

Cultural Context 3

# Recording the Obstacles of Being a Radical Architect:

## Peter Barber and his Courtyard Housing Estates in London

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## 0.1 Prologue

Growing up in a housing complex in the Middle east, I was brought up with a strong sense of security and neighborliness within that safe pocket of the city. However, after moving into a tower block in London, the lost sense of community was evident, thus I was interested in exploring a residential housing typology designed to cater to psychological demand of humans that emphasized both security and community,<sup>1</sup> (Figure 0.1) which I concluded seemed fulfilled in the courtyard housing typology.

I started by understanding the design of a residential courtyard unit, the roman *Domus*, and how its high walls and narrow entrance-way insinuate a sense of exclusivity, promoting security for its residents while simultaneously facilitating a sense of community within the enclosed confines of the atrium.<sup>2</sup> This set a base to exploring courtyard housing in London at various scales, thus leading me to Peter Barber, a UK based architect, who is designing to facilitate communal behavior and is reintroducing pre-modern housing typologies, within London, though the courtyard seems under-explored in his schemes. Throughout my dissertation I record and analyze the obstacles that he faces when implementing his profound architecture in this diverse, multicultural city.

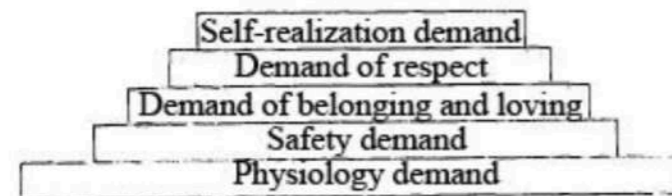


Figure 0.1: Maslow hierarchy of needs theory, stating that humans need their physical environment to facilitate their demand for : coziness, safety, sense of belonging, respect and self- realization,

<sup>1</sup>Cui, H., Hu, Q. and He, F. (2015). Brief Discussion on People's Behavior Psychological Demand in Private Courtyard Space. SHS Web of Conferences, 17, p.02002.

<sup>2</sup> Macintosh, D. (1973). The modern courtyard house. London: Lund Humphries for the Architectural Association.

## 1.0 Background

### 1.1 Peter Barber and the Political Context

Articles upon articles of architecture critics describe Peter Barber as resilient<sup>3</sup>, and amongst UK's leading urbanists.<sup>4</sup> Peter Barber, born in 1960, is a London based architect who set up his practice in 1989. He started off his architectural career working for Richard Rogers, whose aspiration was to create mixed communities and protect lower income citizens,<sup>5</sup> which evidently planted a prominent seed in Peter Barber's current architectural vision.<sup>6</sup> Interestingly, Roger's progressive outlook was during the height of Margaret Thatcher's rule, a time which many may trace back to as the instigator of today's social housing crisis. The right-wing government distinctly rejected the municipal conception of the city, describing the inner city as a space of crime and transgression,<sup>7</sup> and even imposed strict financial restrictions on local governments' taxation, in turn depleting funds for council housing. Simultaneously, council houses were sold in their millions to private corporations. Since the 80s, it can regrettably be said that the state of council housing in London has not recovered much, as in present day, only 8 percent of the British people live in social housing.<sup>8</sup> Furthermore, the number of homes built for social rent in 2017-2019 compared to a decade ago have down by a shocking 99 percent!<sup>9</sup>

### 1.2 Peter Barber's Visions

In the recent decades, besides lack of funds, another ingredient has been brought fourth to the mix, which is the lack of overall physical land for new housing developments in the city, resulting in an overall need for extreme urban densification. Peter Barber seems to have devoted his practice to tackle both these issues, interested almost exclusively in densely packed, lower income housing, integrated with a desire to create a sense of community and liveliness for its residents.

A Peter Barber design seems to respond to both the most minuscule, seemingly ordinary interactions between people and architecture,<sup>10</sup> as well as the urban impact and political nature of a scheme, which I intend to observe by visiting and analysing two of his courtyard housing estates in London, Hannibal Road Gardens (2011) and McGrath Road (2019). I aim to uncover the realities of being an idealistic architect by recording the effect that the residents, local council and local planners and any other bodies have had on the scheme. When and why has Peter compromised his vision due to the harsh realities of the building industry and what effect does this impose on the future of the scheme, as well as the people involved?

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<sup>3</sup> Wainwright, O. (2019). Washing line warrior: the architect who wants to get the neighbors singing. [online] the Guardian. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2018/oct/08/washing-line-warrior-the-architect-who-wants-to-get-the-neighbours-singing-peter-barber-social-housing> [Accessed 22 Nov. 2019].

<sup>4</sup> Peter Barber Architects. (2019). Peter Barber - Peter Barber Architects. [online] Available at: <http://www.peterbarberarchitects.com/peterbarber> [Accessed 22 Nov. 2019].

<sup>5</sup> Architectural Review. (2019). Retrospective: Peter Barber. [online] Available at: <https://www.architectural-review.com/buildings/retrospective-peter-barber/10043990.article> [Accessed Nov. 1. 2019].

<sup>6</sup> Nussbaum, R., Woodman, E. and Johnston, P. (2018). Project interrupted. Lectures by British housing architects. London: The Architecture Foundation.

<sup>7</sup> Architectural Review. (2019). Retrospective: Peter Barber. [online] Available at: <https://www.architectural-review.com/buildings/retrospective-peter-barber/10043990.article> [Accessed Nov. 1. 2019].

<sup>8</sup> Lobo, R. (2018). Peter Barber: The man behind the front door. [online] iconeye. Available at: <https://www.iconeye.com/architecture/features/item/12972-peter-barber-the-man-behind-the-front-door>: [Accessed Nov 5. 2019].

<sup>9</sup> Mayor of London. (2017). HOUSING IN LONDON: 2017, London: Greater London Authority

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<sup>10</sup> Homes for the Homeless by Peter Barber - New London Awards Winner. (2016). [video] London: New London Architecture. (1:16)



1.a



1.b



1.c



1.d



1.e



1.f



1.g



1.h

### 1.3 The Essence of a Peter Barber Courtyard Housing Estate

En-route my first estate, getting out at Stephany Green Station, I walked along Mile End road, alongside a single row of 4 story shopfront terrace homes. Evident was the nature of the busyness of the city, with people who rushed past me getting to the station, or lined up alongside me to cross the main roads. Though surrounded by people, each person was clearly engulfed in their individualistic life, unwilling to pause let alone converse. As I turned around to the Hayfield Passage, there was a stark contrast as human noise had suddenly completely died out. As I walked down the denser residential roads of seemingly lived in, yet surprisingly deserted rows of street-based housing, I turned on my voice recorder. (Figure 1.b) Though less occasional than the main road, the abrasive sound of a car driving by and an occasional rushing pedestrian were the range of encounters that I experienced. (Figure 1.1)

As soon as I turned into the unofficial confines of Stephany Green Housing Estate, external noise was seemingly blocked as I stood in the atrium enveloped by the surrounding buildings. Somehow, the lack of 'city' noise did not seem lonesome, rather allowed the opportunity to audibly highlight the presence of an under-recognised community. The small spikes in waveform indicated sounds of birds chirping, (Figure 1.d) with occasional sounds of clattering plates or the murmurs of conversations taking place past the window of the nearest ground floor terrace house. This space designed by Peter Barber, is a pocket within the city and though I stood in the public courtyard, I identified that I was simultaneously standing in the unofficial extension of residents' backyards, making me feel connected to the inhabitants living past the front doors that surround me.

As I observed the courtyard, my eyes were fixated on a skittish squirrel that skipped from one tomato plant to another. (Figure 1.e, 1.f) I heard a child, a resident of Stephany Green Estate calling for it by its apparent name, Fluffy. 'Is that squirrel your pet?' I asked the child. 'No, mum won't let me have pets but Fluffy is mine and Ali's'. Ali is his friend who lives opposite him in one of Peter Barber's Hannibal Road Garden homes adjacent the preexisting estate. Further observation throughout the day revealed that the squirrel seemingly belonged to multiple children who play in the courtyard yet obviously belonged to none of them at all.

This encounter, I believe was the embodiment of the social visions of a Peter Barber estate, regardless of the housing type. He is infatuated with the idea that "public space belongs to everybody but nobody as well"<sup>11</sup>.

<sup>11</sup> Flexible Living and the London Terraced House: Neave Brown in Conversation with Peter Barber - (2016). [video] London: RIIBA Architecture: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HX-uyfC2N0s>

Figure 1.1: Journey from Stephany Green Station to Hannibal Road Garden Courtyard



Figure 2.1: Hannibal Road Gardens before paving (2011)



Figure 2.2: Hannibal Road Gardens Courtyard after paving (2019)

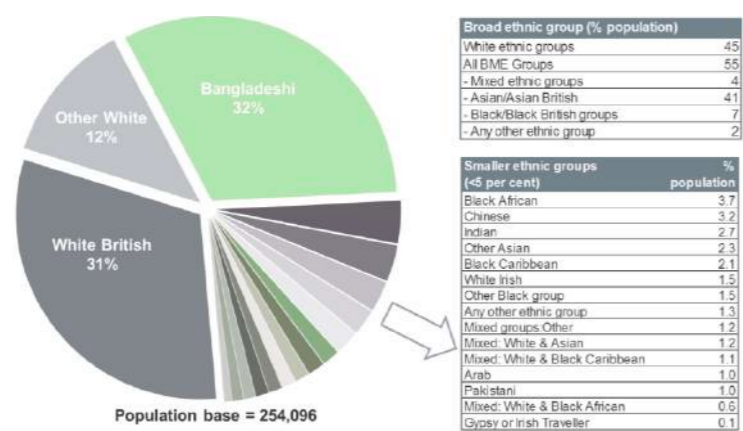


Figure 2.3: Population by Ethnic Group, in Borough of Tower Hamlets, London, 2011 Census

## 2.0 Residents

### 2.1 Hannibal Road Gardens Residents

Hannibal Road Gardens (2011) is a row of 9 low rise, terraced family homes with dwellings of 3, 4, 6 and up to 7 bedrooms. It is an infill project by Peter in association with Stephany Green Council, built in Borough of Tower Hamlets in London. (Figure 2.1) The housing completes the fourth backside side of a preexisting terraced apartment block in the 1960s Stephany Green Estate, forming a community garden in the center.

The scheme, like many of Peter's projects, seems highly responsive and designed to the necessities of the borough and its residents. The area has a high Bangladeshi population with 55 percent of the borough's residents being of non-white ethnicities in 2011 and Bangladeshi being their majority. (Figure 2.3) Since the estate was becoming overcrowded, there was a dire need of rehousing existing residents. Thus, Peter was briefed by the council on the specific requirements of these Bangladeshi families. Bangladeshi communities on average have a higher number of children per family and tend to live a joint family lifestyle,<sup>12</sup> where the interaction with their fellow Bangladeshi neighbours is an integral part of the daily routine, the women and children in particular.<sup>13</sup> Upon opening, the residents were rehoused from their cramped smaller 3 bedroom flats to Peter's more spacious homes. They were highly satisfied by not only the design of the home but having a safe communal meeting space with a play area adjacent to their residence, where mothers and children now hold playdates in the summer<sup>14</sup> The houses have been in use for 8 years now, so the signs usage and inhabitation of the courtyard seemed apparent upon my visit. The residents seemed to have gladly taken initiative adding to and evolving the architecture of Peter's initially built landscaped courtyard. (Figure 2.1) Additions such as cloth drying racks positioned outside the front doors to residents nailing down a collection of self-built planters (Figure 1.h) whose watering responsibilities are shared by all the neighbours<sup>15</sup>. More permanent changes have also been made, such as few years ago when the residents requested paving to be added to the landscaped garden in order to improve access throughout, for both people and vehicles<sup>16</sup>. (Figure 2.2) Interestingly, Peter believes the added pavement is 'visually awful', but chose to fight his urge to interject, as he knew it was a concern raised by the residents which should outweigh his personal visual preferences, prioritizing the residents needs over his own visions.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>12</sup> InterNations GO (2015). A practical guide to the way of life in Bangladesh. [online] Internations.org. Available at: <https://www.internations.org/go/moving-to-bangladesh/living> [Accessed 6 Jan. 2020].

