

Central Hill Estate Listing Application



View down Plane Tree Walk towards Boiler House, Central Hill Estate ©ASH

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Introduction

- *Threat.*
Central Hill Estate is set to be demolished, as planning permission was fast-tracked during COVID19, starting with the demolition of Rosemary Stjernstedt's Truslove House. Currently live-in guardians occupy the building, with hoarding surrounding the structure; meaning that demolition and the cutting down of mature trees is imminent. Several of Stjernstedt's designs are under threat, including her work on the Alexandra Walk, where hard landscaping is being destroyed.
- *Newfound recognition of the architect.*
Designed by the pioneering architect Rosemary Stjernstedtⁱ, working with Ted Hollamby's team on one of the highest points in London, Stjernstedt is now gaining recognition as one of the most important post-war British architects championed by Kate Macintosh and Past RIBA president, Angela Brady.
- *Stjernstedt as a trailblazer.*
During her career, Rosemary Stjernstedt broke through gender stereotypes and barriers that still exist today. This is one of the first projects led by a female architect both as group leader, designer and planner. The relevance of the demolition of Truslove House, the Nurses Hostel, is compounded by the fact that it is a building personally detailed by Stjernstedt .
- *Engineering and Technological Interest.*
Central Hill was Ted Hollamby's favourite Estate, a project that fully incorporated his ethos of 'Architecture as a Social Art'ⁱⁱ . Due to its complexity, Hollamby brought in a world-leading technical expert in Ted Happold, Head of Structures at Arup, who worked on landmarks such as the Centre Pompidou and the Sydney Opera House. He later founded Buro Happold, another award-winning engineering consultancy.
- *Retrofirst.*
The community of Central Hill is currently developing a plan that incorporates Historic England's new report on retrofitting and refurbishing historic buildings in response to the Climate Emergency.ⁱⁱⁱ

I. HISTORIC INTEREST



1. Rosemary Stjernstedt LCC Group Leader for Alton East, Roehampton

A) Rosemary Stjernstedt

- New studies by writers, academics and institutions are reappraising Stjernstedt's work through the lens of representation, intersectionality and heritage.
- Following her studies at the Birmingham School of Arts, where she was one of the only few female students^{iiiiiv}, Stjernstedt worked for Robert Atkinson. One of the many projects she detailed was the Barber Institute for Fine Arts in Birmingham, listed Grade I.
- Stjernstedt completed her Master's degree in Planning at the Architectural Association in 1938. During her studies, she visited Scandinavia where local approaches to social housing and urban planning, convinced her to relocate to here to work.
- Settling in Sweden, Stjernstedt worked for Gothenburg City Council, as well as several private practices, designing social housing, layouts and playgrounds.
- Returning to the U.K. after World War II, she worked for the London County Council Housing Division. At the time of her return, the architecture profession's female representation was approximately 4% (according to Kate Macintosh). As a result, when appointed to the Alton Estate scheme, Stjernstedt became the first LCC female design team leader. Her Point Blocks at Alton East were subsequently listed Grade II*.
- Stjernstedt's status as one of the first women to head a design team gives her work intrinsic value, particularly for her most notable projects: Alton East and Central Hill.
- The *Architectural Review* article, '*Unfair dismissal: the legacy of women architects working for London councils*' (12th March 2018), challenges the listing report's claim that the estate isn't 'pioneering'. It notes how Neave Brown, working at a similar time to Stjernstedt on social housing projects, had "all of his work in the U.K. being listed by 2014". Stjernstedt is only represented on the list by Alton East Estate. Listing more of her buildings would help to

establish her status as a major post-war British architect and protect her work.^{iv} Overall, approximately 0.015% of listed buildings were designed by women.

B) Increasing national / international recognition of Rosemary Stjernstedt's work

- In the last five years, Stjernstedt's designs at the LCC and Lambeth Architects Department, including Central Hill, have garnered praise and national recognition.
- Kate Macintosh, the recent Jane Drew Award prize winner, praises Stjernstedt as role model for generations of architects to come.^v Other high profile architects and planners, like Past RIBA president Angela Brady, have also written letters of support.^{vi}
- Architectural critic Rowan Moore has written extensively on Stjernstedt's legacy. He states in *The Observer*, in a piece dated 31st January 2016:

"It is the work of Rosemary Stjernstedt, a woman who fought a lifelong and quietly courageous battle against discrimination – from being denied access to carpentry classes at college to getting paid half as much as men for doing the same job, to exclusion from social events in some of the offices where she worked. Stjernstedt worked for the architects' department of the London borough of Lambeth, whose head, Ted Hollamby, oversaw a series of remarkable housing projects. Hollamby, for whom architecture was "a social art", and his team learned from the failings of some earlier housing estates, such as their monolithic and impersonal nature, and introduced intimacy and variety, while still maintaining modernist virtues such as good daylighting and intelligent planning."^{vii}

- Moore reiterates this in his book, *"Slow Burn City"* published 2017, in a chapter headed "At Home in London", where he writes:

"she drapes 470, well-designed homes over the steep slopes of what was once a fragment of the Great North Wood, creating a wonderful range of courts and gardens, mature trees interspersed with buildings, terraces turned to face magnificent views and extensive car-free areas where children play and neighbours meet."^{viii}

