

**Values in the conservation and regeneration of  
post-war listed public housing: a study of Spa  
Green, London and Park Hill, Sheffield**

**Thesis submission for the degree of Ph.D.**

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## Abstract

The discourse of historic building conservation assumes a language of intrinsic value in the historic building, detected and managed by experts in local and national agencies. For the less-acclaimed buildings of the twentieth century a separate discourse has emerged of 'difference', requiring explanation. Through this research I show how this discourse of difference has prompted new protocols for the management of listed, post-war public housing. I do this through a mixed-methods approach, combining interviews with filming, drawing, photo-solicitation and walks, mixed with document analysis.

Driven by narratives of reception, I show how at Spa Green and Park Hill two very different outcomes have resulted. At Spa Green the persuasive interactions of participants with the building fabric consolidate the reputation of the architecture and confirm it within the heritage canon. These interactions also revealed new forms of expertise not recognised within formal conservation protocols. At Park Hill, by contrast, sequential and preferred narratives of success, failure and success drew focus upon the architects' intentions for the relationship of the architecture to Sheffield, the making of a community and materials of construction. Through the persuasive actions of certain experts involved with the estate, intention was privileged over its materiality.

These two, different, approaches I see rooted in shifting value emphases in conservation practice. Spa Green reflects the discourse of government policy PPG 15 and its concern with material and formal authenticity. At Park Hill I show a shift towards its replacement, PPS5, and its wider narratives of meaning, harm and public benefits. I identify a new privileging of intention for post-war architecture that has gained ascendancy over the normative protection of authentic form and fabric. This has allowed for much greater alteration to building form at Park Hill than might previously have been countenanced, perhaps even changing the nature of what is protected.

# Introduction

## Preface

My route into planning research has been an erratic one. I studied art history at university and when I graduated I worked half of the week teaching art and the other half for the Georgian Group, one of the national amenity societies concerned with the preservation of C18 architecture and landscape. After a year or two I became a full-time case-worker for them and spent the next five years advising local authorities and owners on planning applications affecting Georgian buildings. At the same time I took a diploma in Building Conservation at the Architectural Association. I moved on to work as a Conservation Officer for Islington Council, and carried on studying in the evenings, this time doing another first degree in classics. When I left London for Bristol I combined working part-time as a Conservation Officer in a smaller local authority with studying for an MA in Classical Heritage.

I give this small biography here because it has implications for how I came to this research project. Whilst at Islington I had some involvement in a number of housing estates of the early and mid twentieth century that were listed. Two of them – Bevin Court and Spa Green – were designed by the well-known modernist architect Berthold Lubetkin, and were listed grade II\*, that is as being of outstanding national interest. I also worked on another Lubetkin-designed block – Priory Green – that was not listed. My involvement with the first two blocks was slight, but I was closely involved in negotiations over the refurbishment of Priory Green. This estate had been turned down for listing a few years earlier, and I was (reliably) told that this was on the basis of its having been too dilute a realisation of the architects' first intentions. Having spent quite a lot of time exploring ideas of authorship, intention, and patterns of reception in my concurrent academic studies, I found the idea that the architect's intention should be afforded such importance perplexing, at best. Although turned down for listing, Priory Green went on to receive £2.46 million in Heritage Lottery Funding and boasted a project team drawing in advice from English Heritage and the architect and Lubetkin 'expert', John Allan. In other words its heritage credentials were obviously sufficient for its failure to match the first vision

to be near-irrelevant in terms of conservation practice. Important to securing the funding was the fact of the estate lying within an Objective 2 area. Neither Spa Green nor Bevin Court, both also in need of repair, were eligible for such funding.

It occurred to me from this project that there were different ways of dealing with, and talking about buildings of the twentieth century that were being deployed in conservation practice to those I was used to. English Heritage, principal advisors to the government on the built heritage, had fairly recently started their thematic post-war listing programme (1992). There were regular outbursts in the national and local press concerning particular inclusions (Park Hill being a good example). It was obvious that there was a degree of public reluctance to accept the new inclusions within the heritage canon, but I still didn't see why that should result in a different way of treating them. I really *could not* see that the date of their construction made any difference. Andrew Saint thought otherwise. In 1996 he had published a thoughtful essay for English Heritage, 'Philosophical Principles of Modern Conservation', noting the points of 'difference' that mark the conservation of modern buildings as distinct (1996a). As a strategy for how English Heritage has approached the conservation of post-war architecture, it seemed that this marking of difference was core.

Whilst working on Priory Green I was also responsible for initiating its designation as a Conservation Area. This designation proved key to securing the funding, but made me aware of some of the shortcomings of the consultative practices in planning and how little scope there was for residents to make their views not so much be heard, but have some effect. In line with the legislation and guidance in current policy in *Planning Policy Guidance Note 15: Planning and the Historic Environment (PPG15)* (Department of the Environment /Department for National Heritage, 1994) we, at Islington Council, notified all residents in writing of the intent to designate a Conservation Area, published a notice in the press and held a public meeting advertised in both, and through the Peabody Trust Housing Association. The turnout (as I found usual for such meetings) was woeful, if supportive, but really as a forum it gave residents no substantial opportunity to engage with the process in terms of their experience of the estate and their understanding of its significance. Although I was willing to hear their stories of these, the conservation protocols did



not allow me any place to put them. The close work of the residents with the Peabody Trust and their agents for the refurbishment, however, did. But it made me aware that there was a significant gap in conservation practice between an emergent rhetoric of 'local and community' interest in government guidance on heritage protection and how this was being accommodated in practice (Department for Culture, Media and Sport 2004:6). I felt that it was somewhat disingenuous to claim this discourse of local/community interest as significant if all the policy and protocols of building conservation rested upon the privileging of the national interest and of remote expertise.

Although I carried on working in building conservation after leaving Islington Council, this sense of 'problems' within normative conservation practice persisted. At the same time, the work I was doing on patterns of reception whilst studying for an M.A. in Classical Heritage made me question the assumed canon of architectural history and attributions of value. Ultimately I decided that I wanted to explore these 'problems' further. I wanted to look at what values were being afforded credence in the management of the historic building stock, and perhaps try to investigate the ways in which that claiming of value was taking place. We had just moved to Sheffield and I was lucky enough to be awarded one of their I+3 ESRC award to do this. Despite my devotion to academic studies I had no formal experience of planning theory and research. What follows tracks the course I took through the MA in Planning Research towards formulating the research project and locating its possible contribution to the heritage discourse in terms of the literature and practice of building conservation.

### **Building conservation as part of planning**

In deciding to pursue an investigation of the management of post-war housing as heritage I was inevitably touching upon other areas of planning and its research, including regeneration, housing and patterns of governance. Built heritage straddles many disciplines and it is the extensive nature of its scope and practice that might have made it hard to contain a study of the values inherent in the management of building conservation. Scholarship relating to gentrification, performance, notions of the home and identity, amongst others, were highly relevant. It would have been possible to take a very different course through this research, exploring the cases in

the context of the recent Pathfinder programme of Housing Market Renewal, for example, or in terms of the literature on gentrification. Removing attention from these debates was a hard, but deliberate choice that I made early on in formulating the research questions. It is worth noting that I was aware that I was excluding some important debates in doing so. I could have talked about, for example, whose claims and interests are represented in the regeneration discourse (Arnstein 1969, Porter and Shaw, 2009), or the place of physical design 'solutions' to housing problems presented by urban design paradigms (Carmona and Tiesdall 2007, Punter 2010). I could have looked at broader questions of justice and governance in the claims for the value of the estates and their consequent refurbishment and regeneration (Fainstein 2001) and I could have looked at debates on housing policy (Mullins and Murie 2006). But whilst these are all stories to be told in relation to the conservation of historic buildings my focus has been determinedly upon how the management of building conservation refers to its own claimed values in conservation and regeneration (Fairclough et al 2008). And it is this analysis that is most conspicuously missing from the published literature. More particularly there is an absence of a significant body of work on the management of post-war architecture as heritage and the value claims made through this. I also felt the lack of work that set out to explore values claimed in the context of published and emergent government policy and guidance. It was here, as I set out in the literature review, that I felt that there was potential to make most contribution through the research project.

### **Values in conservation**

The work of Ed Hobson (2004) arising from his PhD research at Sheffield had set out to explore how values are perceived, and actions justified in conservation practice. Finding contradictions and discrepancies between claims and practice, and a divide between national and local experience of how these values were manifest, Hobson's work was important in reflecting both upon the problems inherent in conservation and its claim on intrinsic value. Interestingly, Hobson posited a divide between the 'small' conservation undertaken by individuals at local level, and the 'large' conservation played out at national level. Putting the blame onto the 'small' conservation practices within planning departments for maintaining conservation as a

marginalised activity within planning more widely, Hobson saw a persistent failure at national level to secure a robust philosophical framework for conservation to operate within (2004:267). Following on from Hobson and his examination of the place of individuals within these practices, Ian Elsmore (2009) was pursuing at Sheffield an actor-network analysis of the conservation process, allowing the buildings an active role in shaping outcomes. Like much of the existing literature on building conservation, both had focussed upon buildings of the more established historic building stock for their analyses.

My own sense of the conservation activity, as set out above, was that there were new conflicts presented by the move to list buildings of the post-war period and how their management was being effected. There were also changes imminent in planning policy affecting historic buildings. Hobson (2004) had made clear the need for further investigations to be made into the nature of the arguments of intrinsic merit and authenticity in building conservation. I felt that there was also need to investigate how conservation practices sought to accommodate expressions of value held outside its adopted protocols. For buildings of the post-war period the arguments for intrinsic value were apparently being undermined as these particular buildings were marked out as 'different' by way of: 'number, technique, intention, performance, viability and appeal' (Saint 1996a:16). The architecture of the post-war period seemed to be where contestations of value might be most overtly played out.

Many of these post-war structures were now suffering from some degree of material failure meaning that a number of buildings were now coming to the point of needing repair, refurbishment, possibly regeneration (MacDonald 1996, 2001). It seemed to me that this was also the point at which any stresses in value claims would be most apparent. An investigation into how housing of the post-war period was being approached as heritage would allow a particular exploration of the rhetoric of 'difference' (Saint 1996). More than this, it would offer me an opportunity to explore what value claims might be made on the basis of how the buildings are experienced and whether such claims are accommodated within, or rejected from the discourse of special interest and significance.

As well as the problem of 'substantive' failure there was another powerful discourse affecting the formative ideas, or 'essence' of architecture of the post-war period (Powers 2001). This is what Gold had come to call the 'Grand Narrative of Failure' (1997a). As buildings were coming under scrutiny for material failure, so too were their intentions, performance and future uses coming into question, with drawn out debates emerging over their maintenance, substantial alteration and re-use (Keeling House, Park Hill) or ultimate demolition (Brynmawr Rubber Factory, Pimlico School). From my own experience as a conservation officer I was aware of the problems of the managed conservation of post-war public housing and I determined to pursue this as a more deliberate area of research.

### **Framing the question**

Having decided to investigate values in post-war architecture in some way, I had to refine this to create a coherent research project. In Chapter 1 I set out how this was put in place through my use of a series of annotated, schematic drawings, trying to mark out some of the prevalent narratives of building conservation as they relate to post-war listed buildings, and how these might be expressed in practice. I call this 'picturing' and it is the first of the visual research methods used. From this drawing exercise I came up with the over-arching research question:

*What values underpin the conservation activity? Are there overt or covert hierarchies of value at play?*

I went on to frame this in the context of an investigation into listed post-war housing in particular, and developed four subsidiary questions:

- 1. What is the relationship between public and private, national and local interest in practices of listing and the articulation of special interest in the conservation and regeneration of post-war public housing?*
- 2. What is the relationship between expert and non-expert opinion in conservation practice and in the making and un-making of reputations?*
- 3. Is there a special focus upon intention in the conservation and regeneration of post-war public housing that relates to understandings of modernism and if so how does this mark it as distinct from mainstream conservation practice?*
- 4. In the conservation and regeneration of post-war public housing, do different values acquire ascendancy, subject to what sort of building programme is being pursued? In other*

*words, are there different values inherent in programmes of conservation and regeneration and, if so, how are these manifest?*

The use of drawings to generate research questions is typical of the attention I have paid throughout this research to the importance of the visual to an investigation of values in building conservation. Building conservation, after all, is an activity that relies on the application of aesthetic judgment and avoidance of harm to the listed 'asset' (DoE /DNH 1994, Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG) 2010). Through the rest of Chapter 1 I show how I approached putting a methodology together, rooted in a Realist understanding of the building conservation activity and responsive to discourse analysis.

In this chapter I also discuss how Michel Foucault's proposition of discourse analysis has been a recurrent feature of much of the art and architectural history I have explored since my first degree in 1986. His ideas are sufficiently well-rehearsed elsewhere for it to be un-necessary to review them in detail in the course of this project (1984, 1995, Philo 2004). Inevitably, I have been influenced in my approach by his concern with the connections between institutional power and the organisation of place, and the dominance of certain discourses in structuring the paradigms of building conservation. The most striking of these, perhaps, relates to the notion of intrinsic worth in the historic building as an objective absolute, its significance deemed capable of measurement (DCLG 2010). But whilst I have pursued a loose discourse analysis through this research, I do not frame it as strictly Foucauldian (Sharp and Richardson 2001, Philo 2004, Huxley 2006). One of the problems presented by Foucault's work is how to undertake new research that can (albeit tentatively) ascribe causes for things and how to do so reflexively. I found the writing of Gillian Rose on the application of discourse analysis to visual research methods really useful in resolving this (2001), and also the work of Liz Sharp and Tim Richardson on the place of discourse analysis in researching planning practice (2001). I discuss this further in the methodology, but as a central analytical approach I have adopted Rose's 'iconographic' discourse analysis, and its emphasis upon the potential of intertextual explorations. Most importantly, I have drawn upon her lucid explanation of discursive 'clusters' (2001:151) and this I discuss further in Chapter 1.

I explore the justification for an attention to the visual, drawing on literature largely outside planning, and reflecting the situation as it was when I began the research in 2005/6. I also set out the reasons behind choosing to investigate two cases: Spa Green in London and Park Hill in Sheffield. My intention was to follow the same methodology in both cases, but as the research developed I ended up taking two very different courses. I began by filming trial interviews with participants on Golden Lane and Barbican estates in London, exploring the notion of special interest. I carried this research method through to form part of a mixed methods investigation into Spa Green, combining filmed and voice-recorded interviews, noted interviews, drawing, walks and photo-solicitation. Much, but not all of this close work on the estate was with residents as research participants. At Park Hill, as I discuss in more detail in Chapter 4, I made the decision not to pursue interviews with residents. In part this was influenced by problems with access, as we had moved from Sheffield to Milton Keynes and I now had two pre-school children to look after. But it was principally because of what emerged from first contact and interviews with professionals, and the analysis of the literature that I had undertaken. My conclusion was that not only were the 'residents' on offer largely a very small group well-versed in presenting themselves for interview as residents of Park Hill, but also that they were about to be 'non'-residents of the estate and had already begun to redefine themselves in relation to it. Resident views of the estate had also formed part of the story of its significance since its first construction. I was worried that they would be jaded. More importantly even, was the awareness that the narratives of the professionals involved had largely been excluded from the literature and I felt that it was their deliberations upon the value of Park Hill that were most absent from the discourse. As works on site progressed, and opinion divided over the choices made in its regeneration, this group of participants reflected upon their decisions to reveal rich insight into how values were assessed.

In this section of the chapter I also reflect upon changes that came as a result of my own circumstances. I knew that I had MS before I started the research but was very unprepared for how suddenly and dramatically I was affected by a series of three acute relapses affecting my eyes and my legs. Now I am no longer able to walk the length of Park Hill, and this has had implications for how I undertook and thought about the research. Problems with vision also made me think and read about how

we access architecture and place and this did bring a shift toward a more reflexive approach to the methods used. The MS and maternity leave have also meant that the research has taken a much longer period than is usual for the PhD process, but it has allowed me to shift my levels of focus on the estates, particularly for Park Hill. The funding crisis that affected the estate's regeneration was well-documented in a BBC programme on English Heritage at Park Hill (BBC 2009) and also brought the debates around value to the fore. As I set out in the chapter, I integrate material drawn from television programmes, websites, film, drawing and photographic work into the research in a way that has not, until relatively recently (Sandercock and Attili 2010) been characteristic of research into planning.

### **A patchwork methodology**

Having decided to adopt an emphasis upon the visual, I then had to think about how to apply and present it. In pursuing this privileging of the visual I followed my own preferences, but was also influenced by the work of Emmison and Smith (2000), Banks (2001), Pink (2001), Pink, Kurti and Afonso (2004), and particularly Gillian Rose (1996, 2001). The first reason for the decision to pursue visual research methods, as I discuss in the methodology, was to attempt to capture something of the spatial qualities of the places I was researching (Banks 2001). I conceived of the research as a 'patchwork' of stories and pictures, interviews, filmwork, photos, drawings and walkabouts, building a composite whole of inter-connected narratives. This 'patchwork' of methods I have tried to reflect in the final presentation of my own work. The research deliberately invites (perhaps even provokes) the reader to construct their own interpretive engagement with the images used and stories told. I have largely left images in the text uncaptioned, and deliberately mixed up different visual media. The initial impetus for this open-ness to interpretation came from what I discuss further in the Methodology chapter under 'Poor Percy'. Essentially it was my own realization, after looking at one particular photograph in a book by Martin Pawley (1971b) of the scope for radically different, valid interpretations of images to those proposed by the author. It is also responsive to the writing of Banks who warns against using captions as they render the potential for the photo to 'communicate multiple narratives ... irrelevant' (2000:15). After my own response to the 'Poor Percy' picture I felt that it was important to leave pictures largely uncaptioned, and so open to this multiplicity of narrative interpretation.

## **A context in the literature**

From setting out how I proposed to undertake the research I moved on to examine the literary context within which this is located. As I have already suggested, and is well-recognised in the literature building conservation does not exist within the boundaries – even umbrella terms – of a single academic discipline (Hobson 2004, Fairclough et al 2008). Through Chapter 2 I examine some of the apparent contradictions within, or omissions from the conservation literature as it relates to values in the conservation of post-war public housing that is listed. The research pursues a close attention to how policy documents and their imperatives are interpreted in practice. I look here to both government planning policy documents and published guidance from English Heritage as well as the wider raft of scholarly literature and practice guides that are written for building conservation. During the course of this research there has been a change from what I see as very fabric-centric policy/guidance in PPG15 (DoE/DNH 1994) to a more expansive rhetoric of value in Planning Policy Statement 5: Planning for the Historic Environment (PPS5) (DCLG 2010). The more inclusive discourse of PPS5, however, is countered by a simultaneous (and at times confusing) move towards a discourse of ‘assets’ and assumed objectivity (DCLG 2010). The shift in policy emphasis from PPG15 to PPS5 is core to how I have framed the findings and I explore in this chapter the particular place of government policy on historic buildings.

The changing value emphases of government policy have coincided with the emergence of a much greater body of writing specifically *about* conservation and its imperatives than was in place when I started the research (Smith 2006, Fairclough et al 2008, Gibson and Pendlebury 2009, Pendlebury 2009). I start this section, however, by exploring the emergence of a conservation literature and its concern with a narrative of authenticity and truth. I then move on to examine some of the assertions of national interest and the extent to which the local, or everyday might relate to that. I show that the prevalent discourse of conservation effectively excludes the valorization of the everyday, but that listing also entails a severance of any building from its own ‘everyday’-ness by making it special. From this I suggest that the narratives of the experience of a building as both everyday and special might occupy this space (Gibson and Pendlebury, 2009, Stephenson 2010).



I then move on to look at the role of the expert as framed in the conservation literature and the claims for conservation as a public good. I suggest that the conservation rhetoric draws from both utilitarian and communitarian theory with sometimes confusing results. The discourse of intrinsic merit is of particular interest here and is something that Hobson (2004) finds unsatisfactory. Conversely, if the value of a listed building is to be understood only in terms of the community that has valued it, then there is no scope for its values to be understood as 'universal or absolute' (Aveneri and de Shalit 1994:4). I discuss the implications of these two positions and the potential offered by Howe's idea of communalism (1992).

Finally I move on to examine the literature related to the conservation of post-war architecture, and that of public housing in particular. I point to an absence of a philosophical framework underpinning the conservation activity as perhaps most exposed in the dealing with this architecture as heritage. And I suggest that this is further laid bare by the narratives of modern architecture as presenting 'difference' (Saint 1996a, Stamp 2001, Harwood 2001, 2008). I find that the literature related to the conservation of post-war housing adopts a particular discourse that proposes a new value set for the conservation of buildings of the more recent past, and which has implications for its outcomes. From this I move onto the case studies.

### **Authenticity and the small stuff; local interest and different expertise**

Chapter 3 pursues a close analysis of the narratives of the conservation and refurbishment of the grade II\* listed housing estate, Spa Green, in Islington, London. This programme of refurbishment was undertaken by Homes for Islington (an Arms Length Management Organisation), between 2006-7. This was under the supervision of English Heritage as conservation experts and the local planning authority's conservation team. Government policy in place at the time was PPG 15 (DoE/DNH 1994), with its emphasis upon the importance of authenticity and material fabric. Adopting a 'patchwork' methodology, I explore how professionals and residents have engaged with the discourse of special interest and the consumption of heritage cachet. I show how these have been expressed through concern with the fabric of the estate, and more particularly the small detail of the fabric. I take particular note,

in this, of the work of the art-historian Keith Moxey (2004) and his notion of the rhetorics of persuasion in securing reputation. I show that the importance placed upon authenticity of form and fabric adopted as a paradigm of building conservation (DoE/DNH 1994, IHBC 2005, SPAB 2010) has been privileged in the course of these works. Through this maintenance of normative conservation practices, the estate is confirmed within the canons of the heritage discourse. These small interactions with the fabric of the estate, however, have also led to the emergence of more embedded, persuasive local narratives of significance than the current conservation protocols allow (Gibson and Pendlebury 2010, Stephenson 2010). They have marked the emergence of different communities of expertise – of belonging, of ‘knowing’ the estate, and of conservation know-how – outside of those accommodated by current conservation practice and its preferred discourse of a single ‘community’ (DoE/DNH 1994/DCLG/EH/DCMS 2010). I suggest that the programme of works at Spa Green, however, has offered a locus for these different communities of expertise who, through small persuasive practices of engagement and collaboration, have thickened an understanding of its special interest (Geertz 1973, Moxey 2004). I also find that these interactions with Spa Green might show how local, embedded knowledges could be accommodated in conservation practice, from which they are currently, and conspicuously missing (Stephenson 2010).

### **Difference, intention and the essence of special interest**

Chapter 4 is a case study of Park Hill in Sheffield. As I have set out already, my approach to the investigation into the conservation/regeneration works at Park Hill has followed a very different course to that used at Spa Green. Like Spa Green, Park Hill was listed grade II\* in 1998, and like Spa Green it was suffering from significant problems with material failure (Cruickshank 1995, Beard 2001). In many ways, however, the comparisons stop here. Park Hill is currently undergoing Phase I of a proposed estate-wide regeneration. As part of this its heritage cachet has been claimed in a concerted effort to re-brand its reputation, set against a narrative of failure (Bacon 1985, Gold 1997a, Urban Splash 2006, Hanley 2007, Hatherley 2010). Park Hill has a long-established presence in the literature of modern architecture in England (Bacon 1985, Harman and Minnis 2004, Gold 2007) as being of not just national, but international importance (Harwood 2000). As part of this literature of special interest, or significance, I point to a very strong focus upon the importance of

the architects' intentions. I find particular emphasis upon the relation of Park Hill to Sheffield, the making of a 'community' and the use of the architectural form and materials (Bacon 1985, Saint 1996b, Harman and Minnis 2004). These particular narratives of Park Hill, which I trace from its first development, persist through changing patterns of reception and sequentially preferred discourses of success, failure and putative success. I show how these first narratives have come to determine approaches to the assessment of value in its regeneration. Pursuing an examination of the ongoing literature of Park Hill together with interviews with professionals involved in the current programme of regeneration, I show how these determinations of value have amounted to a reductive privileging of intention, meaning (DCLG/EH/DCMS 2010) and the essence of what Park Hill represents (Powers 2001). These are preferred over an authenticity of form and fabric in a persuasive rhetoric of regeneration put forward by the regeneration team, and most particularly, Urban Splash.

### **Substance versus essence: a shift in practice?**

In Chapter 5 I draw together the two very different stories of conservation in practice in the refurbishment and regeneration of Spa Green and Park Hill. I show through this chapter how these practices of affording value to intention and meaning at Park Hill point to a shift in conservation practice away from the valorization of an authenticity of material form and fabric that is proposed in PPG 15 and can be seen at Spa Green (DoE/DNH 1994). This shift is towards the accommodation of a wider definition of significance, with a concomitant stress upon meaning and public benefits, as found in PPS 5 (DCLG 2010, DCLG/EH/DCMS 2010). I show how in both case studies, the first literature of the estates and the narratives of their reception have come to shape the approach to ascribing value in the practice of their conservation.

Through the chapter I draw both upon my first picturing exercise, and the writing of Andrew Saint about 'difference' to structure my analysis (1996a). I explore my model of a crystallisation of value at the point of listing and find two different approaches to the wording of the list descriptions in the course of the projects. At Spa Green I see this engagement with the stated value of the estate to be iterative; at Park Hill to be close, literal and concerned with the specific, given language of significance. In the response to these two statements of special interest a separation emerges in the

understanding of where value is located. I then move on to show how engagement with the discourse of architects' intentions also diverges at the two estates. At Spa Green this is marked out through a close engagement with the detail of the fabric (substance), whereas at Park Hill it is shown through favouring the 'essence' of this intention (Powers 2001). In locating significance in the ideas behind the architecture, the highly collaborative scheme at Park Hill has seen great change to the building fabric in what English Heritage call 'constructive conservation' (English Heritage 2009). This approach to intention is manifest in a discourse of *improving* and *correcting*, located in approaches to the community and the relationship of Park Hill with Sheffield, the host landscape.

Associated with the discourse of intention are Saint's tests of performance and viability and here I explore the narratives of success and failure as they relate to architecture of the post-war period and the two estates in particular (Saint 1996a). Spa Green, I show to have been received largely as a success (Coe and Reading 1981, Allan 1992, Allan and von Sternberg 2002), but Park Hill has trailed a dual reception of heroic success *and* failure (Bacon 1985, Saint 1996(b), Harwood 2000, Harman and Minnis 2004, Hanley 2007, Hatherley 2010). Perhaps of greatest importance to the course of conservation and regeneration at Park Hill is the idea of viability. I suggest that the reception of Spa Green as a success has driven a low-key, largely curatorial approach to its conservation, whereas the (selective) focus upon Park Hill's narrative of failure was preferred during the course of the move toward its regeneration. And this has allowed for substantial change to its form and fabric on grounds of viability and past performance.

Finally, I explore the notion of 'shatter'. Through this I explore the extent to which the paradigm of intrinsic value that informs conservation practice is sustained in the course of the projects at Spa Green and Park Hill. At Spa Green I find that the value set framed at the point of listing has been sustained and thickened (Geertz 1973) whereas that for Park Hill has been placed under such significant stress as to have been 'broken'. This is 'broken' in terms of the emphases of PPG 15 and its privileging of authentic form and material fabric (DoE/DNH 1994). However, this privileging of authentic fabric has been displaced by a new rhetoric of significance in terms of the 'essence' of Park Hill. This is consistent with a new focus upon meaning

and a wider understanding of significance found both in the new PPS5 and emergent in the more recent, wider heritage discourse (Fairclough et al 2008, Gibson and Pendlebury 2009, DCLG/EH/DCMS 2010).

## **Conclusion**

Following on from the innovative work of Ed Hobson (2004), this research sets out to explore in some detail the articulation of value in the conservation of post-war public housing that is listed. It does so through a focus not upon the economic value of the conservation activity, but rather an investigation of building conservation as cultural capital. It makes a contribution to the investigation of historic building conservation in three specific ways. The first is in offering a fairly novel set of research methods combining visual and written media and more embodied practices of walking and drawing. The second is in offering an investigation of some of the core assumptions of the conservation activity as it relates to public and local interest and paradigms of expertise. I try to show how in the absence of any strong philosophical grounding for conservation these matters are often negotiated through persuasive rhetoric rooted in the first reception of the architecture. The third is in extending this investigation to the discourse of the conservation of architecture of the more recent past as in some way 'different'. In pointing to a privileging of certain values through two different case studies, the research also sets out to demonstrate a shifting discourse in conservation practice away from a concern with material authenticity toward a more abstract essentialising of that significance.

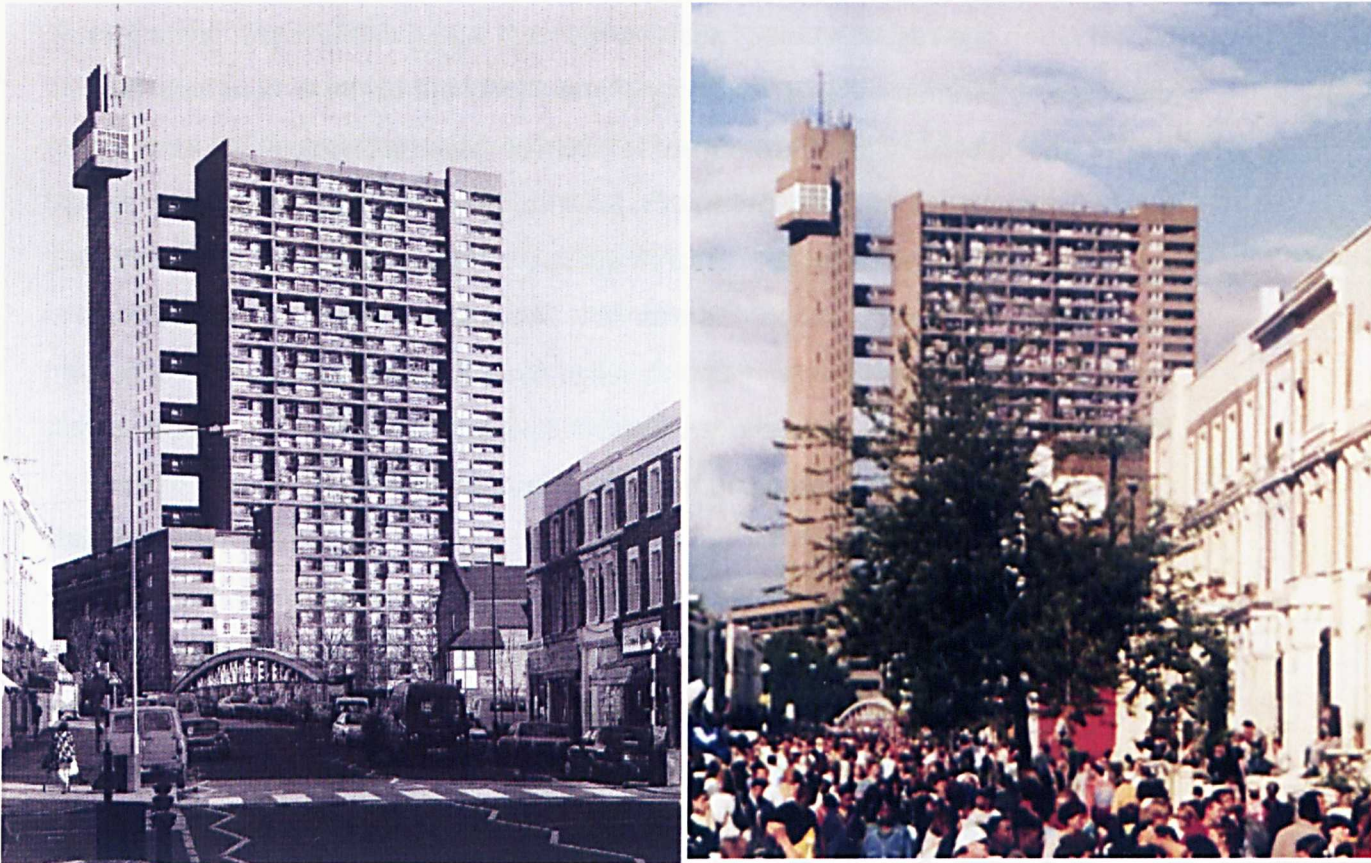
## **Presentation**

A final note concerns the presentation. As pictures have formed such an important part of the research project I have not separated them out as numbered 'figures' but integrated them into the text, noting the source and making comments where it seems necessary. As set out above, these comments are not intended to function as captions and are not applied to all pictures. I do not have access to desktop publishing software, so that the layout is otherwise very basic, with pictures dropped into the text and paragraph and page alignments adjusted accordingly. I have consciously used Gill Sans font throughout. This is a deliberate referencing of the aesthetic preferences expressed through a number of publications about post-war

architecture. It was a feature of a discussion with one of the early participants (GL2), who implicitly aligned its use to an expert understanding of architecture and art of the post-war period. I also like it. As one of the appendices, a short DVD is provided. This includes a short series of edited extracts from some of the filmed interviews I made. There are some muddled moments and incidents of careful reflection included in those selected, which I hope go some way toward representing the flavour of how these filmed interviews went.

## Chapter I:

### Methodology: towards a research question



These photographs are 'of' Trellick Tower in West London. The first is reproduced from Harwood (2000). The second is my own photograph taken from my doorstep during Notting Hill Carnival. Both shots frame the same building but with very different results. The first sits within the conventions of presenting modernist architecture in its use of black-and-white photography and an emphasis upon the sculptural form of the block (Higgott 2007). The second is a personal photograph but presents a much less 'posed' shot of the estate. Obscured by people and a spectacular event, the estate is part of the composite, not presented in isolation. Source: Harwood (2000) and author

#### Introduction

*'I believe that the visitors to 2 Willow Road stand to benefit from the experience of building inside a modern house, which is convincing in a way that no amount of reading or photographs could be. (Powers 2001:5)*

This chapter discusses the course taken from the formulating of the research questions, towards developing the methods used both in the investigation and the interpretation of the material gathered. As outlined in the Introduction, this research project is inherently qualitative and as such makes no claim to being reproducible. It is concerned, rather, to investigate some of the discourses surrounding the listing of buildings, and those of architectural and historic value, as they are played out in the conservation and regeneration of post-war public housing that is listed. In doing so the research assumes a Realist ontology (Sayer 1992) and I set out here how this shapes my understanding of how an exploration of values can work. The chapter works on two bases: the first deals with the ontological assumptions inherent in the project and development of the research questions through an exercise I have called picturing. The second is concerned with how I have framed the work as a rather loose discourse analysis, drawing upon a range of texts and images, with a particular focus upon visual research methods. It also includes a more reflexive exploration of the research methods adopted and how I have approached interpretation of the material found.

Through the chapter I first explore how an assumption of Realism proposes particular research methods that allow for the investigation of the conservation activity. I set out how this investigation proceeds without an expectation of the predictive and generalisable potential of the research findings, beyond a tentative potential for similar findings in similar situations. Following on from this I then set out the place of discourse analysis in the research, discussing Gillian Rose and her quite 'user friendly' take on Foucault's intertextuality and discursive clusters in the context of using visual research methods (Rose 2001). I then examine the general development of the research project, the validity of such an approach and the justification for the particular focus I have placed upon explorations of visual representation at every stage of the research. Core to this research project is the use of visual material in a mixed-methods approach to data collection, including photo solicitation, film-work, walks through estates, and drawing, used in conjunction with more traditional qualitative research methods including voice-recorded, or noted interviews. I start this section by looking at the production of the research questions through an essentially semiotic exercise called 'picturing', and move on to examine the development of the mixed-methods approach to data-



collection. Finally, I discuss how such a composite of data has been analysed, and some of the problems presented by such an approach.

For research into planning, some of this methodology is unusual, perhaps quite innovative. I suggest that it has the capacity to bind together some of the disparate discourses of architectural history, policy and practice as a way of looking at the practices of policy, in dealing with the conservation of post-war housing. More particularly, it allows me to explore these relationships at two very different moments in building conservation – through the refurbishment of Spa Green, London and through the comprehensive scheme of regeneration at Park Hill in Sheffield. Through the focus upon the individual participants and the patchwork of methods of data collection, I show that this research has the potential to offer a place where the discourses of dispassionate, objective expertise and the passionate and persuasive ‘other’ expert might come together.

### **Realism**

As outlined in the preceding chapter, the principal concern of this research is to explore tensions inherent in the discourse of value in building conservation and its practice and more particularly how these tensions are played out in the conservation and regeneration of post-war public housing that is listed. This questioning takes an ontological approach based in the Realist explorations of causal agency and the core assumption in such an ontology of social structures acting upon the individual (Sayer 1992). Through the research process I have also investigated the potential for the individual to act upon these social structures in turn; to reinforce, reshape and challenge them. In taking this Realist approach the research does not pursue positivist testing of stable, objective truths (Gray 2004:22) but equally, does not privilege the individual, human action over the social structure (Law and Hassard 1999, Johnston et al 2000), conceiving the relations between the two as inter-related but not in-distinct. Through the investigation of values, the research tries not so much to identify, or even challenge the role of ‘values’ in a Realist understanding of causal agency. Rather, I set out to break down and scrutinise agency’s response to assertions of value at a greater intensity than is normally afforded. In taking this intensive, qualitative approach and adopting some of the methods of discourse analysis, I am influenced by May’s assertion that ‘one does not have to become a

postmodernist in order to accept some of its insights' (1997:16). Drawing on Sayer's theoretical interpretation of Critical Realism (1992) I attempt, then, to develop a Realist exploration grounded in discourse analysis (Rose 2001, Sharp and Richardson 2001). I do so through a composite of more 'relativist' techniques, including 'picturing' for the development of the research questions, photo-solicitation, interview, or embodied research practices such as the walk-through and site visit.

### **Discourse, Foucault and Rose**

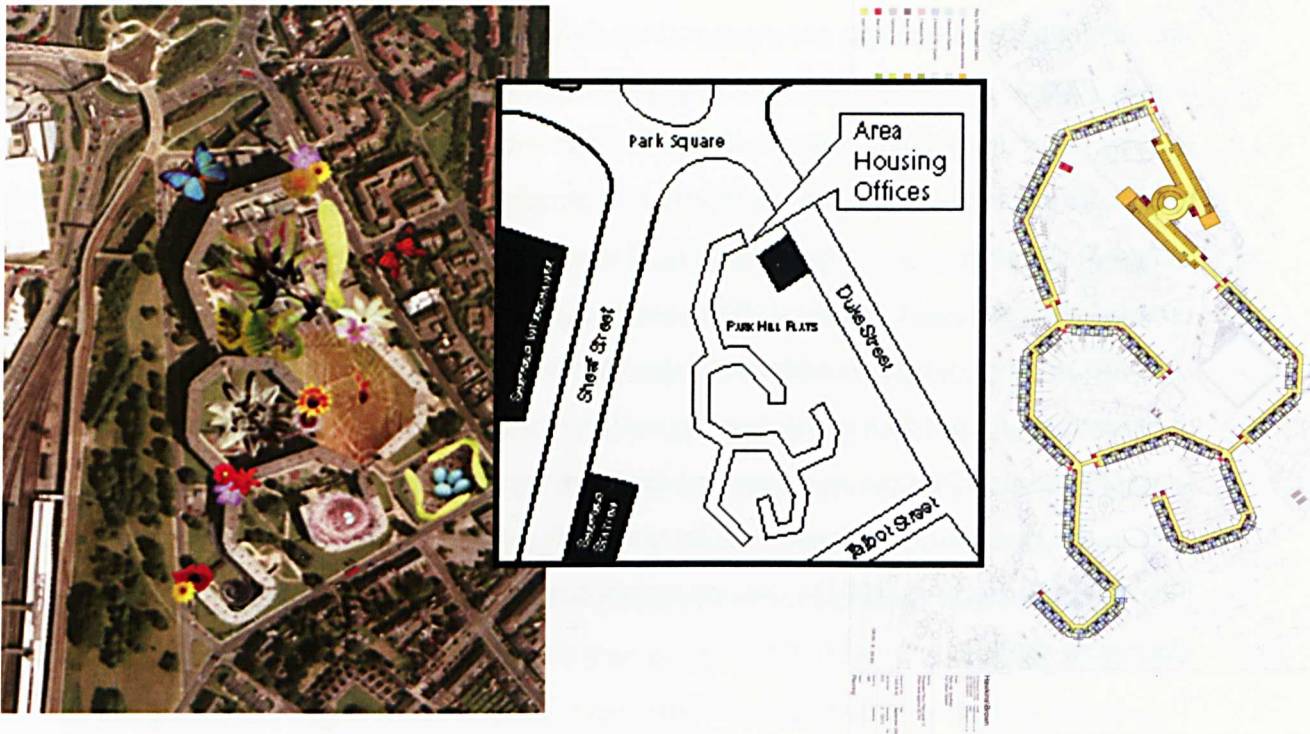
I refer above, to this research being based upon discourse analysis. By this I mean that it is influenced by the ideas of Michel Foucault and his insistence upon communicative practices, discursive power and the place of institutions in maintaining this (1984, 1995). But it is also influenced by the response to his work over the past thirty years and the frustrations of some commentators with some of his more slippery, or at least evasive, thinking. As Sharp and Richardson point out: 'Researchers often use many different notions of discourse, often without a clear definition of precisely what is meant by that term' (2001:195). In struggling with how to integrate planning practice into a Foucauldian research framework they adopt a definition of discourse as 'multiple and competing sets of ideas and metaphors embracing both text and practice' (2001:196). For me, both this struggle with how to explore texts and practice at the same time and Sharp and Richardson's response to it were important in putting the research proposal together. I wanted to explore competing discourses, but also to examine 'shifts in the relative influence of different discourses' (ibid) in conservation policy and practice. Reading Gillian Rose (2001) on visual research methods helped me decide that analysis based upon 'discursive clusters' could frame an investigation of a multiplicity of 'texts' (including the visual and instances of practice) (2001:151). I hoped that through doing this analysis based upon the notion of clusters, and without following a hard Foucauldian line, I could allow myself to examine some questions of causality and even provide a tentative solution to some of the problems I was identifying.

### **Clusters**

In the introduction I alluded to how important Rose's focus on discursive clusters was to framing this research. When I began the PhD I had sufficient exposure to Foucault and the notion of discourse from previous studies to have developed a

sense that this was the 'proper' way to investigate things. But particularly useful to developing my ideas was Rose's writing on visual methodologies, and more particularly her focus upon discursive clusters (Rose 2001). Like Smith I felt that problematising the prevalent discourse of building conservation was important, but like her I also felt that 'I do not want to lose sight of the materiality of heritage' (Smith 2006:12). I found Rose's practical approach to students attempting discourse analysis particularly encouraging and was familiar with many of her sources from my first degree in art history. Rose suggests one should ask of the wide-ranging texts analysed: 'Are there meaningful clusters of words and images? What associations are established within such clusters? What connections are there between such clusters? ... These sorts of questions address the productivity of discourse in the sense that they focus on its production of meaning and things' (2001:151). So this focus upon 'clusters' would allow me to integrate words, images and actions in attempting to pursue the research questions. And by maintaining a focus upon being reflexive (Sharp and Richardson 2001) I did not attempt any kind of formal objectivity in identifying them.

Without recourse to the systematic search of texts that Rose aligned to 'coding' (2001:150) I began to look for recurrent themes and patterns in the material I was both looking at and generating, starting from the first documentary analysis, as I detail below. I explored how meanings were being produced within the conservation discourse through such clusters of words, images, or practice and how values were being asserted. As an example I reproduce below a slide from a research in progress presentation I made in 2007, where I had begun to identify recurrent patterns of representation at Park Hill. I had been struck by the pattern of looking at the estate as an abstract form 'in Sheffield' both in terms of the literature of Park Hill and in its visual representation. From this 'cluster' I went on to examine how this was significant to making the reputation of the estate. It was typical of how I approached the mix of written and visual texts and practices. I identified recurrent thematic groupings, clusters, that in turn drove my analysis and which ultimately came to structure the chapters.



Source: Urban Splash and Sheffield City Council

## Persuasion

Through the assumptions outlined above, the research obviously touches upon some of the most dominant debates in the social sciences concerning the individual and agency and absolutes of value. For the most part, a detailed examination of these debates is beyond the scope of this investigation. I have, however drawn upon some of the work of Lefebvre (1992) and de Certeau (1984) as they relate to notions of the everyday and the individual actor in relation to normative social structures. I have also been influenced by the writing of the art historian, Keith Moxey in trying to negotiate how to deal with the materiality (or otherwise) of a built heritage. Keith Moxey's argument in *The Practice of Persuasion: Paradox and Power in Art History* (2001) takes on some of the interpretive binds of the canons of art history, the materiality of the object and claims for its significance. Although proposed as an approach to early Netherlandish painting, the discussions around the understanding of significance have particular resonance for the examination of value in historic buildings as they are framed in both architectural history and conservation practice.

Moxey proposes a place for personal and passionate conviction in the absence of any strong case for absolutes of value. He suggests that in the wake of the 'culture wars' of the 80s and 90s, efforts to revive connoisseurship and the claimed primacy of the object that there 'are no grounds – especially aesthetic ones – upon which art history can privilege its protocols' Instead he points to his construct of paradox – allowing for both the presence and absence of significance, as well as the 'impulse to understand the past and our relation to it' (Moxey 2001: 6). Persuasion, he claims 'is the result of a personal and political response to the cultural and interpretive predicament of paradox' and it is its 'rhetoric'. In the absence of a consensus about meaning, truth claims can be established, challenged and debated only by persuasion and 'the fact that a limited conception of knowledge must, by definition, tolerate a plethora of different and competing voices places an exceptional importance on the rhetoric of persuasion' (2001:1-3). Persuasion depends upon convincing an audience and allowing these 'competing voices' an ear.

Attempting to distance himself from either a reclaimed empiricism or moving to an ontological revisionism, Moxey in this way allows a place for the *passionate* in the debate. In the context of a dominant paradigm of objective, dispassionate 'characterization' and 'historic assets that I suggest underpins so much architectural conservation literature and practice, this is important (DCMS/WAG 2007, Pendlebury 2009, DCLG/EH/DCMS 2010). Moxey's persuasion both allows a place for the personal conviction of resonance, memory or beauty as significant and simultaneously sees off the potential challenge of in-significance or im-materiality (Smith 2006, Tait and While:2009). And it gives a voice to the persuasive individual within the social structures that form and buttress reputations. Following on from Moxey, it is the persuasive force of an argument that is of particular interest to this research. More particularly it is the place of persuasion in the contestation of values around listing and conservation practice, over the identification of absolutes of value.

### **Buildings and agency**

Although the materiality of buildings plays an important part in the research, the research questions are concerned with how human actors value, respond to and interact with buildings as inanimate (if not immutable) entities. One methodological

approach that might have lent itself to the research is Actor Network Theory (Law and Hassard 1999, Jenkins 2002). For me, adopting Actor Network Theory to negotiate these relationships leads to a disproportionate privileging of the built structure. It also brings up questions about the ontological assumptions inherent in listing and building conservation that are both beyond the scope of this research project and which in turn underplay the physical presence, the materiality of the built form (Jenkins 2002, Jacobs 2006, Tait and While 2009). This research project is inherently concerned with investigating the materiality of buildings within the discourses of value, rather than as actors or even 'events' (Jacobs 2006), although that is not necessarily the same as rendering the building passive within this investigation. Within the methodology adopted, the physical, material presence of buildings can exert an influence upon human actors, but not such that it should be afforded parity with either the actors or their social structures.

### **Picturing problems: documentary analysis**

Developing upon an idea of the constitutive - the thickening - as well as reflective potential of documents in the understanding of conservation and regeneration practice, the research began with an examination of published text (Geertz 1973, May 1997) pertaining to adopted policy. May (1997) neatly summarises the principal debates surrounding the 'use' of documents in social research and the different epistemological approaches to what constitutes a 'document'; to what extent that might be a record or 'monumentalisation' of an event (1997:159). The approach taken in this research, like May, accepts that any document cannot be 'read in a 'detached' manner' (1997:163), but is, rather, culturally embedded, both in its creation and reception (Foucault 1984, Martindale 1993). In analysis, documents (*qua* text or other media) 'might be interesting for what they leave out as well as what they contain (Foucault, 1984, Martindale 1993, May 2007, Rose 2001, Smith 2006). They do not simply reflect but also construct social reality and versions of events' (May 1997:164). Taking this loose definition of documents as the principal repository of statutory assertions of value in conservation practice, the research began with a survey of particular, written policy documents pertinent to the conservation and regeneration activities and of their inclusions, exclusions and marked preferences. I say more about this in chapter 2.

At the time of starting the research, the policy documents for building conservation were produced under the Department for National Heritage, as well as the Department of the Environment. Published, national policy pertaining to historic buildings for England and Wales was contained in *Planning Policy Guidance Note 15: Planning and the Historic Environment* (DoE/DNH 1994), but under review through initiatives by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport: *The Historic Environment: A Force for our Future* (2001), *Protecting our historic environment: Making the system work better* (2003) and *Review of Heritage Protection: The Way Forward* (2004). In 2010 new government policy was finally issued in the form of PPS5 (DCLG 2010), its associated practice guide (DCLG/EH/DCMS 2010) and the *Government Statement on the Historic Environment for England* (DCMS 2010). These specialist documents were supported by a raft of publications for the planning activity more widely, but were bolstered by more specific, often technical, publications from English Heritage, the principal non-departmental organisation for historic buildings and their conservation. Most particularly relevant was the guidance on listing post-war domestic architecture *The Modern House and Housing Selection Guide. Domestic Buildings (4)* (2007). Further guidance, often a material consideration in planning practice, came from specialist national and local amenity societies for historic buildings.

In this first documentary analysis I looked at the published policies in terms of what aspects of value relating to historic buildings were articulated and were afforded high profile, but also in terms of what might be omitted, diminished, or effectively suppressed. That the research project was prompted by my own professional dissatisfaction with the some of the apparently conflicting imperatives of conservation in practice has been discussed in the introduction, and this stage of the research was designed to explore how certain asserted values were afforded ascendancy over others in policy terms; that is to acknowledge the place of the written document within practice. The documentary analysis was also extended at this stage to regeneration publications including *Regeneration and the Historic Environment: Heritage as a catalyst for better social and economic regeneration* (English Heritage 2005b) and *Assessing the impact of spatial intervention: The '3Rs' guidance* (ODPM 2004).

From the initial analysis of the documents and my own sense of process acquired through practice, I began to develop some sense of areas of *where*, and *what* values are most strongly asserted, using what might loosely be called thematic coding, but in a pictorial form (May 1997 125-6, Flick 1998, Rose 2001). These initial analyses I developed into a series of annotated sketches. There was nothing self-consciously 'different' in this approach to a first analysis of the material. In building conservation practice, drawing is a constant means of both communication and negotiation. In other words, it is an activity where materialising the visual is routine. The picturing exercise used to develop the questions, helped to articulate and structure my understanding of the presiding rhetorics and dominant practices of building conservation and the regeneration of post-war public housing; it was both applied and deliberative (Banks 2001). Through working, and reworking the sketches, I developed a number of themes, drawing them together for research questions. These are discussed in more detail below, but to an extent prefigured the identification of the clusters later in the research.

### **Picturing problems: the pictures**

As was pointed out to me in one conference I presented at, I could have developed my research questions without drawing. But drawing is my preferred way of thinking about things and I felt that it helped to allude to – although not represent – the spatial qualities of what I was trying to investigate. The drawings were divided into a number of groups, each of which represented (to me) certain core aspects of the preferred discourse of historic building conservation. The first I have called 'national treasure' and this explores the place of the modernist structure as part of a national collection of listed buildings. The second 'filters' explores the mechanisms of listing and the value tests imposed by experts in the context of assumed objectivity and adequate temporal distance before a building is listed. The third, 'crystallisation' follows on from this and is meant to represent how there is a normative discourse of intrinsic value and a fixed value set for the 'asset' from the moment of listing. This drawing also explores how these different 'crystallised' values might be afforded more importance subject to the viewer. Finally I explore how stresses laid upon this value set through building works or decay might cause crisis and 'shatter' of the crystal holding the intrinsic value, how value might be understood as damaged, changed or even lost. Through these picturing exercises I



developed a set of questions related to the management of the conservation of post-war listed public housing in the context of policy documents and I explore this further below. First I set out in more detail some of the ideas prompted by these pictures. I present these in the form that the ideas developed.

### **National treasure**

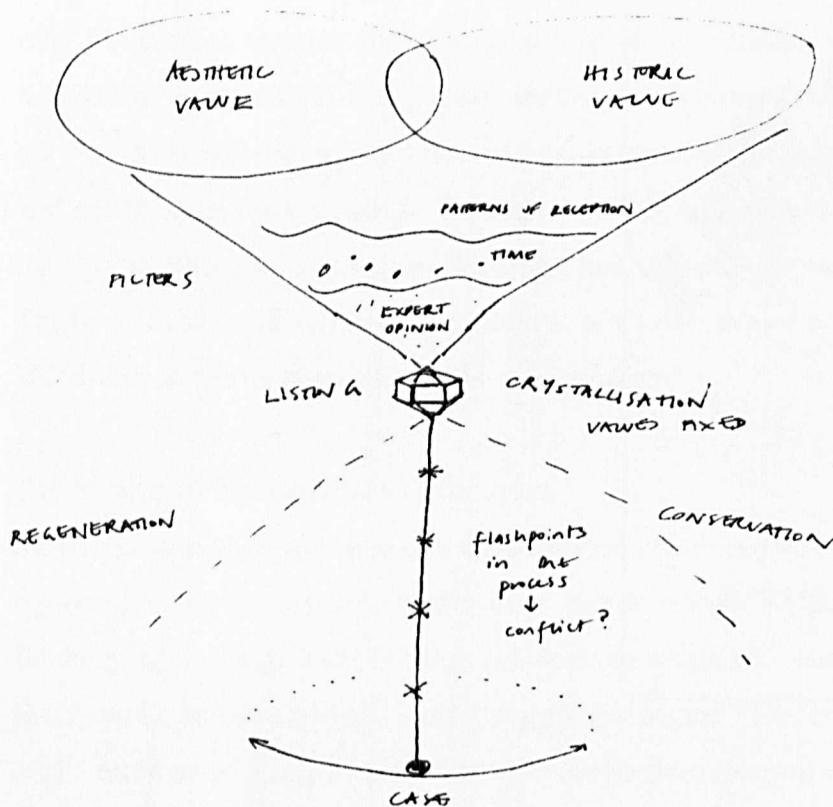


Source: author

Building conservation relies upon a discourse of rarity, of special interest, of national importance. The preservation of buildings that are listed is framed as part of forming a national collection 'to be valued and protected for their own sake, as a central part of our cultural heritage and our sense of national identity' (DoE/DNH 1994: 1.1). Working from this point, I conceived of the individual buildings as part of a collection of 'national treasures' Using the motif of the postage-stamp monarch's head, the drawing claims the modernist tower block as one of these 'jewels' or national assets, asserts planning policy's claims for the naturalisation of the selected building in relation to the more accepted architectures of the heritage canon, and locates the collection of buildings in the discourse of nation and national interest. The drawing

marks the modernist block as 'different' in scale and style, alluding to the continuing debates around the popularity of post-war listing and its lack of 'appeal' (Saint 1996a).

