

# **Housing the Workers**

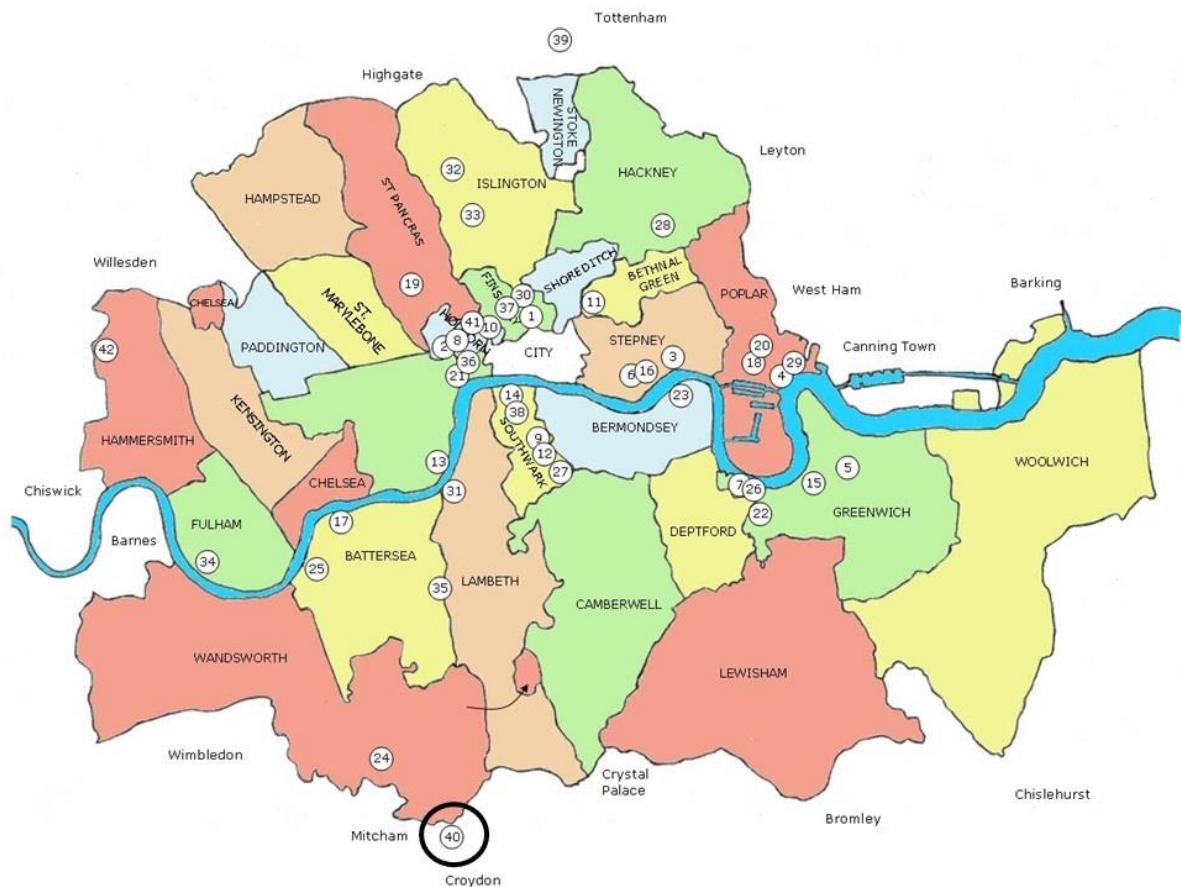
## **Early London County Council Housing**

### **1889-1914**

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**August 2015**

#### **Part 3 – the schemes in detail**

##### **40 – Norbury Estate**



# Norbury Estate, Croydon, 1906

## Built under Part III of the 1890 Housing of the Working Classes Act

This garden estate was meant to be the first built by the Council and the site was purchased in 1900 and consisted of 30 acres. The original estimates were that the site was to cost £20,000 and this included an existing brick-making facility, and that 5,800 persons would be housed in the resulting estate. The final price paid was £18,000 (£600 per acre) and 1½ acres of that was sold to an adjoining owner in 1906 for £3,400, resulting in a net cost of £14,600 for 28½ acres (£512 per acre).