<sup>13</sup> Hannibal Road Gardens Resident, Mothers. (2019) Interviewed by Author of Dissertation, Hafsa Syed, Stephany Green Estate 3 Nov, Appendix page 06

<sup>14</sup> Hannibal Road Gardens Resident, Mothers. (2019) Interviewed by Author of Dissertation, Hafsa Syed, Stephany Green Estate 3 Nov, Appendix page 06

<sup>15</sup> Hannibal Road Gardens Resident, Mothers. (2019) Interviewed by Author of Dissertation, Hafsa Syed, Stephany Green Estate 3 Nov, Appendix page 06

<sup>16</sup> Peter Barber. (2019) Interviewed by Author of Dissertation, Hafsa Syed, 12 Nov. University of Westminster, Appendix page 1

<sup>17</sup> Peter Barber. (2019) Interviewed by Author of Dissertation, Hafsa Syed, 12 Nov. University of Westminster, Appendix page 1



Figure 2.4: Personalized front doors by resident in Donny Brook Quarter

## 2.2 Donny Brooks Residents

Peter Barber can truly be called a socialist<sup>18</sup> therefore he seems lenient when dealing with the users of his buildings adjusting his design vision. Neve brown, an influential Camden based council housing architect, who is an inspiration to Peter<sup>19</sup> discussed, how architects must have a hierarchy of values of whom they aim to design for and the social issues they choose to tackle.<sup>20</sup> Though, on paper Peters client is usually a group of executives in a council, he stated that his real agenda is to design for the people that inhabit the city, and his schemes.<sup>21</sup> He also acknowledged that the ability to predict how the people will use the architecture designed is loose and rather unpredictable.<sup>22</sup> But, it is this unpredictability that actually 'excites him'.<sup>23</sup>

For example, in one of his earlier projects DonnyBrooks Quarter (2006) in Hackney, London, windows were designed into houses' front doors, intended to allow residents to see a glimpse of their guest as they arrived. However, they were almost instantly covered up by personalised artwork or magazine clippings by its residents to protect their privacy. (Figure 2.4) This seemed to add life and personality to the street façade regardless of the shifted design intent. Peter speaks fondly of this incident<sup>24</sup>, with the users of his architecture aiding in adding an animated character to his projects, bringing it to life.

<sup>18</sup> Lobo, R. (2018). Peter Barber: The man behind the front door. [online] iconeye. Available at: <https://www.iconeye.com/architecture/features/item/12972-peter-barber-the-man-behind-the-front-door>. [Accessed Nov 5. 2019].

<sup>19</sup> Nussbaum, R., Woodman, E. and Johnston, P. (2018). Project interrupted. Lectures by British housing architects. London: The Architecture Foundation. page

<sup>20</sup> Flexible Living and the London Terraced House: Neave Brown in Conversation with Peter Barber - (2016). [video] London: RIBA Architecture. Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HX-uyfC2N0s> (1:38:18) [Accessed 10 Nov. 2020].

<sup>21</sup> Peter Barber. (2019) Interviewed by Author of Dissertation, Hafsa Syed, 12 Nov. University of Westminster, Appendix page 1

<sup>22</sup> FAAA Talks: Peter Barber & Ben Stringer - (2016). [video] London: faaaccept. Available at:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AIVmD094TBw&list=WL&index=25&t=0s> [Accessed 10 Nov. 2020].

<sup>23</sup> Homes for the Homeless by Peter Barber - New London Awards Winner. (2016). [video] London: New London Architecture. Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fsSWubHsM5E> (0:48:00) [Accessed 10 Nov. 2020].

<sup>24</sup> Flexible Living and the London Terraced House: Neave Brown in Conversation with Peter Barber. (2016). [video] London: RIBA Architecture. Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HX-uyfC2N0s> (1:05:22) [Accessed 10 Nov. 2020].



Figure 2.5: McGarth Road Arched, Bricked Frontage

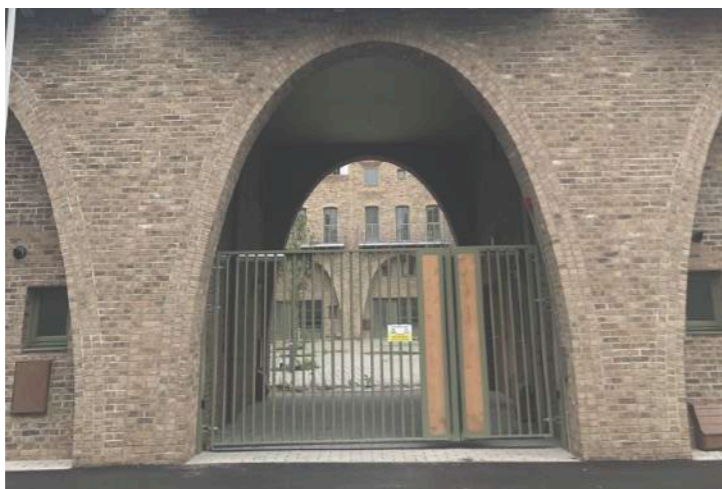


Figure 2.6 Gate added to McGarth Road Site Entrance

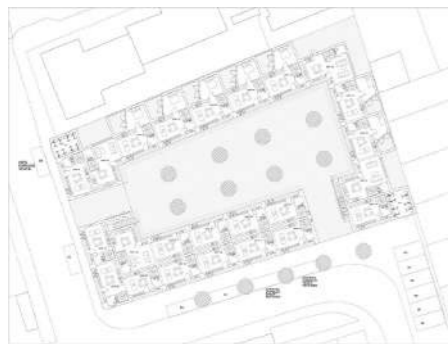


Figure 2.7: McGarth Road Published Plan with no gates or doors drawn at the entrances despite gates being drawn elsewhere



Figure 2.8: Concept Sketch by Peter Barber showing intended use of McGarth Road Estate

### 2.3 McGarth Road Residents

Similar to my journey to Hannibal Road Gardens, upon leaving Stratford Station, right past the rush of people slurring to and from Stratford shopping centre, I was abruptly transported into streets upon streets of deserted 4 story street-based housing. Upon the final turn to my destination, McGarth Road, by Peter Barber which not hard to identify. Reminiscent of a domestic fortress, the double-height arched frontage homes formed an unanimous elevation, slightly higher than its neighboring houses. (Figure 2.5) McGarth Road Estate encompasses a series 28 four story mews houses, arranged around a tree-lined courtyard. It is in association with Newham Council and is being advertised as shared-ownership, starter homes.<sup>25</sup>

To my surprise, I was firstly met with a gated, unwelcoming front, (Figure 2.6) indicating exclusivity and inhabitation only to soon find out the estate opening had been delayed. As I rechecked the published plans, they showed no indication of public obstruction being an intended design element. (Figure 2.7) "Once the estate is opened, the gate will be removed right?" I asked the guard on-site. His reply was blunt 'Sweetheart, this is Stratford. I can tell you that is not happening'.<sup>26</sup> He then insinuated that he believes that the areas crime rate is the reason. In fact, this can be very true because the Borough of Newham for the past 10 years has maintained its reputation of being a significantly high crime zone, being the 6<sup>th</sup> most criminally active borough in London. (Figure 2.9) In addition, the Stratford and New Town area, where McGarth Road is located, holds the highest overall crime rate within the Newham Borough itself. (Figure 2.10)

Peter's initial sketches indicate the urban vision for the courtyard being a lively continuation of the street, (Figure 2.8) but now has been gated as per request of the the council.<sup>27</sup> Peter explained that though a lively space can still be created past the gate, the social logic of the space has defiantly shifted. He also claims that Newham Council, the client, being too reserved in the situation is the reason for this decision.<sup>28</sup>

<sup>25</sup> Architectural Review. (2019). Retrospective: Peter Barber. [online] Available at: <https://www.architectural-review.com/buildings/retrospective-peter-barber/10043990.article> [Accessed 21 Nov. 2019].

<sup>26</sup> Peter Barber. (2019) Interviewed by Author of Dissertation, Hafsa Syed, 12 Nov. University of Westminster, Appendix page 1

<sup>27</sup>

<sup>28</sup> "there wasn't somebody with the same vision unfortunately in Newham council, so the gate stayed." Peter Barber. (2019) Interviewed by Author of Dissertation, Hafsa Syed, 12 Nov. University of Westminster, Appendix page 1



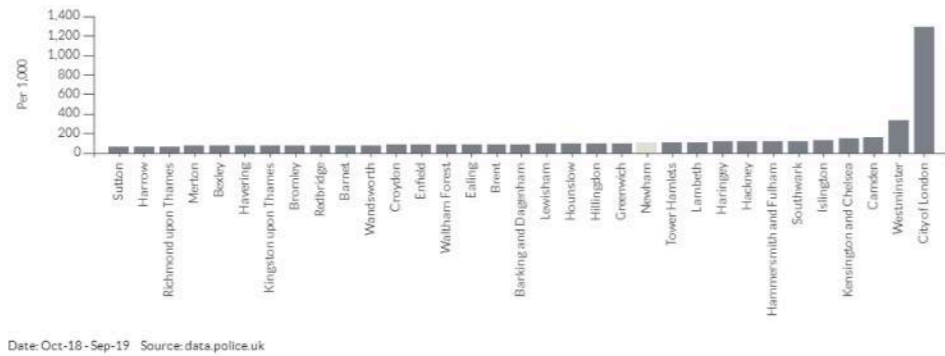


Figure 2.9: Overall Crime rate by area in London near date of site visits. Both Borough of Newham and Tower Hamlets holding similar statistics of around 100 crimes per 1000 residents per Borough .

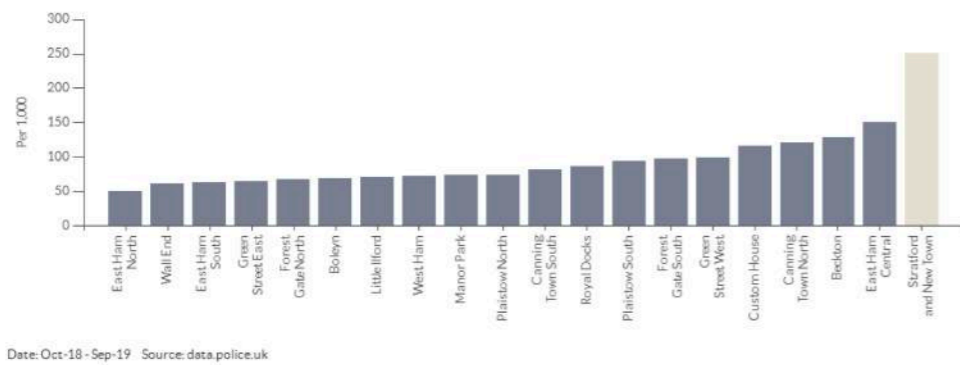


Figure 2.10: Overall Crime rate in Borough of Tower Hamlets; near date of site visit

However I wonder if Peter is too optimistic To me, this seems inevitable, given the of the public of Stratford but also due to Peter’s design decisions to having a sheltered courtyard entrance since the sheltered entrance would probably promote unwanted activity. This phenomenon can be explained using Peters courtyard scheme back in Borough of Tower Hamlets, where the crime rate is almost identical to that of Borough of Newham. (Figure 2.9)

Historically, in courtyard typologies the narrow-sheltered passageway towards the atrium of a courtyard, known in Rome as the vestibulum, is an architectural feature that acts as a buffer between the interior and exterior of the courtyard to ensure a sense of safety and privacy”<sup>29</sup>. However, a narrow sheltered public space in London exhibits a different nature. Back in Stephany Green Estate, that currently consists of two interconnected sets of courtyard blocks, with the two separate entrances adjacent to the same residential road. Though the same estate, the entrance with the sheltered entrance, has been securely gated at the inner edge. (Figure 2.12) Observing it on a rainy day, it was used by the public, not to draw local pedestrians into the courtyard but rather by passersby to take shelter; have an occasional smoke and in the evening by male strangers to have a heated conversation. One would say it becomes a refuge space for Londoners during inconvenient weathers. The second unsheltered entrance opposite to the Hannibal Road Gardens homes, attracted no such activity. (Figure 2.11)

This type of negative public interaction would have eventually drawn unwanted activity into the courtyard of McGrath Road, making it unsafe for the residents. The council, who clearly understood the nature of their demographic requested the gate instillation. For Peter this compromise is a significant one, as he believes there is almost never a need in London for a gated community and if this does happen we “would have lost the zeal of our city.”<sup>30</sup> I do question if communication between Peter and the council during the design stage could have allowed all this to have been pre-calculated?

In conclusion, although people add life and theatricality to his schemes, unpredicted user activity may also result in the architect having to settle on making minor design adjustments to a project, which can have major effects on its overall vision. Perhaps why this seems to have been avoided better in Hannibal Road Gardens, is because Peter was in close contact the with preexisting council estate’s authorities, who were knowledgeable about the lifestyle and requirements of the preexisting residents.