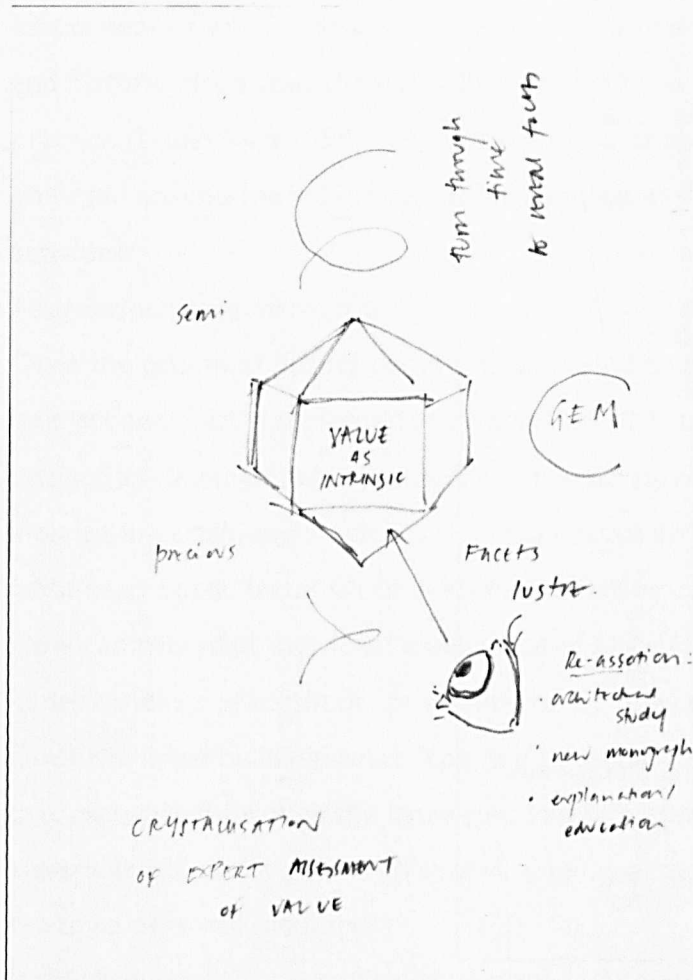
### **Finding treasure: filters and crystallization**



Source: author

Working from the idea of the building as 'jewel' I then developed drawings that attempted to explore how values are expressed in the listing of buildings. These included the value tests that are in place prior to listing – conceived of in the drawings as filters - and the concept of the crystallisation of values at the moment of listing. The idea of filters is derived from much of the reading I had done on patterns of reception. The idea of filters also reflects what I felt at the time to be the normative approach to the reception of historic buildings in the policy documents referred to above: that is as a series of objective tests of importance. The notion of

filters was meant to encapsulate something of the discourse of time in conservation and what is often talked about in terms of an appropriate passage of time prior to objective assessment being feasible. It also includes time in the sense of arguments for rarity, or accident of survival. And finally it includes claims for a particular building or development to represent something particular of its own time, something that is then carried through to both the present and future.



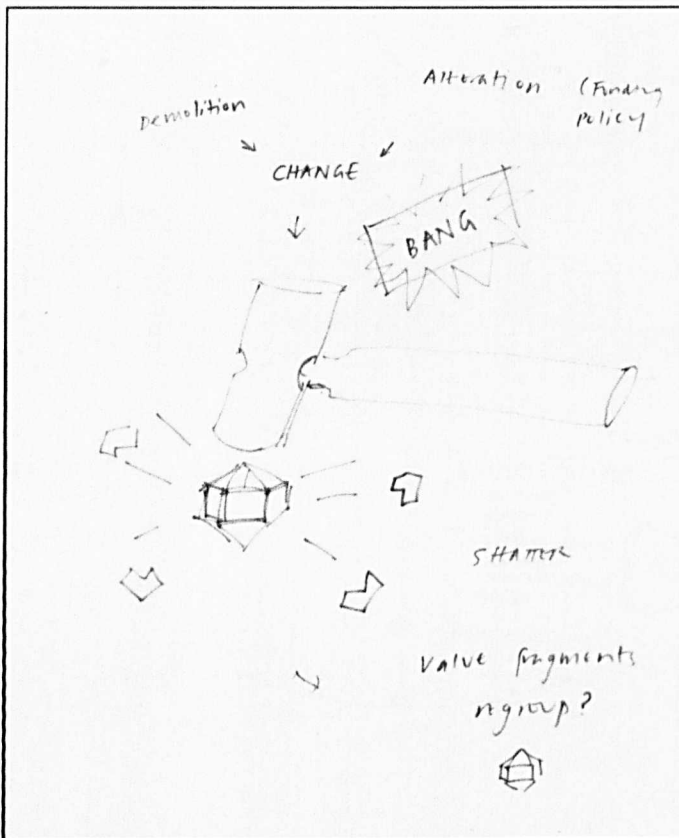
Source; author

Crystallisation was used to explore the ideas of fixed values, and of intrinsic merit that inform much of the conservation discourse, as I discuss in Chapter 2.

Crystallisation is not a representation of my own understanding of how values are negotiated. It is more a representation of how statutory policy and practice respond to the moment of listing and the fixing of the idea of intrinsic worth, against which proposals affecting listed buildings are tested. I tried, through the idea of the values

being 'crystallised' to assert a differentiation between the viewer as public and the building as viewed; as a national asset. The idea of the crystal also asserts the importance of the gaze and how different values as 'facets' might be afforded greater concentration at one time (lustre), but then turned over in favour of other values that might be reclaimed. The value structure of the listed building as a constant is expressed through the crystal, but the idea of facets and lustres allows for emergent and recessive discourses of importance - significance - around them.

### **Crisis and shatter**



Source: author

Just as listing fixes a set of values in statutory terms, a building may also be removed from the statutory lists (DCMS/ODPM 2005). It ceases to be the listed building as previously understood. This might happen, for example when outside pressures are exerted such that the value set is 'shattered', when a significant part of the building is demolished, altered or its assumed values found to be mistaken (de-attribution being most common). Continuing with the motif of crystallisation I have called this moment 'shatter'. Certain pressure points, most usually occurring through the course of building works in conservation or regeneration projects are identified as

making the listed building vulnerable. These value sets may then have the potential to regroup and form a new understanding of that structure, or be abandoned.

### **Emerging research questions**

From these drawing exercises, I began to pull out a number of questions focussing upon assumptions of value and what seemed to have been suppressed in the statutory rhetorics surrounding listing, conservation and the claimed objectivity of assessment of value. I looked at the questions of aesthetic or architectural value, and historic interest as the naturalised, key criteria in listing and conservation practice (DoE/DNH 1994). From this and the picturing a number of broad questions emerged around the value assumptions implicit in the conservation and regeneration activities:

#### *Aesthetic/architectural interest*

Does the notion of beauty come into assessments of aesthetic and architectural interest and if so, is it claimed as an absolute or situated? Is there a necessary distinction between public interest and private opinion in the recognition of aesthetic interest in certain architectures that is (necessarily?) expert-led and operates in advance of public taste? Or is this a naturalisation of the discourse of expertise? How can everyday, individual experience of place (as home) relate to statutory understandings of aesthetic, or architectural, interest?

Does the listed building/estate have the potential to have value that is absent from that recognised through the language of architectural interest (patina of age, experience of walking through spaces, smell, weather effects etc.) and how does this relate to personal memory?

Is there an implicit, or explicit value placed upon architect's intention (then and now) in understandings of aesthetic importance?

Are there implicit differences in the articulation of aesthetic or architectural interest as they relate to the exteriors and interiors of buildings?

Is there a different aesthetic value system in operation for conservation rather than regeneration?

#### *Historic interest*

Does the designation of historic interest around post-war listing afford a place for memory and if so whose does it inscribe (public/private/national/local)?

Does the expert in the conservation activity have a particular role in shaping

reputations and thickening histories through nominations of value? Is this acknowledged if so? And justified on grounds of public interest?

To what extent is the built environment as a neutral historical document assumed in building conservation practice?

Is there a difference between individual and collective history that is framed as being united in the listing process?

How complete a history can a building present and re-present?

How is the argument for public or national interest reconciled in the listing, conservation and regeneration of post-war architectures with ideas of community? Are they determined from within or without?

### **The research questions**

From the picturing exercise and initial set of questions I then went on to take account of the existing literature and policy on post-war public housing and that for building conservation more widely. As a result I refined these down into questions that would allow me to explore the interaction between policy and practice, and how values are articulated at these moments. As an over-arching research question I set out:

*What values underpin the conservation activity? Are there overt or covert hierarchies of value at play?*

In talking of values in this research question, I am not assuming that values have a coherent identity and can be captured or investigated on this basis. Rather, the question is concerned to investigate 'what values' are *articulated* either overtly, or covertly, by those involved in the conservation and regeneration of post-war architecture. That is those values - articulated either expressly, or implicitly - that are subsequently afforded more or less credibility and are adopted, or rejected, by statutory mechanisms of policy and then practice.

From this position, I then developed a series of subsidiary questions relating to who is involved in the conservation of post-war buildings, ideas of the expert versus everyday knowledge of a place, and how approaches to value are negotiated in practice. These are:

*1. What is the relationship between public and private, national and local interest in practices of listing and the articulation of special interest in the conservation and*

regeneration of post-war public housing?

2. What is the relationship between expert and non-expert opinion in conservation practice and in the making and un-making of reputations?

3. Is there a special focus upon intention in the conservation and regeneration of post-war public housing that relates to understandings of modernism and if so how does this mark it as distinct from mainstream conservation practice?

4. In conservation and regeneration practice, do different values acquire ascendancy subject to what sort of building programme is being pursued? In other words, are there different values inherent in programmes of conservation and regeneration and if so, how are these manifest?

### **Starting out: problems and pictures**

I now move on to show how I developed these research questions using two case studies and a mix of methods to investigate them. The methodological approach adopted, as I set out above, is allied to Sayer's 'intensive' research (1992:241-3) and Rose's discursive clusters (2001). As Sayer acknowledges: 'Any explanation... is incomplete for the epistemological reasons that all knowledge is revisable, but explanations of social phenomena are also incomplete for the ontological reasons... that the objects of study are ongoing continuous historical, and not merely evolutionary change' (1992:234). Such a contingent approach to the subject of the research is consistent with discourse-based analyses and also aligns with Moxey's idea of persuasion (2001); there is no fixed character to the objects of study, rather, we are concerned with explanation that appears *convincing* without having to be absolute. As intensive research is concerned with 'how some causal process works out in a particular case or limited number of cases' (1992:242), Sayer also gives a clear methodological steer toward the case study, accepting that the data cannot be 'representative' in absolute terms (1992:249). But in taking such an approach, and an intensive focus upon the causal, there may be some potential for limited generalisation (Gray 2004: 124).

I do not accept Sayer's isolation of 'extensive' research methods to rest solely with positivist investigations. A survey for example, could have been used to identify particular aspects of buildings for further investigation. But I chose to focus upon those methods more associated with intensive research methods principally for

reasons of practicability. My own experience from work of sending out surveys, questionnaires, running public meetings attended by only a handful of the several hundred invited, and of the low priority given by my colleagues to student questionnaires left me rather skeptical about the potential for these making a particularly helpful contribution to furthering the investigation. Or, at least, I doubted their potential to do so without disproportionate prompting and harrying on my part. It also seemed that the intensive methods outlined by Sayer were adequate and appropriate to investigate the sort of questions I was asking.

Accepting that the intensive, case study approach was best-suited to the type of questions asked, the next question was whether to pursue a single case study, or look at two or more. Gray (2004) follows Yin in questioning the potential to generalise at all from the single case study, seeing it as difficult, even 'dangerous' (2004:125) to do so. But Gray's call for three or four case studies 'securing an inferred generalisation' (2004:137), smacks of a nervous, implicit positivism. Robson, by contrast, allows for the potential for '*analytic or theoretical generalization*' that is not dependent upon the more familiar positivist methods of sampling *et al* and it is this approach to the intensive research project, and the potential for theoretical generalization that I followed (1997:177).

### **Selection of case studies**

The research questions relate in part to how values are articulated and negotiated at different stages in the process of conservation and I initially proposed to use three or four case studies that might allow for the exploration of different stages of these processes. This was not proposed in terms of achieving Gray's 'inferred generalization' (2004), but rather to examine whether certain expressed values might become more or less apparent at different stages during a programme of works. On the basis that only the 'best examples' of post-war public housing are listed (DCMS 2005:6.10.1), there was a very limited number of possible case studies, where the conservation and/or regeneration of post-war public housing might be investigated. Many of the surviving housing estates that are listed lie in the south-east of England. This type of housing, as discussed in the introduction, was chosen as the focus of this research principally because it has been the most public of battlegrounds in terms of how value is claimed, or rejected in the listing and then



conservation of particular buildings. From the outset, debates around listing have been unusually open. Deciding upon two case studies that reflected very different stages of the conservation-regeneration spectrum, the approach taken was intended to explore whether certain tensions between the imperatives of conservation and regeneration became apparent, what values gained ascendancy in particular situations, and how these were negotiated.

## **The case studies**

### ***Park Hill, Sheffield***

I explore, in Chapter 4 the literature pointing to the importance of Park Hill and reasons behind its nomination as a building of outstanding national interest and its listing in 1998 at grade II\*. The estate was developed under the direction of Lewis Womersley, the then-city architect for the Corporation of Sheffield. Built between 1957 and 1961 to the designs of Jack Lynn and Ivor Smith, the estate was a grand-scale modernist project on the edge of Sheffield city centre, one that immediately attracted, and sustained, enormous attention and which 'signified Sheffield's post-war renewal' (Harwood 2000:1.27). Its most marked physical characteristics are perhaps the distinctive, unified roofline across the site, which dominates views out of the city, as well as the use of deck access to accommodate dramatic changes in ground levels, and connect blocks ranging between four and thirteen storeys. It is also one of the few pioneering post-war housing estates built outside London to have survived. Park Hill's many problems with tenants, building fabric and popular association have been well-publicised, both on a local and national basis, but its highly contested listing has also been claimed as key to its – and Sheffield's – regeneration (Saint 1996b, Harwood 2000:1.28). As I was putting the research proposal together, plans were emerging for an ambitious scheme to regenerate Park Hill. There was another reason to consider it as a case study. At the time I was based in Sheffield and access should have been quite straightforward. I hoped to watch and record how works progressed on site, to trace in some depth how different values were afforded priority, and to explore the relationships between everyday and expert knowledge of the estate.

### ***Spa Green, Finsbury, London***

Spa Green Estate, in north London, is another innovative, post-war housing estate

listed in 1998 at grade II\*. On a site opposite Sadlers Wells' Lilian Bayliss theatre, the estate was originally designed in the pre-war period by the modernist architect Berthold Lubetkin with his Tecton practice, supported by the innovative engineering of Ove Arup. Built to modified designs from 1945-55, Spa Green pioneered an innovative structural form and attention to decorative detail, as well as features such as new Garchey waste disposal systems. Like Park Hill, Spa Green remained predominantly council-owned, and run, but despite problems with building fabric, enjoyed a very different popular profile. As I was putting this research proposal together, Management Guidelines were adopted, a collaborative document involving tenants, the local authority and English Heritage. A significant programme of refurbishment was also on site. Of particular interest to the research was how this programme of works was conceived and understood by both residents and professionals as a programme of refurbishment and repair, rather than the 'regeneration' of Park Hill.

In my former professional practice, I had some involvement with Spa Green, but at a very low level. I made one pre-application visit to discuss the possibilities of installing a separate boiler in the kitchen, and advised against it. I also attended two or three meetings with a representative of English Heritage and a former estate manager to inspect a small trial area of brick repair. I was, however, significantly involved in the regeneration works to the unlisted Lubetkin housing estate, Priory Green, as described in the introduction. I had some initial concerns about the selection of Spa Green as a case study - some of the officers involved were known to me - but the same is true of Park Hill where I had no formal involvement. The works I had been involved in on site had been 'light' and more importantly, had not got to the point of my making decisions on applications affecting the estate, in which case I might have been more reticent about selecting it. The chance to examine two very contrasting case studies of ongoing or recent works offered an undeniable opportunity for deep reflection on how values are mobilised in practice.

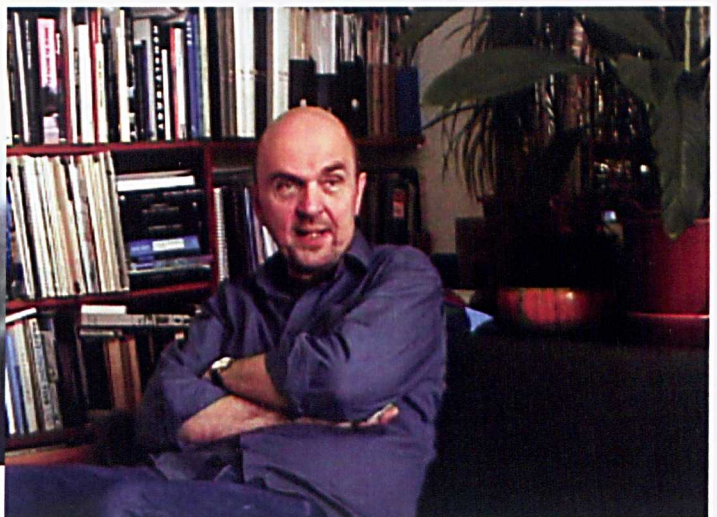
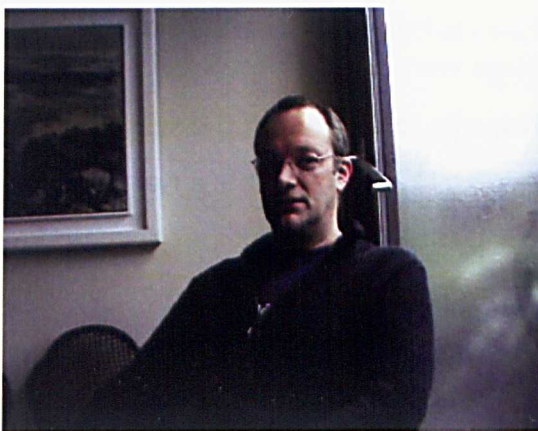
### **Just two case studies**

My initial proposal had also included two further case studies. I considered Keeling House in the Bethnal Green area of London, and Priory Green referred to above. Keeling House, also listed grade II\*, was a sixteen-storey cluster block developed to

Denys Lasdun's designs 1957-9. Its condition was such that it was closed to council tenants in 1992 and remodelled for private housing between 1999 and 2001. As one of the first large-scale regeneration projects of this type of housing it raised questions about intention, community, interior versus exterior and authenticity of outcomes. Priory Green had seen a similarly comprehensive programme of works to remedy problems of both fabric and what might best be called 'community'. It involved gating the estate and the building of a new community office central to the main access and had attracted £2,464,541 of Heritage Lottery Funding, in one of the largest single awards given. As mentioned in the introduction, Priory Green is unlisted, but was designated a conservation area when refurbishment works were first mooted. I also looked at the Barbican (grade II) and Golden Lane (grade II\*) estates in the city of London. Although any of these case studies would no doubt have yielded rich material pertaining to the conservation of post-war architecture, after initial trials of the research methods proposed I decided that the body of material that this number of case studies would generate would be too great for this research project. I also had significant concerns about the ethics of returning as a researcher to Priory Green where I had been so closely involved on a professional basis. I decided then to restrict the investigation to the two case studies where works were recent, or ongoing, and to which I had most immediate (at the time) access.

## **Methods used in the research**

### ***Interviews***





I expected, from the outset, that interviews would be core to this research project. Their place, as I conceived it, was not to offer the potential for standardised responses (Gray 2004:214) but for an intensive exploration of perceptions, or rather, *expressions of* perceptions of value. Starting out with semi-structured interviews with a number of identified ‘experts’ (Holstein and Gubrium 2004:133) I proposed to draw out - much as I had with the picturing exercise - ‘points of salience’ for further investigation (Makyut and Morehouse 1994). These first interviews would then be followed up, developing on points raised in the first. By attempting an iterative, two-tier approach to the interviews, I expected to be able to explore a ‘greater depth’ of material than a flat, single series of semi-structured interviews would permit (Miller and Glassner 2004:129).

The un-structured interviews of the second stage were to allow both for a ‘qualitative depth’ in the process and for participants to ‘talk about the subject in terms of their own frames of reference’ (May 1997:112). Drawing in a range of participants whose narratives might be developed and explored without concern for comparability, but rather for depth of analysis, might be effected in this way, allowing professionals and non-professional residents narrative parity. But for this, the interview has to be understood as partial, subjective (Miller and Glasner 2004:127) and as an event where narratives are broken and reformed for interpretation as ‘thick description’ (Geertz 1973). The interviewee was not perceived as a passive

receptacle of information to be tapped by me as expert interviewer (Holstein and Gubrium 2004:143), but rather the interview was understood as a shared means of constructing a persuasive narrative. Key to this was the idea of reflexivity about the interview process, the notion of establishing a rapport with the participants (Miller and Glasner 2004:133) and a particular reflexivity over my place within it (Gray 2004:342, 222-9). I reflect further below about participants and their own sense of their place in it.

### ***Observation and the mixed methods approach***

When I set out on this research project, my proposal was also to pursue observation as a research method; observation of meetings and communities, of buildings, of people in spaces and of different stages in the formal process of the conservation and regeneration of the chosen case studies. As Robson says: 'As the actions and behaviour of people are central aspects in virtually any enquiry, a natural and obvious technique is to watch what they do, to record this in some way, and then to describe, analyse and interpret what we have observed' (2002:309). In undertaking the research, however, I found it much more difficult to formally separate between observation and interview, or to view the almost inevitable walk-about that would succeed any interview as casual or accidental. Similarly, it seemed over-egging its importance to frame the walkabout as formal observation. All of the meetings I pursued were with fewer than five participants at any one time, and were often very fluid, with initial conversations in one location and with individual participants then moving across to another mix of participants, another location, or even another time. Conversations were continued over walks through an estate, or over months as emails were exchanged, or as they were batted from one participant to another.

Approaches to observational practices tend to be somewhere on a sliding scale between polarizations of either 'direct observation' or 'participant observation', rooted in what might also be characterized as positivist or interpretivist discourses respectively (Gray 2004:240, Flick 1998:137). But Robson proposes an alternative that is appropriate to research of an exploratory nature, and which he calls 'unobtrusive observation' (2002:311-2). It is this form of observational practice that I came to adopt, where participants were made aware from the outset that I was

sometimes concerned to collect visual data as well as records of interviews, but where observations were not framed as objective or separate from the interview work I was conducting. By informing all participants of my research interests and practices, and securing their prior written consent, I sought to ensure that the observational practices whilst 'unobtrusive' were not covert or in any way invasive.

### **The visual as data**

I now move on to discuss the adoption of visual research methods into my investigation. When I started out, as I have referred to earlier, this approach was unusual for research into the planning activity. Banks talks about visual forms of recording as appropriate for those 'things that were too complex to be described in a notebook' (2001:114). Part of this is true, but I also felt that my use of drawing during my previous work as a conservation officer had been more than that, and had allowed me to 'shorthand' what I would otherwise take longer to write. It was part of the notebook, sometimes complementing and sometimes substituting for words. Sarah Pink has also signalled through her work to where the visualities of participants might be 'missing' from interviews (2001, Pink, Afonso and Kurti 2004).

### **Poor Percy**



Source: Pawley (1971)

I was familiar with the idea that particular visual discourses might be favoured, or omitted from some of the dominant narratives of building conservation as I explain in the introduction. I startled myself, however, by my own reaction to a newspaper photograph reproduced in a book by Martin Pawley, shown above (Pawley 1971b). I came upon this image very early in the research whilst flicking through the book and it became very important to how I subsequently pursued and presented the 'patchwork' of text and images. Pawley had included the photograph with the intention of illustrating Percy Jenkins' plight as he was forcibly removed for slum clearance in the post-war period. My first reaction to the image was altogether different. I saw the upset man, wondered what was wrong and what could possibly have made things so bad, then looked at the distinctive roof form, known as a 'butterfly roof' because of the inverted roof slopes and hidden central gutter. Working in Islington for five years had made me very familiar with the problems of this roof form. There was a tendency for pigeons to die in the central gutter and leaves to build up, causing blockages. Frequently these led to water ingress, damp and even collapsed ceilings. I looked at the evidence of water staining from the down-pipe on the back wall, and at the once-fashionable off-set painting of the bricks on the window arch. I thought about how sought-after those buildings now are. And then I looked back at Poor Percy. In the few seconds that it took to rehearse this 'other' story to the one I was supposed to be reading I realized that the use of explanatory text was going to make me feel that I had been a bit stupid in the way that I had interpreted the image. I didn't think that was quite right. I wanted to feel that there were different ways of 'seeing' (Berger 1972) that were valid and which should, to some extent, be left open to the viewer. And on that basis I decided to take a more open approach to images within the text.

There is no strong separation in this research between visual and written forms of what I shall call 'data', of what is within the notebook as written text, sketch or aide-memoire, or something between the three. Of course the word-image-text debate is well-rehearsed elsewhere and it is beyond the scope of this research to conduct a detailed exploration of the effects of the so-called cultural turn (Mitchell 1996, Heywood and Sandywell 1999, Moxey 2001, Rose 2001). Accepting that written and visual material are of equal, if sometimes different, validity however, offers the potential for a greater *depth* of investigation (Geertz 1973, May 1997, Rose 2001)

than one or other approach alone might allow. Through integrating visual methods from the start, the research project was also intended specifically to recognise the visuality of the conservation and regeneration activities, to acknowledge particular practices relating to the visual, such as use of plans and sketches, discussions around noted features, or photographs as naturalised and central to the discourses of many of the actors. Through this, my intention was to explore and integrate visual material as not merely *illustrative* (Banks 2001) but something potentially active and central to the research I was undertaking (Mitchell 1996, Banks 2001, Rose 2001).

The incorporation of some visual practices into the research methodology also expresses my sense that much writing around what is allowed as *important*, or *valuable* about historic buildings and their spaces, these 'assets' (DCLG 2010), is limited by the relation between text and the need to see or 'imagine' architecturally (Borden and Rendell 2000). In this acknowledgement of thinking architecturally as in some way different as reading text I was also influenced by Roman archaeologists' responses to the writings of Lefebvre, particularly the work of Ray Laurence and Andrew Wallace-Hadrill (Wallace-Hadrill 1994, Laurence and Wallace-Hadrill 1997). Important to a number of archaeologists of the late 1990s, including Laurence and Wallace-Hadrill, was Lefebvre's division between the practice and representations of, and representational space, and how this might have relevance to archaeological investigations of Roman housing, and so ideas of Roman identity (Lefebvre 1992). They suggested that such a distinction might even be used to reconcile the problems raised by apparently conflicting narrative accounts as they relate to archaeological data (Laurence 1997:10). To me this work suggested that the practice of space, as understood through simultaneous explorations of the materiality of the archaeology and the written data, might have the potential to shift or consolidate knowledge about Roman housing and identities. And I felt that this approach had similar implications for the investigation of housing of the more recent past.

I have also been influenced by writing for design history on what methods might suit an exploration of single artifacts. Matthew Partington, in particular, has reflected in his work on ceramicists how the filming of interviews allowed interaction with, and discussion about, the three dimensional qualities of pots. (2006). This, he felt, was a more profound representation of the ceramicists' relation to the pots than could be achieved through photographs or voice-only interview. In particular he pointed to



this approach as useful to understanding the object in space, emerging as interviewees moved the ceramics and gestured as they talked. Following this example I allowed for the use of film-making through the research to approach something of the fundamentally three-dimensional nature of architectures, not by walking round with the camera but by gestural reference, or allusion by the participants. I was not going to be able to compete with the real spatial qualities of the buildings, 'the experience of being inside a modern house, which is convincing in a way that no amount of reading or photographs could be' (Powers 2001:5), but it might help allude to that experience, for want of anything better. Although most of the interviews I filmed during the process were inside properties, participants used gesture in relation to the insides of the flats or external spaces and consciously presented themselves in the context of these interiors for the purpose of the interviews.

The walks that followed were not filmed. I did, however, make an exploratory walk-about film following the route to a resident friend's property on the Barbican estate and used this as a prototype for 'looking' during the walkabouts. It reflected something of the mundane nature of walking and recording in what is understood as a spectacular place (Philips 2005), but also of the 'jumpy' nature of filming and walking. In this privileging of film, I am perhaps, guilty of what Lury has identified as an orthodoxy of photographic 'seeing' (1998) and fall foul of Banks' disdain of allusive imagery (2001). But I have tried to respond to this potential problem and incorporate different approaches to the visual as outlined above, through walkabouts, drawing analysis, photo-solicitation and my own rough sketching.

Inevitably, this privileging of the visual in my methodology leads to the question of whether the visual is given disproportionate weight in this understanding of the conservation and regeneration activities, or even misunderstood as constant in its effects. The work on non-representational theory by Nigel Thrift et al. has thrown into question the reliance upon the visual that has perhaps becomes naturalized in much social science research, even if it is only now reaching planning (Thrift 2007). But there seems, to me, an equal danger in excluding the visual from investigations of how architecture might be experienced. I have conceived of the use of film as part of the mix of methods described above, in the hope that some of it will be evocative

of other experience if nothing else. Bissell, for example, has talked about how 'embodied visual practices' on the train journey can implicate other senses, and also how visual experience fluctuates through the duration of a journey according to factors such as levels of engagement and concentration (2008:2-4). If I allow, then, the visual methods a partial place in the research process, I do so not expecting them to substitute for the written, or to be complete in themselves, put to be part of the 'patchwork' of intensive methods used.

## Filming

As I set out above, some of the methods used in this research are unusual, in as much as they are applied to research into planning practice. There was, when I began this research in 1995 surprisingly little engagement in planning research with photography, film-making or more embodied research practices such as the walk. Looking at the justification for film-making in research I drew principally from writings from the disciplines of anthropology – particularly the work of Sarah Pink (2001, 2004) and human geography (Blunt, Bonerjee, Lipman at al 2007, Parr 2007), although recent work by Sandercock (2010) has pointed to how film is beginning to move into the main repertoire of planning research methodologies.



Still from an interview. Source: author

The research began with some pilot filming of residents of the Barbican and Golden Lane estates in the City of London, with the intention of exploring how comfortable - or otherwise - participants and I might feel with filmed interviews. I used contacts made through an old friend who works as an architect and had moved to the

Barbican estate from the Spitalfields area of London. For him, this was a deliberate move away from a much-prized oasis of early eighteenth housing to a more modern, though equally prized architecture, architecture that informed his approach to its décor. I was interested to explore his ideas about how special interest might be located in the two. From him I secured further contacts both on the Barbican and Golden Lane estates. Those interviewed were a mix of an architect, an academic with a an expertise in modernist architecture (Andrew Higgott), a housing professional with a specialist conservation interest in post-war building, and a participant with no particular interest, nor expertise in the area of either building conservation or architecture. All were happy to be filmed in their chosen locations (usually within their home), but with the exception of one interviewee they talked about, rather than took me to see, the external spaces. As one said sitting happily inside: "I enjoy the relationship of my home to the outside" (B2). On both fronts these interviews proved a-typical for the rest of the research. In pursuing interviews for both Spa Green and Park Hill I found prospective interviewees both baffled as to why I should want to film our discussions and reluctant to appear before camera. I shall discuss the interviews undertaken for both case studies in more detail in the relevant chapters, but it is worth noting that the trial methodology and my assumptions about how the research might progress proved somewhat optimistic, even, perhaps, misleading.

These first filmed interviews in themselves, however, offered direction in terms of how to frame the discussions about what was special to participants about the estates, their homes, and the heritage cachet attached to them. Participants were often very self-conscious in how they presented themselves as part of the filming, and also of how they presented their homes. This awareness of the 'home' space (Domosh 1998, Blunt et al 2007) was something characteristic of almost all interviews undertaken in resident flats through the course of the research. It raised some interesting questions relating to the extent to which participants were performing 'living in a listed building' for me, and for the camera. One participant in particular reflected upon how he had tidied up so that I might see the flat in its best light (SG13) and Andrew Higgott was concerned to position himself in a proper frame for the camera in the context of his home flat. The presence of a film camera was certainly a pre-occupation for some participants. One noted half way through an

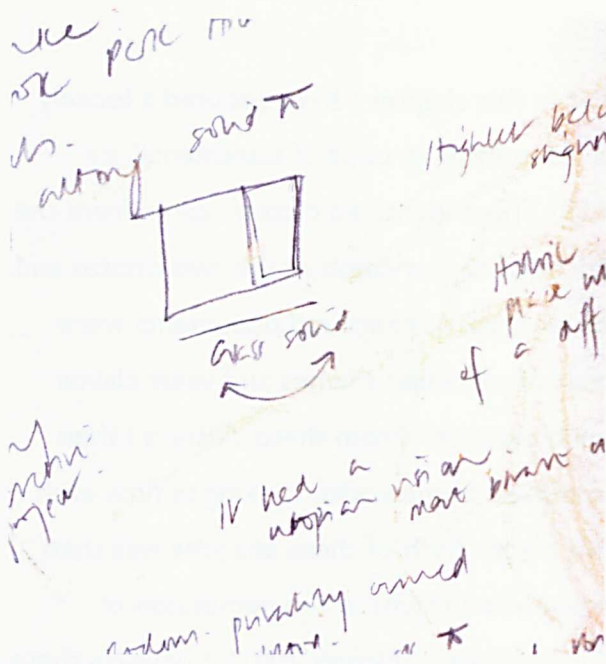
interview how they were impressed that I could write, ask questions and look at them while they were answering (SG5), and I found that I tended to try to ignore the camera once it was switched on and just talk to the participant. This meant that the framing of shots has not been as artful as it might have been, but again, this is part of what I called the 'fractal' nature of the data collected.

The filmed walk I tried out had involved holding a camcorder in one hand while I pushed one of the children in the pushchair. I had intended to attach a copy of extracts from some of this exercise to the end of this research, but as I was told off by an estate security officer for filming on Golden Lane estate without permission (most estates can be accessed by the public but routes through, I found out, remain private space) have not reproduced this here. This was a useful check; it had not occurred to me that the public areas of some of these larger estates were 'private', nor that I as a visitor to a resident could be perceived as transgressing this public/private divide. The practice of filming, however, was useful as it showed me how a focus could be taken upon the mundane practices of walking home, pushing children, pressing lift call buttons etc. and how a broken, imperfect picture might have the potential to be as rich as a very professional one.

### **Further material**

Once interviews - either filmed, voice-recorded or just annotated were complete I followed up on most of those undertaken at Spa Green, and one at Park Hill with a walk to or through part of the site with the participant. I have reflected, above, on the function of these walks as observation, but rather than record them formally I have integrated some of the discussions held into the analyses of participant narratives. In some cases I then had further contact by phone or email with participants, largely related to photo solicitation. Six participants produced photographs in response to a request to capture what they felt was 'special' about the estates and provided titles to go with them. I have incorporated these photos within the body of the text, sometimes as they were pointed out to me in relation to walkabouts, or during the course of an interview. Some photographs included are stills from filmed interviews and I have noted where this is the case. Drawings are included within the body of the text similarly. I replicate a detail from a page in one

of the notebooks I used below to exemplify how I was working. Extracts from films are included on the disc attached with the appendices.



This reproduces part of one page from my notebook, illustrating how I used broken notes, odd words and sketch together to record interviews, or to supplement recordings.

## Anonymity

I talk, in Chapter 3 on Spa Green about how some participants were very concerned to maintain a level of anonymity. There was a tension throughout this research between their and my desire to protect the identities of participants and the need to present the context from which they were speaking. Historic building conservation is a very small world and it would have been easy to identify individuals if I had given specific details of their roles when quoting from interviews. Some of the participants' assertions are quite controversial and I was careful to try to shield their identities by the use of numbered identities linked to specific case studies. At times I was concerned whether to withdraw some material from the research to protect identities, but having withdrawn one participant from the work on the basis of feeling potentially exposed in print (even with anonymity), I felt it important to try to maintain the breadth and, to some extent, integrity of the story that I was trying to tell. On this basis I have tried to provide context where it seems pertinent, but not

stated specific roles where this would be compromising. This relates both to participants who were formally recorded and those who were not.

## **Analysis**

As discussed in the introduction and earlier in this chapter I have adopted a loosely discursive approach to analysis of material, identifying 'groups of statements', or 'clusters' as they arose (Rose 2001:136, 150) These identified clusters came from the analysis of the images, literature and practices of conservation of the two estates and to some extent from my own response to what participants and documents were presenting. I looked for recurrent instances of particular themes and value claims and how these affected other discourses and practice. From these clusters I then developed thematic chapter headings as analytical frameworks, looking at how each was shaping the particular discourse of that place. Each of these analyses was then used for understanding the place of particular value claims in the persuasion of significance through building conservation more widely (Moxey 2001). I develop these more in chapters 3 and 4 but it is worth noting that from here on in the research I largely refer to the identified clusters by way of chapter headings and themes, rather than as clusters *per se*.

## **Conclusion**

Through this chapter I have set out how this research project was developed in the context of the more dominant social science methodologies employed in research into planning. In taking a Realist approach to the material, but drawing upon discourse analysis and intensive qualitative research methods I have sought to integrate written, visual and narrative data to achieve a qualitative depth of material, and a 'thick' description of the conservation of post-war listed public housing. Using an initial document analysis and picturing exercise allowed me to develop broad themes for consideration from what were emerging as the dominant and naturalized discourses in conservation policy at the time. In adopting mixed methods, and a very deliberate use of visual material, I have sought to challenge these orthodoxies and explore how other knowledge might be created about the estates by a range of participants, and sustained through their practices, as set out in the following chapters on both Spa Green and Park Hill. I now move on, however, to explore the

**context for this research in the published literature and to examine in more detail some of the preferred narratives of building conservation.**

## **Chapter 2:**

### **Putting the research in context: a conservation literature**

*'One of the characteristics of modern architecture, across its whole field, is an unstable balance of essence and substance. Neither exists in isolation and, although they may be oppositional categories, their opposition can never be a case of either/or'... you could paraphrase essence and substance as quality and quantity (Powers 2001:7).*

#### **Introduction**

Through this chapter I develop the context for this research question in the literature concerned with building conservation, and more particularly the conservation of the post-war buildings in this country. As set out in the introduction, my point of departure for this research was both a dissatisfaction coming from my professional involvement with the conservation of post-war housing, and the work of a former Sheffield research student, Ed Hobson, exploring values in conservation: *Conservation and Planning: changing values in policy and practice* (2004). Finding that there were still few published attempts to examine the stated imperatives of building conservation and its adopted paradigms, I began to examine how the existing literature dealt with the emergence of the conservation activity, the identification of special interest, or significance in the historic building stock and the canons of architectural history. I set out to explore current government policy and advisory documents, most particularly those produced by English Heritage. And I also set out to examine the built heritage discourse more widely in the academic literature. What I found through this analysis of the literature is perhaps the result of the inherently cross-disciplinary nature of the conservation activity; that there were diverse literatures (including art historical, archaeological, social science-y, scientific, anthropological, historical) informing conservation practice but surprisingly few really exploring in any great depth the values and assumptions that underpin it. Of course, as this research has been rather long in the making, more publications have since appeared (Fairclough et al 2008, Gibson and Pendlebury 2009). But there still remains surprisingly little that sets out to test some of the key narratives of authenticity of form, authenticity of fabric, intention or meaning. Nor is there much



regarding the specific location of special interest, or significance as they are manifest in practice. And it is here that I have set out to locate my research.

### **PPG 15: Planning and the Historic Environment and PPS5: Planning for the Historic Environment**

When I began thinking about this research detailed guidelines for the conservation of historic buildings were in place, anchored around *Planning Policy Guidance Note 15: Planning and the Historic Environment (PPG15)* (DoE/DNH 1994). PPG 15 was issued in 1994 jointly by the Department for the Environment and the newly-formed Department for the National Heritage, placing heritage firmly on the political agenda. Although published by these two government departments, the text was prepared by officers from English Heritage in their role as advisors to the government on matters of conservation. The PPG itself was concerned with the built heritage as distinct from archaeology, which was covered by a separate document, *PPG16: Planning and Archaeology (OCPM 1990)*. The PPG came as a replacement for *Circular 8/87* (DoE 1987), The new PPG was a significant change from the Circular in that it reflected an increased emphasis upon material fabric, gave detailed guidance on practice and sought to secure conservation's relation to mainstream planning (Hobson 2004: 44). But as Pendlebury points out, it was otherwise largely conceived in terms of a continuity with 8/87 with two significant differences. The first was in terms of 'a strengthening of conservation policy' and the second 'an increase in the amount of policy advice to local authorities' (Pendlebury 2009:86).

Intended to support local authorities' own policies on conservation in their relevant development plans (Tewdwr-Jones 1996), the PPG, importantly, also included detailed notes on the practical application of conservation principles, set out in what came to be the much-quoted Annex C (DoE/DNH 1994). In this Annex matters concerning not just the elevational appearance of buildings were included, but also their fabric and form including decorative features, plain plasterwork, doors, windows, plan form and roof structures. The detailed guidance on the preservation of original fabric was upheld by the 'presumption in favour' of the preservation of the listed structure in its entirety (DoE/DNH 1994: 3.3).

Building upon this push to secure the place of conservation within mainstream planning English Heritage published *Power of Place* in 2000. This made claim to the public support for conservation as a core activity drawing on an extensive poll by

MORI (English Heritage 2000). The following year the government's *The historic environment: a force for our future* laid the way for the Labour government to review the imperatives of the PPG and the functioning of the systems in place (DCMS 2001). Amongst its recommendations was a move towards simplifying the complex system of legislation and policy (Hosbon 2004: 22). By 2006, a review of the PPG was imminent. Even allowing for these two documents, the impetus for such a radical overhaul was hard to identify: 'it is not easy to point to any recent political moment or imperative which has catalysed this change' (Hobson 2004:269). But on 21<sup>st</sup> May 2007, *Planning for a Sustainable Future: White Paper* was published by the Labour government (DCLG/DEFRA/DTI/DT 2007). A *Draft Heritage Protection Bill* presented by the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport in April 2008 was intended to run in tandem with the policy revisions (DCMS 2008), although this was subsequently dropped from the immediate legislative programme. In 2009 a consultation paper was issued on the new document: *Planning Policy Statement 15: Planning for the Historic Environment* (DCLG 2009). In March 2010 the government published *The Government's Statement on the Historic Environment for England 2010* and simultaneously, *Planning Policy Statement 5: Planning for the Historic Environment* (DCLG 2010). These publications were accompanied by a separate supporting document *PPS5 Planning for the Historic Environment: Historic Environment Planning Practice Guide* (DCLG/EH/DCMS 2010) issued jointly by the Department for Communities and Local Government, English Heritage and the Department for Culture, Media and Sport, setting out the practical implications of the policy statement. As its key statement the government 'vision' for the PPS and its associated documents was to be:

'That the value of the historic environment is recognised by all who have the power to shape it; that Government gives it proper recognition and that it is managed intelligently and in a way that fully realises its contribution to the economic, social and cultural life of the nation'. (DCMS 2010a:1).

The new PPS documents, their format and authorship departed from the previous policy guidance set out in PPG 15 in a number of ways. Perhaps most importantly for this research project, is that they set out to deal explicitly with the problems of 'what do we mean by the historic environment?' and 'the value of the historic environment', exploring these questions in the context of buildings, sites and

landscapes as heritage 'assets' (DCMS 2010a:1). This self-conscious attempt to demonstrate *how*, and *why* historic buildings might be valuable marked a sea-change in approaches to their conservation. This was the first instance of value being acknowledged in policy as something more than absolute, and more than intrinsic to the listed building (Pendlebury 2009). The new PPS pointed towards a wider and more inclusive claim for what the built heritage might constitute than that previously asserted in PPG 15. It also formalised the discourse of buildings, landscapes and archaeological sites in more natural science terms, as 'assets' (DCMS 2010a:1). Assets, the Statement suggested, 'make a very real contribution to our quality of life and the quality of our places.... through a wider involvement in our heritage... everyone... has an opportunity to discover their connection to those who have come before' (ibid).

I have presented these two policy documents at the start of this chapter because I suggest there is a significant shift between them that emerges through this research and has deep implications for practice. The paradigms of historic building conservation practice up to the issue of the PPS had rested absolutely on the discourse of intrinsic merit, and the protection of material fabric as detailed through specific guidance to local authorities offered in PPG 15 (DoE/DNH 1994). Not only was there this 'presumption in favour' of retention of the listed structure that I refer to above, but there was also distinct advice on how far that presumption should extend into the fabric of the building.

Commenting on the imminent issue of the new PPS, John Pendlebury wondered whether a significant shift was really on the way: 'Ultimately, therefore, this is a key test facing the conservation sector, is the sector prepared to relinquish at least a measure of control [in its acknowledgement of what he calls 'diversity and pluralism'] or is the rhetoric of pluralism used as lip-service to sustain control in the face of broader political agendas?' (Pendlebury 2009:186). It is an important question to ask of the new PPS and one that I hope that this research engages with. Does the new document embody changing values in the management of the built heritage? And if so, are there tensions between this more reflexive understanding of heritage that emerges from the protocols of the cultural turn (Moxey 2001) and the simultaneous move to measure significance and the

rhetoric of assets? Through the case studies I begin to explore this further, but first I turn to what has been written about conservation and its imperatives.

### **A conservation literature; literature for conservation**

Writing both about, and for, conservation has changed enormously over the past ten years, most particularly in terms of how the discourse of value has been approached. I have pointed already to how a more reflective - and reflexive - approach to the matter of heritage and historic buildings has emerged in recent government policy and guidance, and questioned how this relates to the established discourses of architectural or historic importance in conservation practice. That this coincides with a simultaneous move towards quantification and understanding heritage in a discourse more readily associated with the natural sciences is, at least, perturbing. More recent examinations of building conservation emerging from the academic institutions (Smith 2006, Fairclough et al 2008, Hobson 2004, Gibson and Pendlebury 2009, Pendlebury 2009) have been starting to examine the essentially utilitarian claims of much of the literature for the conservation activity as a public good. Here I look at claims for expertise and national interest within these narratives, and explore them in the context of more recent emphases upon localised knowledge and interests. Early conservation literatures were concerned principally with explorations of the genesis of the conservation activity, and less so with its justification, the benefits of which were assumed from the outset.

This normative assumption of the public good in conserving a built heritage has led to problems in conservation practice when dealing with a largely unpopular architectural styles or building forms, most particularly the architecture of the post-war period (Saint 1992, 1996a). Exploring the narratives of post-war listing and an anxiety about its public reception. I point to the naturalised assumption of a public good coming under particular stress and how this has prompted a peculiar literature of explanation and near-apology related to post-war architecture. This is particularly evident in the literature around housing, reclaiming its reputation against a competing literature vouching for how it had 'failed dismally' (Dunleavy 1981:57, Coleman 1990, Hanley 2007).

I have alluded already to the existing literature for post-war architecture being concerned with a discourse of 'difference'. I point specifically to a pre-occupation in much of the literature on post-war architecture with the architect's intention and fitness-for-purpose, as well as a concern with 'iconic' form (Harwood 2008, Saint 1996a). I also discuss here the problem of interiors in much of the literature relating to post-war domestic architecture and a narrative that is characterized by a discourse of innovation (English Heritage 2007a). I suggest that there are distinct practices for their conservation implied through these narratives that are not consistent with established practice. This is a contradiction that I examine in more detail through the case studies, but which I suggest leaves a process of persuasion of the buildings' importance required. But set against this literature of uncertainty, there is a tandem literature of explanation that is peculiar to heritage of the post-war period. I further suggest that the literature manifests an assumed gap between professional and local expertise in the understanding of significance. Whilst this gap is becoming more recognised through more recent publications (Fairclough et al 2008, Gibson and Pendlebury 2009, Pendlebury 2009, Stephenson 2010), formal mechanisms for the recognition of different knowledge and expertise are largely absent in adopted conservation policy and practice. In finding that there is a potential, if not inherent inconsistency in much of the relevant literature between approaches to pre-war and post-war architecture, and understandings of how significance might be understood through scales of expertise, the chapter points to the case for exploring these apparent tensions through the very different stories of the two case studies that follow.

This chapter, then, is structured to offer an overview of the emergence of a building conservation literature, before moving on to explore some of the dominant articulations of value as they emerge. I explore first the idea of truthfulness in conservation practice; the moralising discourse of authenticity of form and fabric (Larkham 1996, Earl 1997). I then move on to look at how arguments relating to expertise and elite emerged to be met by a move to conserve the architecture of the 'ordinary'. Related to this is the notion of public interest, and how narratives of building conservation have represented this. Finally, I move on to look particularly at the literature relating to 'modern' architecture; that is architecture of the immediate post-war period. In conclusion

I point to omissions in the existing literature, particularly in addressing matters of community interest, experience of architecture and how to value the everyday (Pendlbury 2009). I also point to an absence of strong written and philosophical principles on which decisions in building conservation can be made. Like Hobson (2004) I argue that this absence results in the persuasive actions of certain voices gaining particular force in conservation practice with the effect of inconsistent results from apparently consistent policy. I also point to distinct characteristics of the literature relating to post-war architecture – an emphasis upon architect's intentions, innovation, success of delivery, and a concern with objectivity that have largely been overlooked in the existing literature, but which I suggest through the following chapters on the two case studies have significant implications for conservation practice.

### **Starting to write about the conservation activity**

The field of building conservation, the preservation of a national architectural 'heritage', was a relatively late arrival within academic studies and has often appeared as an 'add on' subject area, straddling many academic disciplines from the outset. As Howard put it, the study of heritage 'has emerged from, and sometimes remained within, a variety of departments including art history, built environment, tourism and leisure studies, archaeology, geography and history' (Howard 2003: un-numbered). Whilst this serves to recognise the wide-ranging implications of the conservation activity, it also highlights a problem with defining just what it is all about. As late as 1981 David Lowenthal and Marcus Binney were able to claim at the start of *Our Past Before Us: Why Do We Save It* (1981): 'No other study comparable to this one exists. As a self-conscious movement, preservation is too new to have attracted much critical analysis ... little is known of the philosophy, or psychology of preservation (1981:10). Going on to explore some of the justifications for conserving buildings (the term 'preserving' has rather fallen out of fashion over the thirty years that followed), Lowenthal and Binney drew together a series of essays concerned with wide-ranging discussions around the questions of how historic environments are afforded value, how they relate to structures of identity and belonging, and what this might mean for the practice of conservation in the future. It was not that there had previously been nothing much published on the historic environment prior to their publication,

more that these earlier sallies into print had often been concerned with particular campaigns or with the 'struggle' to conserve (Larkham 1996). And most drew on the substantial body of publications on architectural history dealing either with 'name' architects, or with the merits of particular buildings framed within its canons. What Lowenthal and Binney were attempting that was new was to allow room to 'stand back to examine the larger meaning of their [conservation activists] enterprise' (1981:9).

The narratives of the emergence of the conservation activity and its integration into the English planning system have been fairly well-rehearsed since (Larkham 1996, Delafons 1997, Howard 2003, Hobson 2004, Forsyth 2007, Fairclough et al 2008, Pendelbury 2009) and I do not propose to replicate this here, beyond sketching out some of the principal themes that have come to dominate the related literature and how these have excluded, or even occluded other concerns. Architectural conservation, the story goes, grew from roots in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century traditions of antiquarianism and a pre-occupation with authenticity. Led by influential figures including Ruskin and Morris early adherents reacted against the over-enthusiastic Ecclesiologist 'restorations' of a number of churches and high-status historic buildings (Howard 2008:224). This campaigning activity was complemented by a vogue for recording structures seen in the previous century in, for example, Dugdale's county surveys, and then increasing through the C19, particularly the surveys of the Cambridge Camden Society of medieval churches (Delafons 1997, Earl 1997). The subsequent foundation of the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings (SPAB) set up by Morris and others in 1877 is credited with an enduring concern with building fabric and its authenticity above architectural intention, condition or use, as seen in its manifesto which all new members are still required to sign. (Earl 1996: 91-3, SPAB 2010). The Manifesto dealt with the background to the Society's foundation, but also set out to specify just what it was that they were seeking to preserve. Its tenets are well-understood in conservation practice, and largely assumed as the 'right' ones (IHBC 2005) but for the purposes of putting this research project into some kind of context they are worth setting out again here:

*If, for the rest, it be asked us to specify what kind of amount of art, style, or other interest in a building makes it worth protecting, we answer, anything which can be looked on as artistic, picturesque, historical, antique, or substantial: any work, in short, over which educated, artistic people would think it worth while to argue at all.*

*It is for all these buildings, therefore, of all times and styles, that we plead, and call upon those who have to deal with them, to put Protection in the place of Restoration, to stave off decay by daily care, to prop a perilous wall or mend a leaky roof by such means as are obviously meant for support or covering, and show no pretence of other art, and otherwise to resist all tampering with either the fabric or ornament of the building as it stands; if it has become inconvenient for its present use, to raise another building rather than alter or enlarge the old one; in fine to treat our ancient buildings as monuments of a bygone art, created by bygone manners, that modern art cannot meddle with without destroying.*

*Thus, and thus only, shall we escape the reproach of our learning being turned into a snare to us; thus, and thus only can we protect our ancient buildings, and hand them down instructive and venerable to those that come after us." (SPAB 2010)*

The enduring effect of this Manifesto, its assumption of moral rectitude in the conservation of the historic environment is hard to over-state. Most commentators on current conservation practice have located the dominant paradigms of conservation policy and practice in this 'hands-off' rhetoric of the SPAB and its early adherents. Earl stated in 1997 that: 'The recruiting call of a group of Victorian campaigners can still ... be heard in ... internationally approved conservation creeds' (1997:43) and Delafons added that the assumed rectitude of their position has lasted: 'the dogmatic tone adopted by Ruskin and Morris tended to persist (1997:20). For most publications of the later twentieth century and since, this persistent privileging of fabric above matters of design or architectural aesthetics lay unchallenged. But, increasingly, as debates are being provoked (Clarke 2006) or occur over the very nature of heritage and what is being preserved (Massey 2000, Howard 2003, Fairclough et al 2008, Pendlebury 2009), and with the very materiality of the built heritage now coming under attack



(Tait and While 2009, Pendlebury 2009), pressures are emerging for a more coherent articulation of special interest, and gradings of significance.

