SLAYING SQUALOR

AN ASSESSMENT OF LABOUR'S HOUSING RECORD, 1945 to 1951

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Abstract

This study aims to provide a comprehensive assessment of Labour's post-war housing record from both a local and national perspective. The original and innovative methodological approach used here, implies a pre-post analysis in order to answer the research questions. Firstly, a systematic, more descriptive analysis presents an overview of Labour's housing policy plans and achievements and what it saw as the role of the state therein. It sets out what Labour planned and what its successes and failures were. Secondly, using an intersubjective methodology, the housing achievements are weighted against the initial plans. An analysis of Liverpool City Council's post-war housing strategy is carried out to determine how Labour's housing programme was translated locally and to see whether this resulted in changes to local housing policy and practice. The study's main conclusion is that the Labour government's housing policy aims resulted mainly in successful outcomes, but there were some failures.

The evidence base for the study derives from a wide range of primary and secondary sources, including government papers obtained at the Public Records Office, Kew, Labour Party records accessed at the Labour History and Archive Study Centre, Manchester, and, for the case study, the Liverpool Record Office provided access to documents relevant to Liverpool City Council's post-war housing and reconstruction strategy. Secondary sources include both the work of historians of the period and that of housing specialists.

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List of abbreviations

BISF	British Iron and Steel Federation
BLO	Bodleian Library Oxford
BLPES	British Library of Political and Economic Science
CEPS	Central Economic Planning Staff
CHAC	Central Housing Advisory Committee
DLO	Direct Labour Organisation
HMSO	His Majesty's Stationery Office
IPC	Investment Programme Committee
LCC	London County Council
LHASC	Labour History Archive and Study Centre
LMIDA	Lancashire and Merseyside Industrial Development Association
LRO	Liverpool Record Office
MT&CP	Ministry of Town and Country Planning
NEC	National Executive Committee
NFBTO	National Federation of Building Trades Operatives
ONS	Office for National Statistics
PWLB	Public Works Loans Board
TNA:PRO	The National Archives: Public Records Office

TWAS	Tyne and Wear Archives Service
UK	United Kingdom
USA	United States of America
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics

INTRODUCTION

This study sets out how the Labour governments of 1945 to 1951 responded to the post-war housing crisis in Britain and assesses Labour's housing record during the period. In so doing, it provides an analysis of Labour's housing record from both a local and national perspective. Britain emerged from the Second World War with an even greater housing need than in 1918, when it was estimated that 610,000 new homes were needed. [1] For not only had building and maintenance been severely limited during the war, but a sizeable proportion of the housing stock had also been destroyed or put out of action, particularly in old industrial and dockland areas. Indeed, the figures reveal the scale of the housing crisis. In 1939 there were twelve and a half million houses in Britain.[2] Nearly one in every three of these was damaged during the war and those undamaged had mostly gone six years without repairs. Two hundred and eighty thousand houses had been completely destroyed, 250,000 were rendered uninhabitable and 250,000 more had been seriously damaged. Between 1939 and the end of the war a total of 162,000 houses had been constructed, but that figure was partly counter balanced by 50,000 houses requisitioned and converted for non-residential use. When Labour took office in July 1945, the population of Britain was squeezed into some 700,000 fewer dwellings than in 1939. Furthermore, no one knew exactly what the extent was of unsatisfied housing demand that existed pre-war, or that in the three immediate post-war years there would be 11 per cent more marriages and 33 per cent more births than in the three immediate pre-war years. In addition, divorces in 1945 were up 250 per cent on 1938, splitting households and increasing

[1] A.J.P. Taylor, *English History: 1914 – 1945* (Oxford, 1965), 122.
[2] Michael Foot, *Aneurin Bevan, Vol. 2, 1945-1960* (London, 1973), 65-66.

housing need. [3] Less still was it realised that full employment and increased expectations would increase the number of people demanding separate houses far beyond anything which the figures themselves indicated. [4]

In March 1945, just prior to the end of the war, the Conservative led wartime coalition government published a White Paper which for the first time accepted the principle of affording 'a separate dwelling for each family desiring to have one' and estimated that some 750,000 dwellings were needed for this purpose.[5] The White Paper set a 'maximum target' of 300,000 permanent houses built or building by the end of the second year after the ending of hostilities in Europe. Furthermore, it considered that a further 500,000 dwellings were required to 'provide for the rapid completion of the slum clearance and overcrowding programmes which were already in the course of execution before the war.' The White Paper stated that the long-term objective of the government was 'to secure a progressive improvement in the conditions of housing in respect both of standards of accommodation and of equipment, and to attain this objective by a continuous programme of new building.'

By 1945, the British economy had been devastated by almost six years of total war and the United Kingdom's (UK) accumulated financial and technological resources had been all but entirely exhausted.[6] Britain emerged from the war deeply indebted; it could be argued the most indebted country in the world.[7] This was not the weakening through war of an economy that had been strong pre-war, it was the weakening of an

[3] Nicholas Timmins, *The Five Giants: A Biography of the Welfare State* (London, 2001), 141.
[4] Foot, *Bevan*, 66.
[5] *Housing Policy* (1945) Cmd. 6609.
[6] Vincent Barnett, *John Maynard Keynes* (Abingdon, 2013), 256.
[7] At the end of the war the UKs short term liabilities to foreign banks and official holders were almost £3,500 million against gold and dollar reserves of just over £600 million. See: Edmund Dell, *The Chancellors* (London, 1996), 20, 558.

economy that had already been weak pre-war.[8] The immediate tasks were formidable. The country and its industries had to be converted from war to peace. Its industry was run down due to lack of investment and many industrial sites and premises had been damaged or destroyed by enemy action. Demobilisation had to be carried through without creating unemployment.[9] Britain's balance of payments problem was even more severe. The new government was presented in its first week in office with a lengthy memorandum on the overall financial situation written by the economist John Maynard Keynes. Keynes spelt out the economic position the nation was confronted with, describing it as a 'financial Dunkirk.'[10] He set out the vast burden of overseas indebtedness, the loss of overseas income due to the sacrifice of the export trade and the sale of overseas assets, the huge rise in the cost of essential imports and the threefold increase in the national debt. Correlli Barnett summarised the situation with brutal clarity: the post-war British people had 'the psychology of the victor although their material circumstances approximated more to those of a loser.' [11]

Lend-Lease had been a lifeline extended to Britain by President Roosevelt during the war and had provided the UK with roughly two-thirds of the funds needed to finance a total external deficit of £10 billion over six years of war.[12] Lend-Lease was an arrangement whereby the United States of America (USA) supplied equipment to the UK not in exchange for upfront finance, but in the form of 'lending' or 'leasing' equipment either to be returned after the war was over, or to be recompensed at a later date at terms to be arranged. The UK continued to pay for whatever it could but,

[8] Dell, *The Chancellors*, 20.
[9] Ibid.
[10] The National Archives: Public Record Office, Kew (TNA: PRO), CAB 129/1, Memorandum by Keynes on 'Our Overseas Financial Prospects', 14 August. 1945.
[11] Correlli Barnett, *The Lost Victory* (London, 1995), 178.
[12] See: Barnett, *Keynes*, 253; Dell, *The Chancellors*, 20.

Lend-Lease provided a crucial extra means by which supplies could be obtained over and above this limit. In effect, it was a lifeline that enabled the UK to function outside the constraints of immediate finance. This assistance was abruptly cut almost immediately after the war ended. Like other European industrial states, Britain needed American goods and the dollars to pay for them.[13] However, the price that Britain had been forced to pay for Lend-Lease only exacerbated its problems as it emerged from the war. During the war American pressure was exerted on the British government to reduce its gold and dollar reserves, to restrict exports, and to transfer yet more men into the services and into war production. Furthermore, Britain's commitment to co-operate with the USA on a post-war non-discriminatory trade regime further constrained Britain's freedom of action after the war.[14] It was against this dire economic situation that the incoming Labour Government of July 1945 was charged with delivering the political, economic, and social reconstruction of Britain, including the building of houses to meet the desperate housing needs of the nation.

Competing interpretations of Labour's housing record

There exists a plethora of books, essays and articles that contain chapters or sections, or are devoted exclusively to housing policy in Britain during the immediate post-war years. Amongst the historical literature, Morgan's major study of the Attlee governments, Timmins narrative history of the welfare state, Hennessey's definitive history of the years 1945 to 1951 and Marwick's seminal essay on Labour's historical contribution to the founding of the post-war welfare state, provide thoughtful

[13] Kenneth O Morgan, *Labour in Power 1945-1951* (Oxford, 1984), 144 – 145.
[14] Dell, *The Chancellors*, 22; Under the terms of the non-discrimination condition, Britain agreed that if it limited the amount of any goods that could be imported, Britain would apply the same limit to imports from each country affected. This meant, for example, if Britain had no dollars to purchase American tobacco, it could not for that reason cut its purchases in the USA and instead buy tobacco from another country.

assessments of Labour's housing record. [15] More recent contributions by Kynaston and particularly Renwick, provide a more contemporary critique. [16] The body of work by Tiratsoo about the interwar Labour Party, the Attlee governments and post-war reconstruction generally provides thoughtful and scholarly insights. [17] Pelling's history of the Labour governments of 1945 to 1951 is very general and provides little of note in respect of housing policy. [18] Of the specialist housing literature, Malpass and Donnison provide the most challenging analysis, questioning Labour's post-war housing ambition relative to the welfare state. [19] Other significant contributions include, Burnett's social history of housing, Ravetz' history of council housing and Merrett's study of the local authority housing sector in Britain. [20] Each take a considered view of Labour's record between 1945 and 1951. Boughton's reappraisal of council housing and Hanley's highly descriptive narrative history of Britain's council estates provide further insights from a contemporary perspective. [21] In addition, a number of biographies of Aneurin Bevan include chapters on the subject's stewardship of the housing brief. Foot's two-volume biography is well written and passionate, but as

[15] Morgan, *Labour*; Nicholas Timmins, *The Five Giants: A Biography of the Welfare State* (London, 2001); Peter Hennessy, *Never Again: Britain 1945-1951* (New York, 1993); Arthur Marwick, 'The Labour Party and the Welfare State in Britain, 1900 – 1948',*The American Historical Review*, 73, (1967).
[16] David Kynaston, *Austerity Britain: 1945-51* (London, 2007); Chris Renwick, *Bread for All: The Origins of the Welfare State* (London, 2017).
[17] Nick Tiratsoo,(ed.),*The Attlee Years* (London, 1991).
[18] Henry Pelling, *The Labour Governments 1945 – 51* (London, 1984).
[19] Peter Malpass, 'The Wobbly Pillar', *Journal of Social Policy*, 32, 4, (2003,) 589 – 606; Peter Malpass, *Housing and the Welfare State: The Development of Housing Policy in Britain* (Basingstoke, 2005); D.V. Donnison, *The Government of Housing* (Harmondsworth, 1967).
[20] John Burnett*, A Social History of Housing 1815 – 1985* (London, 1986); Alison Ravetz, *Council Housing and Culture: The History of a Social Experiment* (London, 2001); Stephen Merrett, *State Housing in Britain* (London, 1979).
[21] John Boughton, *Municipal Dreams: The rise and fall of council housing* (London, 2018); Lynsey Hanley, *Estates: An intimate history* (London, 2017).

Eatwell opines, it is the story of a hero, who fought to retain the soul of the Labour Party.[22] That by Campbell is by far the most reliable. [23]

Within both the historical and specialist housing literature covering the period, interpretations of Labour's post-war housing record fall into three distinct types. Firstly, there are those who argue that despite quantitative, organisational, and administrative shortcomings, Labour's housing record was a relative success. The argument here is that having built in excess of one million new permanent houses of a very high standard, predominately for rent in the public sector, against a backdrop of extremely difficult economic circumstances, the record has to be judged positively. This is the view of Morgan who argues that given the extreme social and economic dislocation of the period the performance of the Labour governments on housing was competent if not outstanding.[24] Merrett opines that despite Labour's reluctance to publish any targets for housing starts or completions in the early years of the housing programme (described as the *sine qua non* of a serious attempt to plan), the number of starts in 1946 was an 'unprecedented historical achievement', whilst completions showed a 'powerful and uninterrupted surge' during the period 1945 to 1948.[25] Merrett concludes that despite shortages of both labour and essential building materials, municipal housebuilding had responded to the critical need of the British working-class with an urgency and vigour which few save the most optimistic could have hoped for. Boughton celebrates Labour's post-war commitments to prioritising council housing, to high housing standards and a more egalitarian approach epitomised in its championing of mixed development, neighbourhood units and in removing the

[22] Foot, *Bevan*; Roger Eatwell, *The 1945 – 1951 Labour Governments* (London, 1979), 177.
[23] John Campbell, *Nye Bevan and the Mirage of British Socialism* (London, 1987).
[24] Morgan, *Labour*, 163 – 170.
[25] Stephen Merrett, *State Housing*, 235 – 246.

designation of council housing as housing for the working classes only.[26] A designation that had featured in various forms in every previous housing act until its removal in 1949. Hanley applauds Labour's 'muddled' but 'broadly successful' push to increase the national stock of council housing for the working classes, singling out aesthetically harmonious design combined with high space standards set in heterogenous communities.[27] Furthermore, she enthuses that Labour 'seriously considered' nationalising the entire stock of rented housing. Renwick, impressed by the number of houses built during Labour's six-year tenure, acknowledges the efforts made by the Attlee governments in prioritising houses for rent, improving housing standards and championing mixed communities.[28] Foot, in his biography of Aneurin Bevan, provides a detailed and overall positive account of his subject's stewardship of the housing portfolio and the outcomes achieved.[29] In reluctantly conceding quantitative weaknesses, Foot lays the blame for this squarely at the door of the economic crisis of 1947 that resulted in the government's decision to 'deliberately cut and confine' the housing programme.

The second line of argument in the historiography offers a relatively negative viewpoint. Here, Labour's housing record is interpreted as an underachievement, or worse, as an overall failure. This view is based primarily on what is seen as a quantitative fiasco in terms of the number of new permanent houses built during the period as well as some scepticism about the priority of municipal over private building. Organisational failures, specifically the failure to balance the housing programme with the availability of labour and essential building materials, particularly in the early years

[26] John Boughton, *Municipal Dreams*, 93 – 106.
[27] Lynsey Hanley, *Estates*, 73 – 84.
[28] Chris Renwick, *Bread for All, 254.*
[29] Foot, *Bevan*, 60 – 101.

of the programme, contributes also to the overall negative assessment. Pelling, in his volume on the Attlee governments, is amongst those whose assessment falls into this category. He views Bevan's achievement (in terms of the number of houses built) having fallen far short of expectations.[30] Whilst Burnett commends the Attlee government for delivering improved housing standards and its advocacy of mixed development, he blames growing economic pressure for 'an ordered retreat on standards' and for quantitative failures.[31] Burnett cites the failure to build sufficient new permanent houses as one of the reasons for Labour's electoral decline and eventual demise in 1950 and 1951 respectively. Thomas-Symonds, in his biography of Bevan, appears to blame the housing record entirely on the electors' rejection of Labour in 1951.[32] Whilst acknowledging what is described as 'daunting circumstances' relative to economic constraints and 'fiercely competing priorities' for building materials that were in short supply, Kynaston's overall assessment is that Labour failed to build enough houses.[33] Similarly, Hennessey calls out the sterling crisis of 1947 as the catalyst for what he describes as a 'serious curtailment' of the housing programme.[34] The need for a supply and organisational miracle that was beyond the reach of the incoming Labour government, is Hennessey's brutal assessment of Labour's organisational and administrative arrangements in respect of the control and allocation of available building resources during the early stages of the housing programme. Ravetz contends similarities between Labour's programme and that of the interwar years.[35] However, she concludes that despite the 'objective' set by the wartime coalition government of 750,000 additional dwellings being reached by 1948, it had

[30] Henry Pelling, *The Labour Governments*, 110.
[31] John Burnett*, A Social History of Housing*, 278 – 330.
[32] Nicklaus Thomas-Symonds*, Nye: The Political Life of Aneurin Bevan* (London, 2015), 151 – 161.
[33] David Kynaston, *Austerity Britain,*156.
[34] Peter Hennessy, *Never Again,*169 – 174.
[35] Alison Ravetz, *Council Housing and Culture*, 95 – 97.

been a serious under-estimate of need, and that the actual number of houses built by Labour during the period was 'disappointing.' Timmins, citing quantitative under-performance as the reason for the label of 'underachievement' being attached to Labour's housing record, adds that the preference for public over private sector housebuilding is perhaps the most questionable aspect of Labour's housing record.[36] This latter point is underlined by Campbell, another of Bevan's biographers.[37] Campbell cites Bevan's 'socialist preference' for public over private housing, that was not shared (by the public) as his subject's lasting criticism. Labour's championing of the neighbourhood unit, with houses built in relatively small numbers around a central area equipped with appropriate facilities for education, recreation and shopping, whilst acknowledged as good practice by planners and architects, was in reality, claim Fielding, Thompson and Tiratsoo, a very much more difficult proposition than many had imagined.[38] In reality, Fielding *et al*. opine, local councils found themselves 'overwhelmed' by the 'enormous queues of homeless people', underlining the sheer scale of unmet demand for accommodation during the period. Marwick, contends that the universalist principle, embodied in a preference for public over private sector housing that he claims underpinned Labour's post-war housing policy, foundered completely on the sheer failure of the government to build desperately needed houses.[39]

Finally, there are those interpretations that dwell on Labour's ideological approach to housing, specifically that in respect of its relationship with the post-war welfare state. Here the conclusions of Morgan and Merrett *et al.* about the relative competence of

[36] Nicholas Timmins, *The Five Giants*, 148.
[37] John Campbell, *Nye Bevan*, 149 – 164.
[38] Steven Fielding, Peter Thompson and Nick Tiratsoo, *England Arise! The Labour Party and popular politics in 1940s Britain* (Manchester, 1995), 102 – 107.
[39] Arthur Marwick, 'The Labour Party and the Welfare State in Britain, 1900 – 1948',*The American Historical Review*, 73, (1967).

quantitative performance achieved under extremely difficult economic constraints is acknowledged. However, it is argued that the building of a lot of council houses was not the same as reform along welfare state lines and that ultimately, housing was a welfare state failure. Donnison, for instance, describes the major provisions of Labour's housing policy (including rent control, subsidised council housing and requisitioning) as bold and expensive by pre-war standards, but which bore the hallmarks of a 'crash' programme designed to meet essentially temporary needs.[40] Donnison argues that the *New Towns Act 1946* and the *Town and Country Planning Act 1947* comprised Labour's only major (housing) innovations. Much further thought was required to be given to housing needs and housing policies, opines Donnison, before the housing system could be rendered as comprehensive and constructive as Labour's reforms of the health service, social insurance, and pensions schemes. He cites Bevan's 'vehement rejection' of proposals for municipalising private rented property as an example of Labour's lack of radicalism in relation to housing. Malpass, in acknowledging the building of over one million houses as a great achievement, goes on to argue that Labour's housing policy should be viewed as essentially the wartime coalition's policy with a Labour spin, in the sense that Labour's emphasis on municipal housing extended beyond the coalition governments planned transitional period (two years following the end of hostilities in Europe), during which time it was assumed that local authorities would take a leading role.[41] However, in highlighting Labour's 'failure' to municipalise what is describes as the 'failing, declining private sector', Malpass is similarly struck by the lack of what is described as a 'reform agenda' that it is claimed

[40] D.V. Donnison, *The Government of Housing*, 163 – 168.
[41] Peter Malpass, 'The Wobbly Pillar', *Journal of Social Policy*, 32, 4, (2003,) 589 – 606; Peter Malpass, *Housing and the Welfare State*, 62 – 72.

left housing the least de-commodified and most market determined of the welfare state services. The drive to meet production targets, Malpass claims, completely overshadowed any attempt to reconsider the state's responsibilities for meeting a basic social need or achieving a more equitable housing system. In this context, municipal rents are described as being beyond the reach of many of the poorest households, while rent rebate schemes (that had been formalised in legislation in the 1930s) saw a decline in the immediate post-war period. Here, Malpass argues strongly that post-war housing policy was not shaped around welfare state notions of universalism or citizenship rights, but rather by the 'twin imperatives' of the need to respond to the demands and interests of a politically and economically powerful section of the working class (specifically not the poor), and the need to rebuild the construction industry. Such imperatives, Malpass argues, squeezed out consideration of long-term systemic reform.

The literature has revealed the near unanimous view that the number of new permanent houses built during the period fell short of actual demand despite the 'objective', set by the wartime coalition government in March 1945 of 750,000 additional dwellings required to afford a separate home for every family requiring one, being accomplished by 1948. The serious economic legacy of the Second World War which the Labour government inherited upon taking office, compounded by the sterling crises of 1947 and 1949, is universally acknowledged as the major cause of the shortfall. Poor administrative and organisational arrangements, particularly the failure to balance the housing programme with the capacity of the building industry and the availability of building materials including the failure to set targets in the early years of the programme, is also a major contributory factor that is widely acknowledged. Given the recognition of unmet housing need, the administrative and organisational failures,

and the impact of the unprecedented economic difficulties of the period, it is interesting to note the divergent conclusions drawn about Labour's overall performance on housing.

Given that by the time the Labour government left office it had built in excess of 450,000 more new permanent dwellings than that which the wartime coalition had estimated relative to the requirement for additional dwellings overall, there is traction in the positive conclusions espoused. Indeed, if the number of seriously war-damaged dwellings repaired is added to the total, such a favourable assessment becomes even more credible. However, if one looks at the record purely in relation to unmet housing need, including the number of households living in inadequate or insanitary accommodation, a rather more sceptical view is not without foundation. Indeed, quantitative shortcomings are directly attributed as the main reason for Labour's electoral decline and eventual demise in 1950 and 1951 respectively, notably by Thomas-Symonds. Notwithstanding the fact that housing was most certainly an issue which was high on the voters' list of priorities, to place the blame for Labour's electoral downfall exclusively on housing is rather stretching a point. Burnett's assessment that housing was one of a number of factors that contributed to Labour's eventual electoral failure is considered much nearer the mark.

The incorporation of high standards of construction, space, design, facilities, and equipment in the houses built during the period is recognised by the majority of authors, as too is the concept of neighbourhood units and mixed development. Here, Boughton and Hanley are the main cheerleaders, placing quality alongside quantity in order of importance. The major qualitative progress, particularly as regards space, facilities, and equipment in the home as well as a high-specification aesthetic, was indeed a major improvement and is fittingly commended. However, the fact that high

qualitative standards required a greater amount of labour, materials and financial resources per unit that had consequences for quantitative outcomes, appears often to have been overlooked. There is rightly some scepticism about neighbourhood planning and the development of neighbourhood units. Here, Fielding, Thompson and Tiratsoo justifiably praise the concept, but the reality less so, it having to take second place to the pressing need to increase quantitative performance to meet the insatiable demand for houses. Equally, the concept of mixed development was often compromised. In this respect, Bevan faced criticism for building too many three-bedroom houses.[42] Notwithstanding the view that Labour's housing programme produced the best council houses ever built, what is clear from the literature is that for the majority of authors the acid test for judging Labour's housing record is not one based on quality and improved housing standards, but one based on quantity. This is considered questionable given that improved housing standards, particularly that of municipal housing, was central to the report of the Dudley Committee.[43] It had recommended, prior to the end of the war, enhanced specification, and standards for the post-war design of dwellings, neighbourhoods, and communities.

Labour's ideological approach to housing, or the lack of such a compass, is the major theme taken up by Donnison and Malpass, particularly the assertion that the lack of what Malpass describes as a 'reform agenda' ultimately rendered Labour's housing record a welfare state failure. Marwick too asserts such a failure, citing quantitative under-performance (rather than a reform agenda) as the causation of such. It is considered misleading to claim that Labour's housing programme lacked an

[42] See *the Guardian*, Leader, 1 April 1947, 4.
[43] *Design of Dwellings: Report of the Design of Dwellings Sub-Committee of the Central Housing Advisory Committee appointed by the Minister of Health and Report of a Study Group of the Ministry of Town and Country Planning on Site Planning and Layout in relation to Housing* (London, HMSO, 1944).

ideological thread. Is not the prioritisation of municipal over private, quality over quantity, a trebling of the money value of the Exchequer housing subsidy, legislating to make council housing available for general needs and the establishment of public development corporations to facilitate the New Towns programme, evidence of Labour's more egalitarian approach? However, can this be considered a 'reform agenda' in the terms set out by Donnison and Malpass? The majority of the authors quoted, whether impressed or otherwise by Labour's performance, presume Labour's housing programme had contributed to the post-war welfare state. Donnison and particularly Malpass depart from this view. The theme taken up here is that the comprehensive and constructive nature of Labour's reforms in health and social security were not applied to housing and that much greater state intervention was needed to achieve a more equitable housing system. It is considered that in this context, Donnison's view that much further thought needed to be given to housing needs and housing policies has traction. Indeed, Donnison suggests that Bevan's 'vehement rejection' of proposals for the municipalisation of the private rented sector is an example of Labour's lack of ambition in respect of radical housing reform. This may be true up to a point. However, it ignores amongst other things the financial pressures the government was under at the time and the cost to the exchequer (in compensating private landlords), of pursuing such a policy. In reinforcing Donnison's argument, Malpass rejects Marwick's thesis maintaining that the building of a lot of council houses was not the same as reform on welfare state lines. Again, this is true up to a point; but on the other hand, the amelioration of housing need would have benefited by the building of more houses. Moreover, Malpass challenges the efficacy of Labour's housing subsidy regime, that had been calculated to keep municipal rents at affordable levels. Here Malpass asserts that rents were too high and therefore

beyond the reach of the poorest households. In addition, he questions the prevalence and effectiveness of rent rebate schemes, designed to ameliorate the effects of high rents. Again, these are issues of substance that, along with others, form the basis of Malpass' thesis: that in terms of the welfare state, housing was a 'wobbly pillar'.

Research questions and methodological approach

In summary, the majority of the literature assesses Labour's housing record as a quantitative underachievement, mostly based on the number of houses built; some focus more on the quality of housing; and some embed their analysis of houses built within the ideology of the welfare state. Very few integrate these three positions by trying to quantify the qualitative aspects or analysing how much quantity and quality are part of an ideology of welfare and wellbeing. Moreover, beyond the quantitative, much of the assessment is predominantly based on a descriptive analysis and argued interpretation and as such runs the risk of missing the complexity of the politics of housing and, hence, of distinguishing the different interrelated elements that allows for a comprehensive assessment. That is the aim of this thesis which tries to answer the following research question:

Did the Labour governments of 1945 to 1951 achieve their housing aims?

To answer this question, a pre-post analysis will be followed. A historical study of the housing record of the 1945 to 1951 Labour governments which goes beyond a descriptive narrative poses a methodological challenge. The methodology adopted needs to be both original and innovative to facilitate new perspectives on this important area of study. Here, firstly, in a systematic, more descriptive analysis an overview will be presented of the ideas, policies, plans and results of the party/government re housing and what it saw as the role of the state therein. The descriptive analysis will

set out in detail what Labour planned, its successes and failures, and how ideas developed over the years and why this was (not) so. Secondly, using an intersubjective methodology, the housing achievements will be set and weighted against the initial plans. Such a methodology is based partly on conceptual models that are abstract enough to accommodate diversity and to recognise that failure to implement policies or programmes is not an aberration and partly on methods of analysing the degree of success.[44] This approach, it is argued, providing both a descriptive analysis of Labour's success and failure relative to its housing policy, backed up by a quantitative analysis, allows for a greater level of transparency that both underpins the descriptive analysis and strengthens the study's conclusions.

To substantiate the assessment of the actual level of welfare state ideology in the housing policy, and of the success (or failure) of the quantitative and qualitative elements, the 'pre – post' analysis will examine a series of constituent criteria relevant to quantity and quality. Per criterion a score of 0 - 4 will be given to judge the achievement of each policy element. For example, in terms of quantitative performance the criteria distinguished comprise of (a) number of new permanent houses constructed; (b) number of seriously war damaged houses repaired; (c) number of temporary houses constructed. On the basis of the descriptive analysis these criteria were considered more or less objective and measurable (and thus intersubjective) in relation to planned and achieved outcomes. The criteria will be weighted and scored as to the similarity or difference between planned and achieved outcomes using a five-point weighing scale, as follows: 0 = nothing achieved; 1 = small results (some achievement); 2 = more of less equality in plans achieved and not

[44] See Ernest R Alexander (1985) 'From Ideas to Action: Notes for a contingency theory of policy implementation', *Administration and Society,* 16 (4), 403 – 426; Kees Brants and Peter Neijens (1998), 'The Infotainment of Politics', *Political Communication*, 15 (2), 149 – 165.

achieved; 3 = substantial achievements but with some failures and 4 = all plans achieved. In this respect a score of 1 in terms of the number of new permanent houses built would comprise 25 per cent of planned outcome achieved, whereas a score of 4 would represent 100 per cent achievement. So, the three ‘quantity’ criteria combined can thus produce a minimum score of 3 x 0 = 0 (nothing achieved) and a maximum score of 3 x 4 = 12 (everything successfully achieved), with all scores in between.

The relevant explanatory ‘criteria’ in respect of the quantitative and qualitative record, and of the level of inclusion of welfare state ideology in the policy is articulated in the section setting out the structure of the study, and in the separate empirical chapters. The analysis to establish if Labour’s housing policy was driven by an ideology based on welfare state notions, employs the use of a matrix to substantiate the descriptive analysis. In this respect, it is considered inapposite to use a table with scores as a measurement tool.

The presentation of the research follows a three-step analytical framework: 1. *Ideology* - how much was Labour’s housing policy driven by an ideology based on welfare state notions; 2. *Quantity* - how close to or far off the mark was Labour’s quantitative performance; 3. *Quality* - how successful was Labour’s housing policy relative to qualitative performance, in the standards achieved in the new permanent houses constructed, together with the community standards adopted during the period. Based on a case study of housing policy and record in Liverpool, policy and practice are then also ‘translated’ to the local level.

These separate analyses should allow for answers to and discussions of the following sub-questions:

- *Is there justification for the view that Labour's housing record was an underachievement?*
- *Can Labour's housing record be justifiably judged as a welfare state failure?*
- *How successful was Labour's housing policy in terms of qualitative performance?*
- *How was Labour's housing programme 'translated' at the local level and did this result in changes to local housing policy and practice?*

Sources of the study

Over the past forty years, the literature about the Labour governments of 1945 to 1951 has grown enormously, particularly since the release of the relevant state papers covering the period in the late 1970s and early 1980s. An abundant supply of secondary sources of information is also available. The evidence base for this study derives from a wide range of primary and secondary sources. In terms of primary sources, particularly relevant are the government records at The National Archives, Public Records Office, Kew; the Labour Party records at the Labour History Archives and Study Centre, Manchester and, for the case study, records relevant to Liverpool City Council's pre-and-post-war housing strategy and the post-war reconstruction of the city, housed at the Liverpool Record Office, Liverpool Central Library.

The government records at The National Archives have provided an important source of data that has been used extensively throughout the study. Notably, prime-ministerial and cabinet records, and those from the relevant departments that dealt with aspects of housing, planning and reconstruction both during the Second World War and

between 1945 and 1951, particularly those emanating from the Ministries of Health, Town and Country Planning, Local Government and Planning and HM Treasury, have been invaluable. In addition, records from the Ministries of Town and Country Planning and Housing and Local Government have helped inform chapter four, the Liverpool local study. In this respect records detailing meetings, communications and other interactions between government ministers and officials and the city council about aspects of Liverpool's housing and post-war reconstruction plans, have provided important insights into the relationship between central and local government in respect of post-war housing and reconstruction policy and priorities.

The Labour Party Archives and Study Centre has provided a wide range of information for chapters one, two and three. Specifically, reports by the Labour Party Research Department, including those prepared for consideration by Labour's Central Committee on Reconstruction Problems about the development of housing policy initiatives and those providing relevant statistical data, have been immensely valuable. In addition, the Labour Party Archives revealed an excellent resource comprising reports detailing the problem of slum housing during the 1920s and 1930s, published both by the Labour Party itself and several emanant professional bodies.

A rich and invaluable source of information for chapter four of the study was identified at the Liverpool Record Office, Liverpool Central Library. This includes records relative to Liverpool City Council's housing committee, the council's special sub-committee on the allocation of houses, the special advisory committee on post-war reconstruction and reports of the Medical Officer of Health. The plans and files of the City Architect and Director of Housing have been extensively utilised and have proved invaluable in providing additional detail, complementing the information contained in formal committee minutes and reports. Furthermore, this source has facilitated access to a

number of important Ministry of Health and Ministry of Local Government and Planning circulars relevant to the housing programme, that were sent to local councils and other housing providers during the period.

The study has drawn on information from Command Papers and other official documents and publications, that were mainly obtained through the offices of the UK Parliamentary Archives based at the Houses of Parliament, Westminster. The Library Services at both the University of Sunderland and Newcastle University were also extremely helpful in this respect. Such documents include *Design of Dwellings,* more commonly known as the Dudley Report, that recommended improved post-war housing standards in terms of its design, planning, layout, standards of construction and equipment contained therein; the *Housing Manual 1944* and its successor, the *Housing Manual 1949*, that set out the government's formal advice to local councils on housing and community standards; the Annual Reports of the Ministry of Health and Ministry of Housing and Local Government, that provided helpful data about the housing activities of those ministries during 1945 to 1951 and the *Housing Return for England and Wales* (1951) and the *Housing Return for Scotland* (1951), that were a source of valuable statistical data. Hansard has also provided a helpful information resource, particularly in relation to housing and planning debates in both Houses of Parliament during the period. Other primary sources include recollections from the autobiographies, diaries, and private papers of leading politicians active during the period. In particular, the private papers of Clement Attlee and Hugh Dalton, housed at the Bodleian Library, Oxford and the British Library of Political and Economic Science respectively, have provided useful sources of information.

A major source of secondary information has been obtained from the work of both specialists in the housing and planning field, including Marian Bowley, Alison Ravetz,

Stanley Gale and Wilfrid Burns and historians of the period, the study of which has been an integral part of the research process.

Structure of the study

The chronology by which each area of analysis is followed is an essential component of the study's structure. Therefore, it is deemed sensible that the study begins with an examination of Labour's housing policy and its relationship with the post-war welfare state in Britain.

Chapter one therefore considers, through an analysis of Labour's post-war housing legislation and the key component parts of welfare state ideology, if the housing policy of the 1945 to 1951 Labour government was driven by an ideology based around welfare state notions. In so doing, the chapter debates the defining features of the welfare state and sets out the major elements of Labour's post-war housing and related policy. To strengthen the descriptive analysis, the use of a matrix is employed to illustrate correlation between welfare state ideology and Labour's post-war housing policy.

The second chapter examines if there is justification in the view that Labour's quantitative housing record was an underachievement. To facilitate the investigation, an analysis of quantitative performance in terms of what was originally planned and that which was finally achieved will take place. This is done by looking at both the number of permanent houses completed and all other initiatives that contributed to quantitative performance. Such initiatives comprise the temporary housing programme, initiatives to bring back into use both war-destroyed and unoccupied seriously war damaged houses as well as other schemes that added to quantitative

outcomes during the period, including programmes to adapt, convert and requisition buildings for housing purposes. Moreover, consideration is given to the effect on quantitative performance of other factors including, organisational and administrative problems that the permanent housing drive encountered, particularly in the early years of the programme and those which led to the adoption of measures to finally stabilise the housing drive and to impose a greater degree of central control.

The purpose of chapter three is to establish how successful Labour's housing policy was in relation to qualitative performance: that is in the housing standards achieved in the new permanent houses constructed, together with the community standards adopted during the period. This is done by way of an analysis of the housing standards implemented in terms of space, facilities and the equipment provided in the houses themselves, together with an assessment of wider aspects of qualitative performance, specifically the concept of neighbourhood planning and the development of neighbourhood units and mixed communities. To provide context and historical background, the chapter discusses the major influences on the development of housing standards during the period 1919 to 1945. The qualitative pre -post analysis is set out by way of table format, with weighted scores allocated against the following explanatory criteria relative to qualitative performance: (a) space standards; (b) standards of facilities and equipment; (c) community standards - neighbourhood planning and the development of neighbourhood units and mixed communities.

The fourth chapter will establish how Labour's housing programme was translated at the local level and determine if this resulted in changes to local housing policy and practice. This is done by way of an analysis of Liverpool City Council's housing strategy during the immediate post-war years. In this respect, an investigation of Liverpool's policy on both housing allocations and the fixing of municipal rents,

including the city council's attitude towards rent relief, will seek to ascertain if those families most in housing need were on the one hand given priority status and on the other, able to afford to take on a council tenancy. Furthermore, an assessment of both quantitative and qualitative performance will establish to what extent plans for post-war housebuilding in the city were achieved. The chapter begins by providing some brief historical background about Liverpool and to give context, describes housing progress in the city from 1919 to 1945, including the city council's approach during the 1920s and 1930s in qualifying access to municipal housing.

The rationale for the choice of Liverpool is twofold. Firstly, Liverpool was heavily bombed during the Second World War with thousands of homes destroyed and many thousands more badly damaged. As a result, the city was faced with a severe housing crisis when the war ended. Secondly, Liverpool City Council was Conservative controlled both throughout the whole of the interwar years and right the way through 1945 to 1951 when Labour was in government. It is considered that an analysis of the approach taken locally to post-war housing policy by a Conservative controlled council and whether this contrasted from that practiced by the council during the interwar period, provides new insights to the historiography and additional depth to the study.

The final section of the study will provide a summary of both how the research questions and the methodology for answering such evolved. It will focus on the linkages between the conclusions of the investigations in respect of quantity, quality, ideology, and the local dimension and as such, will set out the major conclusions of the study and answer the research questions. A summarizing pre – post analytical table will be used to further strengthen the study's conclusions.

Conclusion

As the afore-mentioned review of literature tried to demonstrate, the housing record of the 1945 to 1951 Labour governments has provoked considerable debate throughout the post-war years. This study attempts to provide new knowledge and insights to the debate. This will be achieved through an original and innovative methodological approach that seeks to ask pertinent questions and to advance new interpretations, while accepting Dow's comment that 'the answers on any important issues do not become clearer with the mere passage of time and remains to some extent a matter of opinion.' [45]

[45] J. C. R. Dow, *Management of the British Economy 1945-60* (Cambridge, 1965), xvii.

CHAPTER ONE: Labour's housing policy and the welfare state

Introduction

The review of literature in the introductory chapter has raised the important issue of the post-war Labour governments housing policy and how far it was driven by an ideology based around welfare state notions. To recap: Donnison asserts that Labour's post-war housing policy suffered from a lack of radicalism and that much further thought needed to be given to housing needs and housing policies before the housing system could be rendered as comprehensive and constructive as that which was delivered during the period in respect of health, social insurance, and education.[1] A similar line is taken by Malpass, who views Labour's post-war housing policy as essentially that of the wartime coalition government, but with what he calls 'a Labour spin.' [2] He is struck by what is described as the lack of a 'reform agenda' relative to housing. Furthermore, Malpass contends that Labour failed to challenge the market dominance of housing provision, depicting it as the least de-commodified and most market-orientated of all the welfare state services, metaphorically describing housing as (in the context of the welfare state), a 'wobbly pillar.' [3]

This has provided the context for the purpose of this chapter, which is to analyse, in how far the housing policy of the 1945 to 1951 Labour government was driven by an ideology based around welfare state notions. To undertake such an analysis, we must first set out an appropriate analytical framework. This will comprise of three elements. Firstly, an overall definition of the welfare state together with its defining features will

[1] D. V. Donnison, *The Government of Housing* (Harmondsworth, 1967), 163 – 168.
[2] Peter Malpass, Housing and the Welfare State: The Development of Housing Policy in Britain (Basingstoke, 2005), 62 – 72.
[3] Peter Malpass, 'The Wobbly Pillar', *Journal of Social Policy*, 32, 4, (2003), 589 – 606.

be clearly conveyed. Secondly, an examination of the major elements of Labour's post-war housing and related legislation will be carried out. Finally, the analysis will conclude by establishing if correlation exists between the defining features of the welfare state and the major elements of Labour's housing policy.

The analysis of the major elements of Labour's post-war housing and related legislation has been informed by numerous primary sources. These include policy and discussion documents and other relevant publications obtained at the Labour Archive and Study Centre in Manchester; official government papers and documents (specifically those contained in Prime-Ministerial, Treasury and Housing and Local Government files) accessed at the Public Records Office, Kew and Command Papers and other official HMSO publications obtained through the Parliamentary Archives Service at the Houses of Parliament. Hansard, the official record of parliamentary debates, has also provided important data to assist the analysis. The analysis and discussion of the definition and defining features or components of the welfare state has involved the use of numerous secondary sources; primarily the work of emanant writers and theoreticians of the subject.

The Welfare State defined

The welfare state is, and always has been, contested, contradictory, complex and dynamic and as a result, not easily articulated in a simple definition or list of principles.[4] William Beveridge, seen as the architect of social reform in Britain after the Second World War, is said to have hated the term. [5] Richard Titmuss, one of the world's leading public analysts and philosophers and an ardent defender of public services in

[4] Malpass, *Housing and the Welfare State*, 4.
[5] Jose Harris, *William Beveridge: A Biography* (Oxford, 1977), 448.

the post-war period, described the welfare state as an 'indefinable abstraction.' [6] Indeed, Lowe has opined that there exists no agreement amongst social scientists and historians as to when the first welfare states were established or what the term actually means. [7] Some historians have identified their establishment in nineteenth-century Europe, others exclusively in the period after the Second World War. [8]

In terms of definition there has emerged over the years, two schools of thought: what are known as narrow and broad definitions of the welfare state. [9] The narrow definition is one where the phrase 'welfare state' is used primarily to denote the social services provided by government or indeed a defined set of public services. Esping-Anderson describes this as the traditional terrain of social amelioration. [10] Such a definition would describe the welfare state as consisting of public policy in the areas of education, health, housing, social security, and the personal social services. [11] In contrast, described in broader terms, the welfare state is defined as a specific type of society in which the state intervenes within the processes of economic reproduction and distribution to reallocate life chances between individuals or classes. [12] Another example would describe the welfare state as a concept of government in which the state plays a key role in the protection and promotion of the economic and social wellbeing of its citizens. [13] Narrow definitions of the welfare state tend to concentrate exclusively on the actions of government relative to the range of social services

[6] Brian Abel-Smith and Kay Titmuss (eds), *The Philosophy of Welfare: Selected Writings of Richard M. Titmuss* (London: 1987), 141.
[7] Rodney Lowe, *The Welfare State in Britain Since 1945* (Basingstoke, 1993), 9.
[8] Ibid.
[9] Malpass, *Housing and the Welfare State*, 4 – 7.
[10] G. Esping-Anderson, *The Three Worlds of Welfare Capitalism* (Cambridge, 1990), 1.
[11] H. Glennerster and J. Hills (eds), *The State of Welfare: The Economics of Social Spending* (Oxford, 1998), 3.
[12] C. Pierson, *Beyond the Welfare State* (Cambridge, 1991), 7.
[13] M. Klienman, *A European Welfare State?* (Basingstoke, 2002), 2.

provided by the public sector. Broader definitions make no clear distinction between the public and private sectors.