Figure 2.11: Hannibal Road Gardens unsheltered entrance



Figure 2.12: Stephany Green Estate Security Gated entrance shelters pedestrians from the rain

<sup>29</sup> Macintosh, D. (1973). The modern courtyard house. London: Lund Humphries for the Architectural Association. P20

<sup>30</sup> Peter Barber. (2019) Interviewed by Author of Dissertation, Hafsa Syed, 12 Nov. University of Westminster, Appendix page 1

### 3.0 Planners

#### 3.1 Receiving Planning Permission

Generally, the planning process in London can prove to be quiet difficult, particularly for residential schemes. Over the past 13 years, the approval rate for planning applications that get accepted by local authorities has consistently remained significantly lower than the decline rate. (Figure 3.1), especially with major and minor residential schemes, such as Peter's, having persistently lower approval rate than commercial projects.<sup>31</sup>(Figure 3.2) Thus, I was intrigued to say the least, when when I discovered that Peter has not been facing this obstacle throughout his career. He boldly stated that he has 'almost never, had rejected for a planning application in his 30 years of practice!' <sup>32</sup>

The fact that Peter's schemes are lead by urban narrative is the main reason. Peter first and foremost thinks of housing projects form an urban perspective and how it might be used to create a public space. The housing aspect, although equally as important, comes second.<sup>33</sup> He says this is because '70 percent of buildings in a city like London are housing, so when we do housing at an urban scale, we are designing pieces of city'.<sup>34</sup> The origins of his urban vision for public squares comes from the nature of a larger scale case study, Jammal Fannah, a public square in Marrakesh. (Figure 3.3) The architecture of the square comprises of two main elements whose coexistence facilitate one another. Firstly, the the moveable temporary aspect, the markets and masses of people, communicating an architecture of theatricality and liveliness. The second element is the surrounding heavy, solid buildings that contain this congestion, in turn facilitating the chance for encounters to occur between the people. <sup>35</sup>

<sup>31</sup> Andrew Presland. (2018). Planning Applications in England: April to June 2018. London: Ministry of Housing, communities & Local Government

<sup>32</sup> Peter Barber. (2019) Interviewed by Author of Dissertation, Hafsa Syed, 12 Nov. University of Westminster, Appendix page 1

<sup>33</sup> FAAA Talks: Peter Barber & Ben Stringer. (2016). [video] London: faaaccept. Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AIVmD094TBw&list=WVl&index=25&t=0s> [Accessed 10 Nov. 2020]

<sup>34</sup> Flexible Living and the London Terraced House: Neave Brown in Conversation with Peter Barber. (2016). [video] London: RIBA Architecture. Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HX-uyfC2N0s> (51:03) [Accessed 10 Nov. 2020].

<sup>35</sup> Flexible Living and the London Terraced House: Neave Brown in Conversation with Peter Barber. (2016). [video] London: RIBA Architecture. Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HX-uyfC2N0s> [Accessed 10 Nov. 2020].

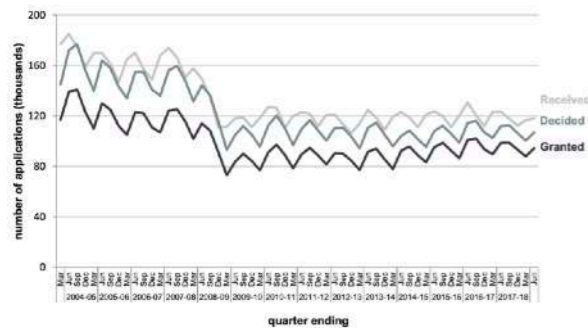


Figure 3.1: Number of Planning application received denied and granted by district authorities in England from 2005 to 2018

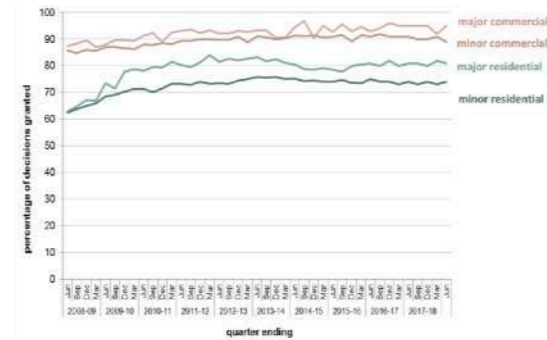


Figure 3.2: Percentage of planning application granted by district authors by type of development, in England from 2005 to 2018



Figure 3.3: Jammal Fannah public square in Marrakesh, clearing within the city bought to life by people



Figure 3.4: McGrath Road exterior using contextual vernacular brick facade, almost identical as the contextual buildings

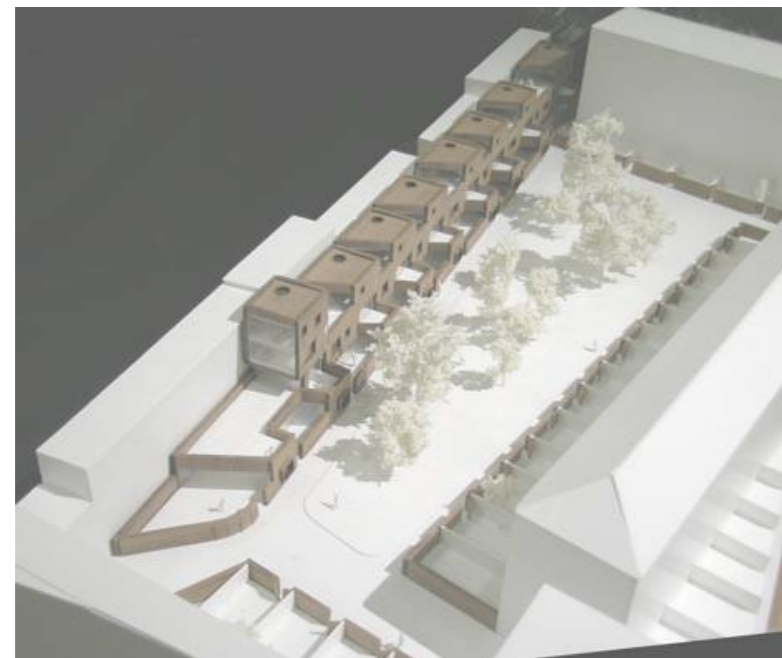


Figure 3.5: Hannibal Road Gardens model showing materiality inspired by timber garden sheds of neighboring context

Another reason for his ease in dealing with planners could be his use of contextual materials. Peter seems to restrict the expression of his radical views to the experimentation of unconventional housing typologies in London, from obscure and premodern vernacular to back to back houses, courtyard types, double and treble stack wall ups.<sup>36</sup> Contrastingly, the façades of these buildings are not highly experimental, with the exception of some earlier white render projects that the firm now steers away from, due to high maintenance cost.<sup>37</sup> He seems to adhere closely to contextual materials. This aligns seamlessly with the main agenda of planners for the elevation materials to 'harmonize with the character of the surrounding developments'.<sup>38</sup> This can explain the usage of majority Freshfield Lane Danehill Yellow Brick, in McGrath Road. (Figure 3.4) It is a material that had already been approved by the borough for usage in previous neighboring developments, allowing its approval from planners to be instantaneous, even eliminating the need to spend time sending a sample.<sup>39</sup>

In Hannibal Road Gardens, the facade at first glance can be seen as different to its surroundings. The row of houses clad with timber shingles, sit adjacent to the concrete and bricked Stephany Green Estate. However, the materiality can be considered highly contextual as it is deriving inspiration from the fences of the estate's residents' backyards. These garden sheds were an inspiration to Peter due to their overgrown, self-made, patch-worked nature, an architectural feature that embodied the livelihood and hope of creativity of the inhabitants, which Peter chose to cherish and highlight throughout his design.<sup>40</sup> (Figure 3.5)

Lastly, besides meeting legislative requirements closely, Peter explains that the most consequential thing is making planners feel a sense of responsibility by clearly communicating the sincerity with which he believes that his schemes will have a positive impact on the public.<sup>41</sup> His colleagues explain that this has allowed planners' feedback on design adjustments to be a positive and encouraging part of the design process rather than an obstacle to overcome.<sup>42</sup>

<sup>36</sup> Nussbaum, R., Woodman, E. and Johnston, P. (2018). *Project interrupted. Lectures by British housing architects*. London: The Architecture Foundation. page 56

<sup>37</sup> Alice; Employee at Peter Barber Architects. (2019) Interviewed by Author of Dissertation, Hafsa Syed, 12 Nov. University of Westminster, Appendix page 5

<sup>38</sup> Armsby, D. (2015). *APPLICATION FOR APPROVAL OF DETAILS RESERVED BY CONDITION*. [online] London: Newham London, p.5. Available at: <https://www.newham.gov.uk/Pages/ServiceChild/Planning-application-forms.aspx> [Accessed 1 January 2019].

<sup>39</sup> Gouldstone, D., Dave@peterbarberarchitects.com, 2015. *McGrath Road: Brick Facing Planning Condition*. [E-mail] Message to A. R Richards (u.d). Sent 29 October 2015 15:20. Available at: <https://www.newham.gov.uk/Pages/ServiceChild/Planning-application-forms.aspx> [Accessed 1 January 2020].

<sup>40</sup> Peter Barber Architect- (2016). [video] London: University of Westminster. Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QFanMRkK17U> [Accessed 5 Nov 2019]

<sup>41</sup> Peter Barber. (2019) Interviewed by Author of Dissertation, Hafsa Syed, 12 Nov. University of Westminster

<sup>42</sup> Alice; Employee at Peter Barber Architects. (2019) Interviewed by Author of Dissertation, Hafsa Syed, 12 Nov. University of Westminster, Appendix page 5

### 3.2 Planners View on Internal Spatial Design

Both planning applications for Hannibal Road Gardens and McGrath Road were approved upon first submission.<sup>43</sup> This in part, can be because Peter knows which elements of the scheme to emphasise to different audiences. With Hannibal Road Gardens, the main element of the scheme he chose to highlight to the local council, to sell the scheme, was the positive impact the large number of bedrooms would bring to the lifestyle of the council's large Bangladeshi families<sup>44</sup>. Contrastingly, in the planning application to Tower Hamlets Council he chose to mainly highlight the urban aspect of the community garden using words like 'delightful' when describing it.<sup>45</sup> This included mentioning the central garden's potential to provide a mixed use development by alluring the families of the neighboring estate. He also explained with certainty how it "would" (not could) enhance the area both visually and security-wise, through the demolition of the semi-vacant preexisting garages and storage units that he claimed attracted crime to the area.<sup>46</sup> In their response, the planners seem to be most satisfied with the compliance of the scheme to national policies. (such as National Planning Policy Framework) These documents emphasize the urban aspect of projects, even smaller residential ones, to have a positive impact on the public realm and to provide a mixed use development.<sup>47</sup>

However despite being satisfactory for planners, perhaps leading the housing design primarily with an urban narrative might not always be the best for the potential residents. Newham council's brief for McGrath Road was actually to design an apartment block, a super dense housing typology.<sup>48</sup> The need for any new builds, especially social housing schemes in London, to be highly dense was (and is) dire, in order to accommodate for the high demand with limited land space. Newham was the 4th highest Brough in London for number of households on the Local Authority housing waiting list (In 2016).<sup>49</sup>

To Peter, an apartment block not only lacks urban narrative, but it's long corridors discourage the chance of encounters between people, leading to neighbor-lenses. Thus, Peter chose to propose a highly dense, domestic and urban alternative to the apartment block, consisting of 26 homes, of which 19 are two bed and 7 are three bed homes. This alternative was positively

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<sup>43</sup> London Borough of Tower Hamlets Planning Service (2007). *Conditional Permission for Development*. London: Tower Hamlets Development and Renewal, pp.1-3.

<sup>44</sup> Peter Barber. (2019) Interviewed by Author of Dissertation, Hafsa Syed, 12 Nov. University of Westminster, Appendix page 1

<sup>45</sup> London Borough of Tower Hamlets Planning Service (2007). *Town Planning Application for Decision*. London: Peter Barber Architects, pp.1-3.

<sup>46</sup> London Borough of Tower Hamlets Planning Service (2007). *Town Planning Application for Decision*. London: Peter Barber Architects, pp.1-3.

<sup>47</sup> London Borough of Tower Hamlets Planning Service (2007). *Conditional Permission for Development*. London: Tower Hamlets Development and Renewal, pp.1-3.

<sup>48</sup> Peter Barber. (2019) Interviewed by Author of Dissertation, Hafsa Syed, 12 Nov. University of Westminster, Appendix page 1

<sup>49</sup> Aston Mansfeild (2017). *Newham key Statistics 2017: 2017*, London: Aston Mansfeild page 22

received by local council.<sup>50</sup> However to achieve this level of density, the homes are 4 stories high, with usually only 1 habitable room per floor.

Although four story terrace homes are not uncommon in London, especially in Newham, the the inaccessibility of the scheme and poor circulation within the two bedroom homes, to me seems disappointing. Peter tried to convince me, with the same thing he had said to convince the planners, 'though it would not suit everybody, there is a market for these types of houses, for people with good knees and strong legs going up and down the stairs'. Another criticism pointed out by the conservation officer of the local planning authorities in the planning acceptance document was, 'there is a concern that the density of the scheme is affecting the quality and flexibility of some of the homes' when referring specifically to the two bed four story homes. These units have the kitchen on ground floor but living quarters on then fourth, all with tight dimensions making them inflexible for larger families. (Figure 4.0) However, this was later neglected by planners with no revisions demanded since the scheme 'just about' met the minimum space standards of the London Plan Housing SPG.<sup>51</sup> This can shine light on how priorities of planners seem to lie mostly on the overall urban aspect. It also raised the of whether high densification of a scheme should be prioritized if the interior experience is not optimal for the residents.

