



L&Q shared outdoor spaces: what works?

This Social Life report was written by Lucia Caistor-Arendar with
Saskia Baard, Roland Karthaus and Saffron Woodcraft.

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Executive summary

Social Life was invited by London and Quadrant (L&Q) to assess the shared outdoor spaces on L&Q schemes and consider the social value of these spaces, and what factors affect their use. This report summarises findings, and includes recommendations for the design and management of outdoor spaces in future L&Q developments. The evidence in this report is based on case studies of four developments: Acton Gardens (Ealing), Creekside (Greenwich), Silwood (Lewisham) and Eltham Baths (Greenwich). This included one-to-one interviews with residents and front-line L&Q staff, site observations, a design assessment, and a residents survey at Creekside, Silwood and Acton Gardens.

Research shows that successful outdoor spaces can make an important contribution to the social life of a community, especially in new developments where relationships are yet to form (Woodcraft et al. 2012). However, in many places where outdoor spaces have been provided, these spaces are not always well used (CABE 2010). As part of our research, we explore a range of factors that can create successful shared spaces and the social benefits they can provide. Social Life has investigated the factors that contribute to successful shared outdoor spaces: how residents on L&Q schemes are feeling about where they live, how this may be affecting the use of the outdoor spaces, and in turn the social value of these spaces - the role they play in the social life of these communities. Below are the key findings and recommendations from this work.

People are satisfied with where they live and the outdoor spaces, however they are not being used. Overall, residents reported high levels of satisfaction with where they live and they are generally satisfied with the outdoor spaces. However, the spaces are not well used. In total, 44% said they rarely or never use the spaces. Nevertheless, the research suggests that the outdoor spaces are important to residents in all of the developments, even if they do not personally use the spaces on a regular basis. 28% of respondents said that they do not have access to a shared outdoor space, while the vast majority do. The reason why residents are not accessing these spaces needs to be explored further.

Links between immediate neighbours and with L&Q staff are strong, but links to other blocks and tenures are weaker. On all four schemes residents reported having strong neighbourhood relationships. They also said they have a good relationship with L&Q front-line staff and that they are satisfied with the rules and guidelines for the spaces. However, the links between people of different blocks and tenures appears to be weaker and the connections with the wider neighbourhood also seem to be limited. This shows that the spaces are currently not playing an active role to bring different people together. There is

a need to create places that invite people in, rather than ones which keep them away. Activities in and around the development can build relationships on the scheme and improve local integration and carefully designed spaces with shared facilities like bike stores can encourage informal encounters.

Clarify the purpose of the outdoor spaces with residents and get them involved in that process. The research indicates that a key barrier to greater use of spaces is that their purpose is unclear. The spaces do not seem to be designed to be used in the ways that residents are using them or would like them to be used. As a result, it is discouraging the use of the spaces and they are becoming more ornamental. On the three developments surveyed, relaxing outside and socialising were the top two activities that residents felt the spaces should be used for, followed by spaces for looking at, walking through, and exercise. As residents said they care about the maintenance and management of the spaces, L&Q could amplify residents' willingness to act by getting them involved in decisions that affect their community. For example helping them set up a residents group is a good way of enabling residents to take responsibility for where they live and to be well informed.

Create inclusive spaces. The research found that the spaces are not catering for the needs of different age groups. Even though children were the most regular users of the outdoor spaces at Eltham Baths, Acton Gardens and Silwood, their activities became a common cause of tensions between neighbours. This is because the spaces are not well designed for children's use. There is a need to create more flexible, inclusive spaces which provide activities and spaces for everyone to enjoy.

Clever landscaping is needed to improve use and maintenance. Current use of the spaces is negatively affecting neighbourly relations, for example, there are complaints about noise, anti-social behaviour, and privacy. Using clever landscaping and creating greener gardens can help to address some of these issues. In addition residents felt that the spaces look nice but are poorly maintained. However, 71% of residents said that maintenance of the outdoor spaces is important to them and there was a desire by some residents in all schemes to be involved in their upkeep. Setting up a gardening club is a good way of getting people to care about their spaces and also to meet other neighbours.

Spaces are over-designed, they need room to breathe and space to grow. At times too much pressure is being put on design to control the way spaces are used, which is making the spaces inflexible and under-utilised. The social role and identity of spaces cannot be prescribed at the design stage, they are emergent; defined over time as residents and their activities project different meanings onto these places. This can be built into the design by having uses that are open to interpretation and that can develop over time, and also by having management play a bigger role, for example in supporting residents groups and activities like gardening.

Introduction



Shared open spaces can both facilitate and inhibit the development of a flourishing community. Evidence shows that, if used well, open spaces can be a real asset to a community by providing space for relationships to develop. Open spaces can become an extension of the home as a place to rest and play when housing sizes are getting smaller. As these spaces literally grow and change over time, they can help build a sense of belonging and identity in new communities.

There is evidence to suggest that having access to outdoor recreational space allows for more social interactions, which can increase community spirit (Morris 2003) and positively contribute to residents' health and wellbeing (Worpole & Knox 2007; CABE 2010); sense of belonging (Morris 2003; Woodcraft et al. 2012), sense of safety (Bond et al. 2013), and neighbourliness (Bond et al. 2013).

“... public spaces form a shared spatial resource from which experiences and value are created in ways that are not possible in our private lives alone” (Means & Tims 2005).

On the other hand, open spaces can also be a hindrance to a community. Underused spaces can invite anti-social behaviour or neglect, which can cause conflict between neighbours and affect levels of satisfaction. Such spaces can end up being a strain on resources with the need for significant maintenance and management and can become more of a barrier than a connector. To work successfully, shared open spaces have to balance potentially contradicting requirements: privacy and communal space; activity and play with peace and quiet; a sense of ownership with equality of use; security with access.

“If public spaces are to have a greater degree of traction as social, shared spaces, then the essential first step is to start with people rather than the physical space...Only with a much more sophisticated understanding of people's diverse values, motivations and needs will city planners be able to begin to identify what might provide the basis for either sharing spaces in common or negotiating differences” (Means et al., 2005).

While a range of research exists on the social value of public spaces, green spaces, and parks, research that specifically focuses on shared, semi-private outdoor spaces, like courtyards in housing developments, is still limited and little is known about what makes these spaces work in practice.

This report includes:

- An assessment of how the shared outdoor spaces on four L&Q developments are being used
- The constraints and opportunities for increasing their use
- A set of recommendations
- A design assessment conducted by Roland Karthaus
- Four case studies.

Our approach

This work draws on Social Life's work Design for Social Sustainability, a project commissioned by the Homes and Communities Agency to synthesize academic and action research about what makes new housing developments thrive or fail.

“Social sustainability is about people’s quality of life, now and in the future. It describes the extent to which a neighbourhood supports individual and collective wellbeing. Social sustainability combines design of the physical environment with a focus on how the people who live in and use a space relate to each other and function as a community. It is enhanced by development, which provides the right infrastructure to support a strong social and cultural life, opportunities for people to get involved, and scope for the place and the community to evolve” (Woodcraft et al. 2012).

Design for Social Sustainability sets out a framework for thinking about the social dimensions of community life and how these ideas can be translated into practical initiatives. Social Life's approach focuses on factors like belonging, wellbeing, strong local networks and active civil society institutions, as well as having good local services and infrastructure, alongside an acknowledgment of the pernicious affects of poverty, disadvantage and inequality. For this work Social Life's Social Sustainability framework is used as a basis to understand how residents on the L&Q schemes are feeling about where they live, how this may be affecting the use of outdoor spaces and in turn the social value of these spaces - the role they play in the social life of these communities.

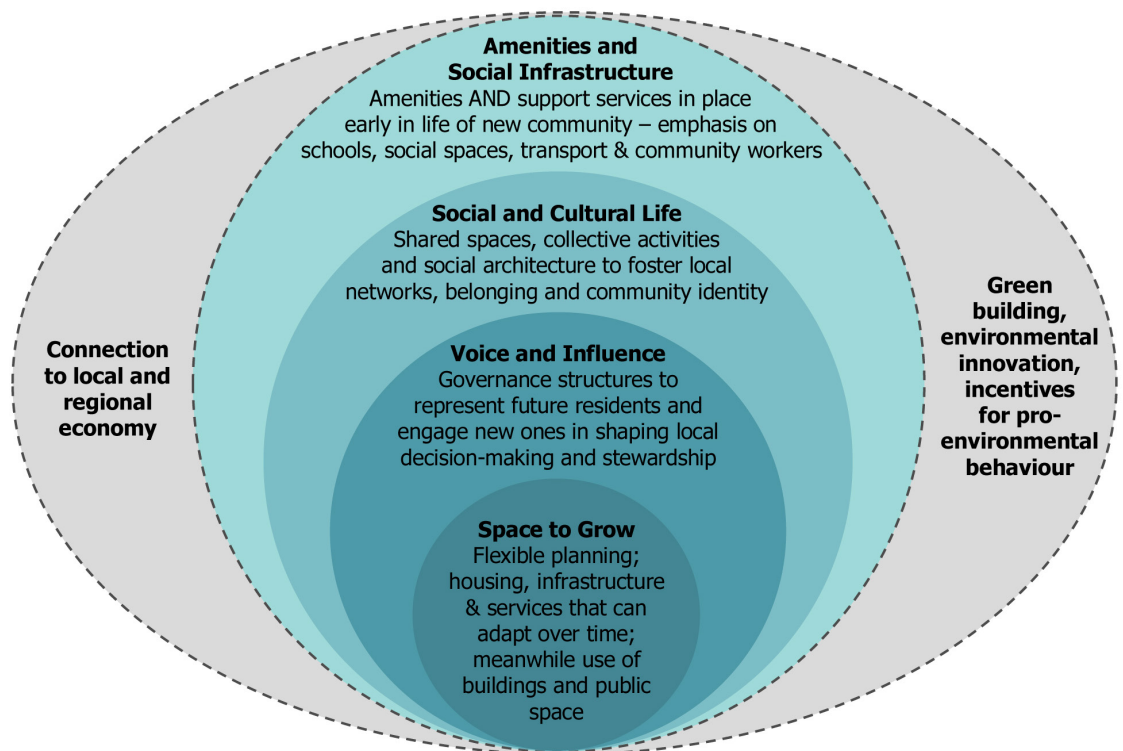


Illustration of Design for Social Sustainability Framework, (Woodcraft et al. 2012)

Case study sites



Silwood, Lewisham



Creekside, Greenwich



Acton Gardens, Ealing



Eltham Baths, Greenwich

How spaces are being used
and how people feel about
them



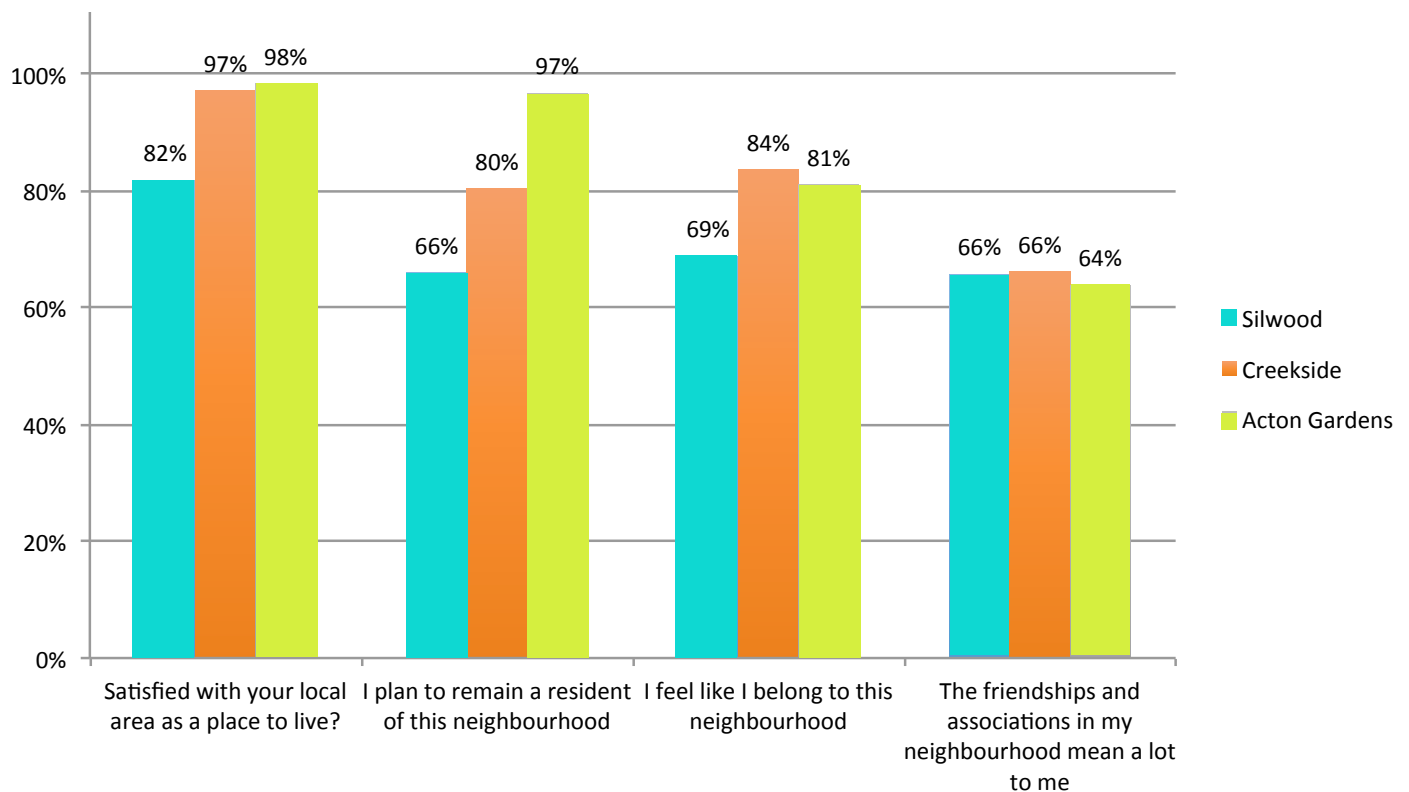
This section describes how L&Q residents feel about where they live, how residents are using the shared outdoor spaces in their developments, how they feel the spaces should be used, and the role shared outdoor spaces play in the social life of the different communities. It summarises findings from both the door-to-door residents survey, which was carried out in three developments (Silwood, Creekside and Acton Gardens), and in-depth interviews, which took place in all four developments (including Eltham Baths).

1. Residents are satisfied with where they live

Overall, residents reported high levels of satisfaction with where they live (see Figure 1). The combined survey results for Silwood, Creekside and Acton Gardens show that 90% of residents say they are ‘very’ or ‘fairly satisfied’ with their local area as a place to live. Figure 1, below, shows how the responses differ for the three developments. 98% of residents at Acton Gardens, 97% of residents at Creekside and 82% of residents at Silwood say they are ‘very’ or ‘fairly satisfied’ with their local area as a place to live.

Residents were also asked how they feel about the development they live on compared to the local area. 97% of residents at Acton Gardens, 96% of residents at Creekside and 81% of Silwood residents say they are ‘very’ or ‘fairly satisfied’ with their development as a place to live. The findings on satisfaction with the area were also reflected in the in-depth resident interviews carried out at Eltham Baths.