However, welfare states are said to be social constructs that have to be understood in terms of specific historical and geographical contexts. [14] In this respect it is argued that in the decades since the creation of what has become known as the 'classic' welfare state in the mid-to-late 1940s, it has been redefined and renegotiated. [15] The mid-1970s is highlighted as marking the point of 'watershed', followed thereafter by a period of crisis and turmoil during which time the post 1945 ideas came under severe attack from a number of directions which eventually led to a re-engineering of the welfare state as a whole. [16] It is therefore considered that an analysis of the housing policy of the Labour governments of 1945 to 1951 and how far such policy was driven by an ideology based around welfare state notions, needs to be set in the context of how the welfare state was understood in Britain during the period. In other words, in its geographical and historical context.

The term 'welfare state' had been in use for a number of years prior to the election of the Labour government in 1945. Indeed, it was first used in Germany in the *interbellum* as a term of abuse (*Wohlfahrtstaat*) against the Weimar Republic, whose constitution was seen to have been burdened with too many social responsibilities and consequently undermined the country's political and economic viability. [17] With the subsequent rise in totalitarianism in Europe during the 1930s, the term welfare state was developed in Britain as an antonym for the 'warfare' or power state. [18] However,

[14] Malpass, *Housing and the Welfare State*, 8.
[15] Ibid, 8 – 9.
[16] Ibid.
[17] P. Flora and A.J. Heidenheimer (eds), *The Development of Welfare States in Europe and America* (Abingdon,1980), 19.
[18] Lowe, *The Welfare State in Britain*, 10.

in the late 1940s the term came to be commonly used here to describe the power vested in the state by the Labour government and it was in this sense that the term became internationally accepted. However, during the early post-war years British politicians were initially reluctant to use the phrase 'welfare state' since, in the United States of America (USA), it was still considered to be a term of abuse, and at that time, Britain was much dependent upon American aid to fund its housing and welfare programmes. By 1949, however, the phrase was in regular use in Britain and in 1950 Clement Attlee felt sufficiently confident to commend Labour's achievement in 'laying the foundations of the welfare state.' [19]

What then, is an appropriate definition of the post war welfare state through which to assess Labour's housing policy of the period. In 1961, Asa Briggs produced a definition, that it is considered, encapsulates the main principles of post-war welfare state ideology and upon which an appropriate framework of analysis can be based.

> A welfare state is a state in which organised power is deliberately used (through politics and administration) in an effort to modify the play of market forces in at least three directions – first by guaranteeing individuals and families a minimum income irrespective of the market value of their work or property; second, by narrowing the extent of insecurity by enabling individuals and families to meet certain social contingencies (for example, sickness, old age and unemployment) which lead otherwise to individual and family crises; and third, by ensuring that all citizens without distinction of status or class are offered the best standards available in relation to a certain agreed range of social services. [20]

The post-war state, not just in Britain but across western Europe has been described as a 'social' state, with implicit responsibility for the well-being of its citizens. [21] It is

[19] Ibid.
[20] Asa Briggs, 'The Welfare State in Historical Perspective', *European Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 2, No. 2, (1961), pp. 221 – 258.
[21] Tony Judt, *Postwar: A History of Europe since 1945* (London, 2005), 76 – 77.

considered that Briggs' definition of the welfare state fits this narrative, in that as well as setting out the states so-called 'social service' responsibilities the definition implicitly attributes to the state a responsibility for the welfare or wellbeing of its citizens. The definition embraces too the concept of universalism and optimum standards, which, it is considered, represent the distinctive character of the welfare state. In this respect, Briggs explains: 'It is concerned not merely with abatement of class differences or the needs of scheduled groups but with equality of treatment (…)'[22] Furthermore, articulated ten years after Labour left office, 1961 is considered an appropriate viewpoint from which to form a definitive view. Briggs' definition underscores what, in 1958, Richard Titmuss described as an 'institutional' welfare state. [23] Titmuss views such a model as 'addressing the entire population, is universalistic, and embodies an institutionalised commitment to welfare. It will in principle, continued Titmuss, extend welfare commitments to all areas of distribution vital for social welfare.'

Having set out a definition of the post-war welfare state, it is necessary now to break down the definition into appropriate component parts or defining features to assist in the process of satisfactorily reconciling how far a relationship exists between the ideology of the welfare state and Labour's post-war housing policy. Again, this presents some difficulties and is not without pitfalls. In relation to housing, however, one could argue that the following components or features are relevant and explanatory. Firstly, an ideologically driven conviction that in the end society is malleable. As such, the role of the state is to improve the quality of life and the wellbeing of its citizens through planning and policy. Secondly, the state actively

[22] Briggs, The Welfare State in Historical Perspective, 228.
[23] Esping-Anderson, *The Three Worlds of Welfare Capitalism*, 20.

intervenes in the economy and as such, through the adoption of Keynesian economic policy, plays an active role in the housing economy. Thirdly, universal provision or access by all citizens is based on need. This was the major principal that underpinned the post-war welfare state and is without doubt fundamental to the analysis. Fourthly, in the welfare state, the health and wellbeing of citizens is promoted, both individually and collectively. Indeed, universal coverage can contribute to improved community and personal health and wellbeing.

Labour's post-war housing policy.

The next stage in the analysis of Labour's post-war housing policy and how far it was driven by an ideology based on welfare state notions, is to carry out an examination of the housing and associated policy initiatives during the period. The question then is whether the four characteristics of the welfare state are reflected in these policies. In analysing the relevant documents four broadly defined policy areas are recognised, namely:

Quantitative performance: The need to provide a separate home for every family requiring one. The wartime coalition had estimated in its Housing White Paper that an additional 750,000 homes were required to meet this immediate need. [24]

Affordability: It had been recognised for some years that an affordability gap existed that prevented many people, particularly in the lower income groups from being able to access council housing. There were also worries about a potential post-war proliferation of high rents in the private sector.

[24] *Housing Policy* (1945) Cmd. 6609.

Qualitative performance: Many thousands of people continued to live in houses and communities that were overcrowded, insanitary and which lacked the most basic facilities. An improvement in housing standards in terms of space, facilities and equipment in the home and improved community standards was a very live issue, and a high qualitative performance was expected.

Planning and control of land use: This was needed to ensure better urban planning and to discourage urban sprawl. The inadequacies of interwar housing development had not to be repeated. In this regard, 'planning' – as a means to enhance and achieve the malleability of society - was crucial to the success of the housing programme.

Prior to detailing Labour's housing policy initiatives during the period, it is worth noting what Labour said about housing in its manifesto for the 1945 general election. The Labour Party manifesto, entitled *Let Us Face the Future: A declaration of Labour policy for the consideration of the nation*, stated that, 'Housing will be one of the greatest and one of the earliest tests of a Government's [sic] real determination to put the nation first.' [25] It pledged a Labour government to 'proceed with a housing programme with the maximum practical speed until every family in this island has a good standard of accommodation.' The housing promise was rather bigger on rhetoric than it was on specifics. Indeed, it provided only the smallest glimpses of what might be termed a 'reform agenda' relative to housing. A promise of a full programme of land planning and if necessary, the use of state intervention in the centralising and pooling of building materials and components, together with price controls, to get the houses built, was amongst the manifesto's more radical statements on housing. [26]

[25] The Labour Party, *Let Us Face the Future* (1945), 6.
[26] Ibid.

Quantitative Performance

The amelioration of the severe post-war housing shortage was amongst the incoming Labour government's primary objectives. More than half a million houses had been destroyed or rendered uninhabitable during the war and a further three million had been damaged, 250,000 seriously. Added to this, few new houses had been built during the war and few slum properties had been cleared. [27] When the war ended, the population of Britain was squeezed into approximately 700,000 fewer dwellings than in 1939. [28] The increase in the number of households after 1945 due to changing demographic trends, coupled with increased public expectations and aspirations, only increased the demand for housing. The strained economic circumstances of the time put enormous pressure on the housing programme, that had to compete with the urgent building requirements of health and industry, amongst other priorities. The sterling crises of 1947 and 1949 respectively increased the cost of imported building materials, particularly softwood and timber that was crucial to the housing programme and which had an adverse effect on government capital projects generally.

The way in which direct government economic intervention has traditionally influenced housing construction costs is through the payment of subsidies. The principal purpose of subsidy after 1945 was to regulate the pace of house building and to keep council house rents at affordable levels. A massive housing drive therefore required a generous subsidy settlement. The legislative basis for the post-war housing programme was the *Housing (Financial and Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1946*. [29] The Act trebled the money value of the Exchequer subsidy and local rate fund

[27] Lowe, *The Welfare State in Britain*, 245.
[28] Roger Eatwell, *The 1945 – 1951 Labour Governments* (London, 1979), 65.
[29] The *Housing (Financial and Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1946* (9 & 10 Geo. 6 Ch. 48).

contribution from the pre-war ratio of 2:1 to 3:1 based on an annual deficit over a period of sixty years, rather than the pre-war forty-year norm, so reducing further future costs to local government. Additional subsidy was available for development on high-cost land, for rural areas and for the building of flats. In this respect the government nailed its political ideology to the mast by not only substantially increasing the Exchequer subsidy but applied it only to the construction of new permanent public sector housing. In addition to its exclusion from the government's subsidy regime, private sector housebuilding was restricted to a maximum of 20 per cent of all new houses constructed in each local authority area. [30] Licences for private sector building were issued by the respective local authorities, whose overall housebuilding activities (particularly from 1947) were closely controlled by the centre. In addition, strict conditions were imposed on the selling price of houses built under licence.

The generous level of Exchequer subsidy undoubtedly provided impetus to the governments housing drive. It gave a huge incentive to local authorities to expedite their respective permanent house-building programmes, helping to facilitate access to council housing. The cabinet papers show that the basis of calculation of the subsidy, carried out by HM Treasury, was the assumed average cost of building per square foot, that had been done just prior to the fixing of the subsidy. [31] However, the calculation made no provision for extra foundational costs and for other factors which frequently vary between local authorities. Subsequently, house construction costs did increase considerably, due mainly to the increased cost of labour and building materials. This compromised both the governments subsidy regime (in terms of keeping rent levels low) and ultimately, quantitative output. It had been intended to set

[30] TNA: PRO, HLG 101/467, Private enterprise: houses built under licence, the *Building Materials and Housing Act 1945* (9 & 10 Geo. 6. Ch. 20), controlled selling price.
[31] TNA: PRO, PREM 8/228, Cabinet: Progress report on housing, October 1945, 8 November 1945.

about a phased reduction in the level of subsidy at a date not being earlier than 30 June 1947. This was clearly set out in the legislation. [32] The Minister responsible (Charles Key) reinforced this commitment during the Second Reading debate on the Bill. [33] This strategy had to be abandoned and subsidy remained at its original level throughout the entire period of Labour's incumbency. [34] Significantly, given the extent of unfinished pre-war programmes, there was no new specific subsidy directed towards slum clearance or overcrowding, that signalled a fundamental shift away from the policy pursued by the National Government during the whole of the 1930s. Given the scale of local authority housebuilding sanctioned by the government, virtually all the external loan requirements of the municipalities were supplied by the Public Works Loan Board (PWLB), to ensure that their capital programmes were financed in an orderly manner and as cheaply as possible. Crucially, during the whole of the period 1945 to 1951 the government ensured that PWLB interest rates remained historically low (Table 1.1).[35]

[32] The *Housing (Financial and Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1946* (9 & 10 Geo. 6 Ch. 48) s. 16 (1).
[33] *Parliamentary Debates* (Commons), 420, 6 March 1946, 343.
[34] LHASC, Research Series R.D. 150-194, 1948-49, 'Notes on the Housing Programme by Minister of Health', R.D. 164/October 1948.
[35] Stephen Merrett, *State housing in Britain* (London, 1979), 156, 242.

Year	Interest Rate (%) (New advances)	Interest Rate (%) (Outstanding debt)
1945-46	3.1	
1946-47	2.5	
1947-48	2.6	
1948-49	3.0	
1949-50	3.0	3.1
1950-51	3.0	3.1
1951-52	3.5	3.1

Table 1.1: The average rate of interest on new advances by PWLB and the average rate of interest on all outstanding debt of local authorities in England and Wales 1945-46 to 1951-52. Source: Stephen Merrett, State Housing in Britain (London, 1979), 156.

Upon his appointment as Minister of Health, Bevan made it clear in a memorandum to the Prime-Minister and his cabinet colleagues that for its immediate housing programme, the government would look mainly to the building of houses by local authorities for letting to 'the lower income groups.' [36] In this respect, Bevan set out the government's intent to secure provision for large and small families, for the elderly and for single people. His objective was to give housing priority to those most in need. He justified his decision to use local councils as the major delivery vehicle of the housing programme on the grounds that local government, rather than private enterprise, could be trusted to honour planning agreements. The preference for building by the public sector rather than by the private sector went further than Labour's manifesto commitment on housing, that was, as we have seen, rather general and lacked any real detail. [37] However, the decision to proceed with a housing programme on the basis set out by Bevan, went further than housing motions passed at Labour conferences in

[36] TNA: PRO, PREM 8/228, Housing: Memorandum by the Minister of Health, 6 October 1945.
[37] The Labour Party, *Let Us Face the Future* (1945), 6 -7.

1943, 1944 and 1945. [38] Furthermore, the sub-committees that had considered Labour's post-war housing policy under the auspices of the Central Committee on Reconstruction Problems during the war years, had not specifically demanded a preference for public over private on the basis proposed by Bevan. [39]

The annual number of council houses completed did, during the period, reach its peak. At their pre-war high in 1938, 122,000 council houses had been built. [40] In 1948, total completions numbered 217,000 and, despite cuts in public expenditure from 1947 onwards, the annual figure for council house completions never fell below 175,000. The wartime coalition estimate (though woefully inadequate), of the need for 750,000 additional dwellings to relieve the immediate housing shortage was achieved by 1948. This set-in-course a fundamental shift in the structure of housing tenure in Britain. In 1945 council housing was recorded as representing 12 per cent of homes in the country. By the time Labour left office in 1951 this figure had increased to 18 per cent of the total. [41]

Affordability.

Upon taking office, Labour, conscious of the housing crisis in Britain, was alive to the need to provide affordable housing both in the public and private sectors, particularly for low-income households. However, Labour's manifesto contained no detail on rent

[38] LHASC, The Labour Party, *Annual Report 1943*, 202; LHASC, The Labour Party, *Annual Report 1944,* 118 – 119; LHASC, The Labour Party, *Annual Report 1945*, 124.
[39] LHASC, Research Series R.D. 1-30, 1941, 'Memorandum on some of the problems of post-war reconstruction and suggested methods for their solution', R.D. 14/October 1941; LHASC, Research Series R.D. 1-30, 1941, 'Suggested short-term programme for housing and town planning in the immediate post-war years', R.D. 29/November 1941, 2-3.
[40] David Butler and Gareth Butler, *Twentieth-Century British Political Facts, 1900 – 2000* (Basingstoke, 2005), 356 – 357.
[41] Ibid.

control: only an oblique reference to price control in the context of housing was all it mentioned. [42]

Public sector rents

To overcome the longstanding problem of high rents that had hindered access to council housing by the lower income groups, Bevan, during the drafting of the legislation that became the *Housing (Financial and Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1946*, had persuaded Dalton (Chancellor of the Exchequer) to the setting of a guideline rent policy of ten shillings net per week for a new three-bedroom council house. A figure which HM Treasury papers reveal was considerably less than many tenants had been paying between the wars. [43] This Bevan did despite initial resistance from Treasury officials. It was estimated that an annual subsidy of £22 per house was required to achieve the ten shillings guideline rent, that on the basis of the 3:1 ratio would require £16 10s from the exchequer and £5 10s from the local rates. [44] The total weekly level of subsidy provided for a standard three-bedroom house was therefore 8s 6d. [45] However, due to higher than anticipated construction costs, the guideline rent policy of 10 shillings per week was completely compromised. In May 1947, average gross council house rents were running at around 18 shillings per week. [46] Based on this figure, the Labour Party Research Department reported an annual deficit of £3. 1s. 2d per property based on the ten shillings guideline. [47] This, it was concluded would

[42] The Labour Party. *Let Us Face the Future*, 5.
[43] TNA: PRO, T 161/1301, Record of discussion between Dalton and Bevan, 12 October 1945 and HM Treasury memorandum to Trend (including handwritten comments by Dalton), 27 September 1945; TNA: PRO, PREM 8/228, Cabinet: Progress report on housing, October 1945, 8 November 1945. See also: Malpass, *Housing and the Welfare State*, 71; Scott, Marketing of mass home ownership, 10.
[44] Pre-decimal UK currency: £1 = 20s (shillings); 1s = 12d (old pence) = £0.05 p (new pence).
[45] Lalage Sharp, 'Labour's Housing Policy', *Socialist Commentary*, March (1949), 66.
[46] LHASC, Research Series R.D. 41-82, 1947-48, 'Housing Finance: Rents of Council Houses', R.D. 62/July 1947.
[47] Ibid.

have to be met by either an additional contribution from the rates or from any surplus that might be available from local authorities' Housing Revenue Accounts.

The *Housing Act 1936* had given local councils wide powers of operating differential, pooled, or rent rebate schemes for the benefit of their tenants if they wished to do so.[48] Malpass has said that such schemes, that he asserts had made little impact before 1939, went into decline after 1945. [49] However, amongst several examples of schemes that were put in place to ameliorate the impact of high rents on poorer tenants include that of Leeds City Council, which at the time had approximately 24,000 council houses.[50] Leeds introduced a Differential Rent Relief Scheme that provided for the charging of what it called a 'normal rent' to all council tenants, subject to assistance by way of rent relief and to the charging of a 'Municipal Economic Rent' in certain circumstances. Other local councils such as Bristol, Portsmouth, Lambeth, Croydon, Oldham and Kendal, put in place rent rebate or rent abatement schemes. There were calls for the Exchequer subsidy to be either increased or targeted at those households in need rather than at the property. [51] This was rejected by Bevan who believed that no 'practical alternative' existed to paying subsidy on actual houses. [52] In this respect Bevan was fearful of the memory of the 'means test', albeit recognising the fairness of allocating subsidy based on need. Bevan opposed direct government intervention on council rents, taking the view that the matter should be left to the discretion of local authorities. Bevan's view was not immune to criticism from many councils and councillors, particularly in London, where council rents were generally high. An

[48] LHASC, Research Series R.D. 322-358, 1949-50, 'Council House rents: Memo on differential rents, pooled rents and rent rebates', R.D. 345/February 1950.
[49] Malpass, *Housing and the Welfare State*, 71.
[50] LHASC, Research Series R.D. 322-358, 1949-50, 'Council House rents: Memo on differential rents, pooled rents and rent rebates', R.D. 345/February 1950.
[51] Peggy Crane, 'Rents and Subsidies', *Socialist Commentary*, May (1950), 106-107.
[52] LHASC, Research Series R.D. 150-194, 1948-49, 'Notes on the Housing Programme by Minister of Health', R.D. 164/October 1948.

analysis carried out in 1949 reported that inclusive weekly rents for post-war council flats across twenty-three London Boroughs ranged from 14s. 2d. to £1. 9s. 2d. for a two bedroomed flat and 17s. 5d. to £1. 13s. 5d. for a flat with three bedrooms. [53] However, the *National Assistance Act 1948*, that included the provision of an allowance towards rent went some way towards providing support to qualifying tenants struggling to manage housing costs.[54]

Rent control in the private sector

In view of the post-war housing shortage, it had been decided that rent control and the provisions of the *Rent and Mortgage Interest Restrictions Act 1939* should be continued following the end of the Second World War. Furthermore, Labour determined that houses built under licence for private rent should be let at a price that was within the financial reach of the majority of those in urgent housing need. [55] Thus, Labour legislated early-on in the parliamentary cycle, bringing in the *Building Materials and Housing Act 1945.* Described by Bevan, in a memorandum to his cabinet colleagues, as a 'Miscellaneous Housing Bill', the rent control clauses of the 1945 Act limited the letting price of certain houses. [56] It provided for what was described as a 'permitted rent', requiring a house or a flat constructed under building licence under the Defence Regulations made under the Emergency Powers (Defence) Acts 1939-1945 to be subject to a condition limiting what could be charged in rent. The 1945 Act imposed a time limit of four years (subsequently raised in 1949 to eight years) during which a breach of the limit rendered the transgressor liable to a fine or imprisonment for up to three months, or to both.

[53] Peggy Crane, 'Rents and Subsidies', *Socialist Commentary*, May (1950), 106-107.
[54] The *National Assistance Act 1948* (11 & 12 Geo. 6. Ch.29).
[55] *Parliamentary Debates* (Commons), 416, 25 November 1945, 915 – 916.
[56] TNA: PRO, CAB 129/3/24, Housing. Memorandum by the Minister of Health, 13 October 1945.

During the Second World War, a committee under the chairmanship of Viscount Ridley was set up to review the working of the Rent Restrictions Acts. Ridley reported in 1945 and recommended that tenants of furnished accommodation in England and Wales should be afforded protection along the lines of that already enjoyed by such tenants in Scotland. The Labour government felt it needed to act quickly to protect those living in furnished houses or flats from high rents and unscrupulous landlords whom it was feared, might take advantage of the exceptional conditions that pertained at the time and to use the housing shortage to drive a hard bargain. [57] Labour was therefore keen to implement Ridley's proposals in respect of furnished tenancies. In what was an interim measure, the government brought in the *Furnished Houses (Rent Control) Act 1946*. The Act established a separate system of protection, that was modelled on the Scottish legislation which involved rent tribunals setting reasonable rents in respect of contracts referred to them for furnished lettings. Previously, furnished accommodation had not been subject to any effective control under the Rent Acts. Consistent with its ideological position as set out in the 1945 Act, the Labour government rejected Ridley's recommendation that newly built dwellings should be exempt from controls (as had occurred between 1919 and 1939).

The *Landlord and Tenant (Rent Control) Act 1949* was brought in to control excessive rents being charged by landlords. In essence, it offered protection additional to that provided by the 1939 Act. Crucially, it gave the tenant the right to have their rent reviewed by the rent tribunals: something recommended by Ridley, but which Labour took almost four years to implement. One must question why it took so long for a Labour government to implement this important change. In bringing in the legislation, the government took the view that the measure was necessary primarily because

[57] *Parliamentary Debates* (Lords), 139, 5 February 1946, 147.

lettings after 1945 were made in circumstances that favoured the landlord enormously as against the tenant, particularly it was felt, in large cities. [58] In addition, it cured numerous defects in earlier Acts and extended the provisions of the *Furnished Houses (Rent Control) Act 1946*. The major new provisions included giving the protection afforded by the Rent Restriction Acts to both landlords and tenants sharing certain types of accommodation. Rent tribunals were given the power to extend the security of a lease given to tenants indefinitely, in three-month periods, and to review lettings made for the first time since September 1939. Additionally, tribunals were permitted to review the premiums paid for accommodation as well as the rent itself, and payments for furniture and other articles. Excess premiums could be recoverable by a reduction in rent.

Qualitative performance

When Labour took office in 1945 it set about ensuring that its permanent housing programme was guided by the high standards articulated in the report entitled *Design of Dwellings* (hereafter referred to as the Dudley Report) published in 1944. [59] The Dudley Report set out recommendations on the design, planning, layout, standards of construction and equipment of new permanent dwellings, that in many respects mirrored those developed during wartime by Labour's own Housing and Town

[58] *Parliamentary Debates* (Commons), 460, 24 January 1949, 572 - 573.
[59] *Design of Dwellings: Report of the Design of Dwellings Sub-Committee of the Central Housing Advisory Committee appointed by the Minister of Health and Report of a Study Group of the Ministry of Town and Country Planning on Site Planning and Layout in relation to Housing* (London, HMSO, 1944); The Dudley Committee that represented the interests of the women's movement, local government, the construction industry, and the medical profession, was appointed in 1942. It decided to confine its consideration to the types of permanent dwelling commonly built by local authorities but stressed that its recommendations should apply equally to all types of housing. Dudley was appointed as a sub-committee of the Central Housing Advisory Committee (CHAC). In view of the close relationship between the layout of residential areas and town planning, the Minister of Town and Country Planning set up a special study group to assist Dudley in the examination of site planning and layout in relation to housing. Two members of the Dudley Committee served on the aforesaid study group.

Planning Sub-Committee and that of Labour's ideological mission to raise the housing standards of the poorer sections of the community. [60] Labour acted speedily to ensure that space standards in the home, that had been considerably reduced during the 1930s, were increased to a minimum of 950 square feet for a three-bedroom house for five persons, which exceeded Dudley's 900 square feet minimum. [61] Furthermore, the requirement that in such dwellings two toilets should be installed, represented a further improvement on Dudley's minimum. Space standards were improved in flats, where it was stipulated that rooms sizes (living space) should be equal to those in traditional two-storey houses. Other facilities and equipment were also improved, including in the kitchen and the bathroom, to conform to that which had been recommended in the Dudley Report. [62]

In addition to offering detailed proposals on standards in the home, the Dudley Report had offered comprehensive advice on community standards too. [63] Worried that municipal housing estates had become 'distorted' because of the large number of interwar houses built by local authorities during the period (a criticism echoed later in the report of the *Committee on the Appearance of Housing Estates,* that appeared in 1948), Dudley gave its approval to the concept of neighbourhood planning through which neighbourhood units (independent or semi-independent mixed social communities) might be created, containing all the industrial, social and other activities and amenities upon which Dudley said, 'community life depends.' [64] The raising up of

[60] LHASC, Research Series R.D. 1-30, 1941, 'Memorandum on some of the problems of post-war reconstruction and suggested methods for their solution', R.D.R 14/October 1941; LHASC, Research Series R.D. 1-30, 1941, 'Suggested short-term programme for housing and town planning in the immediate post-war years', R.D.R 29/November 1941.
[61] Liverpool Record Office (LRO), 352 ARC/47, Plans and files of the City Architect, *Ministry of Heath Circular 200/45*, 15 November 1945.
[62] Ministry of Health, *Housing Manual 1949*, London, HMSO, 1949.
[63] *Design of Dwellings*, 11.
[64] Ibid, 9, 58 – 63, 73 – 74; Ministry of Health, *The Appearance of Housing Estates* (HMSO, 1948), 3. Commenting specifically on the interwar cottage estates the report stated: '[A]ll individuality and

citizens through social mixing very much in evidence here. As such the report recommended the approximate size of such a neighbourhood, in terms of population and area and strongly advised that a variety of dwelling types should be provided within the neighbourhood. Dudley was clear. 'As well as family dwellings, there ought to be accommodation for both old people and single people.' [65] This clearly resonated ideologically with the views of Bevan, who was both instrumental in driving Labour's enhanced qualitative approach to housing and had famously railed against ghettos, whether for the working class or the aged:

> We don't want a country of east ends and west ends with all the petty snobberies this involves. That was one of the evil legacies of the Victorian era […] I hope that the old people will not be asked to live in colonies of their own – they do not want to look out of their windows on an endless procession of the funerals of their friends; they also want to look at processions of perambulators. [66]

Labour's use of conditions attached to the approval of subsidy for the construction of dwellings ensured that through the vehicle of economic intervention by the state, minimum qualitative standards were met. [67] Despite the escalating cost of house construction during the period, Dudley's minimum standards, particularly in respect of space, facilities and equipment in the home were maintained and, in some respects exceeded, throughout the period of Bevan's tenure as Minister of Health. [68]

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homeliness have been lost in endless rows of identical semi-detached houses (…) or in severe geometrical road patterns which bear no relation to landscape features.'

[65] Ibid, 61.

[66] *Parliamentary Debates* (Commons), 414, 17 October 1945, 1223 – 1224.

[67] See: Liverpool Record Office (LRO), 352 MIN/HOU, Allocation for 1951, 18 October 1951. This report refers to the conditions set out in Appendix III of Ministry of Health Circular 118/46 for the receipt of housing subsidy, specified by the relevant sections of the Housing (Financial and Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1946.

[68] However, the high standards adopted by Bevan were loosened when Hugh Dalton became Housing Minister in January 1951.

In addition to taking on Dudley's recommendations relative to the quality of new permanent dwellings, the Labour government legislated to improve overall housing standards during the period. Amongst its numerous provisions, the *Housing Act 1949* afforded exchequer contributions for the improvement of houses by local authorities and development corporations in addition to housing improvement grants for private landlords and owner occupiers. [69] This allowed for older, but otherwise structurally sound houses to be brought up to modern standards. In addition, the statute facilitated the provision of hostels, meals, furniture, and laundry services by local authorities.

It is significant that the 1949 Act was partly inspired by a radical 'Housing Policy' paper that was prepared for consideration by Labour's Social Services Sub-Committee in October 1948. [70] Indeed, it propositioned the brand of radicalism purportedly absent in Labour's housing policy that formed the basis of Donnison's critique. [71] The paper proposed the nationalisation of all rented housing, by way of the establishment of a new social service, coined a 'National Homes Service', described as a revolutionary change in the ownership of houses.' [72] The paper's authors strongly argued that in terms of older housing, the inability of the private landlord to maintain such properties in a state of decent repair was widely known. This was attributed mainly to rent restrictions and high repair costs. The paper considered it to be impracticable to allow increased rents due to tenants' inability to meet the extra cost. Therefore, the most efficient way of dealing with the repair, reconditioning and conversion of older houses, it was argued, would be for the state to intervene. [73]

[69] The *Housing Act 1949* (12 & 13 Geo. 6. Ch. 60) s. 15 – 31.
[70] LHASC, Research Series 150-194, 1948-49, 'Housing Policy', R.D.R. 184/October 1948.
[71] D. V. Donnison, *The Government of Housing* (Harmondsworth, 1967), 163 – 168.
[72] LHASC, Research Series 150-194, 1948-49, 'Housing Policy', R.D.R. 184/October 1948,3,8.
[73] Ibid, 4.

A revolutionary change in the ownership of houses was, it was suggested, the only logical solution to many of the housing problems that existed at the time. The National Homes Service would, the paper proposed, be provided very much along the lines of other forms of social service, including education and health. [74] All families would be required to contribute ten shillings or fifteen shillings per week towards the service and receive in return the housing provision that they required. [75] It was further proposed that when the housing shortage was less acute, if a family wanted a different or better form of housing, or indeed to own a property themselves, they could pay for it if they wished. Differences in income and expenditure would be entirely met out of income tax and differences in the value of new and old houses could be met by extra amenity payments, or deductions for the lack of amenities. The 'complication' of the state taking over all existing rented dwellings and compensating the owners would, it was argued, be no greater than the state taking over any other private industry. Furthermore, the paper opined that the 'appeal' of housing as the next 'National Social Service', as an integral part of the social security system would, 'be great.' [76]

The proposals in the 1948 paper represented ideas both ideological and practical. Ideologically, control over all rented housing in the land would have been vested exclusively in the state. This would have represented a major change in housing tenure in Britain (in 1945, 62 per cent of all housing in Britain was in the private rented sector, by 1951 it had reduced to 53 per cent) See Figure 1.1. [77] Of its more practical implications, the state (or its agents) would have been able to exercise more direct control over the allocation of dwellings and rents. Furthermore, the transformation of

[74] Ibid, 3.
[75] Ibid.
[76] Ibid.
[77] Butler and Butler, *Twentieth-Century British Political Facts*, 357.

overall qualitative standards would, in the medium to long term, have resulted. As it transpired, the Labour government decided not to pursue a policy of so-called housing nationalisation, but instead adopted some, but by no means all, of the so called 'patchy, complex, and impermanent solutions', that were set out in the paper of October 1948. [78] Such solutions included some of those that appeared in the *Housing Act 1949*, including the enabling of a reconditioning and conversion programme (although in practical terms qualitative outcomes were slow to materialise) and the encouragement of the provision of a greater variety of sizes of houses (in the municipal sector) to meet general needs. The decision not to take into public ownership the private rented housing sector was likely heavily influenced by the severe financial squeeze that housing was under after 1947. This made it impossible to fund both a large-scale municipal housing programme in addition to seizing control of privately rented housing, that would have involved paying compensation to private sector landlords, coupled also with massive reconditioning, repair and maintenance costs.

[78] LHASC, Research Series 150-194, 1948-49, 'Housing Policy', R.D.R. 184/October 1948, 8 – 9.

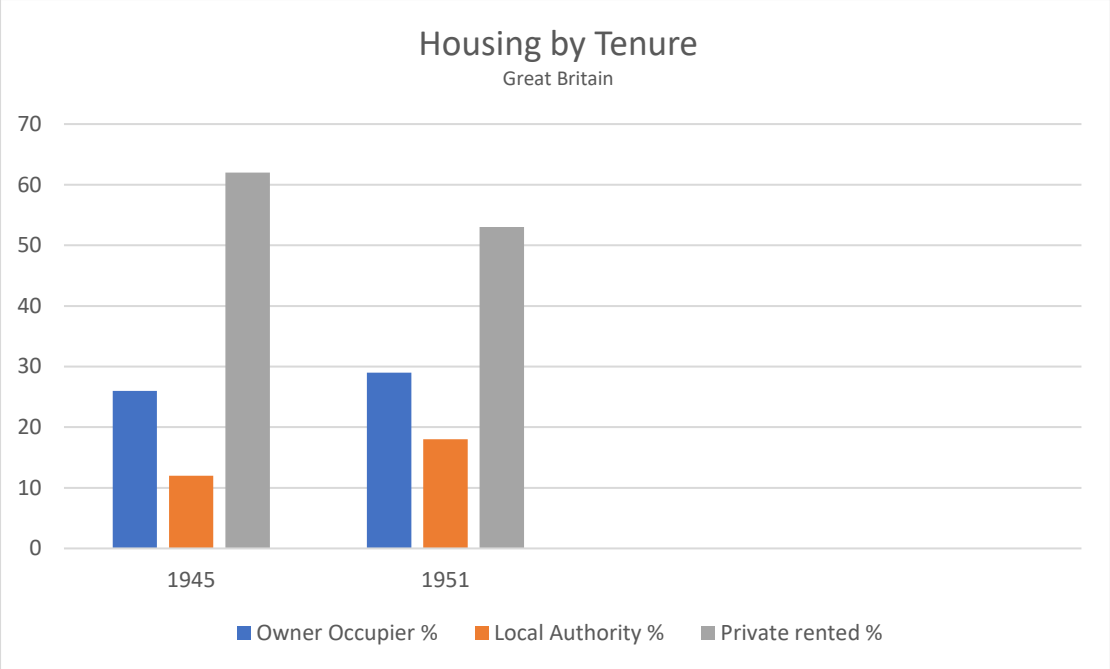

Figure 1.1: Housing by Tenure in Great Britain, 1945 & 1951. Source: Butler and Butler, *Twentieth-Century British Political Facts* (Basingstoke, 2005), 357.

Planning and control of land use.

The passing of the *Town and Country Planning Act 1947* was arguably one of the most radical pieces of legislation affecting housing that was implemented by the post-war Labour government. In essence, the 1947 Act became the foundation of modern town and country planning in Britain, and together with the *New Towns Act 1946* created a system of land use control and a machinery for positive town construction that was completely revolutionary. [79] The passing of the 1947 Act brought to fruition Labour's manifesto commitment to implement what it called 'a full programme of land planning.'[80] The Labour government saw it as essential to restrict the growth of large cities and the 1947 Act laid down procedures to control urban sprawl into the countryside and in general it brought almost all development land under public control

[79] Frederic J. Osborn and Arnold Whittick, New Towns: Their Origins, Achievements and Progress (London, 1977), 56.
[80] The Labour Party, *Let Us Face the Future* (1945), 6.

by making it subject to planning permission. Most importantly, planning was to be no longer merely a regulative function, as each area of the country was required to have a development plan showing how it was either to be developed or preserved. Such development plans were required to set out where and at what density housing development was planned to take place. This more strategic approach to planning gave succour to the concept of neighbourhood planning that had been championed (amongst others) by the Dudley Report which had recommended improved housing and community standards. It resonated too with Labour's manifesto pledge that housing should be dealt with in relation to good town planning, including pleasant surroundings, green spaces, and attractive layout. [81] It also facilitated the manifesto pledge of the need for a tremendous overhaul and a programme of modernisation and re-equipment of the country's housing. [82] It was ideologically radical in that it vested the control of land use in public hands.

In accordance with this wider conception of planning, powers were transferred from the district councils to the county councils, which were given greater powers of compulsory purchase, with coordination through the Ministry of Town and Country Planning. In line with the spirit, if not the letter of the wartime Uthwatt Report, the 1947 Act provided that all development values were vested in the state, with £300,000,000 set aside for the compensation of landowners.[83] Any land was purchased by a developer at its existing use value; after permission to develop was granted, the developer would be assessed a "development charge" based on the difference between the initial price and the final value of the land. [84] In this respect, a further

[81] Ibid.
[82] Ibid, 3.
[83] The *Report of the Expert Committee on Compensation and Betterment* (1942) Cmd. 6386. Commonly known as the Uthwatt Report, it advocated the nationalisation of development rights to be accompanied by compensation but rejected the nationalisation of land.
[84] The *Town and Country Planning Act 1947* (10 & 11 Geo. 6. Ch. 51) s. 69 – 74.

manifesto commitment was fulfilled. [85] To assist local councils to carry out major redevelopment, the 1947 Act provided for extensive government grants. [86] The Treasury paying 50 per cent to 80 per cent of the annual expenditure for the first five years, depending on the financial situation of the authority; in exceptional cases, this could be increased to eight years. In areas of significant war damage, the rate was set at 90 per cent of expenditure. After this initial period grants would continue, at a lower rate for sixty years. Local authorities were given the power to raise loans to pay for this redevelopment, repayable over the same sixty-year period. Grants of 20 per cent to 50 per cent were available for related expenditure, such as the cost of acquiring land outside the main redevelopment areas. This was particularly useful to local councils that planned to develop housing schemes in war damaged and blighted areas, and which eliminated many of the anomalies of the *Town and Country Planning Act 1944* that had allowed grant on war blitzed sites but not on those blighted by war damage. However, the process of approval for many such schemes did, in reality prove to be both onerous and lengthy.

There was no mention whatsoever about the development of a programme of new towns in Labour's 1945 Manifesto. The *New Towns Act 1946* was the product of the New Towns Commission that was set up in 1945 by the Labour government to formally consider how best to repair and rebuild urban communities ravaged following the Second World War. The commission concluded that there was a need to construct new towns using the instrument of development corporations: public corporations financed by government through Treasury loans. The New Towns Commission report recommended that new towns should comprise predominantly family housing at low

[85] The Labour Party, *Let Us Face the Future* (1945), 7.
[86] The *Town and Country Planning Act 1947* (10 & 11 Geo. 6. Ch. 51) s. 93 – 97.

density and, giving a nod to the new concept of neighbourhood planning, that houses should be organised in neighbourhood units around a school, a pub, and shops and that there should be a balance of housing and jobs. The 1946 Act cemented this vision, leading to the birth of the first generation of 'New Towns' and with it facilitating the creation of more heterogeneous communities. Again, the raising up of citizens through social mixing very much in evidence here. The fourteen new towns planned in the first wave were, by the time Labour left office in 1951, incomplete and predominately building sites. However, what they did provide was a further vehicle to promulgate Labour's housing priority of the construction of public sector housing for rent.

A measure that helped aid not only the 'New Towns' vision but also the appeal of municipal housing generally, was one provided by the passing of the *Housing Act 1949* which dealt with what Bevan described as 'the wider aspects of housing policy.' [87] The 1949 Act removed the stipulation that council (public sector) housing should be designated as working-class housing which had featured, in various forms, in every previous piece of housing legislation enabling the provision of housing by public authorities. Although previous housing legislation had always made use of the phrase, only once, in a subsidiary Act of 1903, had it attempted a definition of 'the working classes. ' [88] During the Second Reading debate on the Housing Bill, Bevan set out his and Labour's view that what he called 'this ridiculous inhibition', should be removed to allow local authorities to provide any sort of housing required by the community. [89] The *Housing Act 1949* provided a radical break from that which had gone before. One Labour Member of Parliament (MP) described the deletion from housing legislation of

[87] *Parliamentary Debates* (Commons), 462, 16 March 1949, 2125.
[88] Ibid.
[89] *Parliamentary Debates* (Commons), 462, 16 March 1949, 2126.

the reference to the working-class as 'revolutionary.' [90] Another, described it as being 'very skilful (…) both socially and politically (…) imaginative (…) highly civilised and an excellent piece of engineering.' [91] In many ways, this measure epitomised Labour's (but particularly Bevan's) vision that council housing should, in principle, address the needs of the entire population and become a universally provided social service like the National Health Service, and equally widely accepted.

Through the 1949 Act, Labour put into law a progressive view of council housing. The new neighbourhoods and communities would, under a Labour government, comprise what Bevan described as 'the living tapestry of a mixed community.' [92] Bevan's vision of what he called a modern housing 'township' was that it should comprise all social classes. [93] There was a further aspect that motivated Bevan and the Labour government to sweep away the reference in housing legislation to the phrase housing for the working classes. Bevan believed that Labour's programme of council housing should comprise good architectural design. What he called 'the aesthetic of good modern architecture' could only be achieved in a township which comprised the most 'variegated' kind of housing in it. [94] The *Housing Act 1949* help facilitate Bevan's vision by both giving local councils the right to plan and build the type of houses needed in their communities and the opportunity to allocate those houses on the basis of general needs. In essence, it set out Labour's more egalitarian approach to council housing, creating a clear ideological gulf between Labour and the Conservatives, who viewed the provision of council housing for the poor only.

[90] *Parliamentary Debates* (Commons), 462, 16 March 1949, 2121 -231.
[91] Ibid.
[92] *Parliamentary Debates* (Commons), 462, 16 March 1949, 2127.
[93] *Parliamentary Debates* (Commons), 462, 16 March 1949, 2126.
[94] Ibid.

Conclusion

The aim of this chapter has been to determine in how far Labour's post-war housing policy was driven by an ideology based on welfare state notions. The chapter has set out both a definition and the defining features of the post-war welfare state. In addition, an examination of the major legislative and associated measures that influenced and facilitated Labour's housing plans has been carried out through the lens of four major areas of housing policy, namely: quantitative performance; affordability; qualitative performance; planning and control of land use. To reach a conclusion about how far Labour's housing policy was driven by an ideology underpinned by welfare state notions, we must now weigh how much of that policy correlates with the four component parts or defining features of welfare state ideology, as set out earlier, namely: Malleability of society; State intervention; Universal provision – access to all citizens based on need; Health and wellbeing.

