

# **Barbican Estate**

## **A listed building guide for residents**





Chamberlin, Powell and Bon designed the Barbican Estate for the Corporation of London in the 1950's. It was 'listed' in 2001 for its special architectural and historic interest. This leaflet explains why the Estate is important, focusing particularly on the residential buildings. It outlines what 'listing' means and the policies we have in place to help protect the 'special interest' of the buildings. It also contains information about the Listed Building Management Guidelines which have been developed for the Barbican Estate. This leaflet is based on the management guidelines which can be found on our website

The advice in this leaflet will be relevant to you and your home and it is important that you read it and keep it as part of your Tenants' or Owners' Handbook.

## The Vision

The Corporation was keen to encourage people to move back into the City again after the Second World War and launched a competition in 1951 to design a housing scheme in Golden Lane. As a result, Chamberlin, Powell and Bon were appointed to design the Golden Lane Estate and following this, were commissioned to prepare a scheme for redevelopment of the Barbican – the area north of London Wall. The scheme was agreed in 1959 and included flats, maisonettes, schools, theatre, concert hall, art gallery, library, hostel for students and young people, shops, restaurants, public houses and car-parking.

Chamberlin, Powell and Bon rejected traditional planning ideas and sought to create an urban centre with high density housing and a clear definition of planned spaces: private, public, transport, pedestrian, retail and community facilities. The elevated walkway system, designed to separate pedestrians from vehicles, was an important part of the planned rebuilding of the City in the post-war era.

Part of the residential site showing bomb damage after World War II



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## The Development of the Design

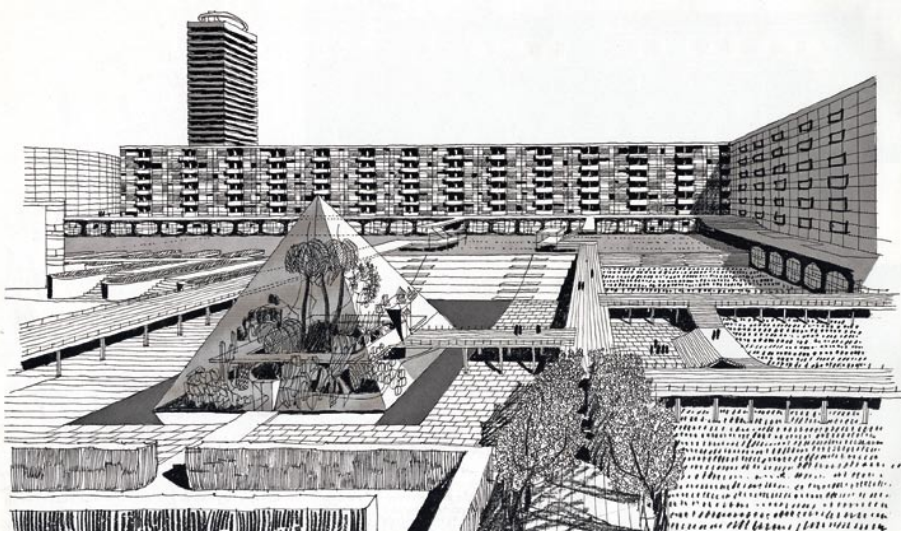
The architects achieved a sense of spaciousness and high density of residential units by concentrating flats into three high towers of 43 storeys and a series of 7 storey terrace blocks. There are over 2,000 residential units on the Estate in 20 blocks housing around 4,000 people. At the time of construction, the towers were the tallest residential towers in Europe.

The residential buildings were designed for young professionals working in the City. The increase in continental travel and the popularity of Scandinavian design influenced the design of the interior of the residential units. They were designed to maximise light and to provide flexible space.

The kitchens and bathrooms were compact and functional. Balconies are an important feature of the Barbican flats and are not restricted to living rooms but can be found off other rooms such as bedrooms and studies.

The architects explored 'Brutalism' in the Barbican design which is associated with the honest use of materials, mainly exposed concrete, and expression of form, function and spaces. Pick and bush-hammering, where the surface of the concrete is altered to expose the Pen-Lee aggregate, gives it a distinctive texture and is an important characteristic of the Estate. It is expensive and time-consuming to produce; an indicator of the Corporation's commitment to creating a high quality environment at the Barbican.