### **Truth and conservation**

Hobson has questioned why the 'intellectual justifications behind planning ideology [not just those for building conservation] were formulated decades prior to their manifestation in practice' (2004:27). That is one anachronism, but for Hobson there is another problem in the apparent dislocation between conservation and planning: 'Conservation seems to float above planning certainly in terms of the moral compulsion to undertake its responsibilities' (2004:248). There is a duty to conserve inherent in the legislative framework that is not routinely laid under stress in practice where 'Authorised Heritage Discourses' of significance abide (Smith 2006). The divination of significance is reliant upon understandings of expertise embedded in the structures of government.

Together with the imperative to conserve comes the notion of the intrinsic, truthful and irreplaceable material qualities of historic buildings (DoE/DNH 1994, IHBC 2005). The buildings, as artifacts, have largely been understood in terms of a fairly straight trajectory from past to present as 'truthful records of the past' (Society of Antiquaries quoted in Delafons 1997:19). Or as Earl put it: 'Proper' conservation practice in turn has been understood as managing the building as dependable witness to the truth of the past where: 'A well-preserved building should speak with a clear voice, presenting a *true record of itself*' (Earl 1997:81). Although Larkham (1996) and Earl (1997) challenged some of the truths exhibited in conservation practice in their analyses of facadism, there has, until fairly recently, been a general absence in much conservation literature of more developed explorations of the nature of architectural conservation as a moral or 'truthful' enterprise and how to identify its informing values. In 2004 Hobson had proposed 'heritage' as being a paradigm allowing inconsistencies to be reconciled in the matter of authenticity in the preservation/decay debates, but this did not in itself explain away the notion of buildings possessing intrinsic, truthful value that has underpinned so much conservation practice (DCMS/ODPM 2005, IHBC 2005, DCLG 2010). Whereas museum studies have produced a wealth of explorations

of the artifact in this context, conservation literatures have largely side-stepped the problem of just what it is that the historic building re/presents.

Peter Howard's thoughtful volume *Heritage: Management, Interpretation, Identity* went some way to offer students of heritage a challenging exploration of what their subject matter really encapsulates, including chapters examining questions of 'heritage as' identity and process (2003). Recent attempts to *quantify* historic architectures as 'assets' (DCLG 2010), or to conduct listing surveys of buildings by typology as seen in English Heritage's programme of twentieth century listing (English Heritage 2005c, 2007a) have to an extent set out to measure relative importance. But, other than the discussion of post-war listing practice which I come to later in this chapter, most fail to really explain in any depth what it is that is being preserved, and almost all fail to decide, if they even chose to tackle, whose values and interests they best represent. *The Government's Statement on the Historic Environment for England 2010* may claim the 'historic environment' as offering the potential for 'everyone' to 'discover their connection with those who have come before' (DCMS 2010:1) but it assumes the neutrality of what's on offer, and does not seek to explore what value-systems have been brought into play in determining what the 'historic environment' comprises (Larkham 1996). With an ever-increasing number of voices like Smith (2006) or Gibson and Pendlebury (2009) questioning how local histories and performances of place can be framed in terms of the statutory system, this absence in the literature is marked. The justification for the discourse of the conservation activity as value-neutral and representative of the public interest, ultimately, is lacking.

It seems that there is also a gap between stated policy and practice, where debates around the determination of value need to occur. As writers like Smith (2006), Gibson and Pendlebury (2009) and Stephenson (2010) increasingly recognise, no adopted means of reconciling differing narratives of significance has yet emerged. I point here, then to an absence in the literature around *how* these more local, or situated values are negotiated and how they relate to the paradigm of the listed building as neutral.

## **Expert, elite, and the rise of the ordinary**

Perhaps the most pernicious of accusations levelled at the building conservation activity has been that of representing elite interests, values espoused by an 'educated and vociferous minority' (Larkham 1996:3) imposed upon a more-or-less willing public (Ashworth 1994, Earl 1997:81). There is no doubt that there have been Hobson's 'key players' (2004:27), the 'conservation militants' (While 2007:647) active in the emergence of conservation and its integration into mainstream planning, but such analyses seem rather crude in their implicit assumptions that it is only these elites that respond to what is being conserved. Inclusiveness in the heritage discourse has emerged as a distinct concern over the past fifteen to twenty years, with publications such as English Heritage's *Streets for All* (2004b) and the 2010 *Government Statement on the Historic Environment for England 2010* (DCMS 2010), making deliberate claim for the 'everyone' whom heritage affects. In this they follow the rhetoric proposed by Edward Impey in 2005: 'The historic environment is a common resource [that is and should be] 'owned... by everyone' (2005). Such public calls on the 'everyone' of conservation are complemented by such initiatives such as the 2006 conference *Capturing the Public Value of Heritage* (Clarke (ed.) 2006) formally exploring differing forms of heritage value, perhaps for the first time in conservation practice.

Of course, the attempt to argue for inclusiveness by English Heritage could be seen as cynical self-protection. The 2000 findings of the *Power of Place* had made hard reading with fairly damning findings of public views of heritage (English Heritage 2000). Even in 2007 Martin Cherry acknowledged that: '... a very small proportion [he suggested less than 4%] of the research budget [for English Heritage] goes on understanding alternative or wider community attitudes to the historic environment and the heritage value' 'Yet', he recognised, 'more and more it appears, this is what counts' (Cherry 2007:21). In the arena of post-war listing, questions have emerged not just in relation to the expression of value, but also around expert fallibility. Nigel Whiteley, in 1995 wrote a stinging article in the *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, accusing Andrew Saint (who was then with English Heritage working on its post-war listing programme) of a false representation of modernism (1995). And more recently, the Twentieth Century

Society poured scorn upon the experts at English Heritage over their refusal to list the post-war Robin Hood Gardens estate in east London (Twentieth Century Society 2010). Such attacks might be expected of the campaigning amenity societies, but much less so on a personal, intra-conservation basis.

I started to wonder whether this lack of concord was in some way related to a particular discourse of the buildings of the post-war period. Whiteley felt that to be correct about stylistic preferences when looking at modernism was of fundamental importance to understandings of national, even personal identity: 'The notion of heritage has a crucial function. A major change occurs when you claim something is part of a nation's heritage, as opposed to being part of a nation's history, because heritage implies the building (or whatever) is significant in somehow contributing positively to your present day *identity*' (1995:222). For the post-war housing stock that becomes 'heritage' through listing it is not only identity but also the shift from the 'everyday' to the special that the literature largely fails to address, although Powers makes a fair shot at it (2001). The experts and their literatures seem baffled by how to deal with an emergent emphasis upon the 'everyday', how to integrate its discourse with the 'high art' distinctions that informed so much early conservation practice. And most particularly, how to do so with a body of architecture that holds, at best, a rather loose grip upon the public affection (Saint 1996, Holmes 2006).

In 1985, Wright attempted to draw a distinction between the 'everyday' and 'grand' in conservation practice, mediated by the concept of the 'national' (Wright 1985:24-5), but he stopped short of extending his argument to explore the statutory role of conservation and its rhetorics of local (not necessarily the same as vernacular), as well as national interest. Lowenthal and Binney's 1981 volume of essays had set a new marker in attempting to analyse the place of conservation and some of the values that informed it, but did so in terms of arguing a naturalised emergence of conservation in response to particular 'threats' to places afforded particular value by certain individuals *on behalf* of a wider public: 'Present-day preservation stems from a three-fold awareness of the past: that it was unlike the present, that it is crucial to our sense of identity and that its tangible remnants are rapidly disappearing' (1981:17). But most of these cases

were very much not of the architecture of the everyday. Such causes celebres as the grand estates like Mentmore Towers, or Calke Abbey produced the paradigm of conservation as an activity responsive to individual 'threats' to the estates of the elites (Larkham 1997, Hobson 2004:27) and this has to a great extent come to relegate the 'local' or the 'everyday' to a second tier of importance.

Conservation Area protection, for example still offers much less stringent limits on the owner than building-based listings (Hobson 2004).

The question of how to position the 'ordinary' or de Certeau's 'everyday' (1984) in the narratives of conservation is of key importance to the management of post-war housing. It is something that Pendlebury, Townshend and Gilroy reflected on in their discussions on the listed post-war Byker estate in Newcastle-upon-Tyne: 'Does recognition of the estate through statutory listing in any way capture how the estate is valued?' (Gibson and Pendlebury 2009:179). In other words, does the value recognized in the practice of listing in any way reflect the breadth of what is considered to be of value by users of a place? It is an important question and one that they seek to explore, as I have in this research, through interviews with a range of 'stakeholders' including both professional and non-professionals. In their reflections upon their findings, the authors refer to the work of Laurajane Smith (2006) and her idea of 'Authorized Heritage Discourse', through which the mechanisms of heritage protection serve to 'override 'subaltern' concepts of heritage, including those which might arise from the community' and in turn to consolidate elite understandings of where significance might be located. (Pendlebury, Townshend and Gilroy 2009:179). But the authors do not wholly subscribe to this structure of heritage in practice at Byker, do not view experience of the estate in terms of an opposition between elite and community values, pointing out instead, how understandings of special-ness, of significance even, can be iterative and collaborative: 'the way professionals think about Byker, at local level at least, is mediated by their engagement with the various communities within Byker' (ibid:199). Although tentative, this approach points more toward an 'agreed discourse' than the current protocols allow for, and the need for a further exploration of how 'community' views might be understood. Emerging work, such as that of Janet Stephenson (2010) might help to point the way.

There is another aspect where the tensions between the 'special' and the 'everyday' are exposed, when dealing with the interface between public and private space in public housing and how to deal with buildings with a multiplicity of near-identical residential units. Much of building conservation, as discussed above, is pre-occupied with the authentic - form and fabric – a 'relics'-driven concern with maintaining authenticity and a return to the truthfulness of the building as a record of the past (Hobson 2004, DoE/DNH 1994)). The implications of this have yet to be resolved for post-war listed housing. The residents who form such a key feature of the narratives of the buildings' construction (Gold 1997, 2007, Allan and von Sternberg 2002, Bullock 2002) are largely excluded from all but a consultee role in the protocols of conservation practice, or accommodated through a token recognition of 'community' (DCLG/EH/DCMS 2010). Owing to a newly-adopted practice in modern listing (2005c) all affected stakeholders are now consulted on proposed listings, and also when Management Guidelines or a Management Plan are proposed. But there is a tension between the architecture as experienced and as framed as special through listing. Andrew Higgott's *Mediating Modernism* (2007) argues of many visual representations of modernism that 'the careful representation of the perfected visual qualities of the building came to be seen as the surmounting achievement of a work of modern architecture' with the exclusion of 'all but the most significant and edited signs of inhabitation' (2007:47-8). This erasure of occupants as part of the discourse of modernism not only served to heighten the fine art allusions of the presentations but also cut counter to the social enterprise of many of the buildings' designs. The 'everyday'-ness of social housing as presented in the pages of the architectural press, I suggest, always was – and is - anything but that. It is a rendering of this manifestation of the 'ordinary' as very, very special. And this is something largely overlooked in the conservation discourse.

### **A public and its interest: inside the everyday**

I go on in this section to further explore the relationship between the public interest and the architecture of the 'everyday'. Hobson asserted in 2004, that 'national interest' is merely an 'abstraction' by those involved in the practice of conservation (Hobson 2004:36,256). Given the claims now explicit in policy (DCMS 2010, DCLG 2010) for the importance of public benefits (DCLG

2010:HE9.2(i)), this leaves open the question of whether conservation as an activity is secure in its nomination of special interest and formulation of a national collection of listed buildings as a public good. The extent to which the public interest might be claimed is also of concern in relation to the external/internal significance of any particular building and the extent to which intervention in the internal space represents a public concern.

The valorization of the 'everyday' certainly brings an approach at odds with the established rhetoric of 'special interest' or 'significance' in building conservation (DoE/DNH 1994, DCLG/EH/DCMS 2010). Wright, for examples, draws a distinction between the ordinary, or 'habitual' which is where the individual operates, and what is rendered apart from that as 'History' with its claim on national interest (1985:6). The recent discourse of the 'representative' implies a degree of confusion in the conceptualization of the ordinary, and everyday and the special (DCMS/ODPM 2005:6.10.3). Georgian town houses, for example, are representative of the ordinary or everyday, but valued for the internal spatial qualities and features as well as elevations: 'how interiors were planned was of crucial importance' (DCMS/ODPM 2005:6.37). Town houses of this period make up a large part of the national listed building stock and are sufficiently uniform in their design and features for English Heritage to have produced an advisory leaflet on their management (1996). My experience of working with them is that protection was extended to the whole building, including parts of original fabric that could not be seen. But the interiors of post-war housing blocks – both distinctive and/or representative in a similar way – may be ignored in new listing proposals, or even marked out as of no special significance, as at Park Hill (RCHME 1998). Instead attention is paid in the protocols of post-war listing to 'principal elevations and public areas' (2005:6.41). It leaves open significant questions not just about the value assumptions inherent in modern listing, but also about their implications.

The protection and presentation of 'how' everyday life is, and was experienced, is a highly contested and often criticized part of historic building interpretation (Wright 1985, Hewison 1989, Uzzell 1989) that seems to its critics to bear little relation to experience as History (Wright 1985) and more to spectacle for

consumption (Thomas 1994, Buchli and Lucas 2001). 'Public interest' as permitted through the protocols of building conservation is never far from 'prurient prying', transgressing social norms in implying, if not allowing access to private space. Massey explores this transgressive access to the domestic everyday in her review of Rachel Whiteread's *House*: 'The private was opened to public view... the intimate was made monumental and yet retained its intimacy (2000:49). Perhaps it is precisely this micro-level (de Certeau 1984) of everyday life that should be held significant to the construction of meaning for architecture of the everyday, where 'non-elite tastes' are allowed to mark and claim the past; a 'lost space' (Thomas 1994:71, Tolia-Kelly 2004, Miller 2006). But conservation practice does not allow for it.

Like Wright, Massey conceives of the private as 'things that should be hidden and never shown' (2004:49). But Laurence has demonstrated through his work on the Roman villa how social practices and conventions can render the public/private divide much more nuanced than the architecture would first suggest; with public practice extending into 'private' space at the Roman villa (1997). Boudon's analysis of Le Corbusier's Le Pessac development similarly reveals in turn, how the private can overtake the public, as residents gradually customized their units to break the uniformity of the original design (1969:figs. 17-20). Such small-scale, customization of the architecturally uniform has also been recognized by Brand (1994), and shows a blurring of the boundaries between public and private space. But in the protocols of building conservation these small interventions are largely construed as value-less; distinguished from those that took place in a more remote (valuable) past. But the extension afforded through listing to the interiors of buildings means that there is no formal boundary to the limits of public interest, no public/private divide.

Conservation, as a particular form of planning 'is an activity... founded on the legitimacy of intervention in land and property markets' (Campbell and Marshall 1999:464), and also its space. For all the moralizing rhetoric of conservation there has been little investigation of its place in moral theory, examining whose interests are being served, and how intervention in privately-owned property is justified on a moral basis. This is, perhaps unfortunate, as conservation seems to



make claims drawn from both utilitarian and communitarian theory with sometimes confusing results. Over the past ten years there has been an increase in the discourse of 'everyone' and community in the conservation rhetoric that I alluded to above. This seems to draw on the communitarian privileging of 'community' as having intrinsic value for example, but elides this with what is manifest as community *interest* in the buildings (as artifacts with intrinsic value) that might be associated with that community (see Clarke 2006). And further confusion comes with the essentially utilitarian claims for the conservation activity operating as an 'instrument' for protecting and enhancing the environment through state intervention (DoE/DNH 1994:1). For Avineri and de Shalit at least, there could be no justification for claiming intrinsic value in the built heritage on a national basis because there is 'no shared understanding of the content of values' (1992:4). So whilst the prevalent discourse of intrinsic value in the listed building may persist (Barter 2003, IHBC 2005), Avineri and de Shalit would only allow the value to be generated and understood within the confines of one particular community that generated it. Trying to match conservation practice with this branch of moral theory the community (in itself a problematic construct), and not the building has intrinsic value (1992), and the local community, not the expert, is capable of assigning value

Within the building conservation discourse, as I have shown above, there is a rather under-challenged notion of what community constitutes (Clarke 1996, DoE/DNH 1994, DCLG/EH/DCMS 2010). In many ways the language of community, for conservation, is largely interchangeable with that of public interest. For Thomas, community is bound up with claiming a particular space to 'embody and manifest its experience' (1994:70) and Massey shows how what she calls 'local spaces' are constantly revised 'something we construct and others construct about us'. This has resonance, too with de Certeau's idea of the everyday as manifest in 'the [subversive] use made by the "common people" of elite-led cultural mores (1984:xiii). There is an inherent tension between the practices of the everyday patterns of occupancy of this architecture and how can it be claimed to have national significance, or to represent a wider public interest. (Howe 1994). What these analyses suggest is that there is a much more complex and iterative relationship with heritage assets at local level than the rigid,

centralising, fabric-centred protocols of much conservation practice allow. And this is not fully addressed in the existing literature.

### **Public interest and conservation: best fit?**

So if there is a confused call upon communitarian justification for intervention through conservation practice, what of utilitarianism? Hobson argues that conservation's 'public interest' as conceived in the planning system is deliberately vague, that 'its breadth in allowing a variety of interpretations meant that the scholarly historicist and architectural values held by a paternal minority could pass quite effortlessly to justify this public function, quite irrespective of any consideration of advantage to the public from the protection of such relics' (2004:237). His picturing of the conservation activity as anachronistically elitist and concerned with 'relics' suggests a model of conservation akin to Burke's essentially utilitarian notion of objective interest existing independently of expressed preference, as something to be detected and managed by a meritocratic minority in the form of experts (Campbell and Marshall 2002:166). What Hobson does not explore explicitly, however, is how this 'public interest' and expert intervention are framed in the conservation discourse as a public good. I suggest that perhaps Howe's more wide-reaching discussion of a 'communalist' unitary conception of the public interest could offer a means of reconciling the apparent conflicting utilitarian and communitarian ethical norms that are assumed (1992:23), although such an attempt has not been proposed in the literature elsewhere.

Under Howe's analysis, public interest is both largely objective and capable of universalisation, but distinct from personal preference and what she calls 'ordinary values' (1992:234). This allows for the public interest expressed through the conservation of the 'special' to be concerned with a common good and for preference to be expressed communally through a process that can 'indirectly impute interest to groups' (1992:263). Whereas Burke's more utilitarian take on public interest puts its management by state meritocrats as a national level, Howe allows for public interest to be concerned with group interest at a local level (Campbell and Marshall 2002:165). This conception of a communalist, unitary public interest does allow for the negotiation of the more

difficult aspects of what might constitute common 'goods' so that they are not wholly reducible to the contextual relativism of Avineri and de Shalit (1992). But in the context of the discourse of 'assets' (DCLG/ED/DCMS 2010) there are problems. Howe's assertion that this communalist public good should not - in fact can not - be subjected to measurement suggests that conservation is moving away from the one branch of moral theory that might support it, if only in relation to its construct of the 'special', if not the 'everyday' (Howe 1992: 237, 239-40).

Assuming, however, for the moment, that Howe's moral framework is one that might offer a reasonable 'fit' to conservation in its protection of the 'special', the preservation of historic buildings through state intervention might be construed as constituting a common good. In this case it would be representing the interests of the nation-as-community (Wright 1985, Avineri and de Shalit 1992) in which public interest might be universalisable but still depend upon the expert voice. Whether public interest is directly transferable from local to national level must then depend upon whether local (community) interests can always be assumed as commensurate with the national ones. Many writers would suggest not (Massey 2000, Hobson 2004:69, Gibson and Pendlebury 2009).

Through emergent programmes of regeneration and refurbishment, conservation policy and practice have laid new claim to both public and community interest that appear confused, but largely utilitarian in their imperatives. The literature does not really address this, particularly not what I show in Chapter 3 to be a powerful move to claim local expertise and value *within* its protocols. Does this point to a transformation in the nature of the conservation activity itself, claiming a place for a more situated and local form of knowledge and expertise consistent with a communalist discourse, or to ultimately unsustainable claims for both utilitarianism and communalism through a dual valorization of the special and the (admittedly special) everyday? In moving both towards and away from a discourse of the listed building as neutral and fixed, does this present a challenge to the inherently utilitarian construct of the conservation activity as a public good? Where the accommodation of claims for community interest comes (Clarke

2006), or where the story of the private *experience* of the listed building fits into this discourse remain unresolved.

### **Collecting history in the present**

Moving on from the question of how the conservation activity came into being, its core justifications and the values that have driven its claims for integration into mainstream planning, there is a separate question around listing and the creation of a national list of buildings. The statutory practice of listing buildings in England takes a normative stance, and assumes that certain buildings and areas are both worthy and deserving of preservation (DoE/DNH 1994, Earl 1997, Smith 2006). This understanding is largely dependent upon a discourse of (often emergent) intrinsic merit framed as either architectural or historic interest, and sometimes both (Barter 2003, Jowell 2004, Blaug, Horner, Lekhi 2006, IHBC 2005, DCLG 2010). Through listing comes a duty of care, incumbent upon the building's owner (Hunter 1996, Larkham 1996, Hobson 2004). Statutory requirements oblige anyone seeking to work on, or intervene in the physical fabric of a listed building (be it an owner, occupant or prospective developer) to secure listed building consent in advance of that work so as to ensure that it does not negatively impact upon the building's special interest. It is through these statutory obligations that listed buildings are stabilised as material artifacts which act as 'a source of evidence for the past, a document as it were, whose rarity and vulnerability [can] be measured as well as its significance' (Cherry 2007:12). As part of the historic environment, the listed building is deemed irreplaceable: 'Once they are lost they cannot be replaced' (DCLG/EH/DCMS 2010:6.5). As part of a national (built) archive it must be preserved, curated, interpreted and re-presented lest 'the decay or destruction of ... objects brings forgetfulness' (Buchli and Lucas 2001:79-80).

Halbwachs has it that 'social beliefs, whatever their origin, have a double character. They are collective traditions or recollections, but they are also ideas or conventions that result from a knowledge of the present' (Halbwachs 1992:188). The present has a powerful place in much of the rhetoric surrounding building conservation. As suggested by the Manifesto of the SPAB (2010), conservation practice is about choosing what should be kept; crystallising the relationship between place, the present and memory. Buchli and Lucas find a direct coincidence between material

culture and remembrance, seeing: 'remembrance as the reproduction of an original experience', where 'if memory is a mere copy, mementoes are copies of copies' (2001:79-80), a coincidence Dear sees inverted in the 'erase-atecture' of Los Angeles (2003). Dear's interpretation of a culture of demolition as a *tradition* of demolition is an important one, where there is no scope for re-presentation beyond memory. Massey in turn chooses to see that through conservation 'a particular rendering of those social relations that constituted that particular time-space is preserved and re-presented' (2000:55). Memento or representation, the correspondence of structure, identity and memory - present and past - in conservation practice is expressed in its literature as both integrated and complete: 'The physical survivals of our past are to be valued and protected for their own sake, as a central part of our cultural heritage and our sense of national identity' (DoE/DNH 1994:1.1). There seems little concern for the *particularity* of the social representation that Massey alludes to, nor the *peculiarity* of the present in this conceptualisation of the past-future continuum: 'We deceive ourselves if we think that when we stand in front of a case of medals, or guns or photographs ... we are looking at the past. We are also looking at the present and the future' (Uzzell 1989:46). Buildings do not simply bring 'something of the past into the present' (Hewison 1989:17). The curatorial imperatives of conservation practice mean that this 'something' is also projected into the future.

But although the building as a cultural product (Buchli and Lucas 2001) belongs to a past rendered remote by the passage of time, the architecture of the more recent past, the building is often framed as having a greater cultural proximity greater than those of the more distant past (Tournikiotis 1999). But is this assumed proximity leading to mis-readings, mis-rememberings? 'The past may not always make much sense to us, but we feel that it ought to' (Fowler 1981:64). Work on the consumption of material culture has also pointed to how the rendering of the building as part of the national heritage itself serves to enforce understandings of cultural distance and different belongings that are distinct from those of temporal severance (Inda and Rosaldo 2002). There is now a burgeoning literature around the place of memory in the heritage activity, helped by a museum studies focus upon cultures of collecting, stewardship and consumption, where 'heritage', as with Hobson (2004) is the word that links the 'preservation of the past for its intrinsic

value and as a resource for a modern community or commercial activity' (Carman 1993:98). There is distinctly less on selective dis-remembering the past for the future (Halbwachs 1992, Dear 2003) and how 'heritage' as a transformatory concept occupies a pivotal place in the translation of the *structure* into the *listed building*. I suggest, then, that in this research there is scope for exploring this discourse of temporal proximity and buildings of the recent past being framed as simultaneously familiar and 'other' to us.

### **The listing of modern(ist) architecture**

Through this section I do not set out to survey the history of post-war architecture in this country, which has been well-covered elsewhere (Dannatt 1959, Gold 1997a, 2007, Tournikiotis 1999, Harwood 2000, Bullock 2002) but explore some of the more prevalent debates around the conservation of post-war public housing as architecture of special interest. I point not just to the confusion inherent in the justifications for the conservation activity, but also the development of separate rhetoric and practices for architecture of the more recent past. While has argued that conservation in the context of post-war listing has been a site-specific negotiation of ill-defined principles and political pressures (2007). I point more to a literature of difference (Saint 1996a) that has emerged around post-war conservation, marking its management as a distinct practice with its own set of imperatives, even if the results diverge. I show here that the implications of this distinct practice have not been fully examined, nor what this means for conservation in practice.

By the later 1980s narratives of failure related to post-war architecture were endemic (Coleman 1990, Gold 1997) and some of the buildings of the mid twentieth century were coming under increasing pressure for redevelopment or demolition (Saint 1992, Gold 2007). Many buildings using new technologies were also reaching the end of their material life, although as MacDonald notes, no specific policies for dealing with concrete etc. were included in PPG15 (Doe/DNH 2001:32-33). Matters of material repair were (as While noted 2007) were being dealt with on a case-by-case basis. A more conscious evaluation of the post-war building stock spearheaded by the influential architectural amenity group the Thirties Society claimed a vulnerable architectural legacy of the post-war period, advocated a 'thirty year rule'

for listing in England that would embrace important buildings of the more recent past. The Thirties Society became the more-inclusive Twentieth Century Society in 1992 (Twentieth Century Society 2009), the same year that English Heritage's programme of post-war listing formally began, surveying buildings on 'thematic' grounds. This thematic approach differed from previous listing practice in allowing listing inspectors to take a national over-view of building types such as housing, church building, offices etc. rather than focussing upon area-based surveys as formerly undertaken. As English Heritage stated:

We decided to look at the whole field of buildings dating from the period 1945-1965 by building type and held a series of consultations on all our proposals for listing in 1995 and 1996, backed up by photographic exhibitions and publications explaining the basis on which post-war listing recommendations are made. These have attracted much press coverage and enormous public interest (English Heritage 2010).

The need to *explain* value was built into these assessments; problems were (rightly) anticipated with the popularity of much of the architecture of the post-war period, what Andrew Saint called the 'obdurately unloved' (1992:3). The move to list buildings of the more recent past, and more particularly of modernism also provoked some consternation amongst the architectural establishment as well as the public more widely (Powers 2001). Critics viewed its integration into the heritage canon as a betrayal of its anti-historicist ethic and social enterprise (Pawley 1998), in a clear discourse of privileging 'essence' (Powers 2001) over *intent* (Saint 1996a). In this situation of neither public support, nor enthusiastic acclaim from the architectural press While suggests that for English Heritage: 'postwar listing was seen as an opportunity to promote a different image of heritage management' (2007:652-3) giving the organisation the opportunity to reflect 'the government emphasis on economic regeneration, social inclusion, access and pluralism'. In this way, post-war listing allowed English Heritage a repositioning of its protocols (2007:652) but without intervening in policy.

The listing of post-war architectures has been led and adjudicated by expert opinion embedded in formal agencies: English Heritage, the Council for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE) and expert amenity groups like the Twentieth Century

Society and the U.K. group of DoCoMoMo. Thematic surveys have been bolstered by ad hoc 'spot listing' with buildings principally suggested by these 'conservation militants' (While 2006). The problem with this thematic approach is that it has tended to a discourse of 'the best'. As Adrian Forty points out: 'Architectural debate, and research, seems to have been taken up primarily with the development of the best school, the best dwelling, or the best hospital. In this context, questions about the nature of the experience to be had from architecture...occurred entirely at the level of the satisfaction of the user's needs' (1995:33). In other words, it re-asserted the divide between the expert and the local user that is highlighted above.

An essay by Andrew Saint published in English Heritage's *Modern Matters: Principles and Practice in Conserving Recent Architecture* (2006a) proposed the six key ways in which 'modern buildings may differ from older ones' that I see as having been of great importance to conservation practice. These were number, technique, intention, performance, viability and appeal (ibid:16). Saint's essay was important in setting the markers for how listing post-war building should be approached, and in marking it out as different. He further suggested that in planning practice, the test of proposed works affecting listed modern buildings should lie in the 'gap between present appearance and construction on the one hand and *original intention* on the other' (ibid:20, my italics). Such an emphasis upon architects' intentions demonstrates how for post-war public housing the idea of what the architecture should deliver both could, and should be assessed objectively. It also alludes to how a significant gap often developed between the original vision and what was delivered. And here sits the discourse of failure; of failure to secure appropriate materials to build, of failure of design, of failure of management, of tenants, of pretty much everything, but mostly of the failure of architects (Pawley 1971a, Coleman 1990, Gold 1997a, Hanley 2007). But what Saint also warned against was this privileging of intention, worrying about 'a growing tendency among architects themselves and the value systems of art history to attach greater significance to the idea and the image than the building itself' (1996a:21).

Like Saint, Katherine Shonfield also explores this discourse of intention in her analysis of modernist architecture, although through Mary Douglas' famous construction of purity and danger (2000). Shonfield extends the argument for



intention further into material choices, pointing to how the delimited essential formalism that characterized brutalism was understood [by its practitioners] to 'prove a morality ... *completely independently* of its social impact on the external world (2000: 8). And although Saint warns against getting caught up in interpretation that relies too much upon 'the idea and the image' over the execution (1996:21), the emphasis upon intention, in an assessment of the architecture of moralising intentionality - as much of the modernist output was (Bullock 2002, Gold 2007) - seems to do precisely that.

Not only do Saint's recommendations reveal the weight given to an architect's intentions in the evaluation of post-war structures as heritage but also point to a reliance in modern listing upon the canons of architectural history. This narrow definition of heritage is beginning to be challenged (Moxey 2001, Malpass 2009, Pendlebury 2009, Tait and While 2009, DCLG/EH/DCMS 2010) as questions arise about claims to represent absolutes. These are not concerns unique to more recent architecture, but indicate something of the problem of persuasion facing statutory and non-statutory organisations in the listing evaluations, and then conservation of post-war architectures. Crucially, it seems for Saint's model that the expert advocates for these buildings have to occupy the 'gap', between vision and delivery, identifying what of the scheme 'as built' is of value from the perspective of an architectural expertise, and mediating between this and an often skeptical public. In many respects the listing of modern architecture has even pushed forward the expert agenda of listing as objective and responsive to intrinsic merit. As Nigel Whiteley argued in 1995: 'we should save Modern architecture not necessarily because we are fond of it, or even because we especially value it as relevant to the needs of today, but because it is an authentic and important record of historical values and practices' (1995:15). Once again, the discourse returns to a utilitarian reliance upon expertise and the conservation of post-war architecture as a public good.

For English Heritage, Saint's argument both on intention and for fitness for purpose (1992, 1996a) endures, both in listing and conservation practice: 'Buildings need to be judged against their original brief... the important factor for any post-war building is whether it fulfilled its original brief' (English Heritage, 2007a). Refining the criteria in this way suggests that the listing of mass-produced modernist architecture is

discerning; discerned by the expert. Listing of twentieth century architecture of the post-war period has widely been recognised as 'difficult, but after more than fifteen years of English Heritage's modern listing programme and persuasive explanatory effort, this 'difficulty' seems to persist (Hatherley 2010). Even between experts (Whiteley 2005). The Twentieth Century Society remains in a stage of high dudgeon over the government's refusal to list the highly-regarded Smithsons' Robin Hood Gardens estate in east London. In a press release of July 1<sup>st</sup> 2008 it claimed that: "EH's advice to DCMS that the Estate was not of significant historic interest will be seen as an example of a beleaguered quango seeking to curry favour with its paymasters" (C20 Society 2008, 2010). Experts, it seems, could not agree on the estate's future, and, uniquely for buildings of the postwar period, had drawn battle lines around questions of the architects' intentions and the buildings' performance. And perhaps English Heritage were using the listing of post-war architecture as the locus for repositioning their activity (While 2007).

## **Conclusion**

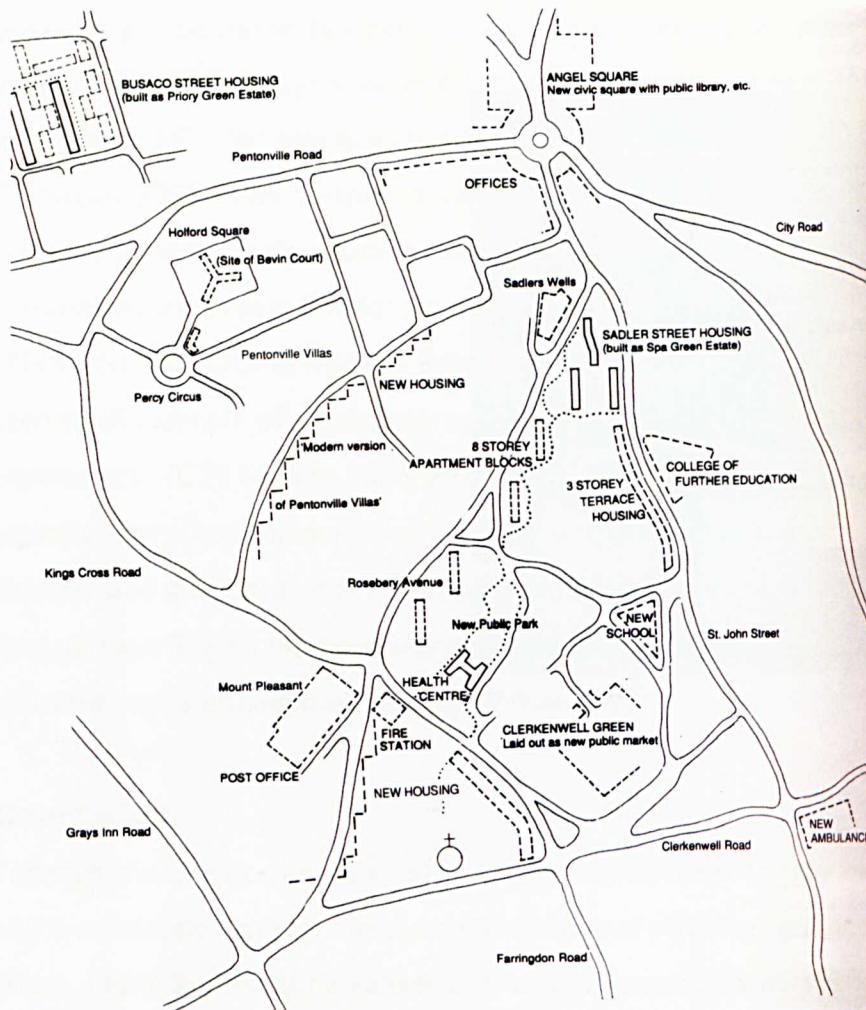
Through this chapter I have tried to set out the context for my close investigation of the articulation of value in the conservation of post-war public housing that is listed. I have looked at narratives of the emergence of conservation as a distinct activity within planning and its claims upon moral theory for conservation as a public good. I have explored the paradigmatic narratives of expert opinion, authenticity of form and fabric as they appear in policy and guidance and as they are reflected in discourses of conservation and truth. I have also pointed to a distinct literature of post-war conservation, particularly in the work of Andrew Saint, which seeks to mark its protocols as a distinct practice (1996a). Through this survey I have highlighted the confused claims on moral theory in the conservation literature and practice and a gap in the literature related to the conservation of architecture of the post-war period. Within this I see my own research to have a place, examining at very close proximity the values claimed in the conservation of two listed housing estates. I now move on to do so.

## Chapter 3: Spa Green and the small stuff



### Introduction

This chapter tells the story – many stories – of how special interest and significance have been both identified and managed in the case of the Spa Green housing estate in Islington, north London. I discuss the development of Spa Green in more detail below, but it is worth setting out some of the basics as described in Coe and Reading (1981, 1992), John Allan's heroic monographs on Lubetkin (1992, Allan and von Sternberg 2002), Harwood (2000) and as they appear in the list description (RCHME 1998). Spa Green Estate was built between 1946-9/50 developing upon immediately pre-war designs by Berthold Lubetkin for a smaller scheme (known as Sadler Street). Both schemes were for the former Finsbury Borough Council. The revived, more substantial scheme formed part of an ambitious area plan for Finsbury that would offer residents access to a range of facilities within walking distance of their homes, of which the Finsbury Health Centre and Spa Green, Bevin Court and Priory Green housing estates designed by Lubetkin and the Tecton architectural practice all formed a partial realisation.



Source: Allan (1992)

The site of the Spa Green Estate is marked as 'Sadler Street Housing' on this reconstruction of the Fisbury Plan

Spa Green estate is situated opposite the rebuilt Sadlers Wells theatre, and has public faces onto both Rosebery Avenue and St. John's Street, in what is now a highly sought-after part of Islington. At the north end of Clerkenwell it is close to the Angel shopping area around Upper Street and is served by bus routes on both Rosebery Avenue and St. John St, immediately to either side of the estate. A number of flats have been leased under the Right To Buy scheme launched through the Housing Act of 1980, but the majority of the flats are social housing and the estate remains in the ownership of the London Borough of Islington. A major programme of refurbishment was undertaken by Homes for Islington (an ALMO) on behalf of the local authority between 2006-7. Broadly, these works extended to

include the replacement of windows, renewal of kitchens and bathrooms, elevational repairs and external repainting, as well as a re-routing of internal wiring.

I set out to show through this chapter how there has been a strong narrative of the importance of the original fabric of the estate and a curatorial imperative to preserve this, consistent with policy guidance in PPG15 (DoE/DNH 1994). Much of this is manifest in attention to the very small details of the estate. But there is a coincidental challenge to the paradigm of conservation expertise in relation to these interactions with the fabric. I show how persuasive performances of this expertise from outside the formal structures of conservation practice have helped to secure the reputation of the estate as heritage. I try to show how, at Spa Green, these persuasive practices relate to narratives of authenticity, appropriate design, community and memory; and that the discourse and practices related to these assertions of value can be located in specific parts of the building fabric – windows, kitchens, bathrooms and decor.

Articulations of significance at Spa Green have a distinct character that is both peculiar to the discourse of post-war architecture and an assumed need to explain, or persuade of, its importance. This occurs in the context of a consciousness of a lack of 'appeal' of architecture of the post-war period that I discuss above (Saint 1992, Moxey 2001, While 2007). The persuasive effort at Spa Green, however, is not set against a strong discourse of failure characteristic of so much of the post-war housing stock (Gold 1997, Coleman 1990, Hanley 2007). The interactions with the building fabric rather, have a powerful persuasive force in confirming to us (the public) the estate's validity as an artifact with heritage cachet. Through the curatorial actions of those involved in its use and management as heritage, these groups and individuals continue that persuasive effort and in doing so, they render themselves as experts in the heritage of the estate.

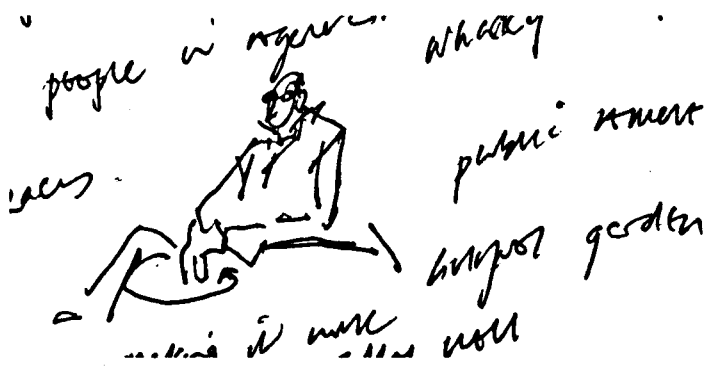
I argue here that the estate has been curated as an artifact, turned into heritage on the same terms as older buildings on the lists (Carmen 1995, Powers 2001, While 2006). In this practice is marked a confidence in the reception of post-war modernist architecture and its claim to public intervention through statutory listing. It is, thus, consistent with the imperatives of PPG 15 (DoE/DNH 1994). It validates

the presumption that public taste will 'catch up' with the expert recognition of significance (Saint 1992, 1996a, Powers 2001:5) and to an extent confirms the naturalised discourse of expert art historians embedded in the formal building conservation agencies as opinion leaders (Saint 1996a, Harwood 2001, Walker 2011). It also makes the guidance of English Heritage on post-war architecture appear too tentative; perhaps even falsely concerned with 'difference' (Saint 1996a, English Heritage 2007a, 2009). But as alluded to above, I suggest that the heritage management of Spa Green is not just part of the preferred discourse of the historic building conservation. It draws upon diverse persuasive narratives, and differing expertise to construct and thicken an additional discourse of significance to that of the established narratives of architectural history.

In finding new forms of expertise I also point to the problems of the preferred discourse of a single Spa Green community. Whilst not claiming this problematising of 'community' as a new idea, I discuss, in Chapter 2 the absence of a full exploration of the notion of community and community interest underpinning much of the conservation literature (DoE/DNH 1994, Gibson and Pendlebury 2009, DCLG/EH/DCMS 2010). I try to show here how at Spa Green different groups formed around different expressions of value and *through* their interactions with the fabric of the buildings marked themselves as distinct communities. These communities were marked out through claims to particular knowledge about the estate: of authentic belonging, of understanding the architectural aesthetic, of conservation know-how. In other words it was the fabric that provided the locus for their claims to aspects of identity.

### **Structure of the chapter**

At Spa Green the methodology adopted was very much the 'patchwork' of narratives discussed already and I start by looking the methods used at Spa Green including filmed interviews, drawing, walks and photo solicitation as well as more conventional documentary analysis.. I reflect on this further below, but the close, iterative work with participants allowed a rich body of material to emerge in relation to their narratives of special interest.



After this section on methodology and associated ethical questions, I turn to the existing literature that relates specifically to Spa Green. I look at the first reception of the estate in the architectural press, and how this pointed to a discourse of the significance of structural and material innovation, the provision of facilities for bettering the lot of residents, the innovative details and its place in the proposed Finsbury project. I then look at a more recent literature relative to Spa Green, particularly the monographic work on Lubetkin of Peter Coe and Malcolm Reading (1981, 1992) and John Allan (1992, 2002). I examine where the literature is located in terms of conservation paradigms of special interest and what the preferred discourse of Spa Green might be. I suggest from these explorations of the literature that Spa Green has been largely viewed as significant as being a work designed by the name-architect Lubetkin and in terms of its pioneering technologies. An attention to detail has been part of the discourse since it was built, as has that of a single Spa Green community.

The next section is broken down into a number of specific 'clusters' (Rose 2001) through which I analyse these changing approaches. I have divided the chapter into a series of themed narratives using topics that were generated by both the participants and the literature and practices around the estate. These thematic groupings are: windows, kitchen and décor and explore narratives of authenticity, heritage consumption and community as well as the performative aspects of living in a listed building. I draw attention to how these features have become the locus for the forming of communities at Spa Green, and how through the interaction with the fabric, assertions of significance are claimed and confirmed. As thematic forms of analysis, or 'clusters' (Rose 2001), these are not intended to be either exhaustive or exclusive. But I do suggest that they offer an alternative introduction to

understanding how different values have been wielded in the management of the estate to the preferred heritage protocols.

I conclude the chapter by exploring how approaches to the listing and then management of the grade II\* listed Spa Green estate have centred upon a concern with the preservation of the fabric that is largely consistent with the established protocols of historic building conservation set out in PPG 15 (DoE/DNH 1994). In this privileging of fabric, the expressed values and practices tally less with the more tentative and even theoretical (Powers 2001) discourse of preserving post-war architecture established by Saint (1996a) and English Heritage (2007a, 2009). Rather, they confirm the validity of an approach to post-war architecture consistent with the protocols adopted for buildings of earlier periods. I show, also, how the narratives of small detail have served as a means through which participants told stories of community, authenticity, heritage cachet and appropriate aesthetics, and asserted new forms of heritage expertise. In this they both offer a new way of 'telling stories' and of drawing out (multiple) community assertions of significance beyond the formal protocols offered by conservation practice (Pendlebury 2009, Stephenson 2010). In doing so they also suggest that the marking of 'difference' between heritage of the more recent and remote pasts by English Heritage may be misplaced.

### **Methods used at Spa Green: Stories and walks and wandering stories**

As discussed in more detail in the previous chapter, material on Spa Green was drawn from individual narratives of special interest using filmed, voice-recorded and noted interviews, as well as photos solicited from participants. This was bolstered by material drawn from walks, where participants had taken or directed me to parts of the estate and some of my own drawing work. In Chapter 1 I discussed the basis upon which I selected research methods, situating the research as a qualitative study of the rhetoric used in the conservation of listed post-war housing estates and what overt or implicit values might be informing its narratives. In adopting this intensive approach I proposed to use a mix of methods, combining semi-structured and unstructured interviews with a particular emphasis upon visual media through the use of film-making, photographs and sketch-recording. When I started the research there was almost nothing tracking the use of filmed interviews in research into



planning and what little there was tended to group it with more liminal research techniques: '[Y]ou should be aware that a complete list of sources can be quite extensive – including films, photographs, and videotapes; projective techniques and psychological testing; proxemics, kinesics; street ethnography; and life histories' (Yin 1994:79 citing Marshall and Rossman 1989). Whilst not quite suggesting that the use of visual research methods was regarded as 'subversive, dangerous and visceral' (Emmison and Smith 2000:14), the tenor of guidance on research methods was that it was a bit edgy as a research tool. Hester Parr, in her work making filmed interviews with obviously vulnerable groups has certainly highlighted how thrusting film cameras at participants can seem at best rather aggressive and suggested keeping a reflexive approach toward levels of participation (Parr 2007). Trials of the proposed filming of interviews with residents at the Barbican and Golden Lane estates had rather engendered a false sense of optimism as to how easy it might be to persuade participants to let me film our meetings. I soon found out, however, that I had to be very targeted about who I wanted to film, and not to be remotely diffident in asking for this. In the wake of tensions running high over some of the refurbishment works undertaken by Homes for Islington at Spa Green, professionals were much less keen to be filmed than residents, so I took the cue from first contact with potential participants as to how to pursue interviews.

A good example of this is one of the first interviews specifically about Spa Green. This interview was with a professional who had some direct involvement in the refurbishment works and was continuing an involvement with the management of the estate. Given my background she was quite easy to contact without needing much introduction. I was, however careful not to assume that I would be welcome in my questioning. When I requested an interview she suggested meeting in a local park during her lunch break and it immediately became obvious that I would not be able to film the interview without making it into something of a public spectacle and all the awkwardness that goes with this. I made an audio recording and took notes during the course of our conversation, but it felt slightly dislocated. We were talking in the park adjoining another of Tecton's star works at Finsbury Health Centre, so were participating in the Spa Green story in some way, but I was very aware that we were not able to make direct reference to the buildings under discussion. For this we both relied on remembered knowledge of the estate, its appearance, its

fabric and its spaces. This necessary imagining of the architecture *at a distance* had occurred with one of the earlier interviews made for the Barbican estate, but the conversation there had been much more wide-sweeping and less particular in its focus. For the interview with this particular professional, there were very specific allusions made to details of the fabric of the estate, and parts of particular flats within particular blocks of the estate, that relied upon us conversing in terms of a shared (although not necessarily common) envisaging of the material qualities of Spa Green. It was an exercise very much consistent with the visual hermeneutics discussed by Davey (1999), a shared and collaborative picturing of the estate that existed for the purpose of the conversation.

The point here is not so much that we all use visualisation when imagining places. We don't. I had learned this from one of the interviewees at the Barbican who said very firmly "I don't think visually" (B2). Nor can I claim that this picturing in the conversation was in any way consistent. These points have been well-made and well-rehearsed elsewhere in explorations of visualisation and common understandings of this (Haywood and Sandywell 1999, Emmison and Smith 2000, Banks 2001, Rose 2001). What struck me about this interview, however, was that I was conscious of a physical distance from what we were discussing in that it *affected the way in which we were discussing it*. By marking a separation of the interview from the estate, we were creating it as an 'other', an artifact to be analysed as an object of historical significance at one remove. In many ways this pushed us to maintain a professional distance and framed our discussion so that it operated within the norms of the established conservation discourse. By creating a distance, this choice of location for the interview made it something quite distinct and very different from the interviews or participatory exercises that I later conducted in, or around the estate. It also had a big effect in terms of shaping how I approached requests to interview and my awareness of the language used during them.

A significant point of contact was the estate manager for Spa Green. He, very generously, made first contact with a number of residents on the estate he felt would be likely to agree to be interviewed and whom he felt had most to say about life on the estate. From these first suggestions I then made further contacts with residents within the estate, and pursued further interviews with professionals using

existing contact groups that I already had from my work experience. At the suggestion of the estate manager, I also produced an A4 leaflet advertising my interest in interviewing residents that was put in the (perhaps rather overlooked) window of the estate office. Not altogether surprisingly, this produced no interest, but the help of the estate manager was fundamental to securing interviews and allowing me to maintain a level of anonymity for participants that some felt was very important. For at least two of the interviewees I have neither second names, phone numbers nor address details. All contact with them has been via the estate office.

I worried, at various stages during the research, that this group of participants was overly self-selecting, or at least, overly selected by the estate manager, and that this might produce something of a misrepresentation of how interested residents on the estate are in the heritage discourses surrounding Spa Green. But this research, as set out earlier, is not about being representative (Sayer 1992). It is about exploring the ways in which certain values are made manifest in the listing and then, conservation of these post-war estates. It is about the stories of the passionate 'some' (they are more than a few) who are engaged in first claiming, then making, consolidating and reforming the estate's reputation as architecture of outstanding national importance. Whether or not they are representative of the residents on the estate is not really relevant. That they are the ones, the 'experts', who take the most active a role in its occupancy, its running and present and future management, however, is (Holstein and Gubrium 2004:133).

Contact from this point was usually by phone or email. I was surprised at times by how slow progress could be towards securing an interview. I reproduce an exchange below after one prospective interviewee had 'gone quiet' on me. This interview did go ahead but is typical of the multi-stage contacts I was making. It is also typical in that I often mentioned childcare constraints when making arrangements, partly of necessity, but also as a means of making myself seem more 'human'. The messages are reproduced most recent first, with spacings etc. as sent:

*[Me] Sorry to bother you again but I just wanted to check whether you still might be prepared to be interviewed? (11.4.08)*

*[Me] I don't know what your diary's like. I'm fielding the kids for school holidays, but could do next Thursday (27th). The following week is not good (31st etc.) but the week after should be ok if you're free at all... (19.3.08)*

*[Me] Are you still happy for me to come to talk to you for my PhD, in which case did you get the ok from x [name given]? I'm coming down on Thursday to see someone ... so wondered whether you would - by any chance - be around in the afternoon? (29.1.08)*

*[Participant] Dear Harriet, > Apologies for the delay in my response, but it has been very busy recently; > before and after the Christmas break. However, I am still happy to be > interviewed regarding Spa Green. (10.1.08)*

Over the course of this research I interviewed and/or worked in collaboration with thirteen participants with particular reference to Spa Green. Seven were current residents, one a former resident, three were professionals involved in aspects of the estate's refurbishment or management and two were conservation professionals with a national, rather than local remit. Five of the participants here were filmed in some way; two individually and a group of three. Unfortunately, the group interview is a very short bit of recording as I pressed the wrong button. As I set out in the Methodology, I made sure that I also took notes through all interviews in case of such failure, although I hadn't expected it to be me that did the failing. Although familiar with the technology I was using I was definitely more nervous operating the various recording devices in the interview situations than I had expected to be and found that this tendency to mishap persisted through the course of the research. In some situations it helped to diffuse a degree of tension before we started, but in other instances - as with the group interview - I didn't realise the problem until afterwards. It was disappointing. . I worried about this at first, worried whether I should return and re-record things to make it 'complete'. But following the reflections referred to in the first chapter on the potential richness of the very juddery recordings of the first filmed walk I made, decided to recognise the wonky, haphazard and fractal nature of the data collection and the partial, incomplete nature of the narratives as a feature of this particular research project. For me this methodological take is iterative; it reflects the very 'wonky, haphazard and fractal' stories I was being told, but also presents an opportunity to explore the smaller, personal narratives of many of the participants.