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<sup>50</sup> Peter Barber. (2019) Interviewed by Author of Dissertation, Hafsa Syed, 12 Nov. University of Westminster, Appendix page 1

<sup>51</sup> London Borough of Newham Planning Service (2014). *Urban Design and Conservation Observations*, Ben Hull: London

## 4.0 Local Council

To further analyze the interior, the property developer let me into the four-story two-bedroom plot, a street-facing model home. Studying its plans, staging and advertisements revealed slight inconsistencies between Peter's, the property developer's and the council's intended target buyers of the home. (Figure 4.0)

As I entered past the front door on the ground floor, I was lead directly into the well lit kitchen, with spacious windows that overlooked the street beyond. (Figure 4.1) Being a Peter Barber affordable housing scheme, I could imagine kids rushing into the family kitchen to enjoy a meal after a long day of playing in the street. Surprisingly, this narrative shifted when I noticed the second-floor room. Despite being labeled in the published plans as a second bedroom, it had been staged by the property developer as an in-home office, instead of a guest or children's room. (Figure 4.3) After that, the rest of the tour communicated a more working professionals semi-luxury portrayal for the home.

The council has arranged for the dwellings to be purchased on the Newham Newshare Scheme, a shared equity scheme aimed for buyers who can not afford the cost of buying a home in the open market. It is made affordable by allowing the buyer to fund a percentage of the cost, with the council making up the difference, which the buyer can pay back within 25 years. This is meant to allow residents to put down roots,<sup>52</sup> which I would imagine involves starting a family and eventually growing old. However, Peter himself admitted 'the design unfortunately might not best suit very larger families or elderly people.'<sup>53</sup> It is the minimum space requirements, and the lack of connectivity of the living room and kitchen would prevent certain properties from being a future family home.

In addition, the council policies claim to prioritise applicants who are already on Newham Council housing waiting list.<sup>54</sup> However, it should be noted that the council revised their Social Housing Allocations Policy in 2012, which meant that unlike traditional allocations policies, people in employment and members of the armed services would to be prioritised.<sup>55</sup>

Now, the property developer, despite being employed by the council, actually seems to be combining both, Peter's general preference for the scheme to be a smaller family home and the council's policy of working professionals. He is doing so by prioritising families or couples who

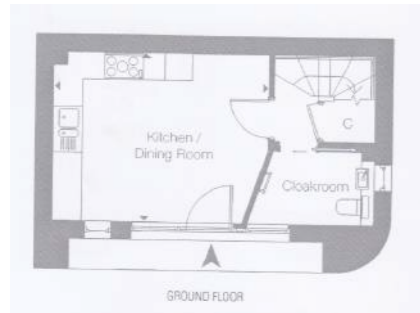


Fig 4.1: Ground floor room, Well Lit Living room over looking adjacent street

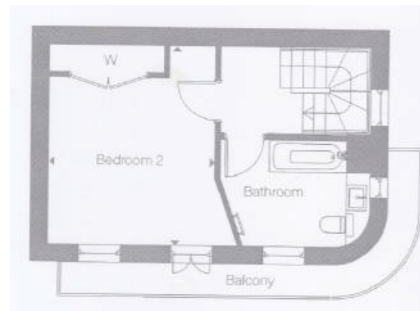


Fig 4.2: 1st floor room, colorfully staged, medium sized, ensuite bedroom

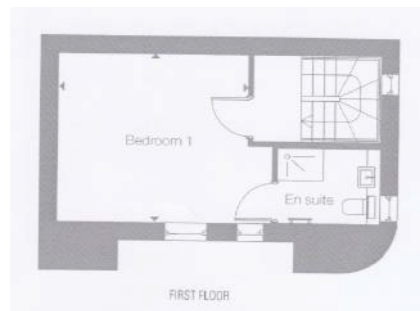


Fig 4.3: 2nd floor room, staged as a spacious home office

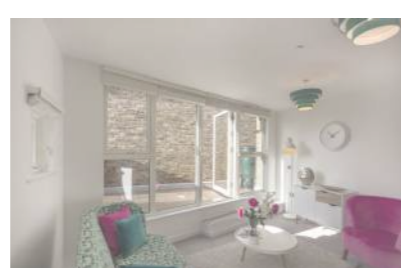
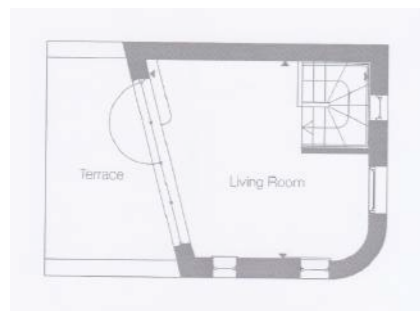


Fig 4.4: 4th floor room, beautifully staged living room connected to terrace

Figure 4.0: Two Bedroom Story Home - Plot 2

48 Newham Council.(2019). McGrath Road 15: Sitesales, Appendix page 09

53 Peter Barber. (2019) Interviewed by Author of Dissertation, Hafsa Syed, 12 Nov. University of Westminster. Appendix page 1

54 Newham.gov.uk. (2020). NewShare - our shared equity scheme. [online]

Available at: <https://www.newham.gov.uk/Pages/Services/NewShare.aspx> [Accessed 1 Jan. 2020].

55 Newham.gov.uk. (2012). [online] Available at: <https://www.newham.gov.uk/Pages/News/Armed%20services%20and%20people%20in%20employment%20to%20be%20prioritised%20for%20social%20housing.aspx> [Accessed 5 Jan. 2020].

seem 'in need' but are also working or will have a stable predicted incomes insuring future financial stability of the estate.<sup>56</sup>

## 5.0 Government Funding

Peter Barber's political aspirations range from: solving the housing crisis, ending right to buy<sup>57</sup> and reviving old-fashion council housing<sup>58</sup>. These broad aims can lead people say he is an optimistic utopian, but he insists he is in-fact an idealist.<sup>59</sup> He claims, his latest proposal '100 mile city' is the solution to the housing crisis. It is a linear, reprogrammed suburbia, consisting of a highly dense belt of street based housing wrapping around of London. (Figure 5.1) Contained by the green belt, the proposed dense collection of social housing meant to mimic the architecture and lively character of the inner city.

Throughout the 100 Mile city film, where residents of the suburbia were asked their opinions on the proposal, many questioned the practicality of the scheme due to its large scale, given the current political context. Peter counter responded by questioning 'Would the same have been said for a commercial project, like a railway line development?'.<sup>60</sup>

He knows that the absence of housing being an integral being of infrastructure is due to the state of the current political climate.<sup>61</sup> The percentage of government funding that is allocated to local government and authorities is continuously depleting, in turn so is the funding for social housing. Thus, with Right to buy scheme, introduced in the 1980, a policy that qualifies social tenants with the opportunity to buy their social rented home at a discount, councils used the revenue this generated to keep the social estates up and running. However, in this process the purity of the old fashioned council house, that prioritises affordable housing for those most need, has seemed to become muddled and diluted.<sup>62</sup> Inevitably, councils must now use various versions of intermediate funding schemes, to allow them just to remain alive. All of this, has

<sup>56</sup> McGrath Road Property Developer. (2019) Interviewed by Author of Dissertation, Hafsa Syed, 12 Nov. McGrath Road, Appendix page 06

<sup>57</sup> Architectural Review. (2019). Retrospective: Peter Barber. [online] Available at: <https://www.architectural-review.com/buildings/retrospective-peter-barber/10043990.article> [Accessed 21 Nov. 2019].

<sup>58</sup> Lobo, R. (2018). Peter Barber: The man behind the front door. [online] iconeye. Available at: <https://www.iconeye.com/architecture/features/item/12972-peter-barber-the-man-behind-the-front-door>. [Accessed Nov 5. 2019].

<sup>59</sup> Lobo, R. (2018). Peter Barber: The man behind the front door. [online] iconeye. Available at: <https://www.iconeye.com/architecture/features/item/12972-peter-barber-the-man-behind-the-front-door>. [Accessed Nov 5. 2019].

<sup>60</sup> *The true History of the 100 Mile City*. (n.d.). [film]. Grant Gee. Dir, London: Peter Barber Architects. Available at: <http://www.peterbarberarchitects.com/hundred-mile-city-1>. [Accessed Nov 5. 2019].

<sup>61</sup> *The true History of the 100 Mile City*. (n.d.). [film]. Grant Gee. Dir, London: Peter Barber Architects. Available at: <http://www.peterbarberarchitects.com/hundred-mile-city-1>. [Accessed Nov 5. 2019].

<sup>62</sup> Architectural Review. (2019). Retrospective: Peter Barber. [online] Available at: <https://www.architectural-review.com/buildings/retrospective-peter-barber/10043990.article> [Accessed 21 Nov. 2019].

facilitated in the loss of over 2 million social units in just the past 50 years,<sup>63</sup> which only continues to deplete!

Even in Hannibal Road Gardens, a scheme that Peter Barber's takes pride in saying 'is hundred percent social housing',<sup>64</sup> the certainty of it remaining so is not definite and its funding status seems not completely pure. At initial stages, the Borough of Tower Hamlets Council requested the applicants of the scheme, The Southern Hosing Group, to enter a legal agreement that would insure all the dwellings to stay affordable indefinitely. However, the final decision was to have a 50:50 split, with only half of the homes as socially rented of-course due to financial reasons.<sup>65</sup> This has resulted in the whole scheme being another intermediate version of an affordable housing scheme instead of true social housing.

With 200 families loosing their home everyday in London, <sup>66</sup> I believe the time for a mass council housing scheme, like 100 mile city, is now. However, I would simultaneously hope if the scheme does go through, Peter resists the urge to rush into its construction. Priority should be given to insuring that appropriate local policies are in place and sufficient government funding have been secured prior to commencing. This would insure that it will be, and remain, a true social housing scheme. Surely, to see such a proposal built but not cater to the people who deserve it would be truly disheartening.



Figure 5.1: The 100 Mile city proposal in Plaster Model

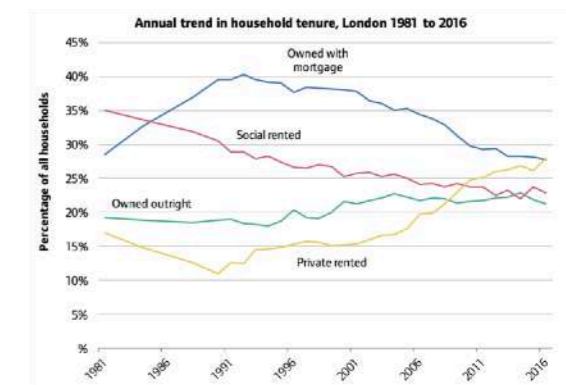


Figure 5.2: Annual Trend in household tenure, London 1981 to 2016 showing the drastic fall in socially rented homes, with private rented exceeding socially rented in 2010.

<sup>63</sup> *The true History of the 100 Mile City*. (n.d.). [film]. Grant Gee. Dir, London: Peter Barber Architects. Available at: <http://www.peterbarberarchitects.com/hundred-mile-city-1>. [Accessed Nov 5. 2019].

<sup>64</sup> Peter Barber. (2019) Interviewed by Author of Dissertation, Hafsa Syed, 12 Nov. University of Westminster, Appendix page 1

<sup>65</sup> London Borough of Tower Hamlets Planning Service (2007). *Conditional Permission for Development*. London: Tower Hamlets Development and Renewal, pp.1-3.

<sup>66</sup> *The true History of the 100 Mile City*. (n.d.). [film]. Grant Gee. Dir, London: Peter Barber Architects. Available at: <http://www.peterbarberarchitects.com/hundred-mile-city-1>. [Accessed Nov 5. 2019].

## 6. Conclusion:

In the past 30 years alone, Peter Barber Architects have already completed a significant number of projects in London, scattering a collection of small scale and high density housing of different typologies throughout its existing urban fabric. As an aspiring architect, observing Peter's process of implementing his architecture and his interactions with residents, councils and policy makers, has taught me, and will perhaps will teach others, where compromises can be or chosen not be made; to see tangible results.

Engaging in thought provoking discussions with my seminar group on the urban and political context of London and experiencing Peter's estates, I believe it opened my eyes to what I see as the true essence of this city. Is that it is a collection of different boroughs, that are further divided into towns, made up of estates that house residents who form smaller pockets of communities of similar ethnicities, languages, cultures and lifestyles. These individuals need a socialist architect, one who will cater to their cultural and lifestyle choices by giving the them an affordable but thoughtfully designed, safe and lively place to call home whichever housing typology that may in tale.