[Figure 1] *Feelings about the neighbourhood*

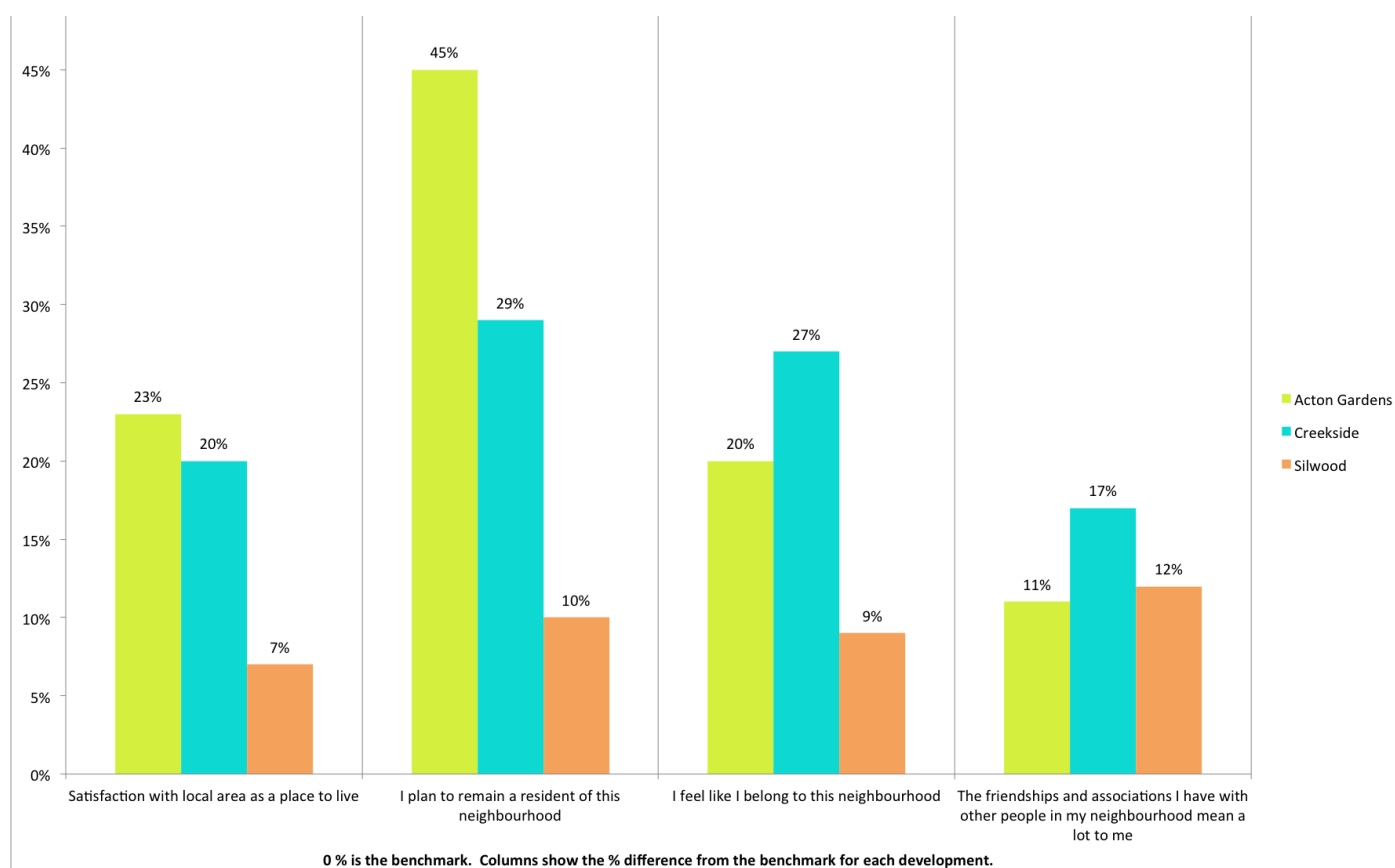


Residents were also asked how settled they feel in the area. 97% of residents at Acton Gardens, 80% at Creekside and 66% at Silwood say they plan to remain resident in the neighbourhood for a number of years. In addition, residents reported strong feelings of belonging to their neighbourhoods. Creekside residents reported the highest levels of belonging: 84% say they agree or strongly agree, compared to 81% at Acton Gardens and 69% at Silwood.

The resident survey asked people if local friendships and associations are important to them. Responses were similar across the three developments. 66% of residents at Creekside and Silwood, and 64% at Acton Gardens, said friendships and associations in the neighbourhood meant a lot to them

The results of the L&Q resident survey were compared to the results of the same questions asked in national surveys. Using the Office of National Statistics Output Area Classifications (OAC) model, it is possible to compare the average responses for different social groups, or OACs, living in small local areas against the results of L&Q residents (see Appendix for a more detailed description). This approach provides a proxy benchmark for local areas. The chart below (Figure 2) shows how L&Q residents' responses differ from the benchmarks for their local areas. For example, it shows that Acton Gardens residents responses to the question "I plan to remain a resident of this neighbourhood" were 45% higher than the benchmark.

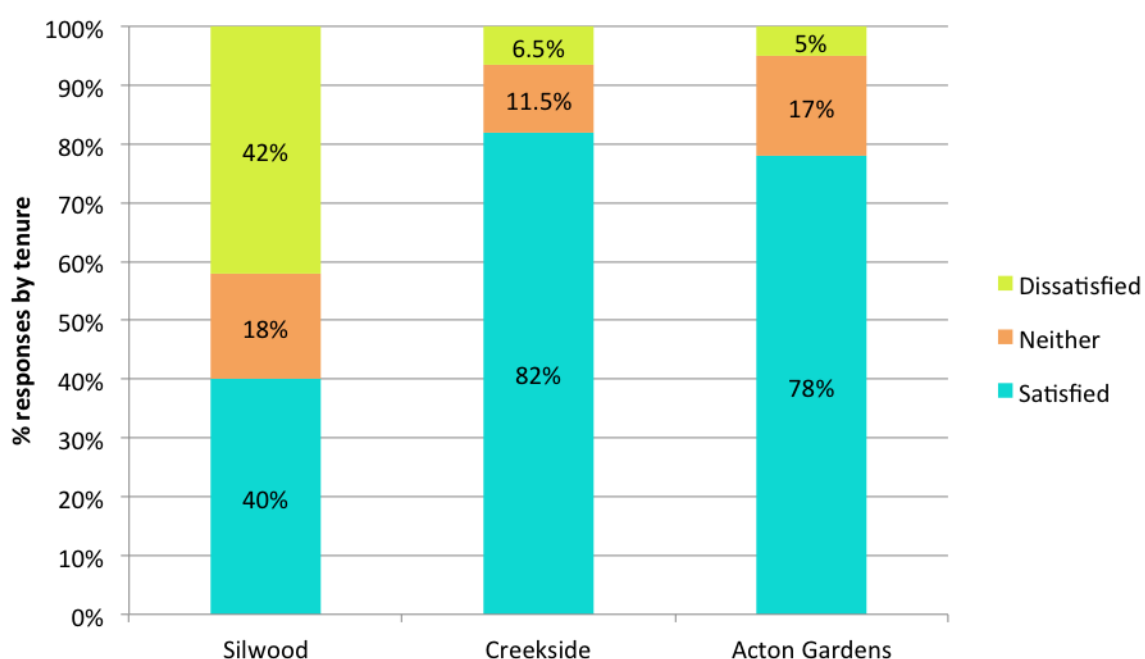
[Figure 2] % difference from the benchmark



2. Residents are generally satisfied with the outdoor spaces, even though they are not well used

Overall, the combined survey results show that 63% of residents say they are ‘very’ or ‘fairly satisfied’ with the outdoor spaces in their developments and 60% say the outdoor spaces are well-used (see Figure 3). However, almost a third of residents (28%) interviewed across the three surveyed developments believed they did not have access to, or did not know if they had access to, a shared outdoor space (Figure 4) and levels of satisfaction and use (Figure 5) vary quite significantly from place to place. This is significant because in all four schemes residents do have access to a shared outdoor space, apart from one General Needs block at Creekside, which only has access to the outside Podium space. At Acton, 90% of residents said they can access the courtyard however all the respondents who stated they do not have access are Leaseholders (52% stated they have no access). This may indicate that they are unaware of it, because many of their flats face outwards, or they don’t feel it is for them to use.

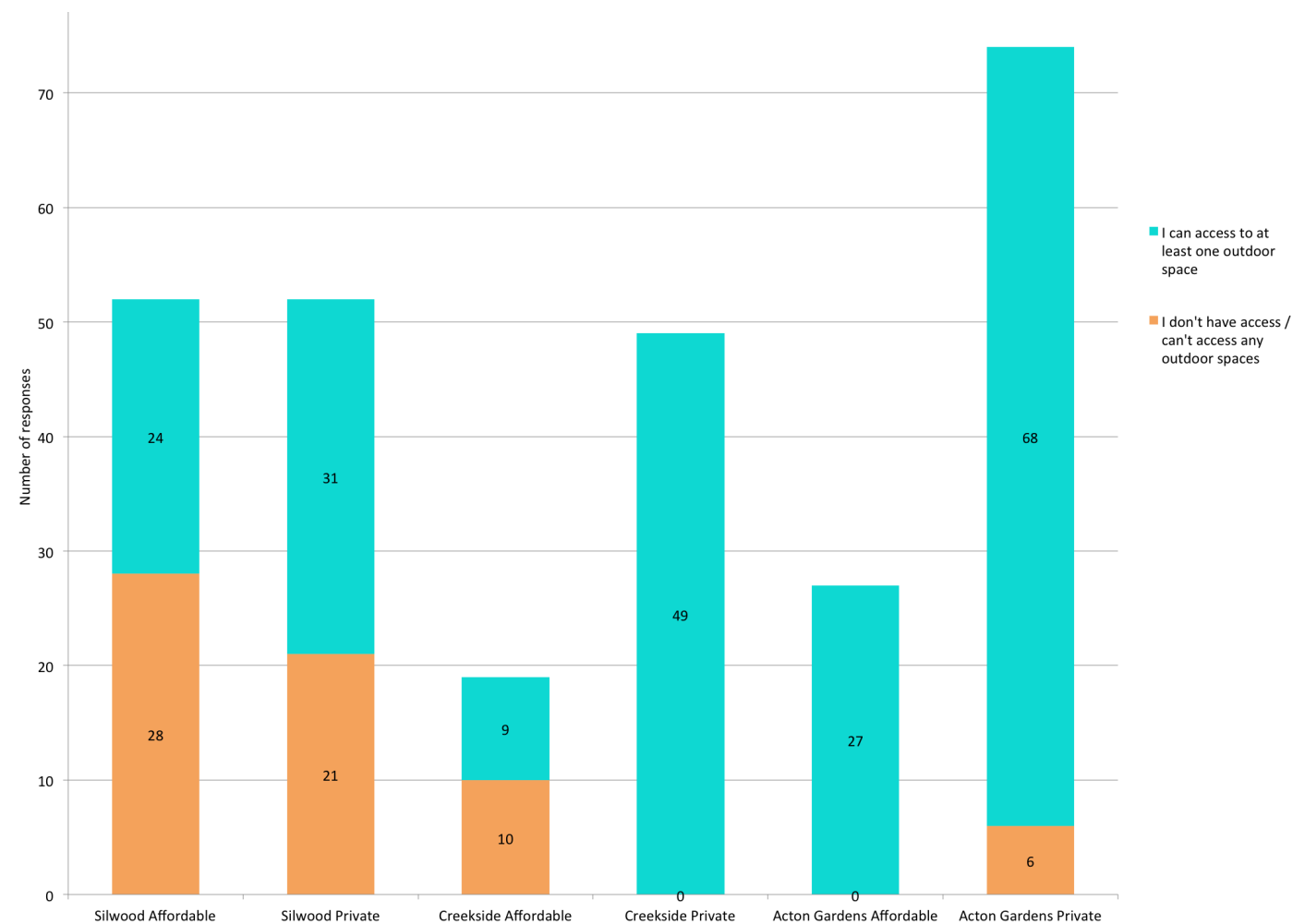
[Figure 3] Overall how satisfied are you with the outdoor space?



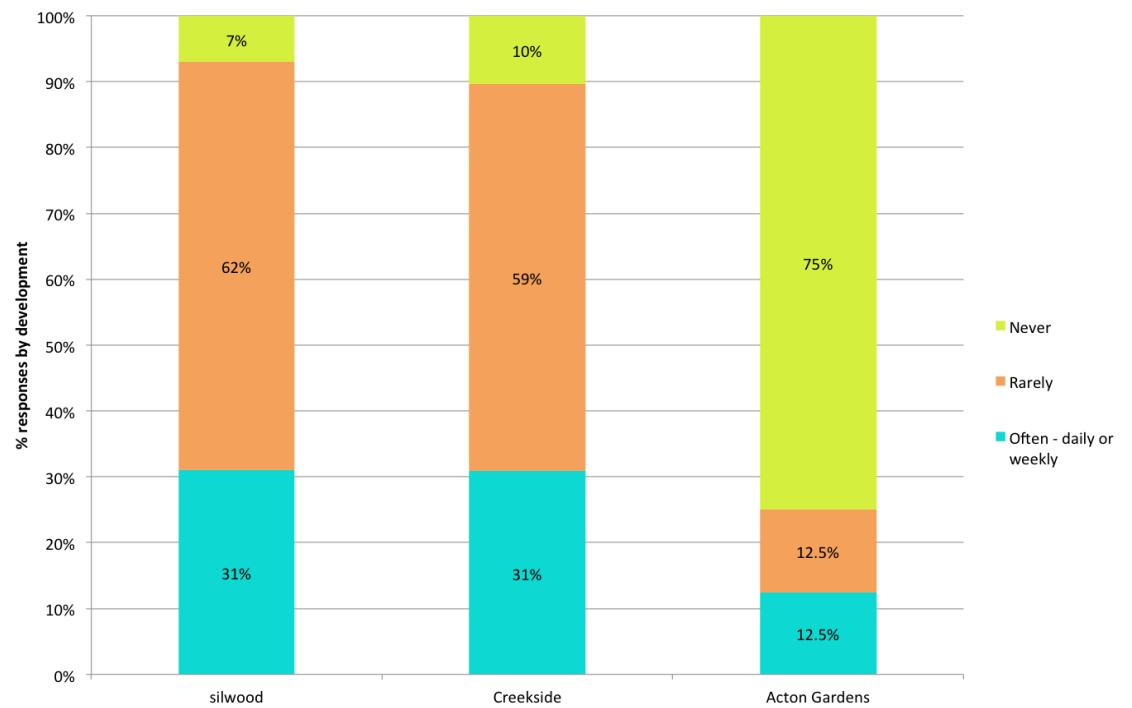
The survey results suggest there is an interesting relationship between satisfaction, perceptions about use, and actual use of the outdoor spaces (Figure 5 and 6). For example at Acton Gardens, 78% of residents are satisfied with the outdoor space and 93% think they are well-used, yet 75% said they personally never use the spaces. 82% of Creekside residents say they are satisfied with the outdoor spaces but only 38% think they spaces are well-used and 69% of residents say they personally ‘rarely’ or ‘never’ use the outdoor spaces. Satisfaction at Silwood is

much lower, only 40% of residents are satisfied with the outdoor spaces, although 53% think the spaces are well-used and 69% say they ‘rarely’ or ‘never’ use the spaces themselves. Access was also quite low for Silwood (28% of residents in affordable housing and 21% of residents in private housing said they had no access). The one-to-one interviews at Silwood showed that this may be related to wider concerns about anti-social behavior and in the case of the home owners because the development is not currently meeting their expectations. (See Figure 6 for perceptions of use).