All the interviews and participatory exercises with residents were undertaken on the estate. Only one interview with one of the professionals was on site; the others were in a variety of formal and informal locations chosen by them, ranging from their own homes to offices or coffee shops around London. As I suggested above, this degree of separation from the site cast these interviews in a very different and much more impersonal light to those interviewed on the estate. It is difficult to articulate, but I very much got a sense of residents that were interviewed in their flats as presenting themselves 'at home' and of claiming Spa Green as their own (Miller 2006, Blunt 2005, Blunt et al 2007). This was, to some degree, a performance of living at Spa Green. This was not the case with those interviewed off-site. With them, as alluded to above, the tenor of the conversations tended either to the rhetoric of a formal conservation case discussion, or to the very informal and essentially rather chatty. Surprisingly, this formal/chatty divide did not depend on how well I knew the interviewee, but simply developed during the course of the conversation. I tried to take my steer from the participants, but it is possible that some talked to me as a fellow conservation professional and so did not doctor their way of speaking about the estate as they would for someone without access to this sort of vocabulary. This recourse to what I suggest is one particular discourse of historic building conservation was not unique to the professionals, nor to those interviewed off the estate. But it did mark a pattern for how certain interviews developed.

I have set out that interviews were semi-structured, or unstructured. In all of them I first asked the participants to comment upon what they felt to be 'special' about the estate in the light of its listing, and whether they had a picture of it in their 'mind's eye'. For many I then followed up with questions about how long they had lived on, or known about the estate. From this point all the conversations tended to be directed by what the participants chose to pursue, with me asking questions in response to what they had said, to draw points out further. Once the interviews were over, I solicited photographs from four of the resident participants. I had already been offered access to architectural drawings during the interview process and I also went to the RIBA Drawings Collection to access the first architects' drawings for the estate, which are held there. I have suggested by including these here that accessing these materials can be framed as part of the same process of

data collection and not exclusively as part of the literature review. The place of the various architectural drawings in terms of these divisions is rather ambivalent, but I have approached them not as having a static, or fixed quality but rather having the potential to shape narratives (Moxey 2001, Banks 2001, Rose 2001, Mitchell 2005). I certainly claim them as having helped direct the course of the reception of Spa Green.

Many of the interviews also involved walks, be it self-conscious approaches to the estate, walks with participants after the interviews around parts of the estate, and walks going out of the estate afterwards. Often participants talked in interviews about particular, small aspects of the buildings, then took me to see them once we had finished recording. One resident participant spent about twenty minutes talking to me in the hall of her flat, pointing out features of the paintwork, elaborating on stories that she had alluded to during the first interview but not developed. At first I was unsure whether even to attempt to integrate the walks (and I use this term inclusively to encompass not just the walking, but also the stopping and talking) into the methodology, to recognise these as having any formal place in the research process. After all, I had not made formal recordings of them, and only one was presented as a 'tour'. But as my mobility suddenly started to go as a result of the MS, so too increased my consciousness of how important these mobile discussions were. The mapping out of particular routes, its boundaries, the pausing in particular places and the rhythms of walking around Spa Green all became obvious as part of the individual stories of the special interest of the estate (Fenton 2005). And so did all the comments on the small details – the lift buttons, the security gates over front doors, the noticing of the broken tile or brickwork that come with it. At the same time, as alluded to in the preceding chapter on methodology, I was also reading around some of the more extensive research methods employed in human geography (Fenton 2005, Philips 2005, Tolia-Kelly 2004). The adoption of walking into the methodology for Spa Green is very much informed by this work. And this was quite different to how I approached Park Hill.

The place of my own drawing work is also rather difficult, as discussed in the earlier chapter. I am not framing the drawings as 'art', for reasons that will be more than apparent, but rather I have used drawing much as I did when working in building

conservation; to understand a particular point a participant was making in relation to the fabric of the buildings or estate more widely, or to reflect upon a particular aspect of the structure. So the sketches in my notebooks that I used to record interviews range from tiny notes on window structures to a rough realisation of one resident's proposals for alterations to their property. This drawing work was for my own purposes in the research and not collaborative. In this approach I was aware of limiting the collaborative and participatory potential of such graphic work (Afonso and Ramos 2004). But I made this decision on the basis that on top of being interviewed - and possibly filmed - and asked for photographs this was probably asking too much of participants and was likely to be burdensome, and so counter-productive. Drawings for Spa Green were largely, but not always, these small, inked drawings made in the same notebooks I used for note-taking during interviews. I replicate one or two extracts from of these pages at various points in the text in a way that is deliberately allusive rather than illustrative (Banks 2001).

In conclusion, I set out at Spa Green to follow a sequence of filmed interviews with residents and professionals based upon the initial trial work that I had undertaken at the Barbican and Golden Lane estates. In doing so I set out to investigate the questions of 'what' is of value and special interest and 'how' this is articulated. The methodology that developed during the course of the research, however, took a much more haphazard and less film-centric course. In pursuing an intensive, interview-based approach to the research, I chose to adopt a more iterative mix of methods, to thicken the description of Spa Green and allow for the small narratives that were emerging. That these small stories challenge the major discourse of the special interest and significance of Spa Green is developed in further detail in the focus taken upon particular parts of the structures, but I first trace the course of the adoption of Spa Green into the canon of architectural modernism and how this has affected approaches to the estate in the main body of the chapter.

### **Ethical concerns**

I reflect finally upon some ethical aspects of undertaking interview work at Spa Green. These relate to the wider ethical implications of the research project already discussed, but came to pre-occupy me greatly at Spa Green, particularly as I became aware of the personal lives of participants more closely than I had anticipated. As

set out in the previous chapter I had early reservations about pursuing research at the estate as I had worked as a conservation officer for Islington Council, the local authority that both owned, and managed the estate and which ultimately processed listed building applications affecting it. I had also heard about some significant resident dissatisfaction with aspects of the Homes for Islington works on site and action being taken as a result of this.

The first concern I had relates to how I, as the interviewer dealt with information offered that at times was inappropriate, even verging on being racist or homophobic.. Spa Green is not an enormous estate, and as I have highlighted earlier in this section, contacts on, and off the estate came largely on a 'trickle down' basis from others. What surprised me, however, was how free in their criticisms of others some participants were, and that some put forward views that were close to being racist or homophobic. They would certainly be understood as such were they to be published. I did not challenge participants on these views, but I very deliberately did not respond to them either. In a way, perhaps, I was retreating to the natural science discourse of the researcher as objective, or at least neutral, and this is not a role that I adopted through the research project. I felt it necessary here on the grounds of maintaining goodwill during the interviews, but worried that it might have been construed as me condoning these views. Fortunately none of the points made were relevant to the discussion of the estate, but this did cause me to be very aware of how I phrased questions and pursued lines of discussion to try to avoid repeats of such incidences.

My second point here relates to permissions to research the estate. I had unexpected problems initially in gaining access to a representative from Homes for Islington. It seemed that the Council had largely introduced an embargo upon interviews relative to the estate, and had certainly done so for filming in the outside areas. Although the bulk of the interviews I had lined up with participants would not take place in the more public parts of the estate I felt that I had to ensure that I 'had' permission to talk from the local authority. And I made sure that I made no films in public areas, nor took photographs of them. As part of securing this consent I had to confirm to the local authority that the work would be 'for academic purposes only'. I made sure that all participants signed and returned consent forms (that I had gone



through with them at the start of interviews), but I was careful to include a clause allowing them to withdraw their tapes should they wish to. One participant at Spa Green did. Initially three other participants had concerns about their anonymity and did not want to sign consent forms. I explained my protocols and adapted the form to explain that their details such as name or address would in no way be made public, and they were happy with this. I also made sure that I re-referred to participants whose photos were used in advance of the publication of an academic journal article, even though the consents were already formally in place. I felt that I had an extra responsibility to do so here because of the greater potential for public access.

In conclusion, the work with participants at Spa Green raised some very particular, and at times difficult issues. In working with participants around their places of work, or their homes in the wake of an at-times contentious programme of refurbishment this was, perhaps, inevitable. The proximity to participants however, meant that we co-operated in a way that I hope allowed me to retain a degree of separation as the researcher, but equally allowed for the production of a rich body of material. I move on to discuss that now.



Source: Harwood (2000)

### **Lubetkin, innovation and detail: receptions of the estate**

Through this section of the chapter I explore how the early literature of Spa Green drew an attention to the innovative architectural form of the estate achieved through technical advances with concrete, the provision of communal and private

resident facilities, and the small detail of the blocks; three narratives that have been a marked characteristic of discourses surrounding its listing as architecture of outstanding national significance (RCHME 1998a). Through these approaches, which intertwine stories of the importance of the concrete form and the intended decent conditions for the inhabitants of the estate, I suggest that early critiques directed patterns of reception. These first patterns have influenced the subsequent management of Spa Green as heritage through a dual privileging of the architecture and its detail, and its users: "What I saw was a piece of architecture. Having lived here, it's more a community now" (Resident participant working in design: SG7). I set out to show how these narratives are located for most participants in the small detail of the fabric, and how this concentration upon detail was directed by its first architects.

The focus upon architecture of the post-war period as innovative both in formal terms and in terms of its social intent has common currency (Gold 1997a, 2007, Harwood 2000, Bullock 2002) but the attention to the material and the small detail, I suggest, has been part of the estate's own, peculiar rhetoric since its inception, driven by both the architects and critics of the estate. As a narrative located in the fabric of the buildings, a focus upon the 'small stuff' has characterised interpretation of the estate in a way that is very different from those narratives that followed other estates of the post-war period. As I show in Chapter 4, these small stories of the fabric are wholly different to those of Park Hill, but have come to be of enormous importance in how the heritage imperatives of Spa Green have been realised.

Spa Green, as I refer to above, has largely been received as a success: 'Only the rich ensemble of Spa Green, securely stitched into the foreground of its mature civic gardens, now seems an inalienable part of Sadlers Wells –optimistic, urbane and human' (Allan 1992:436). Although the history of Spa Green's accession into the canon of post-war architecture appears to have been largely uncontested, it has not been unaffected by the seemingly all-pervasive narrative of failure (Gold 1997a). This narrative of failure, however, has been articulated in terms of a small-scale rather than comprehensive one including brick panel failure, problems with tenants using the roof-top drying areas, misalignment of window frames, problems with the Garchey sinks. These small pre-occupations have had significant consequences for

the listing and then management of works on the estate. Here I set out how some of these first receptions came to enable such a focus, and explore these patterns of response.

### **In Finsbury**

The histories of Spa Green and its architect Berthold Lubetkin have been well rehearsed elsewhere (Coe and Reading 1981, Reading and Coe 1992, Harwood, Saint and Gander 1993, Allan 1992, Allan and von Sternberg 2002) and it is not the purpose of this research project to duplicate those histories. This section, however, points towards certain pre-occupations and characteristics of its literature. That emerge as 'clusters' in the discourse (Rose 2001) Spa Green estate, as mentioned above, was developed in the aftermath of the war, but its roots lie squarely in the interwar schemes of the Tecton practice, as part of the later 1930s Labour-led Metropolitan Borough of Finsbury's ambitious development plan. That the estate did not have the same site restrictions as before the war meant that: 'the work that we had done... could clearly be evaluated' (Lubetkin quoted in Gold 1997: 187) and allowed for a new approach to the construction: 'the wartime hiatus did Spa Green nothing but good. Bomb damage expanded the site, and it enabled Ove Arup to develop a new and more sophisticated structural system' (Harwood 2000:7.4).

The later histories of Spa Green are very much told as the histories of the Metropolitan Borough of Finsbury and its Development Plan spearheaded by Alderman Riley and (the 'handsome') Councillor Dr Katial (Allan 1992: 349, Reading and Coe 1992, Harwood, Saint and Gander 1994). But more particularly they are told as the histories of the architect Berthold Lubetkin. The 'authorised' discourse (Smith 2006) is of the commissioning of the estate from the 'celebrated' Tecton practice who had already proved their credential with the Finsbury Health Centre (Harwood 2000:7.26). Three major public housing projects followed: Spa Green, Bevin Court and Priory Green (the latter two built under the direction of the newer practice of Skinner and Bailey and Lubetkin). Connecting these sites, Allan's reconstruction of the Finsbury Plan also shows extensive new housing including a further series of blocks of 8 storeys along Rosebery Avenue, as well as a new civic square at the Angel to include a public library, nursery, public baths and other

facilities, and a new park, market and school all close to the new Health Centre (1992:350).

The resignation of Alderman Riley in 1944 saw the collapse of the Plan as a coherent project, but left the practice with significant, if distinct projects from it: 'a series of individual jobs' (Allan 1992:376). In design terms the revived scheme, now the Spa Green Estate, offered an innovative concrete box frame and strong elevational grid across three blocks - one of four-to-five and two of eight storeys - in an urban landscape setting. The structural frame allowed both a fluid form for Sadler House and attention to decorative detail: 'syncopated patterns of coloured bricks, tiled balconies and glass, based on Caucasian carpet designs' (Harwood 2000:7.4). Interiors, particularly at Wells House, which had the highest specification of the blocks, included further innovation particularly the Garchey waste-disposal system and residents were provided with small fireplaces, parquet floors and radiators (Reading and Coe 1992). Communal facilities, such as laundry and roof-top drying areas were provided on site and the flats were designed with a modest, largely grassed, landscape setting, including benched areas for sitting out and planter boxes.

These works together form an important part of both the making of the canon of modernism in England, and more particularly of the reputations of Berthold Lubetkin personally, and of Tecton as a practice: 'Rightly listed, the first and best of Lubetkin and Tecton's post-war housing schemes set a standard in architectural and technical accomplishment unmatched by any contemporary' (Allan and von Sternberg 2002:108). Of these few projects of the Finsbury Plan that were completed, the Health Centre is listed grade I, Bevin Court and Spa Green are listed grade II\* and only Priory Green remains unlisted; reportedly not listed on the grounds that it was too dilute a delivery of the original architects' intentions. As a geographically close-knit group of buildings of such high heritage status from the recent past these developments are unique Yet following the first development and then reception as distinct projects they are almost invariably approached in terms of their management as heritage artifacts in isolation (Allan 1992). Perhaps this an inevitable consequence of the legislative protocols but it does lead to a severing of the estate from a more contextual understanding of its heritage value.

section, window, window.



Source: author

### **Innovative form and materials**

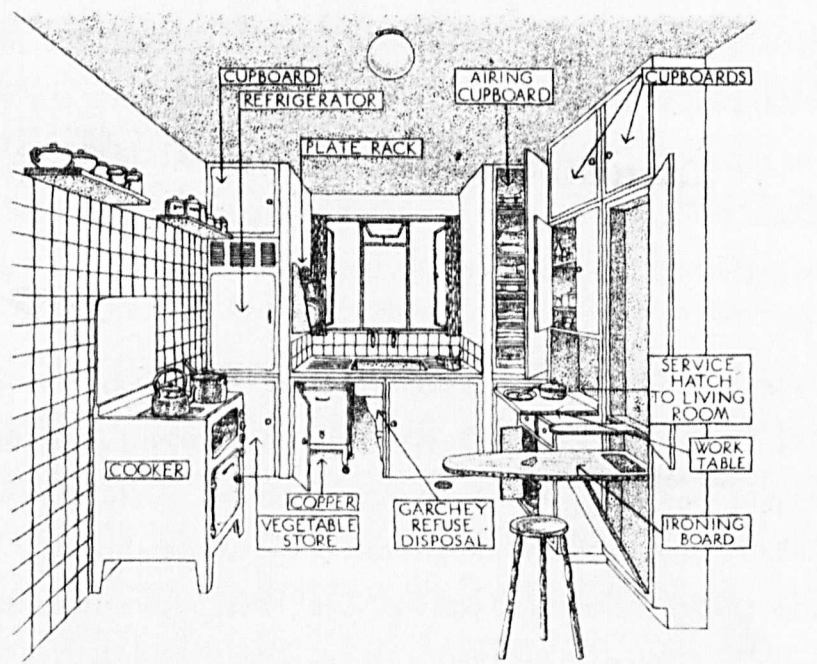
There is a strong discourse for Spa Green of the importance of both the innovative form of the structure and the unusually high attention to detail afforded to the elevations and interiors of the flats. I will show in Chapter 4 how this is in stark contrast to Park Hill, where a full set of drawings for the estate was never made (Harwood 2000). Here I show how both the attention to the engineering and detail of the elevational treatment have become the preferred story of the estate and helped to structure its reputation. In this I point not just to the reception of the estate in the architectural press, and the assessment for its listing, but also to the drawings made by the architects and deposited with the RIBA.

The pre-war Finsbury projects of Lubetkin had received good coverage in the press at the time (Allan 1992, Reading and Coe 1992, Allan and von Sternberg 2002), but the immediate write-up of Spa Green, as built was more extensive. Amongst others, the project was published by the establishment journals of the period - in *Builder* (1949), *Architects Journal* (1949), *Architect and Building News* (1949), *Architectural Review* (1951) and then included by Gibberd in his 1950 publication *The Modern Flat* (1950) The influential critic J.M Richards even proposed the estate as one of the 'Buildings of the Year' for 1952. Particular attention was given from the outset to the innovative Garchey waste disposal system, considered to be of sufficient interest to warrant its own feature in the December 1952 edition of *Consulting Engineer*. The technical aspects of the structure were further covered by the *Civil Engineer's Review* in February 1952, and again in *Consulting Engineer* in October 1952. Through these narratives, the estate was framed as architecture of high quality, with technical innovation and refinements through the use of concrete, and a high level of attention

to detail: '[the] standard of finishes and services... reflects the earlier... generous housing subsidies' (Coe and Reading 1981:171).

### Drawn detail

This attention to detail is particularly evident in the architects' drawings for the estate. Carefully coloured presentation drawings were made by the architects and included detailed structural drawings of the Garchey (RIBA:PA953/5/12) and construction frame (RIBA:PA953/5/10) as well as detailed flat layouts including the location of cupboards, cooker and Garchey in the kitchens for Wells House, and even schematic floor and balcony tiling (RIBA:PA/953/5/7). An internal elevation of the kitchens by the architects shows a detailed layout, with tiles on the walls replicating the tile patterns proposed for the floors, and which themselves echo the tile-work which is a such a dominant feature of the elevations.



Source: Allan (1992)

Attention to the form of interiors and their anticipated use was not in itself exceptional, as illustrated by Llewellyn (2004a,b). Minton's article showcasing flat layouts includes examples by Aalto, Erskine (at Byker), and Le Corbusier at Unité, all offering similar attention to layout (including furniture) and detail, although plan drawings for Park Hill are more perfunctory (2008:28-31). The concentration upon patterns of living, and more particularly the potential of architects being able to

design an optimal domestic environment was an important part of the discourse of architects' intentions in improving housing for residents of public housing, as shown by Llewellyn in relation to the work of Jane Drew (Llewellyn 2004b). At Spa Green the same story came through: 'The Council were impressed with the originality of the competition entry especially with the advanced proposals for kitchen and domestic equipment. This fitted in with their promise for a better deal for the Finsbury citizen... a complete refuse system, separate WCs, central heating, fully equipped kitchens and high standards of heat insulation and sound' (Reading and Coe 1992:107;173).

### **Elevations, patterns and the interior**

Guidance from English Heritage on listing post-war housing (2007a), as I have shown above, suggests that the interiors might have less significance than the elevations of these so-called 'iconic' (Harwood 2004) listed modernist buildings. The focus upon the elevations at Spa Green in the first presentation drawings was demonstrated through a close attention to detail, even down to the annotation of paint. At Spa Green, the architects' equal engagement with interior form and fabric was important in creating a counter-narrative to that of the iconic (ibid, Higgott 2007). Through this, and the early reports of the estate the discourse of its significance lying though its entirety was developed. The architects used a strong, repeating grid evident, for example, in the reiteration of the tile work, carried through from elevation to interior. Both list description and Allan discuss the importance of this repeated (thought not relentlessly *repetitive*) grid to Lubetkin's designs for Spa Green (RCHME 1998a, Allan and von Sternberg 2002), intended in imitation of a kilim pattern (Coe and Reading (1981). From this inspiration Lubetkin is said to have developed the mix of structure and fabric conceived in terms of a 'warp and weft', a 'challenge to the bleakness and mechanical repetition so characteristic of modern mass housing' (Allan and von Sternberg 2002:42). Confirming this focus upon an aesthetic value consciously designed in, Harwood points to how for architects in the 1950s: 'There was a reinvestment in elevational design which became the subject of the same serious questioning as the plan and functional requirements of a building' (2001:18). At Spa Green the story of this being facilitated by the structure is strong. The list description sets out how through the structural load being borne by transverse walls and floors 'the elevations were freed up for... patterning and texture' (RCHME

1998a) and Coe and Reading (1981), Allan (1992, Allan and von Sternberg 2002) and Harwood (2000) all reiterate this. This narrative of a strong attention to the detail of the design carried through from elevation to interior, I suggest, came to form a vigorous part of the discourse of its importance and has helped to direct a 'closely-closely' approach to the management of its conservation.

### **Providing for residents**

Given Andrew Saint's insistence upon intentions in looking at the architecture of the more recent past (1996a) I now explore the narrative of the architects' intentions in terms of the residents and place of community at Spa Green. The initial discourse of a satisfied community at Spa Green was a strong one: 'The success of the Estate proves the relevance of an ordered and comprehensive investigation into the lives of those for whom the housing was being designed' (Coe and Reading 1981:176). Gold quotes Summerson on Lubetkin's 'Marxist' sympathies and his 'tactful' reluctance to force his views upon others (2007:26). His intentions in using architecture to better things for the residents are well known; his belief in the ameliorative powers of design. The current Management Organisation strap-line quotes from Lubetkin making explicit the architect's intentions and what one academic living on the estate lauded as his "egalitarian thinking" (SG13): 'Nothing is too good for ordinary people'. As Allan relates it, Lubetkin believed that 'our [architects'] proper task was not so much to collect opinions as to gain the confidence and trust of the community by demonstrating that we were on their side, and were willing to prove it by participating in direct action' (1992:323). This direct action was to take the form of using (expert) design skills to provide high-specification units: 'Political idealism is manifested in some of the *substance*' (Powers 2001:8), where 'government loans for ample lifts, wood-block floors and a Garchey refuse system' (Harwood 2000:7.4) made their way into some, if not all of the blocks.

As a practice, and as individuals, Tecton's sympathies lay evident in the 'essentially Marxist materials analysis' of the Modern Architectural Research (or MARS Group) and the 'call to arms' of the 1936 Architects and Technicians Organisation (ATO) who held their Exhibition of Working Class Housing at the Housing Centre in London in 1936 (Allan 1992:317, Bullock 2002). The latter, in a 'quasi-military' rhetoric (Pawley 1971b:79) exhorted architects, as to become 'activist-experts'



where the private sector was failing (Allan 1992:327) and where the public sector was taking over as commissioning client (Harwood 2001). In terms of the place of the expert, the architects of Spa Green very much assumed this position, offering tenants guidance on *how* to live in the estate through a tenants handbook. One much-reproduced feature of this was a drawing showing a giraffe's head sticking out of a sink with the wording 'Objects longer than 8 inches should not be put down your Garchey' (Allan 1992:399). This benign didacticism where the resident need is considered and managed by the expert architect has helped to form a discourse at Spa Green of a single community, but one that is marked as valuable through manifest attention to detail in the fabric of the blocks.

## Home and communities



### SPA GREEN II\*

Spa Green Management Organisation  
34 Wells House  
Rosebery Avenue  
London EC1R 4TR

Telephone 020 7833 2377  
Fax 020 7278 2822  
sgmo@spagreen.org.uk

Office Opening Hours: Monday to Friday 9.00am to 5.00pm  
Public / Residents' Access: Daily walk-in 9-11am or by appointment  
Out-of-hours Emergency repair line: 0800 694 3344

### SGMO - Spa Green Management Organisation

Winner of the Best Caretaking Award – Islington 2007

#### Residents' Handbook 2008

**Please report your repairs to our office:**

The estate office is open between 9.00am and 5.00pm Monday to Friday. We endeavour to keep the office open for walk-in between 9am and 11am. A member of staff is generally available at all times during office hours. However, if you get the answering machine or find the office closed, this is usually due to staff carrying out an Estate inspection or attending a meeting. We return all messages left on the office answering machine.

At the end of this handbook you will find a list of the repairs that are the responsibility of Homes for Islington, those that are the responsibility of the TMO and repairs that are the responsibility of the tenant. We do not expect residents to know these different categories and whose responsibility they fall under. As a general rule if you report all repairs to the TMO office we will then ensure that it is passed on to whoever is responsible for carrying it out. Tenant repairs carried out by TMO contractors may be accompanied with a repair satisfaction slip. This slip can be filled in by the tenant and returned to the TMO office. We want to make sure our contractors are providing good services and hence your feedback is important.

An out-of-hours emergency service is available at all times when the office is not open. This is for **emergency repairs** that are deemed to be **urgent and a danger to your health or your property** e.g flooding from burst pipes, gas leaks, dangerous electrical faults, or securing windows and doors if they are unsafe as a result of a crime or fire. The TMO out-of-hours emergency service is handled by Homes for Islington's Repair line available on: 0800 694 3344

**Other emergency Telephone Numbers:**

Contact Islington (Council Main Switchboard):.....020 7527 2000  
Gas Leaks.....0800 111 999  
Police / Fire / Ambulance:..... 999

*"Nothing is too good for ordinary people"*  
Spa Green is a Grade II\* listed building designed by Berthold Lubetkin

Source: Spa Green Management Organisation

In the previous chapter I pointed to an emerging emphasis in policy and the recent rhetoric of PPS 5 (2010) upon attempts to integrate community assertions of value into recognition of significance in the historic built environment. I also discussed how the conservation literature largely relies upon the discourse of a single community, although Pendlebury, Townshend and Gilroy saw that at Byker the distinctions between professional and resident communities were beginning to shift 'at least at local level' (2009:199). Here I set out to show that at Spa Green resident-based expertise has been drawn into the formal protocols of conservation management, revealing a shift in conservation practice. More particularly I show how this is revealed *through* disparate communities of engagement with fabric of the estate, and narratives of 'home'. Starting from an expert-led determination of need underpinning its first construction I trace through to the estate being assessed in terms of its delivery of the architects' intentions (Saint 1996a), designed to make, and house, a community. These assessments were highly top-down; both resonant with Smith's idea of authorised heritage discourse (2006) and also Arnstein's understanding of the relationship between communities and experts (1969). But at Spa Green the protocols changed. I try to show in this chapter that what has happened on the estate since the listing of Spa Green in 1998 has both enhanced and disrupted these normative presentations and altered the approach of both professionals and those who live there. Spa Green is both a housing estate of outstanding national interest and a 'home' (Blunt et al 2005).

A change in the status of local experts was perhaps first manifest at Spa Green through the production of conservation Management Guidelines and programme of works of refurbishment. Whilst still top-down in the first, this process began to engage with, and be driven by other voices. Micro features of the works came to be the focus of demonstrations - even performances - of different forms of expertise about Spa Green and of belonging. These integrated professionals and residents in a peculiarly collaborative discourse of expertise that has thickened (Geertz 1973) the preferred heritage discourse of the estate. The process of producing the Guidelines and response to the refurbishment works challenged the existing protocols for the management of heritage assets based in professional expert assessment of value. They perhaps even offered indicators for a new understanding of how significance might be expressed through a build-up of different stories of value and different

value emphases (Pendlebury 2009, Stephenson 2010). How this shift toward a refined understanding of expertise is revealed at Spa Green through the patchwork methodology and its application now follows.

### **Especially at home**



Still from interview film. Source: author

I refer here to what I saw as the performative (Butler 1993) qualities of some of the interviews undertaken at Spa Green, of my sense that I was being presented by particular participants with representations of themselves 'at home'. And I suggest that for many, this was a performance of being 'especially at home' because of the heritage cachet of their place of residence. Summarising approaches to the writing of 'home' in the wake of Mona Domosh (1998), Alison Blunt has set out how scholars 'have unsettled ideas about home and domesticity by questioning what might at first glance appear to be familiar and mundane' (Blunt 2005:505). Divya Tolia-Kelly, in particular, has also sought to explore how 'home' might be more expansive than one fixed place, stretched across place and time to accommodate memory located in certain artifacts and practices around them (Tolia-Kelly 2004:315). What I now describe is not so much the mundane and familiar of home as the *special* and familiar, and how residents and professionals from outside the estate interacted with that special-ness not so much through small artifacts as through the

repeated interactions with the materiality of the estate. In doing so they made claims to shared and exclusive knowledge of Spa Green and formed, and reformed communities through this.

### **Talking small: narrative themes and icons of conservation**

The dominant rhetoric of modernist architecture relies, as Andrew Higgott has set out, upon a preferred formula of presenting the buildings as black-and-white, unpeopled, sculptural forms familiar from the iconic images that now pervade much of the formal representation of modernism in this country (Higgott 2007). The persuasive refocusing of attention upon the small scale at Spa Green has thrown up new discourses of significance and special interest that have had the effect of re-ordering value sets. Through the new narratives emerge the importance of material fabric and its authenticity, of communities of belonging and of an attention to the detail of the architects' first vision. What is particularly notable is that these occur in opposition to the 'iconic' emblems of modern listing (Harwood 2008) and relate to the interaction between participants and the building fabric, not simply as people doing things 'to' the estate.

Through concentrating on the themes of windows, kitchens, and fittings and décor I examine how narratives of special interest have developed in the context of the heritage cachet of the estate. These are stories that refer, often self-consciously, to the 'authorised' (Smith 2006) heritage values of authenticity of design and material and of appropriate replacement that does not detract from the original structure. These are the values that underpin PPG 15 (DoE/DNH 1994) But through these 'clusters' I also expose the often-complex relations between participants and the very small features of the estate. Through these small features, I now show how various communities have been claimed at Spa Green and how these interactions bring new forms of expertise to both bolster and challenge the discourse of special interest.

### **Windows: authenticity of fabric, authenticity of community**

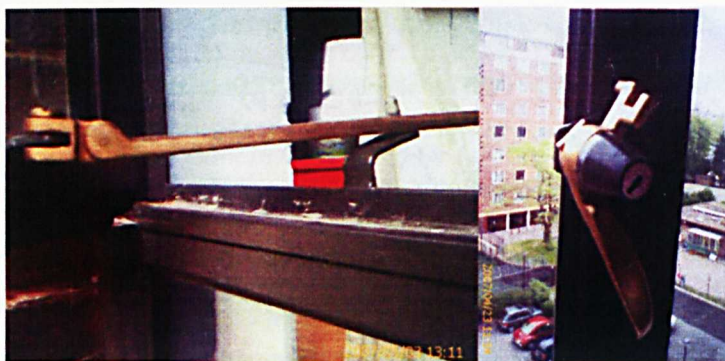
Through this section I show how windows at Spa Green have been a constant source of concern to both residents and professionals involved in the estate's refurbishment and emerged as a strong discursive 'cluster' (Rose 2001). I show this

pre-occupation in three different ways as evincing key values rehearsed in the exercise of persuasion of the heritage value of the estate:

1. Through a concern with the performance and fabric of the windows and their fitness for purpose, and the need to secure a replacement maintaining an authenticity of the design aesthetic of the architecture
2. Through an understanding of location and the window as a frame or viewing mechanism, and views into and out of the individual flats and the centre of the estate.
3. As a locus for personalisation and expression of belonging through approaches to window dressing, and most particularly the use of net curtains or blinds.

By exploring participants' narratives concerning windows, and representations of their importance to the special interest of the estate, this section of the chapter points to how individual pre-occupations with window units have come to stand-in for wider debates around authenticity and belonging. By playing out these concerns with regard to the very small scale of such features as window fixtures, frame thickness or window dressing, small persuasive actions are employed to reiterate claims for special interest. Through what I suggest is, at times, a self-consciously performative re-telling of the estate's heritage cachet and significance, participants have reinforced some already-claimed values in the conservation discourse, but also reshaped them and added others. Together, through this concentration upon the windows, I show how these value sets combine to persuade us (the public) of the continuing importance of the listed estate within the heritage canon. They also persuade us of greater depths of importance than has hitherto been understood. By locating identification and retellings of significance in the material fabric of the windows, these persuasive actions secure claims for the preservation of the fabric, as well as the elevational form, of the blocks. At a time when the first fabric of post-war buildings is coming under enormous pressure, as seen in the next chapter on Park Hill, this deliberate location of narratives of significance in the small stuff, and in the very material qualities of the estate is an important one.

**Windows (i): Window performance; window replacement. Appropriate design and small success**



Source: Participant

I turn first to the matter of the window fabric at Spa Green and how narratives of failure have been negotiated in the course of the Homes for Islington refurbishment of the estate. Concerns relating to an authenticity of design have been manifest in the identification of window failure and their replacement at Spa Green. Working from a position of very different opinions on the appropriate way forward, a consensus between professionals and residents was largely secured through an effort of the persuasion of the significance of the windows to the heritage value of the estate. Whilst not universally well-received, the completion of the window replacement for leaseholders' flats marked a broadly successful collaboration between professionals and residents over an extended period. Through negotiations the details of the windows, particularly frame sections and profiles, and the fixing-in of the windows or fastening mechanisms, became the focus for more expansive narratives around authenticity of fabric, material and the modernist idiom.

The original windows at Spa Green were steel-framed, W20 section, manufactured as so many windows of the post-war period by Crittall. The use of the steel allowed for narrow framing sections and an elegant and open expanse of glass. But very early on the tenants also found that the windows presented problems with draughts, a poor thermal break and the catch for opening and closing. Problems were also reported with the frames distorting, as noted by longer-term residents SG4 and SG7. Like much of the Spa Green estate's pioneering technologies, these windows,

whilst not amongst the first exemplars, were still quite consciously modern both in terms of their material and engineering. The fenestration also formed a distinctive pattern to the elevations, the glazing bars of the windows to principal rooms creating an off-set rhythm, each opening divided into three, the central bay being the widest. Most principal openings had a central top-light, with lower side panel fixed bottom lights, reasserting the syncopation and horizontal axis of the opening itself. From the outset the generous size of the window openings was praised as offering the potential for light to enter the flats with openings solidly centred on the principal bed and living rooms to allow optimal room for the placing of furniture (Allan 1992).



Source: participant

Of the interviews I undertook, not one of the participants, neither resident nor professional, talked of a desire to have kept the original window frames as part of the Homes for Islington refurbishment of the estate. There was a tacit acceptance that they had not performed adequately, and that to insist upon their retention would not be consistent with securing a reasonable living standard for the residents. Not only did many of the first frames not fit terribly well; the poor thermal break resulted in condensation on the inner faces of the glass and real discomfort for the occupants. And as a result, the residents had long been “promised new windows”

(SG7). Between May and November 2005, applications for planning and listed building consent were submitted for their replacement to the London Borough of Islington by Homes for Islington (Application refs: P051197/8). As the buildings on the estate were listed grade II\*, the local authority was bound to refer the proposals for the approval of the Secretary of State, with powers delegated to English Heritage.

As I have set out above, the stories emerging from the interviews here were principally concerned with the authenticity of the aesthetic of the replacement design and material used, with the quality of the works undertaken and whether or not the new units persisted in the failure identified in the originals. It seemed that all parties understood that the decision that the existing units could not satisfactorily be refurbished was taken at a very early stage by the local authority in its guise as a planning authority and client-owner, together with English Heritage. However, all research participants talked about the frustration they felt over delays in the refurbishment programme because of lengthy negotiations over securing an appropriate replacement. They talked of what became to one conservation professional the "thorny issue" (SG1) of windows and how this affected perceptions of listing across the estate. Some participants suggested that by virtue of the estate being listed, Homes for Islington refurbishment works were delayed: "[they/we] lost 2-3 years easily because [the estate was] listed" (SG7). And one professional acknowledged that negotiations on the windows had been unusually lengthy "such an enormous proportion of my time" (SG2).

During interviews, both professionals and many residents spoke of the windows and their appearance as critical to the impact of the elevations, and so to the special interest of the estate. Many showed them to me. And this focus upon the importance of the design of the windows to an elevation was clearly supported by the published guidance at the time in PPG15 Annex C.9 (DoE/DNH 1994:C.9). But one conservation professional referred to initial incomprehension about their importance to the architectural quality of Spa Green and its status as a listed building. Surprisingly this lack of understanding was attributed to other, non-conservation professionals involved, some participants claiming that plastic-framed (uPVC) windows had initially been proposed: "The architect says: 'So what about



windows, can we put in plastic?" (SG1). And there was also reported a degree of skepticism amongst some of the social housing tenants about the importance of the windows to the special interest of the estate. One leaseholder working in design marked a difference in approach from the rest of the resident community and claimed that: "They [tenants] would have had uPVC windows in a flash – it's all about the comfort" (SG7). Professionals, however, had recourse to detailed guidance on windows offered in PPG 15: 'As a rule, windows in historic buildings should be repaired, or if beyond repair should be replaced 'like for like'. (1995: Annex C.40). For a grade II\* building, contravening a presumption in favour of preservation (DoE/DNHI 1994:3) meant that the case for replacement had to be secure, with an appropriately designed alternative. Through interviews it emerged that the understanding of both a large body of tenants and some professionals of the architectural significance of the block, and the associated importance of maintaining both an authentic window design and an authenticity of material were minimal, at least at the start of discussions. A job of persuading of their importance had been necessary.

Some window replacement with uPVC units certainly took place at Spa Green; both before listing and as unauthorised work after the estate had been listed in 1998: "I remember looking up and going 'oh shit!'" said one conservation professional I spoke to (PH7). One of the units had been installed quite legitimately prior to listing and with planning permission from the local authority and its removal was one of the most deliberate acts of persuasion required of the professionals. Ultimately a solution was reached during the course of the estate refurbishment. The residents were sufficiently persuaded of the architectural importance of a unified approach to the fenestration from within and without the estate. Over the course of the estate refurbishment the uPVC units of all tenants were removed and replaced with the new (reclaimed) double-glazed steel-framed Crittall units instead. And some leaseholders followed the same route, or ordered independently (SG2).

Although interviewees did not spell it out to me – and this is probably a case of conservation professionals assuming certain shared values – there was a clear assumption that uPVC windows would have been harmful to the elevational distinction of the estate by reason of thick, flat framing sections, flat-fitting to the

elevations, and colour. Amongst certain residents the design and detail of the windows and approaches to their refurbishment then became a marker of their own understanding of the buildings' special architectural interest. They used it as a distinguishing feature of their relationship with the estate; an enhanced understanding of the design aesthetic reinforced by their practices of occupation. And through their position on the residents' Management Organisation some used it to persuade others of the windows' significance.

For some residents and professionals this level of attention to detail was exceptional. One resident with professional experience of such things, for example, spoke in disgust of the "sica [used] for the terrazzo window surrounds" and complained of "really bad matching" (SG11). Others complained of poor opening mechanisms, (SG2, 7). This level of technical know-how, as well as the capacity to critique reflected a wide-ranging professional experience of working with high status architecture or urban environments. And with this came an expectation of a certain quality of delivery for a group of buildings of so high a grade of listing. This self-conscious understanding and singular expertise that combined a professional expertise as well as one of 'living' on the estate, was then employed to persuade others across the estate of the windows' significance. In combination with the more top-down - or at least side-to-side - persuasive, explanatory efforts of the professionals involved it proved a powerful force in driving forward the replacement of the windows to secure a form and material that would be consistent with the authentic architectural character of the estate and so its special interest.

Perhaps one of the most problematic aspects of listing and then conserving modernist structures is that this particular architectural idiom was conceived as essentially progressive and innovative not simply in design, but also in material form (Shonfield 2000). And it is precisely this clash between what Powers articulated as the divide between the *essence* and the *substance* (Powers 2001:6) that is manifest here. The architectural historian and expert on modernist architecture, Andrew Higgott spoke, in our interview, of what he felt was an inherent "pessimism about listing... [an assumption that] whatever replaces this thing is going to be worse" (AH). The need to replace windows at Spa Green often became elided for participants with small narratives of the failure of this 'essence'; the vision, as set out

to me by longer term residents SG4 and 5. This was further compounded by discontent expressed about the quality of the replacement units. But here, the failure was identified by participants as belonging not so much to the vision of the architects and their intentions but with the particular manufacturing of the units and the manufacturing company: "There have been major problems with the windows. That's Crittall's fault. Everyone's paid for the works. It's their money that's been badly spent" (SG7). But it was also implied by some residents that professionals had not overseen the works adequately. As one resident said of the refurbishment: "They should've took more notice of the windows than they did... haven't cemented them back in... I don't trust it because it's rubbish" (SG5). And a conservation professional acknowledged: "There were very valid complaints about standards. It undermines English Heritage...[that high standards were not maintained]" (SG1), although others were happy with the works.

Windows, then, through the window fabric and an authenticity of design came to preoccupy participants at different stages in the estate's history. They emerged as part of the narrative of Spa Green from construction through to first failure, the identified need for replacement, the search for an alternative and the removal of original and installation of substitute units under the major programme of works. Through the course of these deliberations a close attention was paid to the authenticity of the design aesthetic, encompassing pattern of glazing, opening mechanism, fitting to the window reveal and base material. Professionals and a number of residents on site undertook a persuasive effort based in policy set out in PPG15 (DoE/DNH 1994) of the importance of preserving an authentic elevational appearance, and use of material. Through engaging in a discourse of authentic - and sympathetic - replacement, professionals and residents of the estate co-operated, endeavouring to secure a standardized unit that satisfactorily met requirements of both form and function. In so doing they formed small communities of understanding that crossed the professional/resident boundaries and established new places of expertise.

## **Windows (ii): Windows, location and the view**



Source: Participant

In this section I explore the narratives of location, community and the view in relation to windows and balconies on the estate. Through the course of interviews and work with participants, the location of Spa Green and the views from the flats were presented as fundamental to its special interest. Neither the matter of location, nor the value of outlook are recognised in the protocols of listing which, if they relate to placing of buildings at all, are concerned primarily with the discourse of the 'setting' of the listed building. PPG 15, for example required local authorities to have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting (DoE/DNHI 1994:3.3), and acknowledged wider matters of townscape in terms of conservation area designations (1994:4). PPS 5, however, offers a more nuanced conceptualization of setting as set out in its practice guide, to include factors such as noise, dust and vibration...spatial associations... and historic relationship between places (DCLG/EH?DCMS 2010:34:114). Views and location emerged at Spa Green as of enormous importance in terms of the heritage value of the estate to participants, their narratives of the course of the estate's reception and the approach taken to its refurbishment. As part of the discourse of location, participants cited

views out of the flats, and more particularly views within the estate of other occupants and other flats. This constant referencing of views of others and others' properties was drawn out through narratives of past and present community and who might be included or excluded from that. This was argued in terms of what might be an appropriate response to the architectural aesthetic of the place as seen *from* the window. In particular this was played out in relation to monitoring the use of the landscaped areas between the blocks, the presence of children and animals and the role of the balconies and windows in a small-scale policing of the community.

What I discuss here relates to how certain residents choose through their interaction with the view, that is of the views out of and within the estate, to lay claim to competing understandings of the discourse of significance. By reference to the specific, small detail of their own balconies and windows, residents marked a distinct preference for their own estate as something separate from the public realm. But they also marked themselves as belonging to a number of distinct communities rooted in the fabric of the estate. These often emerged through performance of belonging and commentaries upon the actions of others. In many instances these performances of belonging marked 'old' or 'new' communities through approaches to views and balcony use. Uniquely, these preoccupations are the concern of the residents. The protocols of the conservation management of a listed building, as I refer to above, mean that the views out of, and around the estate only become of relevance when alteration is proposed by way of new development or demolition of structures that affect its setting. In conclusion, I find that at Spa Green residents create a powerful discourse of significance that raises the importance of both location and views as a key part of this. In addition they create complex narratives of belonging and propriety of behaviour in relation to views into and out of the estate, that respond to its status as an architecture of national significance, but which are also rooted in discourses of authenticity and claimed communities of belonging.

The setting of a building and views in and out, as I set out above, are not, as discussed earlier, a feature of list descriptions,. Here the focus is usually upon the elevational qualities of a single, or group of buildings, sometimes accompanied by an additional statement of internal features of particular note (Hobson 2004). Where a 'name' architect has been involved, or where particular aspects of the development

are new or unusual in any way, this is also noted. This is the case with the listing of Spa Green (RCHME 1998a). The description for Wells House is replicated at Appendix 2. The context for the development is given, along with details of its structural wizardry and elevational flair. The evaluation of the estate is framed in the context of the Finsbury works, and Lubetkin's canon and there is special attention given to the Garchey disposal system and kitchen hatches internally. There is reference to its location off Rosebery Avenue and to the 'park' as well as the 'quiet courtyard' between blocks (ibid).

Whilst the setting of a listed building is of clear concern in the discourses of heritage and of building conservation (DoE/DNH 1995/ DCLG/EH/DCMS 2010), the wider issue of its location, and views into and out of the estate is not. Fairclough (2008) claims a new place for sites, areas and landscapes as emerging within the heritage remit but the tie up between significant architecture and location has yet to be manifest in policy, beyond consideration of its setting. For residents of Spa Green, however, the fact of its location in a convenient, (now) highly sought-after part of central/north London was a key factor in what made it 'special' and was integral to their understanding and expressed preference for the estate as architecture of outstanding national importance. As I set out earlier, I started conversations with the question 'what did the participants understand to be special about Spa Green as a listed estate?' Several participants talked about 'the view' from the outside looking in to Spa Green, and even the revelation of the actuality of the estate, an impression of "big, bright colour" that came from "standing in the public area" (SG1). For another resident participant it was the setting of the buildings in their landscape that was important in seeking to move there: "It's probably the public spaces" (SG10). Other residents both with design experience and not, spoke of the entrance to the estate from the roadway and changing view (SG11) with the "sweep" down towards the central area (SG13). One participant who has professional experience of working in environmental issues even said that leaseholders who are not particularly well-versed in the canons of architectural modernism "say they love living here ... [because of the location.] 'Location, location, location!'" (SG9). But for many this discourse of location was framed in terms of being *inside* Spa Green looking out: "my four landmarks" (SG13).

In drawing out this point about the importance of location to an understanding of significance at Spa Green I am (obviously) not suggesting that an appreciation of location for historic buildings is in itself new, rather that some participants spoke of, the views in and out of it as *fundamental* to the architectural and historic special interest. They simultaneously valued the estate in terms of the history of its development in this particular site and the benefits offered to them as residents now, as set out by longer-term residents SG4 and 5, and 7. They related how they appreciated the thinking behind the development being within walking distance of the Angel town centre, on key transport routes and within walking distance of central London as being fundamental to its success. What the architects and commissioning clients had both conceived and delivered, then, the intention behind the fragmented Finsbury Development Plan, was part of its special historic interest. But, as with other narratives concerned with the evaluation of the estate as heritage, these expressions of the value of location were principally on the personal scale, framing the location in terms of participants' own preferences, their own experiences. As another longer-term resident said: "I can [see the bus stop but] live in a place that you can walk, get a bus... I walked my kids everywhere, parties, the zoo..." (SG6).

Many participants referred to the balconies provided for the flats as an asset: "Ultimately these flats are much nicer [than those at Bevin Court]. We have balconies..." (SG7). But as with other aspects of the original design they did not meet with universal approval in their original form: "The balcony height was quite tall so I decked it over with listed building consent and I find I use it more" (SG11). But other more recent residents spoke of using the balconies and their views to impress visitors, leading them through the dark hallway to the principal rooms and then "walk them out onto the balcony at sunset..." (SG10), "people always come out" (SG13). For these residents this was part of this performance of the flat and its heritage cachet.



Source: Participant

Of the interviews undertaken, all of the newcomer residents talked about the balconies in terms of their enjoyment of the outside space, stepping beyond the window plane and the longer views offered beyond the estate (SG7, 10, 11). More established residents tended to create narratives of looking out at others inside the estate. More particularly, narratives of appropriate behaviour were framed by these residents in terms of the balcony: “The roof was for your washing and it wasn’t allowed to put washing on your balconies. No animals whatsoever!” (SG4) “[There are] always stupid people having barbeques on their balconies” (SG5). The proper use of balconies was also of interest to newcomer residents: “What I like to see, people making full use of well-designed balconies... that piñata thing... what’s that all about?” (SG13). Many leaseholders also talked about the importance of plants to the appearance of the balconies in terms of the architectural aesthetic and a ‘greening’ of the estate (SG10, 13).





Source: participant

Some longer-term residents also spoke of the importance of the view of the courtyard between blocks to their understanding of the authenticity of the place, but more particularly in terms of marking an authenticity of the earlier community: “It was wonderful. The kids [used to] play out...” (SG4). These participants spoke of the loss of a play area and the landscaping works done to the external areas since their early days on the estate and how this confined them to particular practices: “Don’t like all this fencing and all these conifer trees. I don’t want to be fenced in” (SG5). They spoke regretfully of a long-gone estate manager, who would supervise the courtyard and ensure that it was managed in the same way that the flats and communal areas were: “[She] slung the kids in at a certain time: “You go in!”” (SG4).



Source: Participant

The way participants described this practice made it clear that there was, and continues to be, a close degree of casual surveillance of this common area from both windows and balconies. Through their shared discussions these participants established a nostalgic re-imagining of the past that was framed in terms of what they saw from the balconies and windows, in direct contrast to what they now see. Through this they were also claiming expert knowledge of the estate that was just as important to their understanding of its special interest as that presented in the list description: “What we saw. They [professionals] are not going to see that” (SG5). “It’s not going to last another 50 years because of the people. They don’t respect it” (SG4). In claiming this membership of a past community, these residents were also rejecting the enthusiastic claims of newcomers to being part of it: “Having lived here, it’s more a community now” (SG7, 9). Through an articulation of, and engagement with the view, I suggest that certain participants were claiming an expert knowledge of living at Spa Green that excluded newer residents on the estate and marked them out as a distinct community.

Through this section I have set out to show how through interactions with location and the short and longer views of the estate, participants laid claim to the location of a building, and the experience of entering and leaving that space as core to its special interest. Through repetitive small actions of arrival or departure residents were able to perform this aspect of the special interest and assert the heritage cachet of their home. They claimed this experience as exclusive to residents of the estate; a community of living at Spa Green. The discourse of a single community that these actions implied, however, was broken by further communities of 'knowing' Spa Green established through interactions with the balconies and the internal view. Here participants established different communities of belonging (past/present) based upon understandings of appropriate behaviour and understandings of authenticity. I now move on to explore the discourse of authenticity as it was manifest in window dressings.

### ***Window (iii): Window dressings and modern design***



Source: participant

The use of window dressings also became a marker of claimed expertise about the estate, and the forming of different communities of understanding its special heritage interest. Window dressings and the use of curtains and blinds were recurrent features of interviews, but framed very much in terms of communities of belonging. Approaches to window dressing emerged as a mark of distinction between the established tenants on the estate and newcomers, principally leaseholders. For longer-term residents the same claims to authentic belonging were put forward; expressed through patterns of uniformity that were not related to the modernist aesthetic of the architecture itself. For more recent residents, a new community of expertise about modern architecture and the special interest of Spa Green were expressed *through* their interactions with window dressing. In this way they were claiming a distinct community at Spa Green, both visible within the estate and from outside. By marking this aesthetic preference they were also asserting an understanding of the architect's design intentions beyond the limits of what listing can dictate.

I look first at the dressing of windows with net curtains. Of the residents interviewed, net curtaining tended to be both associated with, and favoured by, longer-term tenants, while leaseholders largely followed an approach to window dressing that aspired to be 'in keeping' with a modernist design idiom, using either blinds or nothing to restrict views from outside. Long-term residents talked fondly about the once-common use of net curtaining and thought that the estate looked 'neater' and 'cleaner' because of the visual uniformity of this as a window dressing style. As one participant put it in none-too flattering a sense: "when you look up [now] you get more a sense of individual units" (SG2). The fact that some incomers do not curtain their windows nor close their flats to the external view at all, particularly at night, was seen by some residents as inappropriate and in some ways disrespectful to the former uniformity of the estate and its heritage status: "With the 'modern' people coming in they don't like nets. You can always tell the older people. They've all got nets" (SG4).



Source: Participant

For incoming resident experts keen to enact their lives in line with the design intentions of Spa Green, a different window aesthetic has been cultivated. Both groups claim an authenticity in relation to the estate; one of design aesthetic, the other of community and belonging. As one former resident said: “Can’t afford the Barbican? Come to Spa Green!” (SG8) Some participants spoke of the use of window dressings in terms of a performance of the special architectural interest recognised through listing: “Open up the curtains and light can flood into the centre of your space” (SG10). Another participant saw their own approach as corrective: “lots of Georgiana and Victoriana... trying for a cleaner look” (SG11). These residents adopted an aesthetic consistent with the architectural idiom of modernism, but which was held by others to be in-authentic in terms of the patterns of occupation. For longer-term residents, net curtains were a mark of the original occupants at Spa Green, and the net curtains were even used persuasively as an indication of authenticity of community and an appropriate way of living on Spa Green. One participant even took a photograph of the view out from her flat *through* the net curtain, showing the extent to which these dressings had come to be regarded by some as fixtures of the fabric.



Source: Participant

These different approaches to window dressing were a key concern of most resident participants in their discussions of the special historic and architectural interest of Spa Green and its status as a listed estate. Through markedly different approaches to the window dressings – and most particularly in a differentiation between net curtains and blinds or nothing at the centre of the windows – different claims to understanding this special interest were played out. Through the choice of window dressings different groups were marking communities of belonging, and of knowing Spa Green within the estate, and to an outside, viewing public.

In conclusion, approaches to windows at Spa Green have been used as the locus for persuasive small actions related to the claimed heritage significance of the estate. Through an engagement with narratives of authenticity of aesthetic and of belonging, and of understanding the architects' intentions, participants have established new forms of expertise about the estate that are located in its fabric. Through a repeated performance of these interactions residents have also asserted the special nature of their homes and drawn in the heritage cachet of living in a listed building. I now move on to explore how this cachet is manifest in relation to the kitchens.