In turn, I would not necessarily say that the solution to London's housing crisis should be a linear European-centric street based approach, like the 100 mile city, but rather, a collection of diverse architectural typologies fitted within dense spaces. Perhaps these dense pockets of city, span throughout suburbia or wherever affordable land is available. Peter has already proposed such a scheme, a dense urban based neighborhood, Coldbath Town in Clerkenwell, one that I would describe as a series of courtyards within each other. (Figure 6.1) The dense neighborhood, is intended to be social housing of course, and comprises of 600 up-to 700 homes within a \_ acre site.<sup>67</sup> The arcaded frontage buildings, arranged together seem to create a secure perimeter around the site, in turn forming a courtyard, that has then been filled with rows and street based housing that meet up often with other house types like courtyard homes. Empty spaces have also been designed in, creating clearings every so often, forming public squares. (Figure 6.2)

Peter admits that he believes in flexibility in terms of how we think about housing, and since there are different types of people, variety of housing should be provided.<sup>68</sup> However, he simultaneously seems most infatuated with the linear street based approach slightly more than other architecture types, such as the Neve Browns, Alexander estate. (Figure 6.3) But, we

<sup>67</sup> FAAA Talks: Peter Barber & Ben Stringer - (2016).[video] London: faaaccept

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AIVmD094TBw&list=WL&index=25&t=0s>

<sup>68</sup> Flexible Living and the London Terraced House: Neave Brown in Conversation with Peter Barber: (2016). [video] London: RIBA Architecture. Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HX-uyfC2N0s> [Accessed 10 Nov. 2020].

should remember, as he said, the political climate he is working in is starkly different and much more restrictive, to Neve's.<sup>69</sup> I would say that Peter the foundation of individual smaller projects Peter is scattering throughout the city, have a higher potential of one day becoming true council homes, in an optimistic future. This should be seen just as influential, if not more, than monotonous large scale council estates, seemingly designed for people to adjust their life around the proposed architecture rather than the architecture being truly designed for the people.

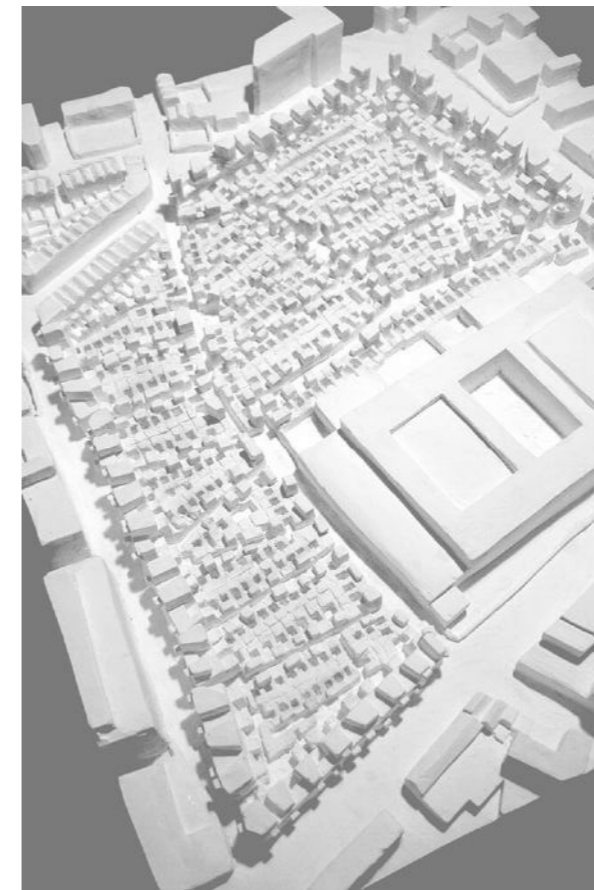


Figure 6.1: Coldbath Town - Mount Pleasant Proposal in plaster model



Figure 6.2: Collection of dense housing forming a clearing that becomes a public square



Figure 6.3: Neve Brown's linear Camden Alexander Housing Estate

<sup>69</sup> Flexible Living and the London Terraced House: Neave Brown in Conversation with Peter Barber: (2016). [video] London: RIBA Architecture. Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HX-uyfC2N0s> [Accessed 10 Nov. 2020].

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## 8. Iconography:

Figure 0.1: Cui, H., Hu, Q. and He, F. (2015). Brief Discussion on People's Behavior Psychological Demand in Private Courtyard Space. SHS Web of Conferences, 17, p.02002.

Figure 1.1: Syed, H. (Nov 2019). Own imagery.

Figure 2.1: Peter Barber Architects (2007.). Hannibal Road Gardens. Available at: <http://www.peterbarberarchitects.com/hannibal-road-gardens> [Accessed 6 Jan. 2020].

Figure 2.2: Syed, H. (Nov 2019). Own imagery.

Figure 2.3 : Tower Hamlets Council (2013). Ethnicity in Tower Hamlets Analysis of 2011 Census data. London: Tower Hamlets Council, p.5

Figure 2.4: Nussbaum, R., Woodman, E. and Johnston, P. (2018). Project interrupted. Lectures by British housing architects. London: The Architecture Foundation. p.

Figure 2.5: Syed, H. (Nov 2019). Own imagery.

Figure 2.6: Syed, H. (Nov 2019). Own imagery.

Figure 2.7: Peter Barber Architects (2018). McGrath Road. Available at: <http://www.peterbarberarchitects.com/mews-housing-east-london> [Accessed 6 Jan. 2020].

Figure 2.8: Peter Barber Architects (2018). McGrath Road. Available at: <http://www.peterbarberarchitects.com/mews-housing-east-london> [Accessed 6 Jan. 2020].

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Figure 2.11: Syed, H. (Nov 2019). Own imagery.

Figure 2.12: Syed, H. (Nov 2019). Own imagery.

Figure 3.1: Andrew Presland. (2018). Planning Applications in England: April to June 2018. [image] London: Ministry of Housing, communities & Local Government. p.

Figure 3.2: Andrew Presland. (2018). Planning Applications in England: April to June 2018. [image] London: Ministry of Housing, communities & Local Government. p.

Figure 3.3: Syed, H. (Nov 2019). Own imagery at Peter Barber Lecture.

Figure 3.4 Syed, H. (Nov 2019). Own imagery..

Figure 3.5: Syed, H. (Nov 2019). Own imagery.

Figure 4.1, 4.3: Syed, H. (Nov 2019). Own imagery.

Figure 4.2., 4.4 Morley Von, Sternberg (n.d.). <http://www.architecturetoday.co.uk/court-appeal/>

Figure 5.1: Peter Barber Architects (n.d). Available at: <http://www.peterbarberarchitects.com/hundred-mile-city-1> [Accessed 6 Jan. 2020].

Figure 5.2: Mayor of London. (2017). HOUSING IN LONDON: 2017, [image] London: Greater London Authority p.10

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Figure 6.2: Peter Barber Architects (n.d). Available at: <http://www.peterbarberarchitects.com/coldbath-town> [Accessed 5 Jan. 2020].

Figure 6.3: Anon, (n.d). Available at: <https://manchesterhistory.net/architecture/1970/alexanderestate.html>.

## 9.0 Appendix

### 1.0 Peter Barber

#### 1.1 Interview with Perter Barber

#### 1.2 Interview with Alice, Peter Barber Architects Employee

### 3.0 McGrath Road

#### 3.1 Interview with McGrath Road Property Developer

#### 3.2 Interview with McGrath Security Guard

#### 3.3 McGrath Advertisement Brochure

### 2.0 Hannibal Road Gardens

#### 2.1 Interview with Hannibal Road Gardens Mothers

### 1.1: Interview with Perter Barber

#### Transcript

Interviewee: Peter Barber

Interviewer: Hafsa Saad Syed

At University of Westminster on Nov 21, 2019

*Interviewer:* You mention how housing is 70 percent of the city, so you approach housing with an urban perspective. And from your drawing of McGrath road I can see that you haven't integrated a gate on both of the entrances, so did you imagine for this space to be a continuation of the street?

*Peter Barber:* Yes. And the gate was installed by the client. It was never our intention that there should be a gate and I fought quite hard to make sure there wasn't a gate, it's a battle we lost, so the social logic of that central space will change. I think it will be / I hope it will be a successful space and the gates will enable something else to happen in there, but it was not the intention of the project. I can think of precedents for spaces like that which have gates on them and I can think of precedence of spaces that don't have gates on them, they both work in an interesting way but they have a again a different social logic, and it will end up being different from how I originally envisioned it and to be frank I was very annoyed about it. We've had battles like that before and won for instance our Donny brook project went quite well, they wanted to put gates on that, that escalated quite high up into that organization, the clients organization, and we won the battle to not have gates but there wasn't somebody with the same vision unfortunately in Neham council, so the gate stayed.

*Interviewer:* That's unfortunate

*Peter Barber:* But I've talked to some people who said, I bet it would be really great in there with the gates because people would be able to leave stuff out you know it'll become more of an extension of peoples homes Exactly, and I was talking to the property developer on site and he was mentioning how, since it's in Stratford, it would actually be more beneficial to have the gates and create more of a sense of community and not attract unwanted activity.

Yeah I think there are different attitudes to this. My attitude is that there is almost never an excuse to have a gated community and that if the gated communities define the beginning of a city, if you think of two different types of cities, one being South African city where its up the draw bridge, its kind of defense against some perceived notion of crime and threat of the city, If we go all the way down that road, we would have lost. The be-nine open humanist city which should be our objective.

*Interviewer:* Was there any opposition from council when you were proposing the scheme for Mc Garth road.

*Peter Barber:* Well the client were the council effectively. When your dealing with. Local authority as a client, it's a very big organization and there are different people within that organization with different views, we were able to do the project because of the client because somebody in the. Council, a woman, who was working on the clients side/side, an architect by training they were inviting us to design an apartment building, they didn't know we were going to come back and say that we are goanna do 40 houses, and when we came back and said that, they said well that sounds interesting, I want to know more about that. I think if we had a less adventurous client they would have gone I don't think we would made that work the houses and they are back to back and they are one room per floor, but she said no I think that sounds really interesting, wouldn't suit everybody you know if you're a grown lady an old man in a wheelchair its obviously not going to work for you but for a whole bunch of people.

Those houses are a lovely alternative to just a normal flat and she saw that, and embraced that idea and really went for it. And without her it probably wouldn't have happened and they would've said wed rather you just do a block of flats, same number of units.

*Interviewer:* So it's obvious that In most of your designs even though the client is the council your true client always seems to be the people of the city?

*Peter Barber:* Its a difficult thing, but one does try to think about the person at the end, and the process is mediated by the person who is the direct client. And with a very good client there can be a creative kind of dialogue about the possibilities of architecture. And not all clients are like that. We had a meeting yesterday with a client who are more conservative, and I don't think we are that radicle actually but we are more experimental and I said to them, we've been going to meetings with them for the last 3 months and not really getting anywhere because I think they have a very different idea of what housing should be like and we've got an idea (of what it should be) And you know I said to her "look are we flogging a dead horse here? Is this ever going to work? You're there were here and I'm really struggling to how we are going to close the gap and maybe we should just acknowledge that we are not the right architects for you and find someone else who would like to do things more."

*Interviewer:* So you would rather have them find someone else then to settle for something that is not in line with your vision?

*Peter Barber:* Well I think rather than arguing months on end about what this project should be, if we can't find common ground then I don't mind, we've got other projects to work on

*Interviewer:* Yeah

*Peter Barber:* It doesn't happen very often usually it's possible to bridge the gap.

As a client you need to be interested in the project not just financially but also ideologically and creatively. And if there is someone just standing there going well I don't like that and I don't like that and take that out, it's not the sort of creative process that will lead to a good conclusion, I don't think.

But with McGrath Road, and with Newnham council, with this woman in particular, it was a great dialogue and she was interested in exploring new idea for housing and the housing crisis that we mentioned.

*Interviewer:* Were there issues within Stratford (and its people) that you were trying to address with McGrath Road?

*Peter Barber:* Um, it's not a Stratford centric project particularly as in general saying what's interesting about the project is saying that can we make houses instead of flats because a significant number of people probably prefer the idea of where they've got a house with a front door on the street and not having to negotiate long corridors of flats, so it's an alternative for people, I wouldn't suit everybody but a general interest that I have, and in that particular site with that particular client, I saw the opportunity to really explore that. And, I wouldn't have suggested it to a less adventurous client. I recognized that there could be someone there who would be interested. In what had been in my sketchbooks for a while. And I suddenly we found the right person to do it with.

*Interviewer:* How long did the planning process take (for Hannibal Road Gardens) and what was the process like getting it past plan-ning ?

*Peter Barber:* It's a very long time ago but I'm not sure it was that difficult. We were boiling in someone's back yard so one of the things we had to do is get the support of people in the adjacent houses you've seen the plan its kind of along thing so we designed a project that gave something to the existing residents, and rather than plonking a block down, we said that our terrace housing would be the fourth side of the square.

*Interviewer:* And (how was the planning process) For McGrath Road?

