

On his departure from the project in 1970, Hodgkinson was less than the happy with the realisation of his architectural conception for the Foundling Estate site, in terms of its truncated scale, the omission of the shopping hall and public gardens, and the poor finish throughout. It simply did not match up to his original vision, even though he was confident that the Brunswick was a significant achievement in terms of the mixed-use, low-rise planning concept, and renewal of Bloomsbury, which it embodied. But, in 1975, two years after building had ceased, the London Borough of Camden was sufficiently proud of its achievements at the Brunswick to publish a pamphlet celebrating the building. It stated, in evocative terms (if largely paraphrasing the architects' own words [Hodgkinson 1972]): *'The Brunswick Centre was conceived not as a city in itself but to provide a nucleus for future housing development in the neighbourhood. As architecture it makes a statement of permanence; its outer shell will present the same face to many generations, but inside it can adapt itself to different kinds of life and activity that successive inhabitants may bring'* (Camden Housing Department 1975, p 7). This description revealed a clear awareness of the significance of the Brunswick as a work of architecture, as well as the Council's commitment to new housing provision for the community and its social conscience. The project significantly influenced housing design by the borough architects' department in the decade that followed: schemes such as Maiden Lane by Benson and Forsyth, and, most distinctively, Alexandra Road by Neave Brown (1972-8) – although Hodgkinson himself was always critical of what he saw as Brown's '100%' Corbusianism (Hodgkinson 2004) [LT 28].

Reference to the building's potential adaptability was reiterated in 2000 by DOCOMOMO in its objection to English Heritage's recommendation for Listing. It made a case for the Brunswick as the embodiment of *'a framework that accepts and assumes change within it over time....The great space-making structure which accommodates the communal spaces and the fundamental relationships of parts is fixed, and the detailed pattern of uses and components within it reflects change'* (Cooke 2000). DOCOMOMO opposed EH's recommendation for Listing on these grounds, and because the new freeholder, Allied Properties plc, had by that time come up with what seemed like an acceptable plan to adapt and refurbish the building, and DOCOMOMO argued that Listing would impede its successful realisation.

Nevertheless, the Department of Culture, Media and Sport nevertheless proceeded with the Grade II Listing of the Brunswick that same year (DCMS Schedule 2000), pointing out that Listing did not necessarily preclude change.

### 3.1 the megastructure concept

Hodgkinson himself always distanced himself from the early critiques of the Brunswick as a megastructure, believing the social concept of the *village* to be far more apt. He felt there was only one critic who, at a later stage, really grasped the essence of the Brunswick. David Hamilton Eddy described the building in architectural-anthropological terms as a composition of *'two related but ultimately separate dimensions, each of which is facing in opposite directions, both practically and symbolically.... these can be seen as traditional-communal and futurist-autonomous'* (Hamilton Eddy 1989, p31). He defined the former as the public area, the *'thriving bazaar of shops... open to the surrounding neighbourhood'*, and the latter as the housing – *'a different world... rows of glazed apartments... like the serried ranks of two alien armies... a dream world, familiar and entrancing and disturbing at once....'*

Hamilton Eddy celebrated what he saw as the Futurist spirit of the housing design, a liberating force within the *'conventional restraining order of Georgian and Victorian London, with its closely arranged social system where everyone is "placed" and knows their place'* (p31). He understood the idealism of the architect's social ambitions, and the source of his inspiration as a heady fusion of traditional forms with a very modern notion of social identity and individuality in a world that had been turned upside down by two world wars.

Perhaps it was easier for Eddy to understand the Brunswick in looking back across a period of 15 years, during which the strict ideologies of architectural practice had fragmented into a kaleidoscopic pluralism under the impact of important texts such as Robert Venturi's *Complexity and contradiction in architecture* (Venturi 1966/1977) and the ensuing evolution of post-Modernism. But in the period immediately before and after completion of work on the site, architecture critics were determinedly seeking to classify within a Modernist narrative of architectural history.

The 'megastructure' epithet was first invoked in 1972, when the *Architectural Review* published Crosby's critique. Crosby's appraisal was positive in some aspects, but highly critical in others. He saw the Brunswick as an example of the negative

impact of industrialisation on choice and variety in the city, where *'tidiness and simple-mindedness have taken over, and ... the possibilities for change and growth are permanently inhibited... by the solidity of the architecture and the nature of the construction'* (p 212). Above all, he said, the problem *'lies in the urban concept. The Brunswick Centre is perhaps the first built example of the idea of the urban megastructure – a building that is a city, rather than being merely a component in a city... the megastructure, because it is self-contained, does not integrate with its surroundings. It is an alien growth, and for its own success it must eat up the surroundings as quickly as possible so as to impose its own order and system on every aspect of life there'* (Crosby 1972, p212).

To a large extent, Crosby laid the blame for this state of affairs on the developers: *'all big schemes are only viable through economies of scale, which allow the profits to come back to relatively few promoters... Any protest on loss of visual or social amenity is easily ignored in pursuit of an economic goal.'* He was generous enough to say that *'The Brunswick Centre proves that a good architect will somehow, in spite of endless disappointment and compromise, manage to produce a meaningful piece of architecture.'* But his condemnation of the megastructure concept embodied, as he saw it, by the Brunswick, was fairly direct. By contrast, Banham's appraisal four years later (Banham 1976), and citing Crosby, was more positive. Banham stated unequivocally that the project was *'saved by ... composition and design from the kind of cheerless chaos that infected so much of the less determined 'megastructure' housing of that period'* (Banham 1976, p188)

Banham had a natural enthusiasm for megastructures, as demonstrated by his comprehensive survey of the type. By his account, the Brunswick was pretty much the high point of megastructure design in Britain, the origins of which he traced to Sant'Elia's Futurist city (1914), and Le Corbusier's Fort l'Empereur (1931) [LT 27] proposals, hypothetical though these were. Banham's survey included a wide range of megastructure schemes from Britain, Europe, America, Canada, and Japan, firmly placing the Brunswick within the framework of a global, universalising phenomenon.

