Chapter 2 **From Architectural Concept to Built Form**

Introduction

The following two chapters lay out the history of the Brunswick's design, development and redevelopment over a period of 30 years, assembled through interviews, archival and bibliographic research (Appendices 4 & 5). The account reveals the contrasts and conflicts between different accounts and interpretations of the intentions behind, and evolution of the Brunswick scheme. It underlines the fundamental difficulty of 'freezing' a building in terms of its art historical evaluation, and the complexity of the process, involving many different parties apart from the architect as 'author', by which a work of architecture evolves from concept to material reality. So, although the Brunswick constitutes a powerful aesthetic and formal image, which has been canonised through the Listing process on the grounds of specific art historical criteria, it also constitutes a highly contested cultural artefact which brings together many different narratives besides the official discourse.

The history of the Brunswick is particularly significant in terms of the questions it raises around the whole concept of 'ownership' as it relates to cultural artefacts. It stands out in one specific and quite unique aspect, which was the return of the original 'author' to resume work on his 'own' work 30 years after being forced to resign from the job, leading to a remarkable conflict of ownership claims. The architect's claim to a moral right of aesthetic judgement and personal reinterpretation was vehemently opposed by critics and heritage spokespeople who claimed the building as an untouchable part of the collective national heritage, by the residents, claiming individual and collective territorial rights, and by the commercial firms, claiming the right of property ownership and associated freedom to redevelop it however their commercial objectives dictated. It is perhaps the fight over 'ownership', interpretation, and 'rights' in the Brunswick at different times which underlines its significance as a culturally charged physical presence.

2.1 Proposed redevelopment of the Foundling Estate [Fig 36]

When the redevelopment of the Brunswick Centre site was first mooted in 1958, the proposals aroused a public outcry, and there was considerable dismay among locals at the prospect of what was described as a 'deeply-rooted population' being displaced. But the housing on the site had been condemned as substandard **[LT 2]**, and

Abercrombie and Forshaw's Statutory Development Plan of 1951 had established the principle of radical redevelopment in bomb-blasted London, which was reinforced by Conservative legislation of 1955 launching a major slum clearance programme. By 1963, Professor Colin Buchanan's Traffic in Towns report, for the Ministry of Transport, had set out recommendations to create traffic-free 'environmental areas' in cities, surrounded by new highways for fast-moving traffic, which built on clearance policies, and was to affect the design evolution of the Brunswick scheme directly.

Alec Coleman bought the site from the Foundling Estate and set up a company, Marchmont Properties, to develop it, part-financed by Robert McAlpine and Sons, who would act as contractors for the project and eventually take it over from Coleman. Between 1958 and 1960, Marchmont Properties made a number of unsuccessful planning applications to the London County Council, using architects Covell and Matthews, who produced a scheme comprising a 40-storey office block overlooking Brunswick Square, three 20-storey blocks of flats and some long five-storey blocks along Marchmont Street containing shops and hostel accommodation for the University of London [Fig 37]. But the LCC was concerned to preserve the residential character of the neighbourhood, and turned down the architects' proposals. In 1959 Coleman was advised to appoint Leslie Martin who had recently left his position as chief architect at the LCC, and was also familiar with the Bloomsbury context (see Melhuish 2006 for further details).

When Coleman finally approached Martin in 1960, Patrick Hodgkinson had been working in the latter's Cambridge atelier for three years, primarily on three schemes: a proposed housing development for St Pancras Borough Council, a new student accommodation building, Harvey Court, for Gonville & Caius College, Cambridge **[LT 10]**, and the St Cross library group in Oxford. Martin had first noticed Hodgkinson while he was still a student at the Architectural Association school (1950-1955) in London, when a project of his for an alternative approach to housing under development by the LCC on a site in Brixton **[LT 11,** Fig 38**]** caught Martin's eye. Hodgkinson later wrote of this project: '*The LCC's recipe produced a mixed-height development with couples and small families in watered-down Unités, larger families in three-storey blocks and old people in gnomes' bungalows, the worst sort of social segregation. Nothing was in scale or sympathy with surrounding, turn-of-the-century streets which, in the visionaries' minds would go. My own student project (1953) for the same site achieved a similar density to the LCC scheme, but to*

the scale of the existing stock, in linear terraces enclosing garden courts. I had taken the Unité 3-floor pack and developed it to suit our climate and habits in a way that produced the social mix of any traditional street' (Hodgkinson 1987, p 19).

Leslie Martin was intrigued by Hodgkinson's low-rise/high-density approach, which they were subsequently to develop in collaboration in a project for St Pancras Borough Council (not actually built). But in 1953 Martin was still working for the LCC, in charge of the very different, high-rise Alton Estate scheme at Roehampton, described in the same article by Hodgkinson as '*that shotgun marriage of Nordic and Corbusian principles whose park setting provided its garden-city image*' (p19). The tall housing slabs, clearly visible from nearby Richmond Park and for miles around, would subsequently become iconic symbols of the problems of the new tower-block estates. In 1967 these were highlighted in Jill Craigie's film for the BBC, *Who Are the Vandals?*, which featured the Brunswick scheme as an alternative to high-rise housing development. By 1968, largely due to the catastrophic collapse of Ronan Point due to a gas explosion, highrise development had been almost totally discredited.

By 1968, however, Martin also had left his high-rise career at the LCC well behind him; in 1956 he had accepted the first professorship in architecture at the University of Cambridge, and established his own practice there. By 1968, he and Hodgkinson had also parted company, the latter opening his own office in London in 1964 to run the Brunswick project as sole architect, notwithstanding his youth (he was 33). Hodgkinson was assisted on the project by six members of staff: David Levitt, David Bernstein (who were subsequently to form Levitt Bernstein), Anthony Richardson, Peter Myers, Dugald Campbell and chief assistant Chris Hulls. He recalls today that, '*Davids Levitt and Bernstein were responsible for housing, Anthony Richardson and Dugald Campbell for the commercial parts, Peter Meyers for external detailing and Christopher Hulls for technical aspects throughout including site supervision. Previously, Bernstein had worked for Louis Kahn in Philadelphia and Meyers for Jorn Utzon in Sydney, on whose advice he came to me. After my resignation Levitt, Bernstein and Richardson opened their own offices in London and Meyers his own in Sidney, while Hulls bought a tumbledown timber farmhouse in Hereford, pulled it to bits and rebuilt it with his own hands. Together they had made an ideal design team, for which I have ever been grateful*' (Hodgkinson 2006b).

2.2 Hodgkinson's training and influences

While studying at the AA school, Hodgkinson also worked at the firm of Ward & Austin on the design of the Riverside Restaurant beneath Waterloo Bridge, for the 1951 Festival of Britain on the South Bank. Hodgkinson loved the Festival, unlike peers of his such as Jim Stirling, who considered it much 'too Swedish', and other critics who disliked its populist character and derided what was called 'People's Detailing'. That agenda actually fitted in with Hodgkinson's own idea of architecture as a 'humanist' profession, as well as an interest in Scandinavian modernism that was to develop through his experience of working for Alvar Aalto in Finland in 1953 – even though the light, curvy grace of a building such as the Riverside Restaurant may seem remote from the more angular and monumental qualities of his later work.