*Peter Barber:* For planning for Mc Grath road, Mc Grath Road relates to the street, and the planners were in-

trigued and the we had to go to them and explain ourselves and tell them. We know that, yeah, it's back to back housing but it's not single aspect, its dual aspect units. We also had to explain what I said to you, that it wouldn't suit everybody but we think there is a market for these types of houses for people with good knees and strong legs going up and down the stairs

*Interviewer:* Yeah I went up on of the homes actually

*Peter Barber:* Oh you've been inside, that's great!

*Interviewer:* Yeah the property developer, I believe, let me in to have a look around.

*Peter Barber:* So I think they got it (the planners for McGrath road) and we had the clients there with us saying as well that this is a bit of leap of faith but you're going to have to trust us.

We've done projects like this before and it's going to be an interesting one and although it's like nothing you've quite seen before, one of the things I always say to these planners is, we can't do this project without you, you could kill it or you could make it possible for it to happen with your support we could make this quite extraordinary project happen and it kind of gave them a sense of responsibility and it sort of worked that approach.

*Interviewer:* With Hannibal road gardens it was obviously an infill project so were there any issues with the preexisting Stephany green estate?

*Peter Barber:* Yeah well for one, the people who wanted to live in the project were from Stephany green estate already so they were extended families living in overcrowded accommodation living in the existing building, not necessarily those immediate ones, so we weren't bringing people in from elsewhere.

It's not housing for wealthy people its housing for overcrowded council housing. It's a very strong case to be made there and as I said now, the project really tries to tap in to the existing forms of the building and give something in terms of the central garden to the residents as well as the newer ones.

*Interviewer:* So from what your saying, and I may be oversimplifying, but you seem so not have a very difficult time trying to convince planners in getting permission for your schemes?

*Peter Barber:* No its usually relatively easy, and I thinks it's because we usually have good clients, a relatively good reputation and be-cause very often were saying we'd like to do a row of houses rather than a row of flats and the planners are always sit-ting, they have policies that they have to comply with, but there's also a matter of local politics and if they've got local residents

who are feeling relatively comfortable with what's being proposed than the planners are more likely to be supportive, if they think that that local residents are going to be freaking out and baying for their blood because they're allowing something to happen that they don't want then they're much more defensive.

So when we go talk to planners we say look we'd like to see some terraced housing with the street which anyone can walk into, then it's an easier thing for them (the planners) to sell to local people, councils as well, and so we haven't really had an application turned down

*Interviewer:* Oh wow!

*Peter Barber:* Which, You know in quarter of a century or in 30 years of doing this is quite something to be able to say.

*Interviewer:* Wow that's quite interesting because I haven't really heard any architects say that before, personally, because its quite a long process form what I know

*Peter Barber:* I know, it's good. I've never or almost never gone into a meeting trying to present something we don't believe in. It makes life much easier if you sit there with your hand on your heart saying that I really believe this will make this unloved corner of the Brough into a really nice place.

*Interviewer:* In conversation with never brown you were mentioning how there are. Many oppositions that you have to face. Is that then mostly from the government, who don't usually advocate that much for social housing or allocate enough funds for this sector

*Peter Barber:* Yes , I think that's the major issue. It's a bigger issue than design really, they're both important but the bigger issue is that there simply isn't enough money going into creating social housing. You've got over 30000 homeless people in the country at the moment, especially a very wealthy country, people say one of the richest countries in the world. Why have we got that huge number of people, 7000 number of people living on the streets and if you include people living in insecure accommodation that's another 1500 or 1000 in London one of the richest cities the world has ever seen, in the history of this planet. So that is about ideology and its is about inequality and about politicians who aren't trying to address the problem of inequality.

*Interviewer:* So you oppositions are then financial based?

*Peter Barber:* So the Never Brown thing is very interesting because Never Brown had his own challenges working in Camden council under the microscope of / the critical eye of councilors accountable to the population because Camden council is democratic organization. So it came with its own challenges. It nearly finished Neve Brown off

you know, Alexander road was a very tricky project. There was public enquiry about it costing too much. but at least it was done in plain sight. Social housing at that time was policy, it was the post war period, it was absolutely pivotal, especial social policy and was treated as basic infrastrucure. so it was being done with the blessing of the government, when we do it its much more under the radar, we are getting away with it, thats what i say in that talk.

*Interviewer:* Yes and is that why Hannibal road gardens, half of it is sold and the other half is council housing?

*Peter Barber:* Hannibal road is 100 percent social housing.

*Interviewer:* OH, really? Okay and what about McGrath Road.

*Peter Barber:* McGrath Road is a hybrid and is mostly shared ownership. but I mean in Newhams defense, sometimes shared ownership is not affordable and they are trying to avoid but I dont approve of shared ownership because i think it eventually leads to inflated property prices. But, in the case of McGrath Road you still have to be incredibly well off to buy them, but it's not as bad as in other places. But Hannibal road gardens is 100 percent social housing which is very very rare.

*Interviewer:* was reading that it was half sold

*Peter Barber:* I'm pretty sure thats not the case. You know you walk along there and they are all people that have come from very difficult circumstances, very overcrowded accommodating. You know extended families living in a 2 bedroom flat. Parents and children crammed , and you speak to people there, and they've always got grumbles but theres a sense of releaf that they have got out of that environment and into this amazing place.

*Interviewer:* I was reading in project Interrupted I was reading about how you explore housing typologies that are under explored in the UK. But then in 100 mile city proposal you are porpoising a lot of street based housing , and not housing typologies that are different to street based. But in you smaller projects you do explore different typologies and you mention how you recognize that people do like to have this variety and option of choice.

*Peter Barber:* Well 100 mile city was done, i mean it took ages to make that model, and those houses are somehow very similar to McGrath road, they are all very thin houses with roof terraces so they are back to back housing so its not conventional terraced housing, and so we had this exhibition in the design museum it

was very cleverly curated by the museum, which took each different house typology as a different subject, so you had courtyard housing, back to back units, mansion blocks, and so they were all relating back to a pre-modern housing typology, so its right to say that is how we kind of think about architecture. And we are not sort of using them for the sake of it, we use them so we can house at a higher density which are not blocks of flats generally. And so its about trying to maintaining a street as the basic street. Usually when you have apartment blocks they will sit behind fences and they kill the street. And even when we are doing the Maison block we are thinking of the street. Even when you are walking about baker street, they are massive blocks but they make the street, their entrances are very clearly defined, they have features that make them feel civic and make it feel like city and the street is very import. You look at modernist blocks, that kind of street is not there. Garages going outside. Even when we do taller mansion blocks, we try to look after the street.

*Interviewer:* I see. Side note, the reason why I am interested in this is because I used to live in the middle east in a housing complex. So where I grew up, compared to my friends was very different. in a safe "city like environment" in a city that is not very communal i would say

*Peter Barber:* Oh really, okay, where about is that?

*Interviewer:* in Saudi Arabia, Riyadh

*Peter Barber:* Oh okay interesting

*Interviewer:* so the complex was somewhat of its own city for me. But when i came here, I'm now living in a tower block. And i can feel the loss of community

*Peter Barber:* Ha Ha Ha, interesting. You know i lived in Dammam a year. I did a house in Dammam see if you can look at that. its a house in an old suburb of Dammam and its a courtyard house, Ambar, for a Saudi family. Its about gender segregation within a house and it explored female and males relationships. Poses the question about those relationships

*Peter Barber:* Are you from Saudi or have you been living there

*Interviewer:* Well, I'm Pakistani but have lived in Saudi Arabia my whole life.

*Peter Barber:* Interesting

*Interviewer:* One last thing regarding the residents of the estates, you say that residents bring life to your projects like the incident of the doors in Donny brooks. Has there ever been a time when the residents inhabited the building different to what you intended?

*Peter Barber:* Well yes, for the windows i didn't intend so i was very delighted when that happened. Well what I've learned is that there inst a cause and relationship with the way that people inhabit the architecture. And people talk about building communities through architecture. And the thing is you cant build communities. Communities build themselves. People decide to come together. But the architecture can sometimes have a subtle influence over the way they do this and make relationships possible. Sometimes you go back and you say thats exactly how i thought it would happen and sometimes it doest but I've learn to be more relaxed about what happens, Id rather give people the opportunity to have the choice.

*Interviewer:* Has this happened in Hannible road gardens at all?

*Peter Barber:* Oh, yes have you seen the paving of the garden, that looks absolutely awful doesn't it. But it was the residents who needed that facility so they could have easier access and better circulation so it was a decision we had decided was not a huge issue i would say.

## 1.2: Interview with Alice; Employee of Peter Barber Architects

Transcript

Interviewee: Alice; Employee of Peter Barber

Interviewer: Hafsa Saad Syed

On the Phone on January 4 2020

*Interviewer:* Was Peter Barber made aware by Ne-wham council that it would be a shared equity scheme and not completely council housing?

*Alice:* Yeah, I think we knew early on but it's still council housing since its publicly procured. with the London borough but the tenure can vary depending on what the political makeup is of the council and depending on their need to cross subsidise. We are never really a part of that conversation, we cant really do anything to interject in that process but the design wouldn't differ no matter what the tenure is really it doesn't really change how we would design. I think actually they have now changed that from shared equity to some of it being rented i think but i am not entirely sure, I would have to ask Petr about that on Monday

Yes It all seems a bit complicated and changing. And do you know when McGrath road was meant to open? Has there been a delay?

Again I don't really know but i think its because they (the council) were working out what tenure to use so thats why there was a bit of a delay really from the councils side, they were just trying to work put which type to use. Which one should be shared equity and which one should be kept as rented.

*Interviewer:* In Peters earlier projects he usually uses white render in terms of materiality such as Donny Brookes quarter but recently/in the recent projects most of the material is very contextual so does it have anything to do with planning being easier or is being contextual it something that Peter in general encourages?

*Alice:* It's a combination of taking reference from Context and maintenance. White render is really hard to maintain it requires doing painting and perhaps more maintenance, I believe to render you have to repaint every year making budgeting quiet difficult.

*Interviewer:* Peter Barber Architects seems to have a good reputation with planners. Are there any specific ways he makes the planning process easier for him?

*Alice:* It's really just listening to the planners and understanding what their concerns are and what trying to address and often well take them to interesting projects so they're a bit more reassured about what we are doing. I think its about making it is creative and positive rather than dodging them and not address them

## 2.1: Interview with Hannible Road Garden Mother

Transcript

Interviewee: Bangladeshi Mother living in Hannibal Road Gardens

Interviewer: Hafsa Saad Syed

In Stephany Green Esate on Nov 3 2019

Interviewee: What impact has th Garden had on your daily Routines compared to before it was here?

*Mother:* Yes ofcourse, course we love the garden. They all (my kids) play in it all the time. I don't let them go out when its like this (rainy weather ) but when it is good outside, they are playing here all the time and I am with my friends here every weekend.

*Interviewee:* Would you say your friends and family are much happier living in this bigger house then when they we reliving is the apartments

*Mother:* Ofcourse, I like my big living room. Everyone likes it more here. Its more nice

*Interviewee:* Are all your neighbors, in these houses (Hannible road garden terrace homes) Bangladeshi

Yeah I think so

Interviewee: I'm Pakistani so I know very well that in asian culture we all love to hang out with everyones families and the Pakistani or Bangalsdeshi community is always really close. Is it the same here.

*Mother:* Yes, If there are Bangladeshi people of course we should all know each other. I want to know who my children are playing with. How is there mom like

## 1.2: Interview with McGrath Road Property Developer

Transcript

Interviewee: Asit Thakrar; McGrath Road Property Developer;

Interviewer: Hafsa Saad Syed

McGrath Road, Stratford on Oct 16 2019

*Interviewer:* Who are the buyers you are prioritizing for accepting?

*Property Developer:* So first we are helping people with a loan, and that would be people who in desperate kind of housing need, temporary accommodation looking for somewhere to live, especially families. and others are purchasing like they again they can buy anything from like a 30 percent share value going up to 70 percent so the bit that they don't buy the council will give them a loan.

*Interviewer:* Are there any specific requirements the approved people should have.

*Property Developer:* I mean of course you have to make sure they can afford to pay and keep up with renting the house. So that would mean families or even couples predicted to have more stable incomes, if not now then defiantly down the line.

*Interviewer:* Is there any preference in terms of the three bedroom and the two bedrooms. Because i know the ones opening into the courtyard have a different value

*Property Developer:* I mean yeah people would prefer to be inside the courtyard you know. Its all new, when your looking inside a courtyard its all new whereas the street facing ones your looking out to existing properties. But really a big preference people just have different needs really. A young couple would buy a two bed and a single person would buy the two bed where with on the 3 you might have a young family.

*Interviewer:* In terms of the other houses in Stratford do you think these are going be much safer? Do you think the gates will stay closed after opening the estate

*Property Developer:* Yeah

*Interviewer:* So in a way it is a more private housing

*Property Developer:* yeah I mean this one faces the road so you cant avoid that but for anyone moving into the courtyard, they are very open.