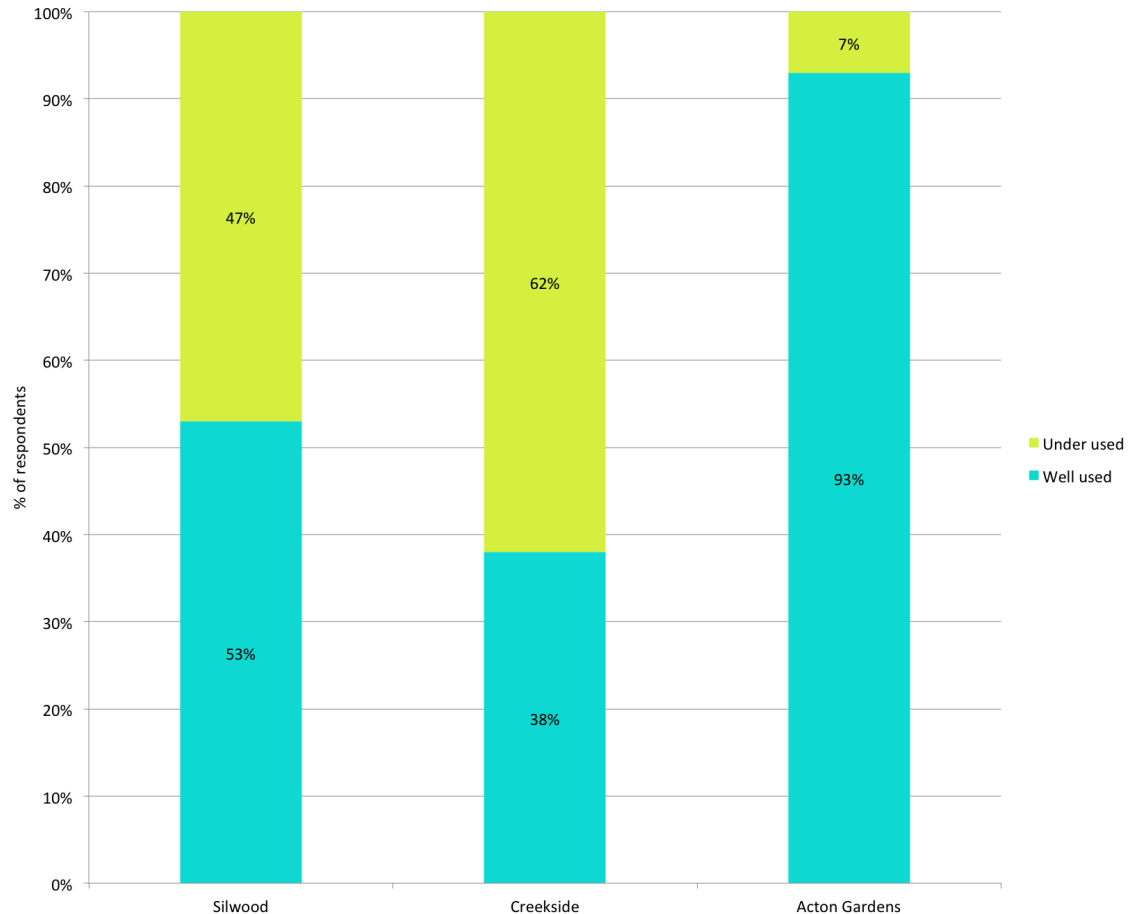
[Figure 4] *Access to outdoor spaces on the development*



[Figure 5] Outdoor spaces - frequency of use



[Figure 6] Do the spaces feel well used or underused?



3. How residents are using the outdoor spaces

Of those who reported using the space, being or relaxing outside, socialising, talking to neighbours, and walking through are the most common uses for outdoor spaces at Acton Gardens, Silwood and Creekside (Figure 7).

- At Acton Gardens, 80% of residents said they are using the outdoor spaces just to be outside, and not for a specific activity.
- At Creekside, 66% of people said they use the outdoor spaces for relaxing, 53% for socializing and 48% said they like to look at the outdoor spaces when they are not (physically) using them.
- At Silwood, 46% of people use the spaces for walking from one place to another, 31% for being outside and 27% for socialising.

[Figure 7] What residents say they use the spaces for



Multiple choice question, % of total residents that chose that activity. "Other" responses - respondents said they use the space but did not specify what for.

The research showed that all the schemes have a very different character and this is reflected in the way they are currently being used. The spaces at Silwood (those within the gated courts) are used as a practical and social facility for children to play, people to walk through, to access bike stores, and talk to their neighbours.

During the observations it was evident that some residents use the entrance through the courtyard to get to their homes, especially if they need to access the bike stores. The lawn space outside the blocks, between 53 and 51 Silwood Street (which are also the only two blocks with access), has no clear purpose and is not being used at all. As the property manager said:

“People just don’t know what to do with it”.

In contrast to the other three developments, Creekside has two very different kinds of spaces for private owners and for General Needs residents and these spaces are being used in different ways. The roof terraces are accessible to all the home owners. These spaces are used for relaxing, socialising and looking at the view. They tend to use these spaces the most on summer evenings, on the weekends or for events like fireworks night or New Years Eve. One resident here told us that the rooftop gardens have been used for activities such as sunbathing, yoga, and photography. Occasionally they organise drinks there. As most of the residents in these blocks are young professionals, these patterns of use are what you would expect. In contrast, the Sky Gardens, which are for General Needs residents, are not well used. This may be related to the fact they are ‘hidden’ within the buildings. Many residents also feel they cannot access these spaces. Nevertheless, some residents say they use it occasionally to relax outside or to supervise their children while they play.

On the whole, residents from all four developments said there is very little to do in the outdoor spaces. Despite this, residents identified how they think the spaces should be used and what improvements there could be.

4. How residents think the spaces should be used

Residents were asked how they felt the outdoor spaces should be used (Figure 8). Relaxing outside and socializing were the top two priorities for residents on all three surveyed developments. This was followed by spaces for looking at, walking through, and exercise.

The improvements that residents said would encourage them to use the spaces more often varied across the developments:

- At Creekside residents prioritised having a covered/shaded area (18 responses) - this is probably a priority for home owners as the Roof Terrace is very exposed. They also said benches and tables (15) and better access and fewer rules (8). This was also evident in the one-to-one interviews where residents stated that currently there were too many restrictions
- At Acton Gardens, there were no clear priorities, however, some residents suggested more facilities for children (5 responses), benches and tables (3) and exercise facilities (3) which corresponds to the findings from the in-depth interviews.
- At Silwood the priorities are cleaning/maintenance (29 responses), more tables and chairs (18) and more facilities for children (17).

[Figure 8] *What residents say the spaces should be used for*



Summary

The research suggests that the outdoor spaces are important to residents in all of the developments even if they don't personally use the spaces on a regular basis. 71% of residents said that maintenance of the outdoor spaces is important to them. The majority of residents agree the outdoor spaces should be used for relaxing outside, socialising, walking from one place to another, and for looking at.

As people are generally feeling good about where they live, the shared outdoor spaces could become an outlet for these positive feelings about the community, and therefore there is the potential for them to become really thriving communal areas.

The next section will explore the key constraints and opportunities for increasing the use of the outdoor spaces.

Constraints & opportunities for increasing the use of outdoor spaces



This section explores the constraints and opportunities for increasing the use of outdoor spaces. Drawing on the design assessment, the one-to-one interviews, the residents survey and the site observations, we identify:

- Eight key factors affecting the use of outdoor spaces on the four developments,
- The role they play in the social life of these communities and
- The implications for design and management.

1. The purpose of the outdoor spaces is unclear

The research indicates that a key barrier to greater use of the spaces is that the purpose of the space is unclear, and as a result it is putting people off using the spaces or wanting anyone else to use them.

The lack of clarity about the purpose of these spaces is creating tension as people's different expectations are not being met. This is particularly the case with private owners at Acton Gardens and Silwood, who showed lower satisfaction with the spaces overall. This was mainly because they felt they were not getting what they expected.

“We need to manage expectations. People moving from houses to flats have different expectations.” (Property Manager, Eltham Baths)

The interviews revealed that management approach on all four schemes is usually to identify the cause of the problem and prohibit or prevent the problematic activity so that the source of conflict is removed.

“When you have to choose between e.g. noise and no noise, you have to choose the more peaceful option.” (Property Manager, Eltham Baths).

However as a result of this management strategy, the outdoor spaces are becoming more like ornaments, peaceful places for looking at, as opposed to a functional social resource. Overall, residents said that the spaces feel more ornamental than practical (62% said ‘ornamental’, 38% said ‘practical’) and much more peaceful than noisy (93% said ‘peaceful’, 7% said ‘noisy’). This trend is also reflected in the low levels of use identified in the survey and the fact that people mainly see it as a space for relaxing.

Despite the incremental restriction on uses, this ‘look but don’t touch’ feel of the spaces seems to have been intentionally integrated into the design.

“This isn’t a place to play footy - this is a place for people to sit, relax, and enjoy the plants and trees”. (Silwood, Shared ownership)

>>> Implications

- The social role and identity of spaces cannot be prescribed at the design stage, they are emergent; defined over time as residents, management, and design impose different meanings onto these places.
- Providing information in a variety of ways can help residents understand the potential uses but also the constraints of the spaces provided for them.

2. The spaces look nice but are poorly maintained

At Acton Gardens, Creekside and Silwood, residents said that the spaces were well designed (86% overall), but the interviews revealed residents felt they were poorly maintained. On all the schemes maintenance of the spaces was important to residents: 86% at Acton Gardens said it was important, 83% at Silwood, 69% at Creekside.



Plants maintained by residents



Plants maintained by L&Q

The observations showed that on all four developments, newly planted shrubs and trees were already dying and planting was overgrown with weeds and mushrooms. One Silwood resident said that if the spaces were better tended, they would use them a lot more.

For home owners, levels of satisfaction with the outdoor spaces appears to be related to the maintenance of the spaces. At Silwood for example, levels of satisfaction for home owners was particularly low (20%). In the interviews, private owners said they feel the spaces are neglected much more than the affordable tenants did (25% of affordable renters, 45% private owners). The majority (86%)

said the maintenance of the spaces was ‘very important’ to them. Secondly, the interviews showed that many home owners feel that the service charge is higher than they expected and they do not feel they are getting what they paid for.

>>> Implications

- There is evidence showing that green places can contribute to people’s health and wellbeing (CABE 2010). According to a CABE study, up to 85% of people felt that the quality of the built environment and public spaces has a direct impact on their quality of life and how they felt (Woolley et al. 2014).

The combined survey results showed that 94% overall said that the maintenance of the spaces was important to them (71% said it was ‘very important’, 23% said ‘quite important’). It also showed that overall 74% of respondents stated that it was important for them to feel that they can influence decisions about how outdoor space is managed and maintained (44% said ‘very important’, 30% said ‘quite important’). The interviews revealed that the lack of maintenance of the outdoor spaces was a point of frustration.

The one-to-one interviews and the survey showed that residents are willing to get involved in maintaining spaces. At Silwood a couple of residents started to prune the lavender in the planters and after a while more adults and children got involved. At Acton Gardens residents asked if they could maintain the planters by their windows themselves because they were unsightly, however, they were told it was already being maintained. At Eltham, residents in the Over 55s block would like to look after the flower beds but the beds are too large, so they can’t access the plants. The space also doesn’t have anywhere to sit and rest. Nevertheless, they are now setting up a climbing wall for food growing.

>>> Implications

- Involving residents in the maintenance and management of their spaces can have a positive influence on developing social capital and social inclusion (Madanipour 2004). In addition, involving everyone with an interest in a space in the early stages of the development as well as during the development can increase the chances of success for that space (Shackell et al. 2008).

3. The spaces are not catering for the needs of different age groups

At Eltham Baths, Acton Gardens and Silwood, residents said in the interviews that children were the most frequent users of the outdoor spaces. They use the shared spaces after school, during the holidays and in the summer to play and socialise. However, over time, residents have been increasingly excluded from it. This is because, in all four places, the spaces are commonly seen as unsuitable for children to play in:

“The design [of the sky gardens] is not suitable for kids” (Creekside, Estate Manager).

No Ball Games

On all four schemes ball games are not allowed. However, at Silwood, Acton, and Eltham Gardens this rule was only implemented retrospectively. Many residents felt kids playing ball games was a nuisance and so the rule was enforced. Now there are signs forbidding ball games. Although it was never stated from the start that this wasn't allowed, it is implicit in the design. The property manager said that ball games are not "appropriate in an enclosed space" and "the space is not designed for it".

In most of the spaces there was a feeling that there were so many restrictions enforced stopping children to play, that the spaces were not intended for their use. At Eltham the Over 55s block said the the noise and chaos from the other blocks was "bedlam". As a result, now all ball games, scooters, and bicycles have been banned in the space.

The in-depth interviews revealed that at Eltham Gardens, Acton Gardens and Silwood children's use of the outdoor spaces became a common cause of tension between neighbours.

On all three schemes residents feel that "things have calmed down" since rules have been enforced, however there was also a feeling that there are now so many restrictions stopping children playing, that the spaces are no longer fit for them to use at all.

"It makes me a bit sad, when there are no children playing or when it is completely quiet" (Property Manager, Eltham Baths).

When asked about what improvements would make them use the spaces more often, residents at all four schemes said they would like more facilities for children. However at Acton Gardens it was felt that children have taken over the spaces and more needed to be provided for adults.

>>> Implications

- Children play an important role in facilitating social interactions between residents - parents meet each other through the relationships children have (Bond et al. 2013; Jupp et al. 1999). Well-designed play spaces are also important as playing contributes to children's physical, social, and cognitive development (Shackell et al. 2008).

4. Most of the outdoor spaces are not fit for purpose

The interview showed that Eltham Baths, Acton Gardens and Silwood, one of the main things that appears to be affecting neighbourly relationships and feelings about the spaces is other residents using the spaces. Complaints are often made about people being a nuisance, littering and privacy. In most cases it is not the fault of the residents, but is caused by the places not being fit for purpose. In many cases this is an issue with the layout and design of the housing and outdoor

spaces. Research shows that the design factors which commonly contribute to spaces being underused, include lack of privacy, noise, and unattractiveness (Griffin 2012; I'DGO 2012).

A key design factor that is affecting the use of the spaces and relationships on the developments is the layout of the housing. The design assessment showed that in all four schemes the housing is of quite a high density and the outdoor areas are arranged around the blocks in such a way that the spaces feel quite enclosed.

“It’s a very enclosed space.” (Property Manager, Acton)

The interviews revealed that at Acton Gardens, Silwood and Eltham Baths residents facing the outdoor spaces said they felt quite exposed, especially when their bedroom or living room backs onto the space. The survey showed that at Silwood in particular residents felt the outdoor spaces were exposed (58% of respondents said the outdoor spaces felt ‘Exposed’ rather than ‘Secluded’). At Acton Gardens it seems to be more the residents living on the ground floor rather than the whole development (93% said it felt secluded). One resident at Eltham Baths says she feels very exposed, especially because you can hear everything around. The sky gardens at Creekside are the most problematic as they have bedroom windows directly onto the sky gardens, which are already enclosed spaces. This led to restrictions being placed on the time of day these spaces may be used, which might prevents other residents feeling welcome there.

Homes overheating

Homes overheating was an issue for residents on all four developments. This is typical on many new housing developments where lightweight construction means there is a low thermal mass and homes change temperature a lot quicker as a result. In this case it is having an impact on how the spaces are used.

“It’s like an oven in here” (General Needs mother, Creekside).

In some ways, it has a positive impact because people on all four schemes reported using their patios and balconies more to cool down. At Creekside, people use the sky gardens to escape the heat in the homes:

“In summer everyone’s out there because it’s so hot in the houses” (General Needs mother, Creekside).

However, overheating is also affecting levels of privacy - as people often need to keep their windows and balcony doors open, noise from the courtyards travels more and becomes a nuisance. This was experienced especially at the two smaller, enclosed spaces at Eltham Baths and Acton Gardens.

>>> Implications

- Outdoor spaces are usually intended to provide a transition from private indoor spaces and the public realm. Private spaces can become too public if the spaces are not designed in a way that creates a sufficient boundary between the two areas.

Another issue that has caused complaints about the outdoor spaces is that there is a history of people congregating and making too much noise. The spaces have been designed to have many hard surfaces, so sound travels significantly. Despite the value of green spaces for wellbeing, there is an increasing emphasis on ‘hard landscaping’, as there is a common perception that it requires less maintenance.

Residents say that over the summer the issues with noise get worse as more children are playing outside and residents are forced to leave their windows open because the houses overheat. The summer months also attract non-residents who use Silwood Street as “a rat-run at night” (Silwood resident). This makes some residents feel intimidated and also creates a lot of noise.

Lastly, the design assessment and qualitative interviews showed that sometimes design is being used to ‘solve’ or prevent problems such as noise and anti-social behaviour that would be better to address through management. For example, the rolling lawns at Acton Gardens are designed to prevent ball games, and the high levels of security at Silwood is designed to deter unwanted people from entering, however neither of these design strategies are working.