By contrast, there was a strong 'cult of Le Corbusier' at the AA which Hodgkinson did not subscribe to. In fact, in a letter to Lewis Mumford of 1952, Frederic Osborn of the Town and Country Planning Association complained about the overpowering influence exerted there by the French architect-planner (Hall 1988, p 237). In 1951 Hodgkinson had been to Marseilles to see for himself Le Corbusier's Unité d'Habitation **[LT 12]**, the first built example of his innovative prototype for mass housing designed as a concrete slab block raised on stilts. But his personal experience of the Unité convinced him that it was the wrong solution to future housing construction. Le Corbusier's technocratic rationalism was fundamentally at odds with his own vision of architecture, and also with his personal experience of French culture gained through a number of return visits to Paris dating from 1948.

As Hodgkinson recalls, Paris seemed incredibly exciting at that time, after the war. It was ravaged by the conflict, but it '*represented tremendous hope... everything was leaping about... it was really marvellous.*' By contrast, '*there was something really rather unpleasant about London – everyone was so proud of having won the war*' (Hodgkinson 2005a). Hodgkinson was strongly attracted by French existentialist philosophy, as propounded by Sartre, and it was to be a significant influence on his developing attitudes towards architectural practice: '*It was simple in those days for the young to sit at the feet of Jean-Paul Sartre at the Café Flore. When I remarked to Sartre that there was nothing existential about* [Le Corbusier's] *Villa Savoye* **[LT 12]**, *he agreed and directed me across the boulevard to* [Pierre Chareau's] *Maison de Verre* **[LT 13]**. *From this time, and disagreeing with much that we were then told about the beginnings of European Modernism, I felt strongly that a*

modern architecture should concern itself with the psyche of the individual rather than being a vehicle for socialism' (Hodgkinson 2000c).

Back at the AA Hodgkinson found inspiration in a range of other sources, especially the architectural traditions of his own country – notably the English Gothic and other medieval building traditions. He loved the English hall tradition represented by '*magical great houses like Penshurst, Haddon and Lacock and their smaller, manorial sisters.…Born of castles opening their walls to light and of monastic colleges' enlightenment, their lofty great halls the public spaces to which more intimate parlours, solars, chapels and offices attached... these halls seem often like roofed courts.*' (Hodgkinson 1987 p19). By the end of his student years he had also become interested in the 19th-century revival of these traditions, in the work of the 'good' English Arts and Crafts architects, notably Lethaby and Voysey, which was regarded with some scorn by his contemporaries. They continued to focus on the built and published manifestos of Le Corbusier and the Bauhaus, while Hodgkinson made the decision at the end of his third year to leave London and work with Alvar Aalto in Finland for 9 months, even though he had some misgivings about the possibility of turning into 'an Aaltophile': '*His...work was a very personal poetry, but what I most admired about it was its existentialism, or something close*' (Hodgkinson 2000c). In the event, he was tempted to stay in Helsinki to complete his training, but it was Aalto who encouraged him to return to England and '*when he came to Cambridge in 1961 and I showed him Harvey Court, he whistled and confirmed he had been right*' (Hodgkinson 2000c).

By that time, Hodgkinson had been working for Leslie Martin for a few years, although his contemporaries could not really understand his decision to do so: '*I think my own generation thought it was odd that I was taking a job with him and going to Cambridge with him...because they didn't understand him, they didn't know enough about him'* (Hodgkinson 2006a). The arrival of the Brunswick project in Martin's office sealed Hodgkinson's future. Alec Coleman had seen the unbuilt St Pancras housing scheme published in an issue of *Architectural Design* of July 1959, and understood its potential for the Foundling site. He had also been advised to enlist Leslie Martin as a skilful and influential politician, with intimate knowledge of the inner workings of the LCC. On learning that Coleman had formed a partnership with McAlpines, Martin was however reluctant to get involved with the project. During his days as Chief Architect at the LCC, he had been pestered persistently by Sir Edwin,

who was eager for new contracts. Martin was happy, however, to set Hodgkinson to drawing up an alternative to Coleman's rejected slab-block scheme.

Although Hodgkinson was, in his own words, 'a relatively poor reader', and has always stressed his non-academic approach to architecture, he had been reading Lewis Mumford's books, particularly the *Culture of Cities* (1940), in which he describes the concept of the superblock **[LT 7]**. Mumford seemed to point the way towards a brighter future after the dreadful war years, while his later book *The Highway and the City* (1964) offered an overt criticism of the Unité concept, or '*the Marseilles folly*', as he put it. Hodgkinson states, '*I can safely say... that Mumford was my largest inspiration.…As for directly architectural influences, I was not drawn by Corbu, Gropius or Mies, more by Futurism than Cubism. I much admired Mendelsohn's German buildings – I thought of him as a Futurist, not an Expressionist, but I was not too impressed by Sant'Elia because he built nothing...*' (Hodgkinson 2000c).

At that time, in an architectural and planning climate dominated by the ruthless thinking and practice of Le Corbusier and the European school of functionalist Modernism, Hodgkinson's rich mix of influences and referents – English Gothic, Arts and Crafts and the Festival of Britain, from Scandinavian and Modernism to Futurism, and from Sartrian existentialism to Lewis Mumford – was unusual. When it came to translating this eclectic mixture directly to his design work in the late 1950s, Hodgkinson's guiding principle was '*not to play with an English translation of Le Corbusier's urbanism, as the LCC had done over the summer of that same decade, but to advance a way of building which instead started with the found, and sound, fabric of city*'. At the Brunswick, it was '*about making a new village for central London, rich with the panoply of life of the West End's villages of old yet possessing a new, life-giving spirit'* (Hodgkinson 1992a).

Hodgkinson was deeply opposed to the *tabula rasa* approach that had underpinned the slum clearance policies of the 1950s, writing of the County of London plan's authors: '*Sir Patrick Abercrombie with his henchman Forshaw – but without much foresight – was to improve away the life a pre-war London had known... The Foundling Estate presented an opportunity to again bring together living, work and recreation to stimulate each other, against normal practice of the time... it would have been a rich village, rich in gain for everyone living there and using it as well as*

for its owners….I was told it was a 'bit messy' by an RIBA judge once. I have never believed in a modern architecture as 'art', but rather as the craft of making liveable towns and cities. If that craft gives ordinary people their dignity and adds a life-giving sense of spirit, that is enough' (Hodgkinson 1992a).

In fact, one of Hodgkinson's criticisms of the Scandinavian tradition of modernism was that '*it made no attempt to create an urban framework*' (Hodgkinson 2001), and this was a problem which he sought to address by reference to the work of Lewis Mumford and other American, as opposed to European, sources, particularly the work of the newly-recognised architect Louis Kahn, who in his early 50s had just opened his own practice. But above all, he looked to the native 18th- and 19th-century traditions of English 'town making'. Hodgkinson held the '*strong belief that we could do it again if only we stopped borrowing from abroad*.' (Hodgkinson 2001). Furthermore, he saw housing, 'ordinary stock', as a crucial component of this equation: '*housing, after all, is the stuff of which towns are made, rather than public palazzos which only serve to decorate. For myself, to rethread the needle was the task*' (Hodgkinson 2001).