Source: Participant

### ***Kitchens: the insides matter***

Through this section I discuss the treatment of the interiors of the blocks at Spa Green in the context of the advice given in PPG15 (DoE/DNH 1994, English Heritage 2007a) and the heritage cachet afforded to certain features by a number of participants. I do this through a focus upon articulations of significance by participants around the refurbishment of the kitchens. In this way interactions with the small fabric of the kitchens – Garchey waste disposal, kitchen hatches, cupboard doors – have become the locus of articulations of special interest, the consumption of heritage and more particularly an authenticity of fabric, for both residents and professionals involved in the estate. This approach to interiors of the blocks is also marked by participants in terms of an understanding of a hierarchy of buildings on the estate, what one leaseholder referred to as “block envy” (SG13). I reflect here upon how the clear, curatorial approach to the refurbishment of the kitchens at Spa Green is consistent with the concerns of PPG15 Annex C.3 and its insistence upon the retention of old fabric: ‘New work should be fitted to the old to ensure the survival of as much historic fabric as is practical. Old work should not be sacrificed merely to accommodate the new’ (DoE/DNH 1994:C.3). I argue that the works to the kitchens are consistent with these imperatives, but that they have been negotiated through close interactions with the small details of the kitchen fixtures and fittings.

Unusually for much of the listed post-war housing stock, the interiors of Spa Green are given special mention in the list descriptions. The entry for Wells House, for

example, reads: 'The fitted kitchens, linked by hatch to living room were a 'revelation for working class housing'... and are noted for its Garchey system of refuse disposal (the first in London and the only one anywhere still know to be in operation' (RCHME 1998). During the refurbishment works by Homes for Islington, the kitchens became highly contested spaces, with decisions being made on a cupboard door-by-cupboard door basis as to what should be retained or replaced. Twelve different kitchen designs were used, with a joinery unit on site to accommodate original features where they survived, or match in new units to an approved design rolled out across the estate for all flats still tenanted. This work included removing later kitchen units installed to return the flats to a single design aesthetic. One professional explained to me: "Where new units had gone in they had to come out" (SG2). These units were designed to marry with the first drawn proposals of the architects, and so followed the narrative of intention in a substantive (Powers 2001) form. There was a further degree of corrective restoration involved "bring back the kitchen hatch if possible" (SG2), drawing upon the detailed documentation available from the first installations and using surviving examples as source-material.



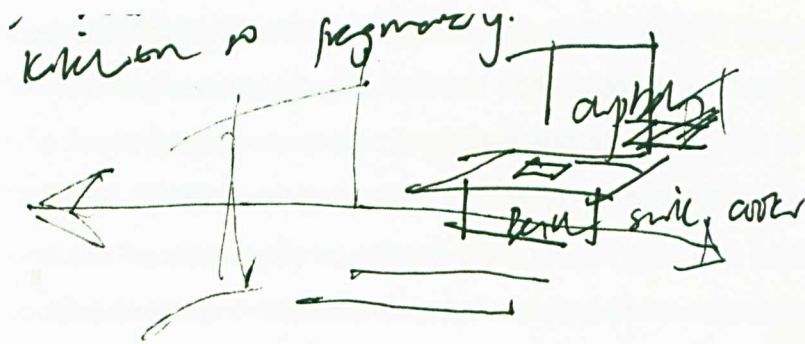
Source: Participant



Again, this was consistent with PPG15 which advised against restoration of features in general but allowed for it where there existed detailed information available as to its original form: 'In general the wholesale reinstatement of lost, destroyed or superseded elements of a building or an interior is not appropriate, although, where a building has largely retained the integrity of its design, the reinstatement of lost or destroyed elements of that design could be considered. In such cases there should always be adequate information confirming the detailed historical authenticity of the work proposed' (DoE/DNH 1994:C.6). In this way the reinstatement of the kitchen units became part of the persuasive effort of design authenticity, and located the approach to the conservation of the estate firmly in the first presentation by the architects.

The value of heritage cachet, of having the authentic Spa Green or the 'real thing' emerged as an important narrative from participants. This focussed particularly upon the kitchen hatches and integral cupboards, Garchey sinks and cupboard doors. Participants interacted with these features of their homes to claim special knowledge about Spa Green and to assert ownership of its special interest. Kitchen hatches and integral cupboards certainly had the most cachet and participants drew them into the persuasive rhetoric of the importance of authentic form. But the cachet was also limited by which blocks participants were in. One more recent resident referred to the diminishing funding available being more than evident in the kitchen fittings between blocks and how some residents complain: "You in Wells get everything" (SG9).

One long-term resident took me to see "the original serving hatch" and cupboard and talked to me about how she used to cook Sunday meals for the family, marking out the placing of the kettle in relation to the hatch so as to be able to make, and pass through, gravy (SG5). Another, who had lived on the estate for many years used the shelves of the glass-fronted cupboard to display artifacts in keeping with a modernist aesthetic (SG7). But where the original fittings had gone others spoke of their regret at not having the original feature "I don't know what it's like to have the original kitchen" (SG11).



Source: Author

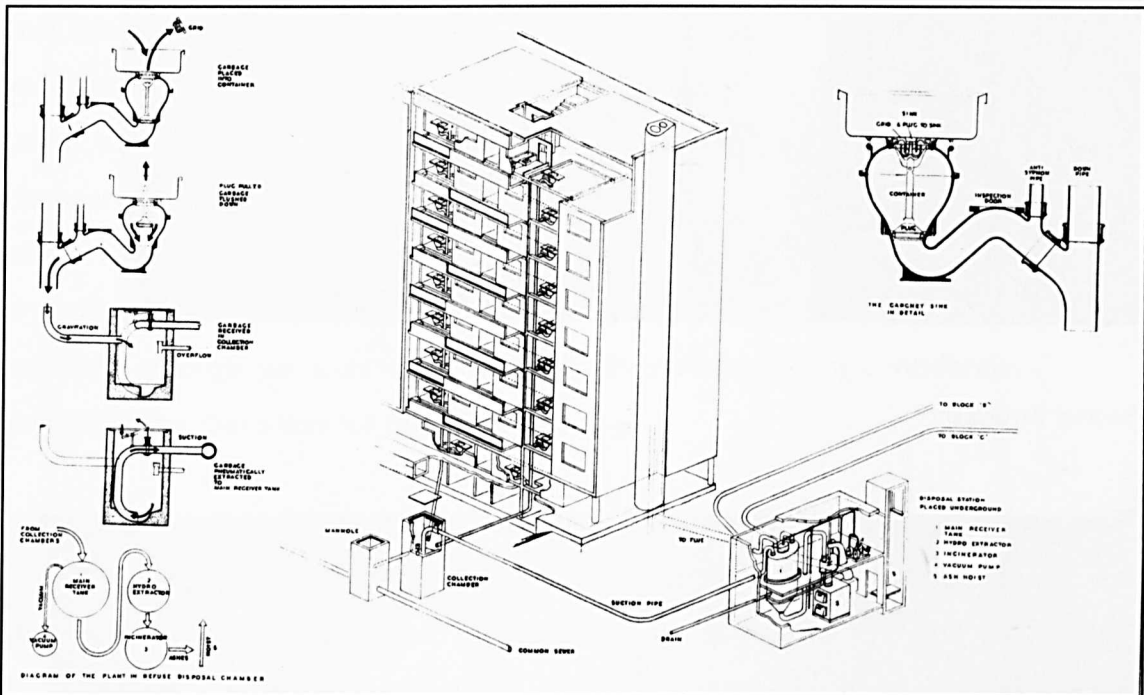
The patchy survival of the original hatch and cupboard configurations meant that professionals “were able to argue on rarity grounds” (SG I) for the retention of those features that remained. These surviving ‘original’ hatch configurations acquired particular cachet, but this was combined with a frustration felt by some residents with the small pull-out tables and awkward configuration of the kitchen. And one or two leaseholders unaffected by the refurbishment works even questioned the desirability of not just reinstating, but even maintaining original examples:

“I don’t know what it’s like to have the original kitchen... I find it hard to see 160 kitchens of the same type [as] valid” (SG I I).



Source: Participant

The approach to the Garchey sinks was similarly curatorial . Although removed from all other estates where they were first used (including Park Hill), and unpopular with many residents, the Garcheys (as they are known on the estate) “had to be retained” (SG2). One long-term resident spoke of the Garchey as something enviable when she first moved in: “To have a Garchey was absolutely unbelievable. It was lovely” (SG4) but in many ways they failed to fulfill their intended purpose of seamless waste disposal from the sink.



Source: Allan (1992)

What counted here, however, was the reputation of the Garcheys that stemmed from the first presentation of the estate by the architects, and which bore witness to their first intent. Again, a (more modest) degree of heritage cachet accrued to those flats retaining the original Garcheys, with residents speaking of their pleasure in knowing that they have them, combined with a frustration at their limitations. One recent resident said: “ I have an ambiguous relationship with my sink [see it as an] art work and an annoyance” (SG13). Such a consciousness of this heritage cachet marks out the small fabric as an important part of the discourse of significance.



Source: Participant

The approach to the kitchen cupboards was discussed by participants less in terms of heritage cachet and more of the validity of seeking an authentic design aesthetic. The internal elevation of the kitchen produced by Tecton maps out the location and design of the kitchen units: “Internally it’s the details. Amazing details. Bakelite handle, metal door frames... the kitchens are the most important internally” (SG7), As one resident with some professional experience in design said: “They [the original kitchens] are beautiful and unique” (SG10). Many of the flats sold under Right-to-Buy had lost their original kitchen fittings: “The more pristine ones tend to be [in the flats of] the elderly tenants” (SG10).

The importance placed by the architects upon the kitchen provision and layout has, I suggest, led its conservation management towards ensuring that the simple, functional design aesthetic is maintained. During the works for Homes for Islington, designs to accommodate remaining original cupboards led to proposals “bespoke to particular flats” with 1:20 scale drawings “covered in notes”, indicative of the close level of interaction with the fabric. “Many kitchens only required repairs of existing units” (SG3), but others required extensive intervention by professionals involved in

its refurbishment in consultation with residents. Even so there were problems with how professionals and residents claimed expert knowledge of the estate through these kitchen units. One resident of the estate from before listing said: “My cupboard doors are 57 years old. She tells me they got to stay the same, ‘like-for-like’ but isn’t not how it was built” (SG6). Other participants challenged the viability of maintaining original units and the reasons for installing new ones to match: “[The] kitchen cupboards inherited the problems of the original ones” (SG9, 3). One leaseholder even questioned the rationale behind it: “I disagree with the argument that this is a well-designed kitchen for its time. The concept of a fitted kitchen is more important than the fittings. I wouldn’t want to put that back, the idea of a larder is strange by today’s standards” (SG10). In other words, the kitchen cupboards came to be the locus for quite deep-set debates around the matter of *what* it is that is being preserved – essence and/or substance (Powers 2001), arguments that were articulated through the fabric. But here there was less sympathy amongst participants for the orthodoxy of maintaining a modernist aesthetic than there was for the windows.



Source: Participant

I have tried to show here how the small fabric of the kitchens was drawn into the narratives of the special interest of the estate. These narratives were principally concerned with design and fabric authenticity and heritage cachet that authentic fabric can accrue. But they also related to how far an argument for authenticity of a design aesthetic can be stretched. I now move on to explore the equally contested change in paint colour for the public areas of the estate and how this produced clear divides within the resident community and differing claims of expertise.

### ***Décor and conservation know-how***

Through this section I explore how particular residents at Spa Green have established narratives of conservation expertise, centred in their approaches to the décor of their flats and their engagement with the heritage cachet of what one professional called “living in a Lubetkin building” (SG2). Through a self-conscious response to the modernist idiom of the architecture, these residents perform the heritage significance of the flats through their choice of décor and furnishings and their interactions with the fabric of the first construction. As one professional put it in relation to leaseholders who have bought onto the estate because of its heritage cachet: “They live in a Lubetkin brand”, about which they are “very passionate” but he noted that “a lot of tenants like living on the estate for the same reason” (SG3).

As I have alluded to earlier in this chapter, there are residents on Spa Green estate who have specialist conservation knowledge and through their interactions with the fabric act persuasively as expert residents of the estate; experts in living on and knowing Spa Green. These persuasive practices take a number of forms but have extended to common and private areas, including interventions in proposals for external paint colour, planting in the common area planting boxes and approaches to internal décor. For some residents these modernist approaches to décor are in some ways corrective of the more traditional, decorative practices of some of the longer-term residents and have led to different narratives of expertise emerging. Such an approach is consistent with what Harwood sees as a gap between conservation professionals and ‘ordinary people’ (longer-term residents) who ‘still too often dismiss the value of modern housing’ (2008:11). But at Spa Green this is muddled by the experts being literally ‘in house’ as much as the ‘ordinary people’. For some residents these persuasive actions in relation to décor were misplaced and

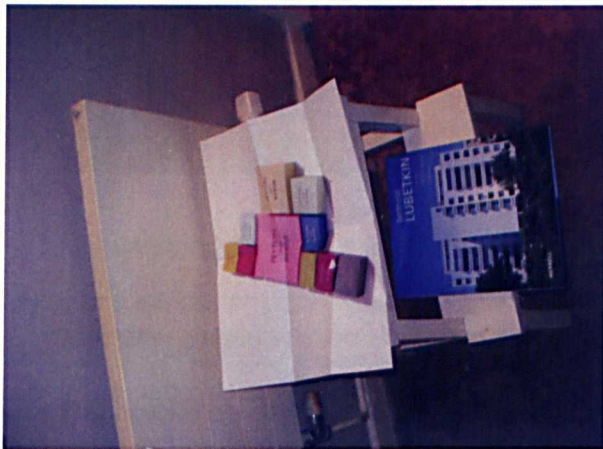
showed mis-claimed expertise about Spa Green: “Too many people came in with the gift of the gab, and none of them agree. They’re not going to see what we saw. They’re not going to see that” (SG5).



Still from filmed interview. Source: Author

This distinction between longer-term and newer residents on the estate was often marked by the desire by newer residents to “strip back” as one leaseholder put it of their own approach when moving in (SG9) and attempt an authenticity of design responsive to the modernist architectural idiom. This was in direct contrast to the approach to décor of many longer-term residents who used “heavily decorated wallpaper... mini-chandeliers... lots of Georgian and Victorian, lots of ornament (SG10). One participant even saw it that “tenants are different from leaseholders [in their décor]” (SG11). Such an approach, the personalisation of a repeated architectural form, has been noted by Boudon at Le Corbusier’s Pessac development (1969), and Jacobs and Cairns (2008), but here I suggest it has been used, and sustained, as a marker of an authentic community at Spa Green, set against the persuasive practices of incomer, ‘expert’ residents.

For those incomer residents who adopted an 'in-keeping' approach to their décor this took the form of a pared-down and conscious re-presentation of the modernist style of the architecture. One participant was quite aware of her persuasive actions in presenting her flat as something with heritage cachet: "Who I am and what I do has been so bound up in Spa Green... this flat's been on TV, in magazines, my whole interior ties in... furniture [has been chosen] in terms of the era" (SG7). For her there was little distinction between internal and external fabric in terms of the heritage discourse. Her persuasive practices within the flat were a performance of the heritage cachet of the whole estate. For another more recent resident participant, the approach to décor was framed in terms of "what would the architect do?" (SG13). The same participant kept a copy of Allan and von Sternberg's monograph of Lubetkin in a prominent position on a shelf in the hallway, marking an informed approach to his décor and making a small public performance of that intent for visitors entering the flat.



The monograph on Lubetkin was kept next to a folded sheet illustrating packaging used by a contemporary café. This sheet had formed the inspiration for the colours used in the décor of the flat.

Source: Participant

For some residents the heritage cachet of living in a modernist flat, however, can be at odds with some of the material fabric that constitutes that cachet. As one conservation professional said: "they are very passionate to keep the envelope and the external space" but less enthusiastic about maintaining plan form, wanting



“contemporary living conditions”(SG1). This can present a dilemma: “I thought about knocking the bathroom wall down but then I felt guilty... architecturally you can’t really say there’s an awful lot [that is] so special. The line they’re now taking is ‘as long as the doors are both kept...’ (SG7). For another resident a proposed requirement that he should keep a down-stand section marking the place of an internal wall to be demolished was a “silly thing”, and engaging directly with the specifics of the heritage discourse he insisted that it was more important to “maintain a cellular plan” than the actual realisation of that (SG10). For these residents their own expertise in the special interest of the estate is deliberated in relation to planned alterations explicitly in terms of the conservation principles and policy. They challenge the received orthodoxies about the estate and the claimed expertise of belonging of longer-term residents. In this way these residents have formed a new community of expertise about Spa Green and a new discourse of expert residence.

### **Conclusion**

Through this chapter I have tried to show how the recent works of refurbishment and approach to the management of Spa Green as an estate of special architectural and historic interest have largely been consistent with the value emphases of document PPG15 and its privileging of original form and, more particularly, fabric (DoE/DNH 1994). I have tried to show how this essentially curatorial approach to the fabric of the estate has been driven by the narrative of the importance of detail derived from project drawings by the architects and the first reception of the estate. During works to refurbish the estate by Homes for Islington this concentration upon the detail emerged as the locus for assertions of value. Participants focussed upon persuasive interactions with windows, kitchens and décor to demonstrate *through* the original form and fabric the special interest of the estate. In doing so they engaged with the discourse of authenticity, both of the architecture and of the resident community. They also performed the heritage cachet of ‘living’ at Spa Green through repeated, small interactions with the estate. And some even formed new communities of expertise relating to these small fabrics: of belonging, of understanding the modernist aesthetic and of having a particular conservation know-how compounded by the knowledge of ‘living’ on the estate.

Such a curatorial approach is also, I show, symptomatic of an implicit acceptance of the estate within the heritage canon, challenging some of the concerns manifest in the writing of Andrew Saint (1996a) and English Heritage (2007a) and the discourse of 'difference'. This acceptance of Spa Green within the heritage canon has been sustained through the persuasive actions of residents of the estate and their repeated interactions with the small fabric of the buildings. Through these low-level performances of special interest these residents have thickened the discourse of significance and brought the fabric of the building into the rhetorics of persuasion. In doing so they have laid claim to different forms of expertise to those posited by the current protocols of building conservation. These new forms of expertise - most particularly those of residence - have allowed residents and professionals to collaborate, or compete in thickening (Geertz 1973) the understanding of its significance. Perhaps they have even offered a new way of assessing that significance through marking out parts of the buildings of special interest. They have also demonstrated that the assumed single community of Spa Green is anything but that, rather that diverse communities of interest formed, and re-formed around particular interactions with the fabric. Through these new claims for expertise and a new framework for understanding 'community' I suggest that at Spa Green challenges have been presented to the orthodoxies of conservation practice and its consultative protocols, whilst simultaneously reinforcing its claims upon the primacy of fabric and a concern with its preservation. I now move on to examine how a very different set of stories has emerged at Park Hill.

## Chapter 4:

### Park Hill: A eulogy and a lament



A photograph looking out towards Park Hill during the strip-out works, taken from high up, in Hallam University buildings. The re-configured Hyde Park estate is visible beyond. Source: author

#### Preface

There is a picture of the TV presenter Kevin Macleod sitting in front of Park Hill on Channel 4's front page for their programme *Demolition*. He is perched on what looks like an informal dump of old play equipment and unused chairs, with part of the estate looming behind. Long grasses grow around him and Macleod gazes out of the picture with an expression of pained dissatisfaction. In 2005 this programme asked the public to vote for their most loathed buildings in the country, the ones that they would like to see demolished. Of the 1000 plus nominations, the Park Hill estate in Sheffield came 12<sup>th</sup> overall, securing enough votes to make it a finalist, ultimately beaten to the prize by Cumbernauld new town (Channel 4:2005). 'Bad housing' secured its own episode with almost all housing nominations having gone up

in the previous forty years (Hatherley 2010) but it was Park Hill that made it to the final.

When I started to look at research into listed post-war housing estates, Park Hill was the subject of polarised debates as to its merits, the case for its retention or demolition, and a strong and developing impetus towards its regeneration. Over the course of my research Park Hill has been given permission for, and then been transformed by, a major regeneration project, although only Phase I of the work is in any way near complete. Coming and going from Sheffield over the past five years has meant that I have seen the estate, and these works at a distance, as a visitor, if not complete outsider. I have seen significant changes to the building's form and fabric as the works have progressed. And at times I have been shocked by what I have seen. More, perhaps, by what has gone. I am, after all, a former building conservation officer and I had certain expectations of what the refurbishment of a grade II\* listed building might entail. This scheme has rocked those assumptions, in a way that the works at Spa Green did not, but it has also brought me to examine some of my own pre-conceptions about what such a project should entail.

Perhaps as a result of this consternation, I initially found it difficult to know where to start writing this chapter, and also to know where to stop. The regeneration of Park Hill is a major project that has encountered funding crises and at times seemed poised to descend into near-chaos. But this attempt to support a longer-term presence of the Park Hill estate in however much-modified a form is also a scheme of heroic ambition. Having made several attempts to start the chapter, I came to recognise that the sense of consternation that I allude to is part of the story of Park Hill. It is part of how its history has been claimed and retold, and how its fabric has followed through from strong narrative directions. Park Hill, I suggest in this chapter, is unusual in being an estate, and architecture of heritage significance, by virtue of always having been an architecture of *ideas*. It was conceived as part of a drive toward social betterment, through a belief in the potential for design to improve people's lot, but unlike Spa Green where the same ethic existed, it was delivered on the grand scale. It is now being transformed by a scheme that attempts a reinvention of its fabric as a means to secure a betterment of place. The trajectory

of Park Hill as an architecture of heritage value from the point of listing at grade II\* in 1998 could not have been more different to that of Spa Green.

## **Introduction**

In this chapter I examine the Park Hill estate in Sheffield and the discourses of success, difficulty and failure that have framed the estate since the euphoria of its first development. I do so through a focus upon the publications - both printed and online - related to the estate and the narratives of professionals involved in its regeneration. It is a chapter that explores how an understanding of *ideas* in architecture can be manifest as something of value in the heritage discourse and how responses to these ideas can have effects upon the course of heritage conservation. In this chapter I argue that at Spa Green there has been a consistent pre-occupation with the small material detail of the estate, and a drive to persuade others of its significance through interactions with this small fabric. At Park Hill, however, the pre-occupation has been with the ideas behind its architecture and the intentions of its first creators, all on a more substantial, even heroic scale. Through interacting with an established discourse of idea and intention in modernist architecture, professionals involved in the conservation and regeneration of Park Hill have played out responses to the ideas understood to have informed its first development in their approaches to the material fabric of the estate.

I suggest through this chapter that not only does this privileging of the 'idea' at Park Hill mark a very different approach to that taken at Spa Green it also marks an approach to heritage conservation that is particular to the conservation of architecture of the mid and later twentieth century. It is what English Heritage at Park Hill have termed 'constructive conservation' (2009). This is a term that I come back to later in the analysis, but depends upon what is essentially an atypical approach to the retention of original fabric. In referring back to Andrew Saint's (1996a) early work on the protocols and problems of listing recent and sometimes unpopular architecture I locate the impetus for this 'constructive' approach in the emergent heritage discourse on post-war architecture (Macdonald 1996, English Heritage 2007a). This literature focussed upon twentieth century architects' intentions on both social engineering and design fronts, and privileged these, at the expense of authenticity of fabric and building as delivered. This approach espoused

at Park Hill is typical, I suggest, of what might be called a 'new' conservation, or at least 'shifting' conservation (Pendlebury 2009). That is one where experts play a crucial role in interpreting architects' intentions and success or failure in delivery, and adjudicate on proposals for the buildings on this basis. It proposes a new rhetoric of conservation, of the significance of intention and the expert's primacy in the divination of the 'essence' of what is listed (Powers 2001). In this it flies counter to the established heritage rhetoric of the importance of preservation of original form and fabric. But it also comes full circle to an essentially utilitarian faith in the expert and the conservation activity as a public good.

The chapter starts by exploring the particular methodology used for research into Park Hill and how this took a very different course to that used for Spa Green. It examines in outline what implications the methodological differences can have for the two case studies and how the two can be reconciled. I develop this further in the next chapter on 'the two stories' but first I set out some markers for the discussion that follows. Here I track the development of this approach to researching Park Hill and the reasons for adopting and adapting the methods used in as much as they differ from those at Spa Green. In particular I draw attention to the proliferation of material available online and how particular narratives (written and image-based) have been presented persuasively as part of the 'marmite' game (love it or hate it) of representing the estate, most notably pursued by the developers Urban Splash (2010). As with the chapter on Spa Green, I make use of visual material related to Park Hill, but draw on a much more extensive range of sources, most of which are already in the public realm. Park Hill's redevelopment has been framed by a strong and persuasive set of visual data, both formal and informal, with the 'authorised' images off-set by less formal presentations (Smith 2006). I also draw out in this part of the chapter how the research here has followed professional, rather than resident narratives. I show how this was not a deliberate omission of residents from the research process from the outset; in fact I expected residents to be a key feature of the research. What I explore here is how residents' presence and their views had been so well-documented and so exhaustively sought during the process of putting the listed building applications in place that professionals' claims on the narratives of Park Hill had almost been overlooked. Their narratives of preferred values relating to the estate and its regeneration emerged as a particularly rich and quite under-

explored source of data. Given the emergence of a preference for the professional adjudicator in the discourse of Park Hill's regeneration, the narratives of the professionals came to have key significance in the research.

From the methodology I move on to explore the literature about Park Hill. First I explore the literature that preceded the listing of the estate. I draw a clear distinction between pre and post listing. So much of what followed the listing is tied into the discourse that informs the current scheme of regeneration and so much of it, I suggest, is generated by discourses formed before listing. I also suggest that these pre-listing critiques of the architecture and place came not just to link into, but also to inform the subsequent character of the proposed regeneration. In other words this section identifies some of the key values that came to be active and constructive of the emergent heritage discourse of the estate. In tracing the narratives of Park Hill and its first development I point to emergent themes and pre-occupations. These I articulate as three principal expressions of the *idea* of Park Hill that acquire persuasive force for subsequent analyses of the estate. The first relates to the discourse of a better place. The second is about community. The third relates to architectural ambition and the modernist vision.

In the next section I move on from pre-listing rhetoric to explore the post-listing, and still ongoing production of literature and imagery related to Park Hill and its regeneration. Here I interweave analysis of written and visual material with interviews with professionals involved in the scheme, following the thematic structure of the previous section. Approaches to Park Hill, I show, have been led by rhetorics expressed outside of the building fabric and then applied to it. Unlike those at Spa Green, these are not rooted, even located in the small parts of the fabric. The narratives around its refurbishment that I explore here are rooted in understandings of design intention, guiding principles and righting wrongs. These have been manifest in the many and very openly contested debates about the estate's past, its present, its future. And whilst there has been some close attention to the detail of the original fabric, particularly in relation to concrete surfaces, the principal point that I make through this section is that Park Hill has been managed as an architecture that is a repository of, and responsive to *ideas*. The consequence of this is that the materiality of it has been a secondary concern.

I then look at the presentations of the regeneration project and tie this back to the earlier themes identified in the pre-listing review. I start with the discourse of a 'better place' and show how the earlier discourse of societal improvement through design ties into a regeneration ethic of the potential of design to improve an environment. I explore Park Hill here in the context of what happened to Hyde Park and the two very different courses taken by reason of the impetus to improve. Secondly I examine the claims for community inclusion and re-creation in the current project, and trace how community was an early focus in published narratives of the estate, but as the gloss fell away, how representations of the estate reverted to the monochrome un-peopled monument. With proposed regeneration has come a re-found discourse of community, of presence and colour in Park Hill albeit on a vastly different basis and which reconfigures it within a mixed-tenure and mixed-use context. Thirdly I move on to explore the approaches to the fabric of the building through the rhetorical justifications for the ongoing scheme and how early approaches to the form and fabric in the architects' drawings and construction practices signified the importance of the idea of the architecture over the fine-tuning of its delivery. I also discuss the contrasting approaches to arguments for the stripping-out of the flats and brick panels to the very conservative heritage approach to the concrete frame. Here, the tensions between an 'authorised' take on the heritage management of the estate, and the new conservation protocols of 'constructive conservation' are most exposed. Here, the claims for value are put forward with most intensive, persuasive force.

Nobody can pretend that the retention, listing and refurbishment of Park Hill has been welcomed by all. In admitting a hostility to the estate ("the 'Star effect'" as one housing professional called it (PH6)) and its architecture, the narratives of its redevelopment can be seen to build on the strong 'success' or 'failure' critiques of the estate and to attempt a rebranding of the Park Hill experience. What I next explore in this section of the research is how powerful narratives of success or failure can inform what happens in conservation practice, and how different values can be afforded such significance that they come to create their own momentum. I suggest that, perhaps, this dependence upon certain values at the expense of others and the tension between rhetorical constructions of 'failure' and 'success' (Bacon



1985, Hanley 2007) is part of the very heritage of the place. Park Hill has become the locus for highly polished professional discourses in relation to heritage conservation. I then move on to look at approaches to retained fabric to explore where some of the fundamental philosophical arguments over the materiality of special interest of buildings of the heritage canon are tested. I show again how it is ultimately the concept, the 'essence' (Powers 2001) of Park Hill and the intentions behind it that has been afforded more value than the retention of the form and fabric of its first realisation. And this, I suggest, again marks a new approach to building conservation, and to conservation practice that is only occurring in the context of heritage of the more recent past.

I conclude by responding to Laurajane Smith's idea of Authorized Heritage Discourse (2006). Developing from Bacon's 'myths' of success and failure (1985) I suggest that rather than authorized, there have been sequentially preferred discourses at Park Hill (success-failure-success), consistent with rhetorics of conservation-as-regeneration. With this has come a re-privileging of the expert, particularly the expert conservation professional. With it has also come an approach to significance as being driven by narratives of intention and delivery, over fabric and form of the estate as-listed. What those involved in its regeneration have persuaded us, and perhaps themselves of, is a dual discourse of failure and success in determining significance that has been played out in a peculiarly public way. By deeming this approach 'constructive conservation' (English Heritage 2009) this has set the marker for a highly distinctive approach to the conservation of Park Hill which contrasts starkly with the approach taken at Spa Green. In both instances there are peculiar approaches taken to the building fabric. But whereas at one the heritage significance of the estate is played out by interactions with the material fabric at the very small-scale, at the other heritage significance is presented through claimed expert understandings of intention and essential form and fabric. What I explore in the next chapter is how far they mark a move in conservation values and towards new practices and how far they are representative of the move in policy from PPG15 (DoE/DNH 1994) to the new PPS5 (DCLG 2010).

## **Methods used**

As I outlined above, the detail of the methods adopted for researching Park Hill turned out to be rather different to that adopted for Spa Green. This divergence from the application of the proposed methodology was not the initial intent; rather it was adapted to follow leads from participants and to the rapid emergence of material related to the site and its regeneration. A change in personal circumstances had an inevitable effect. But I also was influenced by changes with the profile of the works at Park Hill and how this affected people's willingness to discuss the case and their own involvement with it.

As with the research into Spa Green, I set out with an expectation of talking to both professionals and residents of the estate and following closely during the course of works on site. I had hoped to continue the mix of methods, drawing on one or two filmed interviews as well as some photo solicitation and drawing work. I had also hoped to make fairly regular passing visits to the site, making a sort of mixed media diary of how things were going, carrying on from the composite approach to data collection that I had pursued at Spa Green. When it became obvious that this was not going to be practicable I adopted the methodology to include others' presentations of work at Park Hill that were not (always) solicited by me. I did, however, make similar use as I had for Spa Green of published material available in libraries and online, including resources at the RIBA. The closure of the Sheffield Archives Service since early October 2010 for major works meant that a central resource was removed, but I have been able to gain access to most material by other routes. As with Spa Green I have understood architects' drawings as having the potential to generate discourses and not simply be interpreted for their content (Rose 2001). I made six recorded interviews specifically related to Park Hill, either by recording and taking notes, or simply by taking notes. I also held one un-recorded conversation by arrangement with a professional involved in the site and solicited photographs from one participant who has no direct involvement in Park Hill, but has maintained a close personal interest in the works. I met participants at a number of locations ranging from offices to restaurants. Only one interview was conducted on site and this was also followed up by a walkabout.

### ***No residents: A steer from participants***

In the end I did not talk to residents of the estate. This was not how I had conceived of the research when I first set out to do it, but it was a deliberate decision made after interviews with some of the professionals involved. I took this decision on a number of grounds, but the most important of these was what might be called 'Park Hill fatigue'. It very soon became apparent from my meetings with professionals that the residents had, as one regeneration professional put it, been "consulted to death" (PHI) and that certain residents were being 'wheeled out' too much and too often. It was even implied by some participants that as an academic researcher, rather than representative of a body involved in the regeneration or even the press, I would be felt to have little to offer in return to residents. This was an interesting implication – that the granting interviews by residents (or former residents) could be seen as having some currency, and that as an academic I didn't have much of that.

Access to 'residents' was inevitably more difficult once I was away from Sheffield, but it would not have been impossible. One participant secured a 'willing resident' for me to talk to, with an expectation of this leading to two others. Rather inevitably, one of my children fell ill for the first interview we arranged, and the prospective interviewee did the same for the second. But by this time I had developed very mixed views about the idea of the 'willing resident'. The numbers of 'willing residents' were so reduced – even condensed - by this point that I was concerned that any interview would offer little more than a rehashing of a performed 'interview about living at Park Hill'. And I draw a distinction here between the performance of the expert resident at Spa Green and that at Park Hill, principally on the basis of exposure, but also in terms of the persuasive effort. At Spa Green residents had largely been under-recognised as of significance to the heritage of the estate, but played an important role in their persuasive actions in relation to the estate that both claimed and secured its significance. At Park Hill the persuasive force of residents in claiming the heritage significance of the estate was of much lesser significance. Residents' views were already well-established in the public sphere, as part of the move towards regeneration: "Urban Splash has impressed tenants and existing residents enough to secure their support for the proposals" (Jan Wilson quoted in Dorrell 2004:3). The act of residence at Park Hill had been public since

the first occupant, welfare officer Joan Demmers moved in. Residents had begun to be consulted about their views of the estate from 1962 (by Demmers) and public scrutiny of resident narratives of their residence has been a feature of Park Hill since its first development. As I continued to research into the literature of the place I began to understand that it was more fitting to see the public voice of residents as being part of the Authorised Heritage Discourse of Park Hill (Smith 2006). More particularly, within this discourse, residents were conflated with a particular understanding of 'community' that informed moves to regenerate the estate and which I explore further below (Gold 2007:207). I suggest, then, that my attempts to explore contested narratives of Park Hill rest outside of what residents might be prevailed upon to say. Rather than re-arrange the interview for a third time I decided to leave 'resident' interviews to one side.

Quite apart from my concerns that the residents' narratives were already framed as part of the preferred heritage discourse of Park Hill, there was another consideration about their presence in the flats. Only one of the participants at Spa Green was a former resident. Whilst some of the flats on Park Hill were, and are still occupied, those being put forward for interviews had already moved off site. In other words they were *former* residents. Their views had already been sought, their stories already told through their interactions with the regeneration partners and websites charting the progress of the scheme. To push them further about how Park Hill had 'been' seemed unfair. When I spoke to one participant with a role in housing regeneration in terms of interviewing residents I sensed an immediate tensing up. And when I told her of my decision not to seek out residents she expressed her relief both that she was not going to be required to come up with any names ("oh good") and then said: "We did have one [woman] who did a lot [of interviews] but she's been severely ill" (PH 6). Clearly, certain residents were being called upon repeatedly to rehearse their experiences for the interviewer; had become experts for interview in being currently or formerly resident at Park Hill.



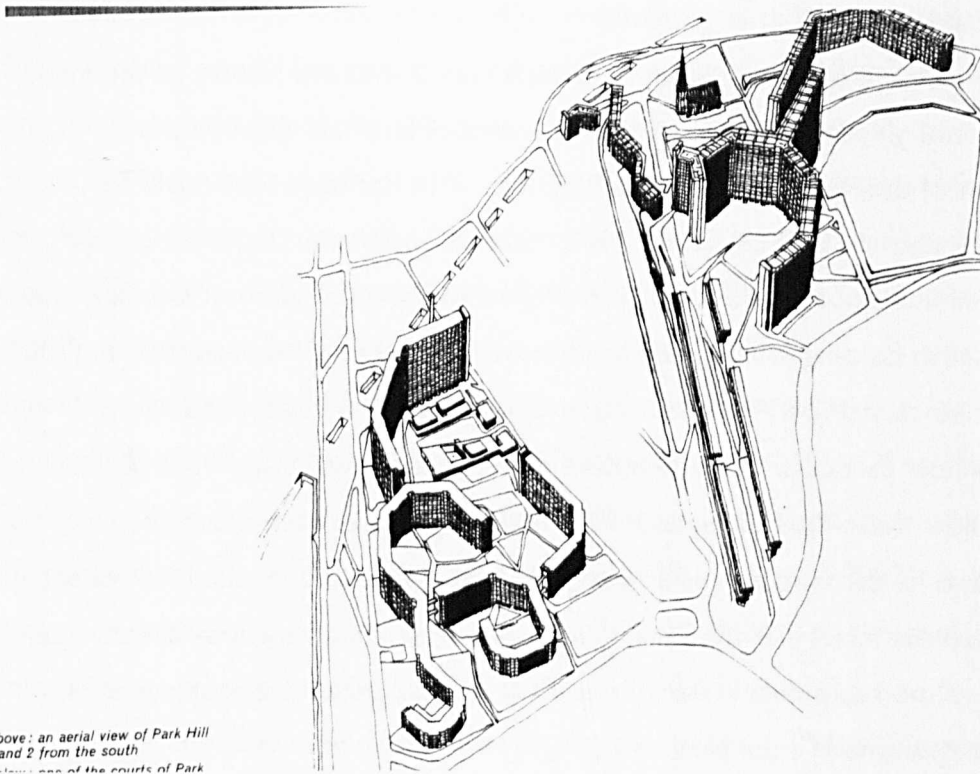
Still from a BBC film of Park Hill. The film tracks former resident caretaker Grenville Squires round the estate whilst he eulogises about 'her'. Grenville Squires also features in the Weston Park Museum exhibit; an eloquent advocate of the estate and one of the familiar faces in a public discourse of residence. Source: BBC

Conversely, the professionals involved in the regeneration works at Park Hill have had much less of a voice beyond the corporate presentations. The profile of the project has been such that it secured a single episode in a series of TV programmes about the work of English Heritage (2009) and there is a Radio 4 programme in the making about the graffiti 'I love you. Will u marry me?' (Urban Splash 2011). For the television episode on Park Hill, English Heritage put forward two of their professional advisors for interview, as well as their Chief Executive, Simon Thurley, with the programme following the progress of works on site through a period of several months. Urban Splash have also pursued a very high public profile, with interviews and links out of their site to commentaries, films etc. related to the scheme. Sheffield City Council even has external links on its (as I write this a rather out of date) website about the regeneration (2010). It seems that there has been a concerted effort to present a particular narrative of Park Hill's regeneration as a success of heritage management by the professionals involved, but it also emerged from early interviews that this preferred discourse might be challenged by their personal reflections. Professionals interviewed ranged from the more remote heritage experts to employees of the local authority and developers. Inevitably this raises questions about the nature of expertise and authorised discourses, and I come back to reflect on this in the following chapter on 'the two stories'. Here, however I rely upon their being experts not simply in the formal sense but also as experts in thinking and talking about the fabric of Park Hill as an architecture of outstanding national significance (Holstein and Gubrium 2004). In presenting their narratives I explore some of the assumptions about the expert:/resident relationship and am able to show how powerful and persuasive rhetorics have shaped the course of

regeneration, drawing on established narratives of Park Hill and arguments for its significance.

**Powerful, problematic yet memorable and by no means unloved'  
(Saint 1996b:7): Park Hill and Hyde Park**

I now explore the literatures specific to Park Hill and trace its early reception as an architecture of innovation and success, through to discourses of failure and dystopia, and ultimately its reclamation as architecture of significance through its listing in 1998. As the reception of the estate changed I explore how strong initial narratives of the estate were adapted to present a dual discourse of colossal failure at Hyde Park and partial failure and uncertainty at Park Hill and how these were negotiated in terms of the preceding narratives of success. In the following section I then move on from the reclamation of Park Hill as architecture of significance at the point of listing to analyse literature surrounding the neo- utopian reinvention of Park Hill under the current scheme of regeneration. I talk specifically about Park Hill, but do so mindful of it as comprising only part of the Park Hill Redevelopment Scheme that also included the substantial development at Hyde Park. One of the points I go on to make in this chapter relates to the severance of Hyde Park from the preferred discourse of Park Hill and its regeneration. Harwood and Minnis (2004) are unequivocal in their emphasis upon understanding these two estates as one: 'the two schemes were conceived as one and should be considered as such' (2004:208).



above: an aerial view of Park Hill  
and 2 from the south  
below: one of the courtyards of Park

Axonometric showing the inter-relationship of the Park Hill and Hyde Park estates reproduced in *Architectural Design* 1961. Source: Crooke (ed.) (1961)

But since the partial demolitions and re-cladding of the remainder of the Hyde Park blocks, this coincidence of the development of the two seems to have dropped off the public - and publications - radar. It is almost as though Hyde Park is testimony to the failure of the whole first Park Hill venture; best forgotten, or at least, not mentioned in the current attempt to refurbish and remarket the remaining Park Hill estate. Park Hill then, for the post-listing period, is largely presented in isolation. In exploring how the estates are discussed in pre-listing literature and analyses, I examine the idea of the preferred discourses of success and failure in the narratives of Park Hill alluded to above, and how Hyde Park has become the repository for many of the rhetorical constructs of failure that have developed around the regeneration of Park Hill. I also explore how these, in turn, have served to create a polarised set of narratives of the estate that, I suggest, have been appropriated to bolster the narrative of the refurbished Park Hill as a potential 'success'.

## **Getting Park Hill off the ground**

It is not the purpose of this research to write a comprehensive history of the mid-twentieth century redevelopment of the Park area of Sheffield through the development of the Park Hill and Hyde Park flats. This has been well-covered elsewhere (Bacon 1985, 1986, Saint 1996b, Harman and Minnis 2004, Gold 2007). As Harman and Minnis note of Park Hill 'it has had more written about it than any other post-war British housing scheme and has been described as a 'Modernist icon' (2004: 207). So far so daunting. What this section of the chapter is concerned with, however, is how particular narratives have come to dominate discourses of the estate and how these discourses and the values they espouse have shaped approaches to its conservation as an estate of special interest. Whilst I do not set out to rehash the history of the Park Hill development, I do, however, sketch out here some of the key points in its genesis, first mooted under the auspices of an interwar programme of slum clearance.

Much of the new development in Sheffield of the interwar period, as that for much of the country, was dominated by suburban, low-density housing of the 'Homes for Heroes' type designed as an alternative to the back-to-back, yard and terrace developments that had sprung up over earlier generations (Crooke 1961, Oliver, Davis and Bentley 1981, Harman and Minnis 2004). Patrick Abercrombie's city plan for Sheffield of 1924 (Abercrombie 1924) had pointed to appalling conditions in the Park area and recommended demolition of some of the existing housing. There was a national move to clear slums for more sanitary housing, and the first attempt to tackle the troubled Park area saw partial site clearance and the development of some low-rise flats on Bard Street in the 1930s (Bacon 1985, Saint 1996b, Harman and Minnis 2004). This inter-war development came to divide the Park Hill Development site as the retention of properties along this stretch later drove the development of Park Hill and Hyde Park as two distinct estates. War-time saw the plans shelved. After the war and the publication of the city plan in 1945 (Sheffield Town Planning Committee 1945), the focus in Sheffield first shifted away from the Park area towards plans for the new Norfolk Park estate. But two things had a significant effect on returning attention to the Park. The first was that the Corporation applied to the government to extend its city boundaries, but in 1951



this application was refused. The second was the release of a government White Paper centred upon slum clearance and public housing (Gold 2007:215). This simultaneous pinching of boundaries and emphasis upon numbers in the provision of public housing meant that high rise, high-density housing was pretty much an inevitability, although nationally 'almost nothing of this kind had yet been done' (Saint 1996b:21). On 4<sup>th</sup> December, 1950, the Town Planning Committee for the city Corporation received a report from their planning officer suggesting that 'a departure' was necessary from the inter-war practice of constructing semi-detached housing' (Sheffield Libraries, Archives and Information 2010:10). Of no little significance was the influence also, of the architectural press and their emphasis upon the rectitude of modernism (Dannatt 1959, Gold 2007, Higgott 2007). It appears that prior to the war, consideration was not given by the city to the development of units of more than five stories, but by the later 1940s this had changed (Bacon 1985). Saint credits Womersley and his 'shrewd tactical support' (1996b:13) for the successful conversion of key figures within the city's structure of governance to the modernist enterprise as manifest in multi-storey housing. The city treasurer, as part of this manoeuvring, was taken to visit Le Corbusier's much-vaunted Unite d'Habitation in Marseilles. Visits had been made by Sheffield staff and dignitaries to inspect public housing prototypes in London in the 1930s, and in 1949 and 1954, deputations were sent from Sheffield to study the multi-storey housing first in Denmark and Sweden and then continental Europe (1996b). A further visit to London in 1959 was undertaken once Park Hill had started on site and was intended to examine how other estates had provided resident amenities that were 'social, recreational and general' (Sheffield Libraries, Archives and Information 2010:15). Exposure of significant figures driving the provision of new housing in Sheffield to continental high-rise 'success' was both deliberate and sustained.

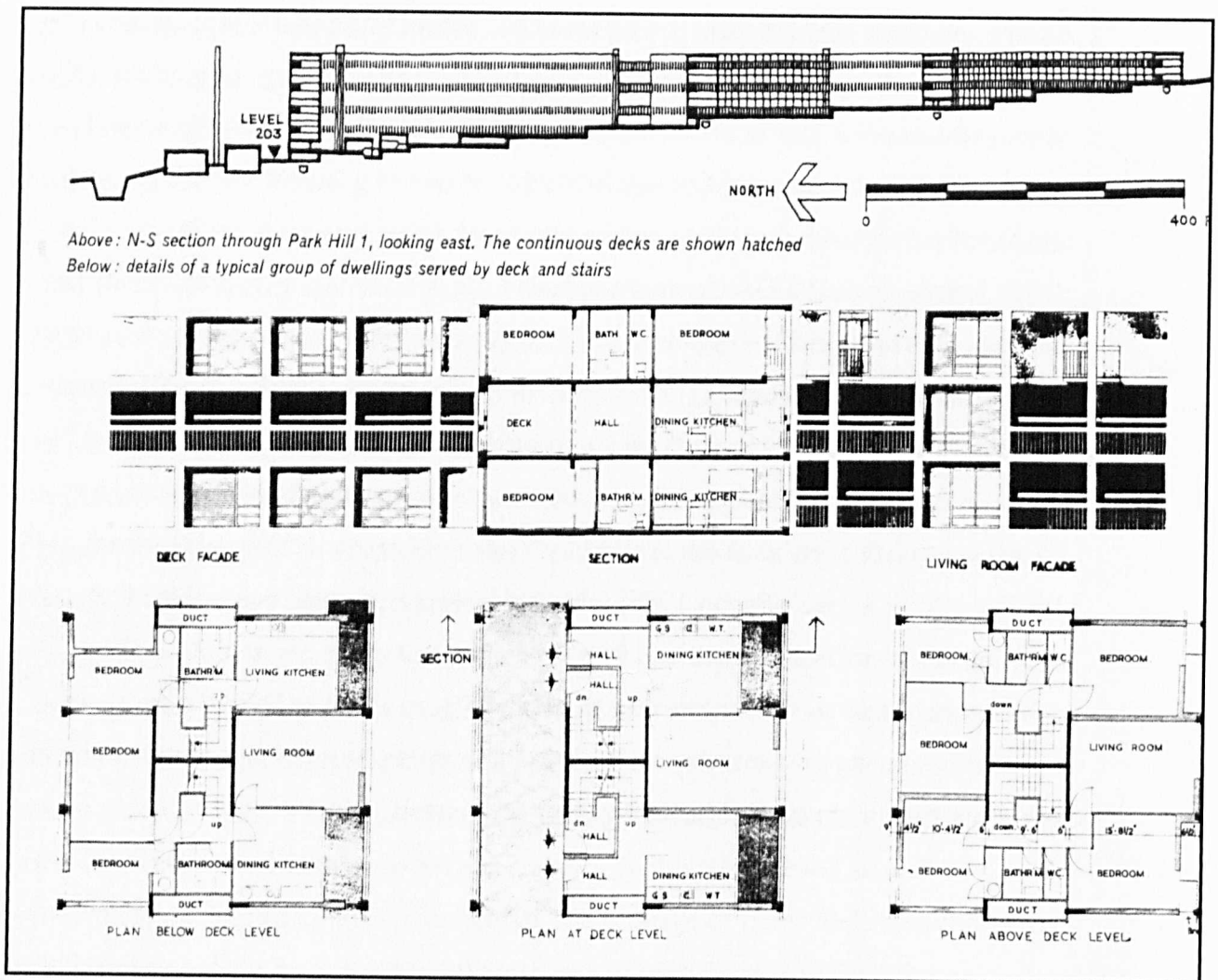
Planned city expansion and assessment of new housing demand in Sheffield put the number of new homes needed in 1950 at 55,000 to be built over twenty years. In August 1955 the Housing Committee's Slum Clearance and Redevelopment Programme report was approved and taken forward to the City Council including Park Hill as one of four prime areas for redevelopment (Gold 2007). Planning permission was granted by the Minister for Housing and Local Government in 1956 for Phase I of the scheme, to redevelop the 'notorious' Park area, also known as

'Little Chicago' (Harwood 2000:1.26). As a departure from the approved city development plan, ministerial sanction was required (Bacon 1985:9). The construction of the estate was conceived as 3 phases of what was known as the Park Hill Redevelopment scheme. From May 1961 the estates became differentiated as Park Hill and Hyde Park, or Park Hill I and Park Hill II (Banham 1961). The Sheffield Public Works Department was awarded the contract with estimated costs of £2,158,587 and on 1 March 1957 the formal Notice to Commence Works was served (Sheffield Libraries, Archives and Information 2010). By 1<sup>st</sup> March 1961 all 995 flats of stage I of the redevelopment (Park Hill) were finished at a cost of £2360 per unit (Bacon 1985:19). By the time of the publication of the Corporation's *Ten years of Housing* in April 1962, 152 of the planned units at Hyde Park were also complete (1962:42). They were finally finished in 1966.

It is well known that Lewis Womersley, Sheffield city architect, recruited Jack Lynn and Ivor Smith on the back of Lynn's unsuccessful competition entry for the Golden Lane estate in 1951-2, a scheme which had proposed deck access (as did that of the more-celebrated Smithsons). Both Lynn and Ivor Smith had studied at the renowned Architectural Association under the tutelage of Peter Smithson and were well-placed to benefit from the school's intellectual take on modernism (Bacon 1985). The Smithsons, in particular, are celebrated for their rejection of out-and-out Continental modernism and a move to embrace an anti-romantic aesthetic through a Brutalist 'honesty' of materials and form (Higgott 2004). It is probably not fair to suggest that Lynn and Smith pursued this Smithsonian dogma relentlessly, nor that they were absolutely influenced by the Smithsons themselves. If anything, their writings about Park Hill suggest a very un-Brutalist, strongly picturesque element to their thinking, which was anathema to some of the Smithsons' dictates, even if an emphasis upon locality was not (Lynn 1962, Bacon 1986). But in pursuing an honesty of materials and attempting a betterment of place they perhaps, as Banham suggests, were largely in tune with their Brutalist aspirations (Banham 1966).

In 1996 a conference was held at the Architectural Association to coincide with an exhibition *Park Hill: What next?* Paul Hyett, reporting for the *Architects Journal* on the conference found that the 'lineage' for Park Hill 'was again rehearsed: Ginzberg and Milaris through the Moscow Narkomfin apartments; Corbusier through Ville Verte,

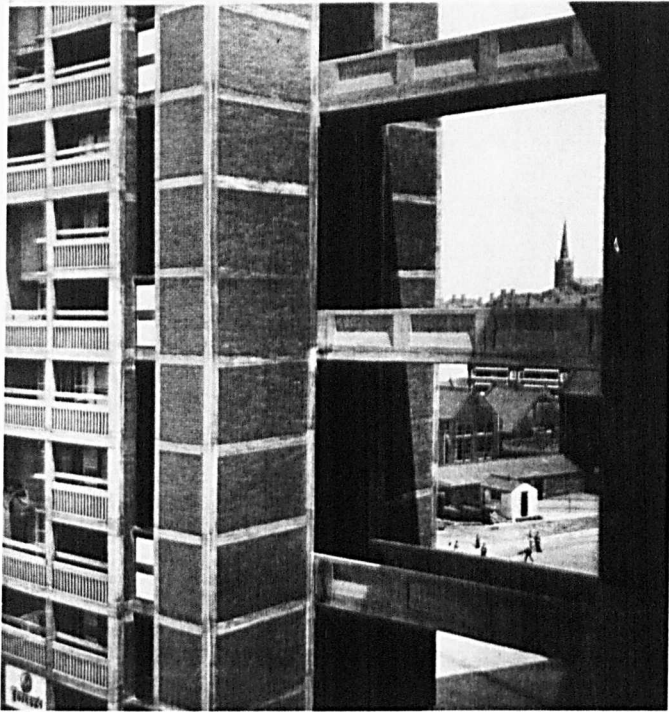
Algiers and Unite d'Habitation; the parallel LCC works at Roehampton; and the Smithsons with their seminal project for the Golden Lane housing competition'; a neat synthesis of its formal precursors (Hyett 1996:11). The architects Lynn and Smith, with the assistance of Frederick Nicklin, engineering advice from Ove Arup and John Forrester as consultant artist were working an emergent prototype. The design for the Park Hill Development included the relentlessly horizontal block(s) of the Park Hill 'single edifice' (Banham 1961:408), rising from four to thirteen storeys across the site, to be off-set by the strong verticality of Hyde Park's three towers. The blocks boasted a concrete frame with brick infill panels, gradually becoming lighter in colour, and concrete balcony fronts. Abstract wind-shields designed by Forrester were never built. Access was by means of 'streets in the air' (Banham 1962) or 'deck-access' (Bacon 1985) with the streets occurring every third floor, allowing access to maisonettes and flats on a repeated three-bay template. Front doors gave access to maisonettes on the upper floors and flats below; a clever mix of residential units on a massive scale. Units themselves were a mix of one and two-bedroom flats, and two to four-bedroom maisonettes.



The clever planning of the 9 bay unit, and the relationship with the street deck was illustrated from the start, using sectional drawings and plans.