The scheme had been planned before the transport infrastructure had been put in place – specifically new planned tram routes. The expectation was that the planned tram routes would be in place by, or shortly after, the time housing started to be available for rent. One reason for the delay in building was that the site included a hill of clay that was used as the raw material for the brickworks, and this hill needed levelling before the site could be developed. All the delays in the scheme resulted in the expenditure to start the construction not being sanctioned until the 28<sup>th</sup> July 1903. The building commenced in 1905 with the first cottages available for rent from February 1905, five years late because of delays clearing the site and disagreements within the Council. The Totterdown Estate had already used 2.3m bricks made on the site and the Norbury contractor also used these bricks, purchased for a price above cost<sup>i</sup>. This brick-making industry was considered to be a success and was run under the guidance of the district surveyor of Croydon.

The OS maps from 1896 and 1912 show that the area was still very much at the southern end of Suburbia and was only viable because of the trams. The site was very rural at the time of construction and this was accentuated by the Norbury Golf Club being to the west of the site. The estate as in Fig. 2 is the extent of the pre-WW1 building. Building of the remaining housing was not started until 1920. The styles of the pre and post-WW1 housing is noticeably different.

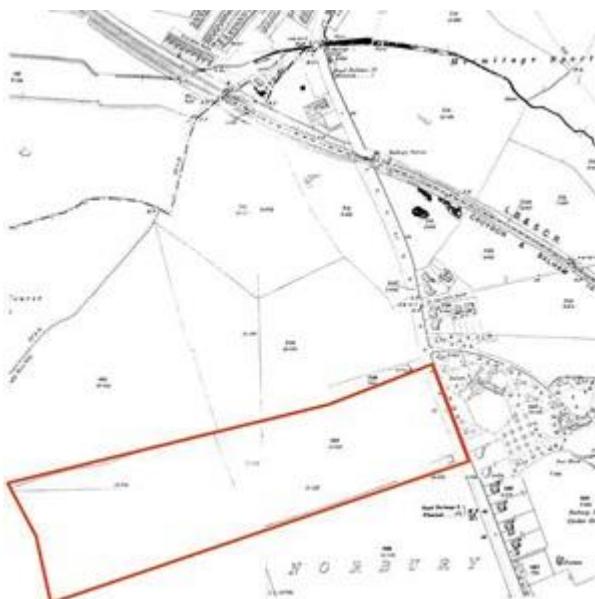


Fig. 1: The site before development from 1896 OS Map



Fig. 2: Partly developed site from 1912 OS Map

The plan below shows the whole estate as originally envisaged. It is interesting to note that the plan suggests that the western side of the estate is better laid out with a large garden on the

north side. Yet the estate was developed from the eastern edge as can be seen from the 1912 OS map above. The western section was built after WW1 when labour and materials were expensive and the resulting housing expected to be smaller and plainer. The completion of the Norbury Estate seems to have gone against that trend.

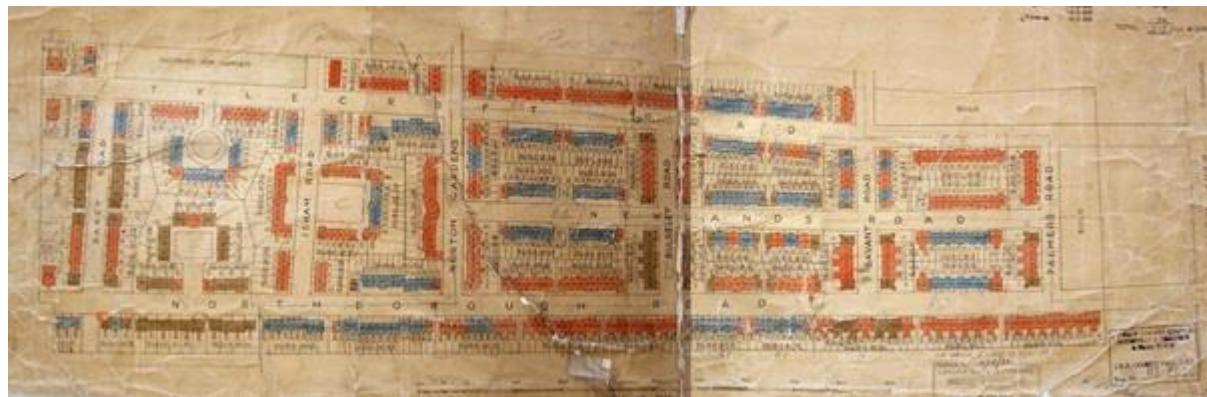


Fig. 3: Norbury Estate as planned (LMA ref: LCC/AR/HS/03/034)