Malleability of society

The role of the state in improving its citizens way of life through planning and policy is implicit in each of the post-war Labour government's main housing policy intentions. Indeed, Labour's housing strategy was underpinned by the social pedagogic features of wellbeing, learning and growth that subscribes to the idea that each person has inherent potential, is valuable, resourceful and can make a meaningful contribution to their wider community if ways are found to include them. This requires that social problems and inequality are also tackled or prevented. In this respect, the raising-up of citizens through the provision of large numbers of affordable, high-quality dwellings set in heterogeneous communities containing all the social and industrial facilities and amenities required for a better life; facilitated by way of state economic intervention

(generous housing subsidy regime and low interest rates) and a national planning system to ensure the maintenance of high standards. Together they provide evidence of a linkage between Labour's housing policy intentions and the notion that in the end society is malleable. In a nutshell, Labour's housing policy intentions were implicitly designed to provide citizens with a hand-up rather than a hand-out.

State intervention in the economy

As Briggs has described, the defining feature of a welfare state is one where organised power is deliberately used in an effort to modify the play of market forces. [95] In his report, *Social Insurance and Allied Services*, Beveridge opined that in order to implement his recommendations, government would have to change the way in which the economy was managed. [96] The intervention of the state in the housing economy during the period was marked by a number of features, in particular the use and targeting of state subsidy. In that subsidy was available for the construction of council housing only, meant that the housing sector in Britain during the period was manipulated in such a way as to favour state housing. That the *Housing (Financial and Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1946* increased the money value of the exchequer subsidy and local rate fund contribution from the pre-war ratio of 2:1 to 3:1, not only reduced local authorities share of the market cost of construction, but the financial burden of such was also able to be spread over a substantially longer period than was previously the case. Such burden was also relieved through the state intervening to ensure that the rate of interest offered by the Public Works Loan Board (PWLB), through which local councils borrowed the money required to finance their housing

[95] Asa Briggs, 'The Welfare State in Historical Perspective', *European Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 2, No. 2, (1961), pp. 221 – 258.
[96] *Sir William Beveridge, Social Insurance and Allied Services*, (1942) Cmd. 6404.

programmes, was maintained at historically low rates during the whole period of Labour's six-year tenure. The state intervened to suppress the private housing sector through the *Building Materials and Housing Act 1945,* by restricting the selling price (and re-sale) of new houses and reducing their output to a maximum of 20 per cent of overall housing completions. State intervention to protect private sector tenants resulted in the imposition of rent control on newly constructed private housing for let; a feature that had not previously figured in any previous rent control legislation. In such circumstances, intervention by the state meant that the building of public sector housing became the dominant source of housing production. The proportion of public sector housing showing the highest rate of growth during the period. [97] The generous subsidy regime provided succour to Labour's intended policy of affordable public sector rents, the relatively high level of which, had been seen as an obstacle to the lower income groups accessing council housing during the interwar years. In principle, this facilitated greater access to council housing. The betterment and compensation clauses of the *Town and Country Planning Act 1947*, together with its provisions requiring all land being subject to planning control, strengthened the power of the state in influencing the value and use of land and as a result the housing economy.

In a relatively small way, state intervention was used to benefit those who wished to access the private sector housing market. Conscious that demand continued to exist for owner-occupation, and in response to the increased cost of housing construction, the government intervened through an amendment to the *Small Dwellings Acquisition and Housing Acts.* This increased the amount that could be advanced by local authorities for the purchase of private sector houses from a maximum of £800 to

[97] Butler and Butler, *Twentieth-Century British Political Facts, 1900 – 2000*, 357.

£1,200. This facilitated both the purchase from the landlord of houses by sitting tenants and newly constructed properties targeted at owner-occupiers. In 1949, the maximum amount was increased to £5,000.

Universal provision – access to all citizens based on need.

Labour's intended policy of delivering a mass permanent housing programme that consisted overwhelmingly of subsidised council houses, in many ways epitomises Richard Titmuss's description of what he called an 'institutional welfare state.' Labour's mass council house building policy, it is considered, meets Titmuss's criteria of a commitment to universalism and in addressing the entire population. [98] Indeed, as Marwick observed, Labour's housing strategy was based on universalist principles, in that it set out to construct in large numbers, sufficient homes to meet the housing needs of the nation. [99] In other words, it aspired to provide a home for every family requiring one. Such commitment is underscored by the decision to make council housing available for 'general needs', achieved through the removal from housing legislation of the requirement that subsidised council housing should only be made available to the working classes. In other words, the extension of welfare commitments to the benefit of society generally. That private housebuilding was restricted to a maximum of one-fifth of the total of new permanent houses built, demonstrates Labour's commitment to giving priority to the housing needs of the lower income groups. Indeed, the use of local councils as the major vehicle for the delivery of the housing programme made it more likely that the allocation of such would, in the main, be made on the basis of housing need, rather than on the ability to pay. The application

[98] Esping-Anderson, *The Three Worlds of Welfare Capitalism*, 20.
[99] Arthur Marwick, 'The Labour Party and the Welfare State in Britain, 1900 – 1948',*The American Historical Review*, 73, (1967).

of state subsidy to council housing only, excluding private housing development from the subsidy regime, reinforced Labour's universalist credentials. The generous subsidy formula not only provided local authorities with the incentive to expedite their housing programmes (through both traditional and prefabricated methods), it helped facilitate access to council housing by the lower income groups through a guideline rent policy of ten shillings per week, upon which the subsidy was calculated. Although ultimately unsuccessful, the (10 shillings guideline) policy bears all the hallmarks of what Titmuss might describe as a 'universalistic' approach. [100] Legislation to keep rents in the private sector at affordable levels and to provide protection from the imposition of high rents to categories of tenants that previously had little or none, demonstrates Labour's commitment to affordable access to rented housing across all sectors. The establishment of rent tribunals was, however, late in coming. One can only hypothesise that the crowded legislative timetable prevented the government from taking swifter action. Qualitative measures too contributed to Labour's universalistic intentions. A variety of house types, set in neighbourhood units to accommodate small and large families, single persons, and the elderly, was indeed a progressive concept. It demonstrates consideration of the need to provide appropriate accommodation for what was a fast-changing household demographic. The New Towns programme was a further vehicle through which Labour delivered its strategy of providing access to good quality housing based on need. The development corporations that were set up to administer the New Towns became agents of the governments housing programme in their respective areas, receiving government subsidy for the building of public sector housing at the same rate as that provided to local councils. Although few houses were completed therein prior to Labour leaving

[100] Esping-Anderson, *The Three Worlds of Welfare Capitalism*, 20.

office in 1951, the fourteen New Towns that were planned immediately post-war provided further succour to an approach to housing that sought to address the needs of the entire population.

The promotion of health and wellbeing

The post-war state has been described by Tony Judt as a 'social' state, with implicit responsibility for the well-being of its citizens. [101] Housing contributed not only to the general wellbeing of citizens but also to improvements in their overall health. Labour's insistence on adherence to the recommendations of the Dudley Report on qualitative housing standards meant that the permanent council houses and communities constructed during the period were built to a specification that included enhanced standards and improved facilities both inside and outside the home. Many thousands of families that had previously lived in overcrowded, sub-standard and insanitary housing conditions, and whose health and wellbeing had suffered as a result, suddenly found their lives transformed having been allocated a new council house that was both spacious and airy and included many modern conveniences. That such houses were planned in neighbourhoods and self-contained communities comprising low density standards with a range of community and communal facilities, including 'green' spaces for recreation, within easy reach of all residents, only enhanced the contribution of housing to the health and wellbeing of individuals, families, and the whole community.

As such, planning was integral to Labour's housing programme which was legislated for by way of the *Town and Country Planning Act 1947*. Donnison's description of the 1947 Act as comprising Labour's only major housing innovation, whilst made in pejorative terms, is nonetheless indicative of the importance of planning to a healthy

[101] Tony Judt, *Postwar: A History of Europe since 1945* (London, 2005), 76 – 77.

community. [102] Well planned development, (that which had been championed by the study group on site planning and layout and whose recommendations had accompanied the Dudley Report), played a pivotal role in ensuring that housing and the communities in which they were set made a positive contribution to citizens health and wellbeing. That such living conditions were made available to citizens on the basis of need, rather than the ability to pay emphasises the relationship between Labour's policy on qualitative standards and the health and wellbeing component of welfare state ideology. Furthermore, legislation facilitating improvements to older, but structurally sound, public, and private sector dwellings respectively through the provision of Exchequer contributions and home improvement grants, together with the provision by local councils of hostels, meals, furniture and laundry services, was a further measure of a commitment to improve the health and wellbeing of citizens.

The descriptive analysis has evidenced significant levels of correlation between Labour's housing policy intentions and welfare state ideology. This presents a challenge to the analyses of both Donnison and Malpass, as set out in the review of literature in the introductory chapter. [103] Both authors raise doubts over the linkages between Labour's housing policy and welfare state ideology.

To further illustrate such correlation, use has been made of a matrix (Figure 1.2). The vertical column represents the ideological elements of the welfare state relative to housing, and the horizontal row denotes the four broad areas of Labour's housing policy intentions. The text contained in the cells in-between, represents policies and measures introduced, as discussed in the descriptive analysis. As can be seen, the

[102] D.V. Donnison, *The Government of Housing* (Harmondsworth, 1967), 163 – 168.
[103] Donnison, *The Government of Housing*, 163 – 168; Malpass, 'The Wobbly Pillar', *Journal of Social Policy*, 32, 4, (2003), 589 – 606.

matrix clearly demonstrates correlation across all four component parts of welfare state ideology. As such, it strengthens the descriptive analysis showing a significant level of correlation between Labour's housing policy intentions and welfare state notions.

Labour's housing policy intentions **Welfare state ideology**	Quantitative performance	Affordability	Planning & the control of land use	Qualitative performance
The Malleability of society	Social problems and housing inequality tackled or prevented through the provision of large numbers of dwellings.	More affordable housing costs facilitate wider access to good housing.	Improved health, wellbeing, and growth of citizens through properly planned development, access to a range of community facilities and the creation of heterogenous communities.	Good quality housing set in socially mixed neighbourhoods and communities to promote good living (wellbeing, learning and growth).
Universal provision - access to all based on need	Housing available for general needs. Priority given to public sector / municipal housebuilding. Principle of allocation based on housing need.	Guideline rent policy in public / municipal sector. Rent control in the private sector.	Variety of house sizes & types. Local Development Plans.	Variety of house sizes and types. Traditional and prefabricated methods of construction.
Promotion of health and wellbeing	Families relocated from overcrowded and insanitary accommodation.	Exchequer payments and improvement grant for housing improvement schemes. Provision of hostels, meals, furniture and laundry services.	Neighbourhood units & mixed communities. National land planning & control including improved housing density standards. Enhanced community facilities and services. New Towns programme. Green spaces.	Increased space standards. Improved facilities and equipment in and around the home. Enhanced aesthetic.
State intervention in the economy	Increased exchequer subsidies including enhanced subsidies for high flats & difficult sites. Low Public Works Loan Board (PWLB) interest rates for municipal borrowing. Increased limit on advances for purchase of houses for owner-occupation.	Differential, pooled &rent rebate schemes operated by some local authorities. Guideline rent policy in public / municipal sector. Rent control in the private sector. Control of selling price of houses built under licence. The *National Assistance Act 1948* included payments in respect of rent.	Grants for major re-development of land and for the re-development of land where significant war damage had occurred. Nationalisation of development values. Compulsory purchase powers introduced. Houses built under license restricted to maximum 20 per cent of overall completions.	Increased exchequer subsidies facilitating improved housing standards. Exchequer payments and improvement grant for housing improvement schemes.

Figure 1.2:Welfare state ideology in Labour's housing policy intentions.

CHAPTER TWO: Quantitative Performance

Introduction

The housing record of the post-war Labour governments has been described as an underachievement by some housing specialists and historians of the period. This view is based principally on Labour's quantitative performance: that is, on the number of dwellings constructed during 1945 to 1951. As set out earlier, Burnett, for example, refers to 'quantitative failures.'[1] Pelling views the number of houses completed as 'falling far short of expectations.'[2] Kynaston's overall assessment is that 'Labour failed to build enough houses.'[3] Ravetz is similarly 'disappointed' by the number of houses built' and Timmins cites 'quantitative underperformance' as being the reason for Labour's housing record having attached to it the label of 'underachievement.'[4] Marwick contends that the universalist principle, embodied in the preference for public over private sector housing, 'foundered completely on the failure of the government to build enough houses.'[5]

This chapter will investigate if there is justification in the claim that Labour's quantitative housing record was an underachievement. The investigation is based on an analysis of quantitative performance in terms of what was originally planned and what was finally achieved, followed by how differences can be explained. This will be done by looking at both the number of permanent houses completed (including the

[1] John Burnett*, A Social History of Housing 1815 – 1985* (London, 1986), 278 – 330.
[2] Henry Pelling, *The Labour Governments 1945 – 51* (London, 1984), 110.
[3] David Kynaston, *Austerity Britain: 1945-51* (London, 2007), 156.
[4] Alison Ravetz, *Council Housing and Culture: The History of a Social Experiment* (London, 2001), 95 – 97; Nicholas Timmins, *The Five Giants: A Biography of the Welfare State* (London, 2001), 148.
[5] Arthur Marwick, 'The Labour Party and the Welfare State in Britain, 1900 – 1948',*The American Historical Review*, 73, (1967).

rebuilding of war destroyed houses) and all other initiatives that contributed to quantitative performance. To base the analysis only on the number of permanent completions would ignore other programmes that contributed to the housing drive. Such initiatives comprise the temporary housing programme, initiatives to bring back into use unoccupied seriously war damaged houses as well as other schemes that added to quantitative outcomes during the period, including programmes to adapt, convert and requisition buildings for housing purposes. Subsequently, consideration will be given to the effect on quantitative performance of other factors that the permanent housing drive encountered, particularly in the early years of the programme, and those which led to the adoption of measures to finally stabilise the housing drive and to impose a greater degree of central control.

To enable the analysis, a wide range of primary sources are utilised. These include official government papers and documents (specifically those contained in HM Treasury, Housing and Local Government, Cabinet and Prime-Ministerial files) accessed at the Public Records Office, Kew. Command Papers and other HMSO publications obtained through the Parliamentary Archives Service at the Houses of Parliament have provided invaluable information relative to quantitative targets and outcomes. Hansard, the official record of parliamentary debates, has also provided important data to assist the analysis. In addition, an interrogation of local authority records at both the Liverpool Record Office and the Tyne and Wear Archives Service has contributed to the comprehensive assessment of quantitative performance during the period. A wide range of statistical and other information about the post-war housing programme has also been accessed at the Labour Archive and Study Centre in Manchester.

Two hundred and eighty thousand houses had been completely destroyed, a further 250,000 rendered uninhabitable and 250,000 more had been seriously damaged as a result of enemy action during the Second World War. Furthermore, large numbers of houses were requisitioned for non-residential purposes either for civil defence or military usage or converted for use by private firms bombed out of their business premises. Although a limited amount of house building had taken place during the war (Table 2.1), when Labour took office in July 1945 the population of Britain was squeezed into some 700,000 fewer houses than in 1939.

Period	Local Authorities	Private Enterprise	Government Depts	Total
Sept 1939- Sept 1940	37,373	81,101	Nil	118,474
Oct 1940 – Sept 1941	6,060	11,066	Nil	17,126
Oct 1941 – Mar 1943	2,759	5,291	6,881	14,931
April 1943 – Mar 1944	2,539	1,079	2,306	5,924
April 1944 – Mar 1945	2,432	1,852	1,253	5,537
Totals	**51,163**	**100,389**	**10,440**	**161,992**

Table 2.1: House building in Britain during the Second World War. Source: Herbert Ashworth, *Housing in Great Britain* (London, 1957), 36.

The housing shortage had played a large part in the election campaign, prior to the Labour government taking power. Opinion polls taken during the campaign indicated that 41 per cent of those questioned thought housing to be the most important issue.[6] Labour had made much of the housing issue during the election with Ernest Bevin making the staggering claim that Labour would build four or five million houses in 'quick time.' [7] Stafford Cripps is alleged to have said that the [housing] problem could be solved in a fortnight! [8] Furthermore, Aneurin Bevan in his book *Why Not Trust the Tories?* had viciously ridiculed the wartime coalition government's housing targets,

[6] Roger Eatwell, *The 1945 – 1951 Labour Governments* (London, 1979), 65.
[7] *The Times*, 18 June 1945.
[8] John Campbell, *Aneurin Bevan and the mirage of British Socialism* (London, 1987), 154.

describing them as ‘Not much of a blitzkrieg’. [9] Such rhetoric only served to raise public expectations about Labour’s quantitative ambitions relative to housing.

What was planned

The Permanent Housing Programme

The permanent housing programme of 1945 to 1951 made an inauspicious start, most especially in England. In November 1945, just over three months into the governments term of office, a senior civil servant was expressing concern and urging that ‘it certainly looks as if the Ministry of Health ought to try and increase the number of houses started and reduce the lag between authority to go to tender and the beginning of construction. Scotland is making much better progress than England and it would be interesting to know the reason for this.’[10] Less than a month prior to this, on 17 October 1945, the Conservative front bench in the House of Commons had put down a motion viewing ‘with great apprehension the existing shortage of houses in both urban and rural areas.’[11] By February 1946, a civil service memorandum noted that, ‘at last houses are beginning to trickle out of the building pipeline.’[12] However, by the end of January 1946 only 20,000 permanent houses had been constructed in England and Wales.[13] For a Labour government committed to ending the immediate housing crisis, albeit having been in office for only six months, this was an unpromising effort.

[9] ‘Celticus’ (Aneurin Bevan MP), *Why Not Trust the Tories?* (London, 1944), 76 – 77.
[10] The National Archives (TNA): Public Records Office (PRO), CAB 124/450, Memorandum by A. Johnston to the Lord President, 6 November 1945.
[11] *Parliamentary Debates* (Commons), 414, 17 October 1945, 1206-321.
[12] TNA: PRO, CAB 124/450, E.M. Nicholson memorandum, 12 February 1946.
[13] *Housing Return for England and Wales, 31 December 1951* (1951) Cmd. 8458, 13; See: Kenneth O Morgan, *Labour in Power 1945-1951* (Oxford, 1984), 166.

It had been agreed by Cabinet in October 1945 that no programme or target for the number of permanent houses to be provided within a stated time should be published. In a memorandum to his cabinet colleagues on the matter, Bevan had said:

> I do not propose to make any definite promises. Progress depends on materials and labour and precise forecasting is impossible. But I shall set targets for the Local Authorities. And I shall publish monthly statements of progress.[14]

Indeed, Bevan had argued strongly against publicly stating a target for the housing programme on the basis that this would not be in the best interests of the new Labour government. His main concern at the time was the consequences of not achieving such a target once it was in the public domain. Bevan was also known to be sceptical about the 'target' set by the wartime coalition government in the White Paper of March 1945, later publicly describing such as based on 'crystal gazing.'[15] Nevertheless, it was decided to adopt for the purposes of phasing production, substantially the same programme as was published by the wartime coalition, to which an allowance was added for permanent prefabricated houses. On this basis, the government planned for the following number of houses to be completed or under construction by the end of June 1947 – 300,000 permanent traditional houses; 165,000 temporary prefabricated houses; 100,000 untraditional or prefabricated permanent houses.[16]

However, in January 1947, and under much pressure from Attlee and other cabinet colleagues to do so, Bevan reluctantly set a formal target for 240,000 permanent dwellings to be completed in 1947. [17] Although this target was accompanied by a huge

[14] TNA: PRO, PREM 8/228, Housing: Memorandum by the Minister of Health, 6 October 1945.
[15] The Times, 27 February 1946, 5; In addition, the wartime coalition had stated that its 'first objective was to afford a separate dwelling for every family which desires to have one.' In this respect, it was estimated that 750,000 dwelling were needed. See Cmd. 6609.
[16] TNA: PRO, CAB 129/4/24, Progress Report on Housing – October 1945, Memorandum by the Minister of Health, 8 November 1945.
[17] TNA: PRO, CAB 128/9/9, Cabinet Conclusions, 17 January 1947.

caveat relative to the availability of labour and materials, it was nonetheless published in the *Economic Survey for 1947*. [18] Later that year following the financial crisis caused by the aborted convertibility of sterling, housing was initially restricted to 140,000 completions for 1948, although Bevan did skilfully negotiate considerable movability relative to this number. Later, in 1950, the housing programme was effectively capped at 200,000 completions per annum for three years. [19]

As we have seen, local authorities were given the responsibility for the construction of public sector housing that would represent 80 per cent of the programme, whilst the construction of houses for sale or rent in the private sector was restricted to the provision of a maximum of 20 per cent of the overall total. The issue of licences to enable the latter to proceed was vested in the respective local authority units. This was a further responsibility devolved to local councils and as such they were required to ensure a degree of fairness in granting such permission. Indeed, it was necessary to make certain that those granted licences to build were amongst those in housing need.[20]

A generous subsidy regime was introduced by way of the *Housing (Financial and Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1946*, but which was only applicable to the building of public sector housing. No subsidy was assigned to private sector construction. Local authorities were urged to proceed with their respective permanent housing schemes prior to the approval of the legislation that facilitated the payment of the subsidy, on the basis that such would be paid retrospectively.[21] By the end of October 1945, sites

[18] *Economic Survey for 1947,* (1947) Cmd. 7046.
[19] TNA: PRO, CAB 128/17. Cabinet conclusions, 17 April 1950
[20] TNA: PRO, HLG 102/108, National Building and Engineering Programme, Licensing for Housing Policy; TNA: PRO, HLG 101/3, Building Materials and Housing Bill, 1945.
[21] TNA: PRO, CAB 129/3, Housing. Memorandum by the Minister of Health, 13 October 1945.

had been approved for the construction of 679,000 permanent houses in England and Wales and 137,000 in Scotland, on the basis of ten houses per acre.[22]

In the early stages of planning for a post-war housing programme, it was recognised that alternative methods to those of traditional means of constructing houses would have to be found. This resulted in 1942, to the establishment of the Interdepartmental Committee on House Construction (Burt Committee), that was tasked to consider which methods and materials would be most cost effective and efficient in providing housing following war damage and destruction.[23] Burt favoured prefabrication as a solution to the problem and requested local authorities and private enterprise to submit new ideas for non-traditional house design that could be put into production quickly.[24] By the end of 1944, plans for using non-traditional forms of construction for permanent housing were beginning to take shape, with the publication of the first report of the Burt Committee.

Upon taking office as Minister of Health, Bevan gave much personal encouragement to the development of houses of non-traditional construction and in 1946 gave his approval to two types: the British Iron and Steel Federation (BISF) house that consisted of concrete panels and steel frames and the Airey House (Urban and Rural), a construction of pre-cast concrete.[25] Later that year production was started on ten other non-traditional house types and a further type of semi-prefabrication, the Cornish

[22] TNA: PRO, CAB 129/4/24, Progress Report on Housing – October 1945, Memorandum by the Minister of Health, 8 November 1945.
[23] The Burt Committee comprised experts from the building industry, government departments and the Building Research Station. The committee was chaired by Sir George Mowlem Burt. The Burt Committee was later asked to look at the development of temporary prefabricated houses.
[24] Elisabeth Blanchet and Sonia Zhuravlyova, *Prefabs: A Social and Architectural History* (Swindon, 2018), 26.
[25] Michael Foot, *Aneurin Bevan: A biography, Vol 2* (London, 1973), 81.

Unit, designed with distinctive reddish-brown mansard roofs, built as bungalows, two-storey semi-detached and terraced houses.[26]

As was the case with the temporary prefabricated housing programme, permanent prefabrication was seen as a labour saving and cost-saving way of constructing houses. However, this proved not always to be the case. The Aluminium house, for instance, required little on-site labour, but was more expensive than the traditional permanent house. Conversely, the cost of an Airey (Rural) type house was comparable with that of a traditional permanent house but needed much more on-site labour than that of the Aluminium house. The Aluminium house was used frequently to address specific problems, such as countering acute building labour shortages in certain areas of the country. However, the inability (due also to labour shortages) to prepare the necessary sites for receipt of these houses precluded their deployment to maximum effect. The Airey (Rural) house was used extensively to meet the housing shortage in rural areas, but it too experienced problems. The Airey Rural comprised of a prefabricated concrete shell that removed the dependence on bricks and bricklayers of which there was a shortage. However, to finish the interior needed the same number of tradesmen as a traditional house. Such tradesmen and the materials they required were often in short supply, especially in rural areas. As a result, small rural building contractors were able to charge inflated prices for such services.[27]

Nonetheless, non-traditional forms of house construction did allow for a more rapid response to particular housing needs, but their production led to the diversion of supplies and fittings away from the traditional permanent housing programme. This was due to prefabricated housing having priority access to such supplies because of

[26] Blanchet and Zhuravlyova, *Prefabs*, 56 – 57.
[27] TNA: PRO, HLG 36/21. Minutes of CHAC Meeting, 2 May 1947.

the need to maintain an orderly production process in the factories that produced such houses. However, as the supply of materials and fittings became more routine, the inventory of such at the factories was substantially reduced, which in turn increased the flow of supplies to the traditional housing programme.[28]

Rebuilding of war-destroyed and repair of unoccupied war-damaged houses

In the early months of taking office, Bevan, as Minister of Health, set about putting through a series of parliamentary measures to relieve the immediate housing crisis.[29] One such was to give priority to the rebuilding of war destroyed houses and the repair of unoccupied war-damaged dwellings. This work was primarily funded by the War Damage Commission, established by the *War Damage Act 1941*. This Act together with the *War Damage (Amendment) Act 1943* gave effect to compensation being paid for war damage to land and buildings. The legislation provided that payment should be either the cost incurred in the repair of the war damage or, if this was uneconomic, a value payment on the basis of prices as of 31 March 1939. A 'cost of works' payment could be made as soon as such cost was incurred, but a 'value payment' was not made until, in most cases, November 1947, although at an enhanced rate: the 1939 figure no longer being considered adequate.[30] In 1946, it was reported that payment in respect of 'restoration of war damaged houses' was being made to local authorities in the sum of thirty shillings per cubic foot.[31]

[28] TNA: PRO, HLG 101/494. Minutes of Housing Production Committee, Sites for Aluminium Houses, 28 March 1947.
[29] TNA: PRO, PREM 8/228, Cabinet. Housing. Memorandum by the Minister of Health, 13 October 1945.
[30] The *War Damage Act 1941* (4 & 5 Geo. 6. Ch. 12)*;* The *War Damage (Amendment) Act 1943* (6 & 7 Geo. 6. Ch. 12).
[31] Tyne and Wear Archive Service (TWAS), South Shields County Borough Council, Housing Committee, 19 February 1946.

The temporary housing programme

During the Second World War the wartime coalition government made the decision to erect temporary houses as soon as hostilities came to an end. This was decided following advice by the Burt Committee which in 1943 was asked to expand its work to include temporary housing solutions.[32] This was regarded purely as an emergency measure designed to alleviate some of the more acute housing shortages in the immediate post-war years. To facilitate this measure, two Acts of Parliament were passed to provide for the manufacture, erection, and siting of temporary prefabricated bungalows.[33] The aim was to produce a limited number of dwellings that could be manufactured and erected with a minimum of labour and as speedily as possible. The 'prefabs', as the temporary houses became known, were eventually produced in a number of forms. The largest number built were of the aluminium type, produced in the main by four companies – Bristol Aero, Vickers Armstrong, A W Hawksley and Blackburn.[34] Other types included 'Arcon homes' (steel frame with asbestos cladding), Uni-Seco (flat roofed timber frame with asbestos wall sections) and the Tarran type (timber frames with precast timber panels).[35] The Uni-Seco type came with pre-assembled kitchen and bathroom units, with the rest of the house arriving in 'flat-pack' units and assembled on site.[36] The 'prefabs' were compact, had flat or low-pitched roofs and unmoulded, wrap-around corner windows. Although the exact design of the

[32] The Burt Committee was initially appointed in 1942 to provide guidance on the housing shortage and to consider which methods and materials would be most cost effective and efficient for providing housing following war damage.
[33] The *Housing (Temporary Accommodation) Act 1944* (7 & 8 Geo. 6. Ch. 36); *The Housing (Temporary Accommodation) Act 1945* (8 & 9 Geo. 6. Ch. 39).
[34] TNA: PRO, CAB 139/386, Housing General.
[35] Ibid.
[36] Ibid.

prefabs was left to each manufacturer, the criteria defined by the Ministry of Works left little scope for individualism. All approved prefabs had the same basic two-bedroom layout and had to have a minimum floor space of 635 square feet. (Figure 2.1) [37] Components could be no longer than 7.5 feet to allow transportation by road. With their fitted kitchens, running hot water, built-in storage and electric lighting and sockets, the 'pre-fabs' were state-of-the-art dwellings of the time, many of which lasted way beyond their expected decade-long allocated lifespan.[38]

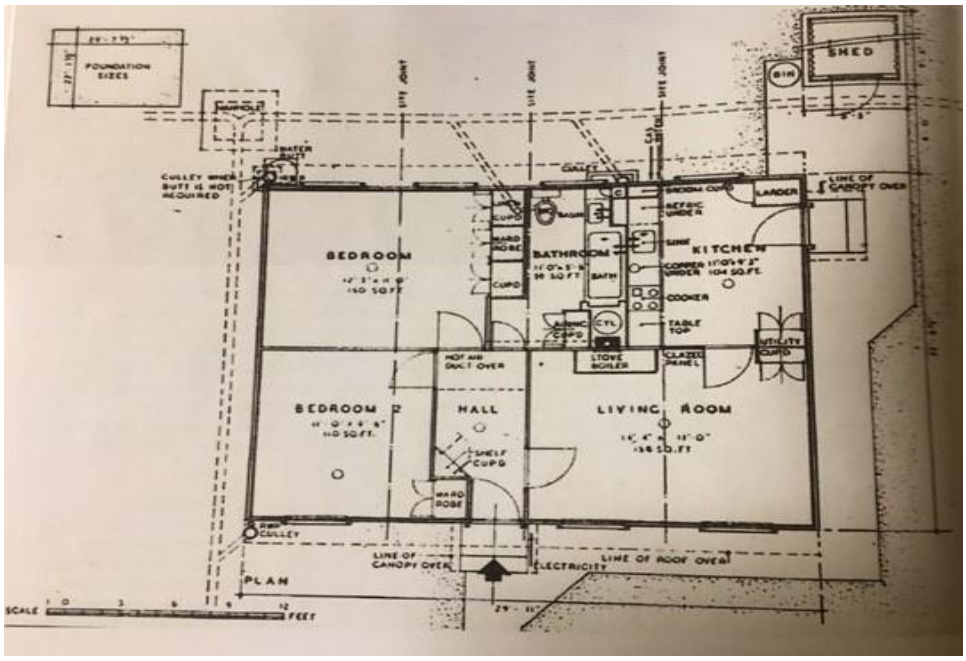

Figure 2.1: Standard floorplan of a Temporary Housing Programme post-war Tarran prefab. Source: Blanchet and Zhuravlyova, *Prefabs* (Swindon, 2018), 34.

The wartime coalition committed the sum of £150 million to the building of temporary houses, which were allocated to local authorities on the basis of housing need.[39] Under the *Housing (Temporary Accommodation) Act 1944*, the local authority provided the

[37] Liverpool Record Office (LRO, 352 COU, Report of the City Architect and Director of Housing, Housing – Temporary Accommodation – The Siting of Bungalows, November 1944, 3.
[38] Blanchet and Zhuravlyova, *Prefabs,* 83.
[39] This was later increased to £200 million by the *Building Materials and Housing Act 1945* (9 & 10 Geo. 6. Ch. 20) and then to £220 million by the *Housing (Temporary Accommodation) Act 1947* (7 & 8 Geo. 6. Ch. 36).

sites (including the provision of roads, common access paths and sewers, water, gas and electricity services) for an allocation agreed with central government. The Ministry of Works was responsible for the supply and erection of the bungalows, together with all the necessary fencing, drainage and sewerage connections, within the curtilage of each dwelling.[40] Subject to any reduction agreed by the Minister of Works, the local authority was required to make an annual contribution to the government of £23 10s. per dwelling or in the case of Rural District Councils, the sum of £21 10s.[41] The *Housing (Temporary Accommodation) Act 1945* also empowered local authorities, in their search for sites on which the temporary bungalows could be erected, to make use of selected areas of public open space.[42] The identification of suitable sites for the erection of the prefabs presented an initial challenge for local councils, particularly those covering inner-city areas, as large stretches of suitable land had to be quickly identified for the purpose.

What was achieved

Permanent Housing

When Labour left office in October 1951 after more than six years in power, slightly more than 200,000 new permanent houses per annum were being completed. During those six years a total of 1,215,000 such units of accommodation had been constructed in the United Kingdom. Of this, 1,013,000 were built for rent in the public sector and 202,000 for private sector sale or rent (Table 2.2).[43]

[40] LRO, 352 COU, Report of the City Architect and Director of Housing, Housing – Temporary Accommodation – The Siting of Bungalows, November 1944, 15.
[41] Ibid, 15.
[42] LRO, Hq 720.9.PUB, *Liverpool Builds 1945-65*, 20.
[43] David Butler and Gareth Butler, *Twentieth-Century British Political Facts, 1900 – 2000* (Basingstoke, 2005), 356-7. See also: Alec Cairncross, *Years of Recovery: British Economic Policy, 1945 – 51* (London,1985), 451 – 452. Cairncross suggests that for several years after the war the

Year	1945	1946	1947	1948	1949	1950	1951
Local Authority (000s)	11	109	148	217	177	175	176
Private Enterprise (000s)	12	31	41	34	28	30	25
Total (000s)	**23**	**140**	**189**	**251**	**205**	**205**	**202**

Table 2.2: Permanent dwellings completed in the United Kingdom 1945 – 1951. Source: Butler and Butler, *British Political Facts 1900 - 2000* (Basingstoke, 2005), 356 - 357.

During the period 1945 to 1951 a total of 201,354 permanent prefabricated houses were constructed in Britain: 151,077 in England and Wales and 50,277 in Scotland.[44] The BISF, Airey (Rural) and Easy-form types were those built in the greatest number in England and Wales and in Scotland the Weir, Blackburn and BISF predominated.[45] However, many other systems were eventually used, as set out below (Tables 2.3 and 2.4).

Notwithstanding the problems encountered, as can be seen from the statistics the permanent prefabricated housing programme made an important contribution to the post-war housing drive. This was particularly the case in Scotland where prefabricated houses made up over 44 per cent of all new permanent houses and flats constructed.[46]

official figures seriously understated the number of homes completed. Cairncross' view is that because the figures seemed more disappointing than they really were, Bevan was allowed to claim a disproportionate share of resources for housing. The statistics quoted in Butler and Butler (taken from the official Housing and Construction statistics prepared by the Department of the Environment), appear to rectify this anomaly.

[44] Cmd. 8458; *Housing Return for Scotland, 31 December 1951*(1951) Cmd. 8459.

[45] Ibid.

[46] Cmd. 8459.

Indeed, although the cost proved to be greater than expected and the speed of construction proved to be less, there is little doubt that prefabricated houses met legitimate housing needs.

Type	Completed	Under construction at end Dec1951
Airey Urban	1,310	380
Airey Rural	20,851	299
Aluminium	16,785	112
B.I.S.F.	31,320	196
British Steel Const'n	1,730	478
Cornish Unit	7,693	3,080
Cussins	1,347	5
Kingston	***	102
Laing Easiform	20,602	3,724
L.C. Systems	2,000	***
Newland	2,391	10
Orlit	7,377	102
Reema	1,510	466
Scottwood	600	62
Spooner	1,450	144
Stent	930	285
Swedish	2,444	4
Trusteel	1,222	622
Uco	650	460
Unity	3,677	1,264
Wates	6,764	1,711
Wimpey "No fines"	10,966	5,687
Woolaway	1,444	736
Other types	6,014	298
Total	**151,077**	**20,227**

Table 2.3: Number and Types of Permanent Non-Traditional Housing in England & Wales, 1945 - 1951. Source: Cmd. 8458.

Type	Completed	Under construction at end Dec 1951
Aluminium	2,504	***
Atholl	4,052	962
Blackburn	5,698	414
B.I.S.F.	4,954	44
Carmyle	2	150
Cruden	3,384	***
Dorran	292	8
Dunedin	1,563	1,071
Foamslag	1,622	***
Hall	34	38
Johnstone	2	24
Lawrence	470	966
Lindsay	518	232
Maxim	216	196
Miller	748	924
Myton	812	224
Orlit	4,326	1,215
Stuart	3,587	744
Swedish Timber	3,506	***
Tee Beam	***	50
Weir	6,954	2,999
Whitson-Fairhurst	3,190	169
Wilson Block	116	196
Wimpey	892	805
Other types	835	***
Total	**50,277**	**11,431**

Table 2.4: Number and Types of Permanent Non-Traditional Housing in Scotland, 1945 - 1951. Source: Cmd. 8459.

Rebuilding

The government expected local authorities to give priority to programmes, over a two-year period, to rebuild dwellings that had been totally destroyed by bombing in order to eliminate gaps that such destruction had created. In most areas of the country, preference was given to smaller houses, particularly groups of houses that were able to be rebuilt by one building contractor. By mid-1945, a great deal of such work was already in progress in cities such as Liverpool, where in the July of that year, architects from the War Damage Commission met with Liverpool city architects to speed-up operations. Licences for reinstatement of war destroyed houses needed to be obtained from the local authority. To qualify for building and restoration, plans had to comply with both the building requirements and the by-laws of the local authority in respect of

facilities such as lavatories and bathrooms, yard-space and rear entrances.[47] By the end of September 1951, more than 42,000 war destroyed properties had been rebuilt in England and Wales, comprising 8,425 by local authorities and 33,673 under licence by private builders.[48] In Scotland, 1,067 such dwelling were rebuilt during the same period.[49]

In parallel with programmes to rebuild war destroyed houses, work on the repair of unoccupied seriously war damaged dwellings went ahead apace. The majority of such repair work was carried out in the period immediately following the outbreak of peace. In 1945 over 60,000 seriously war damaged dwellings were repaired in Britain. This represented over three-quarters of all accommodation provided by the building industry in that year.[50] By the end of February 1946 some 73,795 dwellings had been rendered again inhabitable, 59,356 of which were in London.[51] Such was the level and intensity of the essential war damage repair, particularly in the capital, that it did occupy a substantial proportion of what was, especially in the early years following the end of the war, a hugely depleted building labour force and consumed a large amount of essential building materials that were in short supply. This had consequences for Bevan's stated aim, markedly during 1945 and the first six-months of 1946 of getting 'a substantial output of new houses underway'.[52] By the time Labour left office in October 1951, more than 146,000 unoccupied seriously war damaged dwellings had

[47] *Liverpool Daily Post*, 31 July 1945.
[48] Cmd. 8458.
[49] Cmd. 8459.
[50] Herbert Ashworth, *Housing in Great Britain* (London, 1957), 38 – 39.
[51] TNA: PRO, PREM 8/231, Housing return for February and March 1946.
[52] TNA: PRO, PREM 8/228, Cabinet. Housing. Memorandum by the Minister of Health, 13 October 1945, 3.

been brought back into occupation: 109,231 by local authorities and 36,827 under licence by private builders.[53]

Temporary housing

The temporary housing programme made a slower start and was much more costly than initially forecast. At £1,365 per unit, the cost was considered expensive and considerably in excess of the original estimates.[54] At the end of 1945, six months after the end of the war in Europe, only 9,000 temporary houses had been erected in England and Wales. However, by the end of 1946, the erection of the temporary prefabs reached its peak with 83,000 raised during that year.[55] The slow start and increased costs can be attributed in part to deficiencies in the course of construction. During the first twelve months of the programme, shortages of internal fittings had the effect of throwing production schedules out of line.[56] There were also instances where prefabs were completed before the 'receiving' local authority had prepared the appropriate sites. In such cases, prefabs were diverted to other local authorities, where site preparation was running ahead of schedule.[57] Bevan was one of many that were critical of the temporary housing initiative, taking the view that it undermined the permanent housing drive. Bevan regarded temporary housing very much as a 'stop-gap', to be carried through as quickly as possible and to be limited to the number of houses initially allocated to local authorities. Bevan took action to restrict the prefab scheme that in November 1945 the government had stated would provide 165,000

[53] Cmd. 8458; Cmd. 8459.
[54] TNA: PRO, CAB 87/37. Draft White Paper on the Temporary Housing Programme. October 1945.
[55] Cmd. 8458; Cmd. 8459.
[56] See TNA: PRO, CAB 21/2023, Housing – Informal meetings of Ministers; See TNA: PRO, CAB 87/36, War Cabinet and Cabinet Committees on reconstruction and supply, etc.
[57] TNA: PRO, CAB 21/2023. Minutes of meeting of Housing Production Executive, 11 April 1946.

units of accommodation by the end of June 1947.[58] By the close of 1948, the programme was virtually completed. In total, 157,146 temporary houses had been allocated to local authorities and Government Departments in Britain.[59]

During the early post-war years, local authorities and private builders also provided additional accommodation through the adaptation and conversion of existing dwellings. By the end of 1951 almost 143,000 addition housing units had been made available for occupation by these means.[60] Most of this additional accommodation was provided by the conversion of larger houses into self-contained flats. The practice of allowing local authorities to requisition unoccupied properties (initiated in 1939 under wartime emergency powers), or to derequisition those which had been used for non-residential purposes, was continued throughout the post-war housing shortage. By 1950, 3,800 homes were held under requisition to house those on the council's waiting list in Hackney. In Wandsworth the total was 3,700.[61] In Liverpool, 2,170 houses were held under requisition by the city council.[62] Between the end of the Second World War and the close of 1951 a further 19,987 properties were requisitioned by local councils, providing much needed accommodation for families in housing need.[63]

Furthermore, 26,708 units of accommodation were provided by local authorities in disused army service camps as part of the post-war housing programme.[64] This latter initiative was brought about through direct action by a squatters' movement. The action was organised principally, but not exclusively by the Communist Party, which after the

[58] TNA: PRO, CAB 129/4, Progress report on Housing, October 1945. Memorandum by the Minister of Health, 8 November 1945.
[59] Cmd. 8458; Cmd. 8459.
[60] Ibid.
[61] John Boughton, *Municipal Dreams: The rise and fall of council housing* (London, 2018), 93.
[62] LRO, Hq 720.9.PUB, *Liverpool Builds*, 20.
[63] Cmd. 8458.
[64] Ibid.

occupation of a disused army camp in Scunthorpe in May 1946, spread like wildfire across the country. By October, an estimated 1,038 camps had been commandeered as emergency homes by almost 40,000 activists.[65] At the end of the war, local authorities had approached the government about the large number of disused army camps and other facilities in their areas. Local councils had expressed a desire to refit such camps for use as temporary accommodation for families on their housing waiting lists. However, the Ministry of Health had generally turned down these requests, primarily because the government did not wish to divert scarce building resources from the permanent housing programme into stop-gap accommodation. The action of the squatters was finally vindicated in that the government relented and agreed to transfer the management of the army camps from the military to local councils; funds were provided for basic services and charges levied in lieu of rent. It was expected that the occupants of the camps would eventually become council tenants in accordance with their position on the local council waiting lists.[66]

In addition to the aforesaid initiatives, the government took steps to secure the fullest possible use of spare accommodation in occupied houses.[67] As such, local authorities were invited to make what became known as a 'share your house' appeal to householders with spare accommodation in their houses to make it available to persons with no home of their own. In this respect, the government acted, by way of the use of emergency powers, to remove any legal obstacles including an exemption from the provisions of the Rent Restrictions Acts and from the requirements of covenants attached to a house which might otherwise prevent such arrangements.