Source: Crooke (1961)

Living accommodation – particularly bedroom space - was isolated from the decks so as to be less disturbed by activity on these 'streets'. Almost all of the streets connected to the ground, owing to the extraordinary topography of the site and the change in levels. Radical changes in direction of the blocks 'canting round endlessly and obliquely like a scorpion's tail' (Saint 1996b:13) meant that the decks changed outlook, so that the view from them changed from internal to the estate, to views over the city. As the blocks changed direction at the stairwell and life shafts, the streets continued out as bridges.



Bridges between blocks provided views out towards other landmarks in the city.

Source: Crooke (1961)

The estate was also provided with shops, space for schools, a police station, pubs and laundry facilities for residents. Amended plans from the 1960s included garaging facilities for residents and visitors on site (including garage plots that from the drawings would clearly be unworkable). From the late 1950s tenants began to move into the Park Hill estate, assisted by the on-site, resident, social worker Joan Demers, who also served to help set up a new residents' committee and was responsible for the first of the many formal attempts to understand – or perhaps claim - resident satisfaction in 1962 (Bacon 1985, Gold 2007:219).



Shops on the estate replaced facilities offered by units demolished, including those on Duke Street.  
Source: Crooke (1961)

What happened subsequently is told more through the trajectory of pre-listing publications that I refer to in the next section, but debate around the success of the estate began very soon after residents first moved in (Pevsner 1967, Pawley 1971, Banham 1973). It is worth noting that in November 1985 there was a report of the Sheffield Housing Committee that Bacon refers to in an appendix to his publication on deck access housing: *The Rise and Fall of Deck Access Housing* of 1986. For Park Hill/Hyde Park it pointed to '[a] call for special report on long term future of estate' (1986:un-numbered). By 1995 much of Hyde Park was gone.

This summarises the path towards the first development of the Park Hill estate, but it does not pick out some of the more dominant narratives of its development that have played so important a role in shaping understandings of its special interest. In the following section I move on to explore the preferred Park Hill discourse from the time of its construction and first occupation, through an emergent dissatisfaction with mass-built public housing in the 1970s and 80s and then towards its controversial listing in 1998. In particular, I draw out the strongest narratives of distinction put forward by those involved in its development. These are the particular 'Sheffield-ness' of the development and the response of its architects to the topography of the city and the site, the attempt to reform a community (and a better community at that) through particular architectural devices including the

streets in the sky, and thirdly a focus upon design qualities and material features of the estate – particularly the use of concrete. From the breathless adulatory excitement of the architectural press that met the first phase of the development through to the reflective and increasingly hostile narratives of the architectural press (Bacon 1985), these three aspects of Park Hill dominated its discourse and, I suggest, came to structure understandings of significance that has had great implications for the post-listing scheme of regeneration.

### ***A nasty place made better: Sheffield picturesque***

Through this section I try to show how early narratives of Park Hill related the new estate both to the topography of the city and to an emerging architecture of site-specific modernism. Whilst Park Hill has widely been received in terms of its Brutalist credentials (Banham 1967, Higgott 2007), I point here to its place in a romanticised narrative of the city couched in the conventions of much more classical critiques. Allusions were made, right from the first development of Park Hill to the relation of the estate to the wider landscape of the city of Sheffield, its location on the edge of the Peak District, and also to its picturesque relation to other high-rise blocks in the city. What the early narratives suggest is that Park Hill was peculiarly rooted in its landscape and was something particularly of Sheffield. This focus upon the particularity of place is something quite different from the idea of 'location' that I discussed in my previous chapter in relation to Spa Green. It ties in with what Andrew Higgott identifies as a distinctive characteristic of post-war, as opposed to a pre-war, Corbusian modernism in England: 'The site of a work of architecture came to be seen as *specific* and to embody qualities, rather than neutral, abstract and general' (2007: 86).

The discourse of the potential of modernist architecture to achieve a better environment for all was well-established by the time that the proposals for Park Hill emerged and has been well-covered elsewhere (Gold 1997, Bullock 2002, Higgott 2007). But there was a very particular aspect to the discourse of betterment that informed both the construction and subsequent analyses of Park Hill. This related specifically to its location and topography and its place in Sheffield as one of a group of prominent high-rise housing projects that the city corporation pursued in the 1950s and '60s (Booth 2010). Through the influence of Lewis Womersley as city

architect, and an ambitious Labour-led council, Sheffield re-imagined and re-presented itself as the 'city on the move' (Coulthard 1972), striving to establish standards for housing, celebrating and publicising its efforts to do so through recourse to both written and visual media. Not only were Park Hill and other developments presenting a riposte to Leeds' pioneering 1930s Quarry Hill housing development (now demolished), they were also setting Sheffield on the map as pushing forward the post-war, modernist vision, where larger cities, even London, had not: 'No other authority produced a greater range of housing in the post-war years than did Sheffield under Lewis Womersley' (Harwood 2000:126). It was, as Hyett put it, that 'circumstance and ambition collided happily to provide great opportunities' (1996:11).

Sheffield, as noted by an *Architectural Design* special about the city in September 1961, was 'still an isolated city' in the early 1960s (1961:390) and the new developments pursued by the Corporation pursued a very nuanced response to its topography. A narrative of the attempt to capture the momentum of modernism through a specific relationship with the host landscape can be seen at its most pronounced, perhaps, in the Corporation's 1962 publication *Ten Years of Housing in Sheffield* offering Park Hill as only one of so many schemes, each 'to be carefully integrated into the whole Town Plan' (1962:3). This glorious publication illustrated mass housing projects stretched across the landscape of the city, with Park Hill, Woodside (Burngreave) (now demolished) and Netherthorpe (reconfigured) all consciously presented as inter-related: 'Each scheme can be seen from the sites of the other two and in designing them this important visual relationship has been carefully borne in mind' (1962:8). There was a deliberate visual play with the topography of the city, with intended markers of new development at various vantage points asserting this holistic approach by the Corporation to the city's renewal. The essentially picturesque use of towers as landmarks in the way of church spires is given clear credence in the *Ten Years of Housing*, with a direct reference to Italian hill towns (1962:3, Booth 2010:86) and an emphasis upon the compositional qualities of the Park Hill development on the brow of the hill: 'the vertical treatment of Park II [Hyde Park] will contrast with the horizontality of Part I [Park Hill] to complete the visual composition of the hillside' (Sheffield City Corporation 1962:40-1). Lynn even made explicit reference to the picturesque potential of the development in terms of



the landscapes of Capability Brown and his axiom of 'flood the valleys, plant the hills' (1962). The dramatic interplay of the 'limbs' of the estate is similarly compared to mountain views in the *Architectural Review* in 1961: 'when one looks out from some part of it and see another of its limbs swinging across the view, the effect is like that of suddenly realizing that the railways lines on the other side of some valley in Switzerland are the same that one's train traversed a few moments before' (Banham 1961:409). And for Hyde Park Womersley conceived of the ramps linking pedestrian areas as 'hanging gardens' (Sheffield Libraries, Archives and Information 2010:20). Not only were the vertical emphases of the hill tops made use of, Womersley also made reference to the horizontal mass of the Park Hill blocks along the skyline 'to emphasise the topography' (2010:16).

As well as the relationship of the Park Hill development with the new, high-rise landscape of Sheffield was the narrative of its relationship with the tough, material qualities of the site. Banham praised the statuesque architecture and its relation with the landscape but also framed praise for Park Hill in terms of the monumentality of the host landscape and a consequent need for no prettification: 'When you stand back from the block at the down-hill end and peer up at the fourteen storey cliff of habitation from the depths of the Sheaf Valley, the details dwindle into insignificance' (1962:134). It was, as he had called it for the *Architectural Review* 'a big single dominant form over an area that is irresolute when seen in long views across the valley' (1961:192). Part of this was inevitable given that: 'The site is steep in the Sheffield way' (Pevsner 1967:466). But the peculiarity of the site and its regular changing levels also allowed its developers not only to bring their innovative street decks out to ground level 'thanks to the contours of the site' (ibid:466) but also 'to organize the main services in a very direct manner' (Crooke 1961). The design was also responsive to the landscape in opening up increasingly wide courtyard spaces between blocks as the estate progressed across the levels towards the north of the site (Esher 1983).

Higgott, again, distinguishes post-war modernism in this country as being responsive to location and discusses how 'places were now seen to have their own narratives' (2007: 86). The established narrative for the Park area of the city was one of deprivation and anti-social, even criminal behaviour, as one of the most 'notorious

slums' (Abercrombie 1924, *Architectural Review* 1961, Sheffield Corporation Housing Development Committee 1962, Harman and Minnis 2004). I draw attention to the use of visual markers in the city in its preferred discourse of betterment from the late 1950s/early 1960s, because of this pre-existing place narrative of the Park just where Park Hill was to be built. With the new development of Park Hill a new place-narrative was consciously being created that sought to integrate architecture and conspicuous social improvement in one ambitious scheme: 'On a straggling, sloping site at Park Hill, the city Architect's Department re-housed an entire slum clearance area in one gigantic building whose sheer size would be sensational anywhere in the world' (Banham 1962:132). Right from the outset it was important that the Park Hill development presented as change from the status quo, but still within the context of the city as a host landscape. That the change in the Park area should be visible was understood as being of great significance. Gold quotes Lewis Womersley in a BBC television interview arguing just this: 'I saw the possibility of replacing these [two storey houses] with towers of flats on hill-tops with open space as a foreground to them so that in their redevelopment people could see the transformation that had been brought about'(2007:215, my italics). And as Banham recognized in the *Architectural Review*: 'the whole site is very much in view from all other high ground in Sheffield (1961:403). More importantly, perhaps, for this research project, this emphasis upon visible change as part of a changed place narrative is one that prefigured the later, post listing discourse of Park Hill. Once again, this came to be framed as a *conspicuous* move from deprivation and failure towards an integrated scheme responsive to the landscape and character of the city; one of 'exceptional prominence' (Sheffield Libraries, Archives and Information 2010:21). I discuss this further in the next part of the chapter.

### ***Moving and making a community***

So much of the early discourse of Park Hill was about the 'community' and how this could be simultaneously transplanted and improved through the device of the streets in the sky, the outlook from these street decks, and the spaces provided around the lift and stairwells for informal interaction (Dunleavy 1981, Bacon 1985, Cruickshank 1995, Harman and Minnis 2004, Gold 2007). There are, of course the abiding images of the ideal Park Hill community; housewives talking, the milk float and children 'at play'. Through this section I wonder whether these written and visual narratives

were – possibly even at the time – sentimental constructs of working class life misrepresentative of the reality of the community life they were supplanting. But they were also hugely important in *instructing* the incoming community in how to respond to, and live in, the new architecture. The Park Hill community, I suggest, was a powerful rhetoric of an improved society, projected by the professionals involved in the redevelopment of the estate and which sought to draw residents in through persuasive narratives and actions. Through the narratives of remaking community I trace how certain key themes emerged in how the significance of the estate later came to be argued. In the subsequent section exploring the post-listing narratives of Park Hill I return to these themes of imagined communities and narratives of betterment, but here I set out to show how these narratives emerged from the first construction of the estate and in turn came to shape the discourse of its significance.



Shots of the street decks in use, featuring a milk delivery, housewives at their front doors, and a child

playing; all recurrent motifs in the visual discourse of Park Hill. Source: Banham (1962)

Harman and Minnis rather drily point out that for all its streets in the sky, Park Hill replaced not so much a street-based, but a yard-based community: 'Ironically, Park Hill's streets in the sky did not actually reflect the pre-war street life of Sheffield, which was largely based on the court rather than the street. The houses in any case had largely been cleared so that there was little opportunity to decant an existing community into the new flats' (Harman and Minnis 2004:211). This pattern was noted at the time by *Architectural Design*, in a special issue of 1961 on Sheffield: 'A group of up to 25 'back-to-backs' would have a yard, generally unpaved and used by both street and yard-facing tenants... the yard formed the common ground for this group of houses' (Crooke 1961: 385). Against such a background the professionals involved in the first development of Park Hill emerged with an architecture that tried to recreate what, essentially, had not been there before, based upon ideas of both a 'proper' working class life (Cole and Furbey 1994) and a belief in the potential of the architecture to deliver that: 'strong determinist views of the influence of architectural design' (Dunleavy 1981:57).

This emphasis upon the 'ordinary' life was clearly important to the architects of Park Hill; it was very much attuned to progressive architectural thinking of the day. Gold tells how the Smithsons, for their earlier Golden Lane competition had adopted the theory of Urban Reidentification (1997a) by which it was thought a 'housing development could be infused with a sense of communal life' achieved through set hierarchies of 'house, street, district and city' to rehumanise and anchor residents' relations with their environment' (1997a: 228, C20 Society 2010). By focussing upon the potential for children's street play (1997a:225) the Smithsons argued for the street as the first exploratory extension of the house, prefiguring, in 1952, what Park Hill went on to develop in practice. There was a strong, normative narrative of how to live in the new estate that went with this thinking. As Dunleavy saw it in the 1980s: 'social responsibility [as architects saw it] thus came to mean incorporating in high-rise designs features which it was supposed would produce desired forms of social behaviour' (1981:57). Gold agrees (1985:64). Banham, in turn, relates of Womersley that 'it was his policy to ensure that those about to be "decanted" ... were as fully informed as possible. A series of large-scale public meetings were held, all relevant city officials were expected to be present, explanations were given viva

voce and all questions (usually about whippets I hear) were answered' ... 'they were probably the most carefully 'briefed' tenants ever to move into anything anywhere' (Banham 1973:156).

In his 1962 *Guide to Modern Architecture* Banham, as one of Park Hill's greatest advocates and co-member of the 'Independent Group' with the Smithsons (Gold 1994:224), included a series of photographed 'Everyday view of the street decks' that I have reproduced above (1962:134). These modest, black-and-white vignettes are close-ups of inhabitants on the decks; first having the milk delivered, second of women talking to each other at the front doors, with a child gazing out over the concrete balusters, and third of a child apparently 'at play'. Over the page is a small picture entitled 'Street decks and pedestrian bridge at junction-point' showing two small children out on their tricycles at the point of the pedestrian decks intersecting (1962:135). These pictures are accompanied by two large photographs of the Park Hill estate, one taken from the air, and another of a view towards the bridges that link the blocks, taken from ground level. Conforming to the modernist convention these larger 'views' are of the architecture without any inhabitants (Higgott 2007) in contrast to the small 'incidental' shots of life on the estate. I draw attention to the use of images here because of the importance that contemporary narratives of the estate placed upon the street decks as vehicles of making a community and the persuasive force of the images in presenting this narrative. The decks, says Banham: 'become the real social backbone of social communication and grouping as well – at corners and other natural points of human aggregation, kids play, mums natter, teenagers smooch and squabble, dads hash over union affairs and the pools' ((1962:134). In other words, there was an authorized discourse of living on Park Hill (Smith 2006) which required the use of the decks as points of social interaction in 'the same fatal act of condescension' on the part of the designers that informed Spence's efforts to design-in the washing lines of the tenants of the Gorbels (Hanley 2007:117).

To suggest that the milk float, playing children and chatting mums became the leitmotifs of how Park Hill was presented is no exaggeration. Quite apart from the architects' own assertions of their importance (Lynn 1962, Lewis 1965) Pevsner noted the decks as 'the most interesting innovation of Park Hill' and subscribing to

the approved narrative, wrote of these 'acting as an internal street for the milkman to drive along, for children to play and for housewives to step out of the flats and chat' (1967:466). Banham did not just write; he illustrated them all. This was an idealised working class community in its presentation. Again the milkfloat, again the children: 'Their width is sufficient to accommodate children's games and small wheeled vehicles for deliveries and furniture removals' (1961:409). These images had a persuasive force in the narrative of naturalising the use of the street decks. By grafting the everyday of domestic life onto the less familiar modernist forms they sought to both instruct and reassure the residents and architectural press. Or, as Hanley rather cynically put it: 'it was hoped that the sight of the Unigate man might help to create a sense of continuity with the day when people still lived on the ground' (2007:116). In a more measured tone, even *Architectural Design* questioned the full realisation of a community through the decks; "this ambivalent, neutral, harsh-framework of routes connecting thresholds – while it gives a strong *visual* sense of location... provides no *functional* location whatever. Only front doors line the deck, and it promotes no grouping of neighbours on the scale of hanging out washing, mending a bike, buying a newspaper: the strands that can really bring neighbours together' (Crooke 1961)

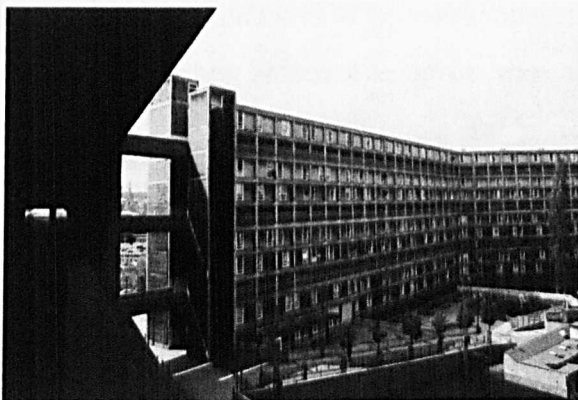
The focus upon the function of the decks is so dominant in much of the literatures that accompanied the development of Park Hill that it somewhat eclipsed the wider community-based initiatives. The provision of shops, pubs, laundry facilities and the expectation of a school on site were similarly concerned with the provision of facilities requisite to making and sustaining a community, but received much less attention. Drawings deposited with the RIBA show a careful noting of shop uses on Duke Street prior to their demolition for the new Park Hill development and there are photographs in the *Architectural Design* special of 1961 showing both shops on the 'Pavement' and the communal laundry in use. Sheffield Corporation also said that 'it is hoped to create pleasant surroundings in scale with the inhabitants and to avoid the oppressive overpowering feeling sometimes produced by large schemes of multi-storey flats' (Sheffield Libraries, Archives and Information 2010: 18).

Community facilities were provided (and *Architectural Design* criticized the Gleadless development for less-than-comparable provision), and a community accordingly expected to flourish. That it more-or-less did was argued over and again (Pawley

1971, Banham 1973, Cruickshank 1995, Waite 1995, Gold 2007). But, perhaps more importantly, the narrative of architecture-makes-community at Park Hill had been established.

### ***Innovations with concrete as a way of life***

I have tried to show in the preceding sections of this chapter how the particular qualities of Park Hill's location in Sheffield and the drive to create a new community through decks and other aspects of the design became core rhetorics of Park Hill from its inception. The third key narrative of its development relates to its use of concrete, both as a means of achieving mass housing, and as a material aligned to the modernist aims. This is borne out in responses both to its use in making the frame, and as a vehicle for smaller detail, particularly the brick. As Pawley pointed out in 1971 the idea of functionalist architecture in the post-war period 'was in reality a kind of *morality* for design and materials' (1971:719) and Park Hill's first reception was framed in these terms. Park Hill has become known as: 'a translation into practice of Team X's new approach to urbanism and the value of human association in the making of community' (Bullock 2002:146), both in intention, and form. It is also known as an icon of British Brutalism (Cruickshank 1995, Harman and Minnis 2004). But although there were clear formal and material conventions associated with Park Hill and its formal modernist credentials, from the outset it seems that the narrative of Park Hill was as architecture driven by ideas *about* architecture and was self-consciously delivered by its makers as such. That narrative was more of the potential of the design and material to deliver a programme of community housing, more consistent with the morality of materials being a means of achieving this.



Source: Harwood 2001

The arrangement of the blocks at Park Hill is extraordinary. Its 'scorpion tail' (Saint 1996b) arrangement across the site, with blocks kicking back on themselves is difficult to describe and many of the early commentators simply didn't, preferring to allude to plans and aerial shots showing its disposition. There was also a rather self-conscious rejection the preciousness of some architectural practices in terms of the delivery of Park Hill on site (Lynn 1962:454). As Harwood notes of Park Hill: 'the architects boasted that no complete elevations were ever drawn' (2000:1.26) and significantly neither the local archives nor the RIBA have over-much in the way of architects' drawings of the estate. Similarly, drawings of proposed parking and garage spacing that I refer to above seem casual in the extreme; they illustrate units, in places, would be impossible to work. The contrast with the careful archiving of presentation and construction drawings from Spa Green, a more conventional exercise in public housing whatever its formal qualities, is clear.

It is also clear that the reception of the material qualities and the design of the estate were not universally in accord with what its architects had hoped. Pawley points out how post-war economies meant limitations (1971a). Whatever materials the architects might have chosen, the expressed concrete frame had a repeating three-bay elevation of windows, concrete balcony fronts and brick infill panels which were colour-graded according to what level the flats were at. Pevsner certainly found the use of colour-gradated brick infill panels and off-set windows 'fussy' and cheerfully predicted that Park Hill – and more particularly Hyde Park – would soon become a 'slum' (1967:466). *Ten Years of Housing* also referred to these bricks and their change in tonality over the stories, but more in terms of rendering the decks legible to residents (1962:47). Writing in the *Architectural Review* of December 1961 Banham complained that: 'One must say, frankly, some of it seems under-designed and some of the junctions seem ill-considered' but went on to defend the architecture against accusations of modishness concluding that: 'some of these details seem entirely praiseworthy, notably the standard pre-cast balustrading in bay-wide units which... is strong enough to stand up as a unit in the façade pattern (1961: 407). He later conceded that 'the architectural detail with which one is immediately surrounded is plain and blunt' (1962:134) and that the "aesthetic consultancy" of John Forrester had amounted to not much more than 'some vaguely



Mondrianesque snob-screens next to the lifts' (1973:153). But *Architectural Design* made play of the functional benefits of repeated structural elements: 'The budget available for the building of Stage I [Park Hill] was strictly limited, and required the maximum possible use of structural repetition, as well as minimal finishes, in order to demonstrate to doubting city councillors and others that the advantages of this kind of housing need not be outweighed by its cost' (Crooke 1961). In the same edition careful attention was given to servicing details, the Garchey waste disposal system and 'structure', describing how the structural units 'about 160ft. in length' were given stability by the H-plan used for the stair towers, with 'wind forces... distributed laterally by floor slabs and beams. Thus the remainder of the structure is freed from stabilizing functions, allowing minimal column size and the use of pre-casting'. Photographs included a detail 'showing the stair towers rising within the structure' with drawing details of the H plan, the 'basic structural module' and 'layout of service ducts' (ibid)



Source: Courtauld Institute of Art, Art and Architecture

Whilst the structural frame was attended to it was left to the architects themselves to be more expansive about the designs and materials used. Womersley wrote of Forrester's involvement in terms of the need for visual relief to common areas around decks and lift halls, the 'special design treatment which it is felt should be integrated in the structure rather than applied in the form of mural decoration [as had been used by Lubetkin at Bevin Court and Priory Green] (Sheffield Libraries, Archives and Information 2010:20). Forrester had input in terms of the elevations,

the 'relationship of planes of brick, concrete, etc' (Banham 1961: 409) and the colour relationship between the frame and the playground equipment (PH7). It is notable that where concrete gradually came to be understood as a dominant feature of the estate, early commentators did not challenge its appearance, but commented more on its structural capabilities, as part of the naturalisation of modernist form in the architectural press at the time (Higgott 2007). The 'banal' use of coloured bricks was presented in terms of an attempted 'humanisation' of the estate (Bacon 1985, Gold 2007:217). But increasingly a discourse developed of concrete trouble and concrete dirt. By 1973 Banham was defending Park Hill against attack by Martin Pawley (1971), lauding the estate's 'post-festival aesthetic that concentrated all its architectural craft and quality in its plan and section' (so not its elevations) and already setting Park Hill as a success up against (a vandalised) Hyde Park as a failure (1973:153).

It is the narrative of the concrete that is perhaps the most complex of the three key core narratives about Park Hill that I have identified. It is the one most associated with the discourse of failure (Coleman 1990, Gold 1997, Ravetz 2001). The discourse of the association of concrete with failure is not immediate but it is one that develops in the ten or so years following construction (Bacon 1985). Pawley reports on how Demmers found that 70% of tenants reportedly 'didn't like its look' (1971:95). A parallel appreciation of its material qualities also followed. By 1995 when Dan Cruickshank reviewed the estate he commented not just on the obvious concrete decay, but on the patterning of the concrete itself: 'the trabeated frame is highly expressive, textured with board markings from shuttering' (1995:56). So mixed discourses were developed around the design innovations and the concrete at Park Hill. That these were significant, however, does not seem to have been in dispute.

### **Park Hill is 'of outstanding national historic and architectural significance'**

On August 29<sup>th</sup> 1996 the *Architects Journal* reported that: 'English Heritage proposes listing of Sheffield's Park Hill estate' (1996:9). It was under consideration as part of English Heritage's programme of listing modern architecture thematically, begun in 1992. English Heritage and the Department had made the decision for twentieth

century listing that new protocols should be put in place, that proposals to list should be made public and a degree of consultation invited (English Heritage 2010). An exhibition *A change of Heart: English Architecture Since the War. A policy for protection* (Saint 1992) accompanied the proposition for the first buildings to be included. Amongst them was the Smithsons' Brutalist Economist building on St. James. The decision to propose listing Park Hill and 66 other structures in the next wave was marked with an exhibition at the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) entitled '*Something worth keeping?*' (English Heritage 1996). The exhibition was designed to move on to Sheffield and be accompanied by a video and leaflets for residents 'to explain what listing means' (Architects Journal 1996:9). From 1995 the public were formally consulted on proposed C20 additions to the lists. This reference to the public was new to listing practice where existing protocols relied upon area-based surveys that kept proposed listings secret, assuming a culture of owners potentially preferring to demolish a property (particularly if in a run-down state) to the obligations coincidental with a building acquiring listed status. The provision for spot-listing had done much to prevent this happening, but in anticipating public resistance to some of the listing proposals, English Heritage were (perhaps bravely) forgoing this level of protection. At the same time they were extending their expert base on the proposed new listings, co-opting outside design advice from the Council for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE). For Park Hill "[English Heritage] wrote to everyone on Park Hill [about listing]. Only one [response came back] majorly against listing. [Most were concerned with] an ant infestation... not really of relevance to the decision" (PH6). Of course, it would be hard for structures like Park Hill to 'fall down' overnight but this initiative indicated that English Heritage were both aware of potential accusations of exclusivity and lack of public accountability as professional arbitrators of importance, but also that they knew that some listings, including Park Hill, would be unpopular. In 1971 Pawley had detected a public antipathy to both architects and their modernist legacy and I discussed Saint's awareness of public dislike of modernist architecture in the earlier review of the relevant literature (1992). By the late 1990s/early 2000s this had developed significantly, or as Hanley put it in 2007: 'Modernism and Brutalism... are emphatically seen as enemies of the people's will, of their desire not to be dictated to by aloof architects and their hideous buildings' (Hanley 2007:118-9).

Park Hill was listed grade II\* on 22<sup>nd</sup> December 1998. The timing of the listing when many 'on and off Park Hill wanted it demolished' was crucial, if not 'ironic... if the council thought it had problems with Park Hill before, it most certainly had them now' (Humphries 2006:24). In August 1996 the then-head of listing at English Heritage, Martin Cherry, was quoted as saying: 'Listing can only work when there is public consent behind it' (Architects Journal 1996: 9). He was reiterating the PPG's insistence upon securing public support and the need for education (DoE/DNH 1994:1.4) but the quote appears as pertinent to the narrative of proposed listing. The initiative to *explain* why Park Hill should be listed was part of an attempt to counter 'a sense of failure, incomprehension and dislike' (Saint 1992:3). But it was one that was expert-led and recognised that 'the Modern Movement' remained vastly unpopular 'in England outside the building professions' (ibid): "When it became listed, when people noticed it more [they questioned] why it's listed, it's so dirty ..." (PH3). Of course listing does not preclude demolition and even once listed there was a long period of uncertainty as to the future of the estate: "I work in lots of parts of Sheffield. Before [working on Park Hill] I thought it would be another demolition – just going to be a bit trickier" (PH6). Newspaper articles from the point of listing – and long beyond the appointment of Urban Splash - attest to a local desire to see the estate gone (Sheffield Libraries, Archives and Information 2010, PH6). The narrative of public consent I explore further below, but it is clear that there were contesting narratives of failure and success at the point of listing.

Of particular concern to this research project is the question of what was listed? I have attached the full list description of Park Hill as an appendix to this research, but it is worth noting here some of the key features mentioned. List descriptions have a famously ambiguous place in conservation practice. Intended as descriptions for the purpose of identification they now include summaries of the context of development and particular features of interest. I quote here from PPG 15, the guidance in place at the time of listing: "While list descriptions will include mention of those features which led English Heritage to recommend listing, they are not intended to provide a comprehensive or exclusive record of all the features of importance, and the amount of information given in descriptions varies considerably. Absence from the list description of any reference to a feature (whether external or internal) does not, therefore, indicate that it is not of interest or that it can be removed or altered

without consent' (DoE/DNH 1994:6.19). Given particular mention at Park Hill are the 'streets in the sky', the repeated 3-bay unit (only varied at the corners), the H-plan structural section, the 'cranked' disposition of the blocks, the 'rhythmic 2:1 pattern' of the elevations, elevational materials (including coloured brick) and details (balcony fronts; window sections) as well as the Garchey waste disposal system. The interiors are described as 'not of special interest', as is the estate office, but attention is given to shopfronts and pub interiors remaining. The description for Park Hill also includes a section entitled 'assessment'. I reproduce this here in full:

*'Park Hill is of international importance. It is the first built manifestation of a widespread theoretical interest in external access decks as a way of building high without the problems of isolation and expense encountered with point blocks. Sheffield and the London County Council had the only major local authority departments designing imaginative and successful public housing in the 1950s, and this is Sheffield's flagship. The decks were conceived as a way of recreating the community spirit of traditional slum streets, with the benefit of vehicular segregation; Park Hill has been regularly studied by sociologists ever since it opened, and is one of the most successful of its type. The deck system was uniquely appropriate here because the steeply sloping site allowed all but the uppermost deck to reach ground level, and the impact of the long, flat-topped structure rising above the city centre makes for one of Sheffield's most impressive landmarks. The result was Britain's first completed scheme of post-war slum clearance and the most ambitious inner-city development of its time' (English Heritage 2011).*

Perhaps not altogether surprisingly, Hyde Park is missing; not just in terms of the listing (it had already lost one tower and the other two had been reclad) but more surprisingly it is missing from the narrative of significance. From this moment Park Hill is, I suggest, severed from Hyde Park in the preferred discourse of its heritage significance, marking Hyde Park as the resolute failure; Park Hill the relative success. Taking the moment of listing as the crystallisation of an understanding of the special importance of the estate, I now go on to explore narratives of its regeneration and how particular values within the heritage discourse came to the fore.

## **Getting Park Hill going again**

*'Options for reinvention were explored and English Heritage then provided expert advice on the scope for change, while identifying the heritage values of the complex. These lay not only in the site's history but in the scale and vision of the original council housing scheme - in the expressed, reinforced concrete frame and the relationship of the building to the local landscape. Substantial changes to the internal layout and the infill panels within the frame could therefore be introduced without damaging its historic significance'. (English Heritage 2009)*

The regeneration of Park Hill has been accompanied by an outpouring of written and visual media that has exceeded its 'most written about' first development (Harman and Minnis 2004). This more recent narrative, however, has been little scrutinised and I explore below how the three dominant themes that informed the earlier literature and use of visual media have been revisited in the scheme for regeneration. First, however, I give some context to the regeneration of Park Hill in the wake of its listing and against a background of major works to Hyde Park (Harwood 2000, Harman and Minnis 2004). This is not, however, intended as an exhaustive account of the progress towards the applications and what precisely they entailed; that is not the subject of this research project. What I explore, rather, are the narratives – and particularly those of the professionals involved - surrounding this move towards regeneration and how certain core values in the heritage discourse have been negotiated.

The regeneration of Park Hill did not happen in a vacuum, it did so against the background of a city masterplan for Sheffield with a great emphasis upon the public realm (EDAW 2000) and changes in local governance that saw a move towards public-private partnerships that have been explored elsewhere (Bell 2004, Booth 2010). Booth discusses how a return of focus to the city centre coincided with the creation of the City Liaison Group (1992) and a building-centric focus upon high quality regeneration that in turn gave way to the Heart of the City Project and ultimately Sheffield One (2010:88-92). Sheffield One emerged from the 1998 shift from long-term incumbents, Labour, to Liberal Democrat control of the Council and in turn saw the creation of the Sheffield City Development Agency (subsumed by the Urban Regeneration Company in 2000) and Sheffield First. The Sheffield Urban

Regeneration Company, a private, public and community sector organisation was based around a partnership between three key organisations: English Partnerships, Yorkshire Forward and Sheffield City Council. From here came the commissioning of the design-led masterplan of 2000 for the city by EDAW (Bell 2004:74-76). The 2000 masterplan, revised in 2008, included seven major projects all with a focus upon the importance of the public realm. The result, says Booth, was that: 'More or less for the first time since the building of Park Hill, Sheffield has been in the national public eye and its experience held up as an example to others' (Booth 2010:95). Although not included in this first raft of proposals, the revised masterplan of 2008 went on to incorporate Park Hill, by then an area targeted for Housing Market Renewals.

This focus upon multi-agency partnership, the public realm, building-led proposals and high quality regeneration went on to characterise the narratives of the search for a way forward with Park Hill. In 1995 Dan Cruickshank was expressing concern about the possible demolition of the estate, fearing that Park Hill might prove 'beyond the wit of its guardians to get the best out of it' (1995:61) and for some time there were many that hoped he would be right (Humphries 2006:24). In 2004 the City Council and English Partnerships appointed Urban Splash and the then-Manchester Methodist Housing Group to front its regeneration from a shortlist that included developers Wimpey, AMEC and Artisan (Sheffield Weekly Gazette 2004:36). They, in turn appointed architects Hawkins\Brown and Studio Egret West and landscape architects Grant Associates and on 21<sup>st</sup> August 2006 an outline planning permission for the 'comprehensive refurbishment and regeneration of the estate' was granted permission by the City Council (06/00828/OUT). Most unusually, planning permission was granted separately from a coincident detailed application for listing building consent, allowing instead for detailed design matters to be left as conditions. Guidance on such procedures from PPG 15 suggested that local authorities should proceed otherwise: The Act empowers an authority to seek such particulars as it requires and an authority should certainly seek any particulars necessary to ensure that it has a full understanding of the impact of a proposal on the character of the building in question. An authority should not accept an application for consideration until it has sufficient information to provide such understanding. (DoE/DNH 1994:B3). That such confidence was demonstrated in the applicants by the local authority is indicative of the strength of the partnership at this

point, as well as a long period of pre-application discussions referenced also by English Heritage (2007, 2009). In 2007, further applications for reserved matters (07/02476REM) and listed building consent (07/02475/LBC) were received for Phase I of the redevelopment. The works included significant alterations to the blocks as well as reconfiguration of the public realm. In summary, their immediate impact upon the buildings were:

- 'Extensive reconfiguration and refurbishment of all residential units within the North Block' to provide 321 units (in place of 312) (Sheffield City Council 2007)
- The formation of a new access route into the site from Sheffield centre, entailing demolition of a 4x4 bay to be known as 'The Cut'
- Removal and replacement of all windows
- Removal of all brick infill panels and replacement with anodised aluminium in different colours
- Change to glass:solid ratio in residential bays
- Removal and replacement of balcony structures on levels 4,7,10 and 13
- Concrete repairs to main frame
- Creation of new single storey, stone-clad structure ('Pavilion') on new route into site
- Construction of 9 storey car-park to include areas of office use and with space for single storey pavilions housing a mix of retail, community facilities and nursery
- 'Refurbishment of the existing cores at each end of the north block to act as a 'book end' to the block and the creation of a new core to the rear façade' (ibid)
- Alterations to ground floor units to achieve double height spaces for mixed retail/commercial use
- Creation of new climbing wall by removal of fabric on four storeys 'carving a four-storey hollow in the existing building' (ibid)
- 'The introduction of secure entrance points to the deck access [gated access]
- New external storage for the flats

While has written of the duality of modernist architecture's discourse in current schemes for regeneration and how on one hand modernist architecture is often



deplored, a 'powerful symbol of economic and social decline' but on the other, once listed as heritage 'assets' it offers something positive for consumption. Amongst these conflicting pressures 'what gets preserved and why' comes from 'multi-scaled negotiation' (2006:2402). The negotiations at Park Hill have been multi-scaled to an extraordinary degree, involving a number of changes to the key bodies. This was a complex partnership at many levels involving English Partnerships, the Housing Corporation, Greatplaces Housing Group (incorporating Parkway Housing Association that was Manchester Methodist Housing Association), Sheffield City Council, Transform South Yorkshire/Homes and Communities Agency, and Urban Splash at the 'top', together with English Heritage. The discourse of partnership is of enormous importance here, not simply as a means of levering in money, but allowing Park Hill to become the locus of agencies' demonstrable success: "The money will come to the right project at the right time. What we need to do helps other agencies achieve what they need, *through* Park Hill" (PH6). CABE gave detailed design input as part of the consultative process, as did the Conservation Advisory Group and Urban Design panels for Sheffield, and the Twentieth Century Society. Urban Splash set up inclusive consultative forums for residents resulting in 'a total of 17 comment sheets ... of which 16 [were] generally positive and broadly in support of the application whilst also raising some questions and concerns' (Sheffield City Council 2007: un-numbered). Seven comments otherwise were received, with one formal objection. Websites sprang up charting the course of proposals, and resident's experiences of living on Park Hill (BBC 2011, Urban Splash 2011).

Modified plans for Phase I have gone ahead despite a well-documented resistance from the Liberal Democrats. As Humphries wrote in January 2006: 'The Labour controlled council wants to see Urban Splash regenerate Park Hill, but the considerable minority of Liberal Democrats want to see it demolished' (2006:24). The subsequent Liberal Democrat majority in the council has now, as I write been reversed. Particular personnel have set their caps against the scheme; others have been passionate supporters of it. One participant working in housing and regeneration rued: "The only question I get is 'Does that mean we get to knock it down?'" (PH6). But what comes through strongly from all the outpouring of literature and the interviews I undertook is a strong narrative of collaboration, of partnership and of strong leadership, often attributed to the leadership of Bob

Kerslake who “turned up at places, would lobby, put his personal stamp on it. The partners knew he was leading it” (PH6). That there is a heritage cachet to the project has both enabled its regeneration and in turn allowed Park Hill to become the locus of the multi-agency negotiations. Whilst this multi-agency aspect of the more recent programme of works at Park Hill marks it as distinct from the first development, I argue below that its narratives have been largely the same; the re-invigoration of a particular part of Sheffield, the reworking of a community through design intervention and the significance of concrete and design detail as a means of achieving this.

### ***Something better about Sheffield***

The first narratives of Park Hill, as I have shown above, were very concerned to create a story of the place being something particularly of Sheffield; both as part of its pioneering architectural programme and in terms of its topography and sense of place (Sheffield City Corporation 1962, Gold 1985, Harwood 2000, Harman and Minnis 2004). In this section I try to show how discourses similar to those of its first development have been redeployed in its scheme of regeneration. They re-appropriate the arguments for Park Hill as particularly something of Sheffield. In doing so, the narratives of regeneration both acknowledge and then reject the narrative of a failed Sheffield and lay claim to new Sheffield success - quite overtly in the form of pop music references (Hatherley 2010) - and a singular determination to improve the public realm (Booth 2010). Persuasive rhetorics are employed by professionals involved to help secure a re-imagining of Park Hill – and I use this term to include both written and pictorial narratives – in a massive scheme of persuasion ‘winning the hearts and minds of those opposing the redevelopment’ (Waite 2005:16). Here I show how a particular narrative of a ‘failed’ Sheffield (which includes Park Hill and Hyde Park) is deconstructed and displaced by a new rhetoric of ‘success’, constructed in terms of reference to the estate.

### ***Sheffield failed***

Harman and Minnis (2004) and Booth (2010) refer to the extraordinary collapse of the steel industry in Sheffield and the consequent effects upon the city. In many ways Park Hill tracked its decline. As the reputation of architects and the modernist ideal

rapidly collapsed in the wake of the Ronan Point disaster of 1968 and high profile projects that either didn't quite work or were badly received (Pawley 1971, Bacon 1985, Gold 1997, Holmes 2001), then so went the reputation of blocks like Park Hill. Here, I point to some of the rhetoric of failure that preceded its listing, and preceded the works to regenerate the estate in the wake of that event. What this section does not do, however, is propose an exhaustive survey of negative comments about the estate. Rather, I set out to show some of the recurrent themes that emerge in the discourse of Park Hill as a failure and how they precede a turn to narratives of Park Hill as a place for success.

The discourse of Park Hill as being not altogether an absolute success started almost immediately, as I referred to above, and doubts about its design and the efficacy of that can be seen, although largely with an implicit expectation that these would not prove catastrophic (Crooke 1961, Banham 1961). That came more with Pevsner's awful prediction of the future 'cosy slum' (1967) with extraordinary disregard for its inhabitants. The voice of the residents was an early part of the rhetoric of failure. In his 1971 article for *New Society* Pawley poured scorn on attempts to demonstrate resident satisfaction with the Park Hill flats, citing an article in *Architectural Review* of November 1967 which showed how residents had failed to 'remember' the proposed function of the streets, concluding that 'seen against these cosmic failures', public questions about architects and their productions were 'not that surprising' (1971:720). Other problems emerged early into the occupancy of the estate including noise from the street decks and neighbouring works and were afforded similar attention (Banham 1961, Sheffield Libraries, Archives and Information 2010:33).

Other than resident complaints, a separate narrative developed of dirt and ugliness. In November 1967 the *Architectural Review* noted dirty, broken lifts on site. The DoE survey of resident satisfaction found complaint about the state of the lifts (DoE 1972). Even Banham conceded that by 1973 Park Hill's city-side was 'fouled from dirty at the top to filthy at the bottom by Sheffield's leading industrial product – smog' (1973:153). Tellingly, though, he drew a distinction between Park Hill and Hyde Park, quoting a conversation with locals in which they defended Park Hill: and compared it favourable to Hyde Park:

“Better than Hyde Park? Why”

“Hyde Park’s gonna be slums in another two years”.

“Isn’t this going to be slums?”

“Ner...’cause its much cleaner, not so many vandals” (ibid)

This discourse of dirt became important to an association between the flats and failure, as well as a wider association between modernism, dirt and failure that Campkin and Dobraszcyk explore in their 2007 introduction to *Architecture and Dirt*. Dirty modernist architecture is often equated in the narratives of modernism with failed modernism (2007:349, Higgott 2004). Park Hill and Hyde Park were, by the early 1970s already dirty. Campkin and Dobraszcyk suggest that a perception of dirt in this context is associated with the failure of the social enterprise, what Coleman more vigorously set out to measure and explain as social ‘malaise’ (Coleman 1990). A strong critical discourse grew up that focussed upon the dirt and its design: “[People asked] why it’s listed, its so dirty” (PH3) and as PH6 said: People often ask why there is “so much [spent] on such a horrible building” (PH6). And Beard noted in 2001 how ‘dirt ... dulled the effect’ of the colour-gradated brick panels (2001:180).

A third narrative of failure was played out through major intervention in the built fabric and is a pattern that followed similar practice around the country (Hanley 2007). Despite continued reference to resident satisfaction (Bacon 1985, Gold 2007), the narratives of the dirty, failing Park Hill and Hyde Park flats persisted. In 1975 the council Housing Committee heard of problems on Hyde Park and in 1976 the population of the estate was ‘thinned out’ in an attempt to help redress some of its problems (Sheffield Libraries, Archives and Information: 37, Esher 1981). By 1985 both Park Hill and Hyde Park were in a state that required special reports to the Council’s Housing Committee (Bacon 1986). Hyde Park underwent structural surveys in 1984-5, was subject to further reports by the Housing Department, was put forward for refurbishment a few years later and ultimately underwent substantial demolition, reconfiguration and cladding for the World Student Games in 1991 (Harman and Minnis 2004). Such a massive intervention could not but point to failure of part, at least, of what the whole Park Hill Redevelopment Scheme (Housing Development Committee of the Corporation of Sheffield 1962) had set out to achieve.

By the late 1980s/early 1990s Sheffield was resolutely *not* the city that could rely on Park Hill flats and its pioneering architecture of the 1960s for its reputation. As Bacon shows a strong, if not unrelenting 'myth' of its failure developed, focused particularly upon its utopian ideals (1985). The release of the hit film *The Full Monty* in 1997 included shots of both Park Hill and Hyde Park in its over-riding presentation of Sheffield as a city down on its luck: 'The flats were even ridiculed in the film *The Full Monty*' (Waite 2005:16). And the film *Sheffield: a City on the Move* (1972) that had boasted of the city's modern housing, was roundly derided in the same. Hanley claims that: 'those who bailed out, and some who remained, nicknamed Park Hill 'San Quentin' after Johnny Cash's excoriating take on the eponymous prison (Hanley 2007:117). If not an absolute failure, things were bad enough at Park Hill for it to ultimately qualify under the terms of Housing Market Renewal. The reputation of the estate was so bad in some quarters that in 2006 Holmes used an un-annotated photograph of Park Hill as shorthand for 'the mass housing disaster' (2006:34)

I have pointed here to a decline in Park Hill's reputation; one that was married to that of Sheffield more widely. It was a narrative of unpopularity if not failure (Cruickshank 1995). Or as one participant put it: "The image of that everything went wrong in Sheffield in the '60s and '70s" (PH4). It was not absolute and nor, as I have mentioned, was it the only narrative of the estate (Bacon 1985). But it was a narrative that the ever image-conscious Urban Splash picked up on in an early publication first available online, adroitly drawing on the Sheffield band Human League's famous song of 1981 *Don't you Want Me*, starting the text with the words 'Park Hill: Don't you want me baby?' (Urban Splash 2006). Hatherley disdains this dotting-about of pop references employed by Urban Splash (2010), but it is both a smart and very timely rhetoric, as both the 1980s band Human League and Park Hill – both associated with Sheffield in the public eye - were at the time somewhat out-of-favour, but poised for some kind of return to public affection.

### **Sheffield success**

In the preceding section I set out to trace some of the narratives of decline at Park Hill and its implicit association with failure. I now set out how, at the point of listing, Park Hill began to be reclaimed as a success. The rhetoric associating Park Hill and Sheffield in terms of 'regeneration' has underpinned and structured the persuasive

efforts of those involved in the substantial proposals affecting the estate, most particularly those put forward by Urban Splash. There is a difference in the rhetoric here to that of the first construction; the narratives, I suggest, are particularly those characteristic of the regeneration activity, less those of conservation practice more widely (Carmona and Tiesdall 2007). Citing Sheffield as an example, Pendlebury (2009) sets out to show how heritage is commodified in regeneration, and in particular how 'Urban Development Corporations used place marketing to suggest a bright new future backed up by claims of a glorious past' (Pendlebury 2009:110). This is precisely what Andrew Saint was proposing for Park Hill in 1996b: 'the inner city key to a complete urban programme' (Saint 1996b:21). I try to show here that the narratives of Park Hill's regeneration have set out to reclaim the first association of its development with the landscape, topography and cultural environment of Sheffield, but draw upon not one, but two particular and glorious pasts; one of the first development in the 1960s and the second of a place in pop history.

Necessary to this narrative of success is an opposition with failure set out above: 'The people of Sheffield have been let down before and those behind this latest brave effort will need more than pretty pictures and the words of architecture's finest to make this work' (Waite 2005:17). The conjunction of this is the narrative of ugliness: 'Looming over the city on a windswept outcrop, its Brutalist deck access blocks have a grim Alphaville appeal...' (*Architects Review* 2005:86). This dual discourse of failure and success has been significant in shaping how its regeneration was approached. One participant in particular acknowledged an established rhetoric of the place as something quite distinct amongst the various Housing Market Renewal areas around the city, suggesting that Park Hill has its own status "where [a discussion] takes a life of its own" (PH6). Others spoke of a consciousness of the importance of the persuasive rhetoric of improvement in the face of opposition: "A stratagem, a strategy for warming people up to it" as one regeneration professional put it (PH2), "rebranding of the whole thing as something more appealing" as another with expertise in conservation said (PH4). Against a background of contesting narratives, the new persuasive rhetorics of Park Hill have needed to reclaim it as something for Sheffield and as something of Sheffield. In doing so they have reverted to the expressed values of its construction.

In the section on the first development of Park Hill I drew attention to a narrative of place, more particularly of the topography of Sheffield and the place of Park Hill within that. Questions emerged in the new works of how regeneration might achieve a symbiotic relationship: “Can they benefit the city?” (SG1). In the more recent narratives of Park Hill there have been distinctive re-workings of the same theme of Sheffield as host landscape to Park Hill. The first of these relates to Park Hill within Sheffield, within the Peak District and the views out of the estate, both out from Sheffield and into the city: ‘The best view across the city and beyond to the Peak District and Derbyshire Hills’ (Urban Splash 2011). Or as Hatherly put it, Park Hill is one of the buildings that ‘make great use of the thing that makes Sheffield truly special – landscape’ (2010:78). One participant even saw the regeneration of the estate in the terms put forward by Smith, Lynn and Womersley, almost as a response to their first rhetoric: “[part of a] more timeless landscape pictureseque tradition” (PH1).

There are stereotypes of Sheffield’s landscape and its relationship with the urban form (Esher 1981). The most recent marketing material from Urban Splash includes references to the estate atop one of Sheffield’s seven hills and how it will utilise this position: ‘Park Hill will have amazingly spacious one and two bedroom, duplex, dual aspect apartments with floor to ceiling glazing allowing the best city views Sheffield has to offer’ (Urban Splash 2011). This sense of being inside Park Hill looking out is also a very strong part of some of the more recent narratives of Park Hill. One participant with conservation expertise spoke of the “different vistas you get” (PH5), another with no conservation experience spoke of how it is/was “always nice to look through the windows into town” and of watching people walking onto the estate (PH3). But participants without a conservation background also spoke of how they reassessed the buildings, knowing the hopes to demolish it: “Made me look at buildings, made me listen to conversations more...I thought they were knocking it down” (PH3), or of: “Trying views and seeing something different... what could go in its place?” (PH6). And a heritage professional spoke of a degree of local incomprehension that it could be considered either important or permanent: “[People] find it strange how places like Park Hill become permanent features on the landscape” (PH4).

Part of the persuasive rhetoric around the elevations of the estate was presented in terms of a discourse of material authenticity that I explore further later in this chapter. But there is another aspect to the discourse of authenticity about Park Hill, that Park Hill is “very much part of Sheffield’s history” (PH6). Gregory picked upon this and the role of the scheme as simultaneously expansive in its reach and an authentic part of Sheffield: ‘While specific to Sheffield, the message of this project is universal, looking at what makes somewhere special different’ (Gregory 2007:77). Responsive to a sense of severance of the estate from the city, Hawkins/Brown, architects for Urban Splash, presented the regeneration as an attempt to reunify Park Hill with Sheffield: ‘It’s a vision based on knitting the estate into the rest of Sheffield’ (Waite 2006:16), reiterating the particular relationship with place set out in *Ten Years of Housing* (1962) and the early Urban Splash publication *Park Hill...* (2006). The visual discourse employed for the regeneration has largely been represented by the press in terms of the estate in isolation. High-colour realisations of the scheme put forward by Urban Splash and Hawkins/Brown had flat, aerial views of the estate, and ground plans embedded into the Sheffield landscape but many views of the blocks were largely contained and insular, or focussed upon spectral occupants of the decks (Gregory 2007: 74-77, Urban Splash 2006). Less reproduced montages, however include longer view of the proposed footbridge connecting the city to the new ‘cut’ realising a wider vision, as viewed from the city. Another artist’s impression swung out from a ground-level presentation of the ‘public realm’ and the artfully-placed proposed rocks linking the landscape back into Park Hill, and so back into the landscape (Waite 2006:16-18).



Source: Urban Splash (2006)



An additional narrative of place has grown up around Park Hill as a listed estate; a place of special interest, significance. Most articles about the regeneration works preface their articles with either descriptions of the estate as failed or more laudatory descriptions of its first reception: 'On the day it opened, Park Hill was as close to perfect as it could be' (Waite 2006:16), 'Park Hill has been regularly studied since it was first built and is one of the most successful of its type' (Gregory 2007:74), 'the famous post-war deck-access Sheffield estate' (Taylor 1996). Participants spoke of this inherent character of place without necessarily articulating precisely what that was. As one regeneration professional put it: "Visual elements that make Park Hill look Park Hill-ish" (PH2). The distinct elevational character of Park Hill as a feature of Sheffield was also recurrent: "strong horizontality" (PH4). 'Architects ... have given special consideration to the façade because of the significance of it looming over the city' (Urban Splash 2011). PH5 spoke of its totemic place in her professional consideration of its reconfiguration: "I think Park Hill's unique enough... [Will it's new form be] beautiful? I take that for granted" (PH5). But that it has such status amongst the architectural cognoscenti also meant high status architects: "To get that calibre of architects up here is quite rare [and is] one of the reasons we've got a good scheme" (PH5).



Source: Urban Splash

The landscaping works associated with the regeneration of the estate have formed a high profile part of the applications as elsewhere in Sheffield: 'The strategy presented a 'vision' of the city centre that was multifunctional, knowledge based and offered a new sense of place. It laid particular emphasis upon the quality of public spaces as an essential element in the regeneration of Sheffield's economy' (Booth 2010: 88). PH6 observed that the then Liberal-Democrat led-council did "not like geographically-based projects" but that by comparison, reactions to other Housing Market Renewal programmes around the city had not raised much by way of objections. An important part of the rhetoric of Park Hill regenerated that seeks to root it in Sheffield has been that of its public realm, 'Park life' (Urban Splash 2006): 'remodelled as a series of landscaped courts providing spaces for play, recreation and reflection' (Architectural Review 2005:86). Even despite this strong, persuasive rhetoric of improvement of the public realm, the proposed landscaping were not felt by all to secure Park Hill as integral to Sheffield. One participant with no particular remit on the wider landscaping even felt that a strong narrative of place was still needed: "the landscaping elements were fairly amorphous, not a great deal of ownership or management" (PH4).