In 1964 the Japanese architect Fumihiko Maki had defined a megastructure as *'a large frame in which all the functions of a city or part of a city are housed. It has been made possible by present-day technology'* (Maki 1964). By then, various experiments in realising the concept had been undertaken or initiated. Banham notes, among others, Basil Spence's Sea and Ships Pavilion at the Festival of Britain (1951),

schemes for Sheffield University by the Smithsons and Stirling (1953), and Camino's project for a new university in Tucuman, Mexico (1952). Banham attributes these developments partly to a tide of interest in vernacular architectures and natural habitats, which between 1964 and 1965 found a focus in Bernard Rudofsky's highly influential exhibition 'Architecture without Architects' at the Museum of Modern Art in New York. The exhibition revealed the extendible and organic character of these impressive natural structures, made up of replicated identical small units, which captured architects' imagination. Hodgkinson himself never acknowledged any interest in Rudofsky's research and photography, but Banham also discussed the parallel, perhaps connected, revival of interest in Expressionism and Futurism, as a romanticised vision of modern technology, which Hodgkinson certainly to some extent shared.

Le Corbusier subsequently developed his Fort l'Empereur concept in the form of the Unité d'Habitation, realised on five sites in France during the 1950s and 1960s, and one in Berlin (1957), with another designed, but not built, for a site in Strasbourg (1951). These projects were highly controlled in architectural terms, and not overtly expressionistic, although they had some expressionistic features. However, many of the later projects that Banham identified as 'megastructural', such as Archigram's City Interchange (1963), or Plug-In City (1964) [28], Moshe Safdie's Habitat (1967) in Montreal [18], Stanley Tigerman's Instant City project (1968), Buckminster Fuller and Shoji Sadao's Triton City project (1968) or Paul Rudolph's Lower Manhattan Expressway project (1970) [LT 29] were much more extrovert and explicitly radical in structural and technological terms. While Hodgkinson rejected the functionalist, abstract Unité model, neither did he embrace these radical, 'organic' megastructure models either, designing in a much more conservative tradition, even though he may have shared similar social Utopian ideals: as he puts it, succinctly, '*Oh, Archigram, never*' (Hodgkinson 2001).

By contrast, there is more common ground, in terms of general formal and construction principles, between the Brunswick and other significant built examples of megastructures in Britain. These include L. Hugh Wilson and Geoffrey Copcut's Cumbernauld Town Centre (1960) [LT 30], A D Cooke and Partner's Anglia Town Square, Norwich (1966), Roger Harrison (New Town Corporation)'s Runcorn Shopping Centre (1967) [LT 31], Neave Brown's Alexandra Road, (1968 [LT 26]), Ralph Erskine's Byker Wall, Newcastle (1968) [LT 32], and Denys Lasdun's

University of East Anglia student housing (1963 [LT 35]), or Institute of Education (1977 [LT 34]). However, the first three were predominantly commercial and civic schemes designed for New Towns or institutional use, while Brown and Erskine's local authority housing schemes do not accommodate a mixed-use programme like the Brunswick, even though Brown's in particular adopts what seems a similar aesthetic and formal approach. The much earlier Barbican Centre, London (designed 1956, though not completed until much later [LT 33]), also sometimes considered an example of the megastructure type, is however very different in aesthetic and programmatic conception, comprising high-rise towers, brick surface treatments, and a lack of everyday shopping amenities [LT 36]. It is on a much larger scale, and quickly became established as a middle-class housing enclave focussed around a high-spec arts centre, a music college and a girls' public day school.

According to Hodgkinson, Lasdun admitted to him privately that he had 'cribbed' from the Brunswick for his design of the Institute of Education, barely two blocks west of it, although the rectilinear glass and concrete form of the Lasdun building gives it a very different appearance. Lasdun was already a confirmed admirer of Harvey Court, which had influenced his considerably earlier University of East Anglia student housing scheme, described by Banham as a series of 'concrete ziggurats'. Of Erskine's project, which is visually very different – a long, flat, high brick wall on one side, breaking out into an anarchic jumble of balconies and verandas on the other – Hodgkinson later said '*I never accepted Byker until I went there in the late 1970s and had almost never before seen such happy faces on a council estate, except perhaps at Taylor & Green's village additions for Loddon District Council*' (Hodgkinson 2001). The Alexandra Road scheme by Neave Brown [LT 26] was regarded by Hodgkinson as the only authentic example of the megastructural idea expressed at the Brunswick to have been realised elsewhere. However, he regarded it as a much more Corbusian, formalistic project, which placed great emphasis on pure structural integrity and could not accommodate the 'messy' mix of uses in the Brunswick programme. For his part, Brown suggested in his critique of the Brunswick that the lack of a pure skeleton structure (as opposed to load-bearing brick walls) and of free, adaptable space was disappointing, and that a mixed-use programme could never be successfully achieved by speculative developers: '*The vast complex of ingredients that must be recognised and included in responsible city development is beyond the imagination and resources of speculative*

*developers, no matter how responsible they may be* (Brown 1972, p 213). Neither architect, it seemed, was fully able to appreciate the work of the other.

In 1974, a development near Marble Arch in London, now called St George's Fields [LT 36], was built by architects Design 5 for the Utopian Voluntary Housing Group. It bears a striking resemblance to the Brunswick, but on a much smaller, tamer, more domestic scale. Banham described it as '*a cluster of mini-megastructures of entirely routine construction – Terrassenhäuser A-frames, semi-underground parking, pedestrian bridges – mini-megastructures as an acceptable format for upper-middle-class housing....*' (Banham 1976, p189). Planned around existing gardens, in a primarily residential area built with upper-class occupation in mind, it is less conspicuous, and does not have the powerful axial, urban qualities that the Brunswick introduced into Bloomsbury.

By that point, the brief heyday of the megastructure as the visionary architectural vehicle of social idealism seemed to be over. As Hodgkinson points out, post-Modernism was dawning, and architects faced a different climate of opinion both aesthetically and in what was deemed acceptable in the clearance and replacement of the urban fabric. In 1968, the megastructure form had already been condemned by planner Peter Hall in an article entitled 'Monumental Follies' (Hall 1968) which lambasted the clearance mentality of the authorities. In his book *Cities of tomorrow* (Hall 1988) he recalls the impact of the redevelopment proposals for Covent Garden Market in London, and the tide of protest which they provoked, culminating in 1968 in what was later described as a 'national nervous breakdown' (Christensen 1979, cited Hall 1988): ' "*the whole of Great Britain was at that time involved in saving something*" ' (p 266, citing Christensen 1979 p 96). In 1971, Rod Hackney, future champion of so-called 'community architecture' and President of the RIBA, organised a high-profile campaign to save traditional housing in Macclesfield from clearance, and in 1973 the first General Improvement Area programme was completed by architect Nigel Melhuish, as a viable alternative to slum clearance and redevelopment at the Flower Streets in Liverpool, an estate of substandard 19th-century dockworkers' cottages that he regenerated (Melhuish, N 2001). It did not take long for the concept of the megastructure to become discredited, and the publication of Banham's book in 1976 was in many ways a valediction.