- In *"The Alternative Guide to the London Boroughs"* edited by Owen Hatherley, 2020, the page on Central Hill by Jason Okundaye. notes that:

"Central Hill is the perfect modernist suburb, the finest of its kind south of the river. Only the poor upkeep and the deciduous trees tell you that this is not in some affluent Swiss modernist hill village."^{ix}

- John Boughton echoes Moore, in *Municipal Dreams: The Rise and Fall of Council Housing* 2019, stating that:

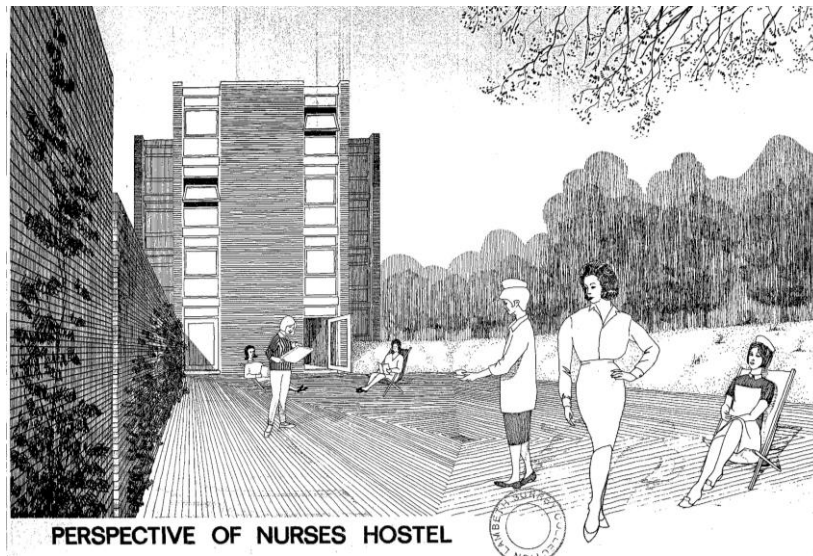
"Stjernstedt created parallel, stepped rows of three-and four-storey brick-built terraces that beautifully exploited the estate's terrain and vistas. Without any now-decried monumentalism, Central Hill, in the words of Rowan Moore, 'drapes itself over its topography, creating both moments of drama and quiet enclaves in the spaces between its buildings' and provides 374 homes with both privacy and a sense of wider belonging".^x

- Phineas Harper, the Director of Open House London, recently described Central Hill in his *Guardian* article on 20th March 2021 as:

“one of Britain’s few modern masterpieces designed by a female architect”^{xi}

- Residents of Central Hill Estate have been part of Open House London for over five years making it one of Lambeth’s most popular events with visitors enamoured by the space created by Stjernstedt inside the terraced homes, incorporating views over London with its setting within the landscape. Recently it has been one of the highlights in the Open City guided cycling tours of South London, alongside Macintosh Court, Dunbar Street, Dunelm Grove, Woodvale Estate, Lammas Green and Dawson Heights. ^{xii}
- Another example of her growing status can be seen in the RIBA’s recent publication of *The Pioneers: Women in Architecture* - four lectures by the “leading female architects of the 20th century”: Jane Drew, Elaine Denby, Patricia Tindale and Rosemary Stjernstedt ^{xii}. This recording sheds new light on Stjernstedt’s work and legacy. ^{xiii}
- Stjernstedt’s connection with Scandinavian modernism and its influence on Alton East and Central Hill also deserves more recognition. Most notably, Stjernstedt travelled with Sir Ralph Erskine to Sweden – with Erskine giving Stjernstedt several private commissions. Lynne Dixon, who knew Stjernstedt personally, commented that Erskine’s approach to locality is celebrated yet it has never been recognised in Stjernstedt’s work at Central Hill for example. ^{xiv xv}
- The housing layouts and playgrounds designed during her time in Gothenburg could also provide evidence to showcase why Stjernstedt’s work stood out the LCC and in the U.K more broadly – in opposition to the approach to housing and planning used by regional planning authorities like Cambridge. Together with Swedish researchers, residents and activists are currently trying to locate these documents and discover the influence of her time in Sweden on her architecture in UK.
- Her contribution to the built environment has further been recognised by *Part W, Women in Architecture, Women in Landscape Design* ^{xvi}