[65] Boughton, *Municipal Dreams,* 90.
[66] Don Watson, 'Theirs was the crisis. Ours was the remedy: The Squatting Movements of 1946 in Britain, Canada and Australia.', *Labour History Review*, 84 (2019), 243 – 245.
[67] TNA: PRO,CAB 129/3, Housing. Memorandum by the Minister of Health, 13 October 1945.

Furthermore, local authorities were given powers to make minimum essential works to provide necessary fittings, furniture and equipment. Such arrangements were extended to both furnished and unfurnished accommodation.[68]

In many respects all these measures were palliative but, nevertheless, made an appreciable contribution to the housing drive and helped to significantly ameliorate the immediate housing emergency. This was particularly so in London and in those towns and cities where much housing had been lost or severely damaged by enemy action. In total (excluding the 'share your house' initiative) such schemes provided 535,626 additional units of accommodation across Britain.[69]

How to explain difference

There were several factors that had an influence on quantitative performance during the period. These factors serve to explain the difference between housing plans and actual achievements. The following paragraphs set out the problems encountered and the effect each had on the housing programme.

Organisational and administrative problems

A number of reasons can be attributed to the slow start of the permanent housing programme. The 1,470 local authorities that had been given responsibility for the delivery of public sector housing in England and Wales had varying degrees of experience in house building. Some, like the London County Council had great experience in this field but others, particularly the smaller rural district councils had little or none. It would take some time before the latter were able to contribute to the programme. Indeed, some of the smaller councils were not equipped with the

[68] Ibid.
[69] Cmd. 8458.

necessary technical expertise to enable them to carry out the function. Local councils were burdened with other onerous housing related responsibilities too. In addition to being the government's main agents for the delivery of the housing programme, local authorities were expected to identify and obtain the necessary land and to plan housing estates to appropriate standards, including layout and design. In some cases, services had to be provided which involved the obtaining of relevant approvals and the administration of tendering processes. All of which was subject to final approval by the Ministry of Health.[70]

During the early stages of the programme, the majority of what was a much-depleted housebuilding labour force was engaged in schemes to repair severely war damaged property. At the end of October 1945, the number of men engaged in the erection of permanent houses was approximately 3,900 in England and Wales and 4,000 in Scotland. In contrast, the numbers engaged in war damage repair work numbered 194,000 in England and Wales whereas in Scotland, where war damage was much less prevalent, 600 men were engaged in such work.[71] Hence, Scotland's superior early progress with its permanent housing programme. However, there were other, more systemic administrative and organisational problems that had a negative effect on the delivery of the programme.

Two specific issues contributed significantly to the problems that the permanent housing programme suffered in England and Wales, particularly during its first two years. The first was in the allocation of responsibility for housing at ministerial level and the second related to the co-ordination of the activities of the relevant government

[70] See TNA: PRO, CAB 87/35, Reconstruction Committee: Sub-Committee on housing; TNA: PRO, CAB 87/36, War Cabinet Housing Committee; TNA: PRO, CAB 87/37, War Cabinet and Cabinet papers: Committee on reconstruction, supply, and other matters.
[71] TNA: PRO, CAB 129/4/24, Progress Report on Housing – October 1945, Memorandum by the Minister of Health, 8 November 1945.

departments during the implementation of the programme. The Labour manifesto had clearly stated that there should be a Ministry of Housing and Planning combining the housing powers of the Ministry of Health with the planning powers of the Ministry of Town and Country Planning.[72] It went on to say that there must be a firm and united government policy to enable the Ministry of Works to function as an efficient instrument in the service of all departments with building needs and of the nation as a whole. This, in reality, did not happen.

Attlee, however, was conscious of the need for organisational clarity and coordination between departments in the delivery of the housing programme and did, during the time he was constructing his government, consider removing from the Ministry of Health responsibility for housing and placing it within the purview of the Ministry of Town and Country Planning. As an alternative, the Prime-Minister considered keeping housing within Health, but making the Minister of Town and Country Planning (a position not in the cabinet), responsible for housing but reporting directly to the Minister of Health. In the event, Attlee, on the advice of his senior officials (who advised that such a change would require legislation), decided to stick with the status quo and housing in England and Wales remained the responsibility of the Minister of Health.[73]

Although Attlee had designated the Minister of Health as ultimately responsible for housing in England and Wales, the control of the resources and materials with which to deliver the housing programme remained dispersed amongst numerous ministries: Health, Works, Supply and Town and Country Planning. In addition, the Board of Trade was key on imports and the availability of workers was the responsibility of the

[72] The Labour Party, *Let Us Face the Future* (1945), 7.
[73] TNA: PRO, PREM 8/53, Greenwood to Attlee, 10 August 1945; Rowan to Attlee, 10 August 1945; Brook to Attlee, 10 August 1945; Silkin to Attlee, 14 August 1945.

Ministry of Labour and National Service.[74] In such circumstances there was a requirement for central coordination of the housing programme (that by implication meant some decrease in departmental autonomy) to ensure the control and allocation of building resources and that the departments involved and the activities they controlled functioned in accordance with the needs and capabilities of each other. The implementation of the housing programme was bound to run into difficulties in the absence of such coordination. Marian Bowley, in her book, *Housing and the State: 1919 – 1944*, describes the requirements for a successful post-war housing policy. In this respect, Bowley opines that the control and allocation of building resources through the use of administrative arrangements was essential. 'Anything else leads to waste of time and money and usually of the scarce resources themselves.' Bowley goes on: 'In the absence of suitable controls of demand and supply, price control is ineffective.'[75] The scale of Labour's housing programme would have to be closely related to the availability of such resources.

A lack of such an 'umbrella' of central co-ordination and control meant that because of the plethora of ministries involved, administrative problems soon emerged. Consequently, in April 1946 this necessitated the intervention of the Prime-Minister himself, with Attlee successfully persuading Bevan to set up a new Housing Production Executive to take control from the various departments of the whole gambit of building materials, the production of components and the supply of labour.[76] Prior to the setting up of the Housing Production Executive, intervention by the Prime-Minister had led to Attlee himself taking the chair of a revamped cabinet committee on housing; one that included Morrison and Greenwood and sometimes Dalton, as well as all the other

[74] The Scottish Office was solely responsible for housing north of the border.
[75] See Marian Bowley, *Housing and the State: 1919 – 1944* (London, 1945), 243.
[76] TNA: PRO, PREM 8/232, Attlee to Bevan, and others, 11 April 1946.

Minister's concerned with housing.[77] In his opening remarks at the first meeting of the committee, held on 11 December 1945, the Prime-Minister declared:

> During the war there had been periodic meetings of Ministers on such matters as the progress of the Battle of the Atlantic, and the meetings on housing progress would be on similar lines. It was essential that housing should be regarded as having the same sort of urgency as military operations in the war years.[78]

At the same meeting, under an agenda item that considered the production of building materials, Attlee again underlined the importance to the government of the housing programme. He declared that:

> The output of materials and components must be planned in the way that the output of munitions had been planned during the war.[79]

The Ministry of Health's policy of giving the local authorities the responsibility for the actual construction of houses on the ground, became a target of attack on the Ministry's stewardship of the housing programme by Douglas Jay, Attlee's personal adviser on economic matters.[80] Jay's criticisms were given weight by backing in the cabinet itself by Lord Addison, who had experienced problems with local authorities faced with the prospect of having to translate the principles of his own housing legislation of 1919 into reality. Jay's solution was to side-line inefficient local authorities in favour of more direct building by the Ministry of Works via the establishment of a new housebuilding corporation to act where local authorities were failing. Jay accused Bevan of putting ideology before practical politics and of being 'very doctrinal' in his

[77] Originally, on taking office, Attlee had appointed a cabinet committee on housing, chaired by the Lord Privy Seal, Arthur Greenwood. However, this committee met only once on 8 August 1945 and was then replaced by one chaired by Bevan himself. See Campbell, *Bevan,* 155, 159.
[78] TNA: PRO, CAB 134/320, Housing Committee Miscellaneous papers. Minutes of meeting, 11 December 1945.
[79] Ibid.
[80] TNA: PRO, CAB 129/3, Housing: Memorandum by the Minister of Health, 13 October 1945.

support for local authority house building.[81] Interestingly, Bevan had himself argued for national planning of housebuilding during the 1945 general election campaign.[82] However, his position became more nuanced when he took office. Bevan appreciated that local authorities not only had experience of housebuilding but were also the planning authorities with unrivalled local knowledge. However, at the first meeting of the cabinet standing committee on housing that Attlee chaired, Bevan was immediately obliged to concede the main practical change which Jay had been pressing: he agreed that 'there should be a government building organisation, provided that it was made clear to local authorities that any such organisation was intended to supplement local authority building', not replace it.[83] However, during 1946 and with the local authority housebuilding programme eventually beginning to gain some momentum, with 163,000 houses started around the country, Bevan felt confident enough to scrap the proposed National Building Corporation that had been forced upon him by Attlee's committee. He did this despite the fact that the Minister of Works, George Tomlinson, had got so far as to appoint a chairman and a board. In a letter to Tomlinson, Bevan expressed the view that it would be 'unwise' to create a new government building organisation at the present time. 'Neither the flow of labour nor of building materials would benefit.'[84]

Despite the setting up of a Housing Production Executive and of Attlee himself taking the chair of the Cabinet Committee on housing, the inability of the Labour government to satisfactorily coordinate the activities of the various departments, particularly in the early stages of implementation of the housing and reconstruction programmes,

[81] TNA: PRO, PREM 8/228, Jay to Attlee, 15 October 1945.
[82] Nicklaus Thomas-Symonds*, Nye: The Political Life of Aneurin Bevan* (London, 2015), 120.
[83] TNA: PRO, CAB 134/320, 11 December 1945.
[84] TNA: PRO, PREM 8/228, Bevan to Tomlinson, 2 August. 1946.

resulted in an overloaded building industry. The problem was thrown into stark relief when, out of a total of 202,704 permanent houses where construction had commenced during the period January to December 1946, only 51,090 had been completed, leaving 171,346 unfinished and still under construction at the end of that period.[85] The gravity of the situation led to the launch, by the Ministry of Health, of a 'Finish the Houses' campaign, that implored all local authorities that had houses under construction to get them built up to eaves level by the end of 1946.[86] The root of the problem was that the number of tenders approved and licences issued for the construction of houses (and subsequently the number of housing starts made) was not commensurate with the availability of the factors of production, especially labour and materials (particularly softwood and other timber).

Building Labour

In 1939, prior to the start of the war, the size of the labour force in the building and civil engineering industries stood at 1,041,600. Indeed, the numbers employed in those sectors had reached its peak the year before, when it stood at 1,050,100. However, in July 1945, the numbers employed in building and civil engineering stood at 597,000, over 40 per cent down on the pre-war figure. Of that number, the total number of operatives aged sixteen years and over, excluding prisoners of war, employed in the construction and repair of housing in England and Wales, whether on work for local authorities or on private contracts under licence was 320,400, representing over 54 per cent of the sectors workforce.[87] Such numbers were slightly less than commensurate with the priority given to housing over all other building and

[85] Cmd. 8458.
[86] TWAS, South Shields County Borough Council, Housing Committee, 24 September 1946.
[87] Labour History Archive and Study Centre (LHASC), Research Series R.D. 239-279, 1948-49, 'Facts about Housing: Some statistical information', R.D. 279/March 1949, 8-9.

reconstruction requirements of the nation by the War Cabinet Reconstruction Committee in January 1945.[88] For a government faced with an unprecedented housing crisis, it was imperative to ensure the speedy deployment of skilled building workers and those with appropriate professional technical expertise, to facilitate the delivery of the housing programme. It was essential also that such deployment was commensurate with the availability of the necessary building materials at each stage of the construction process.

However, during the early years of the housing drive there was much inter-departmental tension over the deployment of technical as well as skilled and unskilled labour to housing. As early as October 1945, Bevan had raised the issue of the shortage of local authority technical staff with his cabinet colleagues, blaming such shortages for the delay in making a satisfactory start on the construction of new permanent houses.[89] Bevan cited the case of 600 men with appropriate technical expertise, whose release from the armed forces had been requested, but not yet granted by the service departments. The shortage of skilled and unskilled building labour was raised at a meeting of the Housing Cabinet Committee.[90] There, it was reported that in the previous June, the Ministry of Labour had prepared a register of 146,000 skilled building workers who were in other industrial employment, 42,000 of which had returned to building and a further 22,000 'could be returned to building when they were required'. At that stage of the housing programme, it was reported that the greatest shortage of labour in the sector was in the unskilled grades of building labour. The shortage of facilities for training building workers was also highlighted.

[88] TNA: PRO, CAB 87/10, Requirements and Priorities for Post-War Building Work other than Housing, 16 January 1945.
[89] TNA: PRO, PREM 8/228, Cabinet minute on proposed statement of policy on housing, 39th conclusions, 9 October 1945.
[90] TNA: PRO, CAB 134/320, Cabinet / Housing. Meeting of Ministers, 11 December 1945.

By December 1946, in a memorandum prepared by George Isaacs (Minister of Labour and National Service) for the consideration of the Cabinet Housing Committee, it was noted that the total outstanding labour demand for priority housing work lodged at Employment Exchanges on 28 November 1946 was 47,500, of which 8,378 vacancies had been filled.[91] Isaacs stated that the demand most difficult to fill was for bricklayers, which represented 60 per cent of the outstanding vacancies for craftsmen and 36 per cent of all outstanding vacancies. Of the 1,100 bricklayers that came each week through the Employment Exchanges, 850 to 900 were placed on housing work.

In November 1947, the Ministry of Health came into conflict with the Minister of Works over the issue of the automatic award of top priority to all housing schemes in respect of the allocation of labour.[92] At a meeting of the Production Committee of the Cabinet held on 29 November 1947, a memorandum prepared by the Minister of Works proposed that the automatic award of top priority should be discontinued, and that the sponsoring department should instead request the award of top priority on a scheme-by-scheme basis. The Ministry of Health objected to the proposal, preferring to stick with the status quo. However, the incident provides further evidence of the tension that existed between the numerous ministries involved over the priority allocation of labour to housing over other important capital projects.

The problems of the allocation of skilled building labour and appropriate technical expertise was controlled by the Treasury's 'manpower' budget and the arrangements of the Ministry of Labour and National Service; they were far beyond the control of Bevan at the Ministry of Health. Such matters were much influenced by the actions of

[91] TNA: PRO, CAB 134/320, Cabinet, Housing, Labour situation in the building and civil engineering industries: Note by the Minister of Labour and National Service, 9 December 1946.
[92] TNA: PRO, CAB 134/635, Cabinet Production Committee, The Building Programme. Priority for labour. Memorandum by the Minister of Works, 29 November 1947.

George Isaacs, at Labour and National Service, in demobilising men from the armed forces. Nevertheless, more than eighteen months after the war in Europe had ended, the number employed in the housing construction and repair sector was considered below that which was needed, even though, by early January 1947, those involved in the sector had increased by 70 per cent to 564,500. Furthermore, the number of operatives employed in the construction of permanent housing at that date numbered 181,500.[93] Indeed, the former figure was well in excess of the number of operatives employed on such schemes in September 1951, that numbered 478,175.[94] The latter, approximately 55,000 below the figure employed on such schemes in September 1951, when the programme was delivering marginally over 200,000 new permanent houses per annum.[95]

Overall, the demobilisation of men from the armed forces proved to be a difficult task for George Isaacs. As well as being pressurised by Bevan at Health and Cripps at the Board of Trade and indeed by Ministers at other departments to release key workers, he faced contrary pressure from Bevin at the Foreign Office to slow down the process to enable Britain to meet its defence obligations in Germany and in other parts of the world. Isaacs, however, did a creditable job. Between August 1945 and December 1946, the armed forces were reduced from over five million to marginally over one million. Further progress was delayed as a result of the insistence of A.V. Alexander, the Minister of Defence, that Britain's military commitments in the Middle and Far East had to be maintained. The consequences of which served only in prolonging the shortage of labour in some key skilled trades, including in the building sector.[96]

[93] LHASC, Research Series R.D. 41-82, 1947-48, 'Facts about Housing', R.D. 45/ March 1947.
[94] Cmd. 8458.
[95] Ibid.
[96] Bodleian Library, Oxford (BLO), MS Attlee dep.49 (fols 86-91) Note by Hugh Dalton on a difference of opinion in the cabinet. 20 January1947; Morgan, *Labour,* 180-181.

Softwood, timber and other building materials

As with the problems with labour, the constant shortage of raw materials, particularly softwood and other timber further compromised the permanent housing drive. Not only did such shortages increase considerably the time taken to build a house, from commencement on site to completion of construction, it contributed to increases in costs, especially of timber and joinery of 198 per cent and 191 per cent respectively above the 1939 figure.[97] Compared to the average increase in cost of other materials of 76 per cent, the increase was phenomenal. Indeed, this alone represented an additional cost of £104 per house.[98] Furthermore, action had to be taken to reduce the amount of timber required for each house, from two standards per house to 1.6 standards.[99] This resulted in the elimination of timber joists and boarding throughout the ground floor and the substitution of solid floors. Such economies were described by Bevan as a 'palliative not a cure', as difficulties existed in obtaining the alternative materials required.[100]

Britain's reliance on imported timber was considerable (Table 2.5). During the period 1946 to 1951, Canada, Sweden and Finland were the major sources of supply.[101] However, these sources never managed to equal their pre-1939 levels during the whole of the five-year period to 1951. Britain's home-produced timber represented only a fraction of the country's overall requirements. Between the years 1935 and 1938 Britain was importing an average of 186,284 standard units of timber per month.[102]

[97] TNA: PRO, PREM 8/226, Cabinet: Timber for Housing: Memorandum by the Minister of Health, 17 July 1946.
[98] Ibid.
[99] 1 standard unit = 2.5 tons.
[100] TNA: PRO, PREM 8/226, Timber for housing: Memorandum by the Minister for Health, 8 November 1946.
[101] Cmd. 8458.
[102] Ibid.

However, during 1946 to 1951 this figure was almost halved to an average of 95,190 standard units.[103] Indeed, the average monthly figures for 1946/7 (91,126), 1948 (85,290), 1949 (91,675) and 1950 (68,812) were markedly less than the overall monthly average over the period.[104] Home produced timber supplied a mere monthly average of 5,123 standard units.[105] Indeed, a warning was given that any additional felling of British timber, 'must have very serious effects on the home forests … [and that to do so] we shall be damaging our future home supply of timber beyond repair for many years to come.'[106] These figures underline the critical nature of the problem, that was compounded by the nations urgent need for timber for the construction of houses, factories, schools and other facilities essential to the reconstruction of Britain.

[103] Ibid.
[104] Ibid.
[105] Ibid.
[106] TNA: PRO, PREM 8/226, Timber for housing and for the mines. Joint memorandum by the Secretary of State for Scotland and the Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries, 6 February 1946.

Imports by country of consignment	Monthly Averages (Unit = Standards)					
	1935-38	**1946-47**	**1948**	**1949**	**1950**	**Jan-Nov1951**
Canada	33,492	35,422	21,962	17,882	9,981	32,092
USA	3,814	8,291	5,539	2,005	1,478	10,336
USSR & Baltic States	46,205	817	1,197	7,565	13,451	8,138
Finland	47,124	12,662	13,784	19,106	11,505	30,240
Sweden	35,176	17,797	17,778	19,615	8,196	29,544
Norway	2,643	134	900	135	242	1,075
Poland	14,782	***	2,618	5,777	3,715	***
Germany	85	14,614	16,383	7,336	1,167	531
Other Countries	2,972	1,389	4,409	12,254	19,007	27,093
Total Imports	186,284	91,126	85,290	91,675	68,812	139,049
Home Produced	***	6,420	5,420	5,393	4,435	3,951
Total Available	**186,284**	**97,546**	**90,710**	**97,068**	**73,247**	**143,000**

Table 2.5: Softwood Timber - United Kingdom Imports and Production. Source: Cmd. 8458.

In the early days of the housing programme Bevan was extremely concerned about shortages of supply of softwood and other timber and particularly, during 1946 and early 1947, he was vociferous in raising the urgency of the problem with his cabinet colleagues. Indeed, the official government papers show that Bevan raised the matter formally on no less than six occasions during 1946, both in the cabinet committee that dealt with housing and in cabinet itself. In so doing, Bevan came into conflict with Cripps (President of the Board of Trade) and Jay over the level of the overall shortages of timber and made a number of personal representations on the matter to Attlee, such

was his concern about the effect of the problem on the housing programme.[107] In January 1946 Bevan advised the cabinet committee that the shortage would 'upset housing plans' and as an emergency step, action was being taken to 'freeze stocks.'[108] In the July, Bevan was pressing his case in cabinet for 'drastic action' on timber supplies to prevent the housing programme being held up.[109] In his July memorandum that was considered by cabinet, Bevan regarded the importation of adequate supplies of timber suitable for housebuilding to be an 'urgent necessity.'[110] Four months later, in the November, Bevan argued that the supply of timber was 'the one matter which is entirely out of my control and which on present indications will go far to wreck our housing programme.'[111] Despite subsequent written confirmation from Attlee that the principle of obtaining as much timber as possible for housing had been agreed, Bevan was again compelled to raise the matter in December, stating in a memorandum to his cabinet colleagues that, 'the most serious difficulty is with regard to timber.'[112]

In essence, five major issues were at the core of the problem. Firstly, as we have seen, the abrupt end of Lend-Lease in August 1945 had immediate serious implications for the British economy, that consequently affected housing. The cancellation drastically reduced the quantities of essential raw materials required for housing, particularly softwood and other timber. Secondly, the supply of timber from some of Britain's major pre-war sources, (specifically USSR, the Baltic States and Finland) had been severely

[107] TNA: PRO, PREM 8/226, Note for the Prime-Minister by Douglas Jay, 31 January 1946; TNA: PRO, PREM 8/226, Board of Trade. Minute to Prime-Minister, 4 February 1946; TNA: PRO, PREM 8/226, Attlee to Bevan, 12 November 1946.
[108] TNA: PRO, PREM 8/226, 23 January 1946.
[109] TNA: PRO, PREM 8/226, 73rd Conclusions, 25 July 1946.
[110] TNA: PRO, PREM 8/226, Cabinet: Timber for Housing: Memorandum by the Minister of Health, 17 July 1946.
[111] TNA: PRO, PREM 8/226, Timber for housing: Memorandum by the Minister for Health, 8 November 1946.
[112] TNA: PRO, PREM 8/226, Attlee to Bevan, 12 November 1946; TNA: PRO, PREM 8/226, Housing: Housing programme for 1947: Memorandum by the Minister of Health, 10 December 1946.

reduced. In the case of Finland by 75 per cent and supplies from USSR and the Baltic States had virtually dried up.[113] These sources, that had accounted for approximately 50 per cent of timber supplies between 1935 and 1938 had been severely curtailed due mainly to the unresolved matter of the settlement of Britain's wartime trading account with the Soviet government.[114] This issue was the subject of protracted negotiations and until a resolution was reached, the supply of timber from these pre-war sources remained deficient. However, by July 1946 Cripps was reported to have undertaken 'satisfactory discussions' with the 'Russians' and as a result, the prospect of the recommencement of more substantial supplies of timber looked more hopeful.[115] However, this was a false dawn and throughout the whole of the period, supplies from Russia and the Baltic States remained particularly meagre.[116] Thirdly, the supply of timber from Sweden (the third largest pre-war supplier) had not come forward in the quantities expected.[117] This was due mainly to a shortage of coal in Sweden, where a large quantity of timber was being used for fuel instead.[118] As a solution, it was suggested that Britain increase its export of coal to the Swedes by, it was proposed, an immediate allocation of 500,000 to 1,000,000 tons, in exchange for the timber that Britain required.[119] However, as British coal stocks for its own industrial and domestic consumption were less than adequate, this so-called solution was not as realistic a proposition as it had initially appeared. A further source of increased coal supplies to the Swedes from the Ruhr, via the European Coal Organisation, was considered uncertain.[120] Fourthly, the anticipated supply of timber from North German Timber

[113] Cmd. 8458.
[114] TNA: PRO, PREM 8/226, Note for the Prime-Minister by Douglas Jay, 31 January 1946.
[115] TNA: PRO, PREM 8/226, Item 4: Timber for Housing. Note prepared by Christopher Eastwood for the Prime-Minister, 24 July 1946.
[116] Cmd. 8458.
[117] TNA: PRO, PREM 8/226, 23 January 1946.
[118] TNA: PRO, PREM 8/226, Board of Trade. Minute to Prime-Minister, 4 February 1946.
[119] TNA: PRO, PREM 8/226, Note from Douglas Jay to the Prime-Minister, 6 February 1946.
[120] TNA: PRO, PREM 8/226, Board of Trade. Minute to Prime-Minister, 4 February 1946.

Control in the British Zone in Germany had not materialised. Indeed, in January 1946 Bevan had lamented the fact that, 'as far as he was aware' no timber had been imported from Germany, despite earlier favourable reports about obtaining supplies from that source.[121] Furthermore, the Board of Trade was the target of criticism over its lack of any 'sufficiently specific suggestions for accelerating the supply [of timber] from Germany.'[122] The problem here appears to have been multi-faceted. Although ample supplies of timber were said to be available in Germany, difficulties existed as regards expediting production.[123] Furthermore, large quantities of timber were being used for firewood in Germany due to a paucity there of coal. Logistical problems were also an obstacle including the lack of vehicles to carry felled timber from forest to railhead. War damaged ports only compounded the problem. In addition, labourers not being as productive as their British counterparts, due to lack of food, was cited as a further contributary factor.[124] Eventually, Germany did provide a significant proportion of Britain's timber supply, particularly during 1947 and 1948.[125] Fifthly, imported timber was an expensive commodity, usually obtained by way of payment in US dollars from so called 'dollar area' countries such as Canada and Sweden. Britain's perilous post-war economic situation meant that spending on imports (particularly that which depended on payment in dollars) needed to be meticulously managed.

Although one of the most critical materials required for the construction of permanent houses, softwood and other timber was by no means the only resource that was in short supply. A serious shortage of bricks, particularly facing bricks, led to other

[121] TNA: PRO, PREM 8/226, 23 January 1946.
[122] TNA: PRO, PREM 8/226, Timber for housing and for the mines. Joint memorandum by the Secretary of State for Scotland and the Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries, 6 February 1946.
[123] TNA: PRO, PREM 8/226, Board of Trade. Minute to Prime-Minister, 4 February 1946.
[124] TNA: PRO, PREM 8/226, Sir Gerald Lenanton, North German Timber Control: Short summary of present position, 12 June 1946; TNA: PRO, PREM 8/226, Cabinet: Exports of timber from Germany and Austria to UK: Memorandum by the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, 23 July 1946.
[125] Cmd. 8458.

methods of facing being used in order not to hold up house construction.[126] The shortage of bricks, due mainly to a dearth of brick workers precipitated the cabinet to agree to the release of brick makers from the armed forces out of turn, on condition that they take up employment in brickworks; a situation that saw the Prime-Minister himself becoming involved in the delicate negotiations with other ministers.[127] Slate was in short supply due mainly to production problems caused by the unavailability of labour and the appropriate machinery.[128] Other materials were desperately scarce including, steel and cast iron.[129] The abrupt ending of Lend-Lease, as well as impacting on the supply of timber, meant that those fixtures and fittings produced in American factories and foundries essential to the housing programme were also lost. These now had to be produced by Britain's somewhat depleted manufacturing capability. In early 1946, it was reported that some fixtures and fittings essential for the permanent housing programme (including baths) were in short supply due to such items having been requisitioned by the Ministry of Supply for the temporary housing programme.[130]

The shortage of materials for the permanent housing programme was in large part also due to such resources being used for essential repairs to unoccupied war damaged houses. Furthermore, the repair and general maintenance of occupied houses was also a contributory factor. The control of the use of building materials (and building labour) for essential repairs to existing buildings was another responsibility vested in local authorities, by way of a licensing system. A local authority was permitted to issue a licence directly if the total cost of the repairs was under £100. If

[126] TWAS, South Shields County Borough Council, Housing Committee, 9 March 1946.
[127] TNA: PRO, CAB 134/320, Cabinet Housing Minutes, 13 March 1946.
[128] TNA: PRO, CAB 134/320, The Slate Industry in North Wales, 24 May 1946.
[129] Foot, *Bevan*, 77.
[130] TWAS, South Shields County Borough Council, Housing Committee, 16 April 1946.

the cost of the repairs was over £100, the local council was required to issue a certificate to be presented to the Regional Office of the Ministry of Works, whereupon a licence would be issued. In carrying out this duty, it was the responsibility of local councils to take into account both the type of repairs requested and the availability of building labour in the area concerned. The duties and responsibilities of local councils relative to the licensing of repairs underwent several changes during the first two years of the programme. There were, however, no controls on housing repairs costing under £10. There is little doubt that the drain on building materials and building labour arising from small maintenance and repair jobs on literally millions of occupied houses that had gone unrepaired during six years of war, was colossal and did undoubtedly compromise any licensing system in operation to control the use of such resources.[131]

Housing construction costs

The scarcities of skilled building labour in key trades and shortages of essential building materials (notably softwood and other timber) contributed significantly to the tremendous increase in the cost of house construction in Britain after the war ended in 1945. A typical three-bedroom house built in 1938/39 in England and Wales cost approximately £380, whereas that completed in the latter part of 1947 cost £1,242.[132] This was mirrored in Scotland, where in 1939 the cost of the average four room apartment local authority house was £480. The corresponding price at the end of 1947 was £1,280.[133] The typical local authority house of 1947 required twice as much labour and one third more materials to build.[134] Indeed, a typical three-bedroom house was

[131] Nathan Rosenberg, *Economic Planning in the British Building Industry 1945 – 49* (Philadelphia, 1960), 28 – 29.
[132] LHASC, Research Series R.D. 239-279, 1948-49, 'Facts about Housing: Some statistical information', R.D. 279/March 1949.
[133] LHASC, Research Series R.D. 239-279, 1948-49, 'Housing', R.D. 252/January1949.
[134] LHASC, Research Series R.D. 239-279, 1948-49, 'Facts about Housing: Some statistical information', R.D. 279/March 1949.

(with the addition of outbuildings) on average 150 to 250 square feet larger than its pre-war counterpart and as such accounted for an increase in cost of £201.[135] In addition, improvements in construction, finish and equipment accounted for an additional £127.[136] The Girdwood Committee that was set up to investigate the cost of housebuilding in England and Wales between 1945 and 1947 and the Laidlaw Committee, its counterpart in Scotland, both cited rising labour costs and the increased cost of essential building materials amongst the major reasons for the increase in overall costs: symptomatic of the aforementioned shortages of supply.[137] Girdwood mentioned the effect of wage increases implemented in November 1947 and in addition, had established that the cost of building materials had risen by approximately 110 per cent above that of 1939.[138] Significantly, Girdwood cited a fall in productivity due primarily to interruptions from shortages of materials and the search for substitutes, as contributing to increased costs in England and Wales.[139] Laidlaw made no such references to productivity relative to the situation in Scotland; an indication, perhaps, of the rather less cumbersome administrative and organisation arrangements by which the housing programme was delivered in Scotland, compared to that in England and Wales.

As a response and in an effort to ameliorate high building costs and to achieve better value for money, several local authorities gave serious consideration to the setting up of direct labour organisations (DLOs) to build council houses, as it were, 'in-house.'

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[135] Ibid.
[136] Ibid.
[137] LHASC, Research Series R.D. 150-194, 1948-49, 'Notes on the Housing Programme by Minister of Health', R.D. 164/October 1948; LHASC, Research Series R.D. 239-279, 1948-49, 'Housing', R.D. 252/January1949.
[138] LHASC, Research Series R.D. 239-279, 1948-49, 'Facts about Housing: Some statistical information', R.D. 279/March 1949.
[139] LHASC, Research Series R.D. 150-194, 1948-49, 'Notes on the Housing Programme by Minister of Health', R.D. 164/October 1948.

There is evidence to suggest that these efforts met with some success. This is contained in a Labour Party Research Department report published in November 1948, which both sets out the results of the Labour Party's own research and that carried out by the National Federation of Building Trades Operatives (NFBTO).[140] Whilst Labour's research identified difficulties in comparing building costs, it was found that in just over one-third of authorities where both 'in-house' and private contracts were used, there was a saving in costs by DLOs over contractors in similar schemes.[141] However, the research carried out by the NFBTO reported that houses built by local authority DLOs represented 'considerable savings in the majority of cases as against private contractors.' The savings reported varied from £100 to £176 per house, that represented a reduction in cost of between eight and 14 per cent.[142] Furthermore, the NFBTO research indicated that the quality of work carried out by DLOs represented an economic gain, due to reduced maintenance costs as compared to houses built by the private sector. Local authorities using direct labour, the NFBTO research advised, were also able to concede working conditions to the building operatives that were not possible under private contract. Overall, the NFBTO research concluded that direct labour, where it is properly organised and carried out, had definite advantages over contract work.[143]

DLOs were not a new phenomenon. Many had been set up after the First World War, but when competitive prices became more normal in the mid-1920s, some DLOs were abandoned. However, many did survive and continued to construct council houses up until the start of hostilities in 1939. Following the outbreak of peace in 1945, many

[140] LHASC, Research Series R.D. 195-238, 1948, 'Building of Houses by Direct Labour', R.D. 198/November 1948.
[141] Ibid.
[142] The average cost of building a council house from the examples quoted in the report was £1,112.
[143] LHASC, Research Series R.D. 195-238, 1948, 'Building of Houses by Direct Labour', R.D. 198/November 1948.

were either resurrected or new organisations set up. In 1948, at the time of the Labour Party / NFBTO research, there were reported to be 127 local authority DLOs engaged in the building of houses.[144] Not all local authorities with house-building responsibilities were sufficiently equipped or favourably disposed politically to set-up a DLO. However, those that did included both large and small councils of differing political colours, including Conservative controlled Liverpool, with a population of 739,000 and Labour controlled Chester-le-Street, with only 17,000 inhabitants.[145]

The number of local councils that used DLOs to build houses, represented only 8.6 per cent of the number of authorities with house-building responsibilities. Their overall effect on reducing costs and providing better value for money was relatively minimal, especially when one considers that some councils with DLOs used a combination of private contractors and the DLO to deliver their housing schemes.[146] Interestingly, the research resonates with the view of Marian Bowley relative to the necessity of 'sound administrative arrangements' and 'suitable controls' to secure successful outcomes.[147] Indeed, the research concludes that the key to success [of a DLO in the delivery of its housing schemes] is one that is efficiently organised.[148] This was corroborated in an essay by Lalage Sharp in 1949. Sharp comments, that the key to success [of a DLO] is both 'efficient organisation' and finding 'the optimum size for [DLO] units for flexibility, good organisation and low overhead costs.'[149]

[144] Ibid, 12.
[145] Ibid, 13 – 14; Estimated population 1948.
[146] Ibid, 7.
[147] Bowley, *Housing and the State*, 243.
[148] LHASC, Research Series R.D. 195-238, 1948, 'Building of Houses by Direct Labour', R.D. 198/November 1948, 8.
[149] Lalage Sharp, 'Labour's Housing Policy', *Socialist Commentary*, March (1949), 66.

The sterling crisis and the imposition of greater central control

There is no doubt that the so called 'convertibility crisis' of the summer of 1947 seriously undermined Labour's quantitative housing ambitions. However, it did provide the catalyst for action to align the housing programme with the availability of the major factors of production. Prior to the onset of the crisis, during late 1946 and early 1947, there had been growing concern amongst Ministers and officials about the pressures facing the national building programme overall. The demand for building across the country was increasing with more school, hospital, factory and housing projects being started. This had placed a huge strain on the availability of building labour and materials that had led to a slowing-down in the rate of overall housing completions. It was noted in November 1946 that housing starts numbered approximately 20,000 per month, whilst completions lagged-behind at approximately 7,000 per month.[150] This precipitated a protracted process involving discussions between Ministers and officials about the appropriate balance between housing starts and the availability of labour and materials. This culminated in Attlee's insistence that Bevan formally publish a target for the size of the permanent housing programme for 1947.[151] A target was eventually set for 240,000 completions (120,000 traditional, 80,000 prefabricated and 40,000 under private licence).[152] However, in announcing the 'target' Bevan included the caveat that it depended upon the adequate supply of building labour and materials.[153]

[150] PREM 8/533. A Johnstone to the Lord President, 12 November 1946.
[151] PREM 8/533. Prime Minister's Personal Minute M420/46, 18 November 1946; Bevan to Attlee (undated letter except for November 1946); Gorell Barnes to Attlee, 11 December 1946; Rowan to Attlee, 12 December 1946; TNA: PRO, CAB 134/320. Minutes of 5th meeting, 12 December 1946
[152] TNA, PRO, CAB 124/452, 9 January 1947.
[153] TNA: PRO, PREM 8/533. Memorandum H.G. (47)2, 9 January 1947.

The harsh winter of 1946/7 that had brought about a severe fuel shortage in Britain, bringing industry and construction almost to a standstill, rendered the first major blow to hopes of Bevan's optimistic target of 240,000 completions being achieved. [154] The freezing weather in the early part of the year had brought building almost to a standstill. The Guardian reported, '[I]t [the freezing weather conditions] made the digging of foundations and service channels in the rock-hard ground impossible and arrested all operations that depend on water remaining in liquid form.'[155] Furthermore, the brutal weather conditions resulted in the acute depletion of Britain's coal reserves. As a result, during the Spring of 1947, industry was subjected to a fuel rationing system with an agreement eventually being reached that the building materials sector should receive 85 per cent of its actual coal requirements.[156] This seriously hampered the production of bricks and other materials that needed coal to fuel its production processes.[157]

Despite the combination of the severe winter weather and the resultant fuel shortage completely undermining Bevan's target of 240,000 completions in 1947, there remained pressure on the Ministry of Health to reduce its housing programme. Such pressure resulted in the decision to decrease the proportion of the building labour force directed towards housing from 60 per cent to 58 per cent.[158] However, this had little effect on the actual numbers employed in house construction, as due to the overall growth of the building labour force, housing received a smaller proportion of what was a larger whole. Indeed, as 1947 progressed and the state of the British economy

[154] The accomplishment of the 1947 target required the completion of 100,000 more dwellings than that achieved in 1946.
[155] *The Guardian*, 11 March 1947,4.
[156] TNA: PRO, CAB 129/18. Fuel Allocations. Note by the Secretary to the Cabinet, 28 April 1947; TNA: PRO, CAB 128/9, Cabinet conclusions,1 May 1947.
[157] TNA: PRO, CAB 129/18. Fuel Allocations to the Building Materials Industries. Memorandum by the Minister of Health, the Secretary of State for Scotland and the Minister of Works, 29 April 1947.
[158] TNA: PRO, CAB 128/9, Cabinet conclusions,1 May 1947.

deteriorated, the momentum of housing approvals was sustained, and the programme continued its upward trajectory. However, as mentioned above, it was the convertibility crisis that came to a head in August 1947, that dealt the most severe blow to the achievement of the 1947 target, and which had the most bearing on Labour's quantitative housing ambitions.

As a condition of the $3.75 billion post-war loan from the United States of America (USA), the Americans had insisted that sterling held around the world should become convertible to dollars. This was one of the key conditions of the loan imposed on the British government by the USA Treasury and Trade departments. Indeed, the loan would not have been forthcoming without such a condition. Thus, Britain was forced to allow holders of sterling to convert their earnings into US dollars and to allow those earnings to be spent outside the sterling area. That day was due on 15 July 1947, one year exactly from the passage of the loan through the US Congress.[159] The USA loan and another from Canada that raised the total of post-war North American loans to the UK to $5 billion, was deemed necessary to ease the burden of indebtedness and deficit that Labour had inherited on taking office and to give Britain a breathing space to help with future recovery. Within a week of convertibility taking effect, millions of dollars from the American loan drained away as investors swapped their pounds for dollars, pushing Britain towards bankruptcy. The tidal wave of selling of stocks was comparable to that of 1931, with the main casualty being government gilt-edged stock. The drain on the dollar reserves was colossal. In the first week of convertibility, the loss was $106 million; in the second $126 million; in the third $127 million and in the week ending 16 August it came to no less than $183 million, until on 20 August the

[159] TNA: PRO, PREM 8/489, Part 1. 25 April 1947.