### 3.2 Brutalism

*'It's always been known as a Brutalist building but I had no intention of it ending up that way'* Patrick Hodgkinson (quoted Tomlin 1998)

*'Like other survivors of Britain's most bloody-minded architectural movement, the brutalists of the 1960s, he [Hodgkinson] is sticking to his guns.'* Deyan Sudjic, 2000

The Brutalist strand of British architectural history evolved in the 1950s within the architects' offices of the LCC as a reaction against the so-called 'Welfare State' ideology of an older generation of architects. This was also known, in derogatory terms, as the 'William Morris Revival', or 'People's Detailing' – exemplified by the Festival of Britain architecture, which Hodgkinson had so enjoyed, but which many young architects derided as anodyne and populist. Its primary sources were the 19th-century English Arts and Crafts tradition, and the state-sponsored architecture of Sweden, both of which were characterised by the use of brick, and had a special place in Hodgkinson's heart.

The 'Brutalists', by contrast, called for an 'anti-design' approach in which the use of 'raw' and 'exposed' materials, denuded of finishes and claddings, was fundamental. Husband-and-wife architects Peter and Alison Smithson were central to the movement, developing what has been called an 'anthropological aesthetic', strongly coloured by the influence of iconographic Modern Movement buildings – notably the Marseilles Unité, Mies van der Rohe's buildings at the Silk Factory site, Krefeld (1932-3) and Lafayette Park, Detroit (1959 onwards) – as well as the vernacular architectures and settlements of Japan and Europe. They later wrote, as spokesmen for a renewed impetus to the movement: *'What is new about the New Brutalism among Movements is that it finds its closest affinities not in a past architectural style, but in peasant dwelling forms, which have style and are stylish but were never modish: a poetry without rhetoric. We see architecture as a direct statement of a way of life and, in the past, ordinary prosaic life has been most succinctly, economically, tersely expressed in the peasant farms and the impedimenta of Mediterranean rural life that Le Corbusier has made respectable.'* (Smithson, A and P 1973, p6). They embraced the techniques of industrialised mass production as the authentic expression of a modern vernacular, in particular the use of concrete, resulting in an aesthetic which was invested with profound ethical and ideological

significance, and which, in its ruggedness and roughness, was antithetical to the smooth, bland aesthetic of 'People's Detailing'.

By 1966, Brutalism was sufficiently well-established for Reyner Banham to produce a book charting the movement. In it, he coined the term 'Brick Brutalists' to describe those architects working in brick as opposed to concrete, who he felt still qualified as Brutalist on account of the exposed way in which the material was used, without traditional finishes. Banham included Hodgkinson's Harvey Court in this section, specifically as part of the 'Cambridge movement' of English Brick Brutalist architecture. He wrote that *'Its claim to inclusion in the Brutalist canon derives partly from its obsessive interest in its chosen material, for it appears, from some points of view, to be almost carved from a solid mass of brick'* (p 126), and also because of its planning concept, which related to the Smithsons' interest in ancient sites. It had, Banham said, *'the air of a sacred enclosure'* (Banham 1966, p126): words which rather foreshadow Rowe's essay on the Brunswick (Rowe 1971), and Hamilton-Eddy's critique after that (1989).

But Hodgkinson fundamentally disagreed with the Smithsons' approach, and had deliberately avoided being taught by Peter Smithson in his last year at the Architectural Association. He said that his acclaimed school building at Hunstanton [LT 37] *'appeared to me to be the very opposite of what a school should be, and something like Team X* [set up by the Smithsons and others as an alternative to Le Corbusier's Congrès International d'Architecture Moderne], *which was political, was the last way I wanted to make my architecture'* (Hodgkinson 2001). He consciously distanced himself from Brutalism, stating *'I myself reject Brutalism (which actually came from Sweden) because I felt it was inhuman and just a fashionable gimmick'*. But Smithson admired the Brunswick, and told Hodgkinson that he personally saw it as a Brutalist building (Hodgkinson 2000b).

The Brunswick's unfinished concrete surfaces drew Theo Crosby's attention in his article for the *Architectural Review*: *'This defiance of new concrete set in one of the most consistent brick environments in London is what makes the project interesting as an urban adventure, and worthy of analysis'* (Crosby 1972, p211) But while Crosby interpreted the use of exposed, fairfaced concrete without any surface finishes as being charged with ideological significance and radical intent, it was actually the vicissitudes of procurement and the incomplete process of construction that had led to the building's final appearance. Far from being a statement of purist



aesthetic and ideological conviction, the Brunswick embodied the ambiguities, conflicts, and compromises that determine the outcome of most real-life large architecture projects.

### 3.3 Reactions of the general press

While the architecture critics set out to find an aesthetic and typological label for the Brunswick, journalists and writers from other disciplines felt compelled to voice their reactions on seeing the dramatic profile of the building emerge from the wasteland of demolished Georgian houses. In the trade press there had been a fairly muted response to Hodgkinson's resignation in 1970, which nevertheless raised concerns about the likely quality of the finished building (*Architects Journal* 1970). The following year, Peter Murray penned an article for *Architectural Design* in which he suggested that the '*contorted history [of the project] gives rise to doubts about the viability of this sort of co-operation between developer and local council*' (Murray 1971, p 611). He also warned ominously that '*it will be a tragedy for the development if it is not completed... [ie in length, up to Tavistock Place]. If it should be blocked at one end by the TA it is likely to become an environmental desert*' (p 611). Not only that, but '*Council tenants, unlike the middle-income, middle-class inhabitants initially expected on the site, are unlikely to be respecters of the clean contemporary lines of the exterior*' (p 611) – though what he meant by that, apart from the possibility of washing being hung out to dry on the balconies, is not clear. Nonetheless, he concluded that the Brunswick was '*a building of class – a stylish building... [and] a pleasant architectural space that makes a fitting successor to the graceful square and streets that once adorned the area*' (Murray 1971 p 611).