C) Truslove House – Detailed by Stjernstedt for Female Workers



2. Central Hill Brochure. T Simpson 1967

- The site where Truslove House is located belonged to the Norwood District Hospital and served as accommodation for the Nurses and Matrons working in the hospital site on Hermitage Road, opposing Central Hill.
- The original Emmeline House was on lease to the hospital to provide accommodation for nurses and war heroes stationed in the hospital for both World Wars, with a covenant that the site would only be used for accommodation for nurses only.
- Frank Truslove, the Chair of the Hospital Board, fund-raised incessantly for over twenty years to fund the construction of a new modern Nurses Hostel for his staff, thus why his name was given to the building.^{xvii} An article looking into Truslove House's place within NHS history is being written by Nursing Times and the Norwood Society.^{xviii}
- The lease to the site was given to Lambeth Council on the condition that a Nurses Hostel would be built in this location.
- Rosemary Stjernstedt personally took on the design of Truslove House (1986 RIBA Talk). Her consultation with the Matrons and Nurses led to a decision to include shared facilities such as kitchens, washing facilities and a lounge area with garden access within the scheme. The Matron had her own facilities on the third floor with a kitchen and lounge area.
- Stjernstedt was able to design a scheme that separated the bathroom and washing areas with the bedrooms so that nurses returning from various shifts would not disturb each other – maximising privacy for hospital staff after long shifts.
- Truslove House is therefore a rare example of accommodation specifically designed for women, matrons and nurses, by a prominent female architect. Professor Jane Rendell and Professor Barbara Penner have discussed her work and have agreed that Stjernstedt needs to be recognised as one of the most important British architects representing women shaping the city.^{xix}

II. ARCHITECTURAL INTEREST

A) Branch Hill and Central Hill: Discrepancies in Historic England assessments

- While the Historic England advice report, Case No 1431543, of 13th October 2016, acknowledges the similarities between Central Hill (phase 1) and Branch Hill, listed Grade II in 2010, there are some clear inconsistencies between the two HE reports. These inconsistencies pertain to the reports' assessments of very similar characteristics on the two estates, and therefore compromise the decision to not list Central Hill.

1. Layout, Crime and Surveillance

- In the consultation for Central Hill, KM Heritage Consultants, on behalf of Lambeth Council, states that: "the success, or otherwise, of the scheme as a piece of architectural design: noting aspects of the layout which create potential for crime or enhance the fear of crime, and raising issues regarding the accessibility and permeability of the scheme in the way in which houses and flats are accessed, how the buildings relate to one another, and how gradient of the site is managed."
- In the discussion section for this report, Historic England gives legitimacy to this argument by insisting on the lack of "passive surveillance" on the estate. However, KM Heritage's statement is made without supporting evidence and may be heavily influenced by the spurious "research" of Alice Coleman. Scapegoating housing estates for the crime on these estates ignores the socio-economic factors which explain criminality - such as poverty, unemployment and inequality.
- More specifically, the Central Hill report considers that: "The front doors of the houses in the 'Ways' are screened by walled yards, so to the north the narrow path which separates each block is not surveyed. To the south however, the path is overlooked by the lower balconies of the next block; the close proximity of the passer-by making these valuable private outdoor spaces less private. The benefits of this overlooking would be best felt at night, a time when the balconies are less likely to be in use. Further to this, as the end wall of each block is blind, there is reduced scope for passive surveillance of adjacent paths, where it might be well valued." (p.4)
- On the other hand, the Branch Hill report admits that "There is very little casual supervision of the "latitudinal passageways" as windows are either at high or low level." However, this lack of supervision rightfully did not affect the report's final recommendation.
- Whilst Alice Coleman's philosophy of design disadvantage has its supporters, it is critical to look at the empirical evidence. In fact, a local resident has commented that "the Safer Neighbourhood Team (SNT) actually kept statistics on all the crime in Gipsy Hill and found less or the same amount of crime on the estate than in surrounding areas." One of the police constables at the nearby police station added that they did not consider the estate a hotspot, which is how the SNT categorises an area they would need to police more often.



3. Central Hill, lateral routes visible from housing above.
@ Marsha Nsiah



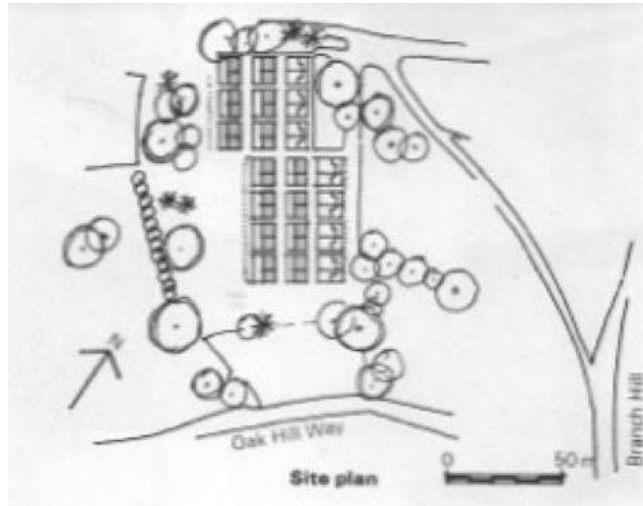
4. Branch Hill lateral routes, windows onto alleyways either at high or low level. © Kate Macintosh

2. Architectural Interest

- Throughout the report, claims are made regarding Central Hill's lack of originality. The assertion that Central Hill "is not believed to have been influential" (p.4) is contradicted by the fact that Central Hill was completed 3 years before Branch Hill (1975 and 1978 respectively). This indicates that Benson & Forsyth were aware of the precedent in Lambeth. Central Hill also predates the Alexandra Road Estate in Camden.
- Moreover, the Central Hill report adds that "the layout of phase I is not particularly innovative. The blocks are arranged in a linear fashion and their blank end walls underline the sense of repetition." However, Branch Hill's assessment depicts these same characteristics as virtue. "The whole estate is ordered by the strict geometry of the orthogonal plan, which admits little variety of perspective."