Secure entrance to the shared lawn



Typical gated entrance to courts with CCTV

>>> Implications

- There is evidence to suggest that when spaces are over designed or have extensive rules applied it can inhibit their use (Curley 2010; Means & Tims 2005).
- Sometimes the neglect of positive activities to address issues surrounding nuisance, noise crime and anti-social behaviour, results in defensive design strategies which prevent not only those activities, but any activities taking place at all. As Whyte points out: “So-called ‘undesirables’ are not the problem. It is the measures taken to combat them that is the problem... The best way to handle the problem of undesirables is to make the place attractive to everyone else.” (Whyte 1970)

5. Residents are satisfied with the rules and guidelines for the spaces and have a good relationship with L&Q staff

The survey for Acton Gardens, Silwood and Creekside showed that residents are satisfied with the rules around management and the interviews on all four schemes revealed that residents have a good relationship with their property managers.

At Silwood the majority of the respondents (65 out of 82 responses) said they were not aware of the rules, which indicates that they have not come up against them. At Creekside the majority said the rules were fair (28 out of 47 responses). Similarly, at Acton Gardens the majority said the rules were fair (33 out of 31 responses). In the interviews residents could all identify an estate manager by name and many said they relied a lot on the property managers to share their concerns and get information. For instance, at Eltham Baths the property manager even attends the tea mornings organised by the Over 55 residents.

6. Positive neighbourly relations

On all four schemes residents reported having strong neighbourhood relationships (65% said the friendships in their neighbourhood mean a lot to them). The qualitative interviews also revealed that most people felt they had a neighbour to talk to if they had a problem or needed some information. In the case of Silwood, the interviews suggested that people know a few of their neighbours within their own gated cluster and that the development is a place where people from different backgrounds get along (88%). These neighbourly relationships within the courts seem to be helping people feel more secure and informed about where they live. One General Needs resident said that neighbours watch out for the other children playing - she says she feels quite safe leaving her children in the courtyard with the neighbours being there.

Residents expressed a desire for outdoor furniture so people can socialise more. On all four schemes, residents said they wanted more benches, tables and chairs. A resident at Eltham said it would be good to have some chairs outside to sit and chat with neighbours “then you can build your relationships”.

>>> Implications

- Evidence shows that shared spaces can nurture neighbourhood relationships and these relationships in turn can nurture shared spaces. Getting to know people and trusting them is important for a community to grow, and shared outdoor spaces can create places for people to meet. This is particularly important in new communities as it takes time for them to develop socially. Communal areas, like shared courtyards, can play an important role in nurturing these relationships early on.
- Similarly, neighbourly relationships can strongly influence the extent to which people use shared spaces. However, not knowing one's neighbours can be a barrier to using courtyards - a common reason people do not use such spaces is because of uncertainty and a fear of upsetting neighbours (Griffin 2012). If residents do not get along with neighbours, they may avoid possible encounters, whereas if they have a good relationship they may welcome these opportunities to interact.

7. There are good relationships between some neighbours but there are poorer links between neighbours of different blocks and tenures

The in-depth interviews showed that links between neighbours on different blocks are weak. As tenures are divided into different blocks this has an impact on the development of relationships between home owners and affordable renters. On two of the schemes (Creekside and Eltham Baths) there are very little opportunities for people of different tenures to interact or even see each other.

In addition, on all the schemes, residents do not have to pass through the outdoor spaces to get to their homes. Some residents on the ground level have access, however, those who live on the upper floors do not. They may be able to see it from the hallway or their balconies but in many cases there is not even a visual connection.

>>> Implications

- There is substantial evidence to suggest that informal social contact in shared outdoor spaces in inner-city neighbourhoods can contribute to stronger social ties in these communities (Curley 2010; Kuo et al. 1998, Silverman et al. 2005). Divisions of different groups into separate living areas and spaces is problematic because it hinders relationships developing across groups with different needs and aspirations (for where they live). This disconnect has implications for the outdoor spaces on mixed tenure developments because where spaces are shared between different blocks, they offer the opportunity for people of different tenures to interact.

8. The spaces are not supporting links with the wider community

Integration with the wider neighbourhood varies in each place, however, the design and management of the outdoor spaces could play a greater role in enabling the development of a relationship with the surrounding area. In terms of design, the

design assessment showed that all the schemes have spaces which are enclosed and inaccessible to the public which can affect the community's integration into the neighbourhood. The interviews with staff also revealed that there is not a clear strategy for linking up these communities with the neighbourhoods they are situated in.

The one-to-one interviews and site observations showed that at Eltham the Over 55s block is opposite an Age UK centre and yet there has been no strategy to work together. At Creekside there are a range of units on the ground floor of the towers which helps to create links not only with the wider neighbourhood but also with other residents. For example, a General Needs resident told Social Life that she uses the gym and this is the time when she meets residents from the home owner blocks.

At Acton Gardens many residents previously lived on the South Acton estate and therefore have maintained their previous ties with the community. This is also the case at Silwood. Nevertheless, at Silwood in particular, local integration seems to be a significant factor affecting the use of the outdoor spaces. Perceptions of high levels of crime and anti-social behaviour in the area are affecting the internal life of the community. The design assessment shows that the design of the spaces is responding to this pre-existing context by creating an overly defensive design which has created a hostile environment.

>>> Implications

- How a development links with the wider neighbourhood can affect how people perceive spaces and how they are used. With regard to the design, inward looking spaces can adversely affect relationships with surrounding neighbourhood.
- A recent report by CABI showed that a key barrier to using open space can be feeling unsafe - including both the physical environment (lack of lighting, overgrown areas) as well as the threat of others (presence of gangs or drug use) (CABI 2010). However, these types of fears around safety have been found to often be based on perception and reputation, rather than experiences (Worpole & Knox 2007). Safety can be influenced on the length of time people had lived in an area - new residents can feel unsafe more easily (Bond et al. 2013).

Recommendations



Taking the evidence into account, we have drawn the following conclusions about what can be done, specifically in relation to management and design, to increase the use of spaces in ways that foster positive relationships.

1. Amplify residents' willingness to act by getting them involved in decisions that affect their community

In all four schemes there is an opportunity to build on the good relationships between neighbours as well as with staff working on the scheme, as this is a fertile ground for creating thriving spaces. In new developments in particular, it is important for residents to feel that they are being listened to when they have concerns. Maintaining the good relationship that has been built with L&Q staff with all tenures will help people settle in better in the scheme. In addition, caretakers are part of the everyday life of these places and speak to residents on a daily basis. This is a useful point of contact which L&Q can use.

Local people should not only be used to gather information, but be involved in such a way to create ownership, increase satisfaction with the final outcome and increase the long term commitment to the space (Shackell et al. 2008). This is important for residents of all ages to ensure the space is usable for them and to give them a sense of ownership (CABE n.d.).

Management strategy:

- Set up events like summer BBQs, picnics and film screenings.
- Help set up a mixed tenure residents group for residents to get involved in decision making and sharing information.

Setting up a residents group

By setting up a residents group early in the life of a development, residents of all tenures could be encouraged to take action to improve their local community. The group could start with an emphasis on social activities; the first residents joining may be invited from the outset to work with L&Q to set up social activities. Early tasks could include organising the first resident's events and then shared activities like a BBQ in the outdoor spaces. Future events could take place on the outer envelope of the development to link it with the surrounding neighbourhood and improve links with neighbours from the surrounding blocks.

The residents group can also be a space for residents to share concerns, liaise with L&Q about the various issues that affect residents, from service charge queries to safety. It could campaign for change on issues that residents feel strongly about. The hope is that by embedding this social, pro-active function from the outset, this group could feel responsibility, and "ownership", of the social life of the development, which will complement its more traditional representative functions. Ensuring that residents of all tenures participate can create an opportunity for residents to hear concerns from people that are currently not in their block and may help to reduce any neighbour tensions.

Design strategy:

- Create flexible places that allow residents the opportunity to shape them over time.
- Share information with caretakers about key community events or information about the development so they can inform residents

2. Create more inclusive spaces

Research into sustainable urban parks shows that the design and management of spaces should take into account the different motives people have for visiting recreational spaces and the different activities they might undertake (Chiesura 2004). Evidence also shows that inclusive spaces can contribute to a sense of belonging and social integration (CABE 2010; Madanipour 2004).

Group activities and events organised in public spaces can help increase understanding between different groups, and can contribute to a sense of community: experiences can be more important than place (Madanipour 2004; Means & Tims 2005).

Management strategy:

- Talk to children about play spaces and involve them in the design process.
- Organise activities in the courtyards that involve people from different blocks. For example invite residents from each block to bring a dish along, or host a BBQ.
- Spend more time communicating with Leaseholders about what would encourage them to use the spaces more and finding out why many do not feel that they can access the spaces.

Design strategy:

- Encourage informal encounters. There is substantial evidence to suggest that informal social contact in shared outdoor spaces in inner-city neighbourhoods can contribute to stronger social ties in these communities (Curley 2010; Kuo et al. 1998). Therefore encouraging informal encounters that are 'designed in' can help with integration in the long term.
- Provide movable outdoor furniture like benches and tables can enable people to socialise in the way they want to and in their preferred location.
- Provide a range of spaces with diverse activities for everyone to use, but avoid being too prescriptive. Spaces that provide for a range of ages and needs, are crucial in making people feel welcome and to increase use (Shackell et al. 2008; Madanipour 2004). Children and young people need 'playable' spaces - spaces with the potential for different uses which they can adapt to suit their needs (Shackell et al. 2008).

3. Improve local integration

It is important to design spaces that are inviting people in, rather than keeping them away. The threshold between public and private spaces is a key point at which design can influence the messages it send to people about whether they are welcome and whether the spaces are safe.

Management strategy:

- Work with local organisations to create a more integrated approach to service provision. For example, at Silwood a local outreach programme could be set up with the Lewington centre.
- Encourage more dialogue between neighbours beyond their own block: Organise and support community activities to improve links with surrounding neighbourhood such as street parties.

Design Strategy:

- Ensure there are visual links between public spaces like the street and private spaces.
- Design welcoming entrances with positive messages rather than negative ones that discourage people from entering.

4. Put less pressure on design to solve social problems

Design and management have to work in tandem, there's a limit to what they can do in isolation. Putting too much pressure on design to solve social problems may have an adverse effect on the community and the use of the spaces as they become more about exclusion rather than inclusion.

Research shows that interaction in public spaces in cities can be increased by encouraging social behaviour, providing opportunities, and engaging with them, instead of regulating anti-social behaviour (Means & Tims 2005).

Sometimes it is better to leave spaces less defined to allow the residents to take ownership of these places themselves and create their own sense of identity. There is evidence to suggest that spaces that are flexible, adaptable, customisable are important for increasing use by residents (Curley, 2010). Spaces cannot be designed by only designers and architects, but must involve the people who will use them, in order for them to reach their maximum potential in the long term (Means & Tims 2005; CABE n.d.).

Management strategy:

- Encourage more neighbourly activities in the spaces and outside so that people feel more ownership of them.

Design strategy:

- Create less active surveillance like CCTV and more passive surveillance like eyes on the street.

5. Create greener gardens that residents can maintain

People should not be prevented from using the spaces because other neighbours will hear them. Strategies are needed to negotiate the need for peace and privacy and the right to use the outdoor spaces. Trees and soft landscaping absorb sound much better than hard surfaces and the increase in foliage over the summer months will also counteract the extra noise during this period. Planting can also be used as a natural screen for residents on the ground floor who feel exposed. Furthermore, research has shown that spaces with grass and trees are used more and contribute more to neighbourhood bonding than spaces without these features (Kuo et al. 1998).

Extra planting and greener spaces will potentially require more investment. However the research showed that residents are willing to be involved in the maintenance of these spaces. It provides an opportunity for community groups to develop based on their skills and interests. Research shows that when residents are involved in shaping their environment it increases levels of belonging (FutureCommunities.net, 2009). Gardening can also be a therapeutic individual or group activity, especially for older residents, contributing a range of health and social benefits (Morris, 2003).

Management strategy:

- Help set up a resident led gardening group that maintains the spaces in the long term. Encourage residents from different blocks and of different ages to get involved in either one off planting/maintenance activities or regular gardening.

Design Strategy:

- Provide extra planting for noise reduction and privacy.
- Create planting areas that will be practical for residents to maintain.



Flowers on the Roof Terraces.

Design Assessment

This section comprises a design assessment of the outdoor spaces on the four schemes including considerations around access, safety, landscaping, overall design quality and the relationship with the surroundings. It also includes a set of design recommendations. This work was carried out by the architect Roland Karthaus.



1. Silwood estate



Railway



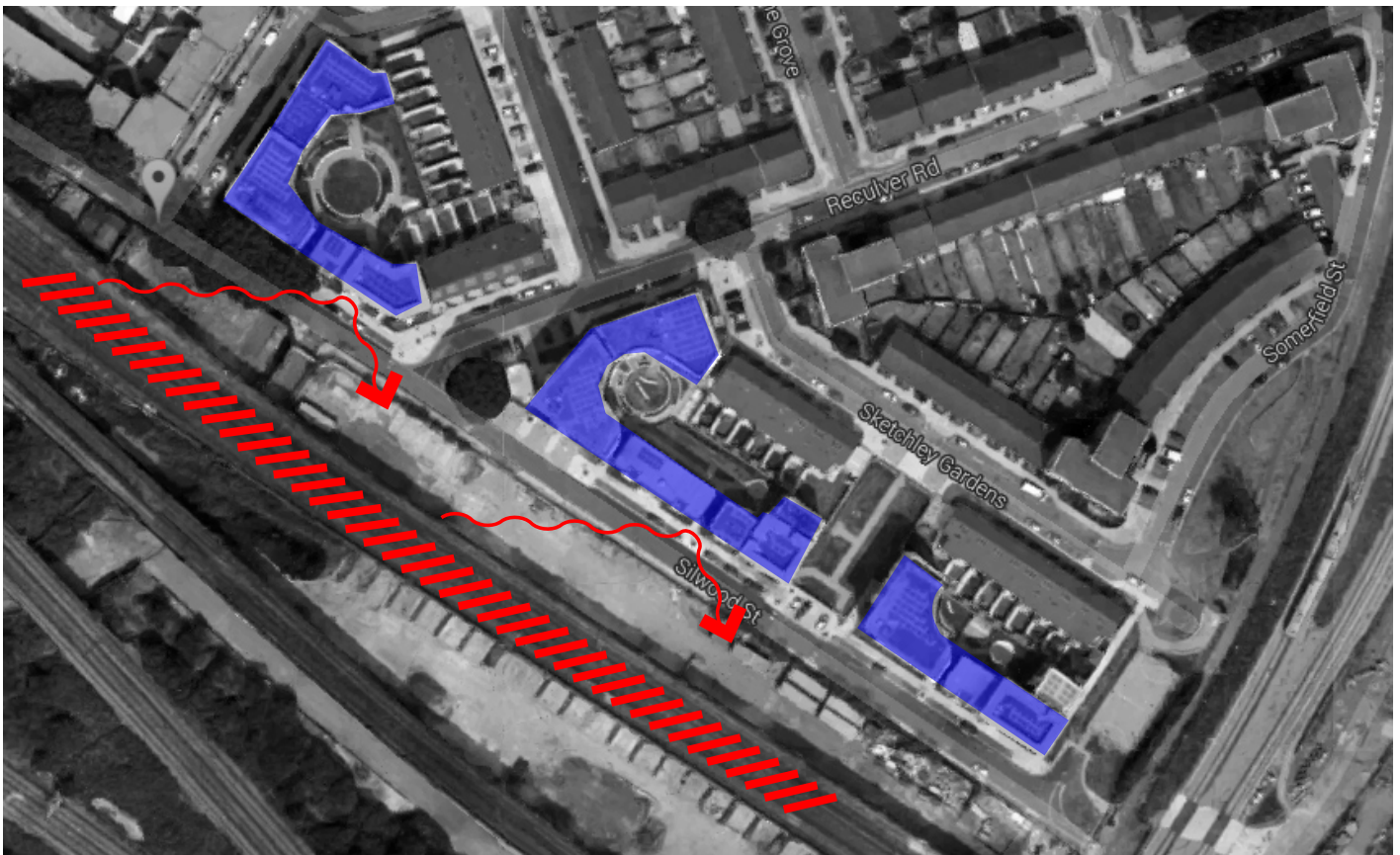
Noise



Tall building

Context

- Orientation of blocks in response to railway boundary condition
- Disconnected edge to urban pattern and blank frontage creates 'defensive' and insecure feeling