Other commentators were not so positive. In *Private Eye* the same year, the poet John Betjeman slammed the development in scathing and sarcastic terms, in a piece suggestively entitled the 'New Barbarism', which compared the destructive impact of the Brunswick with that of the University of London's earlier developments in the area: '*Tentative attempts were made [at barbarism] in Bloomsbury, always a home of revolution, with the London University Senate House building (1932); and all progressive people must be grateful to this University for destroying so many of the Georgian squares and terraces so long a notorious impediment to enlightened planning. I am unable to find the names of the designers of the brilliant complex which our photograph shows...The stepped fenestration above is awaiting not*

*tomatoes, but human fecundity...The bold structural concrete bones from which the ... conservatories are slung convey at once a sense of compactness and regimented irregularity...*" (Betjeman 1971).

Betjeman was not alone in his conservative views. Stephen Gardiner, in the *Observer Review* that year, described a '*conflict of scales*' accounting for '*the peculiar air of placelessness*', a '*seemingly endless perspective view*', and '*an appalling feeling of vertigo*' (Gardiner 1971). Not until the following year did a more complimentary piece appear in the *Daily Telegraph*, written by one Violet Johnstone, in which she said the Brunswick was '*reminiscent of Mediterranean shores*' – an evocative figure of speech which she then rather undermined by suggesting that it might equally be seen as a laboratory building, '*with all that glass*', or a hospital. Johnstone was otherwise enthusiastic in her appraisal, describing it as '*Bloomsbury's* answer to the Barbican', commending the '*imaginative air of the exterior*', and demonstrating an appreciation of the intent to '*recreate the Bloomsbury of a century ago*' as a vibrant, mixed urban quarter. She also reported that the first tenants, who had taken up residence in the autumn of the previous year, '*find it provides a sense of identity*' (Johnstone 1972).

In December 1973, the *Observer Magazine* ran a second piece on the Brunswick, this time more favourable than Gardiner's. Another female author, Ena Kendall, wrote of the glazed terraces, again in somewhat exotic terms, as '*a series of backward-stepping, glass-fronted tiers, suggesting a ziggurat, the pyramid-type Babylonian temple*' (Kendall 1973, p33). She also dismissed the term '*urban megastructure*' as a '*lumpish description*', and quoted some of the tenants' views which showed an appreciation of the new environment, certainly compared with other council estates.

By this time, the *Architectural Review* had also published its special issue on the Brunswick, and a large number of overseas architecture magazines, from France, Japan, Germany, the Netherlands, Switzerland, Denmark, Italy and the USA, had also turned their attention to the Brunswick and published reports, though these were mostly fairly brief, factual accounts using a standard repertoire of images and plans. In the meantime, the home press had quietened down, its interest not to be reawakened until 1990, when the first planning application for the redevelopment of the Brunswick created a furore and launched 10 years of controversy around the future of the building.

### 3.4 Plans to adapt and remodel the Brunswick

Throughout the 1970s and 1980s there was a constant stream of complaints from residents about maintenance problems at the Brunswick, and it was clear that the residential community was unhappy about the state of the building and what was perceived as Camden council's reluctance to address the problems. From the start, the relationship between the freeholder and the Camden housing authority had been strained, and the unconventional partnership between the two was later to result in significant disagreements about which party should shoulder responsibility for which aspects of the Brunswick's maintenance. Although it was specified in the lease that the freeholder retained responsibility for the structure of the building, it soon became clear that defining where that began and ended was not easy.

In 1978, *Building Design* published a very rude commentary on the Brunswick, which gave voice to a general sense of decay and decline: '*Even in purely architectural terms*' wrote Christopher Knight, '*the Brunswick Centre doesn't work... The supposedly cascading glass merely dribbles down in a crude flow impeded by the coarse detailing of patent glazing. The plain windows in concrete walls look mean and ill-proportioned against the massive concrete megastructure, itself never finished as intended [painted!] and consequently grim, weatherstained and repellent.*' (Knight, C 1993, p 15 [1978])

In 1979 the residents protested that the estate had become a '*slum*' (Gray 1979a, 1979b). On top of all the other problems, life was seriously disrupted by undesirable intruders in the accessible public areas. Acknowledging residents' complaints, the council introduced rate and rent reductions of 5%. In the same year, Patrick Hodgkinson lent his name and support to a scheme by Max Hutchinson, a future President of the RIBA, to build a new floor of penthouses on top of the Brunswick, as originally conceived, which it was thought might help to improve the image of the development. This project was shelved because of costs, but in 1983, a £2 million repair scheme was put in place, which included the construction of a wall across the grand central staircase, in order to keep unwanted visitors off the terraces.

It was not until 1991 that new street entrances to the two blocks were finally constructed, equipped with heavy wooden doors and operated by an electronic entry system with individual fobs for residents. This significantly improved the security of the estate, although the new doors defeated the notion of permeable boundaries between the territory of the Brunswick and the street, which had been integral to the

original concept. During the 1990s, further Estate Action work was carried out to the residential areas by Camden, involving the introduction of CCTV, new lighting, the removal of graffiti, and patchy concrete repairs which ultimately failed and did nothing to improve the building's appearance. Damp remained a chronic problem. Security was further improved, with the closure in 1992 of the underground service road and removal of the vagrant community which had taken up residence there, under the supervision of Tranmac, the Brunswick Outreach Team, the police, Salvation Army, Father Barry Carpenter, and the press.

However, the overall quality of the Brunswick was in steady decline. The shopping centre was looking more tawdry, unloved, and under-used than ever. According to Hodgkinson, it had been occupied from the start by *'a supermarket and a riffraff of tired traders they [the commercial letting agents] thought might suit council tenants...'* (Hodgkinson 1992a). And in 1991, when Rugby Estates purchased the freehold of the Brunswick from Marchmont Properties, English Heritage's London Advisory Committee recorded the view that it was in a *'state of decline that had arisen from a gross lack of maintenance, and reduced commercial viability stemming in part from ill-defined entrances to the Centre at its main commercial connections from Bernard Street and Marchmont Street. Tranmac [set up by Rugby Estates] commissioned a market survey of public and commercial attitudes which confirmed the generally-held poor view of the Centre, its threatening image (due to the presence of numbers of vagrants in unsupervised public areas), and the large percentage of people unaware of the existence of the shopping centre, even among those living and working nearby'* (English Heritage 1993).