1956 Proposal showing some of the garden layout including the conservatory and ornamental water



© Gordon Cullen

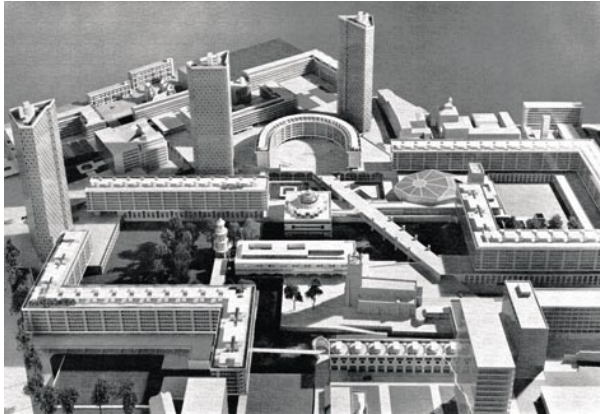
### **The Importance of the Estate**

The Barbican Estate successfully combines a wide variety of uses across a large estate of dense, but high quality housing and is an important example of planning in the post-war era.

The form of the towers and their distinctive silhouette, the layout and form of lower scale housing blocks and their relationship with open spaces and uses all contribute to the Estate's special interest. The distinctive detailing of the buildings, such as the scale and rhythm of columns and the use of bush-hammered concrete, are all important elements as is the uniformity of fixtures and fittings such as doors, windows and planters, all of which reinforce the coherence of the Estate. The roofscape, sometimes referred to as the 'fifth façade' has a strong sculptural quality and is a key element of the architectural language of the Estate.

The architects were equally concerned about the spaces between buildings as the buildings themselves. The use of brick to surface the walkways, planters and minor structures ensures that the minimal palette of materials and uniformity are further emphasised. Other important planned features of the landscaping include the lakes and extensively landscaped gardens, designed to give an aspect to every flat on the Estate. The Barbican landscaping is included in the English Heritage Register of Parks and Gardens and is listed Grade II\*.

Chamberlin, Powell & Bon's 1959 Proposal model of the Barbican Estate



© Alfred Cracknell

### **What does Listing mean?**

Important buildings of different periods in our history are listed by central government to protect their special architectural and historic interest.

Whilst proposed changes to a listed building need to be assessed to ensure that they would not harm its special interest, it does not mean that no changes can take place.

Each listed building is described in a list description which helps to identify it. Whilst the description will mention some of the features of a listed building, it will not mention all. It is important to be aware that the entire building is protected, both internally and externally. This includes any object or structure fixed to it even if it is not mentioned in the list description. This applies to all grades of listed building. The Barbican Estate is listed Grade II.

It is an offence to do works to a listed building which affects its special interest without Listed Building Consent. If such works are undertaken without permission, this may result in prosecution. In serious cases, this could result in a fine and/or imprisonment.



Original interior showing the compact and functional kitchen and dining area



©Corporation of London

### **How were the guidelines developed?**

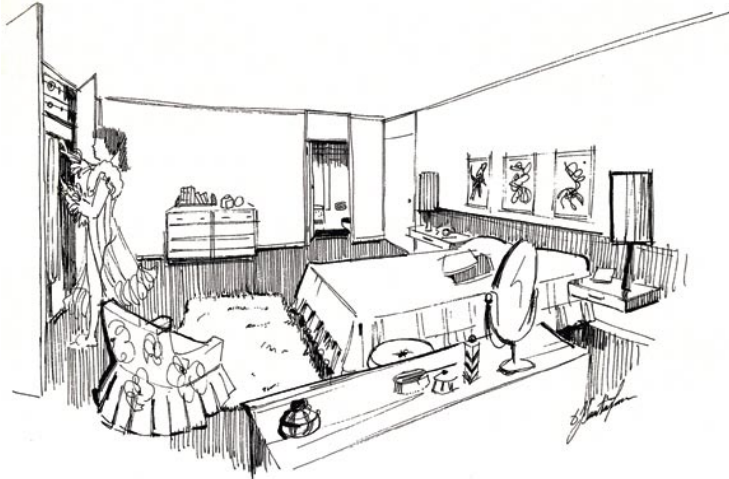
After the 'listing' of the buildings in 2001, the Corporation and English Heritage agreed that it would be appropriate to prepare listed building management guidelines for the Estate. The Corporation appointed consultants, Avanti Architects, to work with them on this project and established a Working Party to help steer the project. The Working Party included resident representatives, English Heritage, Twentieth Century Society, Members, officers and the consultants. There were also two periods of public consultation before the guidelines were adopted on 24th May 2005.