In a sense, then, Hodgkinson, a Suffolk farmer's son, consciously adopted a role of championing English artistic and cultural traditions, the English landscape and its vernacular building forms, in opposition to the European interests of his metropolitan contemporaries. This passion is reflected in his enduring love of the work of native painters such as Augustus John and William Nicholson. So it is hardly surprising that a point he was always keen to stress about his design for the Brunswick was its engagement with the local context of Georgian terraces. As far as he was concerned, the Unité d'Habitation in Marseilles had turned out to be an '*impenetrable slab unacceptable for towns and society...stranded, alien to its surroundings, severing the continuity of space or time*' (Hodgkinson 1987, p19). He noted that, while tall point blocks exert a radial force on their surroundings, producing '*residual and negative space*' (Hodgkinson 1972, p216), linear buildings, exemplified by the Georgian terraces organised in streets, crescents, and squares, have the potential to contain space positively. The Unité model was, he said, essentially unsuitable for transplantation to the English climate, drawing a parallel with the relation between diet and environment: '*I have never really forgiven Elizabeth David for trying to teach us to cook Mediterranean food, simply because it does not suit our raw materials or our climate*' (Hodgkinson 2001). By contrast, the English Georgian

model of housing design was eminently suitable to the temperate British climate, supporting high densities of occupation in conjunction with open spaces.

One aspect of that model Hodgkinson did not like was the clear social hierarchy it embodied, visually ordered as the houses were into recognisable classes of dwelling, but Mumford's proposition offered a way of potentially dissolving and reshaping that order into a more egalitarian and socially acceptable model. Thanks to Mumford, then, Hodgkinson fully believed he could re-present at the Brunswick a romantic evocation of a unique, native tradition of construction and settlement patterns, fused with the English landscape and climate which he knew and loved so well. As he put it, he had envisaged *'a village...overlooking nature...[a] green valley*' (Hodgkinson 1992b) and it was a source of considerable chagrin to him that the trees and grass for which planning consent had been obtained were never planted.

2.3 Architectural precedents

2.3.1. The Adelphi

When the Brunswick was finally Listed as a building of historical and architectural importance in 2000, it was described in the Department of Culture, Media and Sport's Listing schedule as '*a pioneering example of a megastructure in England: of a scheme which combines several functions of equal importance within a single framework. It is also the pioneering example of low-rise, high-density housing, a field in which Britain was extremely influential on this scale... Brunswick developed the concept of the stepped section on a large scale and for a range of facilities, whose formality was pioneering'* (DCMS 2000)

This assessment had been predated by English Heritage's recommendation for listing the building Grade II* in 1992, when it stated that it '*admirably fills all the criteria*' for a megastructure: '*It is multi-functional, a "piece of the city", capable of filling one's needs without having to step outside it, and it is theoretically capable of infinite expansion….As architectural theory turned into actual building, only the shopping centre at Cumbernauld in Scotland can compete, and that has been much more heavily altered*' (Harwood 1992). In 1993, EH's London Advisory Committee, responding to a planning application to make alterations to the building, again described the Centre as a *'multi-functional "megastructure"...monolithic in its architectural form, the concrete of which it is built reinforcing the expansive scale of*

the structure' (Croad 1993). The UK branch, International Working Party for Documentation and Conservation of Buildings, Sites and Neighbourhoods of the Modern Movement (DOCOMOMO UK) endorsed the Ministry's assessment of the building's significance as a megastructure in March 2000, but also – and somewhat controversially – opposed its Listing, by proposing an expanded definition of the megastructure concept as a framework that accepts and assumes change within it over time.

The Brunswick was originally described as '*...perhaps the first built example of the idea of an urban 'megastructure' – a building that is a city, rather than being merely a component in a city'* in the *Architectural Review*'s special celebratory issue on the building (Crosby 1972 p212). Crosby's appraisal was mostly complimentary, and the megastructure tag was taken up enthusiastically by Banham a few years later. He described the building as '*The most pondered, most learned, most acclaimed, most monumental, most bedevilled in its building history of all English megastructures – and seemingly the best-liked by its inhabitants'* (Banham 1976, p185). Hodgkinson however was not impressed. He remains scathing today about Banham's status as a critic, and has always hated the description of the Brunswick as a 'megastructure', which bears no relation to what he had intended in the design.

For one thing, Banham traced the history of megastructures back to a scheme by Hodgkinson's bete-noir, Le Corbusier – the relentlessly rationalising, aggrandising Fort l'Empereur designed for Algiers in 1931. For another, Hodgkinson hated the idea of architecture as a vehicle for authoritarian ideas. His friend the critic Colin Rowe set this out in an unpublished essay on the Brunswick (Rowe 1971), in which he acknowledged the more negative aspects of the megastructure concept as one which had evolved into 'a symbol of authoritarian imposition' from its origins as a protest against the 'urbanistic platitudes' of Le Corbusier, Gropius et al. Rowe did also use the term to describe the Brunswick, but qualified it by distinguishing between 'hard' megastructures which are 'exclusive', and 'soft' megastructures which aspire to integration with their contexts, counting the Brunswick as one of the latter, and comparing it to the Palais Royale in Paris.

Hodgkinson's concept always had been to realise a dream of social idealism and equality in an architectural form conceived, not as homage, but as spirited riposte to Le Corbusier and his followers, which would accommodate a mixed-use

programme in a coherent architectural form, while also responding to the architectural characteristics of the environs in a manner which might at the same time rise above their more banal aspects. Hodgkinson personally saw the Brunswick as the direct descendant of a much older, native model of urban form than the megastructure, and that was the Adelphi, designed and built as a grand speculative development of houses over vaulted warehouses by the Adam brothers from 1768. The Brunswick was the first London development since the war to mix housing with other uses and, like the Adelphi, it represented a fusion of speculation on a grand scale with ambitious architectural vision and enormous risk. Interestingly enough, Steen Eiler Rasmussen, in his discussion of the Adelphi, suggests that *'This creative speculation is something very English, and it is no less typical that when it turns out a failure* [as it did at the Adelphi – the warehouses remained vacant, and the houses were not popular]*, the enterprise is saved by a lottery...*' (Rasmussen 1934, p 181). Rasmussen reminds us that '*at the time when* [the Adelphi] *was built it was very imposing and was by contemporaries considered to represent the very idea of the great modern city*' (p186-187).

Hodgkinson's vision of the Brunswick, like the Adelphi, was driven by a forward-looking desire to realise an idealistic vision of the modern city – and in that sense, he did perhaps have more in common with Le Corbusier than he might want to recognise. He acknowledges that one of his sources of inspiration was the film, *La vie commence demain* (*Life begins tomorrow*) (Védres 1949), an artistic statement about a visionary future which features, amongst others, Jean-Paul Sartre and Le Corbusier at the Unité d'Habitation in Marseilles. One of the metaphors he used to describe the Brunswick was that of the ocean liner, made famous by Le Corbusier as an embodiment of *'a beauty of a more technical order*' (p 88) which would be the foundation of the 'new architecture' described in his manifesto of the same name (Le Corbusier 1923 [1946]). For Hodgkinson, the significance of the liner metaphor was distinct from that evoked by Le Corbusier. It was all about social structure and identity, rather than aesthetics – the Brunswick as '*a liner without class distinctions on its promenade decks*' (Hodgkinson 2004), not an embodiment of innovative architectural form-making. Hodgkinson has always staunchly maintained that the Brunswick is not modern at all. In fact, he saw the Brunswick in the simplest, most

traditional terms as '*a glass-covered market hall*', not subsequently built, and '*a long quiet square with gravel and trees*' (Hodgkinson 1987, p 20).