USA agreed to convertibility being immediately suspended on an emergency and temporarily basis (as it turned out, for eleven years).[160]

However, despite the suspension of convertibility, serious economic problems remained for the Labour government to grapple with, most especially the continuing dollar drain, the growing trade deficit and weaknesses in Britain's balance of payments.[161] As a result, the government was forced to pursue a new financial policy, (initiated by Dalton and continued by Stafford Cripps on his appointment as Chancellor of the Exchequer following Dalton's resignation as Chancellor), one which had severe implications for the entire thrust of Labour's domestic programme, including that of housing.[162] In effect, the policy brought about a much more serious attempt to cut costs by pursing a policy of disinflation at home and by a sharp reduction in dollar imports. A drive to increase exports was initiated, prioritising the manufacture of goods for export over capital initiatives at home. Indeed, Hugh Gaitskell (Minister for Fuel and Power) in a note to Morrison, cautioned against agreeing to Bevan's plans to revise the housing programme because of the conflict between building and export in relation to raw materials. Gaitskell stated that 'the implementation of the new export programme will to some extent depend upon whether or not we are prepared to cut building.'[163] The government was prepared to cut building, including the building of houses, despite housing's high priority status. Bevan recognised that in view of the

[160] TNA: PRO, PREM 8/489, *Exchange of Letters between His Majesty's Government and the United States Government dated 20 August 1947* (1947) Cmd. 7210; See also: Timmins, *The Five Giants*, 147; Morgan*, Labour,* 342-347.
[161] TNA: PRO, PREM 8/489, Balance of Payments: Note by the Chancellor of the Exchequer (Gen 179/14), 25 July 1947; TNA: PRO, PREM 8/489, Note of outcome of discussions between Sir Edwin Plowden and Mr Austin Robinson (Central Economic Planning Staff) et al. Balance of Payments (Gen 179/14). 25 July 1947.
[162] Cripps replaced Dalton as Chancellor of the Exchequer on 14 November 1947 following Dalton's resignation from the post as a result of his divulging some tax details to a lobby correspondent, immediately prior to delivering his Budget speech.
[163] TNA: PRO, CAB 124/452, Gaitskell to Morrison, 8 August 1947.

government's new financial strategy, housing would be hit. In such circumstances Bevan's view was that the housing programme should be set at 180,000 to 200,000 completions per year. The Central Economic Planning Staff (CEPS) and many ministers were aiming at a much smaller housing programme of 130,000 to 150,000 completions annually.[164]

Nevertheless, Bevan fought a fierce battle in cabinet and elsewhere to protect the housing programme. He was successful in fending-off some of the more draconian measures proposed. Such proposals included the cancellation of existing contracts, the stopping of building at 'damp-proof' level and the limiting of new approvals to 5,000 dwellings per month.[165] However, following protracted discussions over a number of weeks, the matter was brought to cabinet for a decision.[166] On 20 October 1947, Cripps, in his capacity as Minister of Economic Affairs advised cabinet that the limiting factor relative to housing was the ability to buy timber from abroad. Cripps said that the country could only afford to devote resources sufficient to import timber for the construction of 140,000 houses per year and that the housing programme for 1948 should be set at that level.[167] In effect this meant limiting the housing programme to 238,000 standards of softwood per annum.[168] This was somewhat softer than that which the Investment Programme Committee (IPC) had recommended. Indeed, it was the IPC that had urged the containment of housing starts to between 5,000 to 7,000

[164] CEPS transferred to new Department for Economic Affairs on 29 September 1947.
[165] TNA: PRO, T229/214. Draft of a CEPS paper outlining the positions of the IPC and the Minister of Health in respect of the housing programme, (n/d).
[166] TNA: PRO, PREM 8/423, Investment Programme Committee (IPC), Bevan to Attlee, 19 August 1947; TNA: PRO, PREM 8/423. IPC, Attlee to Bevan, 23 August 1947; TNA: PRO, CAB 124/453, Post-War Housing Policy, 6th Meeting, 28 August 1947; TNA: PRO, CAB 128/10. 20 September 1947.
[167] TNA: PRO, CAB 128/10, Cabinet conclusions, 20 October 1947.
[168] TNA: PRO, T229/233, Revision of housing programme: Progressing action. Memorandum. Elkington to F.W. Smith, 19 January 1948.

until balance was achieved.[169] Bevan had to accept Cripps' recommendation, but he did engineer sufficient wriggle-room to both potentially increase the number of completions beyond 140,000 in 1948 and to avert the danger of cabinet agreeing to fix the number of completions for 1949 and 1950 at 140,000 completions also.[170] In relation to the former point, Bevan argued that there was currently sufficient timber both in stock and on-site to build in excess of 140,000 houses in 1948. In relation to the latter, he managed to get cabinet to delay consideration of the programme for 1949 and 1950, until June 1948. A brake had been applied to the housing programme through the vehicle of the allocation of timber. Bevan though, had bought time to make the case for increasing the output of houses above 140,000 annual completions, agreed in the autumn of 1947.

To maintain the level of the housing programme it was imperative that both the size of the building labour force was protected, and that housing's priority call on building labour was continued. It was also necessary to find a way of obtaining more timber for housing, as although the cabinet was prepared to allow the number of completions in 1948 to exceed 140,000, the allocation of timber was fixed at 238,000 standards. During the course of the following two years, Bevan and his senior officials at the Ministry of Health used all means at their disposal to ensure that the agreed reduction in the housing programme was not carried through. Such measures included ensuring that the amount of timber allocated to housing exceeded the ceiling that Cripps had imposed in the autumn of 1947. In this regard, Bevan's officials successfully negotiated the limit upward to 278,000 standards to take account of prefabricated

[169] TNA: PRO, CAB 129/21. Report of the Investment Programmes Committee. Note by the Minister of Economic Affairs, 16 October 1947.
[170] TNA: PRO, CAB 128/10, Cabinet conclusions, 20 October 1947.

houses, war damage and other repairs.[171] Later, a further increase of 60,000 standards was secured.[172] Furthermore, they pleaded the case that the bulk of the timber for housing should be allocated in the first two quarters of the financial period, therefore ensuring that any shortfall in quarters three and four would have to be made up to prevent a tail-off in work and to avoid unemployment in the building and allied industries.[173] A proposal by the Production Committee to remove housing's priority in the allocation of building labour in respect of all new housing starts was, due to Bevan's intervention, set-aside by the cabinet [174] Bevan also used his considerable political skills to ensure that a proposed cut to the supply of aluminium to the housing programme was reversed, so staving-off the threat to the production of aluminium dwellings.[175] He also cited pressure he was receiving from local authorities, whose housing programmes, it was claimed, were at risk of compromise if reduced approvals were imposed from the centre and the effect such would have on what were already burgeoning housing waiting lists in many towns and cities across the nation.[176] In addition, Bevan successfully argued that more houses were needed to accommodate workers in areas where manufactured goods were being produced to aid the export drive. This resulted in 3,000 additional aluminium houses being allocated for such purposes.[177] Cunningly, Bevan used the desire of some of his cabinet colleagues for the government to do more to accommodate the housing needs of the middle classes,

[171] See TNA: PRO, T229/214, Timber requirements for housing.
[172] TNA: PRO, CAB 129/24. The Housing Programme in 1948 and 1949. Memorandum by the Chancellor of the Exchequer, 18 February 1948.
[173] TNA: PRO, HLG 102/224, Timber: Supply and use for housing. Michaels to Wrigley, 26 November 1947.
[174] TNA: PRO, CAB 128/10, Cabinet conclusions,15 December 1947.
[175] TNA: PRO, T229/234. Plowden to Wrigley, 2 April 1948; Wrigley to Plowden, 13 April 1948.
[176] TNA: PRO, HLG 101/414. Exchange of letters and minutes of meeting with the delegation from London County Council and the Metropolitan Boroughs' Joint Standing Committee. October and November 1947.
[177] TNA: PRO, T229/234. Syman to Elkington, 16 March 1949 and 13 May 1949.

as a further reason to expand the housing programme.[178] In this respect, Bevan's view was that as long as the housing programme was so constrained, it was only fair that houses should be allocated to those in greatest need rather than those who could afford it.

It should be noted that in 1948 Britain benefited from a significant injection of economic aid from the USA by way of the European Recovery Programme (more commonly known as the Marshall Plan).[179] This eased some of the pressure to constrain the housing programme. However, despite this welcome economic boost, an unexpected widening of the dollar gap precipitated the devaluation of sterling in September 1949, that although designed as a long-term economic stimulus, had immediate negative consequences for housing in that it increased the price of imported materials essential for the building of houses.[180] This resulted in a reduction in the number of houses built under licence in the private sector.[181]

In April 1950, Bevan eventually succeeded in persuading the Chancellor of the Exchequer to stabilise the housing programme at a rate of 200,000 completions per annum for three years. To this, and on the Chancellor's recommendation, the cabinet agreed, and on condition that the licensing arrangements for private houses be made more flexible.[182] To this Bevan acquiesced. The decision was made against the advice

[178] TNA: PRO, CAB 129/38. Licences for Private Houses: Memorandum by the Minister of Health, 7 March 1950; TNA: PRO, CAB 21/2247. Brook to Attlee, 8 March 1950.
[179] Britain was the main beneficiary of the Marshall Aid Plan, that provided an injection of $12 billion dollars in economic aid to a number of western European nations. See: Michael J. Hogan, *The Marshall Plan: America, Britain and the Reconstruction of Western Europe, 1947 – 1952* (Cambridge, 1987), 43.
[180] On 18 September 1949 the devaluation of the £ sterling against the dollar was invoked, reducing its value by one third from $4.03 to $2.80; TNA: PRO, T229/214, Addition to cost of standard house following devaluation, (n/d).
[181] LRO, 352 ARC/13, Ministry of Health Circular 102/49 – Review of Housing Programme, 4 November 1949.
[182] TNA: PRO, CAB 128/17. Cabinet conclusions, 17 April 1950; TNA: PRO, CAB 129/39. Licences for the erection of new houses: Memorandum by the Minister of Health, 29 April 1950; TNA: PRO, CAB 128/17. Cabinet conclusions, 4 May 1950.

of Treasury officials and that contained in the Economic Survey, but which followed a general election that had seen Labour returned with the smallest of majorities during a campaign that had witnessed some public dissatisfaction about the housing shortage.[183]

It is without doubt that each of the aforementioned factors had a marked impact upon the outcome of the permanent housing programme. The shortage of building labour and materials, particularly in the early stages of the housing programme, although anticipated were not adequately planned. In this respect, the mechanics of organisation and coordination between departments failed to properly manage the availability of human resources with the supply of essential building materials. This conspired to ensure that the housing programme made a chaotic and inauspicious start. However, it was the measures that resulted from the financial crisis of 1947 that had the most significant consequences for the housing programme. During 1947 to 1949 Bevan and his senior officials at the Ministry of Health managed to head-off some of the more draconian actions proposed to curtail the housing programme. Despite these efforts, by way of placing a ceiling on the amount of timber that could be consumed by housing, the Labour government finally capped quantitative outcomes at a maximum of 200,000 completions per annum.

Conclusions

The purpose of this chapter has been to establish if there is justification in the view that Labour's quantitative housing record was an underachievement. To facilitate the investigation, an analysis of quantitative performance in terms of what was originally planned and that which was finally achieved has been carried out, followed by an

[183] TNA: PRO, CAB 128/17. Cabinet conclusions, 16 March 1950.

analysis of the relative weight specific problems had on the outcome. The plan-achievement-analysis was done by looking at both the number of permanent houses completed and all other initiatives that contributed to quantitative performance. Such initiatives comprised the temporary housing programme, initiatives to bring back into use both war destroyed and unoccupied war damaged houses as well as other schemes that added to quantitative outcomes during the period, including programmes to adapt, convert and requisition buildings for housing purposes. In assessing the quantitative housing record, consideration was given to the effect of a range of problems and factors that the permanent housing drive encountered, particularly in the early years of the programme and those which led to the adoption of measures to finally stabilise the housing drive and to impose a greater degree of central control.

So, what of Labour's quantitative housing record? In the six years between 1945 and 1951 during which time Labour held office, 1,215,000 permanent houses were constructed in the United Kingdom. This includes 201,354 permanent prefabricated houses, the rebuilding of 43,165 war destroyed houses and the construction of 3,439 houses by New Town Development Corporations. Indeed, the Labour government's target (inherited from the coalition government) of 300,000 houses built or under construction after two years following the outbreak of peace, was accomplished.[184] Furthermore, the wartime coalition's objective of the provision of 750,000 additional dwellings to afford every family requiring one a separate home, was surpassed in 1948. Labour's targeting of 100,000 permanent prefabricated houses built or under construction by 30 June 1947 was marginally underperformed.

[184] After two years 105,000 houses were reported to have been completed and 242,000 under construction. See Cmd. 8458, 13; Cmd. 8459, 11, 14,15; Rosenberg, *Economic Planning in the British Building Industry*, 83.

The combination of the harsh winter weather of 1946/47 and the subsequent fuel and financial crises conspired against the 240,000 dwellings target set for 1947 ever being achieved. Notwithstanding these problem, 189,000 permanent dwellings were in fact completed during 1947 representing 78.7 per cent of the original target. Despite the construction of permanent dwellings being initially capped at 140,000 completions, 1948 provided the Labour government's most successful year for quantitative performance, with 251,000 permanent completions achieved. At 205,000 and 202,000 completions in 1950 and 1951 respectively, the quantitative target of 200,000 dwellings for each of those years was marginally over-performed. Notwithstanding the poor administrative and organisational problems particularly during the formative period of the programme; labour and materials shortages and particularly the fallout from the financial crisis of 1947 and, to a lesser degree that of 1949, it is considered that the construction of almost one and a quarter million permanent houses represents a substantial achievement.

However, it would be imprudent to judge Labour's quantitative record only on the number of permanent houses constructed. Indeed, the measures introduced early in the programme to ease the immediate housing emergency, including the repair of unoccupied seriously war damaged dwellings, the temporary housing programme and the adaption, conversion and requisitioning of buildings all made an appreciable contribution to the housing drive and helped to significantly ameliorate the immediate housing emergency. Furthermore, as the aforesaid interventions consumed large quantities of the labour and materials that were in short supply, and which in some respects compromised the flow of such to the permanent programme, it would be careless not to include their contribution to the assessment of the quantitative record.

Although, no formal target was set, the programme to repair unoccupied seriously war damaged houses resulted in 146,000 such properties being made once again inhabitable. This accounts for over 58 per cent of the number of properties deemed to have been seriously damaged by enemy action. If one considers that a high proportion of dwellings seriously damaged during the war were in areas already designated for slum clearance prior to 1939 and therefore inappropriate for post-war repair, the achievement is substantial. The temporary housing programme, although completely necessary to deal with the immediate housing emergency was, at over £1,300 per unit, expensive. At 640 square feet the houses were considered small and furthermore their construction resulted in some essential components being diverted away from the permanent housing drive. At Bevan's insistence the programme was curtailed. Nevertheless, the temporary housing initiative provided over 157,000 units of accommodation, many of which lasted well beyond their intended ten-year lifespan. Despite, quantitative outcomes slightly underperforming the original target of 165,000 completions, it is considered that in achieving over 95 per cent of that objective, Labour's record in the delivery of temporary housing during the period was more than creditable and again represents a substantial achievement. Together these initiatives, including the programme of adaptions, conversions and requisitioning of properties, provided an additional 492,461 units of accommodation. Therefore, if this is added to the number of permanent completions, almost one and three-quarter million additional homes were provided over the period. On the basis of an average of four persons per household, accommodation was provided for over 6.8 million individuals. There is little doubt that given the severe economic dislocation of the period, this was a substantial achievement. Indeed, on the basis of the evidence presented, there appears little

justification in describing Labour's quantitative housing record as an underachievement.

It is clear from the analysis of problems encountered, that the permanent housing programme of 1945 to 1951 was severely hampered by the inability of the Labour government, particularly during the first two years of the programme, to coordinate the building of houses with the availability of both the labour and materials required for their construction. This resulted in an overloaded housing programme that led to inefficiencies in the construction process including reduced levels of productivity and high costs. In essence, too many houses were started and too few were completed in time during this period. The myriad of government departments involved in the delivery of the housing programme in England and Wales and a failure of the mechanics of coordination was the foremost problem. This did compromise the credibility of the permanent housing programme in its early stages.

The shortage initially of technical expertise and skilled building labour and for a much longer period, that of essential building materials was, of course, a major obstacle to quantitative outcomes. The uneven distribution of such resources across the country and the difficulty in correlating one with the other only compounded the problem. However, such shortages albeit anticipated (given similar problems encountered following the First World War) were not adequately calculated. This represents a major failure of strategic planning. Moreover, the abrupt ending of Lend-Lease almost immediately following the end of the Second World War, provided a clear early warning that materials and components essential for a mass housing programme would be difficult to procure from alternative sources and in the quantities required. This proved to be the case and for long periods during 1946 and 1947 many thousands of houses stood unfinished due to shortages of timber, bricks, slate and other materials and

components (as well as the appropriate skilled labour) required to complete their construction. The high housing standards adopted by the government, particularly relative to design, space, facilities, and equipment, whilst obviously a welcome improvement, only exacerbated the problem, as the typical local authority house of 1947 required twice as much labour and one third more materials to build than its pre-war equivalent.

It is marked that the decision, made in the early weeks of Labour taking office, to adopt, for the purposes of planning, the housing programme of the wartime coalition was a major contributor to the government's difficulties. It was imprudent to design the post-war housing drive on a wartime plan that had not properly taken into account the realities of post-war shortages and economic difficulties. However, having given itself the task of delivering 300,000 new permanent houses and 100,000 permanent prefabricated dwellings, built or under construction after two years following the outbreak of peace in Europe, the government considered it essential to get large numbers of houses started as quickly as possible. The necessity of speed led to a neglect of the administrative and organisational controls necessary to balance the housing programme with the human and material resources available. In partial mitigation, the requirement for speed was driven by the severe housing shortage following more than six years of total war that had resulted in over 250,000 houses in Britain being completely destroyed and many thousands more severely damaged. High public expectations and the brief episode of squatting during 1946 only reinforced Labour's desire to 'get the houses built.'

The decision to use local authorities as the main agents for the delivery of the housing programme provided some difficulties, but these were relatively inconsiderable. Some local councils were able to immediately 'hit the ground running' in the task of building

houses, whilst others lacked the appropriate personnel or were reluctant to take up their commission, or both. However, it is considered that the harnessing of local authorities to deliver the housing programme was both pragmatic and politically astute. Labour's desire to deliver a housing programme based predominantly on the construction of houses for rent in the public sector for the benefit of those in the greatest housing need, meant that local authorities provided the best vehicle for the delivery of such a programme. Indeed, local councils had expertise in both housebuilding and housing management; were (until 1948) the local planning authority and furthermore, owned much of the land needed for housing development. [185] They were also public bodies upon which the government could exert a degree of control. To quote Bevan himself, local authorities were a 'plannable instrument.' [186]

The economic crisis of 1947 that followed the severe winter and resultant fuel crisis of earlier that year was the catalyst to stabilising the permanent housing programme, eventually in early 1950, to an agreed level of 200,000 annual completions. As such, it constituted the major factor that contributed to the diminution of quantitative outcomes. Indeed, the economic fall-out of 1947 forced the government into implementing measures that subordinated all other policy objectives to the overall economic priorities of reducing imports and raising exports. Such measures resulted in the restriction of new housing starts to the availability of timber and that relative to housing was initially capped at a level of 238,000 standards per annum. Although this figure was skilfully negotiated upwards, primarily through the considerable political skill and manoeuvring of Bevan, the measure ultimately assured a more steady and timely

[185] The *Town & Country Planning Act 1947* vested planning powers in county and county borough councils only.
[186] Bevan used this phrase during a speech on housing at a meeting of the London Trades Council and the National Association of Building Trades Operatives in London in 1946.

flow of labour and materials. Despite a further economic shock in 1949, provided by way of the devaluation of sterling that resulted in a temporary cut in the housing programme, from early 1950 onwards the housing programme began to run relatively smoothly.

To substantiate the descriptive analysis of achievements and the effect of problems encountered, Table 2.6 sets out the quantitative pre-post analysis relative to quantitative performance. This (see for the methodology the Introduction chapter) provides an analytical, measured assessment of the similarity or difference between planned and achieved outcomes, using a five-point weighting schedule. The score 0 stands for nothing achieved; 1 = small results (some achievement); 2 = more of less equality in plans achieved and not achieved; 3 = substantial achievements but with some failures and 4 = all plans achieved. The outcomes measured comprise (a) the number of new permanent houses constructed; (b) number of temporary prefabs; (c) number of war damaged houses repaired. In the scores the relative influence of problems encountered is taken into account and weighted against the assessment of what is achieved. Such outcomes are considered intersubjective and measurable in terms of planned and achieved results as it was in these areas that definitive targets were set or where a tangible assessment can be made. Hence, a score of 1 in terms of the number of new permanent houses built would comprise 25 per cent of planned outcome achieved, whereas a score of 4 would represent 100 per cent achievement. So, the three ‘quantity’ elements combined can thus produce a minimum score of 3 x 0 = 0 (nothing achieved) and a maximum score of 3 x 4 = 12 (everything successfully achieved), with all scores in between.

Assessment criteria	Recommended or planned	Achieved	Score
Permanent houses constructed.	(a) 300,000 permanent dwellings built or under construction by 30 June 1947. (b) 100,000 permanent prefabricated dwellings built or under construction by 30 June 1947. (c) 240,000 permanent dwellings built in 1947. (d) 140,000 permanent dwellings built in 1948. (e) 200,000 dwelling built in both 1950 and 1951.	(a) 105,000 houses built and 242,000 under construction by 30 June 1947. [187] (b) 22,446 permanent prefabricated houses completed and 42,565 under construction in England & Wales - 31 December 1947. [188] (c) 189,000 dwellings built in 1947. (d) 251,000 dwellings built in 1948. [189] (e) 205, 000 and 202,000 dwelling built in 1950 and 1951 respectively.	**3**
Unoccupied war damaged houses repaired	250,000 homes seriously damaged as a result of enemy action during WW2. (Many of which were designated for slum clearance prior to 1939)	146,000 unoccupied war damaged homes repaired and brought back into use.	**3**
Temporary houses constructed	165,000 temporary houses were planned to be erected by end June 1947.	157,000 temporary houses were erected. [190]	**3**
Total Score			**9**

Table 2.6: Pre-post analysis - Quantitative performance. Key: 0 = nothing achieved; 1 = small results (some achievement); 2 = more or less equality in plans achieved and not achieved; 3 = substantial achievements but with some failures and 4 = all plans achieved.

The outcome of the quantitative analysis is a score of 9 out of a maximum score of 12.

A score of 3 relative to the number of permanent houses constructed is justified in view of a mixture of both under and over achievement in this category. As regards over-achievement, this was accomplished in respect of the number of traditionally constructed dwellings built or building by 30 June 1947 and, in respect of the number

[187] Wartime coalition government's 'objective' of 750,000 additional houses set out in Cmd. 6609 was achieved by1948.
[188] Figures not available for Scotland. Assume 100,000 target marginally underperformed.
[189] Over-achieved by 111,000 dwellings (+79 per cent).
[190] Programme curtailed due to high costs and conflict with permanent housing programme.

of dwellings constructed above target in 1948, 1950 and 1951. However, targets were under-performed relative to the construction of prefabricated dwellings by 30 June 1947 and, in respect of permanent completions in 1947. The precise figures for prefabricated dwellings are unclear, as appropriate data for Scotland for the period (1945 – 1947) was not published. However, we can safely assume, given the overall figures for Scotland that the target for prefabricated dwellings was not achieved. Given that labour and materials were in short supply, particularly during the early stages of the housing programme and the economic crises following 1947, it is significant that a high level of compliance with original plans was achieved.

A score of 3 is justified regarding the repair of unoccupied war-damaged houses. No actual target was set relative to this category, but we know that approximately 250,000 dwellings were seriously damaged during the war, of which many thousands had previously been designated for slum clearance during the 1930s. In such circumstances the repair of 146,000 such dwellings represents a significant proportion of those applicable for repair. The figures are even more impressive, given most of such work was carried out in the early years following the outbreak of peace and the attendant shortages of labour and building materials during that time.

Although the plan for the number of temporary (prefab) dwellings was marginally under-achieved, a score of 3 is appropriate as it takes into account that the government deliberately curtailed the programme due to high costs and that the construction of prefabs was taking away essential materials and components from the permanent housing programme. Prefabs also took up land that in some towns and cities was possibly required for the construction of permanent dwellings.

The overall score of 9 out of a possible 12 correlates with the descriptive analysis that Labour's quantitative housing record between 1945 and 1951 represented a substantial achievement. This challenges the view of some historians and housing specialists that Labour's post-war housing record relative to quantitative performance was an underachievement.

CHAPTER THREE: Qualitative Performance

Introduction

Labour's incorporation of high qualitative standards in the dwellings constructed during the period 1945 to 1951, is universally acknowledged, as are the merits of neighbourhood planning. However, there is some scepticism about the latter: the concept being praised but the reality, relative to the development of neighbourhood units and mixed communities less so. [1] The purpose of this chapter is to establish how successful Labour's housing policy was in relation to qualitative performance: that is in the housing standards achieved in the new permanent dwellings constructed, together with the community standards adopted during the period. This is done by way of an analysis of the housing standards planned and those achieved in terms of space, facilities and the equipment provided in the dwellings themselves, together with an assessment of wider aspects of qualitative performance, specifically the concept of neighbourhood planning and the development of neighbourhood units and mixed communities. A focus on these standards is considered appropriate given their direct impact on the inhabitants of the homes and communities constructed during the period. In addition, they are measurable in the context of the analysis offered.

The aforesaid analysis is facilitated primarily by way of comparing the minimum standards recommended in the 1944 report *Design of Dwellings* (hereafter referred to as the Dudley Report), with the government's official advice on such standards contained in the *Housing Manual 1949* (hereafter referred to as the 1949 Manual). [2]

[1] Fielding, Thompson and Tiratsoo, *England Arise!* 102 – 107.
[2] *Design of Dwellings: Report of the Design of Dwellings Sub-Committee of the Central Housing Advisory Committee appointed by the Minister of Health and Report of a Study Group of the Ministry*

In this respect, the analysis will establish to what extent official government advice on minimum housing and community standards during the period (standards achieved) replicated that recommended in the Dudley Report (standards planned). This approach is considered appropriate as minimum housing standards were enforced as a condition of government approval for the payment of housing subsidy. [3] The analysis also draws upon advice on post-war housing standards contained in the *Housing Manual 1944* (the predecessor document to the 1949 Manual), and in official circulars issued to local authorities by both the Ministry of Health and Ministry of Local Government and Planning during 1945 to 1951. [4] In addition, the analysis considers the influence of both the *New Towns Act 1946* and the *Town and Country Planning Act 1947*, specifically in the context of neighbourhood planning. Furthermore, Labour Party plans for post-war housing standards, developed during wartime, are surveyed to establish influence upon and corroboration with post-war standards. In this respect, documents obtained at the Labour History Archive and Study Centre in Manchester have been an important primary source. As well as the comprehensive use of primary sources, secondary sources have been harnessed to help assess the impact of neighbourhood planning during the period and to depict the influence of Aneurin Bevan (in his role as Minister of Health) in the drive to improve housing and community standards. To provide context and historical background, the chapter begins with a discussion about the development of housing standards and the major influences thereupon during the twenty-year period 1919 to 1939.

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of Town and Country Planning on Site Planning and Layout in relation to Housing (London, HMSO, 1944); Ministry of Health, *Housing Manual 1949*, London, HMSO, 1949.

[3] This requirement was formally communicated to Local Authorities by way of Ministry of Health Circular 118/46. See: The National Archives (TNA): Public Records Office (PRO), HLG 101/227, *Housing (Financial and Miscellaneous Provisions) Act, 1946,* Circular 118/46, Appendix III, 12 July 1946 ; Alan Murie, Pat Niner and Christopher Watson, *Housing Policy and the Housing System* (London, 1976), 105.

[4] Ministry of Health, Ministry of Works, *Housing Manual 1944*, London, HMSO, 1944.

The development of housing standards 1919 to 1939

The Tudor Walters Report

The design, planning, layout, standards of construction and equipment of the houses built by local authorities during the interwar period were based largely on the recommendations of the committee under the chairmanship of Sir John Tudor Walters, which reported in 1918. [5] What became commonly known as the Tudor Walters Report, comprehensively reviewed every aspect of housebuilding including aesthetic considerations. Tudor Walters recommended that future new houses should be two-storied cottages, built in groups of four or six, with medium or low-pitched roofs and little exterior decoration. Such houses, the report recommended, should be set amongst gardens, trees and laid out in cul-de-sacs. Almost all the recommendations in the Tudor Walters report were adopted by the Local Government Board in its *Manual on the Preparation of State-Aided Housing Schemes,* published in 1919. Tudor Walters drew upon the experience of model towns and the garden city movement, on the planning concepts that had been developed by the likes of Ebenezer Howard and Raymond Unwin and partly on proposals that had been developed by the Local Government Board prior to the onset of the First World War. [6] The reports' recommendations were qualitatively different from anything that had gone before. In short, Tudor Walters was revolutionary, constituting a major innovation in social policy and in the future character of working-class life. [7]

[5] See: *Report of the Committee Appointed to Consider Questions of Building Construction in connection with the Provision of Dwellings for the Working Classes,* Cmd. 9191 (1918).
[6] Sir Ebenezer Howard was an English urban planner and founder of the garden city movement; Sir Raymond Unwin was a prominent and influential English engineer, architect, and town planner with an emphasis on improvements in working class housing.
[7] See John Burnett, *A Social History of Housing 1815 – 1985* (London, 1986), 222 – 223.

As regards the houses themselves, Tudor Walters said that there should comprise a variety of types to suit different needs and localities. In terms of layout, three basic types were suggested. The most rudimentary and cheapest had a living room with a range where most of the cooking would be done and a scullery with a gas cooker, sink, copper, and a bath. The second had a grate in the living-room for a limited amount of cooking, but with the bath located in a separate bathroom. The third, and most costly had no provision for cooking in the living-room but had a bathroom upstairs. Each of the three basic types was planned with a superior version comprising a parlour and a separate bathroom. (Figure 3.1). Indeed, according to the report a third living-room was a reasonable and proper expectation and that a house with a parlour was undoubtedly the type desired by the majority of the artisan classes. Indeed, approximately 40 per cent of immediate post First World War local authority houses had a parlour. [8] In terms of space, Tudor Walters recommendations were liberal if judged by what had gone before. They advocated a three-bedroom non-parlour house of 855 square feet and 1,055 for a parlour house, not including storage for fuel and other items. A main bedroom of 150 square feet, a second of 100 and a third no smaller than 65 square feet was considered adequate for the average five-person family. A parlour of 120 square feet was considered satisfactory. Notwithstanding the various house types proposed, the irreducible core of Tudor Walters' proposals was a self-contained, two-storey family 'cottage' set in generous front and back gardens with its own front door, water-supply, cooking and sanitary arrangements. Although the reports proposed vernacular was dated and harked-back to a by-gone day, in terms of local authority housing, Tudor Walters was instrumental in forming its character: being almost always in new, low density suburban estates, that was at the time

[8] Ibid.

accepted as the most appropriate way of housing the urban working-class population. As such Tudor Walters reflected the prescriptive elements of the welfare state ideology to achieve the wellbeing of mankind in general and the working classes in particular.

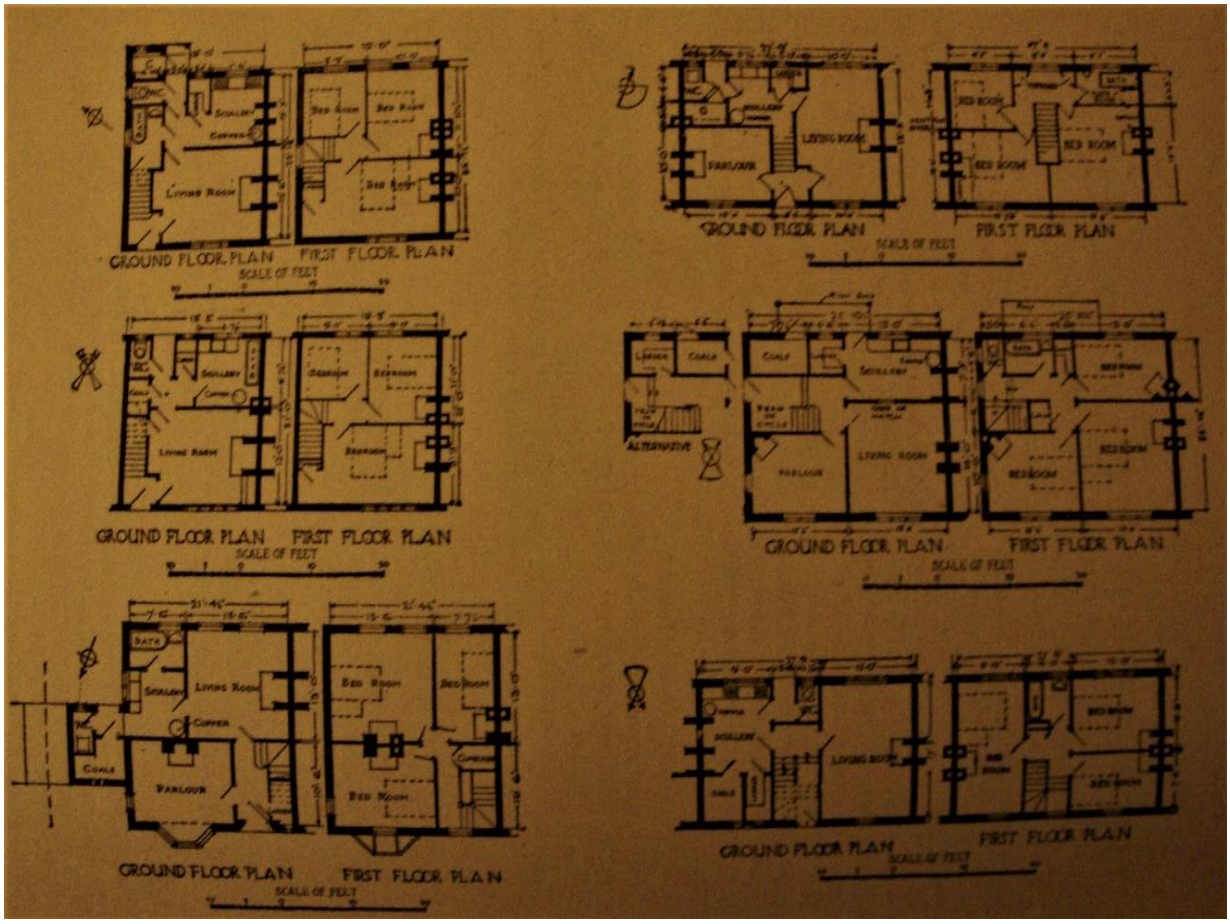

Figure 3.1: Plans of houses mentioned in the Tudor Walters Report, 1918. Source: Gale, *Modern Housing Estates* (1949), 96.

However, Tudor Walters' layouts and plans, whilst setting a general guide were, due to reasons of political ideology and the economic slump of the early 1920s, cut-back and compromised during the interwar period. The houses built under the auspices of the *Housing and Town Planning Act 1919* (Addison Act) generally met the standards recommended in the report, but those that followed, much less so. Indeed, the reduced subsidy offered by *the Housing Act 1923* (Chamberlain Act), its presumption in favour of owner-occupation as opposed to houses built for rent by local councils and the conditions attached thereto relative to overall space resulted in smaller, cheaper

houses which cut down on items that were regarded as non-essential. The vast majority of three-bedroom houses built by local authorities after 1923 comprised 750 to 850 square feet, as opposed to the 900 square feet recommended in the *Manual on the Preparation of State-Aided Housing Schemes* of 1919. The *Housing (Financial Provisions) Act 1924* (Wheatley Act), that both restored local authorities to their position as house-providers and offered a more generous subsidy than that of the 1923 Act, was however conditional upon houses meeting the same standards as those required by Chamberlain's statute. The houses built under Wheatley's legislation were similar in size to those built under Chamberlain, but due to the deteriorating economic climate, Chamberlain's minimum standards regularly became Wheatley's maximum.

Nevertheless, the houses built under both the Chamberlain and Wheatley measures were considered to be of a good standard. Indeed, to its credit, Chamberlain's legislation stipulated that all houses built with subsidy should have a fixed bath in a bathroom. [9] Later, after 1930, subsidy was specifically targeted at slum clearance programmes and standards markedly declined. A government circular of early 1932 pressed local authorities to build small houses. [10] The same circular specified that proposals for new building were to be limited to housing families with children living in insanitary or overcrowded conditions and unable to rent from private enterprise. Indeed, by 1936 the required housing standards reached their lowest point when pressure was applied to build the 'minimum standard house.' [11] Although the Tudor Walters standards of layout and density, at twelve houses per acre were continued, economies tended to concentrate on items such as simpler elevations, reduced floor areas and a greater emphasis on three and two-bedroom, non-parlour houses. On

[9] Alison Ravetz, *Council Housing and Culture: The History of a Social Experiment* (London, 2001), 93.
[10] Peter Malpass and Alan Murie, *Housing Policy and Practice* (London, 1982), 36 – 37.
[11] Ravetz, *Council Housing and Culture*, 93.

large housing estates where development had been continuous during the whole of the interwar period, houses representing Addison, Wheatley and those of the sanitary programmes of the 1930s were clearly identifiable. [12]

Multi - Storey Flats

There was no other housing type built in Britain between the wars that seriously challenged the tremendous popularity of traditional houses and bungalows. However, as the standard of flats gradually improved during the period, such dwellings emerged as a more serious alternative to the traditional two-storey house. Therefore, the rise in both the reputation and the standards of 'the flat' requires some elucidation. Tudor Walters was not a supporter of the provision of flats, remarking that 'no advocate appeared' for them and at best it allowed that 'modified types of such buildings might be a necessity in the centre of areas already partly developed with this class of dwelling or to meet special conditions.' [13] Although Tudor Walters had strongly deterred their use, the pressure of the slum clearance and overcrowding programmes of the 1930s resulted in flats being built in most of Britain's large provincial cities. [14] Once the longstanding prejudice against their construction as outmoded tenements was overcome, flats were seen by some as an alternative to the two-storey cottage in a garden suburb.

The inspiration for the building of multi-storey flats came principally from continental Europe and the architects of the 'Modern Movement', notably the blocks of flats built or influenced by the Bauhaus school of design, such as the Viennese workmen's flats,

[12] Burnett, *A Social History of Housing*, 246 - 247.
[13] Cmd. 9191, para. 84.
[14] Ravetz, *Council Housing and Culture*, 94.

built between 1920 and 1933. [15] Such examples influenced both those who worked in the housing and labour movements to improve living conditions for the working classes, as well as those socially aware architects who 'did not consider their education finished until they had studied these workmen's dwellings on the spot.' [16] Although, the standard of the individual flats was generally inferior in comparison to those in Britain, the provision in these continental examples of such amenities as creches, landscaped gardens and copious window boxes helped to establish the modern flat as an acceptable family home in Britain. [17] The continental inspiration was also partly ideological and largely independent of economic and social reality. For example, the additional costs of combining superior British dwelling standards with continental amenities were mostly glossed over. In reality, British attempts at providing such amenities were either reduced, deferred or left unfinished. Nonetheless, social idealism played an important part in the advocacy of the flats-versus-houses debate and flats were welcomed equally by both those who believed the idea of inner-city development provided a means of preserving the British countryside and by those who argued that people rehoused through slum clearance programmes could be accommodated in a way that did not involve the destruction of their existing communities. [18] The clearest expression of social idealism in Britain, relative to the building of flats during the period was that by Leeds City Council in the development of a huge estate at Quarry Hill (Figure 3.2). Commissioned by the city council to be the most advanced, magnificent, and luxurious estate in the world, its initial phase that

[15] Modernism first emerged in the early twentieth century and by the 1920s the prominent figures of the movement, Le Corbusier, Walter Gropius and Ludwig Miles van der Rohe had established their reputations.
[16] Alison Ravetz, 'From Working Class Tenement to Modern Flat: local authorities and multi-storey housing between the wars', in Anthony Sutcliffe (ed.), *Multi Storey Living: The British Working-Class Experience* (London, 1974), 133.
[17] Ravetz, *Council Housing and Culture*, 94.
[18] Burnett, *A Social History of Housing*, 247.

opened in 1938, accommodated those relocated from Leeds notorious back-to-back slums. It should be stressed that the continental model did not directly influence the development of flats everywhere in Britain, indeed their provenance can in some places be traced back to earlier local schemes, for example in Liverpool. However, the majority of local decision makers, both councillors and architects, proceeded in the development of flats in conscious imitation of continental models. [19]

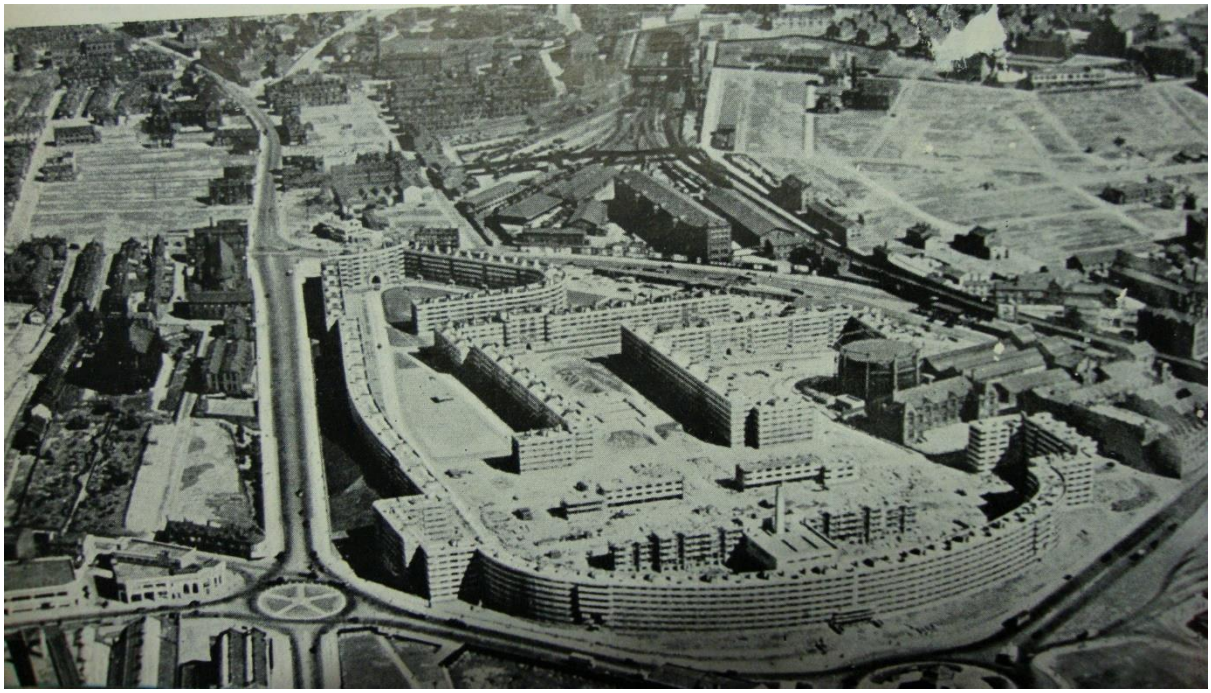

Figure 3.2: Aerial View of Quarry Hill flats, Leeds. Source: John Madge, *The Rehousing of Britain* (London, 1945).