5. Central Hill model Eric de Mare @Lambeth Archive Minet Library



6. Branch Hill site plan

- Within the Central Hill assessment itself, certain assertions seem to be contradictory. For instance, the CH report states the “blocks are repetitious” and the estate “lacks sophistication and aesthetic variety”(p.5). However on the previous page, the report lauds that “Phase II of Central Hill has a quite different character – much more introspective and domestic. It reflects the direction in which Lambeth housing headed in the 1970s – towards more traditional materials and building forms.” There seems to be an inconsistency where the report criticises the estate’s “lack of variety”, before discussing features which give it variety. It must also be noted that there are six different dwelling types on Central Hill, compared with three for Branch Hill.



6. Central Hill Phase 2 @ Kate Macintosh



7. Branch Hill repetitious house types @ Kate Macintosh

- In addition, the Central Hill assessment also notes that the ‘Prospect’ and ‘Way’ blocks are “repetitious, with visual richness coming principally from their placement on a sloped, undulating, site, and the areas of landscaping which soften their geometric forms. In comparison with listed estates, such as those by Camden, there is not the formal complexity, or quality of detail within the architecture, which marks those out as exemplars.” (p.4) On the other hand, within the Branch Hill report, architect Jos Boys is quoted in The Architect saying that “the grid plan lacked variety and the latitudinal passageways were bleak; the estate ignored its surroundings; some elements of the plans within the houses were unhelpful, for example each bedroom courtyard was too far away from the living areas for infants to play there without parental supervision and too small to be useful.”



8. Central Hill, children's play, casually supervised.
@ Kate Macintosh



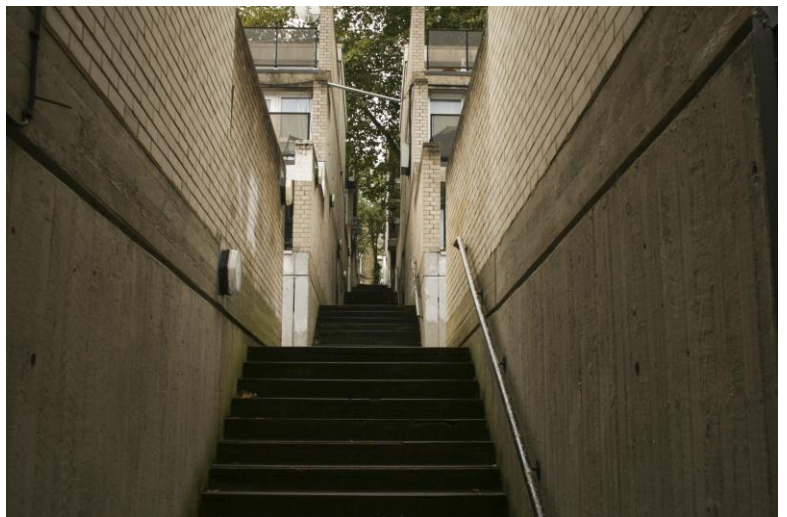
9. Branch Hill, children's play accessed over bridge.
@ Kate Macintosh

3. Slopes

- In Hill Housing, a comparative study, by Derek Abbott & Kimball Pollit, Granada 1980, the authors write of Branch Hill: "One criticism that must be made is that bearing in mind the relatively moderate slope over the site, external steps seem very steep and difficult to negotiate by the elderly and infirm. Also the wide ramps are somewhat dangerous particularly in icy and freezing weather." ^{XIX}
- Whilst Branch Hill sits on a considerably milder slope (1:9) than Central Hill (1:6), struggles with the site geology led to an astronomical increase in construction costs, as well as high rents for residents. At £72,000 per dwelling in 1978, Branch Hill stands as one of the most expensive council housing schemes in the U.K., where Central Hill has always been more affordable due to its impressive geotechnical analysis of the site. ^{XX}



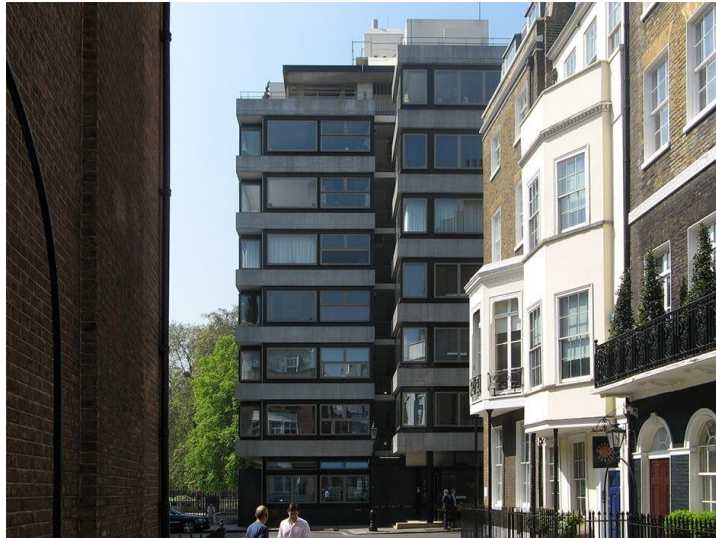
10. Branch Hill, descending route
@ Kate Macintosh