2.3.2 Futurism

But for many amongst critics and the public alike, the Brunswick was, and remains, indubitably modern – all the more so since the days of radical experiments like the Brunswick came to a close. It was the asymmetrical, concrete A-frame section carrying the housing on each side of the precinct that seemed to focus people's attention from the outset. As Reyner Banham succinctly wrote, '*by purely visual criteria…it obviously looks like a megastructure,*' (Banham 1976 p185) and megastructures, originating with Le Corbusier, were equated with an idea of modernity. Banham went further in endorsing the project's ultra-modern credentials, insisting that the scheme owed much to the work of the Italian Futurist architect Sant'Elia who, in his Manifesto of 1914, had famously rubbished traditional architecture, exalting '*the new beauty of cement and steel*' in architecture, the construction of a futurist city modelled on '*an immense, bustling shipyard*' with '*metallic catwalks and high-speed conveyor belts*', and the futurist house as '*a kind of gigantic machine*' (Sant'Elia 1914 [1981], p 20-21). Banham described Sant'Elia as '*the virtual inventor of both the A-frame Terrassenhauser section and the vision of giant buildings spanning over traffic arteries*' (p19) and the Brunswick as a tribute to him, as '*one of the ultimate ancestors of megastructure..... Not only do the residential sections, with their* case a gradinate *over tall public access spaces within the A-frames proclaim his paternity; so also do the twinned towers flanking the entrances and stairs, the modelling and the battering of the surfaces around those entrances..'* (p188). But in reality, Sant'Elia's mechanical, inhumane vision of architecture and the city, which celebrated brutality and ugliness as the unavoidable counterpart of modernity, could not have been more opposed to Hodgkinson's English pastoral inclinations, and he was infuriated by Banham's reference to the Brunswick's '*patent borrowings*' (p185) from his work.

When English Heritage, in its 1992 Listing appraisal of the Brunswick again emphasised a Sant'Elia connection, suggesting that the grand portico to Brunswick Square in particular was 'a direct crib' from Sant'Elia's Milan railway station project **[LT 16]**, Hodgkinson was at pains to dissociate himself from it, insisting that he

'*never knew*' a Milan railway station project by Sant'Elia - indeed that it was '*a project he is not known to have done*' (Hodgkinson 2000c), and that Banham had made a mistake. He distinguishes his own 'portico' at the Brunswick as a 'loggia', pointing to its origins in an early scheme of his own for the site which treated the entire east elevation to Brunswick Square as a long colonnade **[LT 17]** above the stepped profile. The portal as it stands today constitutes the remnant of this linear loggia, and was never conceived as a grand flourish or set-piece in the manner of the supposed Sant'Elia reference.

However, Hodgkinson was drawn to some aspects of Futurism, in particular the idea of the sky as a transcendental plane of escape from mundane everyday life, but by his own account he was more interested in the work of the Futurist artist and sculptor Boccioni than that of Sant'Elia. Boccioni published his own Manifesto in 1914, in which he also railed against the 'slavery' of architecture to the past, but emphasised the importance of expressing emotion through architectonic construction (Boccioni 1914 [1981]) – which would have struck a chord with Hodgkinson. It is hard to deny that the soaring A-frames framing the internal atria of the housing blocks give the place something of a futuristic, if not precisely Futurist, feel which even Hodgkinson does not deny: *'the A-frame is very modern – I slipped up with that! It's not traditional at all*' (Hodgkinson 2004). But the A-frame structure itself had not been part of the original design of the Brunswick, and emerged only as a by-product of changes in building legislation that meant the structure had to be engineered and executed in reinforced concrete instead of brick. The A-frame, developed with engineer Felix Samuely, who had taught at the AA, and whom Hodgkinson had worked with during his student days, provided a resolution of that issue. Far more significant, in architectural and aesthetic terms, was the use of the stepped section. Hodgkinson believed this form eloquently expressed a direct connection with the sky while also retaining a firm link with terra firma: an ideal 'liminal place' – between the homely and the transcendent – which perfectly embodied his aspirations.

2.3.3. Courtyard planning and the use of brick

The essence of the Brunswick lay in the traditional notion of collegiate organisation – linear buildings organised internally around staircases, and externally around sheltered, bounded open spaces – an image of domestic tranquillity as in a grand

medieval house, monastery, or the universities of Oxford and Cambridge. It followed on from the work which Hodgkinson had been doing in Martin's office for a number of Cambridge and Oxford colleges – undramatic, brick-built architecture, completely different from the rhetorical 20th-century reinforced concrete megastructure model that the Brunswick was subsequently linked with. Hodgkinson explained that '*The collegiate plan ... breaks down the town population in appreciable stages with which we identify at different scales and levels of privacy'* (Hodgkinson 1987, p20). It is also an approach to planning that is fundamentally opposed to the suburban densities and open, dispersed layouts of the garden city movement, which, not coincidentally, had at an early stage of Le Corbusier's career been a powerful inspiration to him. It directly influenced the evolution of his Ville Radieuse, much hated by Hodgkinson, with its point blocks and slab blocks surrounded by large unbounded spaces **[LT 15]**.

Hodgkinson was antagonistic towards the suburban ideals of the garden city movement, which he felt killed the tradition of town-making by setting suburbia against urban forms. His espousal of the collegiate model accorded with Mumford's 'precinctual' approach. Predating Buchanan's *Traffic in Towns*, which proposed the creation of similar traffic-free 'environmental areas', Mumford had emphasised the social advantages it would bring in cities dominated by motor traffic. Hodgkinson saw Mumford's proposition as a straightforward enlargement and expansion of Georgian principles of town-building based on the construction of households integrated with community facilities and shops in squares and crescents. He also cited the Palais Royale in Paris as a key antecedent, or prototype, for the Brunswick, prompting Colin Rowe's essay 'A Palais Royale for London?' (Rowe 1971). In this essay, Rowe differentiated the Brunswick, as a 'soft megastructure', or a venture in '*the enclosure and definition of void*', from 'hard' megastructures like Moshe Safdie's Habitat at Montreal **[LT 18]** that were, conversely, concerned with '*external profile, with contour, with solidity*'.

But while Rowe agreed that the central space of the Brunswick was reminiscent of the typical '*attenuated Parisian courtyard*' embodied in the 18th-century hôtel-de-ville, he also suggested that the Palais Royale had a greater external invisibility than the Brunswick, merging into the urban context more seamlessly. Although the Brunswick was not about 'external profile' per se, the exterior had an expressionistic quality which attracted attention to it. Rowe wrote that, *'At the*

Brunswick Centre the Palais Royale lingers around like an uneasy ghost. For here, the memories of classic urbanism become jostled by a range of fantasies distinctly more exotic and austere'. His analysis pointed to a fusion of traditional and classical urban models with a more romantic, existential dimension, in which the influence of Futurism can clearly be discerned. This provides some telling insights into the early evolution of the scheme.