The measure that facilitated the building of flats in large numbers was that which introduced a special subsidy by way of the *Housing Act 1930* (Greenwood Act) and the termination in 1933 of the subsidy introduced by way of Wheatley's *Housing (Financial Provisions) Act 1924*. Greenwood's statute, as well as bringing in procedures for slum clearance provided a new Exchequer subsidy linked to the number of people displaced rather than the number of new dwellings provided. The

[19] Alison Ravetz, 'From Working Class Tenement to Modern Flat', 135.

subsidy increased when rehousing was provided in flats of more than three storeys high on expensive sites. The abolition of the Wheatley subsidy helped divert local authorities away from their established housing policies of suburban development. [20] However, the propensity for flat building (outside London and Liverpool) between the wars was not great: flats contributed only 5 per cent of total subsidised building during this period. Nevertheless, in Leeds, Manchester and Newcastle-upon-Tyne, sizable programmes were commenced. [21]

Described as 'severely utilitarian' in character, the typical local authority flat of the 1930s was smaller than the typical council house of the period. [22] However, they were considerably better designed than those of the 1920s that had been built largely in London by the London County Council (LCC). The living-room measured 150 to 160 square feet, the master bedroom 110 to 120 square feet. Two roomed flats had a floor area of approximately 420 square feet, three-roomed 530 – 550 square feet and four-roomed 660 square feet. Each flat was equipped with a separate bathroom, kitchen, and WC. The blocks of flats were typically five-storeys high, usually served by concrete staircases with outside balcony access, making one side both dark and noisy. The large, paved forecourts to the blocks were bleak, not often being relieved by trees or grass. [23] Blocks of five storeys were deemed to be the tallest that could be built without the provision of lifts, the high cost of such being considered prohibitive. However, there were variations on the general standards, some inferior, some superior. The inferior having reduced ceiling heights and a less generous floor area, the superior incorporating an internal staircase instead of balcony access and an increased floor

[20] Ibid, 123 - 124.
[21] Burnett, *A Social History of Housing*, 247.
[22] Stephen Merrett, *State Housing in Britain* (London, 1979), 57.
[23] Liverpool Record Office (LRO), Hq 720.9.PUB, *Liverpool Builds 1945-65*, 30; Merrett, State Housing, 57 – 58.

area of up to 100 square feet more than the standard.[24] Furthermore, flats of only two-floors in height were being built in quite large numbers for older people. Such flats had either a bed-living room or a living room with one-bedroom and were, it was reported in 1935, in very great demand. [25]

Despite a vague belief that the unit cost of flats should be less than that for the construction of traditional houses, this was not the case, most certainly in England. This conviction had grown partly on the basis that more dwellings could be accommodated per acre by way of multi-storey flats as opposed to traditional houses. However, the high cost of acquiring central inner-city sites only added to the high overall cost of building flats, a factor which was reflected in increased Exchequer subsidy for the construction of flats on expensive sites. By the middle of the 1930s, the erection of flats was as much as two-thirds more expensive than that of the urban, non-parlour house. At £435 per flat, unit costs were at their lowest level in 1934, but by the time the 1930s ended, costs had risen sharply to almost £600. [26] To ameliorate high costs, new methods of construction were investigated, including the use of steel and reinforced concrete frame structures combined with a variety of types of cladding. Such systems came with the promise of significant savings in the cost of construction, due partly to their not requiring the services of skilled bricklayers, plasterers, and other trades in the construction process. However, specialist skills of a non-traditional kind were needed, and this appears to have been ignored in the process of calculating costs. The non-traditional systems failed to succeed in capturing the imagination of

[24] Burnett, *A Social History of Housing*, 248.
[25] *The Builder*, 5 April 1935, 628.
[26] Alison Ravetz, 'From Working Class Tenement to Modern Flat', 126 – 127.

the building industry, and apart from a few exceptions, the traditional method of brick construction continued in Britain during the period.

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Standards Planned

The Dudley Report

On its publication in 1944, the Dudley Report was the universally accepted blueprint for post-war housing and community standards: a plan that government housing policy was expected to follow when hostilities ended. The report set out in the greatest of detail, recommendations on the design, planning, layout, standards of construction and equipment of dwellings. Appointed in 1942, the Design of Dwellings Sub-Committee of the Ministry of Health Central Advisory Committee, under the chairmanship of Lord Dudley comprised housing experts, architects, and housewives. In view of the close relationship between the layout of residential areas and town planning, the Minister of Town and Country Planning set up a special study group to assist Dudley in the examination of site planning and layout in relation to housing. Two members of the Dudley Committee served on the aforesaid study group. Dudley decided to confine its consideration to the types of permanent dwelling commonly built by local authorities but stressed that its recommendations should apply equally to all types of housing. What follows is a detailed exposition of the minimum standards recommended by Dudley specifically in respect of space, facilities, and equipment in the home in addition to its advice on neighbourhood planning (community standards).

Space, facilities, and equipment

The Dudley Report stated that although ‘many of the recommendations in the Tudor Walters Report hold good today (…) it is both timely and necessary that the subject

should be again examined.' In the view of Dudley, such a re-examination was justified because many developments had taken place which had not been foreseen by Tudor Walters, including, the larger than anticipated number of houses built between the wars, including the number of municipal houses, and what it called, 'changes in our national habits and way of life.' [27] In terms of the dwellings in general, Dudley set out three principal defects in the council housing built between the wars. Firstly, a lack of variety in the type of dwelling provided. Although Dudley recommended the continuation of the construction of three-bedroom houses in the main, it stressed the need to make provision for smaller families in areas where such need had not been met. Crucially, Dudley advised that local authorities should be allowed 'considerable latitude' to determine the types of houses required to meet local needs. [28] Secondly, the living accommodation was thought too cramped and ill-adapted to the then present ways of living. In this regard Dudley recommended that the municipal house of the future should contain two 'good' rooms on the ground floor with the scullery becoming a proper working kitchen or kitchen-diner. In this respect, Dudley offered three options for the configuration of the ground floor of a three-bedroom house including minimum recommended space standards for each alternative (Figures 3.3 – 3.5).[29]

[27] *Design of Dwellings*, 9.
[28] Ibid, 12.
[29] Ibid, 14, 33 – 39.

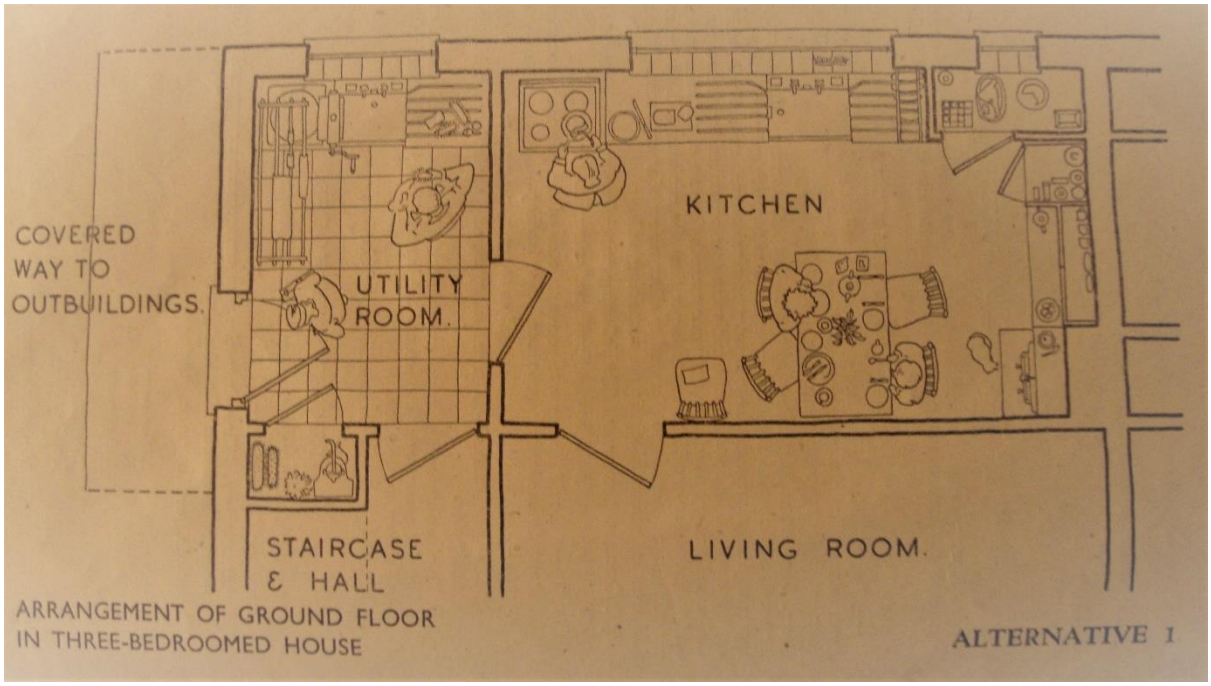

Figure 3.3: Arrangement of Ground Floor in three-bedroom House. Dudley Alternative 1 (305 sq. ft.). Source: *Design of Dwellings* (1944), 34.

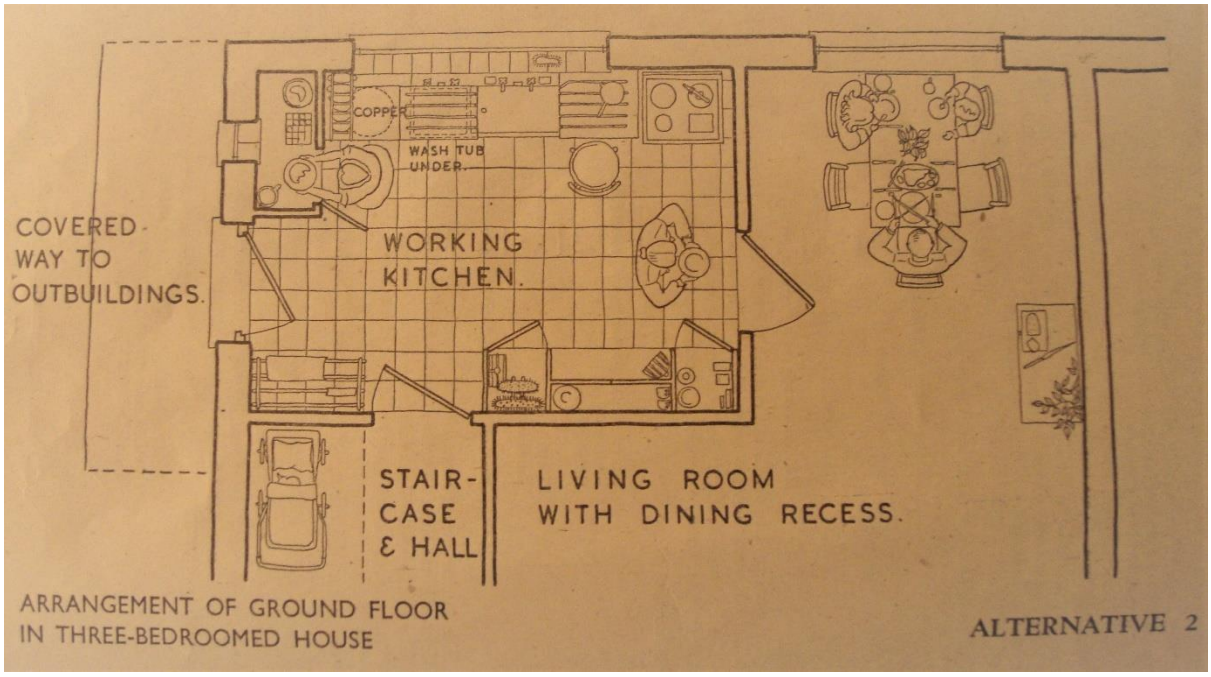

Figure 3.4: Arrangement of Ground Floor in three-bedroom house. Dudley Alternative 2 (310 sq. ft.). Source: *Design of Dwellings* (1944), 36.

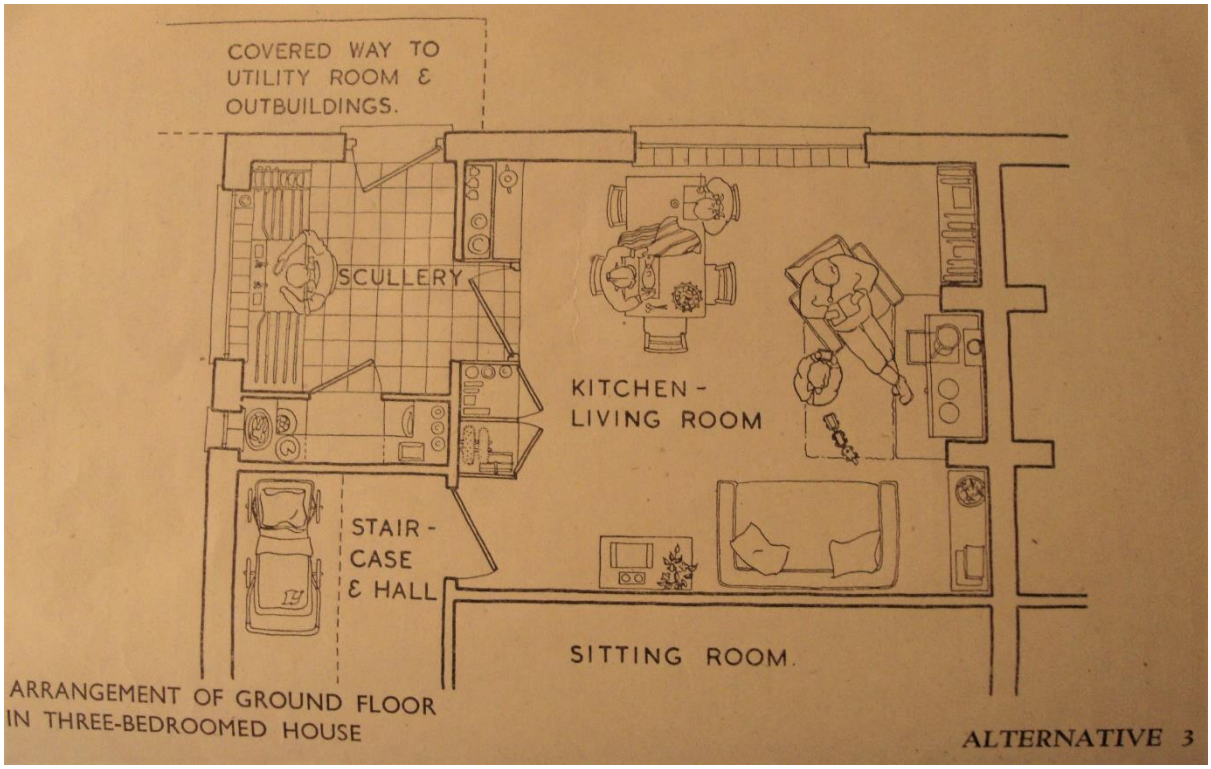

Figure 3.5: Arrangement of Ground Floor in three-bedroom house. Dudley Alternative 3 (365 sq. ft.). Source: *Design of Dwellings* (1944), 38.

It was proposed that the parlour should go, as in the opinion of Dudley, it conveyed an implication of being old fashioned and obsolete, reflecting the educational element of the welfare state ideology. [30] To ensure the best usage of the two living rooms, the provision of a utility room was proposed where washing and other home disturbing work could be done with all the necessary equipment to hand. [31] The bathroom and toilet, it was proposed, should be upstairs, with the toilet being separate in houses of three bedrooms or more. In larger houses, two toilets were deemed necessary. One should be downstairs and contain a lavatory basin; the other situated upstairs, combined, if necessary, with the bathroom. [32] The three bedrooms should comprise

[30] Ibid, 14
[31] Ibid.
[32] Ibid, 15.

minimum space standards of 150, 110 and 70 square feet respectively. [33] A minimum overall floor area of 900 square feet was deemed necessary to give effect to such facilities and to ensure that the defects of the interwar house were remedied. [34] In respect of flats, Dudley said that rooms therein should be no smaller than those in houses. [35] Finally, outbuildings in interwar houses were deemed inadequate, shoddy and badly placed. Indeed, many houses built between the wars had no outbuildings, with the result that there was no place to keep items such as bicycles, tools, or gardening equipment outside the house. In some cases, fuel had to be stored inside the house itself, with resulting dust and dirt. Dudley viewed outbuildings as essential to the reasonable comfort and convenience of the family and highlighted the inclusion, amongst other things, of a fuel store, easily accessible for fuel delivery and where possible, to be reached undercover, from the backdoor. The space devoted to outbuildings, Dudley opined, should not be less than 70 square feet. [36]

Furthermore, Dudley went into a good deal of detail and, in some respects, minute detail about both the equipment and general specification of other facilities that was felt to be necessary in all homes constructed after the war had ended. In respect of heating, Dudley stated that in houses ‘an open fire’ was required in the living room and if desired, in one of the bedrooms; and in flats, in the living room. In addition, the provision of electric or gas points should be provided in every habitable room in houses and flats. [37] Three alternative methods were proposed for the provision of constant hot water. [38] In respect of cooking, where the availability of gas or electricity was present, electric or gas cookers should, it was proposed, be provided in all municipal houses.

[33] Ibid.
[34] Ibid.
[35] Ibid, 20, 21, 23.
[36] Ibid, 16.
[37] Ibid, 40.
[38] Ibid.

Where a local preference for solid fuel existed and in areas where gas or electricity was not available, a solid fuel cooker of the 'modern insulated type' should be provided. [39] To provide more natural light, the provision of bigger windows with the sills of those in living-rooms not more than 2 ft. 9 ins. from the floor and in bedrooms not more than 3 ft. 3 ins. were considered necessary. [40] The report opined that the kitchen worktable should have a hard, smooth, cold top for the making of pastry. [41] The kitchen sink should be at least 24 ins x 18 ins. x 10 ins. and was best placed under the window, and perhaps at right angles to it if not too far from the light. [42] The kitchen windowsill should be tiled, whilst pipes should be hidden and neat. [43] In terms of storage space in the kitchen, provision for perishable and dry food storage, utensils, brooms and cleaning materials, crockery, glass, ironing board and other household necessities was deemed necessary. [44] In addition, the provision of a fitted kitchen cabinet was proposed. [45] In the bathroom, a bath measuring 5 ft. 6 ins. long, with a hard surfaced panel and wall tiling at least 1 ft. in height above the bath was proposed. The washbasin should incorporate a shelf and the bathroom should include the provision of a heated towel rail.[46] In terms of facilities for the storage of clothing, such cupboards should have a hat shelf and a rod for hangers. [47] Dudley also set out some specific proposals for facilities in flats. Passenger lifts were recommended in blocks containing more than three-storeys above the ground floor level. That chutes should be fitted for the disposal of refuse and generally, more communal facilities needed to

[39] Ibid, 29, 40 – 41.
[40] Ibid, 40.
[41] Ibid, 41.
[42] Ibid.
[43] Ibid.
[44] Ibid.
[45] Ibid.
[46] Ibid.
[47] Ibid, 43.

be provided. [48] Furthermore, the report made a series of suggestions to overcome some of the objections to flats, particularly relative to noise, lack of privacy and difficulties in supervising children. [49]

Community standards

More generally, Dudley highlighted what was referred to as 'serious mistakes in the planning and layout of [interwar] council estates', citing five issues of particular concern:

(i) The development of large estates in which private and municipal housing are conspicuously separated.

(ii) Insufficient attention to the provision of churches, schools, club buildings, shops, open spaces, and other amenities.

(iii) The location of residential estates too far from the tenants' employment, thus involving long and expensive journeys to work.

(iv) Too rigid an interpretation of density zoning, resulting in insufficient variety of types of dwellings and in a lack of smaller open spaces and playgrounds.

(v) A failure to appreciate the value to a neighbourhood of good design, applied not only to the houses themselves but to their setting.' [50]

Dudley attributed much of the bad planning and design of housing estates to the reluctance of local authorities and private builders to utilise the services of professional architects and recommended that the Minister of Health require all local authorities to employ a trained architect in connection with their housing schemes. [51] The report

[48] Ibid, 20, 21, 23.
[49] Ibid, 12, 19 – 23.
[50] Ibid, 11.
[51] Ibid, 10.

proposed that in future great care should be given to the layout of areas where new houses were to be built, so that they were as attractive as possible, with the properly cared-for trees and hedges, wide roads, car parking facilities and other modern amenities. 'We hope' Dudley stated, 'that in future local authorities will set out with the intention of adding positively to the beauties of the town and countryside, and not merely of making the housing estates unobtrusive.' [52] In fact, Dudley described municipal housing estates as having become 'distorted', because of the large number of interwar houses built by local authorities and gave a nod to what it described as 'a new conception of planning which involved the creation of independent or semi-independent mixed social communities provided with all the industrial, social and other activities and amenities on which community life depends.' [53]

The Ministry of Town and Country Planning Study Group Report that accompanied Dudley, looked at the relationship between housing and town planning, with specific reference to 'neighbourhood planning.' The basic concept of neighbourhood planning is that for the proper social wellbeing of a large town to prosper, it is necessary to work out some organisation of its physical form that will aid in every way the development of community life and enable a proper measure of social and other amenities to be provided and arranged to advantage in each residential neighbourhood. [54] In this regard, two of the big ideas championed in the study group report were the concept of the neighbourhood unit and mixed communities. [55] The report opined that the maximum size of a neighbourhood unit should not exceed 10,000 people and that every house should have access to the neighbourhood centre. Such a unit should

[52] Ibid.
[53] Ibid, 9, 73-74; Such issued were dealt with by the *Study Group of the Ministry of Town and Country Planning*, set out on pages 55 – 75 of the Dudley Report.
[54] *Design of Dwellings,* 58-63.
[55] The idea of the neighbourhood unit was originally put forward in 1929 by Clarence A. Perry in his regional survey of New York.

contain open spaces, safe pedestrian ways, primary and nursery schools and have shops within a quarter-of-a-mile walking distance. [56] Approximate figures for desirable net residential densities in such neighbourhood areas were also set out in the report of the study group. [57] In this regard the report concluded that the average net residential density (persons per acre) should range from 30 (in open development) to 120 (in central area development). However, it considered the desirable standard for central area redevelopment as 100 persons per acre. In very few cases, and then only in large concentrated urban areas, the report opined, should it be necessary to rebuild at 120 persons per acre.

In terms of mixed communities, the study group stated that within the neighbourhood unit a variety of dwellings should be provided so that it is made up of several minor groups of development and kinds of dwellings. The report was clear. 'As well as family dwellings, there ought to be accommodation for both old people and single people.' [58] It recommended the 'mixed development' of family houses 'mingled' with blocks of flats for smaller households. [59] As such, the report opined flats were best placed immediately adjacent to public open space and near to the 'neighbourhood centre.' [60] Furthermore, Dudley stated that it had received a 'great deal of evidence' indicating that each neighbourhood should be, what it described as 'socially balanced', inhabited by families belonging to different ranges of income groups. This could be achieved, the report suggested, by way of the aforementioned 'minor groups' comprising of between 100 and 300 families. This would both satisfy the desires of the various social

[56] Ibid, 58 – 59.
[57] Ibid, 59 – 61.
[58] Ibid, 61.
[59] Ibid.
[60] Ibid, 61, 74.

groups in the matter of immediate convenience and use, whilst remaining part of the overall neighbourhood. [61]

Standards achieved

The analysis of standards achieved focuses principally on the advice (relative to space, facilities, equipment, and community standards) contained in the 1949 Manual. This represented the official Ministry of Health guidance to local authorities as to the minimum standards the government expected to be implement in post-war housing schemes. This is juxtaposed with the standards planned in the Dudley Report. The analysis also draws upon advice contained in the *Housing Manual 1944* (the predecessor document to the 1949 Manual), and in official circulars issued to local authorities by both the Ministry of Health and Ministry of Local Government and Planning during 1945 to 1951. [62] In addition, it considers the influence of both the *New Towns Act 1946* and the *Town and Country Planning Act 1947*, specifically in the context of neighbourhood planning.

The improved housing standards recommended in the Dudley Report were those that were expected (as a minimum) to be adopted for implementation in the construction of new permanent dwellings following the end of the Second World War. [63] In this respect, the *Report of the Ministry of Health for the year ended 31 March 1945*, stated that Dudley's main recommendations on housing standards had been embodied in the *Housing Manual 1944* (referred to hereafter as the 1944 Manual) which at that time, represented the government's official guidance to local authorities on 'the lines on

[61] Ibid.
[62] Ministry of Health, Ministry of Works, *Housing Manual 1944*, London, HMSO, 1944.
[63] A copy of the Dudley Report had been circulated to all local authorities in July 1944.

which they should frame their post-war housing schemes.' [64] However, the statement in the Ministry's Annual Report was incorrect. Crucially, the overall minimum space standard recommended in the 1944 Manual was in fact inferior to that recommended by Dudley. [65] Indeed, in terms of overall space in a three-bedroom house for five persons, the 800 to 900 square feet minimum it advised was lower than Dudley's minimum 900 square feet.

The 1944 Manual was issued (under the auspices of the wartime coalition government) jointly by the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Works. It summarised relative to housing, the work of the Central Housing Advisory Committee of the Ministry of Health and the work of the Study, Standard, and Codes of Practice Committees of the Ministry of Works. However, when Labour took office in late July 1945, the new government set about ensuring that its permanent housing programme was guided by all the improved standards set out in the Dudley Report, that in many respects had corresponded with its own internal policy planning undertaken during wartime.[66] This was initially done by way of Ministry of Health *Circular 200/45*, issued on 15 November 1945. [67] The circular made clear to local authorities that the Minister of Health (Aneurin Bevan) expected that new permanent council houses conform to Dudley's 900 square

[64] *Summary Report of the Ministry of Health for the year ended 31 March 1945*, Cmd. 6710, London, HMSO, 1945, 34 – 35.
[65] *Housing Manual 1944*, 8
[66] In 1941 the Labour Party National Executive Committee (NEC) set up a structure composed of committees and sub-committee with the remit to consider in detail specific aspects of post-war reconstruction policy. The Housing and Town Planning Sub-Committee (that considered data compiled by such organisations as the Bournville Village Trust, Mass Observation, and the Women's Advisory Council), looked at the issue of housing standards and made a series of recommendations relative to space, facilities, and equipment in the home in addition to community standards. Significantly, the sub-committee advised the adoption of the highest possible standards in terms of living space. See: LHASC, Research Series R.D. 1-30, 1941, 'Memorandum on some of the problems of post-war reconstruction and suggested methods for their solution', R.D.R 14/October 1941 and LHASC, Research Series R.D. 1-30, 1941, 'Suggested short-term programme for housing and town planning in the immediate post-war years', R.D.R 29/November 1941.
[67] LRO, 352 ARC/47, Plans and files of the City Architect, *Ministry of Heath Circular 200/45*, 15 November 1945.

feet minimum space standard for a three-bedroom house to accommodate five persons. Indeed, the circular stated that the Minister felt an appropriate range for such a house was 900 to 950 square feet. In addition, *Circular 200/45* underlined Bevan's expectation (that exceeded Dudley's recommendations), that houses with three or more bedrooms should contain two toilets.[68]

The Housing Manual 1949

The 1949 Manual formalised advice to local authorities as to the minimum housing and community standards the government expected to be implement in post-war housing schemes. Minimum housing standards were enforced as a condition of government approval for the payment of housing subsidy. This requirement was formally communicated to Local Authorities in 1946 by way of Ministry of Health Circular 118/46. [69]

Standards in the home - space

In terms of the standard three-bedroom house, three basic house layout types were recommended in the 1949 Manual, largely based on that which had been proposed in the Dudley Report. [70] Named respectively as the kitchen-living room house; the working-kitchen house and the dining-kitchen house, each house type, based on a space standard of 900 to 950 square feet, could be replicated in both semi-detached and terraced houses (Figure 3.6). [71]

[68] Ibid.
[69] TNA: PRO, HLG 101/227, *Housing (Financial and Miscellaneous Provisions) Act, 1946,* Circular 118/46, Appendix III, 12 July 1946.
[70] *Housing Manual 1949*, 41-42
[71] Ibid, 12, 40.

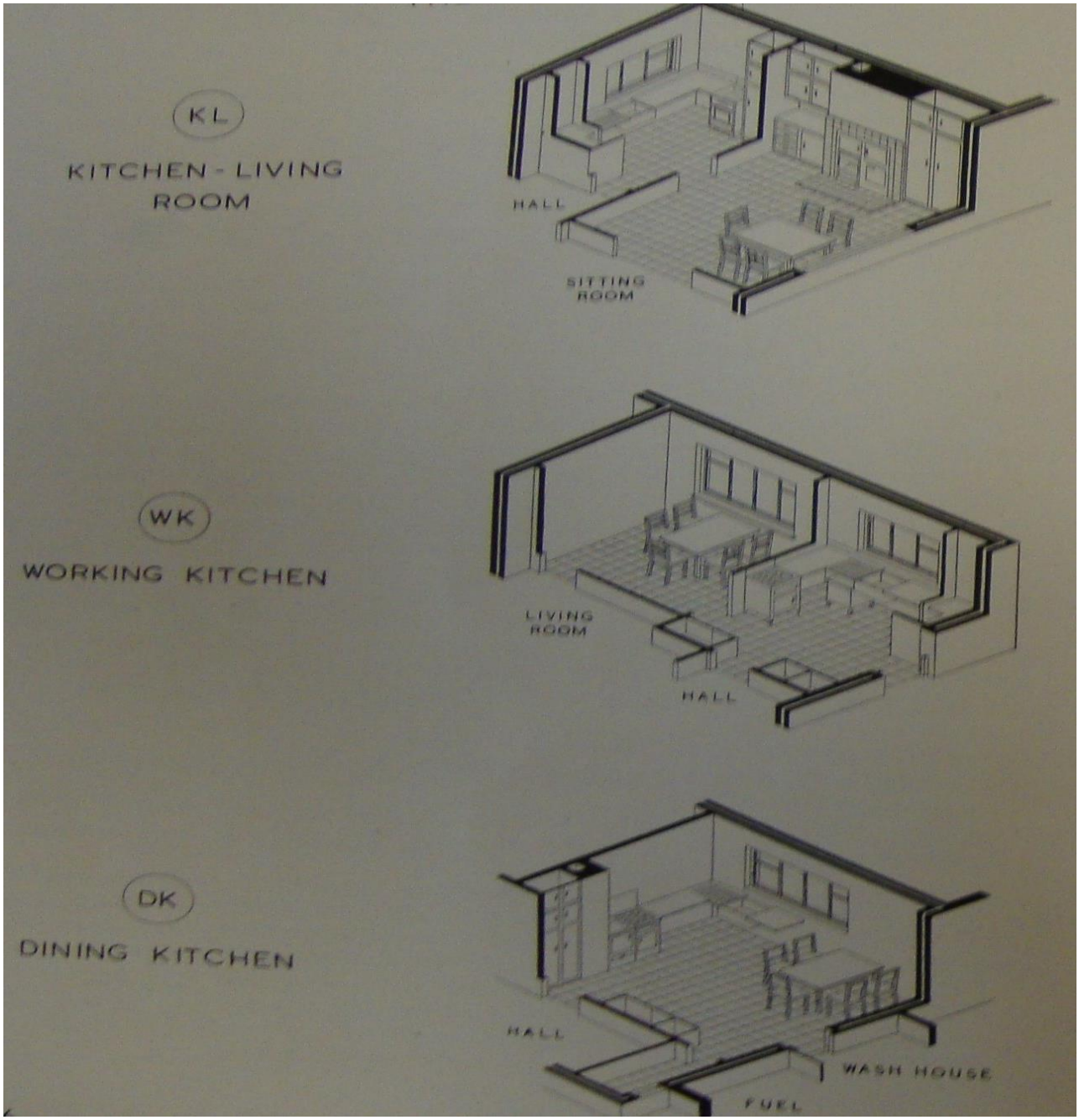

Figure 3.6: Basic house types proposed in the *Housing Manual 1949*. Source: *Housing Manual 1949 (1949), 40.*

The kitchen-living room house had on the ground floor a large kitchen-living room and in the larger house of this type, a separate living room. In the working-kitchen house the ground floor contained a good working kitchen and a large living room in which meals could be taken or a living room with a dining recess or separate dining space.

It could be planned to provide a dining space with direct access from the working-kitchen. The dining-kitchen house had on the ground floor a living room and a kitchen large enough and suitably arranged to take a table for meals. [72] Local authorities were given absolute discretion as to the house type most appropriate for development on sites under their control.

The overall recommended space standard comfortably met Dudley's 900 square feet minimum and in larger three-bedroom houses built to accommodate six persons, 1,030 square feet was deemed necessary. [73] This not only exceeded Dudley's advised minimum by 130 square feet but represented an increase of over 30 per cent on the unit size of housing built for the lower income groups during the slum-clearance drive of the 1930s. Furthermore, for a four-bedroom house for seven persons, the maximum space requirement of 1,175 square feet was proposed. (Table 3.1). [74] The standard recommended dimensions of the ground floor rooms in the respective house types were larger than those proposed by Dudley. In the kitchen-living room house, for example, the recommended dimension of the kitchen-living room was, at 180 to 200 square feet and its adjoining sitting room 110 to 120 square feet, a minimum of 20 square feet larger than that advocated in the Dudley Report. The bedroom dimensions were replicated in all three house types. Here too, in terms of the second and third bedrooms, room sizes marginally exceeded that which Dudley viewed as a minimum. (Table 3.2). [75]

[72] Ibid, 41, 42.
[73] Ibid, 43.
[74] Ibid.
[75] Ibid, 42.

Number of Persons	Number of Bedrooms	Superficial Area (sq. ft.)
4	2	750 - 800
5	3	900 - 950
6	3	980 – 1,030
6	4	1,000 – 1,090
7	4	1,100 – 1,175

Table 3.1: Recommended space standards for two-storey houses. Source: *Housing Manual 1949* (1949), 43.

House Type	Superficial Area (sq. ft.)
The kitchen-living Room House	
-kitchen-living room	180 – 200
-sitting room	110 – 120
-scullery	50 – 70
-wash house	40 – 50
The working kitchen house	
-living room where there is no separate dining space	180 – 220
-living room plus dining space	225 – 270
-working kitchen	90 – 110
The dining kitchen house	
-living room	160 – 200
-dining kitchen	110 – 130
-wash house	40 – 50
Bedrooms in all three house types	
-first bedroom	135 – 150
-other double bedrooms	110 – 120
-single bedrooms	70 – 80

Table 3.2: Desirable room sizes according to the house type proposed. Source; *Housing Manual 1949* (1949), 42.

As regards the provision of outbuildings for the storage of fuel and other items, the overall recommended space deemed necessary for such facilities was 50 to 70 square feet, with up to 20 square feet devoted to the storage of fuel. The approach to

such outbuildings should, it was proposed, be under cover. [76] This was less generous than Dudley, that recommended a minimum of 70 square feet for the provision of outbuildings. [77]

The 1949 Manual also made some general recommendations about space standards in flats. Here it was advised that room sizes should be much the same as in houses for the same number of occupants. [78] This repeated that recommended in the Dudley Report. [79] As such, to accommodate five to six persons in flats containing four to five rooms, 850 to 950 square feet was recommended. [80] In terms of layout, it was advised that the working-kitchen and the dining-kitchen plan arrangement were the most suitable for flats. (Figure 3.7). [81] Overall, this exceeded Dudley's recommended minimum as the room sizes advised in the 1949 Manual mostly surpassed those of Dudley.

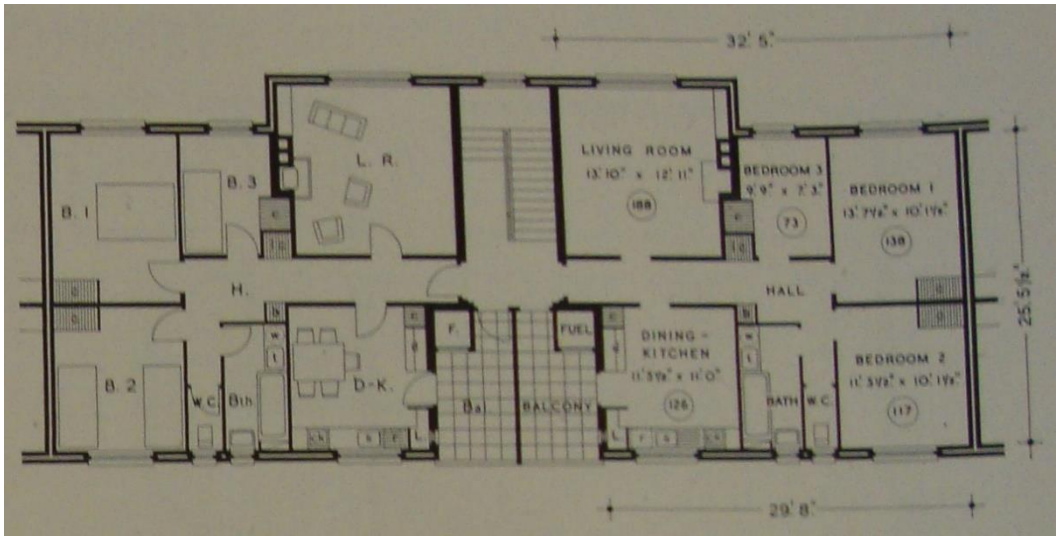

Figure 3.7: Flats in three-storey blocks - Upper floor plan. 850 square feet to accommodate five persons. Source: *Housing Manual 1949* (1949), 89.

[76] Ibid, 44, 45.
[77] *Design of Dwellings*, 16.
[78] *Housing Manual 1949*, 83.
[79] *Design of Dwellings*, 39.
[80] *Housing Manual 1949*, 84.
[81] Ibid, 83, 89.

Standards in the home - facilities and equipment

As outlined previously, the Dudley Report had recommended numerous improvements in the facilities and equipment to be provided in new post-war permanent dwellings. These included advancements relative to the heating of the home, cooking facilities, the provision of constant hot water, kitchen facilities including the storage food and utensils, provision of bathroom facilities and solutions for the storage of clothing. The 1949 Manual provided advice and guidance on all these issues and in general this was either in line with that recommended by Dudley or improved upon. Facilities for the heating of the home was one of the areas in which the 1949 Manual exceeded that proposed by Dudley. With a focus on the provision of maximum fuel efficiency, it advised that the main space and water heating should be provided by a solid fuel appliance of the modern type, and which met 'minimum performance standards.' [82] Several suggestions were made as to the type of 'modern' appliances available. [83] This was an improvement on Dudley that, in respect of space heating, had recommended an open fire in the living room and in one of the bedrooms if desired. [84] Interestingly, the 1949 Manual also advocated consideration of the use of 'district heating systems' for the provision of space and hot water heating in blocks of flats, which Labour's Housing and Town Planning Sub-Committee had previously proposed but upon which Dudley had not expressed a view. [85] In terms of cooking facilities, like Dudley the 1949 Manual recommended the use of gas or electric

[82] Ibid, 94.
[83] Ibid, 95.
[84] *Design of Dwellings*, 40.
[85] *Housing Manual 1949*, 97; LHASC, Research Series R.D. 1-30, 1941, 'Memorandum on some of the problems of post-war reconstruction and suggested methods for their solution', R.D.R 14/October 1941,4.

appliances, except in rural areas and in some areas where solid fuel was preferred.[86] Indeed, in respect of facilities for heating and cooking the 1949 Manual advanced a strong case for 'housing authorities' to ensure that improved types of appliances were installed in every new dwelling. [87] For the provision of clothes washing, it concurred with Dudley, proposing the installation of a wash-boiler in all houses, heated by solid fuel, gas or electricity. [88]

More generally, the provision in the kitchen of a sink with draining boards, working surfaces, plate rack, ventilated larder, double unit dresser and cupboards for the storage of food and utensils that were usually built up to ceiling height were advised.[89] In parallel with Dudley, bathroom improvements proposed the provision of hot and cold running water. The 1949 Manual advised the relocation of the bathroom to the first floor rather than off the scullery, which had been the case in houses built between the wars. Dudley's recommendation as to the size of the bath was adhered to, as too the inclusion of a heated towel rail. [90] For families of five or more persons two toilets (one in the bathroom and another usually separate and situated on the ground floor and incorporating a wash handbasin) was advised. [91] This repeated the advice contained in *Ministry of Health circular 200/45* and represented an improvement over and above that which Dudley had recommended, and furthermore, was an unprecedented luxury in working class homes.[92] There were other advised improvements including the better illumination of staircases and landings and

[86] Ibid, 95,
[87] Ibid, 94.
[88] Ibid, 98.
[89] Ibid 101 -102.
[90] Ibid, 101.
[91] Ibid, 43.
[92] The 'luxury' of two toilets was one that was insisted upon by the Minister of Health, Aneurin Bevan. Indeed, Hugh Dalton, Bevan's successor as Housing Minister in 1951, called Bevan 'a tremendous Tory' on his insistence upon two toilets. See Hugh Dalton, *High Tide and After* (London, 1962), 358.

replicating Dudley, increased wardrobe space that should include a hat shelf and a rod for the hanging of clothes. A linen cupboard was considered essential in all dwellings. [93] The improved provision of electrical socket outlets throughout the home was recommended, but the overall number proposed appears inadequate given the increasing usage of electrical appliances and utensils. In the kitchen, for example, the provision of only two such outlets were advised. [94] However, on this issue the 1949 Manual provided a small advance on that proposed by Dudley that had advised only the provision of auxiliary electric or gas points in all habitable rooms. [95] A significantly important facility upon which the 1949 Manual opined was that of the provision of lifts in flats and maisonettes. [96] It advised the necessity of lifts in all blocks where the entrance to the top dwelling is three or more storeys above the ground floor level. It further viewed that to make full use of lifts, blocks should not be less than five storeys high. This echoed the advice of Dudley that had, in addition, raised alarm about their cost and abuse by some tenants. [97]

Community Standards - Neighbourhood Planning

The Dudley Report had attributed much of the bad planning and design of housing estates to the reluctance of local authorities and private builders to utilise the services of professional architects and recommended that local authorities employ a trained architect for their housing schemes. This was echoed in the 1949 Manual, that further advised that an architect be also responsible for layout as well as design. [98] Dudley had also given succour to the idea of neighbourhood planning, which it described as

[93] *Housing Manual 1949*, 102.
[94] Ibid, 99.
[95] *Design of Dwellings*, 40.
[96] *Housing Manual 1949*, 82.
[97] *Design of Dwellings*, 20.
[98] *Housing Manual, 1949*, 13.

a new concept of planning that involved the creation of independent or semi-independent mixed social communities provided with all the industrial, social, and other amenities on which life depends. [99] In its examination of the concept, the Town and Country Planning Study Group that accompanied Dudley championed the idea of the neighbourhood unit and mixed communities as a practical means of putting the concept into practice. A neighbourhood unit, the study group opined, should comprise not more than 10,000 people, contain open spaces, safe pedestrian ways, primary and nursery schools, and shops within a quarter-of-mile walking distance. [100] Within the neighbourhood unit, the provision of a variety of dwellings was considered necessary to ensure the make-up of the neighbourhood comprised several minor groups of development and kinds of dwellings. [101]

Dudley's embrace of neighbourhood planning and its practical implementation by means of the neighbourhood unit and mixed communities, was fortified by way of advice to local authorities and housing providers in the 1949 Manual, that provided clarity relative to the concept. [102] In this respect, the 1949 Manual advised that such provision would usually take the form of either, infilling of existing sporadic development; large or small extensions to existing built up areas or as redevelopment areas. An example was provided in what the 1949 Manual described as the development of 'a new self-contained neighbourhood' located in the outer area of an existing built-up area (Figure 3.8). Such a neighbourhood, it was advised, 'should contain a neighbourhood centre consisting of the necessary public buildings and the main shopping area, and a series of interrelated neighbourhood groups containing

[99] *Design of Dwellings*, 9, 58 – 63, 73-74.
[100] Ibid, 58 – 59.
[101] Ibid, 61.
[102] *Housing Manual 1949*, 14 – 25.

various types of dwellings, local open spaces and perhaps small shopping centres.'[103] The 1949 Manual also set out guidance on the provision of houses for higher income groups, 'to meet the needs of all sections of the community and to ensure a properly balanced pool of accommodation.' [104] In essence, this represented a neighbourhood unit and mixed community as proposed by the Town and Country Planning Study Group that accompanied Dudley.