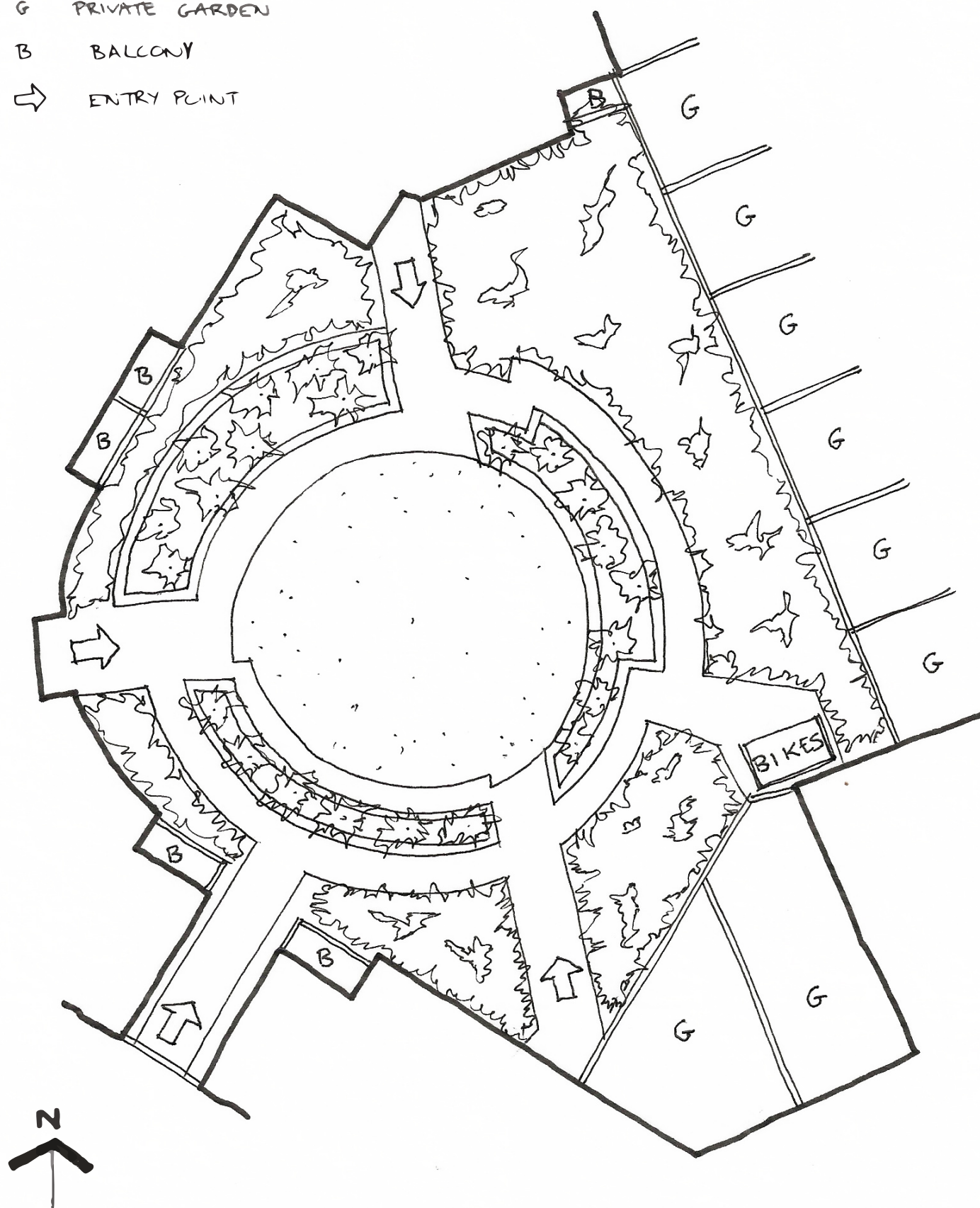


Courtyard 1

G PRIVATE GARDEN

B BALCONY

➔ ENTRY POINT





Courtyard 1 design: positives

- Good visual connection between courtyard and street
- Clearly-defined space
- Good passive surveillance (overlooking)

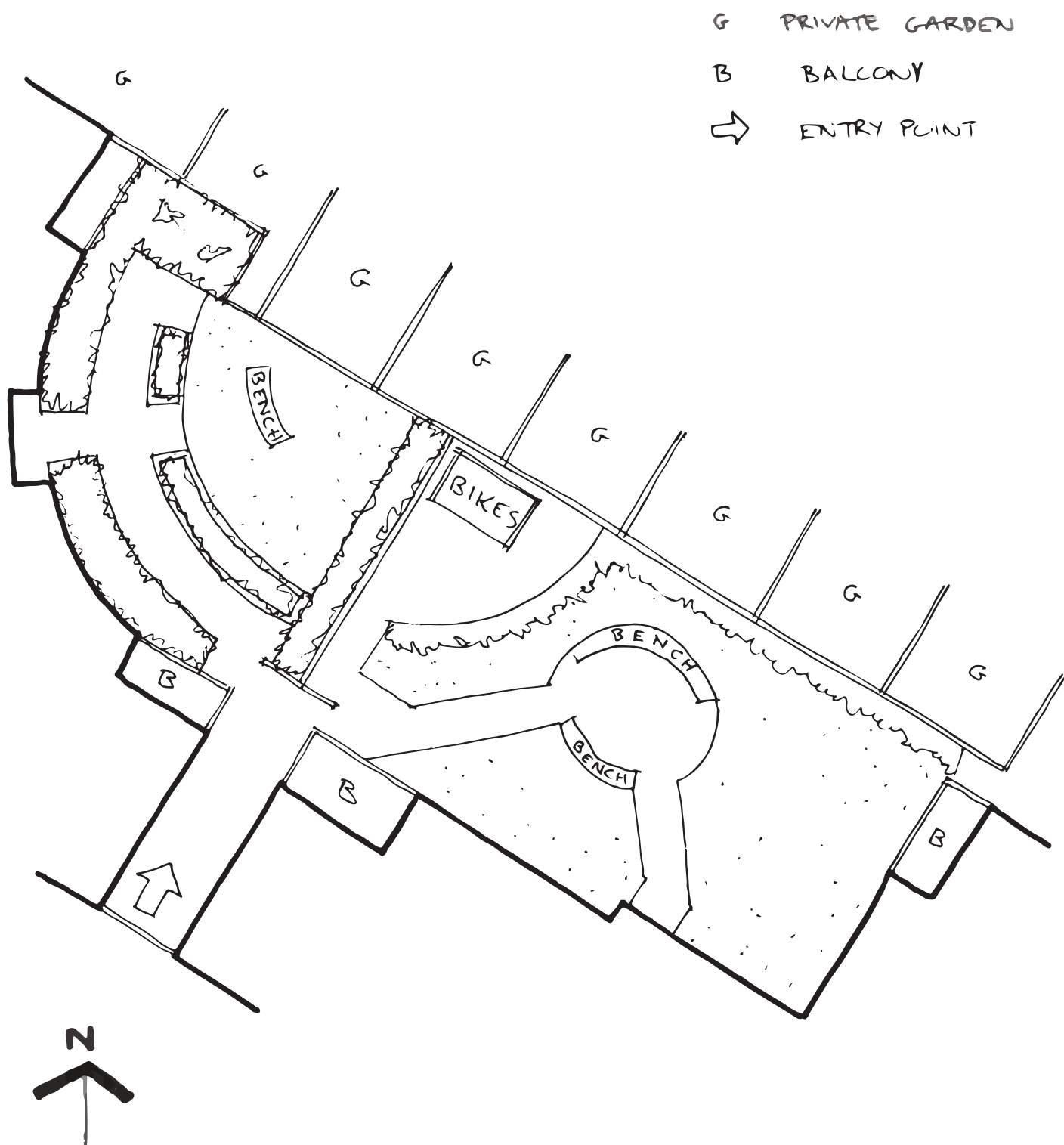


Courtyard 1 design: Negatives

- North-facing orientation means virtually no direct sunlight
- Scale and form of space generates intimidating feeling of constantly being watched (panopticon-like)
- Overly-defensive design measures enhance the feeling of insecurity and lack of community 'ownership'



Courtyard 2





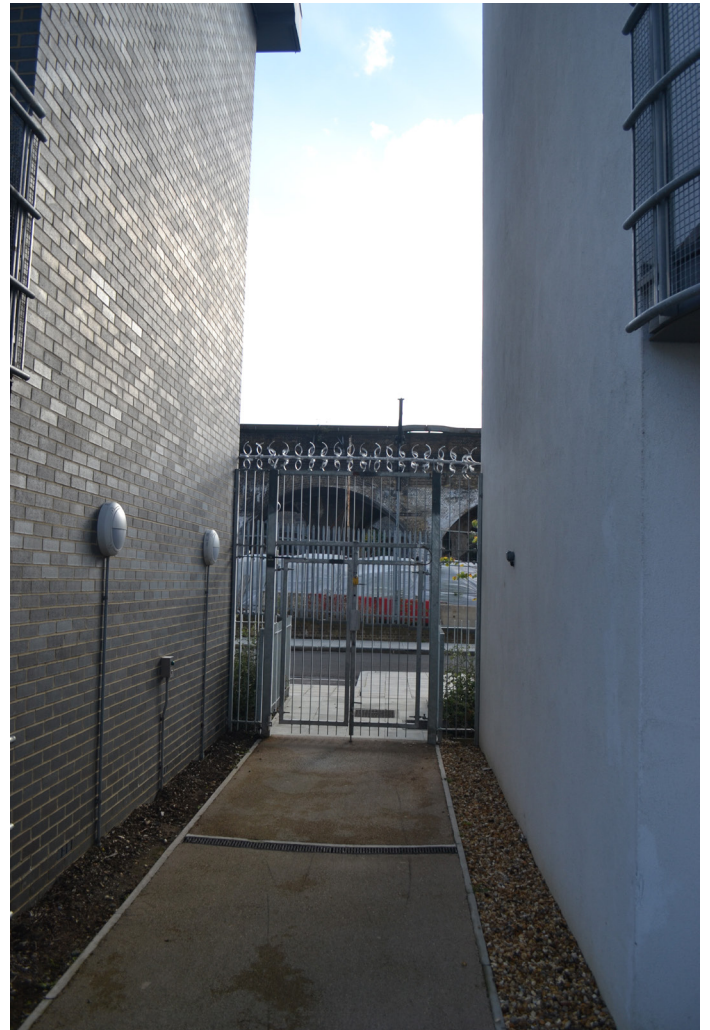
Courtyard 2 design: positives

- Better shape (wide) in relation to height of buildings, reduces feelings of being watched whilst retaining passive surveillance; less intimidating
- Split between tenures is not overly divisive



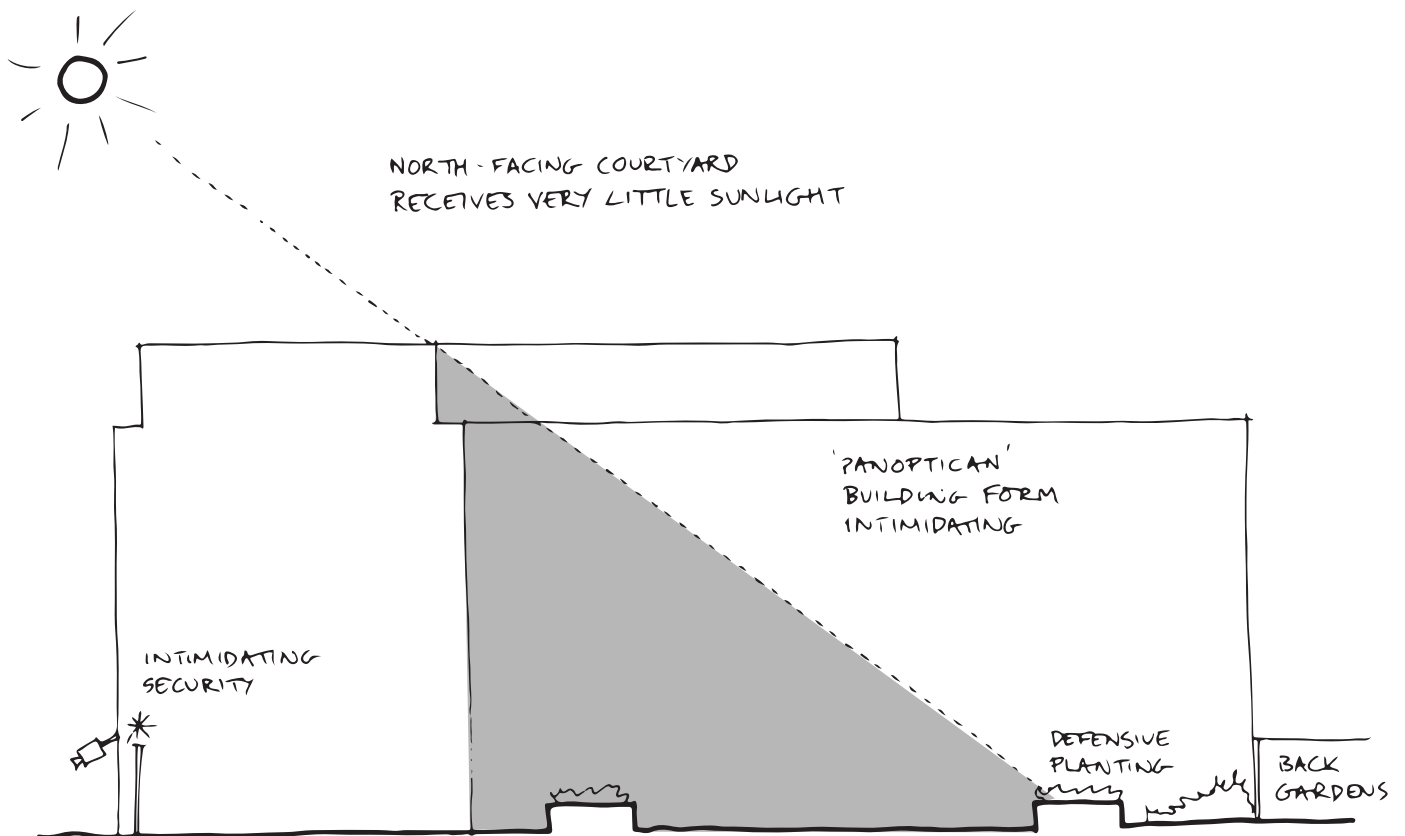
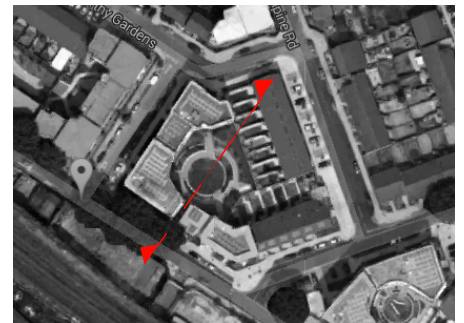
Courtyard 2 design: negatives

- North orientation means little sunlight penetration
- Visual connection with street is weaker
- Still too many defensive design measures