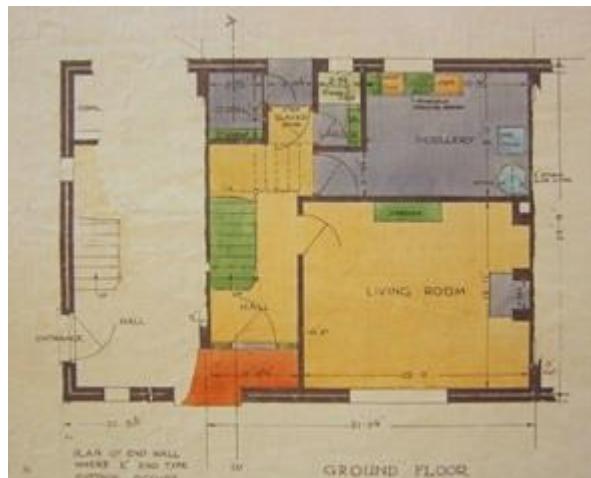


Fig. 4: Norbury Estate, 5-roomed cottages ground floor  
(LMA ref: LCC/AR/HS/03/034)

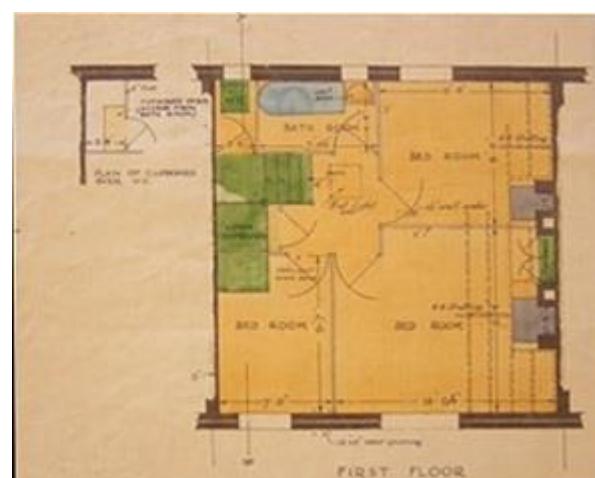


Fig. 5: Norbury Estate, 5-roomed cottages 1st floor  
(LMA ref: LCC/AR/HS/03/034)