#### 3.4.1. Le Riche Maw redevelopment scheme (1992)

Tranmac employed the architects Le Riche Maw to prepare a scheme [LT 38] that included the sale of housing as a route to financing long-term improvements to the shopping centre. In May 1992 they submitted a planning application for a new 7-storey building on Bernard Street, filling the open southern end of the precinct between the ends of O'Donnell and Foundling Courts, and another 8-storey building filling the space under the portico, or loggia, onto Brunswick Square. The blocks were to be constructed in brick in a traditional style, completely at odds with the aesthetics of the Brunswick. The scheme was heavily criticised, stimulating a request for spot-Listing of the building for its own protection, and in July Hodgkinson wrote his own

response, ‘Speculation with Humanity?’ (Hodgkinson 1992a) which outlined the vexed history of the Brunswick, and condemned the proposed blocks as ‘*large and offensive*’. At the same time he rather surprisingly resurrected the original idea of extending the building north to Tavistock Place, which had been dead and buried for 20 years, and was most unlikely to gain public support. He objected that ‘*Nothing is proposed to terminate the complex satisfactorily at Handel Street, nor, alternatively, is there any suggestion of completing the whole project to Tavistock Place, which was consented to by Camden as an imperative before my departure and to transform this seedy, unkempt “Brutalist” ghost (I was never of that ilk) into the rich village we had once imagined, its paint and colour brought alive by summer sun and glinting from the reflection of street lamps on wet and foggy November afternoons. That, to myself and many others, I suspect, is the London we love.*’

Hodgkinson was annoyed that the developers had not contacted him about the redevelopment proposals, highlighting the fact that ‘*unlike France, for example, Britain does not have copyright laws to protect an architect’s work, as his or her work of art, from ruination.*’ The only way in which Hodgkinson could fight to protect his building was by lending his support to the campaign for spot-Listing, even though this might close the door to future improvements. The last thing Hodgkinson wanted was for the Brunswick to be ‘frozen’ as a period piece of 1960s architecture. The unique case put the whole issue of architectural copyright firmly into the public domain. As the *Architects’ Journal* pointed out, ‘*It is rare for a living and still relatively young architect to find himself promoting his own architecture as historic.... Hodgkinson has no recourse other than to present himself as a maker of historic buildings – a posture that must necessarily be somewhat painful to a life-long supporter of Modernism*’ (Cruickshank 1992, p 11).

The journal also stressed that ‘*the problem lies not with the idea of extending the centre, only with the way that it would be done.*’ It suggested that the Brunswick had already developed a rather exotic feel because of the way individual residents had ‘*personalised*’ their balconies, and that there was no reason why the place should not be colonised, in line with Louis Kahn’s idea of ‘*inhabited ruins*’ – perhaps using a lightweight architecture ‘*to contrast with the concrete of the main structure and to work in harmony with the original conservatories*’ (Astragal 1992, p49).

After a highly public campaign, both the application for Listing and the planning application were ultimately turned down; a 5-year Certificate of Immunity

from Listing was also issued. Many people were as horrified at the idea of the building being Listed as others were by the proposed scheme.

#### 3.4.2. Rock and Camp 5 redevelopment scheme (1993)

After the application had been refused, Tranmac appointed a new architect in 1993, David Rock (former President of the RIBA) with Camp 5. Rock in turn appointed Patrick Hodgkinson as consultant, but when the latter produced some preliminary sketches it quickly became clear the two parties did not see eye to eye. A new scheme was eventually submitted by Camp 5, consisting of a free-standing 12-storey 'gateway' residential building at the Brunswick Square entrance, constructed of metal, glass, hardwood and ceramic tile, and containing 50 one- to three-bedroom flats and 10 studio flats [LT 39]. For security reasons, to prevent access to the podium level, the monumental external staircase to the terrace was to be completely removed. In addition, the parts of the terrace that connected across and overshadowed the precinct, plus their supporting columns, were to be removed and replaced by two lightweight footbridges connecting the two sides, and yellow canopies were to be installed along the middle of the 'mall' over an extension to the Safeway frontage.

This scheme was subjected to an extensive consultation process, and generated another wave of publicity in the national and architectural press. Camden's planning department received some 125 letters in response to their consultation operation, 84% of which objected, and 16% of which supported at least a part of it. These included representations from the Twentieth Century Society, Camden Civic Society, Rugby and Harpur Resident's Association, and the newly-formed Save the Brunswick Centre Group, which had organised a petition containing a remarkable 675 signatures from residents, neighbours, and further afield. In addition, 15 letters were received from architects, rallied by Hodgkinson, unanimously rejecting the scheme both as damaging to the original design and as being out of context with the general area. In October 1993, infuriating Rock, Hodgkinson published his own alternative scheme in *Building Design* showing how 104 new flats for sale could be constructed in the top storey, as originally conceived, arranged in clusters of 13 flats around each pair of 8 ventilation chimneys, and removing the need for a new residential building at ground level. In April 1994, the Rock/Camp 5 scheme was refused on 13 counts, and withdrawn without a formal planning application being made – despite Rock's lament

that the Brunswick was ‘dying’ (Rock 1993, p8). However, the removal of the staircase and podium was approved and implemented.

### 3.4.3 Hawkins Brown-Michael Squire scheme (1996)

By 1996, a third scheme had been produced, this time by architects Hawkins Brown, who had assisted David Rock on the previous project, for the commercial areas, and Michael Squire Associates for the housing elements [LT 40]. As Hodgkinson wrote, the new scheme made exactly the same mistakes as the earlier two: *‘All three applications have made the same gross error of infilling the Brunswick Square loggia with a “toff’s” block of sanitised flats backing onto the community and harming its amenities – the worst type of social segregation from which vandalism invariably results’* (Hodgkinson 1996). The new scheme also proposed the same extension of Safeway into the precinct that had previously been ruled unacceptable – *‘it would destroy the rhythm of the colonnade which provides order to variegated shop fronts.’*

By this time Hodgkinson seemed to have accepted that extension of the centre northwards was impossible, and he made the suggestion, later to be realised – by which time he was not so happy about it, and proposed putting it in the basement instead – that a better location for an enlarged supermarket would be at the north end, finally closing off the axis and *‘providing an anchor’* to the shopping street. He also argued that the best way of securing the Brunswick’s future as a ‘destination’ of some quality would be by *‘introducing new cultural activities to draw people from London generally that will in turn attract a better class of shop and restaurant etc.’* By contrast, he said, the current proposals *‘represent the “tatty” end of design thinking aimed at low-grade tourism.’* He also questioned again whether any new housing was needed at all, reiterating the fact that the original design concept already held the potential for vertical extension, via a new top-floor storey, which could, depending on a cooperative attitude between freeholder and lessee, easily be achieved (Hodgkinson 1996).