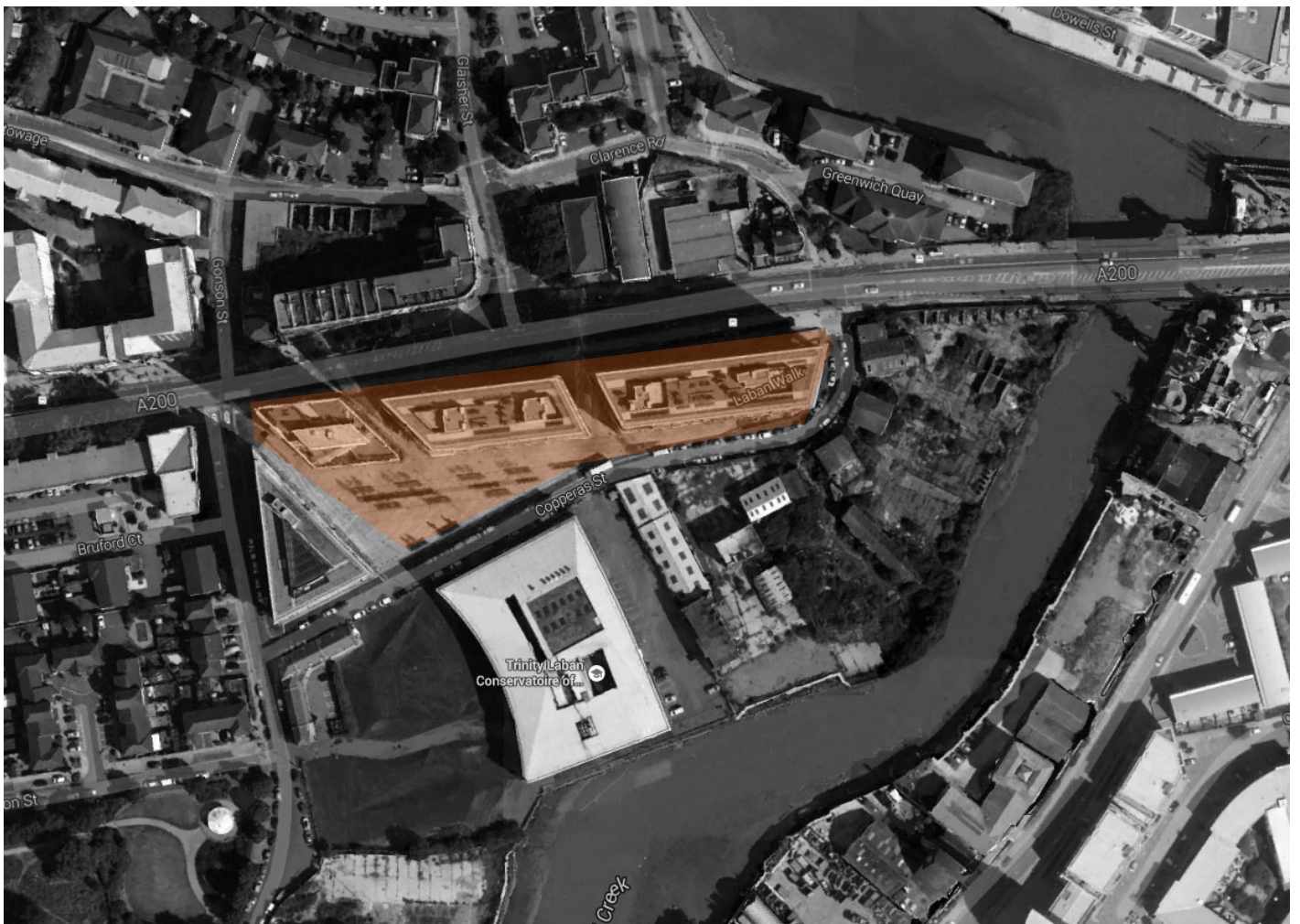
Silwood: key issues

- Orientation of the blocks is a major problem for the amenity of the courtyards
- 'Panoptican' form of some blocks, together with heavy-handed security measures and defensive landscaping contribute to an intimidating and unwelcoming environment



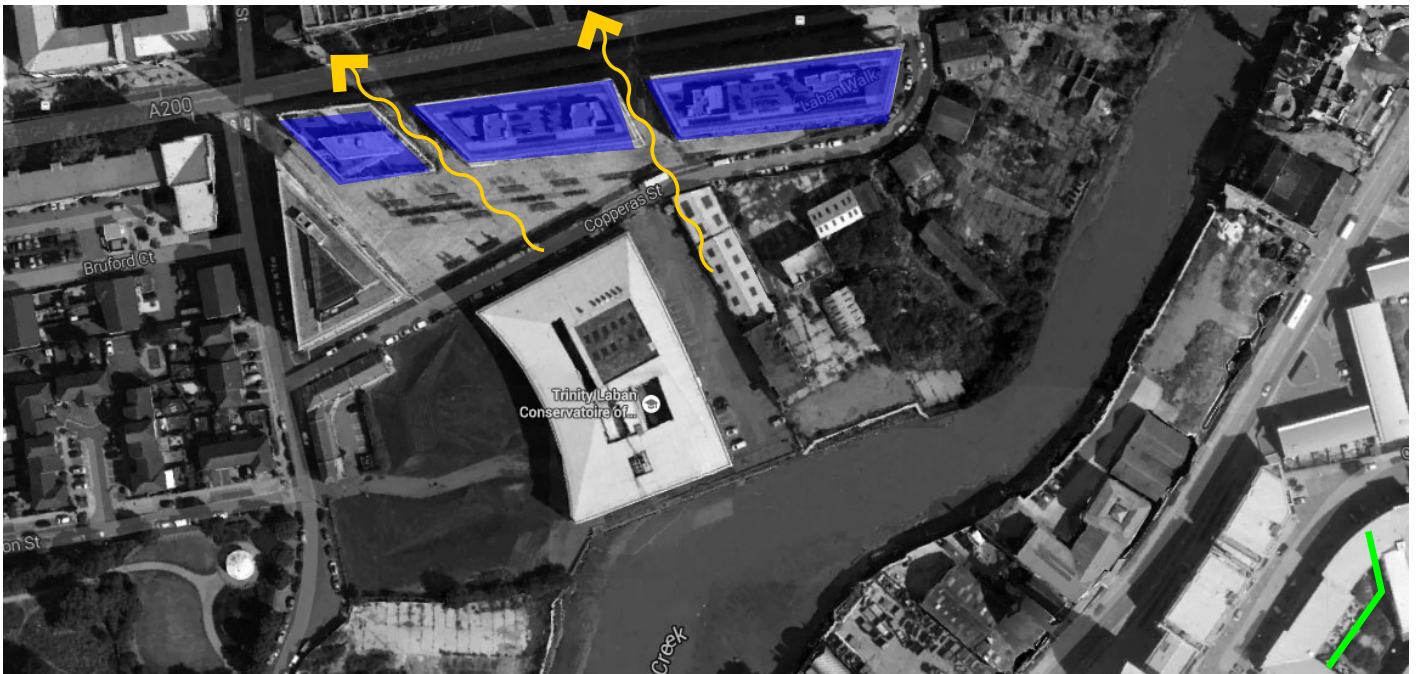
Section

2. Creekside



Context

- High density, central-urban style apartment blocks create cold and windswept streetscape - thoroughfare, not dwelling space
- Sky Gardens in response to the urban condition



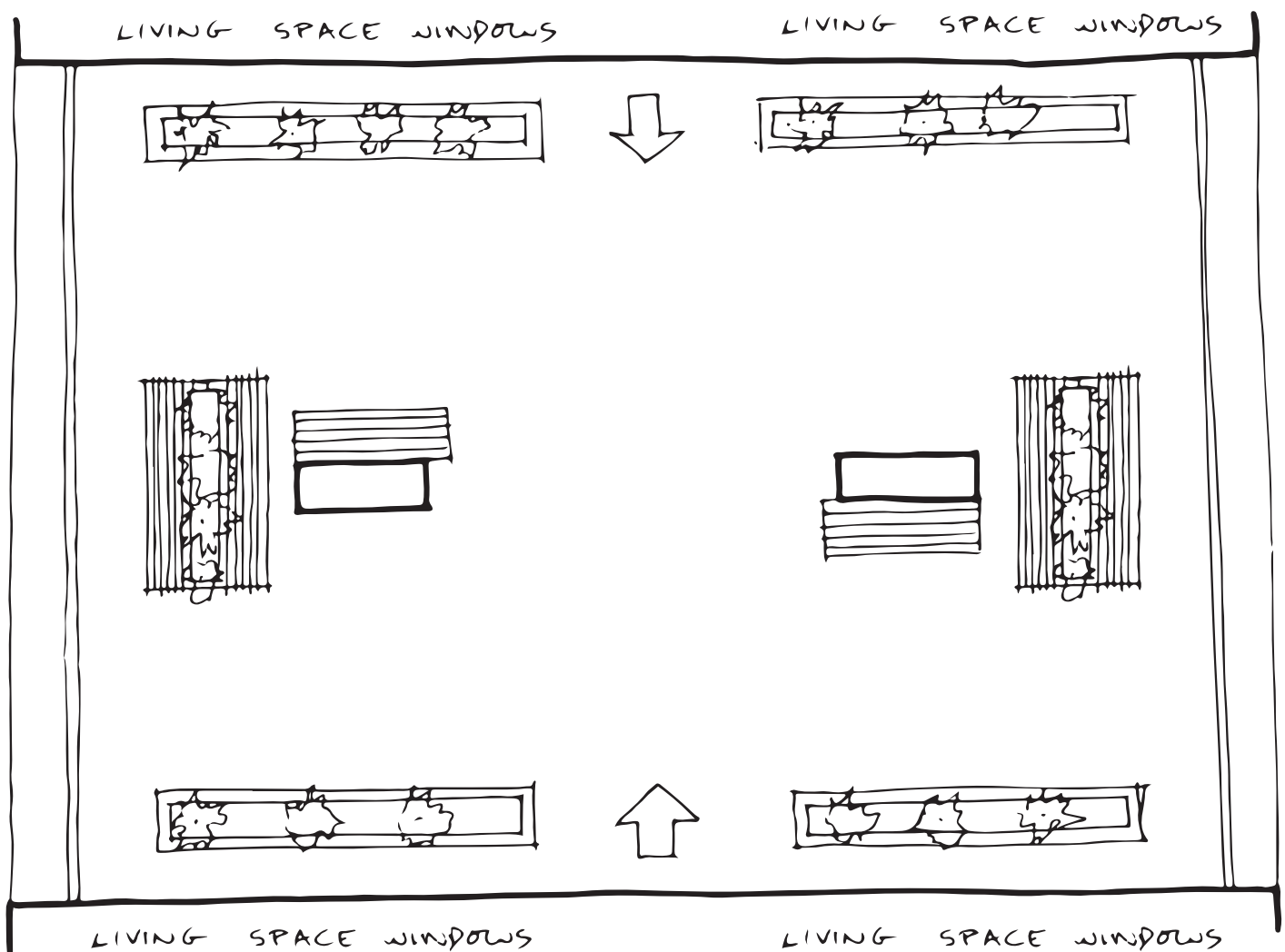
Tall building



Wind tunnel



Sky Gardens



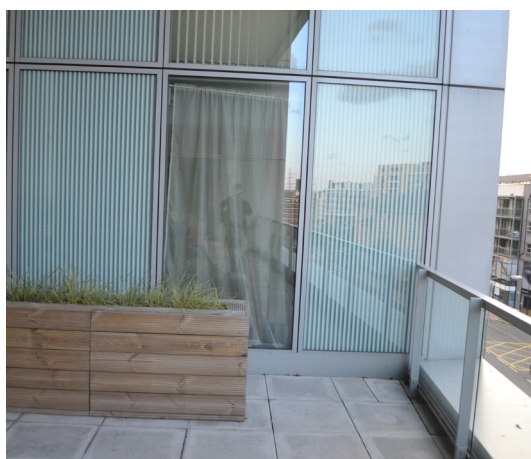
Sky Gardens design: positives

- Great views of the city



Sky Gardens design: negatives

- Overly restricted use of space allows little flexibility and lack of community ownership
- Flats directly adjacent to space with no privacy, but also no direct access, leads to conflicts of use
- Heights of spaces result in wind tunnelling and poor sunlight penetration

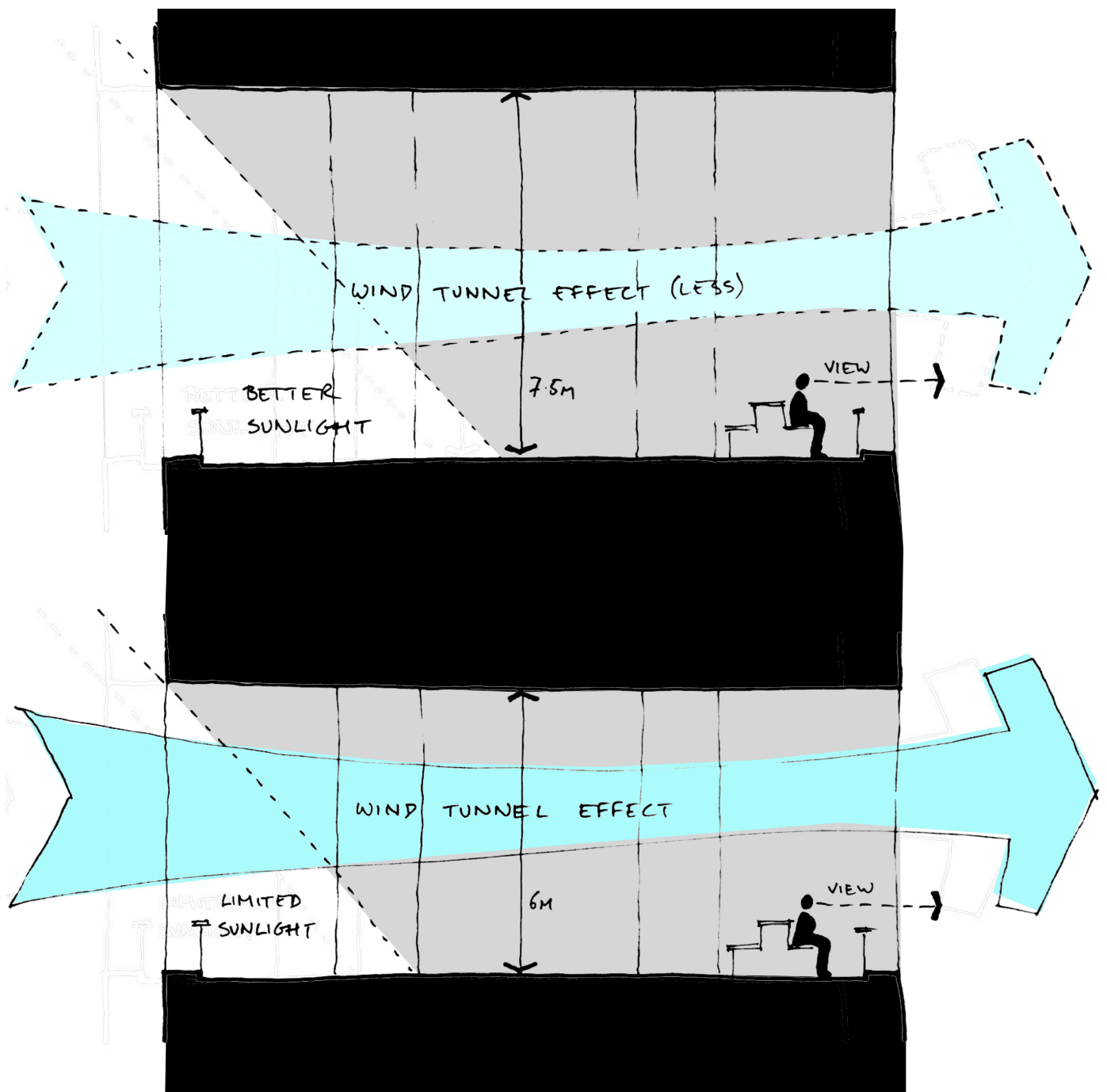




Sky Gardens design: key issues

- Height of the space is critical to comfort: the taller space is better than the lower space
- More could be done to design the space to deal with wind, privacy and use (as with the private Roof Terraces)