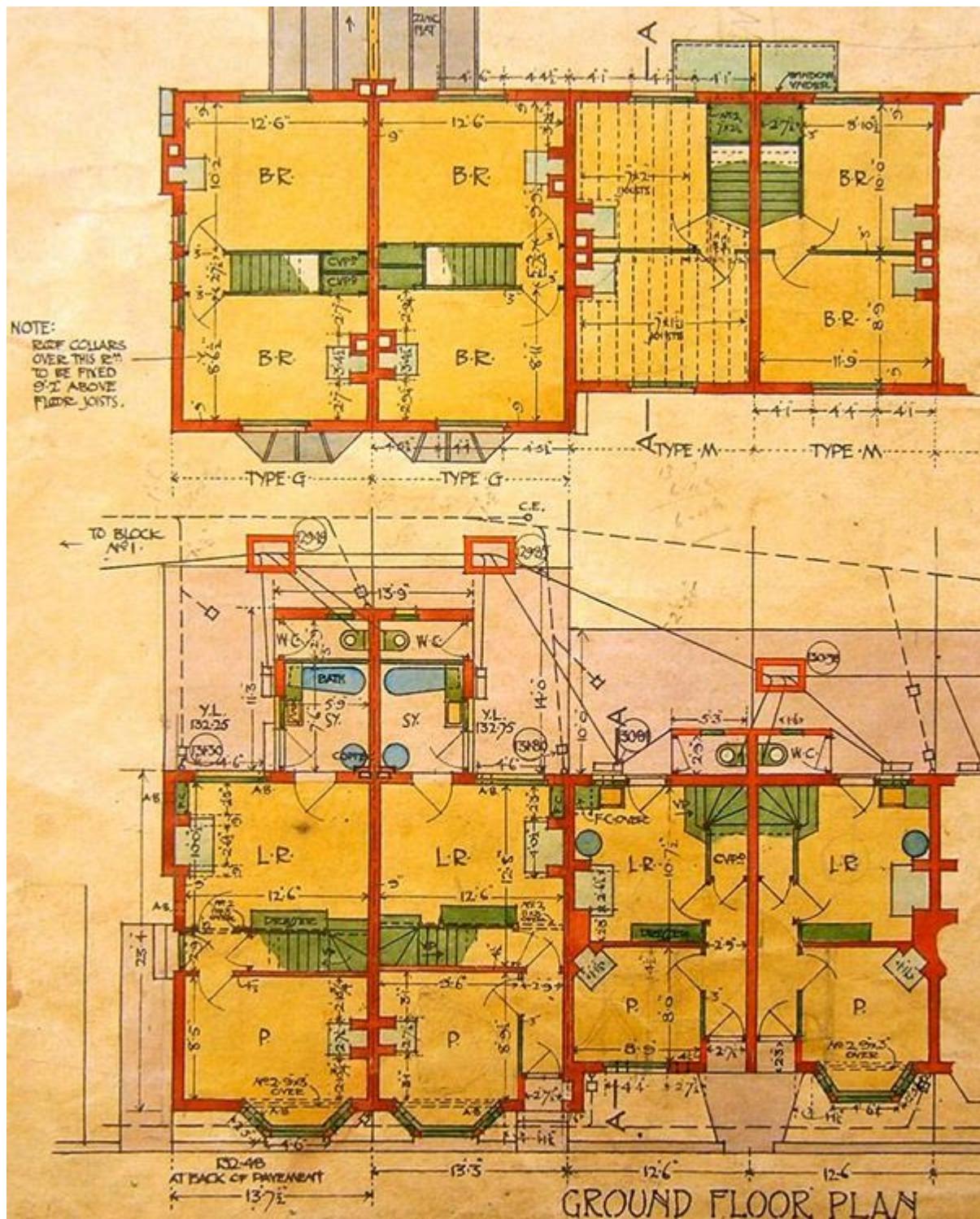


Fig. 6: Design of two of the 2-bedroomed designs. Note downstairs bathrooms  
(LMA ref: LCC/AR/HS/03/034)

The layout of the cottages was fairly unadventurous, but the majority were fitted with bathrooms, either upstairs or down. The largest of the designs (5-roomed, Type E) were large and well equipped.



Fig. 7: Norbury Estate, Northborough Rd, 1908  
(LMA ref: SC/PHL/02/0835)



Fig. 8: Norbury Estate, No. 15 Newlands Rd., 1908.  
(LMA ref: SC/PHL/02/0835)



Fig. 9: Norbury Estate typical street view 2009



Fig. 10: No. 15 Newlands Rd. 2009. Almost unchanged from the 1908 photograph in Fig. 8



Fig. 11: Norbury Estate, Bavant Rd., 1911.  
(LMA ref: SC/PHL/02/0835)



Fig. 12: Norbury Estate, Bavant Road 2009



Fig. 13: Norbury Estate, Bavant Road, 1907  
(LMA ref: SC/PHL/02/0835)



Fig. 14: Norbury Estate, Bavant Road 2009

The site was built in two sections with the housing in the 1912 OS map in Fig. 2 being completed in 1911 and the western section between 1920 and 1922. The whole site eventually consisted of 90 five-roomed cottages, 402 four-roomed and 224 three-roomed. The total maximum theoretical capacity was 5,460 persons.

	Outgoings	Income	
Cost of land (30 acres)	£18,000		
Sale of 1½ acres to private developer		£3,400	
Total cost of development <sup>ii</sup>	£219,000		
NET COST			£233,600
Cost per person (based on 5,640 persons)			£41
Balance of Accounts 1913-14	£10,415	£11,004	£589 (5.4%)

Table 1: Norbury Garden Estate costs

The cost of £41 per person represents good value, but the site was a considerable distance from central London or any extensive manual labour employment, and so the tenants were likely to be in the upper echelon of the working classes. The profit of 5.4% for the year 1913-14 was close to that required by the Council to meet the needs of the sinking fund.