11. Central Hill descending route
@ Marsha Nsiah

4. Pear Tree House

- Pear Tree House (1963 - 1966) is dismissed as “not having “the architectural and planning quality to equal other examples on the List” (p. 6). However, Pear Tree House does have some affinity with Denys Lasdun’s 26 St James’s Place luxury flats (1959 – 1960) as viewed down the narrow street in the photo below. This building was listed Grade II* in 1998.
- The 2016 assessment also suggested that the design of Pear Tree House ‘may’ have been designed by Hollamby. In an interview with Hollamby, he reveals to Andrew Saint that he did design it himself with another source quoting that he ‘worked nights to sort out it’s details’ on top of his duties at Lambeth.
- Further information about Pear Tree House will be added in a following section.



12. 26 St James Lane Denys Lasdun & Partners



13. Pear Tree House, E. Hollamby. @Lambeth Archives

5. Open Spaces

- Central Hill offers the dramatic contrasting experience of emerging from the narrow access alley ways and cascading ramps, into a generous open piazza, surrounded by trees which can be compared to the stage of a classic amphitheatre, where the dwellings are the tiered seats of the auditorium. No such communal gathering space is available at Branch Hill.



12. Central Hill the focus of the radiating descending routes @ Kate Macintosh



13. Branch Hill , the largest open space in the scheme @ Kate Macintosh

6. Influence of maintenance of assessment

- One striking difference between these two schemes, so similar in many regards, is the state of repair. Maintenance of Central Hill has been close to non-existent for many years; in stark contrast to the immaculate state of Branch Hill, listed II* in 2010. Principle 23 for Selection for Listing (March 2018) states that “the general state of repair and upkeep of a building will not usually be a relevant consideration when deciding whether it meets the test of special architectural or historic interest. The Secretary of State will list a building that has been assessed as meeting the statutory criteria, irrespective of its state of repair.”

- In the 2016 assessment of Central Hill, Lambeth Borough Council and KM Heritage (on behalf of Lambeth Council) both detail the various technical problems the estate faces, such as damp, or staining, both of which are consequences of a lack of upkeep. Could it be that fame and prestige of Benson and Forsyth after winning the competition for the Museum of Scotland in 1996, in contrast to the relative obscurity of Rosemary Stjernstedt and the current condition of Central Hill led to the different final recommendations?

7. Managed Decline

- It must be noted here that the problematic upkeep of Central Hill is due to Lambeth Council's policy of managed decline, where the council weaponizes the issues caused by their deliberate lack of maintenance to justify demolition and prevent listing.
- A specific instance of managed decline took place before the Historic England visit to Central Hill during the 2016 Assessment. Prior to the visit, the council decided to cut down mature trees, remove trailing plants from green roofs, cutting back planters and removing trellises, exposing brickwork and concrete, in an attempt to influence the 2016 recommendation.
- On the estate, residents formed a gardening group to bring back planting but were discouraged by Lambeth and its new development company to do so. Mature trees continue to be cut down – this includes one of the oldest Sycamore trees dating back to the time Clayland Coppices which occupied the site a century ago. These particular trees were carefully protected by Stjernstedt in the same way she kept mature trees in her Alton East Scheme.
- Maintenance has now been transferred to the development company. When repairs are requested, the development company responds that their team has not been assembled yet.
- Lambeth Council did not declare a £200,000 fund for solely Central Hill Estate improvement which could have been used to restore important aspects of heritage interest many years ago much to the frustration of local residents.

B) Engineering and technological interest

- Clause 16 of the Principles of Selection for Listed Buildings states that “Engineering and Technological interest can be an important consideration for some buildings.” At Central Hill in particular, it would be difficult to understate the geotechnical marvel that the estate represents.
- In the book “Hill Housing, A comparative Study”, By Derek Abbott and Kimball Pollit, Central Hill is found under the category “Stepped Housing”. In this specific section there are only 2 others listed in England: Atlier Five's Croydon Scheme and Branch Hill. Whilst Central Hill predates Branch Hill, the latter was listed Grade 2 in 2010.
- Both schemes are both much smaller than Central Hill. Furthermore, “Hill Housing” states that the slope to the North East of Central Hill is considerably steeper: 1:6 - compared to 1:9 on Branch Hill.
- To overcome the enormous site difficulties, Lambeth Council called on geotechnical engineering experts. This included Norbert Morgenstern - whose Morgenstern-Price

calculations for slope stability analysis based on limit equilibrium still regularly feature in geotechnical engineering calculations.

- First published in 1965, the birth of the Morgenstern-Price method coincided with the first phases of Central Hill's designs. This method was put forward by Ted Happold as the most accurate calculations for the project.
- Communications with Arup and Prof. Norbert Morgenstern himself reveal that the Central Hill Estate was the first hilltop project in U.K. to test out the Morgenstern & Price method to overcome complex soil conditions and build to the densities and specifications required. ^{XXII}
- Morgenstern's influence on the project also manifested itself through his input on the physical modelling of the site's soil parameters such as cohesion, friction angle, and shear strength.