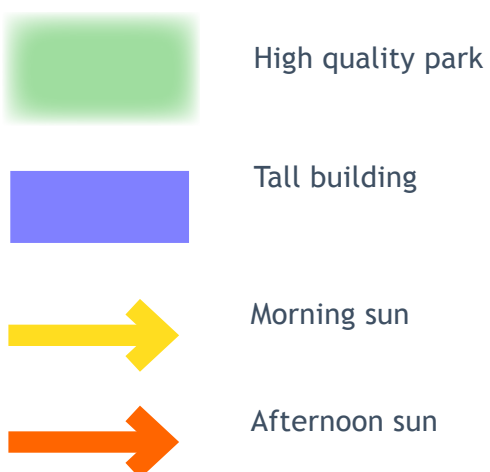


3. Acton Gardens



Context

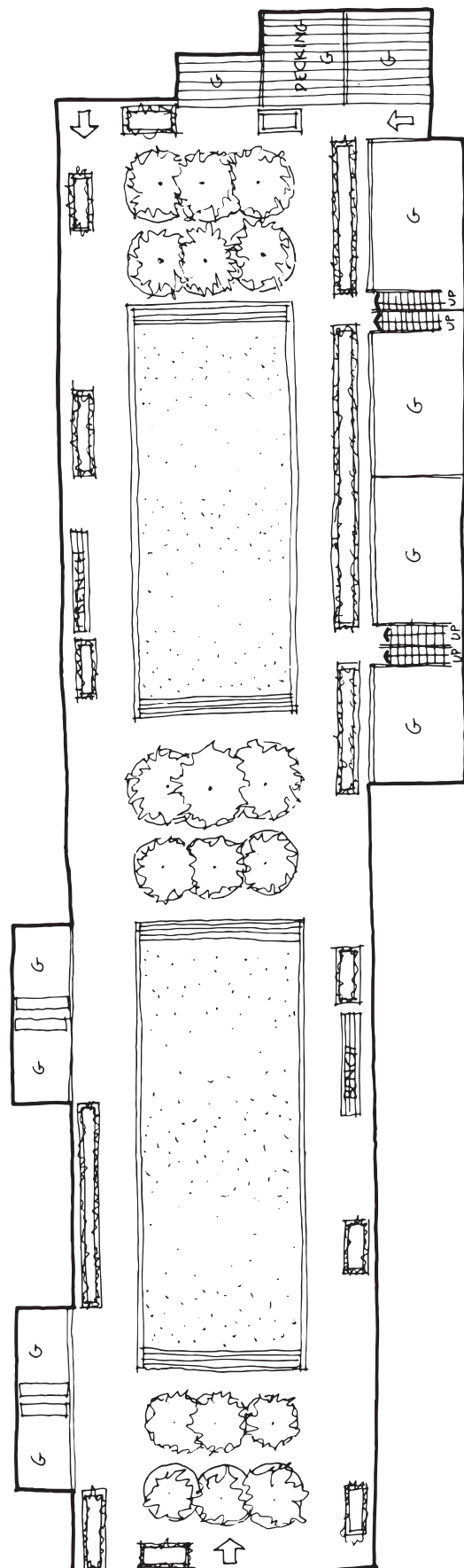
- New, comprehensive masterplan, creating new street pattern. Great local parks and near to amenities and transport links
- First phase block carefully sculpted to maximise sunlight penetration



Courtyard

G PRIVATE GARDEN

➡ ENTRY POINT



Courtyard design: positives

- Central 'lawn' with seating is well-designed
- Two spaces with different tenures do not feel separate
- Sculpting of blocks allows good sunlight penetration
- Generally higher quality of materials, specification and construction than other examples



Courtyard 2 design: negatives

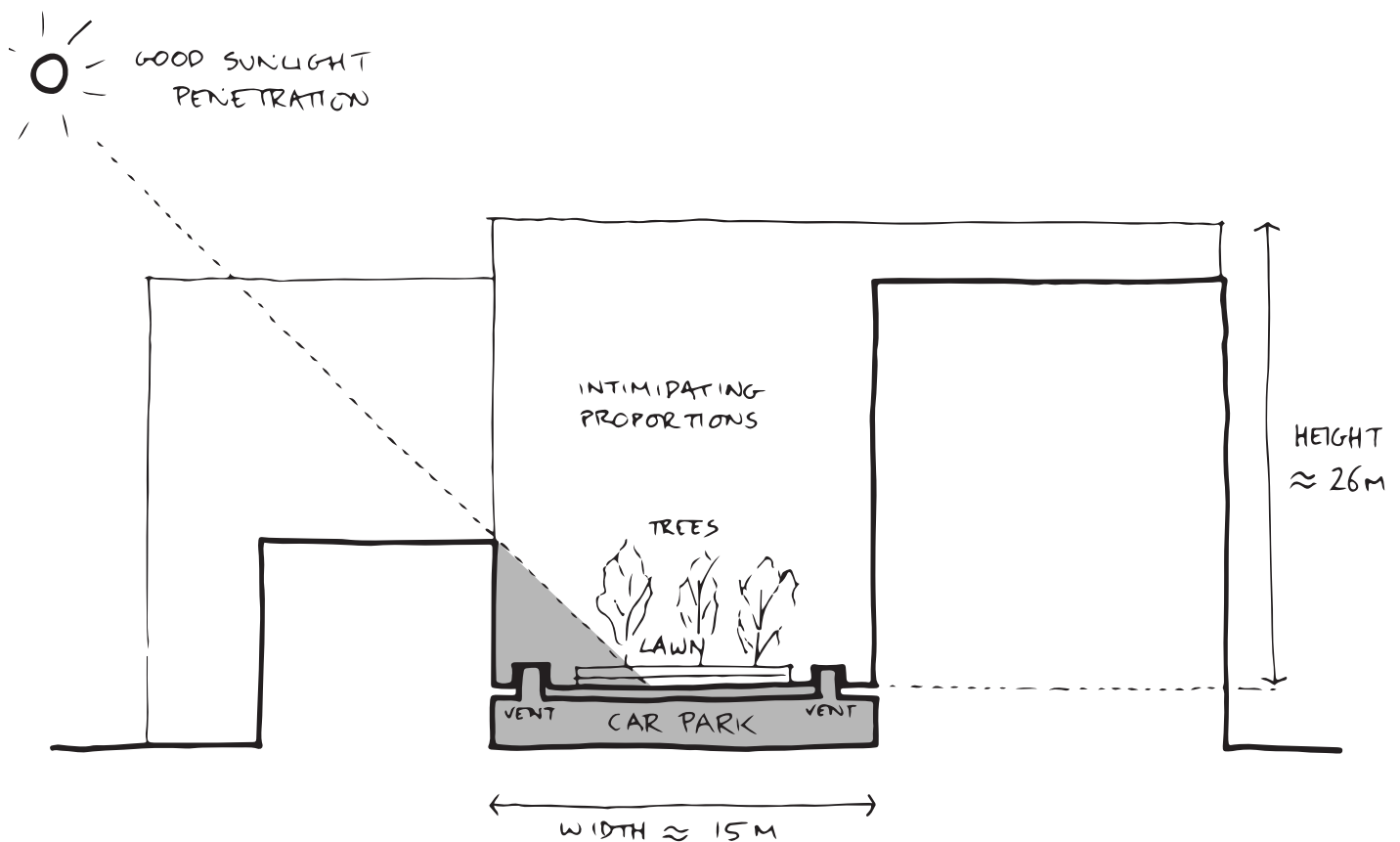
- Few signs of inhabitation and community ownership, slightly sterile environment
- Some restrictive uses signage
- Planter/car park vents are intrusive and create barriers
- Some trees dying where no sunlight
- Proportion of courtyard (width vs height of buildings) is too narrow
- Lack of visual connection with the street





Courtyard design: key issues

- Sculpting the blocks is valuable for sunlight
- Lack of distinction between tenures is positive, but inhabitation and ownership of the space should be encouraged through design: should be more home-like and less hotel-like
- The ratio of width of space to height of buildings is critically important in a new masterplan, here it seems too tight.



4. Eltham Baths



Context

- Facing a busy road, ground floor units with front doors onto the street, but design is overly defensive, creating too many unnecessary 'layers' and hard barriers



Medium busy road



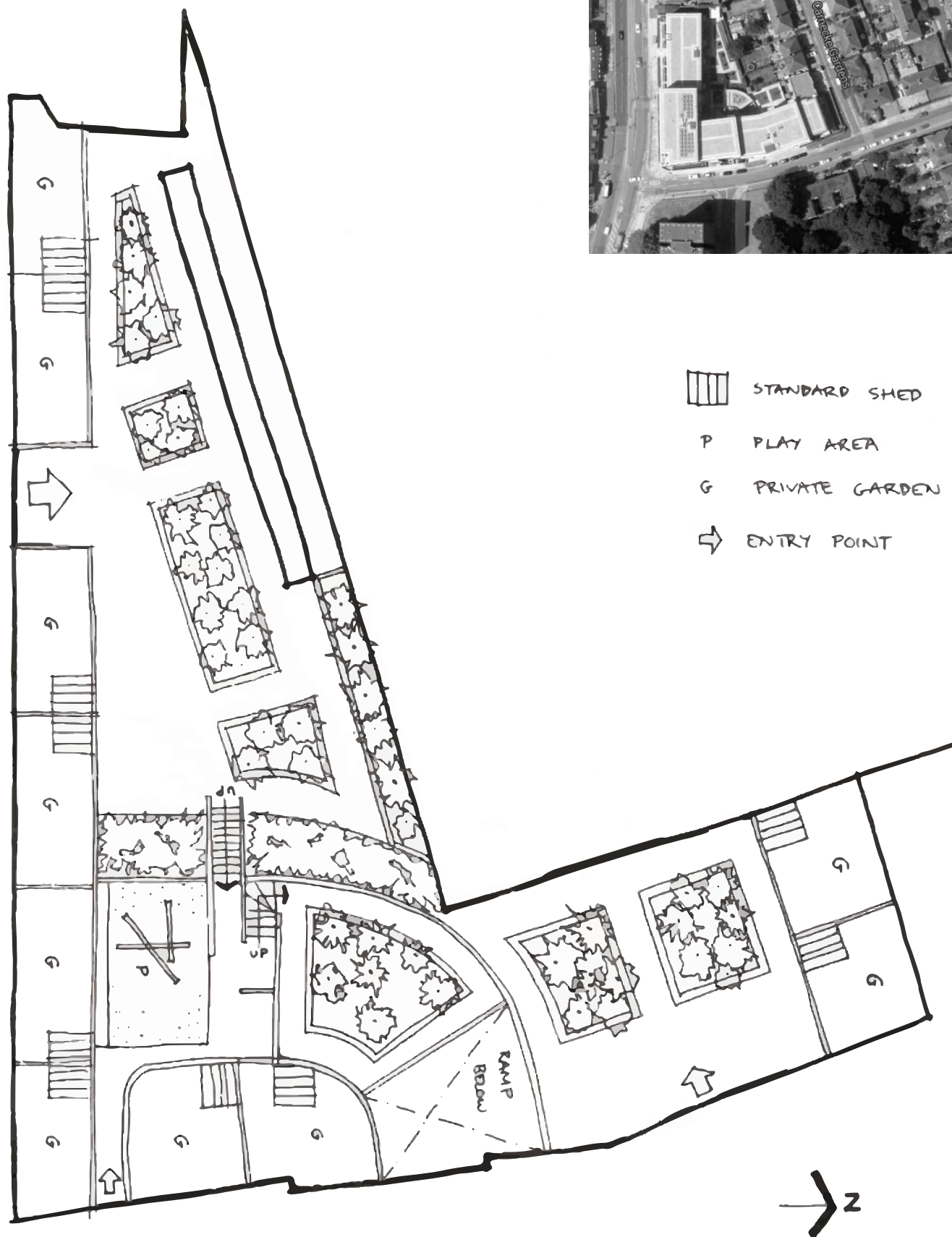
Tall building



Afternoon sun



Courtyard



Courtyard design: positives

- Spacious courtyard with variety of levels and spaces, well-designed planting and reasonable sunlight during the afternoon
- Treatment of retained boundary wall is well-designed



Courtyard design: negatives

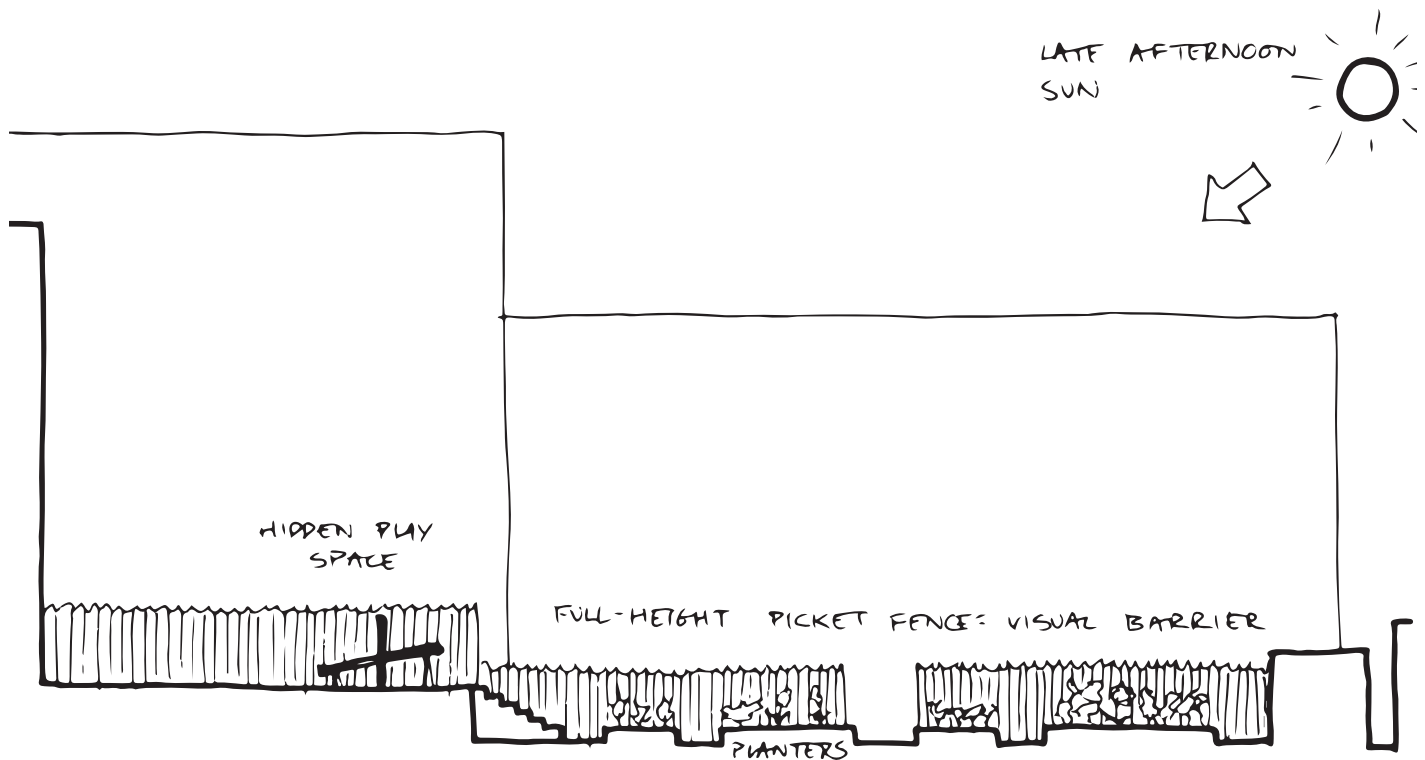
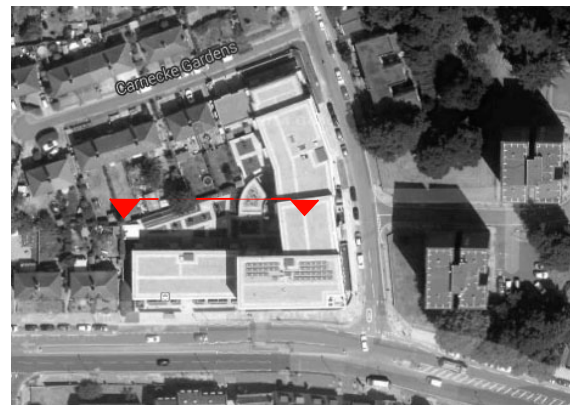
- Tall, solid fencing creates dark spaces and unsurveilled, isolated spaces
- Inaccessible steps and too many fences and gates mean spaces are disconnected
- 'Tokenistic' play space, suggests children are not welcome
- Some awkward edges and lack of benches suggest design-related management issues