My final point in relation to reclaiming Park Hill as part of Sheffield, and as part of Sheffield as a success relates to the use – by Urban Splash – of reference to Sheffield's successful pop bands. Owen Hatherley has also noticed this, rather harshly referring to Urban Splash's brochure as 'written in infantile music press clichés... full of quotations from Sheffield bands' (Hatherley 2010:96). The brochure had been put together by Design Republic who had previously worked on the material for the band Pulp, and who themselves had made use of Sheffield's modernist buildings, pointedly referring to Park Hill in the start of their song *Sheffield: Sex City of 1993* (Hatherley 2008). Hatherley is right in one respect, the *Park Hill... Sheffield, England* brochure includes direct quotes from, or references to Pulp, the Human League and ABC, some of the more successful bands from Sheffield. Park Hill it says is 'like Jarvis [of Pulp], a true Yorkshire hero – hard and soft, all at the same time' (2006). The presence of graffiti saying 'I love you. Will u marry me' is integrated into a paragraph entitled 'The look of love', also a song by Sheffield band ABC (1996) and one of the more powerful motifs of the preferred regeneration discourse, suggesting that Park Hill 'needed a level of romance' (Abrahams 2010:020,

Urban Splash 2011). This integration of the 'I love you' Park Hill motif with pop culture has been reiterated during its replication in neon as part of the celebrations for the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the estate. Press releases refer to how the wording was appropriated by one of the band the Arctic Monkeys, for a T-shirt (Urban Splash 2011). It is a discourse of pop success claimed for Park Hill that has been continued in the press: 'Stainless steel cutlery, bendy-buses, the Arctic Monkeys'... (Gregory 2007:74). As a regeneration trope, the recalling of Park Hill in the same context as this pop culture both serves to remind of success, but also points to an innovative, "wacky" (PH5), "jazzing it up" (PH3) take to the new proposals. That the claim has been reciprocal (Creative Sheffield 2011, Urban Splash 2011) only serves to bolster this effort of re-imagining the estate as part of Sheffield as a success.

### ***A better place: Ideas and social improvement through architecture***

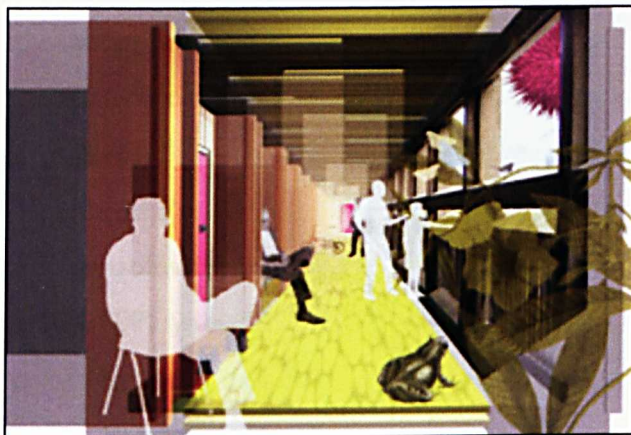
*'It has to be said that people from other countries find the British obsession with failure quaint, and rather perplexing (Forty 1995:34)*

I have made reference, in the earlier part of this chapter to a dual discourse of failure and success for Park Hill, and set out to show in the previous section how this has been related to the city. Here I set out to explore how the earlier discourses of mending and reforming a community and the place of the design of the estate in this have been re-appropriated and transformed in the regeneration discourse, but also how they have shaped arguments relating to its significance. In doing so I make particular reference to discussions around the narratives of community and residents and the role of the street decks. The regeneration of Park Hill has been embedded in consultative practices that involved residents at all stages 'as is the Urban Splash way... not merely as a nod and a wink to the compulsory process of community consultant, but as well-proven tactic to govern and help ensure a successful and commercially viable solution' (Gregory 2007: 74) and sought to be responsive to what has been widely hailed as a robust community (Cruickshank 1995, Saint 1996b, Harwood 2000, Harman and Minnis 2004). Although sometimes critical of the developers one conservation professional admitted: "You can't fault them [Urban Splash] on the way they deal with the community. You can see that some [one] in a suit from London could easily have alienated them, but they didn't" (PH5).

The least discussed change for Park Hill in the press and online coverage of its regeneration, perhaps, is the mix of tenures now proposed. This is no longer a public housing block, more “a physical shell for a community” (PH2). The proposed mix of public, private and shared ownership means an inevitable turn from what one conservation professional felt was the “real mixed development... a pensioner next to a family” (PH7) that the original design aspired to, although the rhetoric is notably similar. Urban Splash said ‘we are committed to providing a wide range of housing here to appeal to a wide variety (2006), and the consensus seems to have been that where there was trouble it was the fault of a mono-culture existing on the estate (PH4, 7). But one housing professional felt that the “old lot are going to think it’s too hoity toity. Everywhere around Sheffield has its own community centre [and] there’s not going to be a school there any more” (PH3). The mix of restaurants and shops to service the estate was of concern to a number of participants as one officer involved in the scheme put it: “Planning wouldn’t allow any more shopping [because] it’s not a district centre” (PH5). And there is concern about a transformation of the profile of the estate beyond all recognition. One conservation professional reported that: “ [Residents said] We’ve lived here all our lives. Don’t want it turned into yuppie flats” (PH7). And one with experience of housing reported:[The potential for success] all depends on the amenities around it, how people get to know each other – school, pubs. They’re not going to be there any more so I can’t see it happening’ (PH3).

The discourse of community that informs the project for the regeneration of Park Hill, is as optimistic and elusive as it was for the first building of the estate. But it is - necessarily - more ambivalent about what it is replacing. The nature of an existing community as something positive was both confirmed by participants, with one participant reporting meetings with “about 100 regulars ...[we want to] project life, success happiness into the future” (PH2) and also challenged. But there is no doubt that community is key to the current presentation of Park Hill. As Urban Splash said: ‘We want to pepper it with life’ (2006). I have discussed in a previous chapter Andrew Higgott’s observations on the modernist orthodoxy of photographing architecture in black and white and largely un-peopled (Higgott 2007). Early presentations of the estate largely conformed to this, except in attempts to assert the community benefits of the street decks or play areas, where people were

'allowed' into the frame, asserting their community credentials (Banham 1961, 1962, 1973). The visual discourse for the new Park Hill is quite the reverse, drawing very much upon the visual orthodoxies of regeneration and persuading us of a successful future: "Reality and colour, fabulous people; fabulous place" (PH2) are core to the vision. Visualisations by Hawkins\Brown and Studio Egret West are packed with people and fantastical whimsies. But these are not merely Park Hill residents: 'We want 2000 people to be well-served by Park Hill but to make it work we also need people from outside Park Hill to come in' (Urban Splash 2006).



Source: Urban Splash

The narrative of a future, unified community co-existing in Park Hill, however, was not accepted by all. One participant with longer-term experience of the site suggested that after listing, the "strong core of residents there since it was built [largely] died off in the ensuing decade"(PH7). Another spoke of the potential "problems of a single-class community" (PH5). I was told repeatedly how keen former residents are to come back, albeit to something different, much as 'the former residents who had to move from their slums to outlying Corporation estates many have now returned to live on Park Hill... but in a completely different environment' (Banham 1961). This narrative of return, however, was implied by some participants to be more nuanced. As one conservation professional put it: "A huge amount of them want to come back, particularly [those from] the 3-4 storey blocks. The one at the end, the one where they had the most social issues [less so]" (PH5). Another spoke of "little cliques" that had grown up amongst remaining residents on the estate and how consultation events had been attended by "the usual crew" and "a lot of foreign residents [who] don't mix... they're just there to live and

nothing else” (PH3). PH3 also questioned the place of the elderly in the refurbished estate, but determined that they might feel unsure of living elsewhere: “They’ve never lived anywhere else... they don’t think they’re going to be able to cope anywhere else”(PH3).

As a strong feature of the original discourse of community the decks have been endlessly discussed in critiques of Park Hill and have tended to polarise the for-or-against narratives of Park Hill: ‘The decks are now rather dispiriting places, which is no doubt a reflection of management than the psychological influence of the design’ (Cruickshank 1995: 58). As part of the current scheme the decks are to be gated. One of the participants involved in regeneration defended this: “People do wander up. You ought to be respectful... streets will be closed off at ground level” (PH2), although a conservation professional noted neutrally that “the public won’t be able to get onto the decks” (PH5). A narrative of the decks as problematic developed: ‘sociological baloney that went into Sheffield’s “streets in the air”’ (Pawley 1971:720), where ‘in practice the estate felt claustrophobic. Walkways... induced a kind of horizontal vertigo in tenants, and provided easy escape routes for muggers and burglars’ (Hanley 2007:117). ‘As Bower put it [the leader of Sheffield City Council in 1995] the decks ‘provide somewhere for children to play... which is often a nuisance’ (Cruickshank 1995: 60). But in terms of the regeneration of the estate the street decks have been (so far) carefully protected as though they are core to the significance (and problems) of the estate: “One of the root problems was that the walkways were not overlooked at all. [Occupants could] humanise the balconies but not the walkways” (PH4).



Source: BBC

The lack of overlooking was acknowledged as a problem very early on (Saint 1996) but the street decks are a key feature of what the list describes as significant, and are a particular feature of the visual discourse of regeneration. Once again there are realisations of residents out on the decks, but this time with adults, plants in pots and seated figures.



Source: Urban Splash

The decks are presented as outside space that is an extension of the private living space, re-drawing the Reidentification discourse of the Smithsons. As they will be gated from public access there is a radical shift in their function proposed, but it is the intention of community contact within the estate, an exclusive community, that has been privileged: “This will be gated. The public won’t be able to get onto the decks” (PH5).

### ***The idea, the fabric and the concrete frame: the ‘sine qua non’ of Park Hill (PH2)***

I have tried to show how established narratives of significance at Park Hill came to shape the approaches to its regeneration. This has been in terms of making a place-specific claim to the Sheffield-ness of the development, and the potential of major works to sustain a changed (if not entirely new) community. Here I discuss the third key narrative of its first development – the use of the concrete and brick and its

place in English (Brutalist) modernism – in the context of the controversial decision to remove all fabric other than the concrete frame, and then re-surface, rather than repair it. Here I suggest that established narratives of the importance of how the structure worked combined with an accommodating, if at times downright apologetic, rhetoric from English Heritage to result in a much more radical configuration and loss of original fabric than might be expected of a building of such high heritage status. Here, the persuasive force of the arguments was concentrated both on architects' intention and material performance, aspects of assessing value that lie squarely with Andrew Saint's analysis of *difference* in the listing of modern structures (Saint 1996a). Whereas I have shown that early critiques of Park Hill largely focussed upon the structural performance of the concrete frame as a good thing, the more recent discourse has been concerned with the 'problems' of dealing with concrete decay (Cruickshank 1995, Saint 1996a, Beard 2001), its dirtiness, and its authenticity as a material of the original development. In relation to the concrete and brick infill panels, values in the conservation and regeneration of Park Hill have been most evidently contested and put under stress. The loss of material and original surfaces has raised questions about the continuing significance of the estate as a heritage asset. Above all these debates have centered around concerns with authenticity, intention and performance, and aesthetic appeal and I now discuss these in relation to materials and the concrete frame.

What is notable about much of the early reception of Park Hill, as discussed above, is that whilst it concentrates upon the use of the street decks, the use of brick infill panels and the formal qualities of the repetitive grid, the appearance of the concrete does not get particular mention. It is its technical performance through the H-section at stairwells, providing rigidity to the structural frame that has been afforded closest scrutiny, as I discuss earlier in the chapter. In the *Architectural Review* Reyner Banham refers favourably to the 'unassuming vigour of the concrete work' by comparison with other elevational detail and finish but does so in terms of describing the construction method: 'pre-cast and in situ concrete, metal and brick' (1961:407). The *Architectural Design* special on Sheffield of the same year provides extensive illustration of the estate, but discusses the frame in terms of its engineering: 'the downstand portions of all interior beams were delivered precast to the site, and this reduced both propping and shuttering of floor slabs to a minimum (Crooke 1961).



Rather than the appearance of the concrete, it was its performance that was afforded the attention. That the building's aesthetic was 'blunt and plain' (Banham 1962), offering a 'gutsy finish' (Banham quoted in Bacon 1985:64) did not seem to have received much praise or opprobrium beyond the enthusiastic support of Banham (1962, 1967, 1973). Esher even suggested that it was 'simply incredibly plain' that in some way reflected a 'no-nonsense tradition of artisan Sheffield' (Esher 1986:207). But the brick panels received more notice: 'The details of the elevations are rather fussy, both in some arbitrary window positions and in the use of differently coloured brick' complained Pevsner (1967:466). But others noted their selection on the advice of John Forester, and their signalling of level changes (Cruickshank 1995, Saint 1996a, Harwood 2000), as discussed above.

The pre-amble to the project of regeneration at Park Hill involved close scrutiny of the concrete frame of the original building and discolouration of the brick. In 2001 Andrew's Beard's chapter in *Preserving post-war Architecture: The Care and Conservation of mid-twentieth century architecture* (Macdonald 2001) pointed to extensive areas of concrete failure as well as layers of surface dirt. I have pointed to the discourse of concrete and dirt above, but that of material failure came too to underpin approaches to its conservation. Beard reported areas of fragility and spalling caused by water infiltration, and noted that since construction: 'Abseilers inspect the concrete at regular intervals and use hammers to remove unsafe pieces to prevent them from falling (2001:181). Extensive trial repair panels by private sector contractors and Sheffield's in-house structural engineers offered different repair options, considering matters of authenticity of the appearance of the concrete surface and the age of discolouration (2001:180). By this stage the aesthetic qualities of the concrete frame were also being recognised as part of the heritage discourse (Cruickshank 1995:56). The bare concrete was part of the anti-appeal aesthetic alluded to by Saint (1996) and so roundly derided by Hanley (2007), where 'Brutalism with its rough-hewn rawness, was always a vision of future ruins' (Hatherley 2008).



Source: Urban Splash

The concrete frame, and its treatment, has become the most exposed (literally) element of the programme of regeneration at Park Hill, as Phase I saw extensive demolition that left only the original concrete frame to repair. English Heritage had quickly recognised a huge ‘conservation deficit’ (Beard 2001:185) as Sheffield estimated concrete repair costs for the estate to ‘be in excess of £30,000 per flat’. (Hanley 2007:118): ‘one of the reasons we’re putting in the money’ (BBC Romancing the Stone 2009). Not just the condition of the original fabric, but also the original treatment of the concrete surface varied significantly so that there was not a uniform finish to be repaired, or in the case of the new balconies, matched into. One conservation professional was vexed by this: “3 of 4 [parts] board-marked and one not... [yet they were] apparently built at the same time... I don’t understand the difference” (PH4). Ultimately even the concrete frame was painted. In *Architecture and Dirt* Crissman suggested that ‘patina and even dirtiness [can] constitute an effective means of allowing the past to remain visible’ (Campkin and Dobraszcyk 2007:349). Here the ‘failed’ past was not to be seen: “I started out trying to get the

concrete to retain its patina. That was undermined by a desire to have it uniform. I'm not sure that what we ended up with will make that much difference". (PH4) And in the context of the regeneration of Park Hill, the "desire to have it uniform (PH4), participants felt that this mattered: "new concrete balconies now match the [painted] concrete" (PH5). One conservation-led participant even felt that the re-visioning of Park Hill depended upon a cleaner appearance and that "softening the concrete" (PH6) was an essential part of the Urban Splash's attempt to move away from past perceptions where people think "concrete... horrible" (PH6) and re-brand Park Hill as a success.

A particular feature of the narratives of participants at Park Hill related to the moral imperative of building conservation, and how this extended to the decisions on original fabric. The assumed morality of materials in the modernist discourse is well covered elsewhere (Pawley 1971:84-5, Gold 1997a, 2007, Higgott 2007). I have referred in Chapter 2 to a similar discourse of the place of materials in architectural morality advanced by the SPAB and which forms an important part of the conservation discourse. Participants at Park Hill spoke of how discussions around concrete repairs and the removal of the brickwork drew upon arguments for the morality of replacement versus repair (conservation professionals PH1, 4, 7), the effect of new material against old (both housing and conservation professionals PH4, 5), and changes in appearance (both housing and conservation professionals PH3, 4, 7). One participant with a conservation base even described the decision to lose the brickwork as a "transformational shift" (PH1). Another spoke from the position of the regeneration professional of the "light touch" (PH2) of unifying the appearance of the new concrete balconies and retained original frame, "recreated as modern and to today's standards" (PH6), but *recognisable* as Park Hill (PH2, 5): . And most participants spoke of the strong persuasive efforts of the developers in discussions around concrete repair: 'The whole point is that you look at it from a distance' it' (BBC *Romancing the Stone* 2009).

The discourse of a morality of materials drew both from modernist and traditional conservation discourses and at least one conservation-based participant felt that different arguments were presented by way of justification as the occasion suited. "[They] went to see Jack Lynn and Ivor Smith. English Heritage saw one ... [to] talk

about the brickwork and why they used brick. Both of them said 'because it was cheap'. However the recollection [in Sheffield City Council] is quite a lot of effort went into [the brickwork and colour gradation]" (PH5). The persuasive effort of regenerating Park Hill meant that spectacular decisions were made on materials and which countered the very strong normative discourse of authenticity of material fabric in PPG15, and in Annex C of that document in particular (DoE/DNH 1994). As one participant without conservation expertise said of the strip back to the shell: "Everyone was talking about it: 'How can it be listed if [they're] allowed to do that?'" (PH6). It was certainly something that participants felt the need to justify to me, although I did not challenge them on it: "our final solution, stripping back to the grid structure" (PH2) "robust discussions [on brickwork], zero rating... shell tests" (PH1). But as one participant put it: "If they hadn't won the VAT argument, it wouldn't have been viable" (PH6). In some ways the first discourse of a casual, functional approach to the materials, and lack of attention to architectural drawings, I suggest, helped to direct a similarly non-curatorial approach to the conservation of the building fabric. Set against a powerfully persuasive rhetoric of regeneration and the very essence of 'concrete' as being sufficient, the narrative of material authenticity lost out.



Photo taken from Hallam University building, looking through the retained concrete frame. Taken during strip-out works Oct 2009. (Source: author)

## **Conclusion**

*'One of the things about Park Hill is the image of the estate ... [it became] so unpopular so soon' (PH5)*

The status of Park Hill as architecture of not just national but international importance (RCHME 1998) has led to a peculiarly high profile of its current scheme of regeneration. Both 'Modernist icon and bugaboo of public housing' (Saint 1996b:8), the estate has seldom been far from the attention of the architectural press. Prior to its listing a conference in 1996 at the Architectural Association considered: *Park Hill: What Next?* and in the papers from that conference Saint hoped that Park Hill 'will give us some indication of the new balance between architectural values and housing values that we need to find today' (1996b:40). It appears that the

heritage establishment had decided a degree of compromise was necessary on Park Hill well in anticipation of the arrival of such proposals. Martin Cherry 'surprisingly described an English Heritage approach of empathy and sympathy, intent on applying policies of intelligence and virtue at Park Hill (Hyett, Architects Journal 21 March 1996: 11). The architectural press, however, expected fisticuffs. In 2004 Dorrell warned of 'an almost inevitable backlash from conservationists who are likely to object to virtually any change' (Dorrell 2004:5), but that did not materialize. English Heritage have been central to the proposals, involved in funding some of the works, and Park Hill has been presented as a triumph of collaboration and close discussion (English Heritage 2009, PH5, 6).

Through this chapter on Park Hill I have set out to show how particular narratives of the estate's first development have shaped approaches to its regeneration. Following narratives of Park Hill as being related to its topography and to Sheffield in particular, to the creation of a better community through design intervention and the use of concrete as a means of securing "experimental" (PH7) mass housing, Park Hill has been described as a success, a failure and now again a (hoped-for) success. In privileging these discourses of the estate I have tried to show how the professionals involved have responded to the importance of what the first architects intended and the degree to which that was a success, over the more usual conservation concerns with the retention of original form and fabric. They have also pursued a rhetoric of regeneration that relies on the reclamation of a former success (Pendlebury 2009).

That Park Hill has bucked the trends in building conservation is in itself, I suggest, tied into the discourse of experiment that underpinned its first development. What the professionals involved have done is pursue a dialogue with that first presentation of the estate, taking those discourses and pursuing the values that inform them. Instead of being a conservation project, then, I have tried to show how the works at Park Hill have been shaped by its reception as architecture concerned with ideas, and have in turn reworked the fabric on this basis. This approach, I suggest, marks a new turn in building conservation towards a more expansive understanding of where significance lies to that set out in PPG15 (DoE/DNH 1994) but which is more consistent with a discourse of public benefit and avoidance of harm set out in PPS5

(DCLG/EH/DCMS 2010). I go on to explore this further in the following chapter:  
Two Stories.



The Park Hill Mug: 'by Ivor Smith & Jack Lynn. Part of the Concrete Elevations range' by People Will Always Need Plates. Source: People Will Always Need Plates

## Chapter 5: Two stories

*'Architectural history in this country has always been more comfortable when discussing architecture in the terms of the stated intentions of the architects and their clients, where architectural form can be verified against documentary evidence. The attempt to give some kind of historical account of the experience provided by architecture has not been a popular subject for research in Britain' (Forty 1995:34)*

In the preceding chapters looking in more detail at the listed estates of Spa Green and Park Hill I set out to show how certain narratives emerged about the estates and how these reveal the privileging of particular values in the conservation activity at the expense of others. These narratives have pointed to different value sets as being proposed as significant in the conservation of these two estates, despite both being examples of mass public housing from the post-war period and both being listed at grade II\*. In this chapter I try to explore how these diverging value sets have emerged from different trajectories at the two estates – one towards close, curatorial conservation and the other towards the removal of much original fabric, and significant alterations to its elevational form in Phase I of its regeneration. From this I reassert how these trajectories have been directed by first narratives of the estates as well as emerging literatures related to the conservation of post-war buildings. But I also relate how they draw on a changing discourse of conservation. Here, I set out to show how the different voices in the two case studies have offered testimony to those first narratives and to the different values espoused in the context of this changing discourse.

Through this chapter, then, I point to an emergent discourse of building conservation that has seen a shift of emphasis upon certain values from one policy document (PPG15) to another (PPS5), and which is prefigured by some of the English Heritage advisory publications for twentieth century architecture (2005c, 2007a). More specifically, I suggest that the works at Spa Green are consistent, in their privileging of fabric and material authenticity, with a normative, preservationist approach, in line with government policy laid out in PPG15 (DoE/DNH 1994), and which runs counter to approaches set out by English Heritage for buildings of the more recent



past (2005c, 2007a). But stories from Spa Green also reflect changed claims for ownership and belonging at the estate manifest as communities articulated through interactions with the fabric, and claims of expertise. To this extent they are beginning to propose new understandings of where meaning is located, but do so in an embedded form through reference to the fabric, the *substance* of the estate (Powers 2001). For Park Hill, however, the approach taken is much more consistent with the essentially pro-development rhetoric of the document PPS5 (DCLG/EH/DCMS 2010) and its emphasis upon an avoidance of harm in a more expansive, and less fabric-specific understanding of architecture as heritage. This, I argue, presents a challenge to the core assumptions inherent in the established conservation activity - that the structure has intrinsic worth and represents something of the past in its material form - and so too the consequent emphasis upon the materiality of the built environment for understanding its meaning. Whilst the intrinsic value of Park Hill as architecture has not been jettisoned from the discourse, I argue that new narratives have superseded this, affording value to extrinsic factors associated with its regeneration, and its *essence* (Powers 2001) and the founding concepts and intentions of its architects.

Through this chapter then, I explore how two very different stories at Spa Green and Park Hill might be related to the particular policy discourses of PPG15 (DoE/DNH 1994) and PPS5 (DCLG/EH/DCMS) and what this might show about the privileging of certain established (normative) conservation assertions of value in practice. What I suggest is that the narratives of the two different estates point to a duality (although not necessarily exclusive) of value sets held by the heritage establishment about building conservation; one concerned with an aesthetic, fabric-centred curatorial approach and another rooted in an understanding of architectural heritage in which *ideas*, or conception and the response to this, might be just as important as the structure 'as found', as set out above. I try to show how approaches to the post-war architecture studied have a distinct character that both exposes stresses in the assumed conservation 'philosophy' and its reliance upon the importance of the materiality of the listed building 'as found', and in dealing with the heritage of a more recent past. The government's *Statement for the Historic environment in England 2010* (DCMS 2010) sets out the 'value of the heritage environment' (2010:7) in terms of 'economy', sustainable communities', 'society' and

'culture' (2010: 7-12). I explore how these two cases made their own claims for value.

The chapter is divided into themes drawn out from the two case studies and the values espoused in their management, but draws upon the first picturing exercise I made at the beginning of this research. It also uses some of the given 'differences' in modern listing as set out by Andrew Saint (1996a). I start with an exploration of the notion of 'crystallisation' of a building's recognized value at the point of listing and the place of the list description in the discourse of significance. I look to both estates and how approaches to conservation work have interacted with this statement of value. Copies of both list descriptions are attached at Appendix 2. At Spa Green I suggest that there has been a fairly literal approach to the statement of special interest in the list description (kitchens were seen as important because of the Garchey waste disposal systems, colour has been a recurrent concern) but that the description itself has not been taken as absolute, nor exclusive (items not mentioned have been afforded protection). The production of Management Guidelines for the estate allowed an interpretive analysis of the terms of the listing, but also provided a statement of intent by the conservation professionals involved; an expectation that fabric would largely be preserved (London Borough of Islington 2006). At Park Hill, however, I suggest that the interpretation of the listing has been an iterative process affording greater weight to the wording of the list description than at Spa Green, and determining through reference to particular proposals the extent to which protection should extend to original fabric. In these approaches to the statement of value for the two estates, I suggest that the two programmes of work have followed differing heritage value sets, aligned to the differing discourses of PPG 15 and PPS5 and understandings of where value might lie.

I then move on to explore the narrative of architects' intentions and the concept behind a design, looking at Spa Green and Park Hill in the context of Andrew Saint and English Heritage's strong discourse on twentieth century architecture as being in some way *different* to that already established on the heritage lists (1996a, 2007a). As part of the response to this discourse I suggest that close interactions with narratives of the architects' intention have occurred at both estates, but on very different scales. At Spa Green professionals and residents have engaged with a

discourse of restorative conservation, through approaches to paint colour, tile-work, planting and décor of flats, seeking to return to what the architects meant it to look like. At Spa Green architects' intentions have acquired extra significance, as residents as well as professionals have entered into a self-conscious discourse with a projection of 'the architect' ("Berthold" (SG13), testing ideas as to what might be most fitting to his original vision for the estate. At Park Hill, however, I suggest that the approach taken in the regeneration of the estate has been almost corrective – finding fault and solution – of the first work in relation to what the architects intended, and the potential for new designs and technology to *make things better*; a powerful narrative described in the previous chapter. In particular this narrative of betterment relates to approaches to the remaking of a community in the current works and its connection with the public realm in Sheffield. I argue also that the imperatives manifest in PPS5 (DCLG/EH/DCMS 2010) of a flexibility of approach and a wider understanding of public interest have been important at Park Hill. Most particularly these have been evident in a self-conscious interpretive 'creativity' by the conservation professionals in the face of quite daunting economic and political obstacles, but also in terms of the narratives of sustainable communities and societies (English Heritage 2009, DCMS 2010) and the potential for historic buildings to offer up 'public benefits' (DCLG/EH/DCMS 2010:8:HE9.2(i)).

Related to the discourse of intention is that of success of delivery and viability and I explore these narratives at the two estates in terms of how the projects have been conceived and implemented. Again there are enormous differences here between the two estates, not least in terms of how levels of success have been interpreted. Spa Green never had the same rapturous first reception and close scrutiny as Park Hill, but nor did it suffer the same (partial) fall from favour. There are two different narratives of fitness for purpose here that are manifest in terms of different approaches to the interiors of the flats, and treatment of the elevations. Temporal proximity - and the potential to refer immediately to the first architects - has been presented as being of significance here, the chance to, as one professional put it: "see all the things they would rather have done in some other way or didn't really work..." (SG5). I suggest that these very different approaches rest not just in terms of an objective, expert-led assessment of their fulfillment of a vision, but also in terms of how the narratives of their relative success informed the approaches to

their conservation. Again, I find much more in the approach taken at Park Hill to be consistent with the imperatives of PPS 5, and its concern with 'place-making' and sharing and improving understandings of significance ((DCLG/EH/DCMS 2010:10:HE10.2), although these have been largely expert-driven. Works at Spa Green are more consistent with the building-centric emphasis of the PPG and its emphasis upon the intrinsic material qualities of the buildings. I suggest, because they were largely received as a success from the outset. I further suggest that at Park Hill in particular, major alterations driven by, and bringing, ferocious cost implications were in some ways rendered palatable by a discourse of past failure, with the expectation of a transformation to success through the corrective interventions.

Finally, I turn to the stresses laid upon the estates as heritage as a result of the two programmes of works. I explore this in the context of my notion of 'shatter'. At Spa Green there have been stresses manifest in the understanding of professional expertise and the extent to which original form and fabric should be both preserved and re-created. But there has not been a profound challenge to the understanding of the fabric of the architecture as representing something of the national heritage, nor that of its preservation representing a public good. The story at Park Hill has been very different. The principle of listing was challenged, the public interest in maintaining the estate as a heritage asset was, and continues to be challenged, and the scope of works has been challenged; not so much in terms of the extent to which original fabric should be kept, but more expressly in terms of whether more of it should have been. In other words, the question has been raised of whether the very significance or special interest of the estate that the listing set out to protect has been put under such stress as a result of the works that it has been lost. Within this discussion, I reflect upon the force of persuasive rhetoric in the conservation activity and the place of the expert in this. I conclude that whilst Park Hill may have lost its special interest as framed in terms of the older PPG and its emphasis upon the importance of original fabric, it has retained it in terms of the new PPS and its emphasis upon meaning and what I suggest points to the potential for historic buildings to have extrinsic value (DCLG/EH/DCMS 2010).

Through these thematic explorations I set out to relate my analysis of how values are wielded in the management of heritage to the changing rhetoric of conservation-related policy. I show how this change of rhetoric has been drawn on – and led - by different voices with strongly persuasive force, but how the policy discourse has been bolstered by shifts in narratives of the estates themselves, ultimately to result in very different solutions. That these changed narratives are not necessarily those of the conservation experts puts a new focus upon the protocols of heritage management and points to the place for a more collaborative, more inclusive practice, and I reflect upon this further in the conclusion.

### **I. Listing crystallizes**

I proposed, in my picturing exercise and in previous chapters, that for the current discourse of heritage significance, the moment of listing signifies a crystallisation of ideas of value that are concentrated around a particular building, or group of buildings and that this value set is largely fixed from that moment, Differing ‘facets’ of that interest may emerge as more or less important as times change and the patterns of reception along with it. PPG 15 recognized that new value may be discerned in buildings already listed, although this largely related to instances of listing covering elevational inspections only (DoE/DNH 1994), but essentially the core values are assumed as static. Here I show how two different rhetorics around listing have emerged in government policy that are manifest as different approaches taken to the conservation of Spa Green and Park Hill. At Spa Green I find that the list description has been part, but not the dominant feature of a concerted pro-preservation enterprise on the part of both professionals and residents at the estate, with the list description used to validate the scope of the pro-conservation interventions and limits on alterations to the fabric. At Park Hill, however, the list description has become the locus of debates around proposed works and the meaning of what it is that is listed, situated in relation to a large body of literature on the relative success and failures of the estate. In both instances the specific values that the listing identifies have not been challenged in themselves (beyond the questions of why list it at all), but for Park Hill they have provided a ‘way in’ to explorations and even deconstructions of what constitutes that special interest.

In terms of the impetus to list buildings, and how to do it, the most recent government thinking, is that: 'The difference between a heritage asset and other components of the environment is that a heritage asset holds meaning for society over and above its functional utility' (DCLG/EH/DCMS 2010:7.11). 'The basic criterion for listing a building is that it must hold special historic or architectural interest' (DCLG/EH/DCMS 2010:8:14). At the time of listing both Spa Green and Park Hill, however, the emphasis was different. PPG 15 advised that: 'The physical survivals of our past are to be valued and protected for their own sake, as a central part of our cultural heritage and our sense of national identity... Their presence adds to the quality of our lives, by enhancing the familiar and cherished local scene and sustaining the sense of local distinctiveness which is so important an aspect of the character and appearance of our towns, villages and countryside' (DoE/DNH1994:1.1). Although the 'cherished local scene' survives into PPS 5, there is a shift in emphasis and the explicit discourse of meaning as having value in the PPS is new. I suggest that it acknowledges a much more inclusive understanding of national interest than had previously been allowed by the tentative allusions of the PPG to memory and 'cultural heritage' (DoE/DNH 1994), and it simultaneously begins to move away from the argument for listing for the structure/s' own sake. By removing the focus from the *intrinsic* qualities of the listed building to also embrace the *extrinsic*, I suggest that this proposes a radical shift in understanding of what it is that listing protects and then how this is managed.

I referred in my earlier chapter to the particular protocols of listing buildings of the twentieth century and English Heritage publications on this subject. It is worth repeating here some of the wording of that guidance as set out for domestic architecture. What is remarkable about it is the vaunting of art-historical expertise in discerning its significance, but also its focus upon what architects were trying to do:

*'Houses and housing developments of the period rank amongst the masterpieces of English Architecture. The traditional stylistic approach of the architecture historian has particular value here. Imagination and ingenuity together with the quality of craftsmanship or striking use of materials (not least concrete) are the principal benchmarks. Planning and lay-out,*

*decoration, relationship with setting, reputation of the designer; these too are considerations, as is the extent to which the original design has survived unaltered.*

*With regard especially to social housing, constraints of funding and legislation need to be understood if the historic significance of a building is to be properly understood. Buildings need to be judged against their original brief: their fitness of purpose relates to what was expected of them then, rather than what they are capable of providing now. Because we are dealing with people's homes, it is imperative that the special significance of a building is clearly identified along with those parts that are of lesser, or of no, interest..." (English Heritage 2007a).*

The list description made at the point of listing is not the whole assessment of a building's special interest, or significance, but it is important to it. Critical to the new PPS take on listing, however, is the push to encourage assessments of significance to be undertaken by both 'sides' as part an assessment of proposals, as 'better decisions will be made when applicants and local planning authorities assess and understand the particular nature of the significance of an asset, the extent of the assets' fabric to which the significance relates and the level of importance of that significance' (DCLG/EH/DCMS 2010:8.17). For Spa Green that assessment was made by the local authority and English Heritage in advance of the programme of works on site, in the form of the Management Guidelines of 2006, designed to expand upon and complement the list entry (London Borough of Islington 2006). These guidelines were produced by the local authority in collaboration with English Heritage and residents of the estate and involved meetings with all interested parties on site prior to production. Their scope extends to advice on what works do, or do not require listed building consent as well as an assessment of the reasons for listing. Pre-application meetings on the subsequent refurbishment of the estate by Homes for Islington nonetheless involved, as one professional directly involved with the refurbishment put it: "Waving hands, talking about what's special" and essentialising that: "egg-box, cantilevered stairs, innovation..." (SG2). But some participants suggested that the Management Guidelines at Spa Green acted as an interpretive buffer between the list description, the conservation professionals and the agents for the works on site and provided a degree of collaborative interpretation of the level of significance. But for others it was inadequate. One conservation professional felt

that it was': "Not a conservation plan.... A compilation of photocopied stuff, a bit of history... very little strategy or vision" (SG1), that was nonetheless important in "shaping expectations" (SG3). The impetus to make the assessment, however, largely came from the professionals, the conservation experts in consultation with affected groups.

This acceptance of the fact and wording of the listing and the limits on the intervention in the fabric of the buildings as a result was evident in interviews with most participants, whether residents or professional: "A listed building there for all to enjoy" (SG1). One participant with no conservation expertise noted: "The kitchens are listed as well" (SG10) although many participants talked of others on the estate at Spa Green as having little comprehension of the reasons why: "a lot of them don't care just as long as things work" (SG11) or, instead, a sense that the limitations went too far. One resident with professional involvement in design felt that: "There are areas where you have to be flexible" (SG9). This participant spoke with particular force of a sense that buildings of the twentieth century were to some degree being given special treatment, with extra limits on alterations and also of what Andrew Higgott had noted as a "fetishisation of plan" (AH), claiming that: [Buildings of the] recent past somehow became even more difficult to change" (SG9). But these challenges to the scope of the list description and of what might be covered by its wording were invariably presented in the context of close comments over the merits of paint colour restoration, mastics for the window reveals, or brick panel renewal. In terms of the emphasis of the listing and extent of the associated protection upon the elevational form and materials there was little concern. It was only in terms of the interiors of the individual flats and the micro-scale of the fabric that the competences of the listing were challenged. In this concentration by both residents and professionals upon the material qualities of the building as architecture of historic and architectural significance beyond the wording of the listing their pre-occupations confirmed the focus of PPG15 upon the intrinsic qualities of the estate. They also reiterated the 'architectural historian' focus of English Heritage (2007a) in determining the importance of twentieth century architecture, intent upon narratives of innovation, materials, layout and reputation of the architect.



At Park Hill, however, there was much less of an overt concern with the authenticity of fabric in the approach to the list description. More than one participant spoke of their regret at the absence of a Conservation Plan having been drawn up for the estate to expand upon the list description and extend the assessment of significance, as one conservation professional put it: “[The project] should have started with a Conservation Plan, some place to have started from. [It’s] rather been left to the whim of the designers” (PH4). But another with a similar role felt it adequate that the “conservation parameters [were informally established through negotiations over specific proposals by expert professionals in the local authority and English Heritage, setting out] what’s special and what should be retained” (PH5). PH4 argued very strongly that the list description had been used as a point of reference from which discussions were extended out, and the basic philosophical premises of undertaking alterations to a listed building tested: “This, and this, and this represent the fundamentals, certain things...(PH4)”. This discourse of a reductive, essentialised (Powers 2001), or condensed characterisation of Park Hill generated by the list description was a recurrent narrative amongst participants. One housing professional focused, for example, on the idea of a formal repetitive pattern to the structure as an essence of what the place represented: “the Grid...they [the design team] talk about a rhythmic pattern” (PH6), what another involved professionally in regeneration called “stripping back to the grid structure” (PH2). A conservation professional noted that: “They dissected Park Hill by principles. Each set of elements within the bay of 9 is still there” (PH4). One conservation-based participant was less impressed by this reductive rhetoric. “What really impressed me was the variety of repetitive plan. [Reduce this down to] the grid? No! Bollocks!” (PH7). But as PH4 reflected, rather ruefully, there was an accompanying rhetoric of the morality of conservation at play here that recognized an intrinsic merit in the design if not the fabric: “[We would] fall back on morality and architecture [suggesting that it’s] immoral to do the same [thing again. Arguing this they can justify] anything they want” (PH4), leaving a question of not just how much do you take away, but also “how much do you put back?” (PH3). If there was a sense of intrinsic value it extended to this focus upon design and its expression of intention over the material of the fabric. As one participant without design experience put it: “make it look like Park Hill... new or renewed” (PH3).

For Park Hill, then, the wording of the listing acquired critical significance in negotiations on the proposed works for its refurbishment and alteration, but most particularly in terms of the decision to demolish all but the structural frame. One conservation professional participant referred to how the wording of the listing had been essential in the decisions over the extensive removal of fabric and said that: “There was absolutely nothing of importance in the interiors... the importance is in the cluster” (PH5), an assertion strongly contested by PH7 who expressed bewilderment that the list assessment of the interiors as being ‘of no interest’ should be interpreted as a green light for their wholesale removal “ I didn’t think I needed to say it [that the basic plan should remain]” (PH7).

From participants at Park Hill the narratives around the listing largely moved away from a focus on the material qualities of the building to those aspects of social experimentation like the street decks: “doors upon doors” (PH7), the place of Park Hill in the landscape: “Park Hill as a city park” (PH2), or the attempt to reform a community (in both senses), as seen in the previous chapter. Materials were largely discussed in terms of innovation – the frame, the engineering – or performance, with the exception of the close focus upon the surface of the retained concrete frame, although: “the micro level has not been what the project is about” (PH4). In this way, the value of the estate as expressed in the listing was partially constructed as extrinsic to the fabric of the estate, and much more in terms - as I showed in the previous chapter – of its relation to its host city and resident population and its place as an innovative architecture within that; in other words its *meaning* (DCLG/EH/DCMS 20107.11).

### **Intention: Preserving the concept**

The discourse of what the architect intended for post-war architecture has been of enormous importance to how works have been approached at both Spa Green and Park Hill. As a distinct feature of how English Heritage have afforded value in listing post-war architecture (Saint 1996a, English Heritage 2007a), the intentions by way of both design and social innovation, and how the architects realised them, have been core to both building the reputations of the two estates, and how conservation works were approached. At Spa Green I have already pointed to close interactions with the fabric by both residents and professionals involved. Here I look at how

these interactions have had particular relation to the narrative of intention by way of attempts to restore the estate, as well as meet the Decent Homes standards in the works by Homes for Islington. I also point to how particular residents have adopted an 'in-keeping' approach to their décor of their flats, as discussed in Chapter 3, and how this relates to an interaction with the first intended design aesthetic. Through this I suggest that the works at Spa Green have maintained a focus upon the importance of the architects' intention as manifest through the form and fabric of the buildings, consistent with the emphases of PPG 15 (DoE/DNH 1994). This concern with the importance of small fabric, discussed in Chapter 3, is of particular relevance in the focus upon detail offered in Appendix C (DoE/DNH 1994). I also explore a lesser narrative of intention from Spa Green – that emerges from the changes of tenancy and shift in use patterns from the social housing provision that the architects intended. PPG 15, I suggest, allows for this shift in use more readily than PPS5, as it does not construe a change of use in terms of a change in meaning. I reflect upon how this narrative of socialist ambition has consequently been rather subdued. I then set out to show how there has been an equal - if not greater - concern with architects' intentions at Park Hill, as seen in Chapter 4, but that it has been framed in very different terms. This narrative of concept and intention is largely concerned with an interpretation of the meaning of those intentions, rather than tracing them through form and fabric, as at Spa Green. In the previous chapter on Park Hill I argued that the context of the first, and ongoing receptions of the estate helped to shape the course of the project of works. I suggest here that this interaction with the discourse of intention has been carried through into how the works were conceived and delivered, consistent with a changing emphasis upon the discourse of historic buildings as having not so much intrinsic value, but being more 'a vital contributor to improving the quality of place, and quality of life for all' (DCMS 2010:7). As with Spa Green, I reflect also upon the intentions of the architects in creating a place of public housing and how this particular discourse of intention has been diverted by narratives of 'community' and betterment.

The advice in PPG 15 on buildings and their use was that: 'The best use will very often be the use for which the building was originally designed, and the continuation or reinstatement of that use should certainly be the first option when the future of a building is considered' (DoE/DNH 1994:3.10). I have set out what it said in relation

to restoration in Chapter 3 but it is worth reiterating that certain features might be restored subject to detailed records: 'confirming the detailed historical authenticity of the work proposed. Speculative reconstruction should be avoided, as should the reinstatement of features that were deliberately superseded by later historic additions (DoE/DNH 1994:c.6). In these assertions there is a strong sense of the listed building as artifact; a separate entity from its originators and remote from those intentions. At Spa Green, however, there was a strong narrative of returning the estate to its earlier form; both in terms of the fabric "you see all these wonderful ideas" (SG9) and in terms of a community: "It's more than the fabric of the buildings that needs to be preserved" (SG2).

The practice of restoration to intended form can be seen in approaches to the refurbishment of kitchens and of the choice of external paint colour in particular. In the chapter on Spa Green I pointed to how residents engaged in close interactions with the fabric of the building, and how this was particularly manifest in relation to kitchens in terms of the cachet of heritage and having 'the real thing'. But I show here that it was also expressed in terms of returning an appropriate design aesthetic to the kitchens under the programme of refurbishment by Homes for Islington and the stresses laid upon this by the requirements of the Decent Homes standards: "cookers too close to plugs etc" (SG7). Kitchens were refurbished to a modern design aesthetic, based upon twelve design variations that took into account what original features survived in each flat including Garchey waste disposal, side cupboards, kitchen hatch, top cupboards and larder door. Many participants spoke of the very detailed work that went into resolving how to marry the requirements of an aesthetic appropriate to original design intentions and to the requirements of Decent Homes. This level of care was recognized by some participants both with and without design professions (SG7, SG13). But not all welcomed the intervention: "Not fantastic. [Some of the] units inherited the problems of the original ones" said one professional with a direct involvement in refurbishment of the estate (SG3). And another resident said: "The design failed. You shouldn't replicate a failure" (SG11). But although the designs adopted an aesthetic to complement the original, full replication of that first kitchen design was not pursued. In this sense the move to 'restore' was more that of the over-riding modernist aesthetic than the particularity of every aspect of the first kitchen design. And it was combined with a

first impetus to preserve original features. In this way it coincides with the advice in PPG15 against full-scale restoration but in favour of 'low-key' intervention with a concentration upon 'small internal fittings' (DoE/DNH 1994:C.2-3).

A different approach, however was taken to the paint colour used in common areas of the flats. Here, the original intention of the architect was felt to have been well-documented (Allan 1992, Allan and von Sternberg 2002), and also important to the presentation of the estate in terms of its heritage significance, however unpopular that might prove to be: "a lot of people think it's hideous... very divided... the committee [was] very keen to get it back to how it looked, wanted it returned" (SG3). One participant described how residents had "fought hard to get original wall colours", describing how these colours featured in a 1953 article about the estate. The colours expected had eluded capture through paint scrapes under the direction of Homes for Islington, but participants related how a consultant commissioned separately by the Management Organisation "found it within half an hour" using a "three-sectional analysis" (SG9). Even so, the results were not fully implemented. One residents with conservation know-how said: "They couldn't take the leap" (SG11). Conservation professional SG1 observed that dissatisfaction was inevitable set against the expectation of a "small group of residents" of a "100% restoration project" (SG1). But however small this group were, their persuasive force has been significant. As one participant with a design profession put it: "Although it's not perfect we achieved a lot. [We wanted to] go back to the original colour schemes. We had huge fights on the committee following the scrapes. Particularly the older people wanted to go back to grey. It's an amazing result with the co-operation of the committee" (SG7). Working with, and sometimes up against, the professionals involved in the works to the estate in this way these resident experts pursued the restoration of what the architects intended. That the result was ultimately collaborative points to a different way of negotiating types of expertise.

Some residents have gone further than this in their approach to an 'in-keeping' décor consistent with an interpretation of the architects aesthetic intentions. I discuss this in Chapter 3 in relation to window dressing and the selection of a modernist design aesthetic to mark themselves as distinct in their understanding of the architectural protocols of post-war modernism. For some this interpretation has gone further

than simply adopting an aesthetic, has taken the form of thinking “what would Lubetkin do?” (SG13), selecting furnishings and decor for the flats on this basis: “My whole interior ties in...[I’ve chosen the] furniture in terms of the era” (SG7). By engaging in a self-conscious performance of understanding of the special architectural significance of Spa Green, these participants have also set up an imagined dialogue with the architects’ intentions.

My final discourse of intention at Spa Green related to the “egalitarian” (SG13) hopes of what the architects had designed in terms of housing “the suffering poor of Finsbury” (SG2). Resident participants SG4, 5 and 6 all talked of their awareness of a shift away from what they saw as an authentic community on the estate, as I discussed in the earlier chapter on Spa Green. Resident SG7 felt that this “single culture” of working class tenancy had not done the fabric of the estate any favours, but did acknowledge that changing patterns of ownership had transformed the nature of Spa Green. But only conservation professional SG2 noted this as something potentially transformative of its significance, where “luxury apartments” become “against its purpose” (SG2). For these participants, the act of listing, and the protocols of managing the estate as a heritage asset, and an architecture of special historic and architectural interest, had effectively divorced it from its intended use as public housing and architecture of the everyday. But whilst this concern with its intended use was voiced, it was not so much expressed in terms of the meaning of the design; more in terms of patterns of use.

For Park Hill, ‘such a gigantic and a novel a scheme’ (Saint 1996:15), I point to a strong narrative of corrective intervention, responsive to what was believed (or documented) as having been the original architects intention. This, I suggest, has been concerned with illuminating the meaning of Park Hill as key to defining it an architecture of significance, as much as the material form that this took. I set out, in the previous chapter, the changing narratives of Park Hill and how these patterns of reception might be seen in terms of a repeating shift from failure to success and back. The extent to which the estate was found to have delivered on what the architects proposed, and those concepts behind it were core to the subsequent narratives of the estate (Banham various, Pawley 1971, DoE 1972, Cruickshank 1996, Bullock 2002, Saint 1996b, Gold 2007). I point here to how various agencies involved

in the current scheme of regeneration have explicitly drawn upon narratives of what the architects set out to achieve, and have done so in terms that have dictated the course of the regeneration. In other words, by engaging with the discourse of Park Hill as a success/failure, the meaning of the architects' intentions has been brought into focus more than a curatorial approach to the fabric of what those intentions produced. In this way the project allows for Park Hill to function as a 'cultural artifact' (DCMS 2010:12) with a dynamic place in an understanding of the historic environment, framed as having both intrinsic and extrinsic value.

There has been a strong discourse at Park Hill, of the regeneration works in some way correcting the architects intentions by way of anchoring the estate in the Sheffield public's affection, improving its relation to the public realm and re-creating a community. This narrative of an intended community as part of the value of the estate is recognized in the listing as I refer to above, principally expressed in terms of the provision of an environment to house a working class community, including street decks as 'streets' and on-site community facilities including shops, school and pubs at ground level (Saint 1996b, Harwood 2000, English Heritage 2007b). I show here how the persuasive rhetorics of the regeneration of Park Hill have maintained a focus upon the provision of resident facilities (Urban Splash 2006) and use of the decks, but have 'corrected' these provisions, for example, to encourage use of the restaurants by other residents of Sheffield, or by gating the decks so that the resident group becomes exclusive. As Urban Splash put it: 'We want a 'high street' linking South Street to Duke Street', 'we want posh bars, not so posh bars', a 'brand new art gallery', supermarket, dance studio but 'we also need people from outside Park Hill to come in' (Urban Splash 2006). Rather than the focus being upon provision of facilities expressly for the residents of the site, the focus is now outwards, towards the city and away from an understanding of the estate in isolation. In this way these interventions have entered into a dialogue with the architects' intentions in terms of their meaning, as much as the material delivery of them, and is in stark contrast to the fabric-centric approach taken at Spa Green. Architects' intentions have been translated into a new form to the fabric but have been framed in terms of the essentialized understanding of listing and an associated presumption that meaning remains unaffected.

I now turn to how the architects' intentions in relation to community have been negotiated. The current relocation of a substantial part of the resident community and inevitable change in the profile of the projected occupants as a result of the current project has largely been presented in terms of the "flowery language" (PH6) through which Urban Splash have sought to "re-brand" and change perceptions of the estate (PH2, 4). This "branding" (PH1) approach I see as consistent both with the inclusive narratives of regeneration but also that of public benefits manifest in PPS 5 (DCLG/EH/DCMS 2010). Park Hill regenerated has been presented as "a shell for a community" (PH2); a (literal) frame within which that community is expected to grow and establish its own patterns of occupation as one conservation professional put it (PH4), but the intention is to move away from that community being a single social group (as that has been deemed, and recognized by some of the participants as a failure (PH3, 6). I pointed in the previous chapter to a strong focus upon resident dis/satisfaction informing literature related to the estate (DoE 1972, Banham 1973, Gold 2007), and how engagement with the resident 'voice' has been a strong feature both of these first literatures and of the recent applications (Urban Splash 2006, Sheffield City Council 2007), "resident views being "more influential than I imagined" (PH6) in determining what might also be considered as desirable on the site. Drawing the residents into the discourse in this way has both included and 'othered' them. On the one hand it has meant that the professionals involved have responded to their narratives of what has been missing from what the first architects tried to achieve, but on the other it has confirmed Park Hill as being an architecture given to a displaced resident community. It has also highlighted how the intended new Park Hill community will be installed *in place of* an established, however dys/functional resident community; that it is not a complete transfer. As I reflected in the methodological section of the preceding chapter, this resident community is something of a phantom – it existed in the past and it may exist in the future, but the two are not, and are not intended to be, the same thing. The narrative of residence and community that underpins much of this is also, I would argue, somewhat disingenuous. The scheme drawings put forward by Hawkins Brown and reproduced in Gregory 2007 for the *Architects Journal* illustrate that there is a move away from the photos of the first intended (perhaps idealized) community of working class housewives and children on the street decks towards different ideal; a mixed society, including young and old, able and disabled mixing enthusiastically in the public realm



(Gregory 2007:117), with all their ‘reality and colour” (PH2). It is the unproblematised idea of a community that has achieved currency over the profile of that first social group to be housed.

As discussed in Chapter 4, the discourse of Park Hill as re-engaged with Sheffield has also been a powerful narrative in the proposals for regeneration. I discussed how early narratives of the estate located it very firmly in terms of the topography of its host city and its intended place as a landmark within this (Housing Committee of the Corporation of Sheffield 1962, Lynn 1962, Booth 2010). The discourse of Park Hill made better through more coherent reintegration with Sheffield is, I suggest, another aspect of the corrective interpretation of the first intentions for the estate. An example of this discourse can be seen in terms of the projected drawing in of outside users (Urban Splash 2006) and proposed transformation of the public realm.



Source: Urban Splash

The demolition of bays to create and align the new entrance ‘cut’ with the footbridge from the city centre had been put forward to redress the apparent severance from the city (Sheffield City Council 2007). Although now abandoned, as a formal design statement of corrective intervention the proposed creation of the ‘cut’ moves toward an understanding of Sheffield as important to the concept of Park Hill and away from its material authenticity. PPG15 allowed that: ‘the merit of some new alterations or additions, especially where they are generated within a secure and committed long-term ownership, should not be discounted’ (DoE/DNH

1994:3.13) and called for 'flexibility' in such instances on the part of local authorities (3.15), but this is a small concession to such practice, whereas paragraph 3.3 refers explicitly to Section 16 of the Act and the onus upon the local authority to operate a presumption in favour of preservation (3.3). That the idea of the connection of Sheffield, the conception of the place of Park Hill in relation to its host city became dominant over concerns with fabric points here to a privileging of the meaning of this intent over its execution and the emphasis in PPS5 more upon the balancing of public benefits with the avoidance of harm (DCLG/EH/DCMS 2010:8.HE9.2). In this way it represented a shift in the discourse.