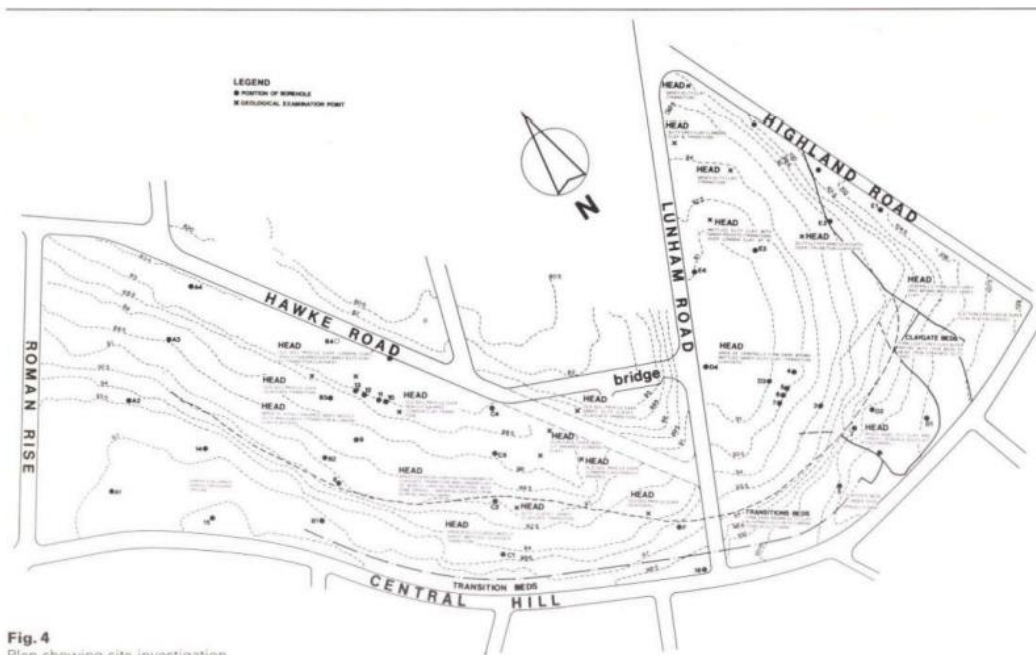


Fig. 4
Plan showing site investigation,
borehole locations and surface geology as exposed

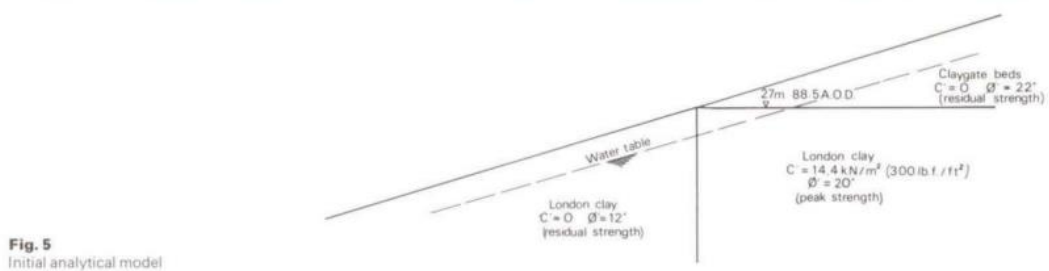


Fig. 5
Initial analytical model

14. ARUP initial analytical model for Morgenstern - Price calculation

- Staying true to the architect's idea of providing contoured, stepped hillside housing, thus realising the full potential of the site, land drains were installed throughout to lower the water table and therefore stabilise the soil.
- However, 6 months into water table drainage, water levels had not reduced, requiring a more intricate site investigation. Research into surrounding hydrogeology showed that:

“It is almost certain that the River Effra rose on the hill, probably consisting of two tributaries each emerging from the gravel capping at the top. The first tributary is thought to have flowed along the south side of Central Hill ridge; the other in a northwards direction down Lunham Road adjoining the main stream near West Norwood Cemetery. During the glacial periods of the Pleistocene, when the sea levels were much lower than now, the Thames and its tributaries eroded deeply into their channels. It seemed likely that the hillside was over-steepened during this period, causing slipping of the London Clay Towards the end of the glacial periods successive seasonal freezing and thawing of the upper strata occurred, concentrating water near the surface. This had the effect of creating a sludge of very high water content which moved down slope during the thaw periods (solifluction). Much of this soliflucted material derived from the sandier beds at the top of the hill, together with the gravel from further to the south east. The materials identified on the site were Claygate Beds. 'Transition' London Clay. London Clay. Head comprising land slip colluvium, solifluction deposits and hill wash.”^{XXIII}

- Following this realisation, discussions about which soil strength parameters to opt for were held with Geotechnical Engineer R. E. Gibson, now remembered as “one of the few researchers whose name is linked to a particular soil model, so that geotechnical engineers across the world recognise a Gibson soil as one in which the stiffness increases linearly with depth.”^{XXIV}
- The multi-layer system that is the soil below Central Hill was too complex to be modelled on Arup’s computers, forcing engineers to resort to hand computation of soil stability.