As for the notion of building a new block in front of the Renoir portico, he compared it to *‘leaning a similar block against the Marble Arch.’* He reminded his readers of the symbolic significance of the loggia, describing it as a *‘unique instance of urban largesse that represents our socio-civic values... designed in memory of Ruskin (born on the site) and those Bloomsbury philosophers whose beliefs encouraged our social revolution... metaphorically with its seven pillars it is the*

*equivalent of an archway ventilating today's village with the fresh air those thinkers breathed into our clogged lungs from the last century onwards'* (Hodgkinson 1996).

According to the Royal Fine Art Commission, this third scheme was the best to date, but it recommended making use of the original architect's current ideas. English Heritage, surprisingly, did not object to the application, commending the height reduction to the proposed flats, but the Twentieth Century Society remained opposed to the loss of the dramatic portal onto Brunswick Square. As for the residents, they took up arms once again, and the Council received another deluge of protests and a petition containing 202 signatures.

The proposed new block of flats was described in pejorative terms as the 'lean-to' building, and residents were especially outraged at the threat these privately owned homes posed to the light and air of council tenants, regarded as adding insult to injury. Residents strongly felt they were being laid open to exploitation by a large corporation intent on squeezing profits out of the place they called home. The petition enumerated a further nine points concerning the unacceptable practical implications of the scheme, including noise and dust from construction work, the addition of canopies to the shopping arcade blocking the view of residents down into the precinct, the possibility of a wind tunnel effect through the precinct, the felling of trees on surrounding streets, the proposed change of use of flats to shops at the south end of Marchmont Street with the potential noise from delivery lorries; potential disruption from the proposed bar/café on Bernard Street, and the proposed demolition of the second floor deck, which would cut off the connection between the blocks at the south end. It was also suggested that Rugby Estates had no intention of doing any work itself, and would simply sell the property on once planning permission had been obtained. The final demand was that the freeholder should take steps to clean up the estate straight away.

In face of such overwhelming opposition, the council issued another rejection, and consequently, following Rugby Estates' appeal against the decision, the case went in 1997 to a Planning Inquiry, headed by Inspector Nicholas Hammans. Architectural historian and local resident Alan Powers took the opportunity to publish a candid reappraisal of the Brunswick in *The Spectator* – the first new critique of substance to be published since Hamilton Eddy's 10 years previously (Powers 1997). Powers pointed out that the development '*was an attempt to do something for the community we are all still searching for*', highlighting the fact that the ideas embodied in the



Brunswick might have a renewed relevance for the future of urban planning. On the other hand, he protested, *'so massively was thought embodied in concrete that you must like it or lump it'*, and the sense of sheer fixedness, the non-transmutable quality of the Brunswick, seemed to locate it firmly in a bygone era of architectural production. Powers also felt that the Brunswick's freedom from the car, which at the time (and no less so today) seemed such a good idea, *'was bought at a high price of disconnection from the surrounding street network.'* But in counterpoint to these criticisms, his evocation of its architectural qualities was persuasive: *'Against the evening light, or on a winter's evening, the tall thin columns standing out against the chiaroscuro background provides one of the few genuinely sublime architectural sights of London.'* (Powers 1997 p 40). Powers' piece heralded the production of a considerable body of evidence at the Public Inquiry, and a thoroughgoing reconsideration of the Brunswick, its place in history, and its relevance for the future – culminating in the apparently modest, but significant, recommendation that there was *'no reason to defer cleaning, repair of surfaces and normal maintenance which would make this striking structure instantly more attractive.'*

The Inspector – whom Hodgkinson described as thoughtful and sympathetic – made it clear that the long-term, inexcusable neglect of the Brunswick had played a major part in a process of degradation which was not by any means inherent to the architecture itself. At the same time, he drew attention to the fact that the proposed housing block was, in effect, a windfall site, as it was not one identified in the Unitary Development Plan for prospective housing – but it did not contain the required amount of family accommodation. Finally, the style of the block was completely wrong – *'a wholly disparate element set in a very conspicuous place'*, where *'the dominant theme... is the uncompromising and insistent rhythm of the Brunswick Centre'* (Hammans 1997).

As for proposals for the shopping centre, the Inquiry suggested that although *'the retail Plaza is intentionally self-contained and inward looking'*, the introduction of new kiosks within the space *'could enliven the plaza and reduce its apparent excess width.'* It pointed out that it *'is not designed for maximum retail efficiency. The monumental access through the loggia does not relate to the shopping streets of Bloomsbury, it relates to the park, whence few shoppers come.'* These issues were central to the concerns of the freeholder, and while rejecting Tranmac's appeal, the

Inquiry seemed to open the way for the implementation of certain alterations to the public space.

The outcome of the appeal was met with mixed feelings. Safeway and Iceland, the two largest retail units in the shopping precinct, had been clamouring for an approval, fearing that decline of the Brunswick's prospects was imminent if no progress was made. Niyasi Eren of Ukay Hamburger Restaurant, however, wrote to the *Camden New Journal* (Eren 1997), applauding the victory 'over unscrupulous speculators', which had saved the architectural integrity of the Brunswick. He took the opportunity to protest against the exorbitant rents charged by Rugby Estates, which he identified, along with a lack of proper upkeep, as the real cause of the Brunswick's decline. On 9 January 1998 Camden approved a revised version of the scheme for improvements to the shopping centre only, upon which Rugby Estates struck a deal with Allied London Properties for £13 million and sold up.

#### 3.4.4. Patrick Hodgkinson with Stubbs Rich scheme (1999)

Allied London bought the site amid much fanfare and promises that it would invest up to £3 million in an improvement scheme. The company seemed to appreciate the building's significance, describing it for *The Times* as '*greatly ahead of its time*' (*The Times*, picture caption 1999), and also communicated a clear idea of what a regenerated Brunswick could do to create a new focus for Bloomsbury. During 1998 local residents, shoppers, visitors and people working in the area were consulted about possible improvements, and the decision to bring Patrick Hodgkinson back on board was also a beneficial publicity move. As Michael Ingall, chief executive of Allied London, put it later: '*We are delighted to take him on because he is the authority on the building. His plans will give the centre a new lease of life and create a new heart for Bloomsbury*' (Hollis 2000, p8).