### *What should I consider when thinking about possible changes to my flat?*

The philosophical approach to change in any listed building is to consider repair as the first option.

Original fixtures and fittings are part of the design and owners are encouraged to retain these where possible. It is recognised that items, particularly those that have a functional use in kitchens and bathrooms, are subject to wear and tear and can reach the end of their 'working life'.

If possible, a 'like for like' replacement should be considered, but it is accepted that this may not always be possible and alternatives that are sensitive to the original design are encouraged.



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### **Maintenance and Repairs**

'Like for like' repairs and regular maintenance work do not require Listed Building Consent. For example,

*Can I redecorate the interior of my flat?*

Yes, painting and wallpapering do not require Listed Building Consent and there are no restrictions on the colour scheme you use on the internal walls of your flat.

*Can I change my carpets?*

Yes, Listed Building Consent is not required to change carpets, linoleum, tiles or other floor coverings. However, Landlord's Consent may be required for certain changes, particularly installation of wood or laminate floors.

*Can I rewire my flat and replace my light switches and fittings?*

Yes. There are no restrictions on type, style or number of fittings provided they comply with British safety standards. All wiring should be concealed as far as possible.

*Can I put plant pots on my balcony?*

Yes. The concrete window boxes and planters are important external elements of the buildings and 'like for like' replacements are available from the Barbican Estate Office. Placing plant pots on balconies does not require Listed Building Consent. However, care should be taken not to block fire escape routes.

*Can I install new plumbing?*

Yes. This does not require Listed Building Consent although may require Landlord's consent.

*Can I disconnect from the Garchey system?*

Yes. This does not require Listed Building Consent.

However, it will require Landlord's consent and must be undertaken in accordance with their instructions.

Please contact the Barbican Estate Office for further details.



*Can I change my fridge/cooker/other kitchen appliances?*

Yes. The original kitchens were designed using imperial measurements. If you wish to replace an original appliance in an original kitchen, you may need to make some minor alterations to accommodate a metric appliance which will not require

Listed Building Consent.

*Can I change my kitchen units?*

Yes, although in some cases Listed Building Consent may be required. Owners are encouraged to offer original units, worktops and appliances that are in good condition for salvage for use in other flats.

*Can I change my bathroom suite?*

Yes, Listed Building Consent is not normally required to change the bath, toilet, sinks or taps in your bathroom. You can also choose any style of fitting and install a shower instead of a bath. Again, where possible, owners are asked to offer original fittings in good condition for salvage.

*Can I install new cupboards?*

Yes. This does not require Listed Building Consent although, where possible, owners are encouraged to consider the repair

of original cupboards or to offer original fittings in good condition for salvage.

*Can I replace the internal doors in my flat?*

The replacement of original internal doors would require Listed Building Consent. However, owners are encouraged to match the detail of the original door and architrave. The replacement of original external doors would require Listed Building Consent and should match the existing.

Generally all repairs should match the existing. If you think this applies to works you plan to do, you should contact the Department of Planning and Transportation where a Planning Officer will be able to advise you.

If Listed Building Consent is not required, this can be confirmed by an exchange of letters.

1970'

1970's Promotional photograph from Shakespeare Tower brochure - Shakespeare Tower, high point in city living



## Alterations

You would normally require Listed Building Consent and possibly planning permission if the works involve the removal of original material, alterations or changes to the building's appearance. You will also require landlord's consent. For example,

*Can I alter or remove an internal wall and/or screen in my flat?*

You will require Listed Building Consent to remove or alter any internal walls or partitions in your flat, such as those to your kitchen or living area. This includes sliding doors and partitions. Each case is judged individually on its own merits. You will also need Listed Building Consent to erect a new internal partition wall.

*Can I alter or relocate the staircase in my flat?*

The staircase is important and you are unlikely to get consent to remove it or relocate it. It may be possible however to modify the existing staircase. Such alterations are likely to require Listed Building Consent.