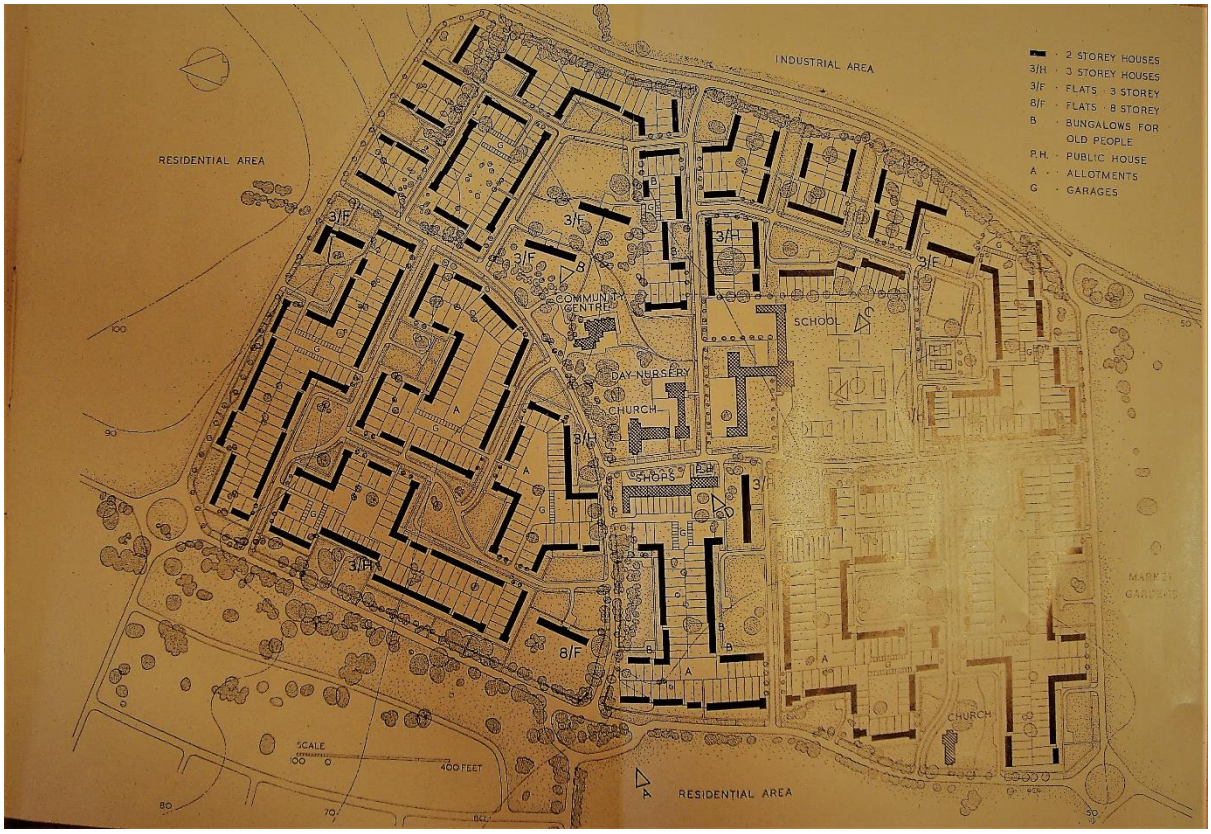

Figure 3.8: Outer Ring Development - A study for the layout of a new residential area. Source: *Housing Manual 1949*, (Fig.4).

[103] Ibid, *16*.
[104] Ibid, 49; In early 1946 Bevan came into conflict with the Board of Trade over the provision of larger houses for managers and the issuing of licences by local authorities to facilitate such. An agreement was eventually reached, but not without great angst relative to both the action required should local authorities refuse to issue licences, and the increased amount of building materials required for such houses during a period of severe shortages. See: TNA, PRO: HLG 104 /5, Letter, Cripps to Bevan, 2 January 1946; Evelyn Sharp to Sir John Wrigley, 9 January 1946; Sharp to Wrigley, 28 January 1946; Sharp to Kerwood, 26 February 1946; Sharp to Summers, 25 March 1946; Minutes of meeting between official from Ministry of Health and Ministry of Works, 26 July 1946.

Sites for small scale development, the 1949 Manual advised, should be selected adjoining or surrounding an existing nucleus: cautioning against the creation of a new estate not large enough to justify social and educational facilities of its own and yet isolated from such facilities. [105] Crucially, the 1949 Manual, whilst appreciating that the creation of a new community was often the 'simplest and most attractive task', underlined the need to remedy the 'deficiencies of existing developments', a view it shared with Dudley. [106] In terms of density standards, the 1949 Manual, in its elucidation of Dudley's criticism of the 'too rigid interpretation of density zoning', advised a change to the measure of net density. This, it opined should comprise the number of habitable rooms per acre to be arrived at by way of an estimated occupancy rate based on persons per habitable room. [107] Integrally linked to the advice on net densities was the provision of major open space in redevelopment areas. This, the 1949 Manual advised should not be less than four acres per one-thousand persons. Furthermore, a minimum of an additional one acre per one-thousand persons should, it was advised, be in the form of local open space or greens within the residential area.[108]

The Town and Country Planning Act 1947

It is also the case that the concept of neighbourhood planning was advanced by way of the new planning regime brought in by the *Town and Country Planning Act 1947*. The 1947 Act required every planning authority to prepare a Development Plan to show all proposed residential areas with their density, main street framework, relation to shopping and industrial areas and the stages by which they were to be developed

[105] Ibid, 16.
[106] Ibid, 15.
[107] Ibid, 18 – 19.
[108] Ibid 17 – 18.

or redeveloped. This was all clearly explained in the 1949 Manual together with both an acknowledgement that the preparation of the Development Plan would take a considerable time to complete and an expectation that in the interim period close contact should be maintained between the planning authority and the housing authority to enable agreement to be secured at an early stage on sites deemed suitable for housing purposes. [109] In many respects, the concept of neighbourhood planning symbolised the order and rigour of the new planning regime brought about by the 1947 Act and in its practical implementation the 'neighbourhood unit' became a standard feature of many local government planning authority Development Plans when they were initially published in the early 1950s. [110] Furthermore, there was an expectation that Dudley's aspiration for the creation of 'socially balanced' communities should be considered by planning authorities when drawing up their Development Plans. In advice published to assist authorities in the production of such plans, it was stated:

> It has been more and more realised that in order to be happy, healthy and productive a community needs to be composed of groups which not only possess social and economic qualities of their own but are also related to each other in such a way as to preserve balance and efficiency in the larger units so formed. [111]

This statement very much corresponds to Dudley's objective, advanced by the Town and Country Planning Study Group. [112]

[109] Ibid, 16.
[110] It was a provision of the *Town and Country Planning Act 1947* that local planning authorities (County Councils and County Borough Councils) were required to submit their first Development Plans to the Minister of Town and Country Planning by 1 July 1951.
[111] B.J. Collins, *Development Plans Explained* (London,1951), 20.
[112] *Design of Dwellings*, 61.

Three examples of post-war neighbourhood planning

The practical construction of neighbourhood units as described in the 1949 Manual was in fact commenced well before its publication. Indeed, its predecessor document, the 1944 Manual had already set out comprehensive advice on the development of neighbourhoods, including layout, density, variety of house types and community facilities. [113] Therefore, when housebuilding recommenced after the Second World War, many of the housing schemes that were abruptly halted in 1939, resumed in the image of neighbourhood units. The following represents three examples, carried out in different settings.

Sheldon Estate, Birmingham

In Birmingham, for example, the Sheldon estate, that had been started before the war with a plan to accommodate 44,000 people, recommenced with a plan to create four neighbourhood units each containing approximately 10,000 inhabitants (Figure 3.9). Planned to be reasonably 'self-contained', each neighbourhood was so devised not to be split by any railway or main road. Each unit was designed to have its own neighbourhood centre consisting of a shopping centre, schools, churches, library, welfare centre, doctors' and midwives' homes, public houses, social and communal centres within ten-minutes-walk of any part of the neighbourhood. The estate was planned generally to a density of ten to twelve houses per acre with a small area developed with larger houses at a density of six to ten houses per acre. A portion of the neighbourhood was developed with open forecourts along the road providing continuous grassed spaces between roads and buildings to avoid the monotony of small timber fences. The elevations of the houses varied considerably, with different

[113] Ministry of Health, Ministry of Works, *Housing Manual 1944*, London, HMSO, 1944, 11-17.

colours and types of walling and roofing, planned to add to the variety of the vernacular. The houses constructed were of various sizes, ranging from two to five bedrooms and were planned to incorporate the latest development in house design and in the words of the City Engineer and Surveyor of Birmingham, ‘suitable for varying income groups to produce a balanced community.’ [114]

Figure 3.9: Layout of Neighbourhood 'C' Sheldon, Birmingham. Source: Gale, *Modern Housing Estates*, (1949), 225.

Stevenage

Later, neighbourhood planning was furthered by way of the *New Towns Act 1946*. The purpose of the 1946 Act was to provide for the creation of new towns through the

[114] Stanley Gale, *Modern Housing Estates* (London, 1949), 223 – 224.

agency of development corporations that were established and financed by the government. There was much opposition locally to new towns. In Stevenage, the first of such planned, progress in building was very slow in the early years, indeed the first houses were not begun until 1949, almost three years after the official designation. There was similar opposition at Crawley and Hemel Hempstead, designated a few months later, but it was particularly strong at Stevenage and delayed the start of construction there. The greatest early progress was made in Hemel Hempstead. When the construction of houses eventually started there in April 1949, progress was rapid, so by the end of 1953 some 3,861 houses had been completed, at that time, more than any other new town. [115]

New towns were planned to comprise a series of neighbourhood units. In Stevenage, planned initially for a population of 60,000 inhabitants, the six neighbourhood units each comprising approximately 10,000 people, were grouped in a semi-circle around the main town centre (Figure 3.10). Each neighbourhood was planned to contain a shopping centre, primary school, church, public-house and other community facilities. All the principal roads were planned to run between the neighbourhoods, so that young children attending primary school did not have to cross a main road on their way to and from school. In the Bedwell neighbourhood, the first to be completed, the layout was irregular with curved roads and the spaces at the rear of the houses formed into common gardens like village greens, linked with each other by footpaths. [116] Most of the houses built at Stevenage in its early stages of development were principally the two-storey type containing two and three bedrooms, although a minority of other types were included. Indeed, one of the first parts to be built was an experiment in high

[115] Frederic J. Osborn and Arnold Whittick, *New Towns: Their Origins, Achievements and Progress* (London, 1977), 155.
[116] Ibid, 125.

density development that included three and four storey flats and one seven storey block containing 54 flats, built near the town centre to accommodate middle-class tenants.[117]

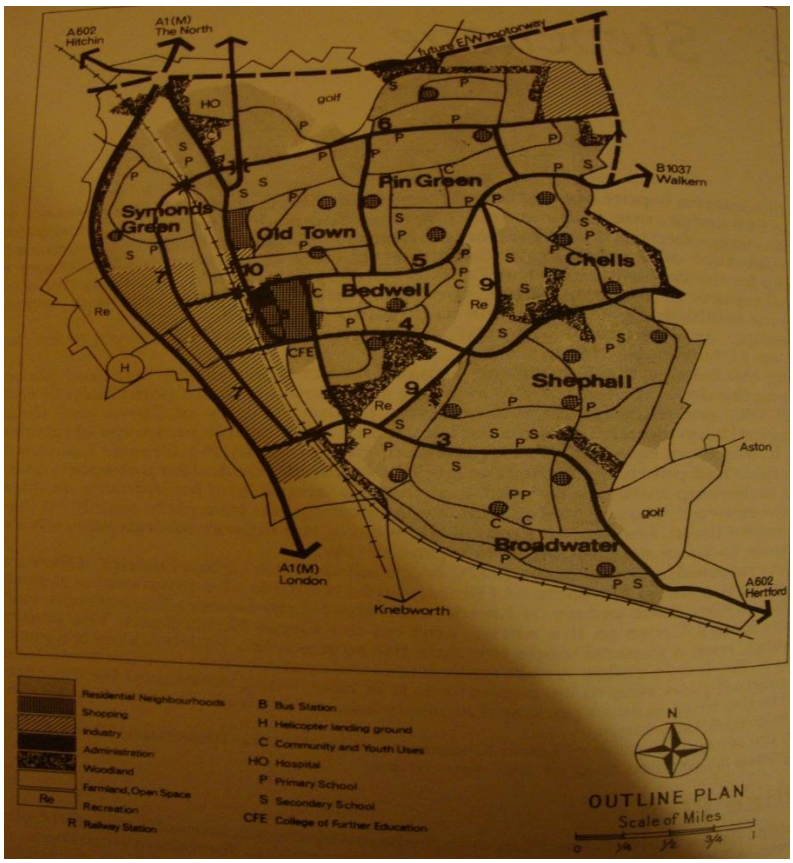

Figure 3.10: Stevenage - Outline Plan. Source: Osborne and Whittick, *New Towns*, (1977), 118.

Lansbury Estate, Stepney and Poplar, London

Neighbourhood planning was also a feature of early post-war inner-city re-development. This was famously demonstrated in plans adopted in 1947 for the rebuilding of 1,500 acres of land at Stepney and Poplar in London's east end (Figure 3.11). This area had suffered greatly during the Second World War with about 24 per cent of the buildings in the area having been destroyed or seriously damaged by

[117] Ibid, 121 – 124.

enemy action. The Stepney and Poplar Reconstruction Area as the 1947 designation became formally known, was planned to comprise eleven neighbourhood units with each neighbourhood planned to contain its own schools, public buildings, shops, and open spaces. Its origins can be traced back to the *County of London Plan 1943* that was itself commissioned by the London County Council (LCC) and prepared by J.H. Forshaw and Patrick Abercrombie, one of the leading experts on town planning. [118] Notably, the *County of London Plan 1943* had commended both the 'urban cooperation' and 'sturdy individualism' of London's east end communities, features that characterised the concept of neighbourhood planning. [119]

The most famous of the eleven neighbourhoods planned for Stepney and Poplar was that of 'Neighbourhood 9', the Lansbury Estate, named after the Labour Party politician George Lansbury, who had represented Poplar at both local and national level for many years. With approximately 124 acres, Lansbury's first phase, consisting of 37.5 acres, was designated to form the basis of the Live Architecture Exhibition during the Festival of Britain in 1951. This represented an early attempt to show new planning and architecture 'within its old setting of depression and squalor.' [120] The idea was to create a 'live' exhibition that used real building projects to display the latest ideas in architecture, town planning and building science, and which would leave behind permanent and useful structures at the end of the festival. As a result, compulsory purchase powers were obtained to expedite the completion of phase one of the Lansbury neighbourhood by 31 December 1951.

[118] J.H. Forshaw and Patrick Abercrombie, *County of London Plan 1943*, (London:1943).
[119] Ibid, 4.
[120] Wilfred Burns, *New Towns for Old: The technique of urban renewal* (London, 1963), 50.

In line with neighbourhood unit principles, Lansbury comprised of different types of development, consisting of housing, a shopping centre, a marketplace, schools, churches, church hall and a small amenity park. The houses and flats were grouped into closes and squares of different sizes and linked with open and landscaped land to add visual interest and distinct character to the neighbourhood. Notably, London stock bricks and purple-grey slates were used both to achieve a level of unity across the architecture of the neighbourhood and because these were the traditional materials used in that part of Poplar. Although a victim of the economic constraints of the period and not without its critics when completed, Lansbury combined well-designed houses and low-rise flats of differing sizes mixed with shops, markets, and public transport routes.

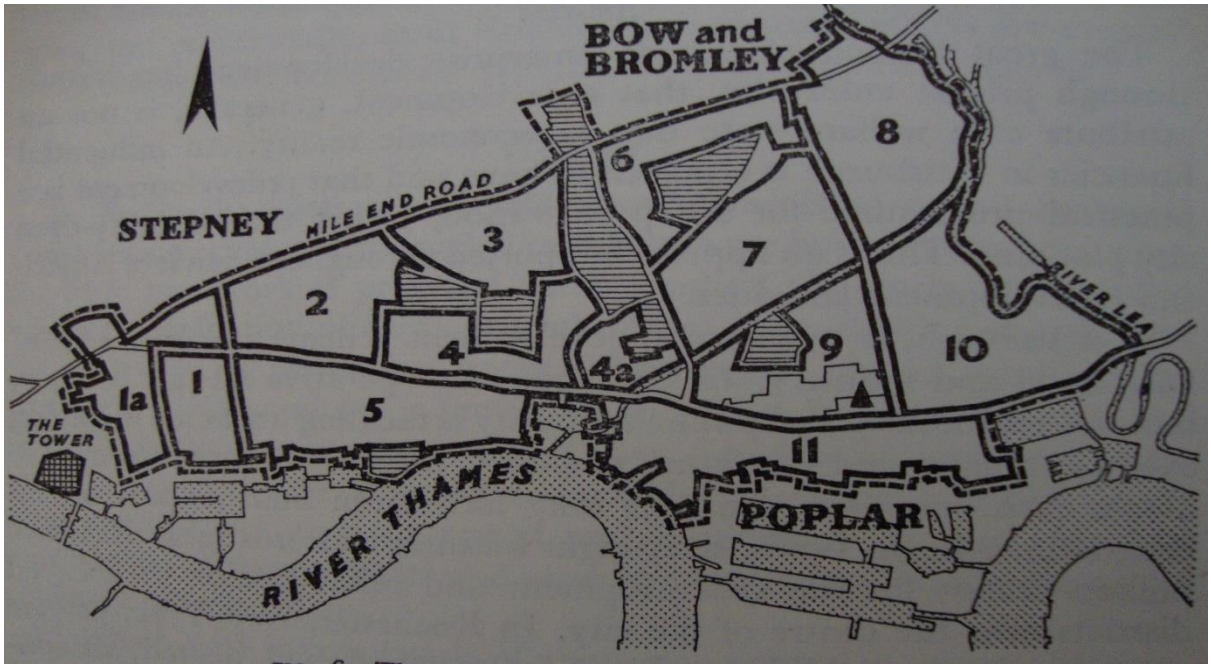

Figure 3.11: The outline plan for Stepney-Poplar (Neighbourhood 9 denotes the Lansbury Estate). Source: Burns, *New Towns for Old* (1963), 48.

Bevan's influence on housing standards

Labour's desire to raise housing standards was very much driven and inspired by Aneurin Bevan himself. It can be argued that Bevan had an ideologically driven conviction that in the end society is malleable. He had a compelling vision for council housing, seeing it as permanent and universal and this was underpinned by his belief that the role of the state is to improve the quality of life and the wellbeing of its citizens through planning and policy. Bevan was ever conscious of the poor housing into which the working-class families of Tredegar, his hometown, had been cramped and had had to endure. Bevan's aim was the construction of good quality, modern council housing built to last. For Bevan, post-war council housing represented much more than bricks and mortar. Indeed, Bevan believed strongly that council housing should be of such a high standard as to be attractive as a form of housing tenure for all social classes. To this end, Bevan was clear that the mere quantity of new houses built was an insufficient measure. In the longer term, the measure that mattered most to Bevan was one of quality. [121] Although, during his time as Minister of Health, he came under tremendous pressure to do so, Bevan resisted attempts to lower the specification of council housing in order that more houses of a lower standard might be built more quickly. Bevan was unequivocal, Labour was not prepared to sacrifice long-term views (about the need to build houses of a high standard) to short-term needs.[122] Indeed, Bevan saw the reduction of housing standards to be:

> [T]he cowards' way out (…) if we wait a little longer, that will be far better than doing ugly things now and regretting them for the rest of our lives. [123]

[121] LHASC, The Labour Party, *Annual Report 1947*, 191 – 194.
[122] LHASC, Research Series R.D. 150-194, 1948-49, 'Notes on the Housing Programme by Minister of Health', R.D. 164/October 1948.
[123] Foot, *Bevan*, 80

Bevan further opined:

> While we shall be judged for a year or two by the number of houses we build (…) we shall be judged in ten years by the type of houses we build. [124]

In addition, Bevan was a strident advocate of improved community standards. [125] His espoused belief in the creation of what he called 'mixed communities', where the professional person lived in the same neighbourhood as the manual worker is testament to this. Bevan's vision of what he called a modern housing 'township' was that it should comprise the doctor, the grocer, the butcher, and farm labourer. [126] Bevan believed that such a social mix was essential for the full life of the citizen, what he called 'a necessary biological background for modern life (…) leading to the enrichment of every member of the community.' [127] Crucially, Bevan was adamant that Labour's new housing developments should not merely be housing for the poor. Furthermore, he took the view that the 'segregation of the different income groups, [was] (…) a wholly evil thing.' [128] Bevan, whose language, and narrative clearly echoes the welfare state ideology, set out his belief that Britain's new council housing should comprise houses of good architectural design, and as such many housing schemes built during the period exemplified this. What he called 'the aesthetic of good modern architecture' could only be achieved in a township which had the most 'variegated' kind of housing in it. [129] This could only be realised, Bevan believed, if communities comprised not only a social mix, but also catered for different family types, including

[124] LHASC, The Labour Party, *Annual Report 1947*, 191 -194.
[125] Bevan's views on community standards were likely heavily influenced by Thomas Sharp, town planner and writer on the built environment. See: Thomas Sharp, *Town Planning* (Harmondsworth, 1940), 85.
[126] *Parliamentary Debates* (Commons), 462, 16 March 1949, 2121 – 231.
[127] Ibid.
[128] Boughton, *Municipal Dreams*, 96
[129] *Parliamentary Debates* (Commons), 462, 16 March 1949, 2126.

housing for single persons and older people. He extolled the virtues of what he described as 'the living tapestry of a mixed community.' [130]

However, when Bevan was succeeded by Hugh Dalton in the cabinet reshuffle of January 1951, that saw Bevan moved to the Ministry of Labour and Dalton heading a new Ministry of Local Government and Planning (with housing included within its responsibilities), quality was compromised in favour of quantity. [131] Dalton did relax some of the standards which Bevan had imposed. In fact, the formal diminution of housing standards can be traced back to Local Government and Planning *Circular 38/51*, issued on 28 April 1951. [132] In short, Dalton decided to leave it to the discretion of individual Local Authorities to dispense with the minimum requirement of 900 square feet for a three-bedroom house for five persons, provided that the individual rooms and the total amount of living space did not fall below the standards set out in the 1949 Manual. Dalton also gave Local Authorities discretion to decide whether to provide a second toilet in houses with three bedrooms. In essence, Dalton's strategy as housing minister was to 'push housing along' by cheapening and simplifying design, and to press ahead with, amongst other things, the New Towns programme, to show maximum results before an election. [133] However, Dalton did commit to continuing Bevan's policy of building houses of types and sizes to meet the needs of individual districts and sections of the community. He also maintained the ratio of one in five houses built by the private sector. [134]

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[130] *Parliamentary Debates* (Commons), 462, 16 March 1949, 2127.
[131] However, Hugh Dalton undoubtedly injected a good deal of new energy into the housing programme in 1951 and the construction of new permanent housing continued at a busy pace. See Morgan*, Labour,* 169.
[132] LRO, 352 ARC/67, Ministry of Health Circulars, 1 Nov 1950 to 8 Dec 1952, Ministry of Local Government and Planning *Circular 38/51*, 28 April 1951.
[133] Ben Pimlott, *Hugh Dalton* (London, 1985), 595.
[134] British Library of Political and Economic Science, London (BLPES), DALTON / 2/9/20 (1), Speeches and Papers 1951.

Conclusions

The purpose of this chapter has been to establish how successful Labour's housing policy was relative to qualitative performance. This was done by way of an analysis of the housing standards planned alongside those achieved in terms of space, facilities and the equipment provided in the dwellings themselves and that relative to community standards, specifically neighbourhood planning and the development of neighbourhood units and mixed communities. A focus on these standards was considered appropriate given their direct impact on the inhabitants of the homes and communities constructed during the period. In addition, they are measurable in the context of the analysis offered.

The analysis juxtaposed the advice contained in the *Housing Manual 1949*, the official Ministry of Health document that formalised guidance to local authorities as to the minimum housing and community standards the government expected to be implement (standards achieved), against that recommended in the Dudley Report of 1944 that represented the official recommendations of the Ministry of Health's Central Housing Advisory Committee on post-war housing standards (standards planned). It also assessed the impact on neighbourhood planning of the *Town and Country Planning Act 1947* and provided a practical example of such facilitated by the *New Towns Act 1946*.

The analysis has confirmed that the standards of the new permanent dwellings constructed during the period 1945 to 1951, in terms of the space, facilities and equipment represented a marked improvement on interwar standards generally and particularly those of the 1930s. In fact, the standards achieved predominantly equalled, and in some cases exceeded the minimum standards recommended in the

Dudley Report. Although some standards were relaxed in April 1951 during Dalton's very short tenure as Housing Minister, it is argued that this had only a very minimal effect. Overall, the improved standards represent a substantial achievement. The most striking advance was that relative to space. The 900 square feet recommended by Dudley for a three-bedroom dwelling for five persons, that in-itself represented a substantial increase on the size of such dwellings built during the mid to late 1930s, was by 1949 more than 100 square feet in excess of Dudley's recommended minimum. It is, however, noteworthy that Dudley's 900 square feet minimum, represented little advance on Tudor Walters' advice of 1918, that was significantly watered down during the interwar period.

The overall increase in space in two-storey houses resulted in an enlargement of living space on the ground floor, and space devoted to the bedrooms upstairs. This not only met one of Labour's own policy demands developed during wartime, but it also gave a nod to Dudley's view that living accommodation in houses built during the interwar period was too cramped and ill-adapted to 'present ways of living.' The reconfiguration of the ground floor space (in two-storey houses) by way of the three alternative models advised in the 1949 Manual afforded more appropriate accommodation for multiple and individual function, something that had been lacking in houses built between the wars. It is notable though, that at 50 to 70 square feet, the space committed to outbuildings in the 1949 Manual was less than the minimum 70 square feet advised by Dudley. On outbuildings, Dudley's minimum became the maximum advised by the 1949 Manual.

It is significant too that in flats, space standards were improved, marginally exceeding that which Dudley had recommended as a minimum. In terms of living space in flats, this was more generous and better configured than that which had been the case

between the wars. Indeed, flats were held to require the same level of room space as that of traditional houses. This not only represented a substantial improvement on the space standards in the flats built during the 1930s, but also signalled greater acceptance of flats as suitable family accommodation. The requirement to provide passenger lifts in all blocks of flats where the entrance to the dwelling was three or more storeys above the ground floor level, resulted in the main to the construction of three storey flats, to save on cost.

Aside from space standards, that of the facilities and equipment provided in the home represented a marked advance on that which had pertained in dwellings built between the wars. Indeed, numerous of the improvements made addressed one of Dudley's central points about the need to review the standards advocated by Tudor Walters in 1918. Dudley had claimed that 'changes in our national habits and way of life' necessitated improved standards. Such changes in 'habits' and 'way of life' had, of course, driven the need to reconfigure the accommodation itself, but this had also propelled demand for improved facilities and equipment in the home. In this respect, the installation of more efficient and significantly more fuel-efficient systems to heat the home was a substantial improvement on the open fires and old-fashioned ranges that they replaced. The elimination of open fires and ranges necessitated improved equipment for cooking provision and, in areas where gas and electricity were available, this was provided in the form of gas or electric cookers. Undoubtedly, such improvements coupled with moving the bathroom upstairs, the provision of two toilets in three-bedroom houses built to accommodate five persons or more, enhanced storage facilities for food and kitchen utensils and cupboards specially designed to accommodate clothes and other personal items represented a major advance, indeed luxury, on what many families had been used to previously. Nevertheless, such

improvements did not represent a panacea. In some specific respects they were not sufficiently foresighted, but collectively they represented a major improvement on the standards of space, facilities and equipment provided in houses built before the start of the Second World War.

In terms of neighbourhood planning and the development of neighbourhood units the analysis has revealed the 1949 Manual to be at one with the Dudley Report. Significantly, the 1949 Manual provided an example of how such schemes should be planned, including detailed advice on the calculation of net density standards and the provision of open space. Local authorities also were encouraged to appoint a professional architect with responsibility for layout as well as design. Furthermore, the analysis has shown that on the whole, the concept of neighbourhood units and mixed communities was in many cases put into practice in a variety of settings, including inner-city, outer areas and in the development of New Towns. This challenges the view of some authors who have, on the one hand commended the Labour governments' commitment to the concept as representing good practice, but on the other have doubted the prevalence of its implementation between 1945 and 1951. Their rationale here being that the overwhelming need to build three-bedroom houses negated its practical implementation. The analysis has revealed that from a very early point following the ending of hostilities in Europe in May 1945, concerted efforts were made by some local authorities to remodel major housing projects, halted in 1939, in the shape of neighbourhood units and mixed communities. This was aptly demonstrated at Sheldon, Birmingham, where four neighbourhood units were designed comprising houses of various sizes and incorporating the latest development in house design. The houses built by the New Town Development Corporation at Stevenage were initially planned to contain six neighbourhood units. In its early stages of development most

were two-storey type housing containing two and three bedrooms, although a minority of other house types were included. In terms of layout, the houses and flats built in the first phase of the Lansbury estate in London's east end were grouped into closes and squares of different sizes and linked with open and landscaped land to add visual interest and distinct character to the neighbourhood. All these were undeniably hallmarks of neighbourhood planning.

To substantiate the descriptive analysis, Table 3.3 sets out the quantitative, though inter-subjective pre-post analysis relative to qualitative performance. This provides a visual assessment of the similarity/difference between outcomes recommended and what was achieved using a five-point weighting scale as follows: 0 = nothing achieved; 1 = small results (some achievement); 2 = more of less equality in recommendations achieved and not achieved; 3 = substantial achievements but with some failures and 4 = all recommendations achieved. In terms of qualitative performance, the outcomes measured comprise (a) standards of space in the home; (b) standards of facilities and equipment provided in the home; (c) The practical implementation of the concept of neighbourhood planning. Such outcomes are considered measurable relative to standards recommended and standards achieved. Hence, a score of 1 in terms of standards of space in the home would denote 25 per cent of recommended outcome achieved, whereas a score of 4 would represent 100 per cent achievement. The three 'quality' criteria combined can thus produce a minimum score of 3 x 0 = 0 (nothing achieved) and a maximum score of 3 x 4 = 12 (everything successfully achieved), with all scores in between.

Assessment criteria	Recommended or planned	Achieved	Score
Standards of space in the home	* Dudley recommended a minimum of 900 square feet in a three-bedroom dwelling. * In flats, room sizes same as in houses for the same number of occupants. * Outbuildings should comprise a minimum of 70 square feet.	* 1949 Manual 900 – 950 square feet for standard and 1,030 square feet in larger dwellings. * Re flats 1949 Manual followed Dudley Report. Room sizes achieved normally larger. * Re outbuildings 1949 Manual advised between 50 and 70 square feet. * In April 1951 Dalton relaxed minimum overall space standard, provided that total amount of living space not compromised.	**3.5**
Standards of facilities and equipment in the home	* Dudley recommended improvements re heating and cooking facilities, kitchen storage, bathroom facilities and the provision of two toilets in four-bedroom houses.	* All recommendations incorporated in the 1949 Manual * Often exceeded, like two toilets in larger three-bedroom houses to accommodate five persons. (Dalton relaxed this requirement in April 1951).	**3.5**
Neighbourhood Planning	* Dudley championed neighbourhood units and mixed communities, with easily accessible community facilities and amenities and houses of various types and sizes.	* The 1949 Manual followed Dudley in championing creation of neighbourhood units and gave clarity re layout, structure, facilities, and dwelling types. * The 1949 Manual gave guidance on houses for higher income groups to meet the needs of all sections of the community and ensure a properly balanced pool of accommodation. * The *Town and Country Planning Act 1947* and the *New Towns Act 1946* fortified the concept of neighbourhood development. * Several developments were modelled on the neighbourhood unit and mixed communities' concept.	**2**
Total Score			**9**

Table 3.3: **Pre-post analysis – Qualitative Performance**. Key: 0 = nothing achieved; 1 = small results (some achievement); 2 = more or less equality in plans achieved and not achieved; 3 = substantial achievements but with some failures and 4 = all plans achieved.

The qualitative outcome is a score of nine out of a maximum score of twelve. A score of 3.5 out of a maximum of four was calculated on the basis that all recommended space standards were achieved except for that relative to outbuildings. It also denotes a recognition of the government's relaxation of some qualitative standards in April 1951. In terms of facilities and equipment provided in the home, a score of 3.5 out of a maximum four was deemed appropriate. Whilst all recommended standards in this

category were met and, in some cases exceeded, the score takes into account the government's relaxation of some qualitative standards in April 1951. As regards neighbourhood planning, the computation of a score is more difficult to assess, as the duration of projects might have taken beyond the period of analysis. In several settings the practical implementation of neighbourhood units and mixed development was commenced, and in some cases, the initial phases of such schemes were completed. Therefore, a score of two out of a possible four is considered appropriate. This challenges the view of some authors who have doubted the prevalence of the practical implementation of neighbourhood units and mixed communities during the period 1945 to 1951.

The overall score of nine out of a maximum of twelve correlates with the descriptive analysis that Labour's housing achievement relative to standards of space, facilities, and equipment in the home and in respect of community standards (neighbourhood planning) represents a substantial achievement in the area of qualitative performance.

CHAPTER FOUR: The Local Dimension - Liverpool

Introduction

So far, this study has established that Labour's housing policy intentions were driven by an ideology based around welfare state notions and that in terms of both quantitative and qualitative performance, a substantial achievement was accomplished. This chapter will determine how Labour's housing programme was translated at the local level and ascertain if this resulted in changes to local housing policy and practice. This is done by way of an analysis of Liverpool City Council's housing strategy relative to the council's approach on matters ideological, quantitative, and qualitative, during the immediate post-war years. As such, an investigation of Liverpool's policy on both housing allocations and the fixing of municipal rents, including the city council's attitude towards rent relief, will seek to ascertain if those families most in housing need were on the one hand given priority status and on the other, able to afford to take on a council tenancy. Moreover, this affords the opportunity to investigate further the claims made by Malpass that municipal rents were generally beyond the means of the poorest households and that rent rebate schemes went into decline during the period. [1] Furthermore, an assessment of both quantitative and qualitative performance will establish to what extent plans for post-war housebuilding in the city were achieved. The chapter begins by providing some brief historical background about Liverpool and, to give context, describes housing progress in the

[1] Peter Malpass, 'The Wobbly Pillar', *Journal of Social Policy*, 32, 4, (2003,) 589 – 606; Peter Malpass, *Housing and the Welfare State: The Development of Housing Policy in Britain* (Basingstoke, 2005), 62 – 72.

city from 1919 to 1945, including the city council's approach during the 1920s and 1930s to its policy on rents and in qualifying access to municipal housing.

The aforesaid analysis is facilitated by numerous primary sources accessed chiefly at the Liverpool Record Office. These include records relative to Liverpool City Council's housing committee, the council's special sub-committee on the allocation of houses, the special advisory committee on post-war reconstruction and reports of the Medical Officer of Health. The plans and files of the City Architect and Director of Housing have been extensively utilised and have proved invaluable in providing additional detail, complementing the information contained in formal committee minutes and reports. Furthermore, this source has facilitated access to important Ministry of Health and Ministry of Local Government and Planning circulars relevant to the housing programme, that were dispatched to local council's and other housing providers during the period. Use has also been made of government papers, accessed at the Public Records Office at Kew, detailing meetings, correspondence and other interactions between Liverpool City Council and the Ministry of Health and Ministry of Town and Country Planning respectively, about the housing programme and the post-war reconstruction of the city.

The rationale for the choice of Liverpool is twofold. Firstly, Liverpool was heavily bombed during the Second World War with thousands of homes destroyed and many thousands more badly damaged. As a result, the city was faced with a severe housing crisis when the war ended. Secondly, Liverpool City Council was Conservative controlled both throughout the whole of the interwar years and right the way through 1945 to 1951 when Labour was in government. An analysis of the approach taken locally to post-war housing policy by a Conservative controlled council and whether

this diverged from that which it practiced during the interwar period, will provide new insights to the historiography and additional depth to the study.

Liverpool – A brief history

Liverpool is situated in North-West England on the north shore of the Mersey estuary, a few miles from the Irish Sea (Figure 4.1). The origins of the city date back to 1207, when King John issued letters patent advertising the establishment of a new borough called 'Livpul.' The most important factor of Liverpool's growth was the infamous slave trade, which started in 1709, the year in which the system of enclosed docks was begun by Liverpool Council. The expansion of the city in the nineteenth century was due to the Industrial Revolution. As Liverpool became the main port for England's industrial hinterland, the line of docks was continually extended while the few alternative industries declined. [2]

Figure 4.1: Location of Liverpool in North-West England.

Liverpool became a Parliamentary Borough in 1832 and by the *Municipal Reform Act 1835*, the same areas were included in the borough for administrative purposes. In

[2] Liverpool Record Office (LRO), H 338 LAN, Lancashire Industrial Development Association, *Industrial Report No. 3*., 1949, 6.

1841 Liverpool Council opened the first public baths and washhouse in the country and in 1846, it appointed the country's first Medical Officer of Health. The development of Liverpool saw the population of the city grow rapidly. In 1801, at 80,000 people, Liverpool's population was considered considerable for the time, but by 1831 it had expanded to 213,000. The intervening century saw the population of the city grow exponentially. At the 1931 census, Liverpool's population totalled 856,000, although in 1939 it was estimated that the number of inhabitants had declined by over 30,000 to 822,400. [3] During the interwar years, the decline of Britain's old export industries and world trade in general had a profound effect on Liverpool. The decline of the city's traditional industries of shipping and shipbuilding, and transport and distribution, which accounted for more than 50 per cent of Liverpool's insured workforce resulted in unemployment on a very large scale. In 1938, approximately 20 per cent of the insured population was registered unemployed. [4]

During the Second World War, Liverpool suffered greatly at the hands of the Luftwaffe. Indeed, as Britain's major Atlantic port, the twin conurbations of Liverpool and Birkenhead, start of the essential sea-lane to North America, were a major German target right from the very start of the 'blitz', suffering sixteen large attacks, eight of which ranked as full blitzes (only London had more).[5] The largest of all the Merseyside raids occurred on 28 November 1940, when 324 German bombers bombarded the area during one attack. [6] On 1 May 1941, Liverpool and the Mersey was attacked for

[3] Liverpool Record Office, Liverpool Central Library (LRO), 720 KIR/1836, *Merseyside Plan 1944* (London, HMSO,1945), 68.
[4] The National Archives (TNA): Public Records Office (PRO), HLG 79/308, Brief for the Minister's Visit, 9 April 1946, 4.
[5] The 'blitz' (a word abbreviated from the German *blitzkrieg*) is generally accepted as beginning in Britain with the first big aerial bombardment of London on 9 September 1940 and thereafter concentrating on that target until a switch to the provinces, via Coventry, on 14 November 1940 and concluding with a record assault back on London on 10 May 1941 and a final night over Birmingham on 16 May 1941.
[6] Tom Harrison*, Living through the Blitz* (London, 1976), 236.

seven successive nights, resulting in 3,000 people killed or injured and many thousands rendered homeless. [7]

When hostilities ended in 1945, the old medieval town continued to serve as the administrative centre of the city and indeed the commercial centre of Merseyside. All internal and external communications radiated from this point of the city, including the cross-river ferries, the rail and road tunnels under the Mersey and the Liverpool trams and railways. Crowded along the line of the docks lay the city's warehouses and most of its factories. Although unemployment in the city was considerably lower than it had been immediately pre-war, in January 1946, 6.3 per cent of the insured population was recorded as being out of work. [8] This was considerably higher than the 1.7 per cent recorded nationally. [9] In terms of those in work, it was reported that a high proportion were unskilled labourers, with family incomes lower than the average. [10]

Housing progress 1919 - 1945

Quantitative and qualitative performance

During the interwar years, the scope of the housing activities that local authorities were permitted to undertake was gradually increased. This began with the passing of the *Housing and Town Planning Act 1919* (hereafter referred to as the Addison Act), that gave local authorities more comprehensive powers to deal with housing problems. In the years that followed numerous other housing statutes were enacted. During this period housing activity in Liverpool was accelerated, including programmes to demolish insanitary properties in the central area of the city, the building of blocks of

[7] Winston Churchill, *The Second World War vol. III, The Grand Alliance* (London, 1950), 39.
[8] TNA:PRO, HLG 79/308, Brief for the Minister's Visit, 9 April 1946, 4.
[9] LRO, 352.07113 (72) LAN, Lancashire and Merseyside Industrial Development Association, 'A Preliminary Plan for Lancashire.' (1951).
[10] TNA:PRO, HLG 79/308, Brief for the Minister's Visit, 9 April 1946, 4.

flats in the city's inner core and suburban development of the 'garden city' type on the outskirts of the city was undertaken. [11] The erection of seventy-two dwellings, which made up part of the near 6,000 houses and flats constructed under the terms of the Addison Act marked the recommencement of municipal housebuilding in Liverpool following the end of the First World War. Further progress was made because of the *Housing Act 1923* (Chamberlain Act) which facilitated the erection of 1,500 new municipal houses and flats replacing 1,479 insanitary dwellings. The *Housing (Financial Provisions) Act 1924* (referred to hereafter as the Wheatley Act) was instrumental in the completion of over 19,500 houses and flats, and as required by the terms of the *Housing Act 1930* (Greenwood Act), Liverpool City Council submitted an ambitious programme of slum clearance to the government. Indeed, a 1931 survey on housing conditions in the city, undertaken by the University of Liverpool as part of a wider study entitled *The Social Survey of Merseyside* added weight to Liverpool's slum clearance proposals. [12] The survey established that in some areas of the city, particularly in tenement dwellings consisting of two and three rooms, overcrowding stood at 37 per cent. Liverpool's slums were subsequently described, in a survey of working-class housing conditions carried out in 1933, as the worst in the country: nauseating, revolting and sub-human. [13] The city's ambitious slum clearance programme which covered an eight-year period planned the demolition of 12,742 homes and the displacement of 64,000 persons to be rehoused in 5,000 houses on the outskirts and 10,692 flats in the central areas of Liverpool. The plan eventually

[11] See LRO, H942/721/5 RED, *Liverpool and Merseyside Official Red Book* 'Housing work in Liverpool', 1939, 1945, 1946 and 1950/51.
[12] See LRO, H309.1.UNI, *The Social Survey of Merseyside No. 1 - Housing Conditions in Liverpool 1931*; The survey, which looked principally at the proportion of families sharing a house; the proportion of families living in overcrowded conditions and the proportion of families that could afford to pay a higher rent, sampled 5,000 families, representing approximately 3.3 per cent of inhabited houses in the city.
[13] *Daily Herald*, 22 March 1933.

delivered the construction of 4,691 houses and 4,423 flats, before the intervention of the Second World War put an end to serious housebuilding in the city. [14]

Nevertheless, during the twenty-year period between 1919 and 1939, Liverpool's housing programme had been greatly augmented and expanded. Although thousands remained, progress had been made in the clearance of slum dwellings in the central areas of the city. These dwellings were replaced with blocks of walk-up flats, four and five stories high. Liverpool was one of the few local authorities in England to positively embrace multi-storey housing between the wars, inspired in the main by Lancelot Keay, the City Architect and Director of Housing. [15] In addition, the creation of vast suburban estates, both within and beyond the city boundary, consisting largely of two-storey houses had assisted in the accommodation of some inner-city slum dwellers.[16] During the interwar years Liverpool City Council was compelled to develop outside the city boundary because of the extreme paucity of land in the city itself. [17] One such development, coined 'a self-contained community' at Speke, situated on the extreme upriver boundary of the city, was at the time, albeit fallaciously, described as 'a unique undertaking among the activities of local authorities throughout the country.' [18] The land at Speke, which was acquired following the *Liverpool Corporation Act 1936*, that empowered the city council to develop industrial estates as well as housing accommodation in parallel with them, occupied an area of 853 acres, 352 acres of which were outside the city boundary. [19]

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[14] See LRO, Hq 70.9.PUB, *Liverpool Builds 1945-65*; TNA: PRO, MH10/144, Ministry of Health Circular 1866, 8 September 1939.
[15] L.H. Keay, 'Redevelopment in Central Areas in Liverpool', *RIBA Journal*, 46, 6, (1939).
[16] LRO, H711 COU, Liverpool Development Plan 1952, VIII (a) (i). By 1939, 5,838 municipal dwellings had been built beyond the city boundary.
[17] See LRO, Hq 70.9.PUB, *Liverpool Builds 1945-65*, 19.
[18] See LRO, Ho 643 CUT, Housing and Rehousing in Liverpool, n/d. By 1945, over 1,500 municipal dwellings had been erected at Speke. See LRO, H942/721/5 RED.
[19] See LRO, Hq 70.9.PUB, *Liverpool Builds 1945-65*, 19.