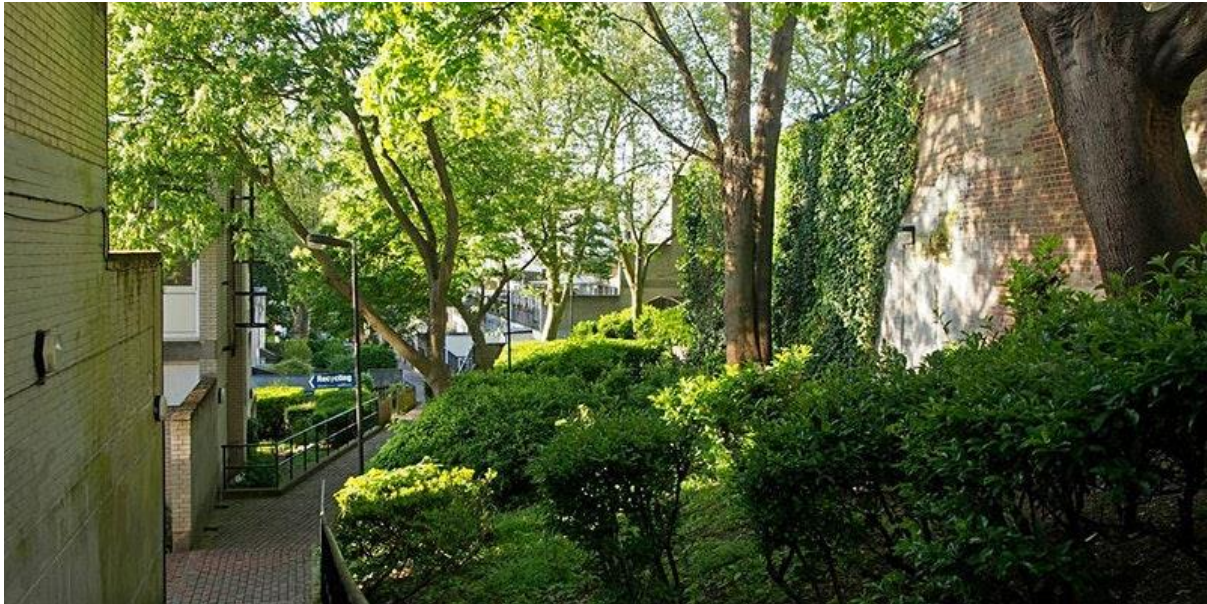
III) RETROFITTING AND THE CLIMATE EMERGENCY

- Historic England acknowledges that there is a climate emergency. Buildings accounts for approximately 40% of the U.K.’s carbon footprint, meaning that there cannot be a way to carbon neutrality without sustainable built environment strategies.
- Due to the importance of embodied carbon, the Heritage Counts report states that “We cannot new-build our way out of climate change”. It adds that “The repair and re-use of historic buildings is materially less carbon intensive than either demolition and rebuild...”.
- Central Hill Estate was designed as a green estate – designed around existing mature trees, green roofs, planters and trellises at every intermittent interval making Green “Walks’ and Green “Ways’, a district heating system, reusing bricks from demolished buildings, restricting cars to the periphery amongst other design features.
- Listing Central Hill means protecting Central Hill from demolition, but also presents opportunities for community-focused refurbishment. Residents are seeking a low carbon retrofit of Central Hill, in line with the Heritage Counts report. This could include air-source heat pumps, hardwood window frames and wood wool insulation. Ensuring that the materials and strategies used to achieve a more sustainable Central Hill in the short term is key; especially in line with Lambeth Council’s ambition of reaching carbon neutrality by 2030.
- However, residents’ sustainability strategy is holistic and does not limit itself to buildings. It includes, for instance, green roofs on the estates to limit pressures on urban drainage systems and reducing the flood risk in surrounding low-lying areas. The residents are re-

greening their estate by setting up a gardening group and getting funding for community family-friendly gardens.

- In conclusion, the design of the Central Hill Estate maximises green spaces and minimises car traffic, effectively making it a low traffic neighbourhood. Through its consideration for air quality levels, Central Hill is a case of pioneering environmental design. In this regard, residents are looking to build on Stjernstedt's legacy, with the help of the countless groups and individuals that support Central Hill's listing.

End.



View down peripheral route between Central Hill Estate & Gipsy Hill Police Station ©ASH ©Simon Elmer