*Can I extend a roof over my roof terrace to create a conservatory?*

Individual alterations to the roofline or frontage of terraces and balconies would disturb the appearance of the whole building and are therefore unlikely to be acceptable. Such an alteration requires Listed Building Consent and planning permission and would normally be resisted.

*Can I erect a satellite dish?*

Additional fixtures to the exterior of the building, such as satellite dishes and aerials, would require Listed Building Consent. Such alterations are discouraged and would only be granted consent in very special individual circumstances.

*Can I replace or alter the windows to my flat?*

Listed Building Consent and planning permission are required to replace windows to individual flats. Consent would only be granted in the most exceptional circumstances. Any alterations to windows, such as secondary glazing, will require consent and each case would be judged on its merits. Owners are encouraged to retain the original hardwood finish of the interior window frames.

Should you wish to undertake such works, the Department of Planning and Transportation would be able to advise you whether you are likely to obtain consent and how to apply.



### **Do the guidelines apply to the work undertaken by the Corporation on the Estate?**

If the Corporation needs to undertake alterations to the Estate, it also requires Listed Building Consent and its applications are dealt with by central government with advice from English Heritage. The approach to repair and alteration is similar to that outlined above. Repairs that seek to match the existing fabric of the building are encouraged and that care is taken to ensure that appropriate materials are used. Alterations should seek to safeguard the special character and interest of the building.

### **What should I do if I want to do works to my flat?**

We advise that you read this leaflet to help inform you about whether or not you might require Listed Building Consent. If necessary, also refer to the management guidelines for further information. You can also contact the Department of Planning and Transportation to confirm whether consent is required or for any further advice. You must also contact the Barbican Estate Office about any works to your property (see section on Landlord's Consent).

Illustration from 1970's Willoughby House promotional brochure



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### **How to apply for Listed Building Consent?**

Whilst there is no charge for submitting an application for Listed Building Consent, there may be other costs involved. Drawings to scale of 1:50 of existing and proposed plans and sections must be submitted with your application. An architect or surveyor can prepare these for you. If you prepare the drawings yourself, they must be accurate and to scale in order for your application to be accepted for consideration by the City Planning Officer. Depending on the nature of the application, we may also require larger scale drawings of details such as new joinery work. Your application should include a Design Statement describing the proposed works. Application forms are available from the Department of Planning and Transportation. If you need any advice, please contact us.

Applications are dealt with by the Corporation's Department of Planning and Transportation. There is a statutory requirement for the Department to consult interested parties such as English Heritage, the Twentieth Century Society and where applicable, the relevant Tenants or Leaseholders Associations. We are also required to advertise all applications in the local newspaper and by public notice on the building.

### **Will I need Landlord's Consent?**

You should contact the Estate Office before you undertake any work to your flat as their written approval is needed under the terms of your lease or tenancy. Where Listed Building Consent and/or planning permission are necessary, this is separate to the need to obtain Landlord's consent. This is because planning laws are separate from property laws and there is a legal obligation that you obtain both.

### *Who do I contact to discuss works to my flat?*

If you think that the works may require Listed Building Consent, please contact the Department of Planning and Transportation (contact details below). They will be able to look at your proposals and offer you advice, free of charge. Any works you wish to do to your flat will also need to be agreed with the Estate Office who represents the Corporation of London as freeholder of the Estate:

Barbican Estate Office  
Department of Community Services  
Lauderdale Place  
Barbican  
London EC2Y 8EN  
020 7029 3958

[Barbican Estate Office](#)

If you are planning works to your flat, a Planning Officer will be able to offer you advice and recommend whether or not you require Listed Building Consent or planning permission. You should discuss your proposals with an officer prior to submitting an application to ensure your proposals are likely to be recommended for approval:

Department of Planning and Transportation  
Corporation of London  
PO Box 270  
Guildhall  
London EC2P 2EJ  
020 7332 1710

[Contact the City Corporation](#)

If major alterations are proposed to your property, Heritage England may become involved in your application:

4th Floor  
Cannon Bridge House  
25 Dowgate Hill  
London EC4R 2YA  
020 7973 3700

[Heritage England London and Southeast](#)

Further information about planning and listed buildings can be found on our [on the planning page on the website](#) together with Barbican Listed Building Management Guidelines.