Courtyard design: key issues

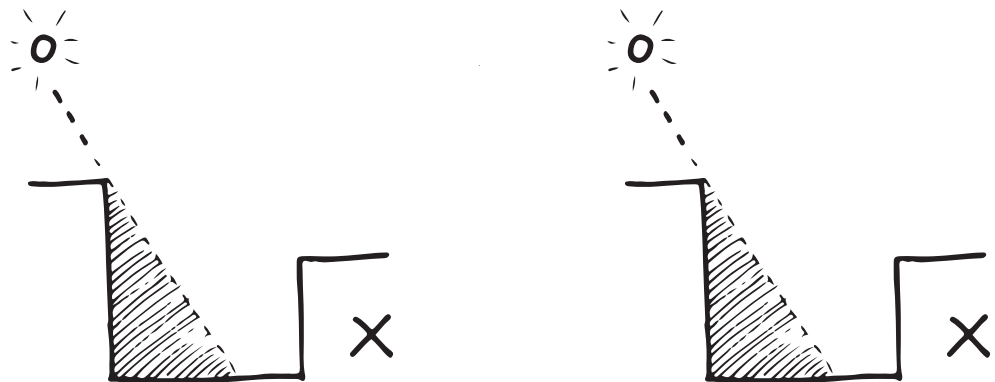
- Variety of widths of space and heights of building makes the best of an awkward site
- Nice, attractive planting, though many hard surfaces reflect sound
- Levels are not fully accessible, lack of seating and some poor design decisions



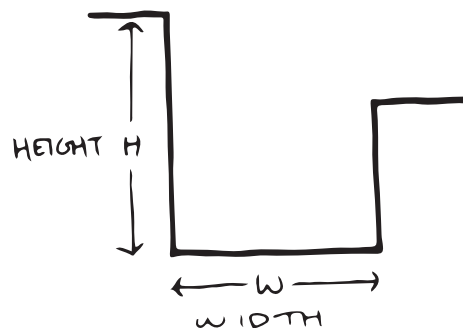
Courtyard design recommendations

1. Masterplan stage

Courtyard orientation, access to sunlight and proportion of width to surrounding heights should be key considerations at earliest planning stage

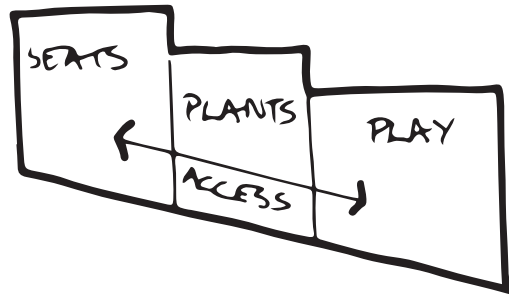


Where possible, the width of the courtyard should aim to be equal to the height of the tallest buildings and ideally a minimum of 18m wide



SPACE CAN BE INTIMIDATING
IF $H > W$

A variation of form, either in plan or section allows for more diverse uses to be accommodated.



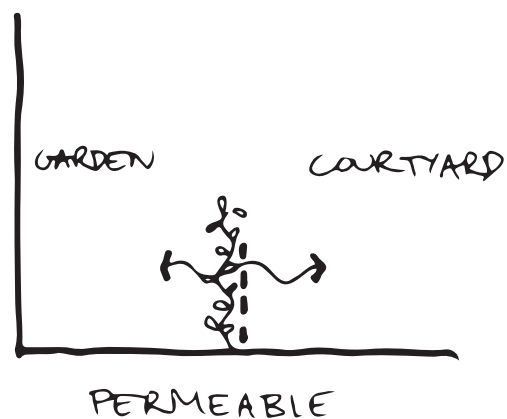
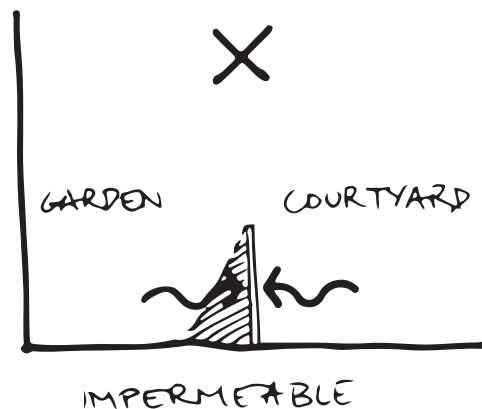
PLAN



SECTION

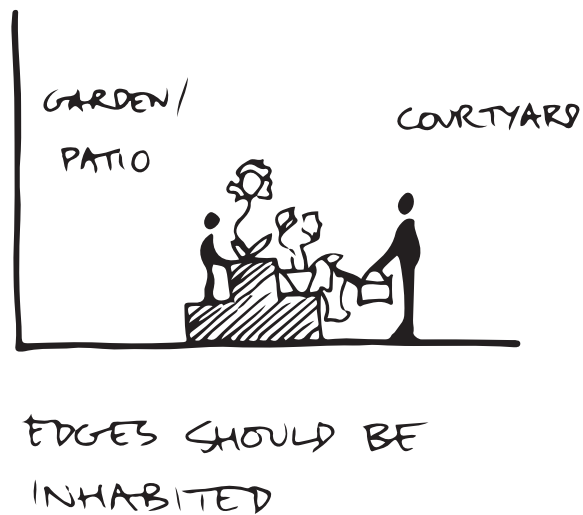
2. Design stage

- Security measures should be passive, not aggressive. Privacy and natural surveillance should be carefully balanced so that the space can become self-regulating
- Provide seating and benches, particularly in sunny spots and edges and make boundaries permeable where possible. Garden fences need not be full height.
- Secured by design can be counterproductive when considered in isolation. The objective of courtyards should be to encourage, not discourage their use



The edges of courtyards are particularly important and need to be carefully designed to balance a number of potentially contradictory factors:

- Light into people's homes
- Privacy
- Passive surveillance
- Security
- Sound absorption
- Inhabitation and community ownership
- Management and maintenance



3. Design and management stage

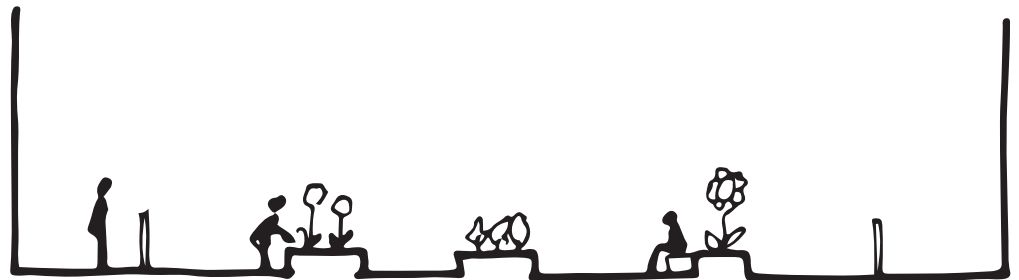
- Children need to be catered for and allowed to use courtyards. Complaints from residents should indicate a design fault, not a fault with children.
- This is easier to manage in large courtyards where noise dissipates naturally but in smaller courtyards sound needs to be dissipated through soft materials, levels etc. Small play areas may not need equipment, but should have visual connection with surrounding family homes.



NATURAL SURVEILLANCE WITH SOFT
AND MODULATED SURFACES TO DISSIPATE
NOISE.

4. Design and management stage

- Elderly people need to be catered for and allowed to use courtyards. Often it is their only accessible social space. Raised beds provide an accessible social activity.
- Courtyards with varying levels need to be fully accessible. Seating should be provided, paying attention to edges and sunny spots. A courtyard can be thought of as an outdoor 'room'.



RAISED BEDS AND SEATING ENABLE OLDER
PEOPLE TO BE ACTIVE AND SOCIALIZE

5. All stages: design and management philosophy

- People who feel at home make a space their own.
- Too much design and too much management both prevent this sort of occupation.
- Some parts of spaces should be intentionally left 'unfinished' for people to take over.
- Things like planters, walls and edges provide excellent opportunities.
- Signs of inhabitation are signs of a successful place.



Herman Hertzberger, lessons for students in architecture, 010, Rotterdam



Herman Hertzberger, lessons for students in architecture, 010, Rotterdam

Appendix



About the research

1. Research questions

The aim of the research was to explore the following:

- How do residents on L&Q schemes feel about where they live?
- How might this be affecting their use of outdoor spaces?
- What is the social value of these spaces? - the role they play in the social life of these communities
- What are the implications for the design and management of outdoor spaces in future L&Q developments?

2. Case study sites

To explore the nature of open spaces in L&Q developments we conducted case studies of four schemes across London. The case study sites were selected by L&Q. They are all less than five years old. They range in size, tenure mix, and the types of outdoor spaces they provide.

Scheme 1) Silwood Estate, Lewisham - This development is part of a large estate regeneration scheme. There are 477 housing units overall. The case study focuses on the courtyards along Silwood Street.

Scheme 2) Creekside, West Greenwich - This is a S106 scheme that was developed by Telford Homes and is now managed by Rendall and Rittner. It is not an L&Q development. Handover of the units was in 2008. This is a mixed tenure development with a series of roof gardens for different tenures. There are 224 units in total.

Scheme 3) Acton Gardens, Ealing - This is a large scheme developed by Countryside and L&Q. For this study, we focused on Phase 1 - the Acton Gardens development which was completed in 2013. There are 212 units overall.

Scheme 4) Eltham Baths, Greenwich - This is a new smaller, mixed tenure scheme. It also has a block for residents over 55 years. It was launched in 2013 and there are 155 units overall. This development is in a more suburban context than the other three.

3. Definition of shared outdoor spaces

For this research, we define shared outdoor spaces as an external amenity for recreation, social interaction, access and common services that is accessible to residents within a development boundary and is there for all residents to enjoy.

4. Research methods

For the research we used a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods to understand the dynamics and perceptions of the shared outdoor spaces. Methods included door-to-door surveys, interviews, focus groups, and site observations. The table below summarises the field work conducted from September to November 2014.

SILWOOD	CREEKSIDE	ACTON GARDENS	ELTHAM
Residents survey			
105 surveys	68 surveys	61 surveys	n/a
Staff interviews			
Interview with a property manager, a neighbourhood services officer, a non-residential caretaker and the Lewington Centre coordinator	Interview with the property manager and the estate manager (managing agent)	Interview with the property manager and the cleaner	Interview with the 2 property managers
Resident interviews			
Interview with 6 households (6 people in total)	Interview with 5 households (5 people in total)	Interview with 3 households (7 people in total, including 2 children)	Interview with 7 people (4 households in total, including 2 children)
Focus groups			
n/a	n/a	n/a	Focus group with Over 55s group
Site observations			
4 x 10-30 minutes	2 x 10-30 minutes	3 x 10-30 minutes	2 x 10-30 minutes
Design assessment			
1 site visit by Roland Karthaus	1 site visit by Roland Karthaus	1 site visit by Roland Karthaus	1 site visit by Roland Karthaus

4.1 Residents survey

A residents survey was conducted to explore attitudes to the courtyards and how people feel overall about their living situation. The data collection was carried out by Face Facts Research.

Variations in the survey samples reflect the tenure mix on each scheme and sample sizes reflect the size of each scheme. Face Facts used random sampling with

tenures based on sample quotas. The tenure categories used are based on L&Q's household data categories. The table below shows tenure breakdowns, sample sizes and quotas. As sample sizes are small, some of the data has been combined into two categories:

- **Affordable renters** - General Needs tenants, intermediate market rent (IMR) and affordable rent
- **Private owners** - Leaseholders, shared ownership, shared equity and freeholders

A residents survey was not conducted on Eltham Baths because the sample size is too small to give a meaningful comparison with the other sites.

Tenure breakdown

1. Acton Gardens		
Tenure	no.	%
General Needs	68	40.0
Leaseholders	30	18.0
Shared Ownership	17	10.0
Shared Equity	2	1.0
Other landlords	47	29.0
total	164	100

Survey sample size:	60
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2. Creekside		
Tenure	no.	%
General Needs	65	28.0
Leaseholders	124	52.0
Shared Ownership	47	20.0
total	236	100

Survey sample size:	60
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4. Silwood		
Tenure	no.	%
General Needs	109	44.0
Leaseholders	26	10.0
Shared Ownership	88	35.0
Shared Equity	1	0.5
IMR	25	10.0
Affordable Rent	1	0.5
Freehold with services	1	0.5
total	251	100

Survey sample size:	80
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Number achieved

1. Acton Gardens		
Tenure	no.	%
General Needs	27	44.4
Leaseholders	11	17.8
Shared Ownership/Equity	7	11.5
Other landlords	16	26.3
total	61	100

NB: The sample included 'Other Landlords' however this group was later combined with Leaseholders.

2. Creekside		
Tenure	no.	%
General Needs	19	27.9
Leaseholders	35	51.5
Shared Ownership	14	20.6
total	68	100.0

4. Silwood		
Tenure	no.	%
General Needs/Affordable Rent	44	41.9
IMR	6	5.7
Leaseholders/Freehold	14	13.3
Shared Ownership/Equity	41	39.0
total	105	100

4.2 Benchmarking

The results of the L&Q resident survey were compared to the results of the same question asked in national surveys. Using the Office of National Statistics Output Area Classifications (OAC) model, it is possible to compare the average responses for different social groups, or OACs, living in small local areas against the results of L&Q residents.

Two sets of questions in the resident survey have been benchmarked against the results of national surveys to compare the responses of people living in L&Q developments to people with a similar social profile who live in the surrounding neighbourhoods. First, a series of questions exploring how L&Q residents feel about where they live:

- Overall how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with your local area as a place to live?
- I plan to remain a resident of this neighbourhood
- I feel like I belong to this neighbourhood
- The friendships and associations I have with other people in my neighbourhood mean a lot to me.

And, second, a series of questions about levels of health and disability in the resident population:

- Blindness, deafness or communication impairment
- Mobility impairment
- Learning difficulty or disability
- Mental health condition
- Long-term illness.

4.3 Site observations

To gain a better understanding of the context and to see how spaces are being used, by whom, and under what circumstances, multiple site observations were done at each outdoor space at different times of day. This was conducted by Social Life.

4.4 Interviews with staff

At each site the project team conducted an interview with the property manager to understand the scheme from a management perspective. At all four sites we also spoke to at least one other staff member. In total we spoke to 10 staff members across the four developments.

4. In-situ interviews with residents

To understand how residents experience the courtyard spaces and how they could be improved to better support the local community, Social Life did a number of

in-depth home-based interviews. These included residents who currently use the courtyards as well as residents who do not currently use the courtyards.

These interviews focused on the use of shared courtyards and how it affects their feelings of belonging, neighbourliness, and wellbeing. The conversations were loosely structured, although the set of questions was broadly consistent. The types of questions included: how do you use the space?; what value and meaning does it have to you?; what is good about the space?; what is bad about the space?; and how could it be improved?.

At Eltham a focus group was also held with residents to compensate for not having a residents survey.

4.5 Design assessment

An assessment of the design approach at each scheme was conducted to explore the relationship between the social dimensions of the courtyards and their design. This involved site visits and analysis of the spaces conducted by the architect Roland Karthaus.

5. Research Limitations

- It was not possible to conduct any one-to-one interviews with Leaseholders at Acton Gardens or Eltham Baths.
- The research would have benefited from site observations during the summer months, however due to the timing of this project, this was not possible.

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About Social Life

Social Life was established by the Young Foundation in 2012 as an independent centre of expertise in placemaking. Our expertise lies in understanding the social dimensions of placemaking and sustainability; how to accelerate local social innovation; and translating these insights into practice and policy.

We are currently working with communities, city authorities, housing providers, planners and architects in the UK, Scandinavia and Australia to develop tools and approaches for planning socially sustainable new communities.

Our work centres on people's lived experience of local neighbourhoods, and we believe that people's wellbeing, resilience, sense of belonging and relationships with their neighbours are key to creating successful places.