I think there are some two bedrooms that open into the courtyard

Yeah sure, I mean I couldn't tell you can take a brochure if you like. It shows the layout and all the floor plans in there

*Interviewer:* So the two bed facing into courtyard would be more expensive right

*Property Developer:* It would be yeah

*Interviewer:* Do you think the Stratford area is an unsafe area for people to move to?

*Property Developer:* I mean yeah, the area inst the best but its improving people who live here want to live here. Most people want to live locally so generically when people buy they don't move too far from where they've grown up from what they know.

## 1.2: Interview with McGrath Road Security Guard

Transcript

Interviewee: McGrath Road Security Guard;

Interviewer: Hafsa Saad Syed

McGrath Road, Stratford on Oct16 2019

*Interviewer:* Hello, I was just wondering, is the estate not opened yet?

*Security Guard:* No its not open yet

*Interviewer:* I noticed that there are gates at the entrances . Is that for now or will they remain there after it opens?

Sweetheart, this is Stratford I can tell you that is not happening

# McGrath Road E15

A collection of beautifully designed 2 and 3 bedroom homes, available to purchase on the Newham NewShare scheme



Actual photo of McGrath Road development

Newham London

\*Newham Council's shared equity scheme

SITESALES  
PROPERTY GROUP

## McGrath Road E15

In the heart of London E15, within fifteen minutes of the centre of the city, this brand new development offers an exciting opportunity to get onto the property ladder.

Outside, the bold and imaginative architecture makes a clear design statement. Large windows allow ample light into each apartment and the sweeping curves and distinctive roofline create a confident, contemporary feel.

The houses themselves feel spacious and inviting. Walk into the kitchen and you'll notice the generous workspaces and streamlined style, with dishwasher and washing machine neatly tucked away. The bathroom features modern units, tiling and a powerful shower. Every home has a private outside space.



Actual show home photography

## Location and travel times

It is only 0.4 miles\* walk from your front door in McGrath Road to Maryland Station. From here you can reach Stratford in under five minutes\* and Liverpool Street Station, in the heart of the financial district, in under fifteen minutes\*.

Stratford offers a huge range of handy amenities, with its huge Westfield shopping centre and all the sports facilities built for the 2012 games. You can now swim in the same stunning pool where records were broken and do your workout in the famous copper box. Even closer to home, the Atherton Leisure Centre offers a pool, gym and other excellent facilities within walking distance of your home. There's also a Tesco Express, Sainsbury's local, other shops and a school within easy reach.

Maryland Station will soon become part of the new Crossrail service. You'll be able to climb aboard and enjoy superfast access to Canary Wharf, The West End, Heathrow Airport and all the way out to the towns of the Thames valley!

With so much on your doorstep, and such great connections to the rest of London, **this is the perfect location to put down roots.** There are also ample bus services to all parts of town and, when you want to travel further afield, London City, Heathrow and Stansted airports are all easy to get to.

### Travel times\* from Maryland Station

London Liverpool Street	15 mins
Canary Wharf	22 mins
London Bridge	25 mins
Oxford Circus (West End)	26 mins
Waterloo (South Bank)	28 mins
Covent Garden	31 mins
Piccadilly Circus	32 mins

### Travel times\* from Stratford Station

London Liverpool Street	8 mins
Canary Wharf	9 mins
London Bridge	19 mins
Oxford Circus (West End)	19 mins
Waterloo (South Bank)	21 mins
King's Cross St Pancras International	25 mins
Covent Garden	25 mins
Piccadilly Circus	26 mins
Victoria	27 mins
Paddington	31 mins

\*Source: www.tfl.gov.uk \*Subject to completion



Stratford Station



Westfield Stratford

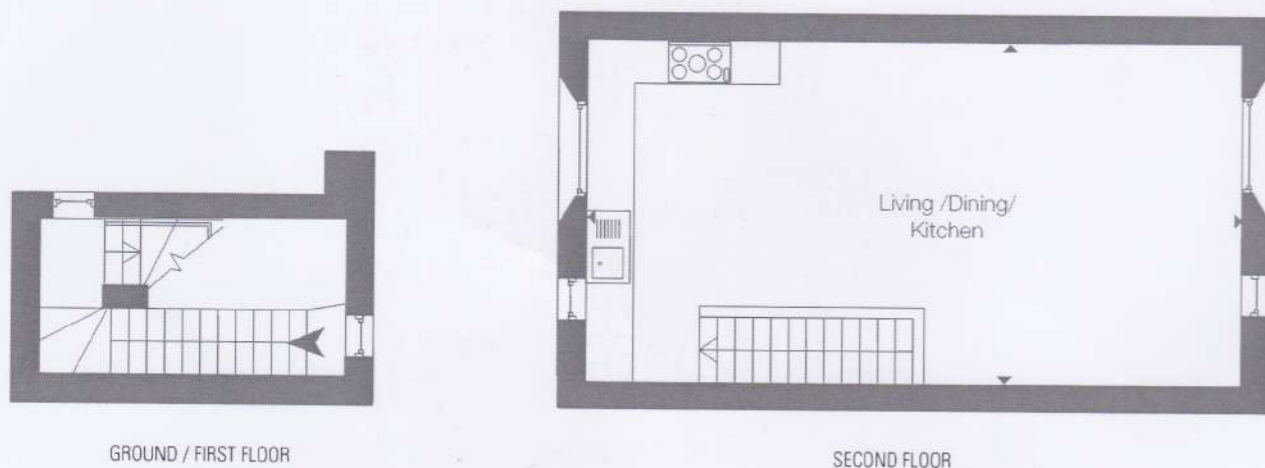
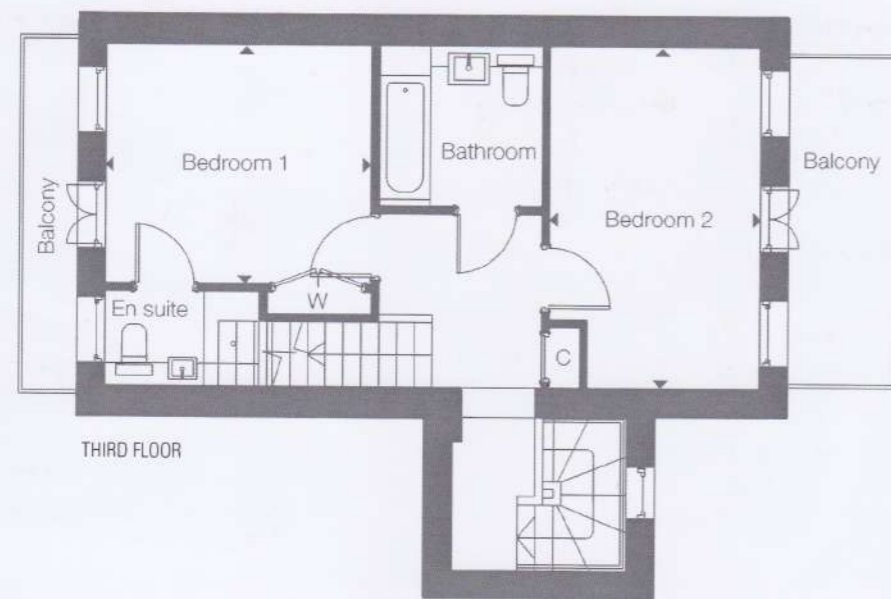


Queen Elizabeth Park

## TWO BEDROOM – PLOT 26

Total Area 85 sq.m. / 915 sq.ft.

	Metric	Imperial
Living/Dining/Kitchen	9.0m x 4.7m	29'6" x 15'5"
Bedroom 1	3.7m x 3.2m	12'2" x 10'6"
Bedroom 2	4.7m x 2.9m	15'5" x 9'6"

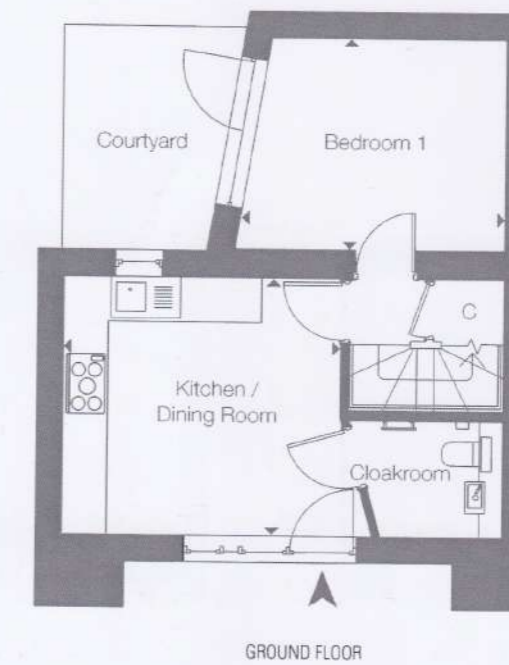
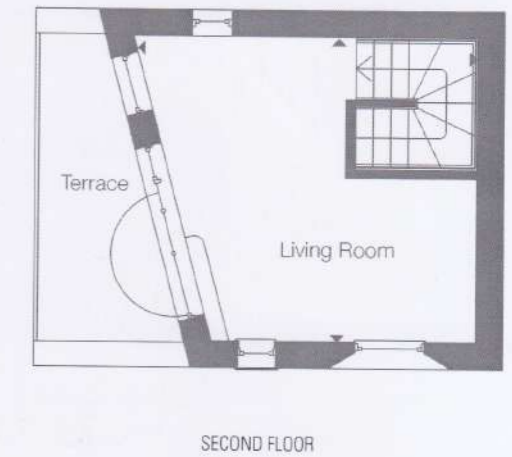
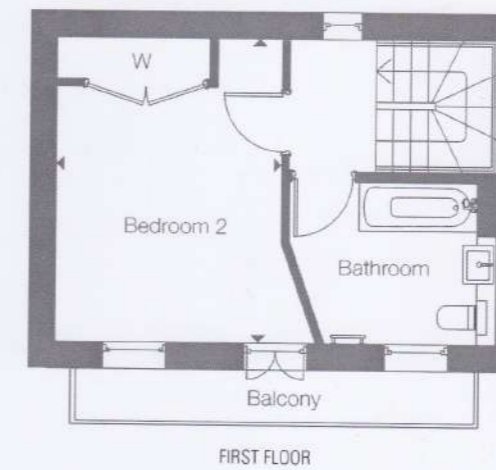


KEY  
C - Cupboard  
W - Wardrobe

## TWO BEDROOM – PLOTS 18, 19, 20, 21 & 22

Total Area 86 sq.m. / 925 sq.ft.

	Metric	Imperial
Living Room	5.0m x 4.4m	16'5" x 14'5"
Kitchen/Dining	4.1m x 3.7m	13'5" x 12'2"
Bedroom 1	3.9m x 3.0m	12'10" x 9'10"
Bedroom 2	3.4m x 3.2m	11'2" x 10'6"



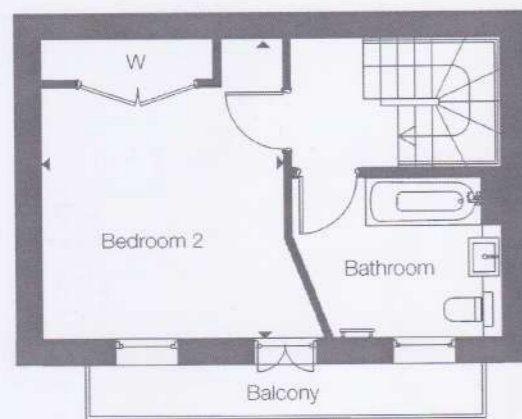
Floor plans are not to scale and are indicative only. Location of windows, doors, kitchen units and appliances may differ. Doors may swing in the opposite direction to that shown on selected apartments. Dimensions, which are taken from the indicated points of measurement, are for guidance only and are not intended to be used to calculate space for items of furniture. Total areas are provided as gross internal areas and are subject to variance. Please speak to our Sales Consultant for further information.



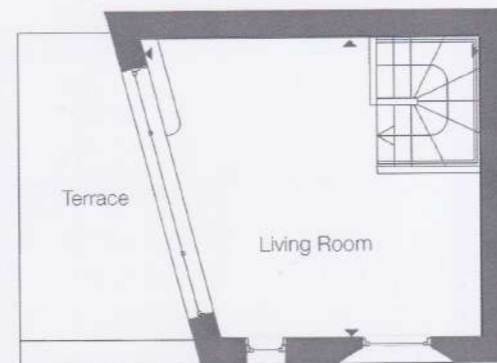
## TWO BEDROOM – PLOTS 4, 6, 8, 10 & 12

Total Area 96 sq.m. / 1033 sq.ft.