In order to work up a scheme, Hodgkinson forged an uneasy relationship with a commercial practice, Stubbs Rich, which had an office in Bath, and expertise in computer imaging. In 1999 an exhibition, mounted at the Brunswick, of a new scheme submitted for planning application, showed [LT 41] a large new building filling in the northern end and a circular projection to the Renoir portico, as well as extensions of the shopping arcades into the precinct. Press reaction was extremely negative, and Hodgkinson was accused of ruining his own building. Some questioned whether he was even capable of revisiting a project he had originally designed 30 years before,

since when he had scarcely practised as an architect. In a piece entitled, ‘Whose building is it anyway?’, the *Observer*’s architecture critic commented on the bizarre situation of Hodgkinson ‘*having to defend his right to alter the design against conservationists who want to save him from himself*’, and quoted Kenneth Powell, of the Twentieth Century Society, saying ‘*We don’t like the way that he is proposing to monkey around with the Brunswick Centre. It’s his plan for a supermarket that’s the worst thing*’ (Sudjic 2000). Hodgkinson himself admitted that ‘[the building] *has been something of an embarrassment to me over the years, but this gives me the chance to put it right*’, and he rejected the suggestion that, at his age, and having barely practised during the last 30 years, he might not be up to the task (Hodgkinson 2000a).

The conservationists’ concerns won. They were upset not only by the supermarket, but by the proposed alterations to the Renoir portico and a the plan to introduce a glazed restaurant structure in the precinct. After much dissent, to which the Bloomsbury Conservation Area Advisory Committee lent its voice, disaster finally struck when, after submission and approval of a new scheme in 2000, the building was finally Listed in September 2000, and the planning approval thereby nullified. The whole process, it seemed, would have to be relaunched. By this time residents were close to despair, especially as none of the routine maintenance and cleaning work recommended by the Inquiry had been implemented.

#### 3.4.5. Listing of the Brunswick (2000)

Allied London was furious when the Twentieth Century Society resurrected its campaign to have the Brunswick Listed, at the end of the 5-year certificate of immunity, and so was Hodgkinson, in his new role as architect to the improvement scheme. Apart from anything else, the case for Listing made great play with the notion of the Brunswick as a megastructure. A new article in *The Guardian*’s ‘Space’ supplement defined the project as ‘*one of the first and best examples of megastructures*’ (Kerr 2000, p13), and even referenced Archigram and Peter Cook’s Plug-In City, both anathema to Hodgkinson.

Camden Council too was unhappy about Listing, fearing a huge escalation of its management and maintenance costs. Local Councillor Brian Weekes warned in doom-laden terms that Listing would be a ‘*catastrophe*’ (Weekes 2000) making redevelopment far more expensive, so that the building would probably be sold again

to some overseas developer who would simply allow the building to deteriorate to a point where Camden would give permission for them to do anything they wanted, including demolition. The Listing process was also resisted by DOCOMOMO on the grounds that the whole point of a megastructure was that it could grow and adapt over time and not be frozen, but the bandwagon had gathered momentum, and the decision seemed almost a foregone conclusion after the trial run of 1992. English Heritage had launched a concerted effort to secure the recognition and Listing of significant post-war buildings, and the Brunswick, along with Charles Holden's Underground stations, Basil Spence's Swiss Cottage Library and Lasdun's Institute of Education building were among those identified in north and east London. Furthermore, EH was currently carrying out its Heritage Review, with a view to updating the whole concept of 'heritage' and embracing more of the social context of architecture than before. The Brunswick constituted a fine example of an architectural 'icon' that could also be read as a document of the recent social history of the area (Murphy 2000), and so fitted in with its new mandate.

#### 3.4.6. Levitt Bernstein with Patrick Hodgkinson scheme (2002)

English Heritage made it clear that the Listing of the building should not be seen as precluding the refurbishment of the Brunswick, and pointed out that listing as Grade II rather than Grade II\* acknowledged both the previous structural alterations and the possibility of future improvements. It also stressed that the first scheme submitted by Allied London was not acceptable. The developer responded by immediately replacing Stubbs Rich by Levitt Bernstein, the successful specialist housing practice founded by Hodgkinson's original assistants on the Brunswick, David Levitt and David Bernstein. The structural engineering consultant was Buro Happold. Hodgkinson himself had already made clear his unhappiness with the Stubbs Rich scheme, but was happy to work with Levitt Bernstein on a new scheme, prepared in consultation with English Heritage.

This was again greeted with raised eyebrows in many quarters, and flatly opposed by the local Conservation Area Committee as being out of character both with the Brunswick and its surroundings, largely on the grounds of the proposed alterations to the Renoir portico. The Planning Committee was not enraptured either, but was prepared to go along with it to prevent further deterioration. However, only one objection was received from residents, whose reception of the latest proposals

were generally positive – as well they might be, because by this time the fear that the building might fall into irreversible disrepair, and even the possibility of demolition, had become palpable.

The Levitt Bernstein–Hodgkinson scheme [LT 42] submitted for Listed Building Consent in May 2001, and finally approved in September 2003, featured most prominently a large circular ‘eye-catcher’ structure underneath, and projecting from, the Renoir portico towards Brunswick Square which was intended to be a restaurant or café, drawing attention to the centre as a shopping and leisure ‘destination’. Allied London was considering introducing new cultural attractions, the British Cartoon Gallery, and possibly a large bookshop, catering for the academic residents and students in the area, but the consensus was that the most valuable draw to the Brunswick had historically been, and would be in the future, a large, good quality supermarket.

The residents of the Brunswick were largely in favour of the scheme, but they were also anxious to be involved in discussions with the freeholder, and to ensure that prospective improvements would not be confined solely to the shopping centre but also deliver benefits to the inhabitants of the housing above it. They felt both possessive about their territory and exasperated by the lack of feedback on the continuing maintenance problems they had suffered for so long. The Tenants and Residents’ Association, under the chairmanship of Stuart Tappin, a structural engineer by profession, had initiated a campaign to be involved in talks with Allied London and the architects which would allow them to put forward their views, although Allied London made it clear from the outset that, strictly speaking, they owed the residents nothing. In 2004, in the announcement of an imminent start on the works, at a cost of £22 million, the developer’s spokesman Neil Carron stressed that the new Brunswick was ‘*designed to be a neighbourhood area for Bloomsbury – not just for the tenants who live above the shops*’ (Janssen 2004, p25).