The first version Hodgkinson produced was for a 'blanket' of brick courtyard buildings, internally subdivided into small vertical blocks arranged around staircases [Fig 39]. This was subsequently modified to meet the developer's desire to minimise the cost of redeveloping the site by introducing a single large floorplate slightly elevated above street level, bordered by continuous linear blocks with relatively few points of vertical access and long horizontal internal access galleries instead: the basis of the structure we see today. The blocks were higher on the internal elevation, to give a more 'civic' presence onto the precinct, and lower on the external elevation, to achieve a more domestic scale in relation to the street. The elevated plinth allowed for underground servicing and car parking, and the setback of the housing blocks from the existing street line was to accommodate the planned widening of the surrounding streets for improved traffic flow, with the removal altogether of Kenton Street and Coram Street where they traversed the newly enlarged city block.

This approach was to produce an open-ended configuration of buildings and sheltered spaces on the site, free of traffic, and capable of redefining a territory which it was felt would be better suited to the conditions of modern life [Fig 40]. The stepped section of the blocks was already in place from an early stage, to provide midday sun into all the living rooms, east or west facing, and glass-enclosed 'winter-gardens' for every flat. Hodgkinson maintains that the idea of the stepped section initially came to him as a student, not from Sant'Elia and the Terrassenhauser section, but from the less well known Elberfeld hospital project of 1928 by Marcel Breuer and Walter Gropius. But his acknowledged references are typically wide-ranging. He also points to the influence of the work of the fin-de-siècle French architect Henri Sauvage (1873-1932), one of the lesser known French architects who had experimented in Paris with newly available materials and structural technology to develop new building forms. In particular, he is noted for an apartment block design (1911-12) at rue Vavin in which the building steps back progressively from the street to provide

each flat with a terrace **[LT 20]**. Perhaps most significantly, however, Hodgkinson draws attention to a prototype much closer to home, the winter gardens built in the seaside town of Brighton during the 19th century, which he regarded as a more appropriate response to the variable British climate than the open balcony which Parker Morris regulations were later to stipulate.

The stepped section appealed to Hodgkinson for reasons other than the purely practical, above all because of its potential to express an existential dimension to everyday life, the fact that it was '*about looking up*' towards the sky (Hodgkinson 2000a). This is precisely the feature of the Brunswick flats that sociologist Richard Sennett has interpreted as a severing of the connection between life inside the flats and everyday street-level activities, resulting in abstraction and alienation (Sennett 1976). For Hodgkinson, by contrast, the possibility of living '*in the clouds*' was something to aspire to, allowing an escape from '*the frightful buildings [immediately] around the Brunswick*' (Hodgkinson 2000a) (many of which had been replaced piecemeal since the war). In other words, it appealed to his interest, originating in Paris, in engaging with an existential awareness of self in the world, transcending the depressingly mundane qualities of one's immediate environs, especially in the post-war period.

Hodgkinson has described his first scheme for the Brunswick as 'a whole load of Harvey Courts', referring to the student residence he worked on with Leslie Martin for Gonville and Caius College, Cambridge, during what he has called his 'Collegiate Interlude (1957-61)' (Hodgkinson 1987, p 20). This building **[LT 10]** is arranged around an internal courtyard which is raised one storey above ground level, with the section stepped back. Banham subsequently described it as a truncated pyramid which appears '*almost carved from a solid mass of brick*' (Banham 1966, p 126).

Harvey Court could never have been anything other than a brick building. The grid on which it was planned was 9 x 4 x 3 – which, as Hodgkinson puts it, was '*brick perfect*'. Working with Leslie Martin's studio in the mid-1950s had allowed Hodgkinson to develop a commitment to brick construction that had started during his student days at the AA, and developed through his work with Alvar Aalto. At that time an architect's choice of materials was charged with ideological significance: '"*the Ville Radieuse and the Unité d'Habitation suggested a model to be applied by good hard socialist principles in good hard modernist materials*"' (Hall [citing Cook]

1988, p 237). The use of 'soft' brick, then, was an appropriate choice for an architect opposed to such models, and Hodgkinson's interest was fuelled not only by his love of traditional English architecture, the 'good' Arts and Crafts architects Lethaby and Voysey, but also by the work of the then little-known American, Louis Kahn (1901-1974).

Kahn was not very interested in Arts and Crafts architecture, but his use of brickwork was inseparable from his interest in the spatial ideas embedded in the architectures of the past. His visits to Greece, Rome and Egypt had inspired him with an interest in the monumental and spiritual qualities of ancient buildings, and he sought to recreate those qualities in a new architecture for the present. Kahn won his first major commission in 1951, an extension to the Yale Art Gallery at Yale University in New Haven, USA, and it was his work that set Hodgkinson, while still a student, on course in the use of brick. He suggests now that his work with Leslie Martin on the St Cross group of brick libraries in Oxford would be hailed as 'very Kahn' today, but at that time the American architect had barely established his career, and he was little known in England.

As for the Brunswick itself, it is an irony that one of its greatest claims to fame today is as a concrete building. Changes to the building regulations were responsible for the radical rethink of the construction and materials of the original scheme. Hodgkinson had grave misgivings, but recalls that other architects in the office thought that concrete really was the more appropriate material, because the building was '*so monumental – it was bound to look and feel more important*' (Hodgkinson 2001b). Eventually he came round to the idea, partly because of his concerns after Camden Council became leaseholder that the bricks used would be of such poor quality that concrete would indeed be preferable, and partly because he formed the view that concrete was more appropriate for urban architecture, brick more suitable for rural buildings, just as '*black shoes* [are] *for the town, brown shoes for the country'* (Hodgkinson 2000a). In other words, it was an expression of an essentially traditional approach to matters of etiquette and propriety, rather than an intentional gesture in the direction of a self-consciously modern aesthetic.

Notwithstanding the change of materials, the pervasive influence of Kahn was indirectly highlighted by Colin Rowe in his 1971 essay, where he wrote of the Brunswick as a modern-day Classical forum or arena. Rowe suggested that '[in] *Hodgkinson's central space, it is sometimes difficult to avoid the impression that we*

are in an arena for the celebration of some archaic and not wholly known religious ritual. Are we in the Palace of Knossos or the Ball Court at Monte Alban?'
Later, David Hamilton Eddy, referencing Rowe, also suggested that at the Brunswick '*we are in a pagan world...The walkways that give access to the flats on the upper floors and the broad decks of the first floor bear no relation to the Christian cloister of Gothic and Palladian architecture...one is reminded of the great causeways and monuments of ancient civilisations, the Egyptian, the Mayan and Aztec with their ziggurats and intimations of entombment and human sacrifice*' (Hamilton Eddy 1989, p31).

Hodgkinson concurs that '*I was always interested in the ancient...there was something there that I couldn't grapple with and nonetheless it interested me tremendously'* (Hodgkinson 2006a). This interest represents another dimension of the sense of shared ground with Kahn, and it seems likely that Kahn himself would have appreciated Rowe's or Hamilton Eddy's romantic-classical evocation of the Brunswick as a descendant of the ancient tradition of monumental architecture imbued with spiritual quality.

2.4 The evolution of the scheme

Harvey Court was finished in 1962. Hodgkinson had already started working with Martin on the adaptation of his student project for the Loughborough site in Brixton to meet the requirements of a brief drawn up by St Pancras Borough Council for a site in West Kentish Town [**LT 11**, Fig 41]. These were not exactly courtyard projects, although the linear 'terraces', designed on a similar scale to the existing 19th-century terraces which made up the urban fabric, were to be grouped to form open-ended courts. The interlocking maisonettes were comparable to those of the Unité in Marseilles, but with the significant difference that they had a double aspect and direct access to outdoor space, since unlike the Unité the blocks were firmly rooted in the ground, rather than elevated above it on *pilotis*. Also banished was the Unité's 'internal street', which, in Hodgkinson's view, was a concept with severe limitations due to the lack of natural light and ventilation.