### **Performance and Viability: Fitness for purpose**

Saint's categories of performance and viability as marking post-war architecture as something different are inevitably bound up with the discourse of architects' intention, focused as they are upon the success of delivery and the potential to sustain what that was (Saint 1996). But the judgement of how well those intentions were delivered is part of the emergent narrative of significance for English Heritage to be discerned through expert assessment (English Heritage 2005c, 2007a). It is in this category that the two case studies and the values rendered explicit in relation to the management of their conservation most diverge. This divergence can partly be accounted for by the difference in scales between the two estates and the scope of the works necessary to secure their refurbishment. And the financial implications of all that. But it also reflects a divergence in expectation that I suggest rests in the established reputations of the two estates. At Spa Green, which had been well-liked, admired for its serpentine form and variety of flat types, and influential in terms of its use of the Garchey system, but had not registered on the international field (Harwood 2000), a more low-key approach was proposed. At Park Hill a more spectacular resolution resulted, much of which was explicitly rooted in this discourse of viability: 'Sometimes change will be desirable to facilitate viable uses that can provide for their long term conservation' ((DCLG/EH/DCMS 2010:7:6), "It's about reinventing something that didn't work at the time and what you've got to do to make it work for the future," says Simon Thurley, chief executive of English Heritage' of the works at Park Hill (Baillieu 2009).

Here I explore where failures were identified in particular aspects of the two estates, and how narratives of performance and viability developed around them. At Spa Green I locate this discourse of failed performance in terms of the small-scale; the replacement of the windows and bricks and how this was played out in drawn-out and close interactions with the buildings. At Park Hill I relate the idea of performance and viability to the narratives of failure and the demolition of all but the concrete frame of the structure and replication of the plan form, with elevational alterations including inversion of the solid:glazing ratio and removal of all brick panels and their replacement with anodized aluminium. I suggest that the discourse of intention to some extent over-ran those of performance and viability here and that for the professionals involved, the persuasive voice of those leading its regeneration meant that the importance of the concept of the design outweighed a concentration upon the fabric.

In 1982 *Building* reported that basic repairs were needed, and to be undertaken at Spa Green. But in 2001 the flats at Spa Green featured (alongside Park Hill) in an article in the *Guardian* newspaper on the problems of repair confronting tenants of listed public housing (Pollock 2001). In 2006-7 a major programme of works undertaken by Homes for Islington, which saw an outlay of something over £6 million, centred upon window replacement, kitchen and bathroom refurbishment to meet Decent Homes standards, including repainting, re-routing of service ducting, regrouting and replacement of failed brick panels. The estimated costs of the repair of the external fabric only of Park Hill in 2001, by comparison, were put at something in the region of £15 million, but at this stage, notably, questions were not being raised about its long-term viability presenting a need to remove fabric. In an endnote of June 2000, to his analysis of concrete and brick failure at Park Hill, Beard foresaw a bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund by Sheffield City Council as likely, but recognized the problems of the Council securing match-funding 'in the current climate and taking into account all the other pressing demands for housing capital finance' (Beard 2001:185). His focus throughout the article, however, had been on the best means of repair.

I turn first to the discourse of performance and viability at Spa Green. There is no doubt that there were significant material failures including the facing brick panels

and tile-work to the elevations, as well as the windows. The Garchey waste disposal systems were also found to be problematic “My lovely, smelly Garchey” (PH13) and the Garchey system famously failed to cope with the arrival of the disposable nappy (Hatherly 2010). Window failure – as discussed in Chapter 3 – was also a problem. These were all framed by participants as small-scale failures in performance, often in terms of the innovative methods used in the construction of the estate. But, equally, these problems were not interpreted by participants as significant challenges to the viability of the estate. In this respect the delivery of what the architects intended was implicitly measured a success, and with flats remaining in high demand, including those available on the private market. Problems with viability did not appear to be a significant part of the discourse.

In relation to window replacement, for example, participants all spoke of the time taken to ensure that appropriate replacement frames could be found that redressed problems with opening mechanisms and thermal breaks, but still maintained the elevational character of the buildings, as discussed in Chapter 3. One participant also spoke of his “alarm at what I was reading online” (SG2) before first seeing the estate, which was somewhat modified by what he saw: “typical of council [owned housing] peeling paint... paint made a huge difference to the feel.. “ and of how the “hit and miss brickwork panel” made him realise “underlying problems” (SG2) But participants also set such frustrations in response to the failure of the architects’ first intentions in terms of performance against other small successes: “because the window fields are right against the wall [there is a quality of light]” (SG9), “use of materials [at Bevin Court] isn’t as nice as at this one, the plan works so well” (SG10). Where dissatisfaction was expressed it was often more with the performance of features of the new works, and even here was concerned with the detail of delivery “really bad matching” (SG10), “crooked corners on concrete repairs” (SG2). As with the narrative of architects’ intentions, the concern at Spa Green was largely with performance in terms of the micro-scale, and with a consistent emphasis upon fabric as part of this.

This discourse of performance at Spa Green was not mirrored at all at Park Hill. As part of this the discourse of material failure underpinned and was critical to securing the works to regenerate the estate through reference to a narrative of concept and

intent. Performance here was presented as a narrative of the failure of innovative materials to do what was intended and a pressing need to resolve this: “not least the safety of the concrete” (PH2). Performance also emerged as a narrative of the extent to which the vast scale of the estate presented problems with the viability of repair. The BBC programme *Romancing the Stone* (2009) had revealed how fragile the funding mechanisms for the regeneration were at this point and housing professional PH6 spoke at some length of the detail of funding strategies and how “Splash had to get the frame back to the shell... see the sky” because of a VAT ruling on alteration, “if we hadn’t won the VAT argument it wouldn’t have been viable” (PH6). Viability, then, became part of the persuasive rhetoric of regeneration.



Source: Urban Splash

This stripping back to the concrete frame as part of Phase I of the regeneration of the estate provoked media comment as well as strong views from participants. The discourse of failure that I pointed to in Chapter 4, and the need for radical change to the form of the building to secure viability as part of this “making people think differently” (PH2) caused considerable consternation. Hatherley entitled an article on Sheffield: ‘City of Skeletons’ and wrote of Park Hill and the comprehensive stripping out of all internal fabric as ‘the most glaring element in a sequence of wanton destruction’ (Hatherley 2009). But he also questioned ‘why they [Urban Splash] took such a drastic (not to mention expensive) approach’ (ibid). The

argument for public benefits resulting from the regeneration that Urban Splash put forward, however, was important, and conservation professional PH5 reflected that had the PPS been in place when negotiations were ongoing, this would have made things “much easier” because of the emphasis upon wider public good (PH5). PH4, speaking from a similar position, even felt that the performance and viability of the estate had been of lesser importance to the debate than “creating a new image... just using the old building as a blank canvas, creating a new work” (PH4). In this way the fabric of the blocks was rendered of lesser importance, and the meaning, the “significance” (PH5) of the estate elevated through an association with a changed image of Park Hill and the potential for wider public benefits to Sheffield brought through its regeneration.

I have already pointed to the emphasis upon original fabric in the old PPG. There is similar emphasis upon plan form in Annex C.58, acknowledging it as one of the ‘most important characteristics’ of a building (DoE/DNH 1994:C.58). The near-complete removal of fabric, however, was not seen by all as a significant loss, particularly as the formats were to be reinstated: “going back to the original”. PH5 went on: “I was pretty disappointed by the interiors. No doors, light-fittings, kitchen, bathroom fittings.... nothing” (PH5). This argument for reinstatement cut right across the presumptions in the PPG and entailed a real challenge to the arguments for the intrinsic importance of the estate lying in an authenticity of fabric. Whilst some acknowledged some problems with the layout of the flats “all the rooms the same size ” (PH4) and of “people putting beds in the kitchen in studio flats to give themselves a proper bedroom” (PH7), the performance of them was largely left unquestioned. The surprise, perhaps is that that the strip out was neither proposed as something corrective of failed performance, but nor was it in any way concerned with preservation. The argument here for viability, seems entirely to have been driven by financial concerns and not contested on grounds of material authenticity. Again, the narrative of retaining the meaning of the estate and its intentions seems to have held sway.

The removal of the colour-gradated brick panels and inversion of the solid:glass ratio on elevations also provided a focus for debate around the intentions, performance of Park Hill and its viability. The preferred discourse for the coloured bricks is that

they offered a means of identifying different levels, but were also part of John Forrester's involvement on the site in his guise of consultant artist (Cruickshank 1996, Saint 1996b). But this device was challenged as having been a only a partial success: "I knew which route to take; I didn't use colours" (PH3). As with Spa Green, the brick panels had problems with performance, and more particularly discolouration (Beard 2001), but the decision to replace them with coloured aluminium based on original colourways was, as one participant put it: "a Big One" (PH6). After all, Annex C stated that: 'Every effort should be made to retain or re-use facing brickwork, flintwork, stonework, tile or slate hanging, mathematical tiles or weatherboarding (DoE/DCMS 1994: C.8). Beard in his article of 2001 had acknowledged the discolouration of the bricks but recognized them as 'one of the interesting features' (2001:179) of the estate and reported close consultant-led tests on cleaning both brick and concrete, an approach much more consistent with the works at Spa Green (2001:181). But the works of regeneration brought something entirely else: anodized aluminium panels "replicating the colour banding" (PH2). As part of an investigation into the architects' intentions visits were reportedly made to both Jack Lynn and Ivor Smith by English Heritage to discuss the panels and why brick was used: "Both said because it was cheap... However, the recollection within the department [at the council] is that quite a lot of effort went into it" (SG5), "Jack [Lynn] though the brick was really critical... was very proud they had involved an artist" (PH7). To support the argument for replacement, I was told that the more accommodating view of Ivor Smith was deliberately preferred over the other, although as PH4 argued, the establishing of the "theory behind [replacing] them" did not take away from the material authenticity of what was there. Ultimately, the argument for change won out, the narrative of "replicating" the original was again of relevance, making reference to the original intentions of the estate and a narrative of this having failed in terms of the material performance. A slight variation on this occurred in relation to the proposed reversal of the pattern of solid: glass "subtly altering" (PH2) these bays. One participant said that: "[From] talks with the original architects they made the windows small because the occupants probably wouldn't be able to afford curtains" (PH4). In such terms the interventions were corrective of intention, but also closely aligned to a looser discourse of performance; that of the windows having been too small and the rooms too dark.



One of Urban Splash's photographs of the site. The block on the left retains the original brick panels and solid: glass configuration. The facing block has been stripped out and refurbished with the new coloured panels and glass. Source: Urban Splash

In summary then, the narratives of performance and viability at the two estates were quite radically different. For the period up to the proposed works of regeneration at Park Hill they followed a similar trajectory (exploration of material failure, investigation of remedial action) but as viability became an acute concern, the course of Park Hill turned toward an entirely different solution. Here, the discourse of performance and viability has become entwined with the narrative of concept and architects' intentions, with considerable persuasive force. At Spa Green viability of the estate never really emerged as an acute concern, but problems with performance were focused upon material failure and remedial action, or compensatory substitution. At Park Hill, the fabric became part of the discourse of viability, rather than the locus for discussions about it, and its substantial demolition placed enormous pressure upon the narratives of its special interest. I now move on to explore this in terms of the idea of 'shatter'.

## **Shatter**



I turn finally to the question of how far the values identified in the listing process can be placed under stress during the course of works and what implications this has for both Spa Green and Park Hill in the context of my idea of 'shatter'. In suggesting that the works undertaken at Spa Green were largely concerned with a close, curatorial concern with its fabric, I propose here that the persuasive and practical efforts of those at Spa Green have been concerned to maintain an authenticity of fabric and maintenance of those values 'crystallised' at the point of listing. Whilst not entirely without critics there have been no narratives of Spa Green to suggest that this expressed special interest has been put under such stress as to be lost. There have, however, been arguments to this effect in relation to Park Hill and the level of intervention permitted with both support and even funding from English Heritage (Building Design 2009, Hatherley 2009, 2010). Here the narratives have turned away from a concern with material authenticity, as I explore above, and have rested instead in narratives of intention and of concept as signifiers of meaning. Understood as important in terms of fabric as well as intention, the conclusion must be that the special interest of Park Hill has, I suggest, been lost, or 'broken'. But as understood principally in the terms of essence (Powers 2001) or 'meaning', it has not suffered 'substantial harm' but has been sustained.

The notion of 'shatter' derives from the current protocols for listing, which still rest in the understanding of experts recognizing merit and listing on this basis. Listing may be framed for the narratives of post-war architecture as being in advance of current taste (Saint 1996a, Harwood 2001, English Heritage 2007a), but: 'Achieving a proper balance between the special interest of a listed building and proposals for alterations or extensions is demanding and should always be based on specialist expertise' (DoE/DNH 1994:3.15). I have described in Chapter 3 how professionals and residents at Spa Green participated in a thickened understanding of the special interest of the estate. The expression of that special interest, or significance was manifest in small interventions in the fabric of the estate and interactions with the building. Different forms of expertise emerged beyond those of the 'art historian' (English Heritage 2007a). These were largely located in terms of expertise of community - or belonging - and were claimed exclusively by residents and more particularly longer-term residents. The expertise of residence was framed in terms of décor and an aesthetic appropriate to the modernist idiom, and to a smaller

extent, professional expertise in historic building rival to those held by professionals directly involved in the estate. The expertise of community was claimed in terms of a special understanding of what Spa Green represented as architecture of social housing and was framed in terms of a narrative of community or belonging as discussed in relation to the window dressings in chapter 3. It was also articulated by reference to inter-resident contact: "A lot of neighbours talk about how there was a great community. [When it was the anniversary they] celebrated the estate more than the buildings" (SG9), or "we all brought our kids up here... they [leaseholders] don't mix with ourselves" (SG5). And professionals were very conscious of being 'outside' of the estate, seeking to "discuss and learn from" longer-term residents (SG2), "people who have lived here for a long time" (PH1). The narrative of an expertise of appropriate aesthetics was largely located in the leaseholder and professional group: "I want to see the right things done by it... make sure it's cared for" (SG9), and as one resident with a design profession put it; "The best social housing with 'style cred'" (SG7). The narrative of 'better' expertise emerged most particularly in relation to the repainting of communal areas, with one resident participant criticising professionals for "not following the design process through to its logical conclusion" (SG10), even though the use of the paint was hailed "an amazing result" (SG7). These narratives of expertise, however, were played out in relation to an acceptance of, even insistence upon, the importance of the estate as architecture of special interest. These interactions with the fabric by some residents did not challenge the value set embraced through the listing, but rather sought to claim better understandings of it through different performances of expertise.

At Park Hill, the discourse of expertise was claimed principally in terms of the ability to determine the extent to which interventions might occur without causing significant harm and consequent loss of significance. As English Heritage claimed in their publication *Creative Conservation*: 'We provided expert advice on the scope for change and identified the heritage values of the complex. These lay not only in the site's history but in the scale and vision of the original council housing scheme, in the expressed reinforced concrete frame and the relationship of the building to the landscape in which it sits. Substantial changes to the internal layout and the infill panels within the frame could therefore be introduced without damaging its historic significance' (English Heritage 2009). Participants largely confirmed this discourse of

English Heritage as having adopted the position of expert adjudicators on the extent of the special interest: “very much English Heritage’s baby” (PH5), and that their “change of view” (PH6) “encouraged by the English Heritage Committee” (PH4) was pivotal in changing the trajectory of proposed schemes from a concern with material preservation toward a discourse of concept and intent; “the fundamentals” (PH4). There must, however, be a place for a narrative of the regeneration expertise of Urban Splash and their architects, the persuasive force of their rhetoric in achieving something different: “certainly not an approach you would follow on a more traditional grade II\* building” (PH4), to the extent that trust was placed in the conservation team at the authority and the developers: “English Heritage came to the project group occasionally if something interested them” and any disagreements were approached in an expectation of resolution “[we] resolved problems in co-operative project meetings, with open discussion... didn’t want fights in public” (PH6). If not driven by the “whim” of the development team, the project decisions certainly seem to have rested on a professional, expert-led adjudications, drawing on “helpful” (PH7) narratives and discarding others. Within this context a focus upon the small stuff of the fabric “did make me look rather picky” (PH4).

In designating the structures as listed, the preferred discourses of significance for the two estates were largely driven by their first reception, and the structures measured against matters of intention and delivery as much as authenticity and degree of intact-ness. In an article of May 2009, *Building Design* magazine wondered: ‘Does listing sufficiently protect modern buildings?’ (2009). For Catherine Croft, Director of the C20 Society, in relation to Park Hill the answer was essentially no: ‘It may well be that the condition of the blocks and the requirements of future tenants meant a radical reinvention was the best solution, but by kidding itself that this is conservation, EH has prevented the opportunity of an upfront debate’ (2009). For another conservation professional: “ Still II\*? It would be tough [to justify that as a recommendation]” (PH7). I suggest here, that for Park Hill, the special interest manifest in the value set based upon an understanding of its material interest has been ‘shattered’ through Phase I of its regeneration. All but the concrete frame was demolished, its elevational appearance altered and even the retained concrete frame “built up” (PH4). Nothing of the original fabric remains to be seen from this part of the estate. Baillieu cited Mark Latham of Urban Splash on how it still passed ‘the

“squint test”... the frame’s grid must still be readable from a distance’ (Baillieu 2009). But by resigning the materiality of special interest to “an image” (PH4) the narrative of authenticity has to rest on concept, intention and a very particular interpretation of twentieth century architecture that sees the reification of the idea over the fabric of its delivery. PPS5, through its privileging of ‘meaning’ (DCLG/EH/DCMS2010) allows this value set new significance, and simultaneously allows for a new construction, a new crystallisation of special interest, or significance for Park Hill.

## **Conclusion**

I have tried, through this chapter, to show how two very different stories of how values are claimed in the conservation and regeneration of post-war architecture have been manifest at Spa Green and Park Hill. I have argued that the two estates have taken very different courses through their management as heritage, and that these have been driven by changed discourse of building conservation that can be tracked in a policy shift between government documents PPG 15 and PPS 5. Consistent with the dictates of PPG 15 (DoE/DNH 1994), the material fabric of Spa Green has been curated and intervention managed to ensure minimal disruption to its form. Professional and resident interactions with the estate have been characterized by small interactions with the fabric, producing narratives of expertise, community and understanding that have thickened its narrative of architectural and historic importance. For Park Hill, however, the focus in terms of special interest has been driven by the first narratives of the estate towards a discourse of essence (Powers 2001), concept and performance in the context of the estate as representing something particular to Sheffield. Bolstered by the construction of post-war architecture as being in some way ‘different’ (Saint 1996a, Harwood 2001), the focus of its regeneration has been upon preserving the essence of the estate, the ideas behind its construction over its material form. The loss of almost all original fabric in Phase I of the works has divorced the estate from a discourse of material authenticity, but re-presented it as the locus for the expression of ideas about the Sheffield landscape, housing a community, and the role of deck access housing in this and the experimental formalism of post-war British modernism. In transferring an idea of special interest from ‘fabric’ to ‘meaning’ the contrast between the two estates, I suggest, encapsulates a shift in the conservation discourse between PPG 15

and PPS5 and marks the conservation of post-war architecture as a distinct practice in the management of building conservation.

## Conclusion

*'I think we shall die, not from the dagger thrusts of our ranting enemies, but of entropy and boredom amongst ourselves, unless we find a better rationale for our activity' (Powers 2001:6)*

Next year London is hosting the Olympic games. When the last Games closed in Beijing, graphics shown for London as the next host city featured a number of 'iconic' London landmarks and *embla*. Amongst them I noticed the distinctive silhouette of Trellick Tower, Erno Goldfinger's grade II\* listed post-war housing estate in west London. Post-war public housing has not always been held in such close affection by the British public. This casual claiming of Trellick Tower as significant to the identity of London as the host city, and by implication the UK as the host country, is an important one. Although in 2001 a MORI poll for English Heritage had found that 75% of the population would support the retention of the 'best' of the more recent architecture, as While points out, there was a distinctive demographic characteristic of this – the young were more supportive than the old (2007:653). Perhaps the heritage canons are finally changing, and perhaps public taste is finally catching up with its experts (Hobson 2004, While 2007).

That public opinion was not instantly behind the listing of buildings of the more recent past has been widely noted (Saint 1992, 1996a, Harwood 2000, Powers 2001, While 2007). But it seemed that there was also an institutional unease with the justification for the grounds for such intervention as framed in the legislation and adopted practices. Even the architectural press was less than ecstatic about the modern listing programme, some seeing listing modernism as a betrayal of its core principles (Pawley 1998, Powers 2001). Against such a background it seemed that post-war architecture was being adopted into the heritage canon as in some way *different* from rest of the listed building stock and the established paradigms of building conservation practice. It is this apparent marking out of difference through adopted practice and the tensions between claimed values that arise in the conservation and regeneration of post-war architecture that I set out to investigate

through this research. By following on from Ed Hobson's work on values in conservation practice and policy (2004) I sought a further exploration of values as they are manifest in the listing and then conservation of post-war public housing and its associated discourses of authenticity and expertise. Although some work has been done in this area since I began (While 2007, Gibson and Pendlebury 2009, Pendlebury 2010,) the research in this project is the first to attempt to do so through a particular emphasis upon visual research methods, and to draw out the significance of this discourse of difference.

I now return to the particular research questions proposed at the start of the research and discuss how this project has tried to answer them.

*What values underpin the conservation activity? Are there overt or covert hierarchies of value at play?*

Through the research I have argued that building conservation has been informed by a strong narrative of the importance of authenticity, both of form and fabric, and is driven by a statutory obligation to preserve (DoE/DNH 1994). Responsibility for both recognizing significance and adjudicating on proposed change rests with the expert in national and local agencies, principally English Heritage and local authority conservation staff. Concerned with the preservation of historic buildings as representing a public good there have been coincident emphases in more recent policy and published guidance upon community or 'local' interest that appear unresolved in terms of the current protocols of conservation practice (Pendlebury 2009, DCLG 2010). Questions arising about the conservation of post-war housing have both highlighted this mis-match and provoked a deliberate exposition by the experts involved of what is valuable in post-war architecture. This has framed architecture of the more recent past in terms of being 'different' to other listed buildings. (Saint 2006a) The explanatory effort has both opened up debates on post-war listing and conservation to a wider interest group, particularly residents of housing estates, but it has also reinforced the place for the expert adjudicator within the formal agencies (While 2007, Pendlebury 2009).

Taking a detailed study of cases at Spa Green and Park Hill, I have shown how two very different approaches to the articulation of value have emerged and I have argued that these are two distinct practices can be located in a shift in government

policy on heritage management. At Spa Green there has been a curatorial approach to the architectural form and fabric of the estate as being of prime significance, but also a widening out of the performance of expertise about it. Different communities of expertise have emerged who have used the building fabric as the means of asserting the significance of their home, and of affirming their own identities. The place of these local knowledges remains ambivalent in terms of the formal protocols of conservation planning (Gibson and Pendlebury 2009, Stephenson 2010). But there has emerged a strong pattern of locating the discourse of authenticity in the fabric of the buildings of the estate. Drawing out from the discursive preferences of the first reception of Spa Green I suggest that these first receptions have helped to secure a story of the significance of the fabric that has shaped subsequent approaches to its conservation.

At Park Hill, however, I show how there has been a valorization of architects' intention over authenticity of fabric, with an emphasis upon public benefits brought through regeneration (English Heritage 2005b, 2009). In this way the architecture has been marked out as significant still, but both difficult and different (Saint 1996b, English Heritage 2010). In part, I suggest that this discourse of difference, and the consequent search for a radical solution at Park Hill, has been driven by a discourse of success and failure that has been operationalised to justify intervention at various stages through from first development to the current regeneration. In large part it will also be due to the size of the estate and the economies of regeneration, but the dominant discourse for the estate has been one of finding solutions through design. And through attempts to reconcile apparently conflicting values arising from the conservation-regeneration activities has come a re-assertion of the place of the expert adjudicator within the formal agencies and particularly English Heritage.

Rather than values being covert, I suggest that these case studies reveal that certain values are overtly preferred in the conservation and regeneration of post-war architecture. Which values are afforded preference may to some extent be dependent upon how a programme of works is framed, either as conservation refurbishment or regeneration. Within these differing approaches persuasive actions and rhetoric proposed by individuals or groups have enormous importance. But what these case studies seem to reveal here is that the differing values claimed



during the course of the works have been located as much in the shifting discourse of building conservation as in a tension between conservation and regeneration. To that extent the problems are within conservation.

Perhaps the most important point to have emerged from this research project is that these two different claims on value at Spa Green and Park Hill appear to have been driven by different, and shifting emphases within adopted policy in both PPG15 (DoE/DNH 1994) and the new PPS 5 (DCLG/EH/DCMS 2010). In other words these two cases are symptomatic of a shift in values in the conservation discourse away from the primacy of original fabric and the intrinsic value of the historic structure in heritage management and towards a preference for finding value that is extrinsic (Blaug, Horner and Lekhi 2006, Pendlebury 2009). Spa Green I see as having been largely the product of the value claims of PPG 15 and its privileging of an authenticity of material form, largely concerned with the architecture as an artifact. The course of works at Park Hill, however, I see as more consistent with the imperatives of seeking public benefits and a privileging of the extrinsic, even instrumental values of heritage (Blaug, Horner and Lekhi 2006, Pendlebury 2009). That this shift in value emphasis has been possible, I suggest, is in part owing to the emergence of new conservation protocols, marking out of post-war architecture as different to other conservation practice, and its associated emphasis upon the architects' intentions. What this seems to mean is an inherent threat to the paradigms of building conservation practice that is not so much responsive to the challenges of the 'cultural turn' and its questioning of inherent worth and expertise (Moxey 2001). Rather, it seems to suggest that intrinsic value accrues to the intentions of the architect (no dead authors here) and success of delivery, considered against the claims of a public interest and determined on the advice of experts in remote agencies. Rather than help to secure a better philosophical grounding for the place of conservation within the realm of planning this points towards a potential crisis in the conservation.

I now move on to examine the subsidiary research questions:

*1. What is the relationship between public and private, national and local interest in practices of listing and the articulation of special interest in the conservation and regeneration of post-war public housing?*

*2. What is the relationship between expert and non-expert opinion in conservation practice and in the making and un-making of reputations?*

I set out to answer these two questions together, as in terms of the discourse of the conservation of post-war architecture they are closely interlinked. From this research I hope to have shown that there have been strong, essentially utilitarian claims upon the public good as represented by the conservation activity, reliant upon a privileging of the expert embedded in formal agencies, particularly English Heritage (Larkham 1996, Hobson 2004, Fairclough et al 2008). This, however, has been laid under stress by the listing and management as heritage of post-war public housing that is often unpopular, expensive and difficult to conserve. Reliant upon a discourse of public taste catching up with the opinion of professional experts (Saint 1992a, Harwood 2001, While 2007), there has been acute pressure upon professionals to both justify their intervention and explain their reasons for decision-making (Hobson 2004). This has led to initiatives such as the exhibitions to accompany proposed listings, and efforts to consult individuals and the wider public. I suggest that it may also have led to what English Heritage have adopted as 'constructive conservation' (2009) and an approach that implicitly draws the assertion of value away from the materiality of the building.

As part of this changing approach that I identify there has also been an emergent divide between assertions of local and national interest. The current protocols of conservation practice privilege the national over the local, but residents at Spa Green showed how embedded local knowledge can enforce claims for national interest. Through their interactions with the buildings on the estate they were also claiming communities of expertise that challenged the normative structures of remote experts within formal agencies. Rather than setting the different forms of expertise in opposition, however, the local interest manifest through these new forms of expertise was used persuasively to confirm the special - national - interest of their home. A different form of local expertise was employed for Park Hill, which was concerned with polarised approaches to the estate and interpretations of its failure or success. As part of this I see a deliberate engagement by the development team with a local discourse of failure and a stated desire to re-integrate the estate into the city. By doing so these actors sought to create new knowledges about the estate as a success.

In terms of the moral theory supporting building conservation (or lack of it) this shift at Spa Green away from remote experts to those claimed at local level is a potentially important one (Fairclough et al 2008, Gibson and Pendlebury 2009, Pendlebury 2009). I discussed in Chapter 2 the potential 'best fit' between a communitist justification for conservation as set out by Howe (1992) and its reliance upon both the discourse of the 'special' and the potential for value to be understood as universalisable. This means that there is no intrinsic merit detected by experts but nor is value wholly situated and only understood within certain communities of interest. I discussed whether there was an inherent tension between framing the architecture of the 'everyday' as special and this justification. At Spa Green, however, participants demonstrated that the act of listing had rendered their homes as 'special' and through their daily interactions with the fabric they performed the special interest of the estate. Residents at Park Hill had their homes rendered special from the outset through the literature and consultative effort that accompanied the estate from its first development. In neither case, then, does there seem to be a conflict between nominations of 'special' and 'everyday'.

There were, however, differing approaches to the exterior/interior divide. Harwood has described how approaches to post-war architecture have often been (mis)concerned with the 'iconic' (2008) over the composite of any structure. This concern with the elevation over the interior is also seen in English Heritage policy on post-war listing (2005, 2007a). The inference is that there are limits to the extent of public interest in the interiors of post-war buildings. At Spa Green, some residents certainly felt that the scope of intervention permitted by virtue of listing was disproportionate to what public interest might represent, by way of curatorial approaches to the preservation of, for example, internal walls or restoration of missing features. Others were satisfied that the public interest represented by the protocols of listing meant that such intervention was justified, albeit only on an informed basis. At Park Hill a much more robust approach was taken, with all original internal fabric beyond the frame being removed. The public interest in the retention of the estate as significant heritage was only really defended in the elevations and setting of the structure. Phase I of the regeneration seems to succeed more as a response to the imperatives of regeneration, rather than the

*Conservation-led Regeneration* (English Heritage 2008) that might have been expected. Whilst the estate still passes the 'squint test' I suggest that to some extent it has become the image of Park Hill rather than the material form that the previous PPG 15 had so fiercely defended.

*3. Is there a special focus upon intention in the conservation and regeneration of post-war public housing that relates to understandings of modernism and if so how does this mark it as distinct from mainstream conservation practice?*

Through this research I have made repeated reference to the essay by Andrew Saint 'Philosophical Principles in Modern Conservation' from 1996 and his insistence upon *intention* as one of the ways in which architecture of more recent past might be marked out as 'different' (1996a). But, as I noted in Chapter 2, he also warned of a developing tendency to accord value to 'idea and image' in more recent conservation practice over what was delivered (1996a:21). In terms of listing there is no doubt that buildings of the post-war period are marked out as different. They have their own protocols, and until fairly recently they even - in the form of CABI - had their own extra consultee for proposed new additions to the list. Following on from Saint's distinctions, English Heritage guidance, as I noted in the same chapter, also seems to mark modernist architecture as something distinct from the established heritage canon (2005c, 2007a) offering a justification for listing that is framed as more discerning.

At Spa Green, it appears that the approach to the management of the buildings works has not followed this divide. The protocols of established conservation practice as set out in PPG 15 (DoE/DNH 1994) were adopted, with an emphasis from both professionals and residents upon the importance of the fabric and original form of the building. Where architects' intentions entered into the discourse they were specifically in relation to small detail such as paint colour, decor or kitchen units. Occasionally they were also claimed in relation to intended community. At Park Hill, however, I see the same focus that Saint was referring to (1996a) upon preserving the ideas driving the first development as well as the image of the architecture, at the expense of fabric. In pursuing a dialogue with the first intentions of the architects, professionals have taken their focus away from a curatorial concern with original fabric to an essentialised concentration upon idea and

elevation form. This has been particularly manifest in approaches to the placing of the estate in relation to Sheffield and the landscape, to the moving and making of a community and to the use of materials within the modernist/Brutalist idiom.

*4. In the conservation and regeneration of post-war public housing, do different values acquire ascendancy, subject to what sort of building programme is being pursued? In other words, are there different values inherent in programmes of conservation and regeneration and, if so, how are these manifest?*

In asking the question of values claimed in conservation versus regeneration here I have implied that there may not be consistency. In much of the literature for conservation, conservation and regeneration are assumed as natural partners, with sympathetic imperatives (English Heritage 1998, 2005b, 2009). The new *Statement on the Historic Environment* even makes the link explicit: 'Heritage can act as a catalyst in helping towns, cities and rural areas to regenerate and transform to modern needs' (DCMS 2010:8). More recently the 'tension' between the two activities and their value sets has been recognised (Pendlebury 2002:145, Fairclough et al 2008), but not so far as to inhibit practice. The works at Spa Green I do not construe as regeneration. They have largely been concerned with an upgrade of the building fabric and resident facilities without significant changes in structure or resident group. From the outset, however, the works at Park Hill have been presented as regeneration. Park Hill as a structure has become the 'focus' (DCMS 2010:8) of a consciously area-wide renewal, reconnecting the estate to the city and framed as part of the Housing Market Renewal. What has been fundamental to this effort is the re-imaging or re-branding of Park Hill by Urban Splash and the development team. Concerted, often art-based initiatives, such as the neon lighting of the 'I love u' sign have been part of this engagement, consciously calling upon the 'romance' of the place (Abrahams 2010). By using the building as a locus for an extensive reconfiguration of the Park Hill brand, new narratives have emerged that draw on its early reception and which relate particularly to its place in Sheffield, its community and materials. Their relation, however, is in terms of ideas more than the fabric. Through adopting, and adapting, the established discourse of Park Hill and some of its key narratives, I suggest that key actors have been able to persuade experts in other agencies of the coincidence of the values of regeneration and conservation.

Whether it is the nature of regeneration imperatives to prompt this engagement with the ideas of the architecture over the fabric (Bell and Jayne 2003), or whether this is the result of marking architecture of the more recent past as different is less easy to determine.

What I hope to have shown through this research is that not only are there problems with the naturalized discourse of intrinsic value in a listed building) but that there remains a significant want of a robust justification to sustain conservation practice (Hobson 2004). The marking out of conservation of the more recent past as in some way different (Saint 1996a, English Heritage 2007) has served to expose these contradictions but has simultaneously proposed a new form of conservation practice that privileges intention and the essence of a structure over its fabric. And it is this new form of conservation that I see adopted in the new PPS 5 (DCLG 2010). Through the apparent confusion with regard to the moral theory sustaining conservation as part of the planning activity, this new policy has emerged that seems to reject the primacy of the material form and looks for value that is not intrinsic to the listed structure. A dual approach to expertise also emerges in the conservation of listed post-war housing, on one hand situated in embedded, local practices of interaction with building fabric as at Spa Green and on the other reliant upon remote, expert adjudication of special interest in terms of the public interest, as at Park Hill. Those involved in their conservation have pursued two very different courses for the management of these heritage 'assets' and the cultural capital that they represent. And perhaps this shift in understanding where value lies in heritage management is the result of the discourse of 'difference' that emerged in response to twentieth century listing.

### **Limits of the research**

As I set out in the introduction to this research, my focus has been upon an exploration of what might be called the cultural capital identified by conservation practice and has not engaged with questions of the economic or political value of the conservation activity. There are stories to be told for both Spa Green and Park Hill about their place in turn-of-the-century approaches to housing policy (including Housing Market Renewal and ALMOs) as well as the enormous literature on

regeneration and gentrification (Porter and Shaw 2008). In excluding these parts of the stories I have necessarily ignored these literatures, but I have done so deliberately to highlight the focus upon the story of heritage value. In taking a determinedly qualitative approach to the research I have also excluded the possibility of drawing any generalisable conclusions. What I have done, however, is point to different value emphases and justifications emergent from the two cases and seek to identify practices that these represent. There are, of course, limits on the extent to which I can draw conclusions even from locating these assertions of value in practice. Such difference in the geography, economics and political cultures of the two case studies, and even the scale of the estates, means that the limits for even theoretical generalisation must be significant. Limits on resources (and me) have also meant that I could always have done more interviews, undertaken more site visits, solicited more photographs and made more drawings. But in pursuing such an intensive examination of the two cases I have been able to show a richly detailed material emergent from these two studies that I believe offers a new way of looking not just at the practice of the conservation of post-war architecture but also the protocols of building conservation more widely. Through opening up questions about the moral justification for conservation, its privileging of certain forms of expertise at both national and local level, and its shifting rhetoric of authenticity from fabric to intention I hope to challenge the orthodoxies inherent in its practice and propose some new ways of positioning expressed value preference.

### **Implications for further research**

The findings of this research point to three distinct places in which further research might be located. The first is in an investigation of the proper place for the justification of building conservation as a particular aspect of planning within moral theory, and an attempt to propose such a framework for its proper practice. Without this, I suggest that building conservation will continue to bundle along drawing from ultimately conflicting theoretical bases on a case-specific basis (Hobson 2004) to amount to radically different results, if not the 'entropy' that Powers suggests (2001:6). The second relates to the use of mixed research methods in investigating building conservation and the reflexive potential of drawing on a range of visual media for this. I suggest that the visual imperatives of the conservation

activity mean that visual research methods are not only a desirable, but necessary, part of an investigation and result in a much richer body of material than a straight textual analysis would allow. The third is the need for an investigation of how different forms of expertise might be afforded credence and formal recognition within conservation protocols. Through the research I point to a rich, embedded articulation of value expressed through interaction with the fabric of Spa Green in particular. This form of engagement with the fabric produced narratives of its special interest that I suggest could form a model for other situated assessments of significance in post-war listing at least, where there is a limited resource on which to try it out. Conservation needs to change its protocols in terms of its accommodation of local interest and expertise and I suggest that this intensive (if resource-heavy) investigation of value through fabric might offer more than a straight user statement of significance.. Further research might also explore how conservation projects, particularly those of post-war housing, seek the participation of residents and the ways in which different groups of residents engage with them. In turn this might add to the literature on resident participation in not just conservation, but regeneration more widely, by furthering an understanding of the relationship between expert/resident action. And, as I have set out above, there are studies to be made of these two cases in the context of the wider debates around housing policy and Housing Market Renewal, as well as the gentrification of social housing with a heritage cachet.



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## **Appendix I**

**List descriptions: Wells House, Spa Green and Park Hill**

## **I. Wells House, Spa Green Estate**

This building is listed under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 as amended for its special architectural or historic interest.

**Name:** WELLS HOUSE

**List entry Number:** 1246683

**Location**

WELLS HOUSE, ROSEBERY AVENUE

The building may lie within the boundary of more than one authority.

<b>County</b>	<b>District</b>	<b>District Type</b>	<b>Parish</b>
Greater London Authority	Islington	London Borough	

**National Park:** Not applicable to this List entry.

**Grade:** II\*

**Date first listed:** 22-Dec-1998

**Date of most recent amendment:** Not applicable to this List entry.

## **Legacy System Information**

The contents of this record have been generated from a legacy data system.

**Legacy System:** LBS

**UID:** 471988

## **Asset Groupings**

This list entry does not comprise part of an Asset Grouping. Asset Groupings are not part of the official record but are added later for information.

## **List entry Description**

## Summary of Building

Legacy Record - This information may be included in the List Entry Details.

## Reasons for Designation

Legacy Record - This information may be included in the List Entry Details.

## History

Legacy Record - This information may be included in the List Entry Details.

## Details

TQ 3182 NE ISLINGTON ROSEBERY AVENUE (East side) 69/10074 Wells House GV II\* Block of 48 flats. Designed in 1938 for Finsbury Metropolitan Borough by Lubetkin and Tecton, revised design built 1946-9; completed work published in the name of Skinner and Lubetkin. Ove Arup and Partners, engineers. Innovative reinforced concrete box frame, with expansion joints, the staircases carded as balanced cantilevers off a central spine stabilised by the twin columns of the lift shaft. The open egg crate structure enabled Lubetkin, assisted by C L P Franck, to devise an elaborately patterned exterior of brown brick, with tiled ends and balconies and dark red cast-iron railings and grilles. Red pointing and grouting a distinctive feature. Six flats per floor, those to upper floors served by three lift towers, with living rooms to the street and 2 or 3 bedrooms facing quiet internal courtyard. One bed and bedsitter flats on ground floor reached by access deck. Eight storeys, with parabolic roof designed aerodynamically to provide drying facilities and rounded lift tops and basement district heating. Principle elevation overlooking park devised by Tecton on Rosebery Avenue with balconies set with line of block in front of kitchens. The whole elevation expressed as a grid, set in frame provided by high parapet and tiled ends, with separate framing giving emphasis to centrepiece - which does not reflect

the internal partitions of the flats. The ground floor set back, with the upper stories set on pilotis. The concrete balconies tile clad, with sections of decorative ironwork forming contrasting patterns on each floor to give rich chequerboard texture to the block, based, said Lubetkin, on Caucasian carpet patterns in his native Georgia. Metal concrete seats incorporated within posts a feature of the elevation to Rosebery Avenue. Rear elevation simpler, with windows in concrete surrounds and chequer-pattern open ventilation grilles to stairs. Ramped entrance loggia of cantilevered concrete, with ramps either side of central door, giving on to deck access on-bed and bedsitter flats on ground floor. Interiors carefully designed and finished to a high standard, with timber floors. The fitted kitchens linked by hatch to living room, were a 'revelation for working class housing' (Coe and Reading) and are noted for its Garchey system of refused disposal (the first in London and the only one anywhere still known to be in operation). The flats served by a district heating system set under Tunbridge House. The shape of the aerofoil-shaped drying areas resulted from a series of experiments with the scientist Hyman Levy. The Spa Green Estate is the first and finest scheme of public housing by this celebrated firm, working for Finsbury Metropolitan Borough for whom they had completed a pioneering health centre (q v Pine Street) in 1938. Lubetkin and Tecton were noted for their commitment to public building. They had won a much publicised ideas competition for working class flats in 1935 - yet had been frustrated in the 1930's since their private Highpoint (Haringey) also listed, was so successful it went rapidly up market. Spa Green was designed before the war for a smaller site, but wartime bombing enabled the blocks to be better placed. The war also enabled Tecton to continue their investigative approach to

architectural design and rational planning and it saw the development of Ove Arup's box frame or egg crate system which was to transform post-war building. By placing the structure in the side walls and floors the elevations were freed up for the patterning and texture that make Lubetkin's post-war work so distinctive. 'Too often in Contemporary buildings of this kind the elevational proportions, with their repetitive rhythm of openings, seem to form a part of a continuous band of indeterminate limits, which could be snipped off by the yard at any point' Lubetkin told the *Architectural Review* (1951). This is not the case here. Wells House and Tunbridge House form a mirrored near-pair, set back to back. The foundation stone was laid by Aneurin Bevan, Minister of Health and Housing on 26 July 1946. Spa Green is included at a high grade because the box frame was devised by Ove Arup especially for the development, though one small block was used earlier (Brett Manor, Hackney). It was the work in which Lubetkin at last expressed his ideas on low-cost public housing, simply but without the cost limits that constrained his later work. Every detail of exterior and interior is carefully thought out and finely finished. It is the most important post-war development by the most thoughtful and inventive pioneer of the modern movement in Britain. 'In this scheme the town planning interest, the structural interest, and the manipulation of structure and planning to arrive at an architectural totality of high quality epitomises the problem of high-density housing as the architect sees it, and offers one of the most interesting results yet obtained' (Sir John Summerson, 1959). (Sir John Summerson, 1959. (*Architectural Review*: Volume 109: 1951- : 138 - 140; Peter Coe *Social Commitment*: Bristol: 1981 - : 173 - 6; John Allan: *Berthold Lubetkin, Architecture and the Tradition of Progress*: London: 1992 - : 377 ~ 405;



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- 53). Listing NGR: TQ3148982773

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- **Book Reference** - *Author:* John Allan - *Title:* Berthold Lubetkin Architecture and the Tradition of Progress - *Date:* 1992 - *Page References:* 377-405
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- **Book Reference** - *Author:* T Dannatt - *Title:* Modern Architecture in Britain - *Date:* 1959 - *Page References:* 24, 150-53
- **Article Reference** - *Date:* 1951 - *Journal Title:* Architectural Review - *Volume:* 109 - *Page References:* 138-140

National Grid Reference: TQ 31489 82773

## **2. Park Hill**

**This building is listed under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 as amended for its special architectural or historic interest.**

**Name:** PARK HILL

**List entry Number:** 1246881

**Location**

PARK HILL, DUKE STREET PARK HILL, SOUTH STREET PARK HILL, TALBOT STREET

The building may lie within the boundary of more than one authority.

<b>County</b>	<b>District</b>	<b>District Type</b>	<b>Parish</b>
	Sheffield	Metropolitan Authority	

**National Park:** Not applicable to this List entry.

**Grade:** II\*

**Date first listed:** 22-Dec-1998

**Date of most recent amendment:** Not applicable to this List entry.

## **Legacy System Information**

The contents of this record have been generated from a legacy data system.

**Legacy System:** LBS

**UID:** 471963

## **Asset Groupings**

This list entry does not comprise part of an Asset Grouping. Asset Groupings are not part of the official record but are added later for information.

## **List entry Description**

## Summary of Building

Legacy Record - This information may be included in the List Entry Details.

## Reasons for Designation

Legacy Record - This information may be included in the List Entry Details.

## History

Legacy Record - This information may be included in the List Entry Details.

## Details

SK 38 NE SHEFFIELD TALBOT STREET (North side)  
784-1/6/10016 Park Hill II\* Includes: Park Hill, SOUTH STREET Includes: Park Hill, DUKE STREET Flats and maisonettes. 1957-60 by Sheffield Corporation City Architect's Department under J L Womersley, designed by Jack Lynn and Ivor Smith with F E Nicklin and John Forrester (artist); Ronald Jenkins of Ove Arup and Partners, engineer. Formally opened in 1961 by Hugh Gaitskell. Reinforced concrete frame, partly board marked, with concrete balcony fronts and brick infill in four shades - a progression of purple, terracotta, light red and cream. Continuous flat roof of even height throughout the estate. 995 flats on 17 acres (total site 32 acres) at density of 192 ppa and a unit cost of £2,800 each (total cost £2,158,591). The scheme includes 31 shops, 4 pubs, a laundry boiler house, Garchey refuse station and garages. The flats and maisonettes were designed on a steeply sloping site (gradient 1 in 10) keeping a constant roof level, so that the height of the blocks range from four to thirteen storeys. A standard three-bay unit with central staircases set in pairs in H-shaped frame is the main unit of construction and design, each containing a one-bedroom and a two-bedroom flat, a two-bedroom and a three-bedroom maisonette, all with balconies. Access decks at every third floor serve maisonettes on and

above the deck and one-storey flats set below. The innovatory width of these four 'street decks' was a key feature of the architects' concept; all save the uppermost (Norwich Row) debouches on to ground level at some part of the scheme, and are served by 13 lifts and two large goods' lifts which gave milk floats and other services direct access to the decks, enhancing the image of 'streets in the sky'. Park Hill is formed of four ranges linked by bridges across the upper decks, all cranked at obtuse angles (between 112 and 135 degrees) to maximise the site aspect and panoramic views. Lifts (mainly in pairs), stairs, pubs and laundry are set at nodal points. Shops, boiler house and former garchey station set on lowest point of site to north west. Elevations treated as a regular exposed grid of the board-marked concrete frame. Balconies on those elevations not served by decks give to a rhythmic 2:1 pattern in both directions across facades, varied only at corners. Balconies and decks with vertical concrete balustrading, similar pattern to slender steel balustrading to bedrooms. Timber windows with aluminium horizontal opening sections. Flush timber doors. Interiors. The rigid grid of flats and maisonettes ensures that kitchens and bathrooms are stacked in pairs to facilitate servicing. Interiors not of special interest. The Pavement area of shops. Most shops retain original varnished timber shutters and glazed shopfronts in timber surrounds over concrete plinth with weathering. Many shopfronts - including Neils News and the grocery opposite - have timber panelled dado. These original shopfronts survive behind later security shutters. Linked two-storey block with open stairwell and columns clad in gold mosaic. Housing Area Office later and not of special interest. Public Houses. There are four on the estate, all of which retain most of their original features. All are four-bay units in the ground

floor of the block, mostly close to the shopping centre. All have common plan: they face in two directions, with a lounge on one side and public bar on the other, linked by central bar and glazed screen. The Earl George Public House, The Pavement, retains original fenestration of single lights (with applied later latticework) over inset timber panels, with set-back clerestorey glazing. Original bar with later facing panels, and timber boarded surround, set under lowered ceiling with inset lighting. Marble tiled flooring round bar and main entrance. The Link, Gilbert Row. Four-bay canted front, formed of timber panels in concrete bays with mosaic spandrels, with painted mosaic fronts. Public bar entrance on internal court has three projecting canted bays and entrance with original doors. Public bar retains bar and fixed bench surrounds. The lounge has been remodelled. Scottish Queen, Gilbert Row. Brick faced. Tripartite windows set forward, only the large upper lights glazed, the others infilled with timber panels. Clerestorey glazing above level with building line. Original bar counter. Timber columns with bevelled and varnished timber boarding, marble tiled floors. Original doors, screen between bars with glazed tiles and later coloured glass. Fixed bench seating in both bars. Adjacent are public lavatories, clad in grey and gold mosaic, disused in 1996. The Parkway, Hague Row. Fenestration with projecting four bays of timber windows over timber dado and set back clerestorey, the surrounds clad in slate hanging, with two-bay mosaic mural. Original interior with central bar and bevelled timber panelling; fixed seating to both bars. Park Hill Social Centre on two levels with ramp to upper entrance. Brick with concrete cornice, roof and sills; timber windows. Interior with sprung timber floor. ASSESSMENT Park Hill is of international importance. It is the first built manifestation of a widespread theoretical interest in

external access decks as a way of building high without the problems of isolation and expense encountered with point blocks. Sheffield and the London County Council had the only major local authority departments designing imaginative and successful public housing in the 1950s, and this is Sheffield's flagship. The decks were conceived as a way of recreating the community spirit of traditional slum streets, with the benefit of vehicular segregation; Park Hill has been regularly studied by sociologists ever since it opened, and is one of the most successful of its type. The deck system was uniquely appropriate here because the steeply sloping site allowed all but the uppermost deck to reach ground level, and the impact of the long, flat-topped structure rising above the city centre makes for one of Sheffield's most impressive landmarks. The result was Britain's first completed scheme of post-war slum clearance and the most ambitious inner-city development of its time. Listing NGR: SK3606487093

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- **Article Reference** - *Title: 21 July - Date: 1965 - Journal Title: Architects Journal - Page References: 157-70*
- **Article Reference** - *Title: 23 August - Date: 1961 - Journal Title: Architects Journal - Page References: 271-86*
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- **Article Reference** - *Title: October - Date: 1995 - Journal Title: RIBA Journal - Page References: 53-61*

## Appendix 2: List of terms and abbreviations

**ALMO** Arm's length management organisation. A company set up and owned by a local authority for the management, maintenance and improvement of local authority property

**ATO** Architects and Technicians' Organisation set up in the 1930s. Membership included members of the Tecton practice.

**Ove Arup** Structural engineer and member of the Tecton practice who worked on a large number of structures of the modern movement in the UK. Later set up his own practice.

**Brutalism** Associated with the architects Alison and Peter Smithson and the architectural critic Rayner Banham. Usually identified with a style of architecture of the mid C20 characterised by a determined honesty of materials and form.

**C20 Society** The national amenity society concerned with architecture and design of the C20

**CABE** Council for Architecture and the Built Environment

**Docomomo** Charity concerned with the protection of buildings of the Modern Movement .

**DCLG** Department for Communities and Local Government

**DCMS** Department for Culture, Media and Sport

**DoE** Department of the Environment

**DNH** Department of National Heritage

**EDAW** Multi-disciplinary consultancy responsible for the Sheffield

**EH** English Heritage

**Finsbury Health Centre** Grade I listed, designed by Lubetkin and Tecton for the London Borough of Finsbury. Built 1935-8.

**Erno Goldfinger** Architect prominent in the Modern Movement in the UK.

**HLF** Heritage Lottery Fund. Administers distribution of part of moneys raised from National Lottery to heritage projects in the UK.

**Homes for Islington** An ALMO established in 2004 to manage properties for Islington Council

**Housing Market Renewal** Labour initiative begun in 2002 providing investment into the physical infrastructure in areas of housing market failure in the central and northern England. Cancelled from the end of March 2011.

**Listing** Listed buildings are designated under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 as having special architectural or historic interest. There are three grades of listed building. Grade I represents a tiny proportion of all listed buildings as being of exceptional, sometimes international interest. Grade II\* buildings are of 'more than' special interest. Grade II buildings are of national importance and special interest. Just over 90% of all listed buildings are listed at grade II. To do works that affect the special interest of a listed building Listed Building Consent is first required and it is a criminal offence under the Act to do works without that Consent being in place.

**Berthold Lubetkin** Architect and co-founder of the modernist Tecton practice, who designed Spa Green.

**Jack Lynn** Modernist architect of Park Hill with Ivor Smith.

**MARS** A group concerned to promote modernist architecture in the UK in the 1930s

**Frederick Nicklın** Architect who worked on the Park Hill estate

**ODPM** Office of the Deputy Prime Minister

**Objective 2** Structural funding available through the European Regional Development Fund to areas of identified need.

**PPG 15** Planning Policy Guidance Note 15: *Planning and the Historic Environment*

**PPG 16** Planning Policy Guidance Note 16: *Planning and Archaeology*

**PPS 5** Planning Policy Statement 5: *Planning for the Historic Environment*

**Pathfinder** See Housing Market Renewal

**Peabody Group** Owns and manages property around London. Set up in 1860s to improve housing conditions in London.

**Niklaus Pevsner** Influential mid C20 architectural critic and author of acclaimed series of regional architectural guides

**RIBA** Royal Institute of British Architects

**Right to Buy** Legislation passed through the Housing Act of 1980 by the Tory government allowed council tenants the right to buy their properties at a reduced rate.

**Ivor Smith** Architect of Park Hill with Jack Lynn



**Alison and Peter Smithson** Radical and influential mid C20 architectural practice pioneering what came to be known as 'brutalism'. Schemes include the Economist building and Robin Hood Gardens.

**RIBA** Royal Institute of British Architects

**SPAB** Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings

**Tecton** London-based architectural practice pursuing modernism in the 1930s, set up by Berthold Lubetkin, Francis Skinner, Denys Lasdun, Godfrey Samuel, and Lindsay Drake

**Lewis Womersley** City architect for Sheffield at the time of the construction of Park Hill