NOTE: CENTRAL HILL AND THE COLD WAR

- More so than any of its contemporaries, the Central Hill Estate was designed with a possible nuclear fallout in mind. The breadth and depth of the estate's Cold War features make the estate incredibly unique, and worthy of listing as collective memory of the Cold War withers.
- In response to the Cuban Missile crisis, the Metropolitan Boroughs of Lambeth Southwark and Camberwell were grouped together to form to make up 53a, a new Civil Defence region. Negotiations subsequently took place between the boroughs to establish the most appropriate location for a control centre.
- The Central Hill site in the South of Lambeth was chosen – specifically the junction between Lunham Road and Hawke Road. Well protected by local hills, and located on one of London's highest points; this location was deemed ideal to provide a control centre that could survive a possible fallout if high profile targets in Central London were attacked.
- On the site, a two-storey bunker with 1m thick walls and blast doors was designed. Above this bunker, a block of 8 two-bedroom flats detailed by Hollamby himself was built, subsequently named Pear Tree House.
- However, the internal structure of the Civil Defence Region soon changed. Although work on Pear Tree House started in 1963, the change resulted in Pear Tree House becoming the Borough-Wide Control Centre; with the existing borough control in St Matthews Road (Brixton) becoming its Sub-Control.
- The eighteen-room bunker and the flats above were costed at £31,850; of which the Home Office paid 75% a total of £23,250. Pear Tree House was completed in 1966. Nevertheless, the bunker went into stasis when Civil Defence was stood down two years later.
- In 1971, London was designated a Civil Defence region once again. 2 years later, the Greater London Council set up emergency planning teams looking at the possible civil defence structures for the city. Consequently, it was decided that London would be split into 5 groups of Boroughs, each having its own control centre. The GLC selected the Pear Tree House bunker as South East London's group control centre. Pear Tree House was remodelled to fit this new purpose in 1979.^{xxv}
- In the 1980s, Pear Tree House became a focus of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament marches. According to Subterranea Britannica, the bunker's blast doors were fly posted during one of the local CND marches. Most notably, Pear Tree House "was opened to the public for a week in 1982 for CND's 'Hard Luck' campaign which coincided with the dates of the cancelled 'Hard Rock' exercise."
- Speakers during that week included Bruce Kent, Duncan Campbell, Joan Walley and Illyd Harrington. Incidentally, Kent recently wrote down his memories of this event in preparation for a talk at Open House London, which was cancelled due to COVID-19.^{xxvi}
- When the rent agreement with Lambeth Council expired, the London Fire and Civil Defence Authority was threatened with eviction. Ultimately, an agreement was reached: Pear Tree

House remained the South East London group emergency centre covering Bexley, Bromley, Croydon, Greenwich, Lewisham and Southwark until 1993. The bunker was later used as a social services store by Lambeth.

- Subterranea Britannica's view of Pear Tree House bunker is that the structure is incredibly unique. Mitigating through planning the impact of a potential nuclear conflict on the civilian population was an important part of the Cold War period. However, most local authorities used converted or municipal premises as control centres. By contrast, having a purpose-built structure incorporated into a domestic residential block is extremely unusual.
- SB are aware that the building is at risk of demolition and believe the bunker could be successfully re-used as a community asset ideally with a small area within it to be designated as a museum which they themselves would be happy to contribute towards.
- Some files pertaining to Pear Tree House are still bound by the Official Secrets Act relating to Civil Defence structures. Therefore, further studies need to be made to corroborate that certain design elements of this defensive architecture were used in design of the wider Central Hill Estate. This includes the service corridors running beneath the estate, over specified waste disposal units, and large underground carparking facilities.
- Nevertheless, there are numerous design features of the estate which set it into its historical context. Windows are omitted on the London-facing side of Truslove House to protect the nurses, key workers in the case of a nuclear fallout. The baffle used to protect the boiler system is composed of reinforced concrete. Finally, designers intended the glass along the balconies to be protected with sandbags in the event of a blast, and cleared by pushing the sandbags along angled brick slopes at the end of balcony runs – to be easily collected from ground level maintenance crews. SB's website provides a detailed description of all of Pear Tree House's features.

I) Pioneers: Women in Architecture RIBA Exhibition 1986

II) E. Hollamby, 'The social art', RIBA J, March 1974, pp. 37-44.

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XV) Private correspondence with Lynne Dixon who wrote a biography of Rosemary Stjernstedt for the University of Birmingham's Architectural Department

XVI) Correspondence with Part W, Women in Landscape Design, Parlour, AAXX

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XXVI) Correspondence from Bruce Kent 2019 - 2021

Photographs

Front Cover: View down Plane Tree Walk towards Boiler House, Central Hill Estate ©ASH ©Simon Elmer

Back Cover: View down peripheral route between Central Hill Estate & Gipsy Hill Police Station ©ASH ©Simon Elmer

1. *Rosemary Stjernstedt LCC Group Leader for Alton East, Roehampton*
2. *Central Hill Development Report by T.H. to H.G. Simpson 1967 @Lambeth Archives, Minet Library*
3. *Central Hill Lateral Walk Ways @ Marsha Nsiah*
4. *Branch Hill lateral routes © Kate Macintosh*
5. *Central Hill model @Lambeth Archives, Minet Library*
6. *Central Hill Phase 2: Highland Road @ Kate Macintosh*
7. *Branch Hill repetitious house types @ Kate Macintosh*
8. *Central Hill, children's play, casually supervised @ Kate Macintosh*
9. *Branch Hill, children's play accessed over bridge @ Kate Macintosh*
10. *Branch Hill, descending route @ Kate Macintosh*
11. *Central Hill descending route @ Marsha Nsiah*
12. *26 St James Lane Denys Lasdun & Partners*
13. *Pear Tree House, E. Hollamby. @Lambeth Archives, Minet Library*
14. *Branch Hill, the largest open space in the scheme @ Kate Macintosh*
15. *CND protest Pear Tree House Bruce Kent, Ittyld Harrington, Joan Walley 1982 @Lambeth Archive, Minet Library*