These projects directly influenced Hodgkinson's approach to the design of a scheme for the Foundling Estate. He was very irritated when it was later suggested that the Brunswick scheme had developed out of research conducted at the Martin Centre (a research centre set up in Cambridge by Leslie Martin and Lionel March, but

not until 1967), and published in Martin and March's 1972 publication *Urban Space and Structures* (Martin and March 1972; Fig 42). Hodgkinson claims he never had any idea that Martin and March were planning to use the Foundling site as a case study in the first chapter, written by Martin. In fact, when Coleman approached the Martin studio, Hodgkinson had recently turned down Martin's offer of a partnership because he was uncomfortable with the practice's overly scientific approach to design, as he saw it. The Brunswick project represented a great opportunity to strike out on his own, and, as he says, Coleman was a 'wonderful' client, because he was willing to take risks to achieve some sort of quality.

Hodgkinson and Coleman established a good relationship from the start, largely through Coleman's surveyor, Charles Harman Hunt, who in many ways '*was the client*'. Most of his work was with McAlpines, and he acted as '*a good hard pusher*' (Hodgkinson 2004) for Hodgkinson and Coleman's ideas with the contractor, whom Coleman had invited in to help finance the project. McAlpine's view of the Brunswick project was crisply summarised in the words of its then chairman Sir Edwin, who stated on seeing the model: '*I think it looks like a bloody football stadium, but if you tell me it'll make money, we'll have it!*' (Hodgkinson 2000a). In the end, the relationship with McAlpine seriously hampered realisation of the Brunswick, even though Hodgkinson got on well with John Derrington, head of the company's in-house engineering consultants, McAlpine Design Group. But McAlpines' early involvement was necessary to get the scheme off the ground, and Hodgkinson found that Harman Hunt, who was '*completely conservative, but very good fun* [and] *... understood how much a caring architect hated people like McAlpines*' (Hodgkinson 2004), provided an invaluable intermediary between the different parties.

Harman Hunt had an office in Mount Street, a Bentley, chauffeur, and a house on the Sussex coast. He was in his late fifties, and Hodgkinson describes him as very old-fashioned, with little knowledge or understanding of architecture, and a penchant for lunches at Simpson's in the Strand; but nevertheless he had faith in the young architect, and Hodgkinson found himself well supported, and enjoyed a good working relationship with his client. When Hunt announced in 1965 that the job was dead, because McAlpines had mismanaged its investments and run out of money, Hodgkinson suggested that they approach Camden Council to see if they would take over the housing element of the project, and Hunt not only agreed to his bold

suggestion but also hammered out the deal with the council. Ultimately however, he was unable to save either Hodgkinson or Coleman from McAlpine's heavy-handed cuts and antagonism. By 1970, when Coleman was ousted and Hodgkinson forced to resign, Hodgkinson had had enough of the project. He had been unable to do anything like the design work he had wanted to or develop his architectural ideas during his involvement with the Brunswick because, as he said, he had spent nearly all his time on the telephone dealing with administrative matters.

2.4.1. The Outline Planning scheme (1960-1963)

Hodgkinson's first idea for a grid of eight blocks, with vertical access staircases, bedrooms looking onto internal courtyards, and living rooms looking onto public space, had been quickly replaced at the developer's wishes by a layout of two parallel linear blocks, with fewer staircases and long access galleries. Initially these were solid blocks, with double-aspect flats running from front to back; the space between the two blocks was a relatively narrow street rather than a precinct or piazza. This evolved into an arcade, with a circular recital hall placed centrally at the intersection of north-south/east-west axes **[LT 22, 9].** Fifty-four shops on each side were proposed, with a department store on two floors. There was also a petrol station facing onto Marchmont Street, and extensive car parking, along with two electricity substations, under the elevated floor plate in a double basement.

In the early drawings, the central axis through the scheme is clearly shown to be aligned with the east side of Queen Square to the south **[**Fig 43**]**, and it is intriguing to note the superficial similarities between the Brunswick concept and the Charles Holden schemes for the University of London in the early 1930s. These were to provide new university accommodation in a long 'spine' stretching from Montague Place in the south to Byng Place in the north, presenting a monumental, formal façade of advancing and retreating bays to Malet Street with a series of entrance courtyards **[LT 8]**. In the third scheme for the university the central, raised spine is located at the centre of a linear double grid of internal and open courtyards stretching along the site.

Although comparisons can be made between this project and Hodgkinson's work, and he acknowledges that he briefly saw it in Martin's office prior to the Brunswick commission, he says he was much more strongly influenced by an unexecuted 18th-century plan for the Foundling Estate, by a forgotten architect named Merryweather. This proposal comprised a long wide street stretching from Queen

Square to Tavistock Place, and Hodgkinson saw no reason why the idea shouldn't be resurrected. He had a clear vision of the new development as '*a major public place on a proposed pedestrian route linking the rail termini of Euston Road with the offices of Holborn*' (Hodgkinson 1987).

Whatever the possible precedents, it is clear that the concept of a monumental axial scheme had been in the air for a long time, and that the Brunswick proposal was therefore not as radical, in terms of its scale and ambition, as one might think. Furthermore, it was a vastly preferable option to the alternative of high-rise tower blocks and slabs. By the early 1960s, traffic considerations had also become paramount, road widening seemed to be inevitable, and everyone assumed that the shops on Marchmont Street would disappear as a result. The long Brunswick shopping arcade was regarded as an appropriate and well-conceived replacement for, not a duplication of, Marchmont Street, which would be widened and taken over by fast-flowing traffic. It was for this reason that the planners stipulated that a new shopping frontage should be inward-facing, and the street-line of the new housing set back behind that of the original buildings on the site.

Because the profitable hotel and large office uses had been separated out and allocated to Site B, Site A became a relatively 'pure' housing scheme, still mixed-use, but only with uses directly complementary to the main programme – mainly shops and a pub, with a small number of 'professional chambers', mainly to replace the doctors' surgeries that had been lost to the development, at second floor level **[**Fig 30**,** professional chambers coded 8**]**. These opened onto a wide terrace, conceived as a public square or pleasure garden looking down into the arcade below, and connected to it by a grand staircase which would give the general public access to the upper level. Indeed, the scheme provided a much higher proportion of open space within the developed area than on the old estate.

2.4.2 The Speculative scheme of 1964: A-frame and wintergardens

On winning Outline Planning consent in 1963, the developer decided the scheme should be modified to meet a more typical speculative brief, which Hodgkinson worked on for a further year. The first major alteration was the replacement of the circular recital hall by a covered shopping hall as the focus of the arcade. Hodgkinson wrote, '*It will give a meeting place to the area and allow the terrace above to become*

one large space: a piece of quiet tree-lined ground (not just a raised deck) separating the housing from street bustle' (Hodgkinson 1972, p 218; **LT 19, 46**).