The 1911 census returns are on an estate that has recently opened although almost all the housing built before WW1 has been completed. As with the White Hart Lane Estate, there is an expectation of the higher earning workers moving out of London to the suburbs to better themselves with a house and garden. A similar approach was taken in establishing the demographics with the analysis looking for local-born people (or locally-established families) and then for families who would have moved south in a rough line between Lambeth and Norbury. This follows the London Road (now the A23). This is the route taken by the trams. The occupations of the heads of household showed a predominance of “white collar” workers, to a greater extent than for White Hart Lane. This can be explained by the lack of industry in the Norbury area requiring almost all those in work having to commute northwards to London although some may have found work in Croydon to the south. These white collar workers included a significant number of shop workers and they have been grouped into a “Retail” category. The pie charts in Fig. 15 and Fig. 16 show the demographics and main occupations.

The occupancy of the houses is a creditable 94% with even the 5-roomed houses having an 83% occupancy; a much better figure than for White Hart Lane for the same period.

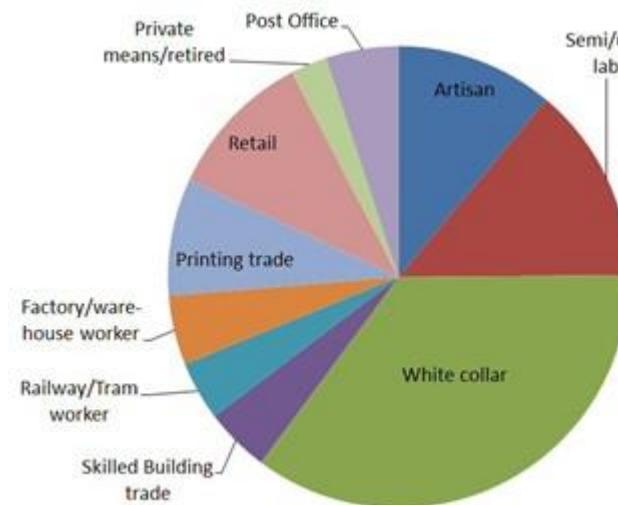


Fig. 15: Norbury Estate: breakdown of head-of-household occupations



Fig. 16: Norbury Estate: breakdown of head-of-household migration to Norbury

The estate has been designated as a Local Area of Special Character (LASC) since 1997<sup>iii</sup>. This designation is more restrictive than others, yet is not mandatory and has therefore been produced as advice where modifications are planned. The LASC guidelines even advise that original house numbers, where ceramic, should be retained.

This advice is very commendable but the estate today has not aged as well as on the other three pre-WW1 estates; Totterdown, Old Oak and White Hart Lane. Many of the houses look smaller than on the other estates and there are more terraced houses. A lot of unsympathetic modernisations have been carried out on the smaller houses, probably prior to the LASC designation in 1997.

As regards the naming of the roads on the estate, Northborough is the old name of Norbury; Palmer (originally Palmer South) and Tylecroft were old manors in Croydon; Bulkeley, Darcy (originally D'Arcy) and Granden were named after previous owners of the land; Norton and Bavant are named after the small village of Norton Bavant in Wiltshire. Nearby roads on the privately-developed Stanford Estate are also named after villages in Wiltshire where Sir William Stanford had his seat. The naming of Isham Road is not known but it should be noted that it has nothing to do with the etymology of the name of nearby Lewisham. The Isham family are from Northampton and it is possible that he also funded the building of the Stanford Estate. Because of confusion with Buckleigh Road in neighbouring Wandsworth, Bulkeley Road was renamed Granden Road in July, 1949<sup>iv</sup>.

## Footnotes

<sup>i</sup> LCC; Minutes of the Council; 19<sup>th</sup> Dec 1905; held at LMA

<sup>ii</sup> LCC; “London Housing”; G.H.Gator, 1937, p130

<sup>iii</sup> London Borough of Croydon; <http://www.croydon.gov.uk/environment/conservation/specialcharacter>; 22 May 1997

<sup>iv</sup> “The Croydon Database” entry dated 30<sup>th</sup> Jan 2008. Accessed 1<sup>st</sup> April 2013.