
Supplemental data

Appendix A: Short history of London Borough of Islington and its social housing stock

Islington, one of the 33 boroughs making up Greater London, lies just north of the centre of the metropolis. The population in 2022 was estimated to be 260,000, making the population density the highest of any local authority in Britain. Up until the eighteenth century, Islington was a separate town outside London. During the nineteenth century the area now covered by the Borough became rapidly built up, and by 1850 the southern half was fully developed, mostly in streets and squares of brick-built terrace houses. These range in size from two to five storeys, many of the taller houses having half-basements.

The bigger houses have since undergone successive changes of fortune. From the 1860s, wealthier residents moved further north. Meanwhile the south of the Borough became overcrowded and went into decline, and large houses became subdivided. In the mid-twentieth century many were acquired by the Borough and remain in their possession. Many are listed as being of historic and architectural importance. Figure S1 shows an example, a fine 4-storey house on Myddelton Square, with a basement and an attic conversion.

Figure S1: House on Myddelton Square  Figure S2: Halton Mansions

After World War I, efforts were made by government and the new London County Council to increase the supply and quality of working-class housing. The first schemes to receive state aid date from the 1920s. Figure S2 shows Halton Mansions of 1922-23. Public housing only started to grow rapidly however after World War II.
Some 3,200 houses had been destroyed by bombing, and many of the empty sites were redeveloped with brick-built blocks of various lengths along the street fronts. Herbert Chapman Court on Avenell Road is shown in Figure S3. Some of these blocks contain flats, others contain maisonettes. They can have inset or external balconies. Some have balcony access. The older buildings tend to have pitched or mansard roofs; the newer blocks have flat roofs. Many of the Borough’s estates consist of groupings of mid-rise blocks of these types. There are some miscellaneous oddities. These include flats over shopping centres, and flats in blocks on high streets with shops on the ground floor, as at Royley House on Old Street (Figure S4). There are also a few single-storey houses in brick or timber frame on estates, appropriate for older tenants.

![Figure S3: Herbert Chapman Court](image1)

![Figure S4: Royley House](image2)

Most of the high-rise blocks in Islington were built in the housing boom of the 1960s. The oldest is the Aubert Court Estate, a very long brick-clad block on 7, 8 and 9 storeys, with elegantly curved balconies (Figure S5). The Borough’s towers contain flats, maisonettes, or a mixture of both. A few have shops or other non-domestic uses at ground level. Some of the blocks have cantilevered balconies, like Aubert Court, or inset balconies. Loadbearing brick construction is rare, being confined to buildings up to 8 storeys. More common is brick cladding on frame construction. The great majority of the high-rise stock is constructed with concrete frames. In terms of built form, the higher-rise buildings from 10 storeys upwards are simple slabs or square-plan towers, with flat roofs. The lower buildings tend to be slabs or courts.

![Figure S5: Aubert Court](image3)

![Figure S6: Dixon Clark Court](image4)

There are some high-rise blocks that stand on their own, not in a larger estate. An example is Dixon Clark Court (Figure S6). This is a 15-storey building with an H-shaped plan, built in 1966. Estates can contain multiple high-
rise blocks, or high-rise combined with medium and/or low-rise. An example is the Finsbury Estate built in 1965 which has four blocks: Michael Cliffe House on 24 storeys (Figure S7), Patrick Coman House on 9 storeys, plus two low-rise blocks.

From the 1970s, partly in a reaction against high-rise buildings, the Borough commissioned several low-rise, high-density housing developments, with internal walkways and complex stepped sections. These included the Marquess Estate in 1976 by the architects Darbourne and Darke. The scheme however proved too dense and complex and had many social problems. In the early 2000s, 460 houses were demolished, and the estate was remodelled (Figure S8).