The housing allocation was also altered, the number of 'high-grade' units being reduced to achieve a better commercial mix; the solid housing blocks were also redesigned, with the introduction of a concrete A-frame carrying a tier of single-aspect housing on each side, one facing outwards (the 'perimeter' block), and one inwards (the taller, 'main' block). This was a dramatic structural innovation to the scheme, a significant departure from the understated, load-bearing brick approach which Hodgkinson first favoured, which evolved in consultation with the engineer Felix Samuely. Once the decision had been made to proceed with the A-frame, Hodgkinson was keen to show it off, and maximise the potential of the internal concourse as both a functional internal street, and also an expressive device: in Boccioni's terms, an '*internal (architectonic) construction* [which] *gives rise to emotion'* (Boccioni 1914 [1981], p 17).

On the other hand, Hodgkinson wanted to stick to a largely invisible, inexpressive, load-bearing brick structure for the volume of the blocks, combined with brick facing and concrete render. This relaxed, eclectic attitude to construction and materials free of ideological dogmatism was at odds with the attitude of some of his neo-Corbusian contemporaries – advisedly, in view of McAlpines' technical limitations. McAlpines not only had no interest in housing, but also none in promoting innovation in structural solutions or construction methods. According to Hodgkinson, they were reluctant even to pre-cast the concrete, although in the end they did pre-cast the housing slabs, so that for the duration of the project there was an enormous crowd of navvies pouring concrete in situ: scenes that looked positively Victorian. Hodgkinson, who, along with his contemporaries, was familiar with the innovative pre-fabricated structural approaches propounded by Buckminster Fuller many years previously **(LT 25)**, found it most peculiar.

With the introduction of the A-frame, the open terraces in the outline scheme were now enclosed as glazed wintergardens. Secondary glass screens to the rooms behind were to allow them to be used either as extensions to the living space or as separated balconies **[LT 23** top**]**. The asymmetrically paired, linear tiers of raked glazing, glinting in the light, were subsequently to become the defining feature of the Brunswick as an urban landmark, even after Ministry of Housing regulations forced a change in the design in the next phase of revisions.

2.4.3. The Council scheme (1965-1970)

In 1965 Hodgkinson embarked on further modifications to the scheme, in the hope of making it attractive to the newly-formed London Borough of Camden, and specifically its new senior planner, Bruno Schlaffenberg, who had previously been at the LCC. Hodgkinson had met him there, knew that he was interested in promoting alternatives to zoned planning, and rightly guessed that he might welcome the Brunswick as a flagship project for the new council. In 1967, Mr Spencer, Deputy Town Clerk, summed up the council's intentions in taking over the Brunswick housing component as being to '*bring back, into this central part of London, ordinary family life – in fact, it is what you might call a fist of family life thrust into this area of institutions, offices, hotels and student hostels*' (Barsley 1967). There was concern about the depopulation of the Holborn area, which had shrunk from 70,910 persons in 1891 to 24, 810 in 1951, 22,008 in 1961, and 18,482 in 1966. The Brunswick would provide housing accommodation for a community of around 1,600 people which would therefore represent a valuable gain. Schlaffenberg welcomed the scheme as one which also embodied his belief that people should be able to live close to their place of work, with shops and other civic amenities at hand, rather than in the zoned suburban developments promoted by the garden city models; Camden's 99-year lease on the housing was accordingly sealed in 1966.

The key factor in the Council Scheme which Hodgkinson produced for Schlaffenberg was the further reduction of the housing mix and the size of the flats to fit in with the council's housing manifesto, but other changes were also necessary. The Ministry of Housing had specified that newly-built council flats must have an open balcony, and would not accept the wintergardens as such, so the glazing component was cut back to leave half the space per flat as open balcony, and half as the single-glazed 'greenhouse' that we see today (**LT 23** below]. The developer wanted to see the commercial areas, which remained in its ownership, enlarged, with an increase in the size of the shop units, and the addition of a large basement supermarket, although this was later rejected. The recital hall, meanwhile, after much debate, became a cinema (subsequently designed by practice Burrell Foley) in the basement, located underneath the Brunswick Square portico. Despite the general reduction of the scheme, Hodgkinson managed to persuade John Derrington, McAlpines' engineer, to retain the original design of the foundations and structure so

that a further storey on top of the building might still be built at some point in the future, and planning permission for that potential top floor was obtained the same year.

Once the council had bought the lease of the housing component, and appointed its own architect, Bikerdike Allen and Rich, to supervise the work, Hodgkinson's involvement became more precarious. He was happy to liaise with Camden's Chief Architect, S A G Cook (who oversaw a number of innovative housing schemes showing the influence of the Brunswick elsewhere in the Borough, notably Neave Brown's Alexandra Road **[LT 26]**), and enjoyed a good relationship not only with Bill Allen, whose job it was to approve the technical aspects of the working drawings for Camden, but also with John Derrington, who looked after the whole construction programme, including structural and services engineering, for McAlpines. Even so, Hodgkinson found it increasingly difficult to accept the developers' sliding standards, and also what he describes as the blatant 'misbehaviour' on both McAlpines' and Camden's sides in breaching the terms of the planning consent in various ways. In 1970 (three days before his 40th birthday), when had completed all the drawings and obtained the necessary consents, McAlpines told him his services were no longer required, and that his outstanding fees could be settled only once his resignation had been received.

2.4.4. The project grinds to a halt (1972)

Hodgkinson was subsequently replaced by L Brian Ingram, architect to the contractors, who applied for permission to omit six staircases connecting level A (precinct level) to level C (the terrace), which was approved, and also to omit the connecting pedestrian slab between the two sides of the terrace, which was rejected – although the link that was eventually built was a very rough and ready version of what had been intended. In 1972, Ingram was replaced by T P Bennett and Son, and it was this firm which made the decision to scrap the glazed roof of the shopping hall. This was to have been '*London's first glass-covered shopping galleria since the arcades of Piccadilly had been built*' (Hodgkinson 1992a) and was a huge loss to the scheme. Also jettisoned was the cream-coloured paint finish to the fairface concrete façades specified by Hodgkinson, along with the tiling, paintwork and decorative brick slip-work he had specified for the shopping area: '*painted stucco and concrete (Crown Commissioners' cream, as for Regent's Park) for the housing, with bright painted*

colour, bricks, tiles and mosaic as foreground in the shopping street with its covered galleria, fountains and richly patterned pavements' (Hodgkinson 1992a). This also, as far as Hodgkinson was concerned, was an absolute travesty of his design intentions, and one for which he was never able to forgive the council. Towards the end of 1972 building work finally came to a stop altogether: '*a desultory halt at Handel Street..., the Council having completely reneged on its own planning consent, not because of rising costs (the oil crisis was yet to come) but to reduce the value of the development*', wrote Hodgkinson later (Hodgkinson 1992a).

Building work was not resumed until Spring 2005, despite a series of planning applications for redevelopment made between 1992 and 2000, during which period the Brunswick was recommended for Listing and finally designated a Grade II building of architectural and historic significance. In Hodgkinson's words '*it was a bungled, funny contract, yet it's still considered an interesting building by some people'* (Hodgkinson 2006b). But despite a highly convoluted procurement process and repeated renegotiations of the planning consents, it remains a building of quality and considerable impact, iconic in its forward thinking, which made a radical break with zoning regulations and, above all, gave back 70% of the land area as public or private open space, 40% more than the old estate.