	Metric	Imperial
Living Room	5.0m x 4.4m	16'5" x 14'5"
Kitchen/Dining	4.4m x 3.7m	14'5" x 12'2"
Bedroom 1	3.8m x 3.7m	12'6" x 12'2"
Bedroom 2	4.4m x 3.5m	14'5" x 11'6"



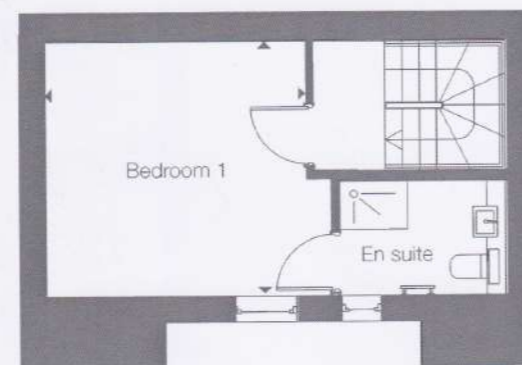
SECOND FLOOR



THIRD FLOOR



GROUND FLOOR



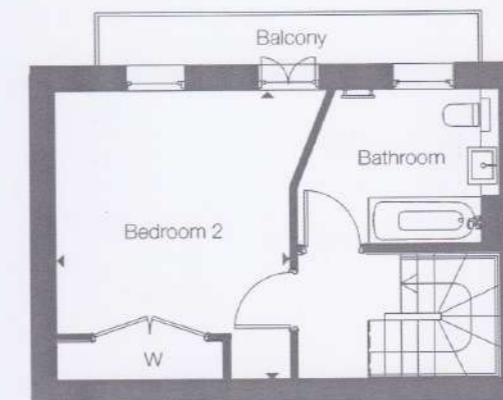
FIRST FLOOR

KEY  
C - Cupboard  
W - Wardrobe

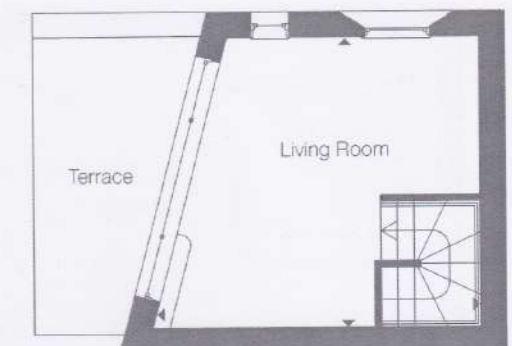
## TWO BEDROOM – PLOTS 5, 7, 9, & 11

Total Area 96 sq.m. / 1033 sq.ft.

	Metric	Imperial
Living Room	5.0m x 4.4m	16'5" x 14'5"
Kitchen/Dining	4.4m x 3.7m	14'5" x 12'2"
Bedroom 1	3.8m x 3.7m	12'6" x 12'2"
Bedroom 2	4.4m x 3.5m	14'5" x 11'6"



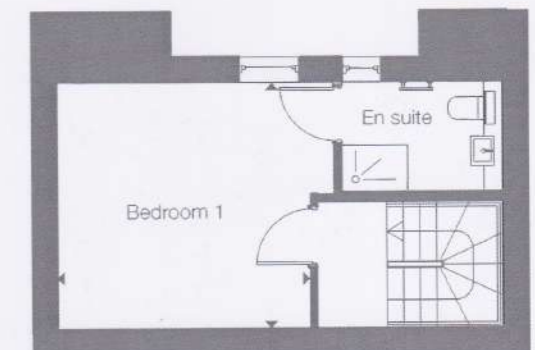
SECOND FLOOR



THIRD FLOOR



GROUND FLOOR



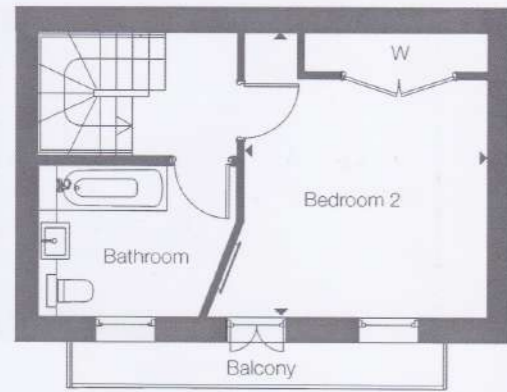
FIRST FLOOR

Floor plans are not to scale and are indicative only. Location of windows, doors, kitchen units and appliances may differ. Doors may swing in the opposite direction to that shown on selected apartments. Dimensions, which are taken from the indicated points of measurement, are for guidance only and are not intended to be used to calculate space for items of furniture. Total areas are provided as gross internal areas and are subject to variance. Please speak to our Sales Consultant for further information.

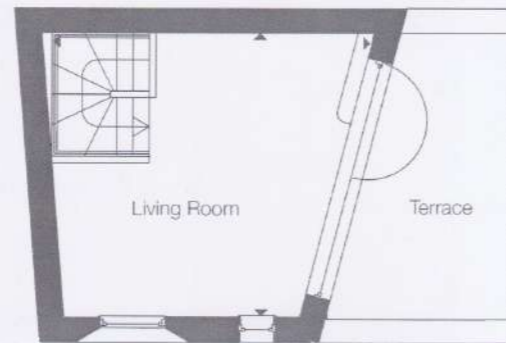
## TWO BEDROOM – PLOT 24

Total Area 96 sq.m. / 1033 sq.ft.

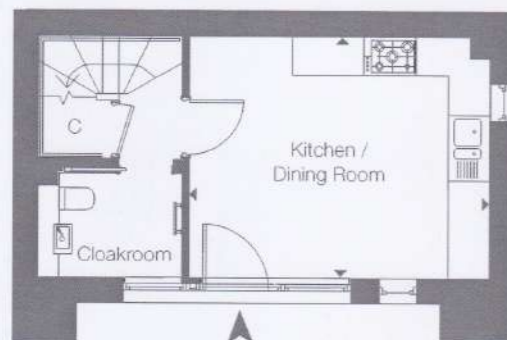
	Metric	Imperial
Living Room	5.0m x 4.4m	16'5" x 14'5"
Kitchen/Dining	4.4m x 3.7m	14'5" x 12'2"
Bedroom 1	3.8m x 3.7m	12'6" x 12'2"
Bedroom 2	4.4m x 3.5m	14'5" x 11'6"



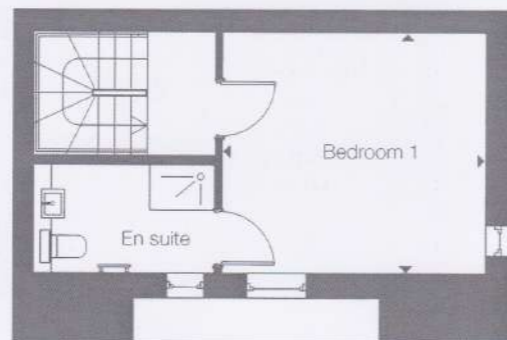
SECOND FLOOR



THIRD FLOOR



GROUND FLOOR



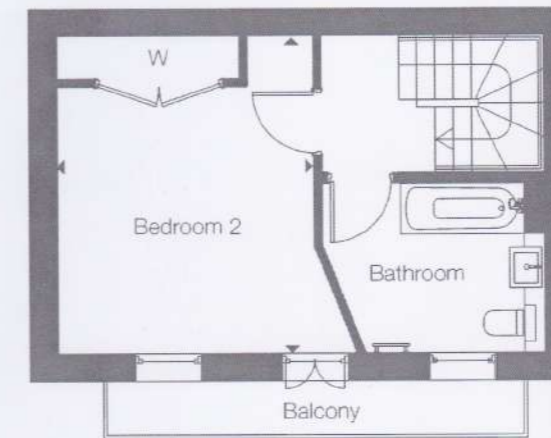
FIRST FLOOR

KEY  
C - Cupboard  
W - Wardrobe

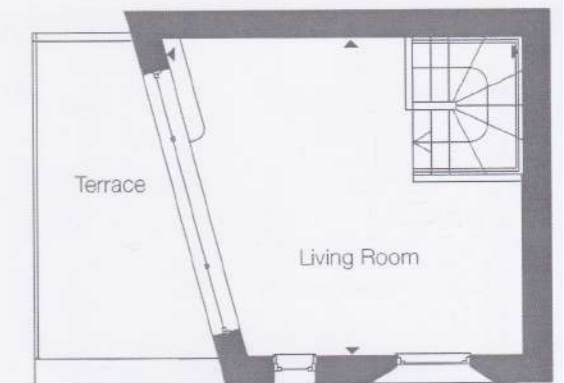
## TWO BEDROOM – PLOT 1

Total Area 99 sq.m. / 1065 sq.ft.

	Metric	Imperial
Living Room	5.0m x 4.4m	16'5" x 14'5"
Kitchen/Dining	4.4m x 3.7m	14'5" x 12'2"
Bedroom 1	3.8m x 3.7m	12'6" x 12'2"
Bedroom 2	4.4m x 3.5m	14'5" x 11'6"



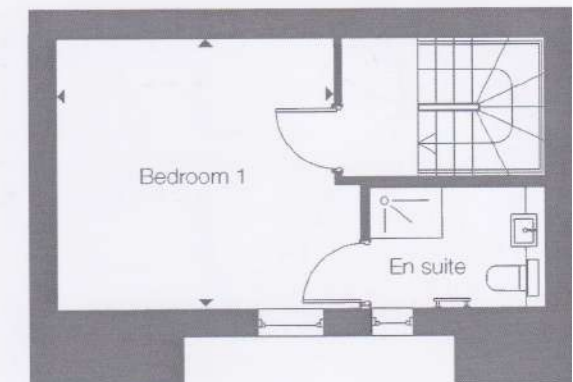
SECOND FLOOR



THIRD FLOOR



GROUND FLOOR



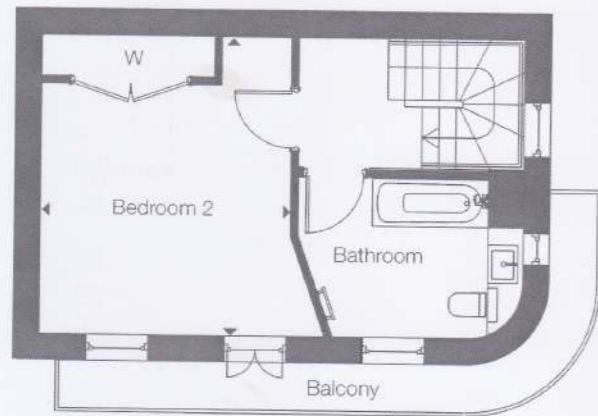
FIRST FLOOR

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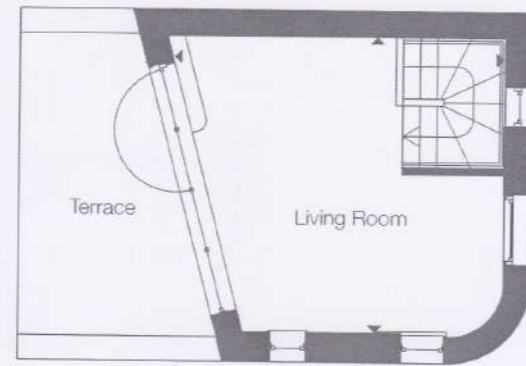
## TWO BEDROOM – PLOT 2

Total Area 104 sq.m. / 1119 sq.ft.

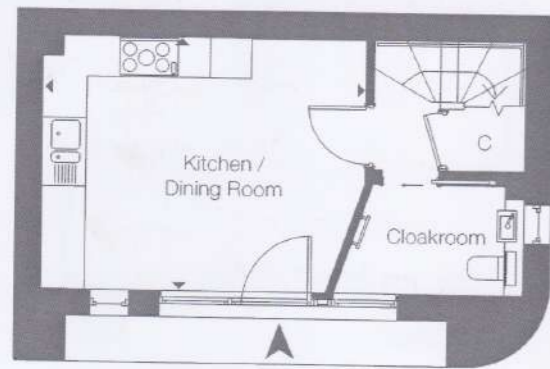
	Metric	Imperial
Living Room	5.0m x 4.4m	16'5" x 14'5"
Kitchen/Dining	4.8m x 3.7m	15'9" x 12'2"
Bedroom 1	4.2m x 3.7m	13'9" x 12'2"
Bedroom 2	4.4m x 3.7m	14'5" x 12'2"



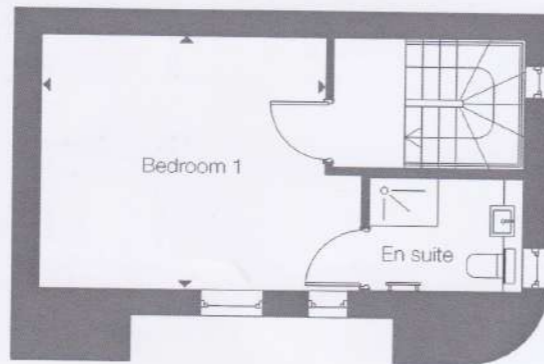
SECOND FLOOR



THIRD FLOOR



GROUND FLOOR



FIRST FLOOR

KEY  
C - Cupboard  
W - Wardrobe