At this point, plans for the unpopular semicircular restaurant had been temporarily shelved, largely for diplomatic reasons, attention being focused on the construction of the new supermarket building, painting and fresh landscaping of the hard surfaces, and improvements to the retail units that would ensure take-up by ‘big-name’ retailers [Fig 44]. The term ‘Centre’, which Hodgkinson had always hated so much, had finally been dropped from the name, along with the discredited concept of the ‘precinct’, and the development had been re-branded as ‘the Brunswick, a high

street for Bloomsbury', adorned with sculptural works by the artist Susanna Heron. The residents and tenants were pleased, but retained some suspicion of the project. As Tappin said, they were *'really keen for work to start. We are trying to make sure that the residents have a voice in the changes that are being made. But for some of us it's a shame that we are going to have High Street chains like Starbucks rather than a more interesting mix...'* (Janssen 2004, p25).

For Hodgkinson, the key point was that at last the building would have its finishing coat of paint: *'When it's painted cream I hope it will look like the terraces by Regent's Park'*, he said, adding *'I can see it going the way of the Barbican'* (Janssen 2004) as an upmarket mixed-use development with a strong cultural focus. Early in 2005, this hope received a fillip, although not quite in the way Hodgkinson hoped, when it was revealed that Waitrose was to step in to replace Safeway as supermarket anchor to the site. After 30 years at the Brunswick, Safeway, which had recently been taken over by Morrisons, had announced its lack of interest in retaining a shop there, causing a moment of crisis in the progress towards implementation of works. But its replacement was widely welcomed. *'It is exactly the type of offer Bloomsbury needs and wants'*, said the chief executive of Allied London. *'We chose Waitrose because of its proven ability to attract and perform in this sort of central London location'* (Spittles 2005, p84). The 'Waitrose factor' was hailed as the linchpin of the Brunswick's future success, providing the catalyst for the arrival of other reputable, upmarket traders, with a knock-on effect for the whole future of Bloomsbury.

This was not exactly the cultural centre Hodgkinson had dreamt of, but potentially a magnet for the sort of customers who might be interested in using the revamped Renoir art house cinema. At a party held to launch the works in May of 2005, it was suggested by the chief executive of the news organisation ITN, based in nearby Gray's Inn Road, that the successful regeneration of the Brunswick as a shopping centre could attract an influx of media companies into the area, turning Bloomsbury into *'a media centre to rival Canary Wharf and Soho'*, for it was only the lack of good-quality shopping that was keeping companies away (Janssen 2005, p12). The only, barely-heard, voice of dissent came from those residents of the Brunswick who lamented the loss of Safeways as an old friend and complained that they would not be able to afford Waitrose prices, but by this time the excitement and publicity

around impending operations was loud enough to drown it out. Work finally began in 2005.

### 3.5 Refurbishment of the Brunswick by Allied London

In 2007, I was asked to contribute an article on the refurbished Brunswick to an issue of the *Architectural Review* entitled 'Mending Modernism' (Melhuish 2007). In his preface, Hodgkinson made it clear that the reasons it needed 'mending' were entirely due to its lack of maintenance over 35 years, rather than any inherent design flaws.

However, the issue clearly locates the Brunswick within a flawed Modernist tradition that came under severe criticism during the same period, and is generally considered now to have had a negative impact on the built environment. Furthermore, it highlights the fact that social changes during the post-war period have also influenced the public expectations of what the physical environment will represent and provide.

When the Brunswick was first mooted as a project, Camden Council emphasised a local, social agenda pinned onto the need for new working-class housing provision in a rapidly depopulating part of the borough. Since then, the territories of central London have not entirely lost their local character, but have been firmly re-cast within the context of a multi-cultural, global society and economy. Society in general has become more affluent, materialistic and consumer-driven, and since the 1980s, retail and leisure have been seen as the key ingredients for successful empirical, privatised, urban regeneration. The contemporary built environment represents an embodiment of those imperatives, presuming on a pool of disposable income to be drawn into the economy, and an effective rejection of the explicit utopian social aspirations of the Modern Movement, based on the principle of social equality in terms of access to health, welfare and decent living conditions through public policy and provision.

The key modifications that have been made to the Brunswick, and reflect the imperatives of the global urban culture, include the construction of a new infill building – a high-class supermarket - with a prominent sawtooth roof, sealing the north end at the point where the blocks were prematurely truncated. The colonnade along the two sides of the precinct has gone, a new glazed shopfront having been built out along the line of the columns. This has narrowed the precinct, an effect enhanced by the construction of a continuous fixed canopy extending over the shopfront. The approach to the Renoir cinema from the east has been remodelled, and the two ramps which rose either side of the south entrance to the precinct have been removed. The

external faces of the building have been painted cream and grey, and a new exterior lighting design installed which emphasises the geometries of the structure. A concrete-framed pool occupies the spot from which the external staircase used to rise, and fixed benches line the newly configured route towards Waitrose, either side of a raised linear water feature and newly-planted trees. The Renoir cinema and the medical centre have both had a facelift, and most of the old shops and eating-places have gone, to be replaced mainly by well-known chain stores and restaurants.

Residents have complained that the new shops are too expensive for them, but there has been a dramatic change in the look of the Brunswick – above all because it is now filled with people during the day and evening. It is no longer a ‘dead public space’, as Sennett put it, but a lively arena for shopping and leisure. The unforgiving ‘hardness’ of the original materials has been softened with the new finishes, but the detailing of the new work is somewhat crude and does not match up to the quality of the original architectural design. The Brunswick has clearly been ‘commodified’, repackaged to appeal to a consumer culture which responds best to familiar formulae, and it seems to be working well as a shopping ‘destination’ in its own right, confounding the Space Syntax analysis that it could never do so because it was not located in a sufficiently ‘integrated’ spatial nexus - in other words, does not contain enough ‘movement-rich lines’ (‘where you can see’, and ‘where you can go’). To use the Space Syntax terminology, the Brunswick has become an ‘attractor’ in its own right, where some other force has come into play to counteract the inherent disadvantages of the site in terms of ‘movement potential’.

This would not, it seem, be the power of the architectural image alone. But clearly, repackaged into a more ‘accessible’, consumable form, this does play a significant role in attracting people to the site. The Brunswick is not a dramatic ‘poetic ruin’ any more, not a ‘liminal’ space on the margins of mainstream culture. But it has become a newly visible architectural and social landmark in the cosmopolitan, consumer-driven landscape of central London, even if this transformation, this ‘mending’ process, has been achieved by integrating the different components of the development’s original, holistic, mixed-use programme more rigidly. It may be that its modernist credentials as a visionary urban intervention, capable of transcending the more banal aspects of social existence, have been lost along the way, but the threat of irreversible failure and eventual demolition has finally evaporated.