2.5 The Brunswick as a concept for domestic life

In 1963, with the design of the Brunswick proceeding apace, the Daily Mail Ideal Home Exhibition celebrated its 40th anniversary, entitled 'Design 1963'. That title alone was an indication of how far the idea of modern design had captured the popular imagination. The previous year, the exhibition had featured An Adventure in Design, by Trevor Smith, and The McLean Split Level House, both conceived as self-consciously modern homes, amongst the 'village' of show houses in a variety of styles forming the centrepiece of each exhibition. Seven years earlier, in 1956 (the year before Patrick Hodgkinson started work at Leslie Martin's office), the Exhibition had celebrated its jubilee year by reinstating a so-called House of the Future alongside the village, reviving a short-lived tradition started in 1928. This house, designed by the 'new Brutalist' architects Alison and Peter Smithson, was a plastic structure intended to be wholly mass-produced as a unit, with various automated functions (including functions we take for granted today, such as remote controls for TV and lighting, and a doorbell answerphone) and a self-cleaning capacity. In the same year,

the *This is Tomorrow* exhibition, co-organised by the Smithsons at the Whitechapel Art Gallery, had created a stir amongst artistic and intellectual circles. Exhibits such as Richard Hamilton's collage 'Just what is it that makes today's homes so different, so appealing?' focused attention on the home as an arena for radical thought.

Between the mid-1950s and mid-1960s, then, there was considerable interest in rethinking traditional models of the home, both at an intellectual and a more populist level. The notion of modernity had permeated the thinking of the general public, and ordinary people were prepared to contemplate fairly forward-looking ideas about the organisation and setting of their domestic lives.

When Tate Britain staged its retrospective of 1960s art and architecture (Jul-Sept 2004), under the title *This Was Tomorrow*, it made deliberate play on the theme of the Whitechapel exhibition almost 50 years before. The Tate event included the Brunswick and other landmark buildings of the period, alongside Pop-art canvases, erotic sculptures, robotic installations, and material from the Destruction in Art symposium, highlighting the subversive and avant-garde aspects of the cultural context. Whereas the Brunswick may be fêted as an example of modern design, ahead of its time, Patrick Hodgkinson saw himself essentially as a traditionalist in domestic design, and experiments such as the Smithsons' House of the Future were of little interest to him. He deliberately designed the Brunswick flats not to be ultra-modern, but homely.

He was, he says, *'a bit dreary*' about domestic ideas, not influenced at all by futuristic notions of home life. '*For myself, the concept of family life with children was entirely traditional*' (Hodgkinson 2001) he writes, and this was reflected in the design of the dwelling units at the Brunswick. Hodgkinson's admiration for the 'magical' 14th- and 15th-century great houses of England was aroused by the interplay between open and closed, public and private, grand and intimate spaces, which reflected domestic ritual and '*gave an ordered hierarchy to life*' (Hodgkinson 1987, p 19). In the first Brunswick scheme, Hodgkinson drew on this model to achieve an open, airy T-shaped living space, juxtaposed with a band of closed service rooms intended to shield the habitable rooms from street noise **[LT 23]**. The wintergarden concept, drawing on 19th-century precedent, allowed the main living space to be opened up completely to the external space, in a manner that also reflected the Modernist use of a glazed envelope to blur the boundaries between interior and exterior.

In the earlier Brixton and St Pancras housing schemes, Hodgkinson had reworked the Unité idea of split-level flats with double-height, glass-fronted living spaces overlooking the park, and services shunted to the back of the unit, abutting the internal street. Hodgkinson designed the kitchen as the largest living space, one-and-a-half storeys high, opening onto a terrace, with a smaller 'best room', or parlour, located off it, a half-level up, and the main bedroom with its own shower unit located beyond that. Children's bedrooms and bathroom were located half a level below the kitchen, at entrance level. '*Family banter would take place in a light, airy 'open' space, but old and young could withdraw to the privacy of their own 'closed' realms, the young being near the front door for their friends*' (Hodgkinson 1987, p 20). By contrast, the LCC's scheme for the Brixton site meant that '*family life had to be sustained in a laboratory kitchen not large enough for a decent table, because the living-room was kept for Sunday best'* (p 20).

The Brunswick (Foundling) project '*was about a different lifestyle than the project for St Pancras*' (Hodgkinson 1987 p 20). The kitchen was integrated within a large living space, off which the bedrooms opened, on both sides in two- and three-bedroom units, on one side only in one-bedroom units. The kitchen zone had a window overlooking the access gallery (and beyond, at the upper, open levels), but otherwise commanded an open view across the living-room and out through the glazed winter garden. The living space could be opened up to the wintergarden, which formed a glazed band across the whole frontage of the flat, although that would then impinge on the privacy of the bedrooms, which also had external doors opening into the wintergarden area.

The introduction of Parker Morris Housing Standards in 1964 has often been cited to explain the larger area of council housing units of that period than in more recent models, but in fact, when the Brunswick was transferred to Camden council the scale had to be reduced, and the wintergarden had to be replaced by open balconies, which resulted in balconies set above floor level, poorly drained and prone to leaks, and living-room fenestration set uncomfortably high in the wall. The wintergarden had been conceived as a clever response to the climate, which frequently renders open balconies unusable – even for hanging out washing, which was swiftly banned at the Brunswick. The regulations also specified that net curtains should be installed across the picture windows, another requirement that would have been obviated by the double glazed screen of the winter garden design.

As for the internal layout, the scheme as built incorporated a curiously proportioned shoulder-height partition installed between kitchen and living-space, in place of the waist-high counter and strip of overhead storage, while the bedrooms were grouped to one side of the living-room, accessed separately and individually off an enlarged entrance hall. En-suite washing facilities, and separate WC, were also jettisoned in favour of a single combined bathroom and toilet, also opening off the entrance hall. These changes led to a general loss of habitable space in favour of increased circulation space and self-containment of bedrooms **[LT 23** below**]**: in other words, a reversion to a more cellular, 19th-century model, as opposed to the spatial interplay of the medieval prototypes which Hodgkinson so enjoyed.

Thus, Hodgkinson's 'traditionalism' in domestic design, coupled with a questioning approach to the model established by the Unité in Marseilles, had led him to a more flexible and innovative approach to the internal organisation of dwellings for the post-war era than the authorities seemed willing to consider. When it came to the secondary fittings of the units, he did evoke an explicitly modern, indeed futuristic, model – that of the Dymaxion House, designed in 1929 by Richard Buckminster Fuller, the American inventor who saw, and to an extent realised, the potential of new lightweight, industrially-produced materials to create the homes of the future **[LT 25]**.

The Dymaxion House was made of lightweight steel, duraluminium and plastic, and was suspended from a central mast from which the rooms radiated on a hexagonal plan. The principles were applied some years later to produce temporary shelters, but were never fully embraced by the construction industry. The house pointed the way to a prefabricated approach to the production of homes in relation to both the external envelope and the internal fittings, which was a direct inspiration to architects working at that time. Hodgkinson always assumed that the secondary fittings of the Brunswick would be prefabricated along the same lines, but in fact the 'incredibly simple-minded' approach of the contractor – reluctant even to pre-cast the concrete elements – made it extremely unlikely from the start that such a route to the completion of the units would ever be taken.