In total Liverpool City Council built 38,611 municipal dwellings between 1919 and 1939: 32,510 houses mainly of the three-bedroom type and 6,101 flats. Most of the municipal properties built in the early 1930s were of the non-parlour type, the council being compelled by the Ministry of Health to build such houses no larger than 760 square feet. [20] During the same period, private builders completed 26,415 dwellings in the city, mostly semi-detached houses for sale, making, with the municipal output, a total of 65,026 dwellings constructed between the wars. [21] At almost 60 per cent of the total, the proportion of dwellings built by the local municipality as against 40 per cent built locally by the private sector, contrasts starkly with the figures nationally for the same period. Indeed, at almost 69 per cent of the national total, the private sector outstripped the public sector output by more than two to one. [22] The local figures demonstrate both the reliance in Liverpool on public sector housing during the period and the languid demand in the city for private sector dwellings. Progress also had been made in terms of overall housing standards. The quality of the dwellings constructed during the period were far superior to those built prior to the onset of the First World War, although from the mid-1920s onwards space standards had witnessed a discernible decline. Furthermore, the programme of demolition of insanitary dwellings in the central area of the city, had helped raise overall housing standards. However, despite the considerable progress made, there remained in 1939 a large shortage of houses in Liverpool amounting to at least 19,000 dwellings, due in part to the unsatisfied pre-war shortage and party because of the relief of overcrowding. However, this figure belied the full extent of housing need in the city as it did not include

[20] LRO, 352 ARC/13, Ministry of Health Circular 1238, 12 January 1932.
[21] See LRO, H 942/721/5 RED, *Liverpool and Merseyside Official Red Book* 'Housing work in Liverpool'; 1939, 1945, 1946 and 1950/51; LRO, H711 COU, City of Liverpool, A Review of Housing and Planning, 1952, 27 June 1952, 33-52; LRO, Hq 720. 9. PUB, *Liverpool Builds 1945-65*.
[22] David Butler and Gareth Butler, *Twentieth Century British Political Facts 1900-2000* (Basingstoke, 2005), 356-357.

the number of houses needed to replace insanitary and worn-out properties that needed to be demolished in compliance with the relevant Housing Acts.[23].

Affordability

Although considerable progress was made in the provision of municipal housing between the wars, the issue of affordability had prevented many of the poorest households taking up a council tenancy. High rents meant that only the better off working classes could afford a council house, the cost of such housing being well beyond the means of many of those in the greatest housing need. In Liverpool in 1920, a three-bedroom parlour type house built under the subsidy provided by the Addison Act commanded a gross weekly rent of £1. [24] As the industrial slump intensified in the early 1920s even the more affluent working classes experienced difficulties in paying their rent. This led to tenants sub-letting parts of their home to meet rent payments, a situation that was initially frowned upon by the city council, but later formalised; the council seeing this as the only way to control rising rent arrears amongst its tenants.[25] As housebuilding costs reduced, the rents of houses built under the Wheatley Act were very much cheaper than Addison Act rents. By way of a policy of reducing the size of both parlour and non-parlour houses, in 1925 Liverpool's Housing Committee was able to set rents at 16s. 6d. and 13s. 3d. per week inclusive. [26] However, despite the reduction, the rent of a small non-parlour council house represented more than 25 per cent of the average weekly wage of an unskilled Liverpool labourer. [27] As such, and despite pleas from tenant groups for cheaper rents, renting from the council continued

[23] LRO, H711 HOU, Preliminary report of the City Architect and Director of Housing on Housing and Rehousing, 2 February 1944.
[24] *Liverpool Daily Post*, 29 January 1920.
[25] LRO, 352 MIN/HOU, Allocation of Houses Special Sub-Committee Minutes, 16 December 1920.
[26] LRO, 352 MIN/HOU, Finance (Housing) Sub-Committee Minutes, 19 February 1925.
[27] The average weekly wage of an unskilled Liverpool labourer was £2 10s.

to remain too expensive for many working-class families in the city. [28] In response, a policy of so called 'building down' to poorer families, advocated in 1927 by the Ministry of Health, was subsequently adopted by the city council. [29] Nevertheless, at the beginning of 1932, 40 per cent of municipal tenants in the city were recorded as being in rent arrears. [30] By June 1932, almost 1,000 tenants experiencing difficulties in paying their rent had been transferred to cheaper accommodation.[31] Furthermore, during that year Liverpool's housing allocation policy had been amended to include a clause preventing the granting of a tenancy to any applicant in receipt of public assistance, without the prior authority of the housing special allocations committee. [32] Although there had been calls both in the 1920s and 1930s for the adoption of a rent rebate scheme, the Conservative controlled council vehemently refused, both on political grounds and on the basis that such a scheme would require costly additional administration. A response typical of conservative-liberal ideology. Indeed, when the matter of introducing a rent rebate scheme was formally proposed in 1928, the Housing Committee responded by further reducing the size of non-parlour houses, rather than providing rebates to needy tenants. [33] The irony of this policy stance was that it ultimately led to a reduction in municipal housing standards in the city. In the early 1920s the council's housing allocation policy had awarded top priority to ex-servicemen with family responsibilities who were residents of Liverpool. However, the Housing Committee soon began to pay greater attention to the rent paying capacity of future tenants. By 1924 the most important criterion in the allocation of a council

[28] *Liverpool Echo*, 16 March 1927.
[29] TNA: PRO, MH10/125, Ministry of Health Circular 755, 1 January 1927.
[30] LRO, 352 MIN/HOU, Allocation of Houses Special Sub-Committee Minutes, 22 June 1932.
[31] LRO, 352 MIN/HOU, Housing Committee Minutes, 29 June 1932
[32] Ibid, 18 February 1932.
[33] Ibid, 21 June 1928.

tenancy was the applicants' ability to pay their rent. [34] Indeed, the adoption of a policy of so called 'sorting' that involved the allocation of low rent dwellings, usually of a poor qualitative standard, to poor families typified this measure. Again, this was characteristic of a conservative-liberal ideology and, was a far cry from a welfare state ideology that favoured the allocation of municipal dwellings based on housing need.

The impact of the Second World War

The Second World War only exacerbated the housing shortage in Liverpool; some 6,500 dwellings were either destroyed or damaged beyond repair during the conflict and a further 125,310 were damaged or seriously damaged by enemy action. [35] In addition, the city council had to demolish a further 2,222 dwellings in areas that had previously been designated for action under the relevant Housing Act, which tenants had evacuated because of wartime air-raids. [36] Only 575 municipal dwellings were completed in Liverpool during the Second World War, that represented a fraction of those lost or seriously damaged during the conflict. [37] Housing need was very much a problem in Liverpool at the cessation of hostilities in 1945 and was very much more acute than it had been in 1939. Compounded by the relative absence of building during the war years, the housing shortage in Liverpool had in fact reached crisis proportions. It was intensified by the very considerable damage done during the air-raids on the city. In addition, substantial arrears of maintenance in the remaining stock of dwellings and the paucity of housing land within the city environs only added to the enormous

[34] LRO, 352 MIN/HOU, Allocation of Houses Special Sub-Committee Minutes 16 September 1924.
[35] *Liverpool Daily Post*, 23 June 1954; LRO, H711 COU, City of Liverpool, A Review of Housing and Planning, 1952, 27 June 1952, 35.
[36] Ibid.
[37] LRO, H711 COU, City of Liverpool, A Review of Housing and Planning, 1952, 27 June 1952, 35.

problem to be tackled. [38] This was the backdrop to the housing position in Liverpool as the city entered the post-war period in 1945.

Quantitative performance

Preparation of post-war housing plans

In March 1943, in response to a request from the Ministry of Health, Liverpool City Council had set out details of a 'First Year's House Building Programme' in which it advised the Ministry that, in the first twelve months following the end of hostilities, a total of 5,862 dwellings would be built in the city by the local authority and 619 by private enterprise. This was, to say the least, an over ambitious target given the anticipated post-war shortage of building labour and materials and that during the interwar period, the annual average number of dwellings erected in the city both by private enterprise and the local authority at 3,239 was only half of this target. [39] However, this was followed in February 1944, by a more comprehensive plan to tackle Liverpool's post-war housing needs, authored by Lancelot Keay, the City Architect and Director of Housing, in a report submitted to the city council's Housing Committee. [40] Significantly, the report noted that the programme 'appeared to modify' the estimate sent to the Ministry of Health (in 1943) for the first year. This, it explained, was due to most of the land forming the proposed sites, situated principally on the outskirts of the city, was at that time being used chiefly for agricultural purposes. [41]

[38] Ibid.
[39] LRO, H711 HOU, Preliminary report of the City Architect and Director of Housing on housing and rehousing, 2 February 1944, 33. See also: LRO, H711 HOU, Ministry of Health Circular 2778, 4 March 1943.
[40] LRO, H711 HOU, Preliminary report of the City Architect and Director of Housing on housing and rehousing, 2 February 1944.
[41] Ibid, 34.

The 1944 plan conservatively assumed an immediate post-war housing shortage of slightly more than 32,000 dwellings, made up as set out in Figure 4.2.

Shortage in September 1939.	
Unsatisfied applicants of the interwar period	14,000
Dwellings required for the relief of overcrowding	5,000
Shortage arising since September 1939 due to various causes.	
Dwellings rendered uninhabitable by enemy action or demolished for other reasons	8,949
Dwellings which it is recommended should not be permanently repaired	3,250
New families created since 1939 requiring accommodation in the city	1,000
TOTAL	**32,199**

Figure 4.2: Estimated post-war housing shortage in Liverpool. Source: LRO, H711 HOU, Preliminary report of the City Architect and Director of Housing on housing and rehousing, 2 February 1944.

The 1944 plan optimistically set out to overcome the immediate housing shortage over a period of only five years, following the end of hostilities. This, it was considered, would constitute a tremendous challenge, particularly due to the anticipated shortage of building labour, materials, and components when the war ended. Indeed, and not unreasonably, the plan anticipated that during year one of the programme it would not be possible to complete the construction of any new permanent dwellings, as year one would necessarily be one of preparation and devoted to the early stages of construction. However, the erection of 1,000 temporary dwellings, during the first twelve months following the end of hostilities, was considered achievable. During the following four years, the immediate housing shortage would be met by the erection of 10,500 permanent dwellings in addition to, the City Architect reluctantly concluded, the

erection of a further 20,500 temporary dwellings. [42] The 1944 plan rightly conceded that the building of such large numbers of temporary houses had many disadvantages including the fact that they were almost as costly as permanent dwellings to provide, and that there was no guarantee that they could be removed at the end of their assumed life span, even if built on licence. The reliance on the provision of such substantial numbers of temporary accommodation during the first five years of the programme is likely to have been motivated by plans (at the time of the report unpublished) to develop a locally produced Liverpool Plan prefabricated bungalow. Designed by Lancelot Keay himself, the Liverpool Plan prefab constituted the narrow-fronted type that was suitable for erection on inner-city cleared bombed sites where economy in frontage space was essential. It was never put into full production. [43] The erection of such significant numbers of temporary dwellings over a short period of time would have necessitated the identification of sufficient land on which to erect such structures. This was always going to be a problem in Liverpool where the availability of housing land was in short supply. This was given only a cursory mention in the report and as such, constituted a major error of planning given the known acute dearth of available housing land in the city. [44]

In addition to planning ahead for the immediate post-war period, the 1944 blueprint looked forward to the longer term, setting out a housing programme for the city covering a period of twenty-two years following the end of the war (Table 4.1). Over this time, it was estimated that a total of 91,000 new permanent dwellings would need

[42] Ibid, 32, 34.
[43] LRO: q 643 CUT, 'Bungalows', 19 September 1945. In fact, only two experimental Liverpool Plan 'prefabs' were ever produced. The Labour government refused a licence allowing for their mass production as it was unwilling to reopen the process upon which agreement had already been reached about the types of prefabs to be used in the temporary housing programme. See *Liverpool Post*, 26 September 1945.
[44] Ibid, 36-37.

to be constructed to meet Liverpool's housing demand, built at a maximum rate of 5,000 dwellings per annum from year six of the programme. [45] The 21,500 temporary dwellings programmed for completion during the first five years of the plan, were deemed to have a maximum life span of fifteen years. A phased programme for their demolition was scheduled to commence from year sixteen of the plan, continuing over a period of seven years. [46] The proposed demolition of 21,500 temporary dwellings over a seven-year period, when concurrently undertaking a major housebuilding programme would, even in the most favourable of circumstances present immense logistical difficulties. Such a proposed course of action contemplated during such uncertain times was more than optimistic.

If viewed relative to Labour's housing policy intentions, Liverpool's plan to 'solve' the immediate housing shortage in five years following the end of the Second World War has some resonance with Labour's quantitative aspirations. As we have seen, Liverpool had gained a reputation during the interwar years for providing large numbers of municipal dwellings, and the city evidently aspired to continue along such lines when the war ended. However, Liverpool's 1944 blueprint for the number of dwellings it planned to provide during the period contrasts starkly from the Labour government's housing programme on coming into office in 1945. Labour's initial quantitative plan was more restrained, measured and despite its shortcomings, more cognisant of post-war shortages. Significantly, Labour's plan was principally based on the construction of permanent, high-quality dwellings, whilst the early years of Liverpool's 1944 strategy relied heavily on the construction of temporary bungalows,

[45] Ibid, 12, 34; The figure of 91,000 dwellings was considered an under-estimate and was calculated as follows: 32,000 – present shortage; 19,000 – replacement of dwellings already scheduled for demolition; 40,000 – replacement of dwellings likely to be scheduled for demolition during the subsequent 25 years.
[46] Ibid, 34.

that were both expensive and qualitatively inferior. Indeed, as we have seen, it was principally on this basis that the Labour government cut short the temporary housing programme. It could be said the Liverpool's plan was naïve, if not unsustainable given interwar quantitative performance, predicted post-war shortages of labour and materials and the known dearth of housing land in the city.

Year	Permanent Dwellings	Temporary Dwellings	Cumulative Total	Remarks
1	Nil	1,000	1,000	
2	1,500	2,500	5,000	
3	2,000	4,500	11,500	
4	3,000	6,500	21,000	
5	4,000	7,000	32,000	Shortage overcome
6	5,000		37,000	
7	5,000		42,000	
8	5,000		47,000	
9	5,000		52,000	
10	5,000		57,000	
11	5,000		62,000	
12	5,000		67,000	
13	5,000		72,000	
14	5,000		77,000	
15	5,000		82,000	
16	5,000	-2,500	84,500	Commencement of removal of temporary dwellings
17	5,000	-4,000	85,500	
18	5,000	-4,000	86,500	
19	5,000	-3,500	88,000	
20	5,000	-3,000	90,000	
21	3,500	-2,500	91,000	
22	2,000	-2,000	91,000	
Totals	**91,000**	**Nil**	**91,000**	

Table 4.1: Liverpool City Council - 22-year housing programme. Source: LRO, H711 HOU, Preliminary report of the City Architect and Director of Housing on housing and rehousing, 2 February 1944.

Density standards, overspill estimates and development beyond the city boundary.

It was against a backdrop of underlying tension and dispute over population density standards, overspill estimates and the development of land beyond the city boundary, that Liverpool City Council took its first steps in the drive to deliver a post-war programme of permanent housing development in the city. Prior to the end of the Second World War and during the immediate period thereafter, the Minister and officials at the Ministry of Town and Country Planning (MT&CP) were concerned about the net population density standards for Liverpool recommended in the *Merseyside Plan 1944*. [47] The plan, that had been commissioned by MT&CP itself, provided an outline for a co-ordinated Merseyside-wide strategic plan for the reconstruction and future development of the conurbation within which each constituent local authority would develop its own detailed planning schemes. In essence, MT&CP took the view that the densities recommended in the plan for Liverpool were too high, particularly those proposed for the central area of the city, that ranged from 184 persons per acre in what was coined a 'Riverside Zone' to 136 persons in an 'Inner Zone'. [48]

A further consequence of the dispute over population densities meant also that the MT&CP was at variance with the estimate in the plan of the overspill of population that would result from the redevelopment of the older urban areas of the city. This was

[47] LRO, 720 KIR/1836, *Merseyside Plan 1944* by F. Longstreth Thompson, (London, HMSO, 1945); Net densities denotes the number of dwellings or persons accommodated to the acre on the portion of any development occupied solely by dwellings, including gardens and all access roads. Gross densities are the number of dwellings or persons accommodated to the acre over the whole of any development, including dwellings, open spaces, schools, community buildings, industrial buildings, roads, etc.

[48] LRO, 720 KIR/1836, *Merseyside Plan 1944;* TNA:PRO, HLG 79/308, Merseyside Plan 1944: The case for its review and amendment, 3 November 1945; TNA:PRO, HLG 79/308, The Merseyside Plan (n/d); Central Merseyside, 1 January 1947.

considerably less than the estimates of MT&CP and was not, in the view of the Ministry, distributed over a wide enough area. [49] These issues needed to be resolved to facilitate the comprehensive redevelopment of central area sites and the development of land outside the city boundary. They also impacted on the city's housing quota allocation from the Ministry of Health. Furthermore, a long-running deadlock between Liverpool City Council and Lancashire County Council over both the completion of the interwar housing development at Speke and the proposed construction of a township at Kirkby, in both cases on land owned by the city council but outside the city boundary, seriously threatened to further compromise Liverpool's housebuilding aspirations. As the planning authority for more than a third of the land at Speke (352 acres) and for the entirety of that at Kirkby, Lancashire County Council was unwilling to approve Liverpool's plans. [50]

It took until late January 1949 before the limit of difference between the views of the city officials, MT&CP and the Ministry of Health over population densities was so narrowed that a sufficient level of agreement was able to be reached.[51] The agreement on what was termed 'interim net densities' allowed for the calculation of estimates for population overspill of 195,000 persons. This figure represented 50,000 more than the number set out in the *Merseyside Plan 1944* and approximately 40,000 less than that

[49] TNA:PRO, HLG 79/450, Report of F.J. McCulloch, North West Regional Controller, Ministry of Town and Country Planning, Liverpool CB Density Standards, (n/d), 1, 5; McCulloch on behalf of the Ministry estimated an overspill of 233,400 persons; The *Merseyside Plan 1944* estimated an overspill of population on the redevelopment of the older urban areas of the city of 147,834 persons, requiring an area of 4,743 acres of land to accommodate the population overspill; TNA:PRO, HLG 79/450, Central Merseyside, Jan 1947, 1.
[50] LRO, 352 ARC/13, Housing Programme, 1 February 1949.
[51] Ibid.

preferred by MT&CP officials [52] The deadlock with Lancashire County Council over Speke and Kirkby was by the spring of 1949, finally broken. [53]

It is staggering that the dispute over population density standards was allowed to fester for so long, given both the Labour government's determination to respect the densities recommended in the Dudley Report and Liverpool's post-war housing emergency. However, it seems that matters political and administrative conspired to prevent an earlier resolution. Politically, Liverpool was concerned that reduced densities would result in increased population drain from the city.[54] Indeed, the city council was keen to extend the city boundary to include areas where much of the population overspill would be relocated. [55] In addition, Liverpool aspired to build large numbers of flats in the disputed central area of the city; and flats attracted an increased amount of government housing subsidy. [56] Lower densities meant fewer flats and less subsidy. Administratively, there appears to have been a disconnect between the Ministry of Health and MT&CP (who seem to have been working in a silo rather than collaboratively in speedily resolving the issue) and at Liverpool City Council, less than unanimity amongst its chief technical officials about the original densities proposed. [57] Significantly, it was not until the departure of Lancelot Keay, who was ultimately held

[52] LRO, 352 ARC/61, Housing Programme: Progress report, 15 February 1949.
[53] LRO, 352 ARC/13, Housing Programme, 1 February 1949; Letter from Dr R Bradbury (City Architect and Director of Housing) to Sir John Wrigley (Ministry of Health), 5 May 1949 and Sir John's reply, 7 May 1949.
[54] TNA: PRO; HLG 79/307, Meeting between Minister of Town and Country Planning and Liverpool City Council Members and senior officers, 9 April 1946, 1-2.
[55] Ibid.
[56] Ibid, 2-4.
[57] TNA: PRO, HLG 79/308, Liverpool C.B. Brief for the Minister's visit, 9 April 1946; LRO, 352 ARC/61, Meeting with Sir John Wrigley and Mr Jordan (Department of Health), 10 December 1948, 2-3.

responsible for miscalculating the disputed density figures, that progress was able to be made. [58]

Control of the housing programme.

Like all local authorities, Liverpool was required to prepare as rapidly as possible for the resumption of the building of permanent dwellings. During 1946, councils got on with the job of acquiring sites, preparing lay-outs and site plans, securing contracts, and making an initial start with the building of new houses in their area. By the end of 1946, the Ministry of Health had approved contracts for 96 per cent of local authorities in England and Wales, comprising 99 per cent of the total population. [59] However, as we have seen, during 1945 and 1946, the Labour government had failed to exercise sufficient control over the permanent housebuilding programme. Its inability during this period to coordinate the building of houses with the availability of both the labour and materials required for their construction resulted in literally thousands of unfinished dwellings across the country, including a substantial number in Liverpool. At the end of 1946 a total of 348 dwellings completed in the city was outnumbered by more than four to one by the 1,506 that stood unfinished due to labour and materials shortages.[60] During 1947 and particularly following the financial crisis of the summer of that year, the government began to exercise very strict control over the housing programme. This was exerted both nationally and locally to ensure that despite the high priority accorded to it, housing did not absorb too much of the country's limited resources. Consequently, each local authority was allocated an annual quota setting out the maximum number of dwellings it was allowed to have under contract, in addition to the

[58] TNA:PRO, HLG 79/450, P L Hughes to J H Waddell, 27 April 1948. Hughes stated that at a meeting with Mr Hough, the Liverpool City Engineer, Hough had pointed out that what Liverpool proposed for the Riverside Zone was 158 persons (net) per acre, and not 184.
[59] LRO, 352 ARC/13, Ministry of Health Circular 16/47, Housing Programme 1947, 28 January 1947.
[60] LRO, 352 ARC/47, The facts about allocations since the end of the war, 26 July 1950.

maximum number of dwellings it could have under construction at any one time. The quota included the share apportioned to the building of properties by private enterprise. [61]

Housing quotas

The allocation of housing quotas was carried out by government on a regional basis from within which each local authority was apportioned its individual quota. In March 1948, Liverpool's quota was set at a maximum of 3,000 dwellings under contract per annum, with a maximum of 1,800 dwellings under construction at any one time. This latter figure was increased to 2,200 dwellings in August 1948. [62] In January 1949, the Ministry of Health altered the whole basis of allocation from 'houses under construction' to 'contracts to be let over a given period'. On this basis, Liverpool was authorised to let tenders for (or to licence) a maximum of 3,550 dwellings for the fifteen-month period, 1 October 1948 to 31 December 1949. In 1950, (due to Liverpool exceeding its 1948/49 allocation by 1,100 dwellings), the quota was eventually fixed at 1,770 dwellings for the year. [63] In 1951, the maximum number of dwellings that Liverpool was permitted to have under contract was fixed at 2,750. [64]

The factors that were considered in setting regional quotas included, the size of the population, numbers on the housing waiting list, the extent of bomb damage and the needs of essential industries. However, such quotas could be scaled down in conformity with the available building labour. [65] It was on the issue of the availability of

[61] Licences for the building of dwellings by private enterprise could not exceed 20 per cent of the total quota allocated for the area.
[62] LRO, 352 ARC/13, Review of Housing Position in Liverpool (In Relation to the Approved Allocation), 27 September 1948, 1.
[63] LRO, 352 ARC/47, Report by the City Architect and Director of Housing 'Notice of Motion in the names of Councillors H Carr and E M Braddock', 6 September 1950.
[64] LRO, 352 ARC/47, Slum Clearance and Redevelopment Report, 10 September 1951.
[65] LRO, 338 LAN, Lancashire and Merseyside Industrial Development Association, Research Memorandum 1-4. Housing and Industrial Development, 17 September 1951, 10,16.

building labour locally that the Lancashire and Merseyside Industrial Development Association (LMIDA) took issue with the government: a shortage of such was considered a major factor severely limiting the progress of housebuilding in the North-West and in consequence, the economic performance of the region. At forty-three per 1,000 insured workers, the North-West region had the lowest proportion of building workers in the country, and at 42 per cent the lowest proportion of its building labour force engaged in housing. LMIDA believed that a government policy of scaling down housing allocations in conformity with the available building labour force, discriminated against areas like the North-West, that had high levels of obsolete and overcrowded dwellings. Indeed, LMIDA described the policy as favouring more affluent areas with a smaller proportion of housing requiring replacement, but with a larger building labour force. In this respect, the North-West was at a strong disadvantage, claimed LMIDA.[66]

It is plausible that a shortage of building labour in the North-West Region did have a knock-on effect on the calculation of Liverpool's housing quota allocation. This though, appears to be a relatively marginal factor. It was the shortage of housing land that most compromised the level of Liverpool's housing quota allocation; and consequently, the city council's ability to fulfil such and to satisfy the government that it was able to do so in future years. [67] It was on this issue that Liverpool was vulnerable to potential political embarrassment, it being of a different political persuasion than that of the party of government. This issue was not lost on Sir John Wrigley, (Deputy Secretary, Department of Health), when he met city officials in December 1948.[68] On eventually becoming alive to Liverpool's difficulties relative to the shortage of housing

[66] Ibid, 4-5,16.
[67] LRO, 352 ARC/13, Report of the City Architect and Director of Housing, 28 January 1949, The housing position of the City of Liverpool as at January 1949 and the additional land required for the housing programme, 5.
[68] LRO, 352 ARC/61, Meeting with Sir John Wrigley and Mr Jordan (Department of Health), 10 December 1948, 2-3.

land, Ministry of Health officials were both keen to assist Liverpool's housing efforts, particularly regarding development outside the city boundary and to avoid political conflict between the city council and the Labour government. Markedly, it was only at this late stage that Ministry of Health and MT&CP officials appear to have started working collaboratively to break the deadlock between the city council and Lancashire County Council over land at Speke and Kirkby. However, such efforts were not sufficient to avoid a very public spat that erupted in 1950 between Aneurin Bevan and the city council over claims that Liverpool was not meeting its allocated housing quota, following complaints by the council that its quota allocation (for 1950) was too small.[69] The row was very much centred around Liverpool's perceived lack of progress relative to the number of houses completed (a measure not directly applicable to quotas), but upon which Bevan used to fend off claims that Liverpool was not receiving its fair share of the regional housing allocation. Indeed, the Minister claimed that he was prepared to consider making an increased allocation to Liverpool when 'it is justified by evidence of an increase in the rate of completion.' [70]

Initiatives to assist the private sector

In view of the restriction on private sector housebuilding to a maximum of one-fifth of the overall local allocation, it became clear that there were several private builders who had land available and serviced for housing, but who would not be able to use it all for some considerable time within their share of the quota. Legislative arrangements were made whereby private builders could erect houses on the land they owned and sell on to the local authority by agreement, the houses, land, and services. In Liverpool, such agreement was reached between the city council and private enterprise builders.

[69] LRO, 352 ARC/47, Copy of letter from Mr Aneurin Bevan to Mrs E M Braddock, MP, 3 July 1950
[70] Ibid.

In total, 365 such dwellings were acquired for municipal housing purposes in the city. On the Woolton Grove Estate, the city council took possession of seventy-three such properties in 1949 and by 1952, a further 292 houses had been acquired at Childwall.[71] On the one hand, these developments provided the city council with much needed new permanent municipal dwellings, and on the other, gave the private developer some outlet for capital tied up in the acquisition of land, which otherwise would have remained frozen. The measure, although helpful, was merely a palliative. The acute shortage of suitable sites for housing purposes remained a major obstacle to Liverpool's housing drive.

Delivery of the permanent housing programme.

The proposed solution to the housing problem in Liverpool was two pronged. First, a programme of development in the suburbs and on the periphery of the city of new housing estates on virgin land that had been zoned for housing purposes, was started to make an immediate impact. Second, the city council endeavoured to make progress with the much more difficult task of redeveloping the older urban areas of the city. [72]

Suburban development

The construction of permanent dwellings was formally commenced in 1946 on three large suburban sites, which the city council had acquired prior to 1939 in areas beyond the city boundary. The Brook House area at Huyton, that had been acquired as an extension to the pre-war Woolfall Heath Estate was started, and on completion comprised 800 dwellings of mixed types, including 210 flats and maisonettes, with some specially designed for older people. Owing to the shortage of facing bricks during

[71] LRO, Hq 720.9.PUB, *Liverpool Builds 1945-65*, 20.
[72] LRO, H711 COU, A Review of Housing & Planning, 1952, 38.

the period, many of the dwellings on the estate were erected in common brick and colour washed externally. The development of 716 dwellings was completed between 1946 and 1950 on a large area of land on the Cantril Farm estate, also acquired before the war. A total of 592 of the dwellings on Cantril Farm were of non-traditional construction, as part of the overall effort to economise on bricks and skilled bricklayers, both of which were in very short supply at the time. In total 200 of the dwellings were built to the standard British Iron and Steel Federation (BISF) design and were of steel framing, and 392 dwellings were constructed in 'no-fines' poured concrete. [73] Notwithstanding the future problem of gaining planning consent in respect of land beyond the city boundary, in 1946 a start was made on the completion of the comprehensive township that the city council had planned at Speke. In addition, a site at Sparrow Hall, which was declared surplus to requirements, was made available to the city council for housing purposes by the hospital authorities. The construction of dwellings at Sparrow Hall began in 1946. [74]

Central Area development

When the war ended, some land was available in the central area of the city for new development, principally due to the pre-war slum clearance programme, that was brought to an abrupt end in 1939. It was on such sites that the first new blocks of flats in the centre of the city were built. The first of such blocks were like those built in the interwar period, being of the five-storey balcony-access type with large forecourts to the blocks, used for recreational purposes. Later blocks were a compromise between the interwar type of balcony-access with an internal court and a more modern method

[73] 'No-fines' concrete is obtained by eliminating the fine material sand from the normal concrete mix. The single sized coarse aggregates are surrounded and held together by a thin layer of cement paste giving strength of concrete.
[74] LRO, Hq 720.9.PUB, *Liverpool Builds* 1945-65, 29-33.

of staircase access. Between 1947 and 1950, well over 1,000 flats of this type were constructed in the central area. [75] On the completion of these schemes, the city council decided that all flats exceeding three storeys must be provided with lifts. This decision effectively ended the construction of five-storey walk-up flats in Liverpool. For some years thereafter, the building of flats became almost entirely three-storey, designed on the principle of six flats being accessible from a common staircase hall, but allowing a varied assortment of accommodation, comprising one, two, three and in some cases four-bedroom flats.[76] Having decided to build flats no higher than three-storeys, the opportunity was thereafter lost of making the maximum possible use for housing development of each area of land identified for housing purposes, including such land freed up through slum clearance.

Indeed, despite the quarrel with MT&CP over inner-city population densities, slum clearance programmes in the central area of the city constituted a major component of Liverpool's housing strategy. Slum clearance was started in the central area of the city in 1945 and continued through to 1951. These schemes were facilitated by way of either Clearance Orders, Compulsory Purchase Orders and Declaration of Unfitness Orders, or a combination of all three. As Table 4.2 shows, as a result, during the period a total of 2,004 slums were demolished involving the displacement of 9,312 persons.[77] In September 1951, a further programme of slum clearance in the central area was authorised by the Housing Committee, that during 1952 resulted in the demolition of a further 408 dwellings, leading to the relocation of 2,099 individuals. [78] Yet, despite

[75] LRO, Hq 720.9.PUB, *Liverpool Builds* 1945-65, 30; The principal schemes were: Hurst Street (132 dwellings), Pitt Street (154 dwellings), Westmorland Place (130 dwellings), Blucher Street (114 dwellings), Portland Street (202 dwellings) and Sussex Gardens (164 dwellings).
[76] Ibid.
[77] LRO, H352 4 HEA, Report on the Health of the City of Liverpool for the year 1952 by the Medical Officer of Health, 175.
[78] LRO, 352 ARC/47, Slum Clearance and Redevelopment Report, 10 September 1951.

such activity, there remained approximately 5,000 dwellings in the twenty central wards of Liverpool, which had been the subject of pre-war Compulsory Purchase Orders or Clearance Orders. Indeed, in 1949 a report by the city's Medical Officer of Health identified 22,300 dwellings which in his opinion should be demolished as soon as practicable: 5,200 within a period of five years. On average, it was estimated that 1.5 families occupied each slum dwelling. [79] On this basis, in 1949, the number of additional dwellings needed to rehouse those living in the worst of the central area slums was, at least 7,850. This was an unenviable short-term task for a local authority with a severe shortage of housing land within its own environs.

Year	Number of dwellings demolished	Number of persons displaced
1945	190	920
1946	374	1,396
1947	485	2,540
1948	260	1,299
1949	161	678
1950	327	1,536
1951	207	943
Totals	**2,004**	**9,312**

Table 4. 2: Progressive summary of slum clearance in Liverpool, 1945 to 1951. Source: LRO, H352 4 HEA, Report on the Health of the City of Liverpool for the year 1952 by the Medical Officer of Health, 175.

Action undertaken to identify additional housing land

The increasing urgency to identify additional land for housing development in Liverpool had necessitated the city council to complete an intensive survey of land that potentially could be made available for housing development in the city over several

[79] LRO, H711 COU, Liverpool Development Plan 1952.

years. [80] The 1949 survey report underlined the importance of the city council receiving the necessary approvals to develop the majority of the land categories disclosed by the survey, otherwise, the report revealed, 'a position will be reached within the next few years when the city will have no available outlet for its housing drive.' In addition, the survey report warned that if such a position was reached, it would not be possible to embark on any schemes involving the demolition of 'unsatisfactory' properties, as no areas would be available to which occupants of such properties could be relocated. [81]

The first developments that resulted from the land categories identified in the survey were at Horrocks Avenue and Mather Avenue. In 1950, work commenced on both estates, comprising both houses and flats.[82] The search for land continued and included sites categorised as not having previously been considered for housing development. [83] Consequently, in 1949, negotiations were commenced with the Earl of Sefton, leading to the eventual development of what became a major municipal housing estate at Croxteth. The Croxteth estate was developed on land partly belonging to the Earl and partly on that which was already in the possession of the city council. Site operations duly commenced at Croxteth in late 1949, with housebuilding starting there in 1950. [84]

[80] LRO, 352 ARC/13, The housing position of the City of Liverpool as of January 1949 and the additional land required for the housing programme. Report of the City Architect and Director of Housing, 28 January 1949.
[81] Ibid, 3.
[82] LRO, Hq 720.9.PUB, *Liverpool Builds* 1945-65, 33; The Horrocks Avenue Estate, which was developed between 1950 and 1954, comprised 163 houses and 54 flats. The Mather Avenue Estate comprised 191 houses and 202 flats.
[83] LRO, 352 ARC/13, The housing position of the City of Liverpool as at January 1949 and the additional land required for the housing programme. Report of the City Architect and Director of Housing, 28 January 1949, 5.
[84] LRO, Hq 720.9.PUB, *Liverpool Builds 1945-65*, 33.

It was with some relief, that the agreement with Lancashire County Council over the major development at Kirkby was reached in April 1949. This, together with the land identified through the comprehensive survey and the successful negotiations over the land at Speke and Croxteth, meant that the outlook for Liverpool's housing programme was slightly more favourable, at least in the short-term [85] Following the approval of the Kirkby Town Plan in November 1949, the basis upon which the development was to proceed, work was started on constructing the first main sewers and roads in February 1950. [86] This led, in March 1952 to the letting of the first housing contract at Kirkby for a total of 674 dwellings. By the end of 1952, 116 houses had been finished at Kirkby. [87]

Temporary housing, requisitioning and the rebuilding of war destroyed properties.

In addition to the unsuccessful attempt to obtain a licence from the Labour government to put into full production the 'Liverpool Plan' prefab, Liverpool's strategy to erect large numbers of temporary houses during the first five post-war years had received an earlier setback. Firstly, in the form of the wartime coalition government's decision to legislate for the national provision of temporary prefabs and to begin their construction as soon as hostilities ended, and later by the incoming Labour government's resolve to curtail that programme which it had inherited from the wartime administration. [88] The commissioning of a temporary housing programme was always regarded by central government, both during and after the war, purely as an emergency measure

[85] LRO, 352 ARC/13, Letter from Dr R Bradbury (City Architect and Director of Housing) to Sir John Wrigley (Ministry of Health), 5 May 1949 and Sir John's reply, 7 May 1949.
[86] LRO, 352 ARC/61, Letter from C. Hutchinson (Ministry of Health) to the Town Clerk, Liverpool, 5 December 1949; LRO, Hq 720.9.PUB, *Liverpool Builds 1945-65*, 36; Formal consent to the appropriation of 351.25 acres of land at Kirkby for housing purposes was formally received from the Ministry of Health in December 1949, allowing work on phase one of the township to begin.
[87] LRO, Hq 70.9.PUB, *Liverpool Builds 1945-65*, 36.
[88] The *Housing (Temporary Accommodation) Act 1944* (7 & 8 Geo. 6. Ch. 36); *The Housing (Temporary Accommodation) Act 1945* (8 & 9 Geo. 6. Ch. 39).

designed to alleviate some of the more acute housing shortages in the immediate post-war years. Labour's decision to truncate the temporary prefab programme was made on the basis both of cost and that it distracted the permanent housing drive. As such, this rendered unsustainable Liverpool's 1944 strategy to solve the city's immediate housing crisis principally via the vehicle of temporary dwellings. This constituted a major error of judgement on the part of Lancelot Keay, the City Architect and Director of Housing. Indeed, as someone who was well connected with government housing and reconstruction initiatives (having served as a member of the Dudley Committee), it might reasonably be assumed that Keay would have been 'tuned-in' to current government thinking on the issue. On this basis and given the predicted immediate post-war shortages of building labour, materials, and components, Keay should have anticipated that the government was likely only to give priority to the temporary housing programme in the very short-term.

Following the 1944 legislative measures that facilitated the temporary housing programme, Liverpool, like many other towns and cities that faced major housing difficulties due to extensive war damage, was required to indicate to the Ministry of Works the number of temporary prefabs they were able to speedily accommodate. The local authority was required to provide the sites (including the provision of roads, common access paths and sewers, water, gas, and electricity services) for an allocation agreed with central government. The Ministry of Works were responsible for the supply and erection of the bungalows, together with all the necessary fencing, drainage, and sewerage connections, within the curtilage of each dwelling. [89] Under the complex financial arrangements in place, Liverpool City Council was required to

[89] LRO, 352 COU, Report of the City Architect and Director of Housing, Housing – Temporary Accommodation – The Siting of Bungalows, November 1944, 15.

make an annual contribution to the government of approximately £8 per prefab, of which £4 represented the annual contribution towards capital costs and the other £4 the loan charge on the site. [90] In all, Liverpool received an allocation of 3,500 temporary bungalows (approximately 2.5 per cent of the national total), which were erected, together with two 'Liverpool Plan' experimental bungalows, on forty different sites throughout the city, during the years 1945 to 1947. [91] A further 146 temporary homes were erected in the city during 1951. [92] Table 4.3 shows the types of temporary bungalows erected across the city between 1945 and 1947.

Type	**Total**
Uni-Seco	1197
Phoenix	50
Aluminium	2057
Liverpool Plan	2
Acorn	138
U.S.A.	58
Grand total	**3502**

Table 4.3: Types and number of temporary bungalows erected in Liverpool 1945 to 1947. Source: LRO, H643 HOU, Housing Progress 1864 – 1951.

The identification of suitable sites for the erection of the prefabs presented an initial challenge to the city council, as three-hundred acres of land, suitable for the siting of the dwellings in the city had to be quickly identified. In the inner-city area, sites were chosen where it was deemed permanent redevelopment would not take place before the expiration of ten years, or where it was unlikely that any redevelopment would be

[90] Ibid, 3; LRO, H643 HOU, Housing Progress 1864 – 1951, 30.
[91] LRO, Hq 720.9.PUB, *Liverpool Builds 1945-65*, 20; LRO, 352 COU, Report of the City Architect and Director of Housing, Housing – Temporary Accommodation – The Siting of Bungalows, November 1944 / Ministry of Health Circular 167/44, 22 November 1944.
[92] LRO, Hq 720.9.PUB, *Liverpool Builds 1945-65*, 22.

carried out by the local authority for a very considerable period.[93] The smallest of the sites in Liverpool was at Larkhill, where the two experimental Liverpool Plan prefabs were accommodated and the largest, on the Belle Vale Estate, where 1,159 bungalows were erected. [94] Belle Vale was to become one of the biggest temporary bungalow sites in the country. [95]

At the same time as the temporary housing programme was being executed in Liverpool, the city council pursued a policy to rebuild dwellings that had been destroyed by bombing on its various estates, to eliminate the gaps which their destruction had created. By mid-1945, a great deal of such work was already in progress in Liverpool, and in the July of that year, architects from the War Damage Commission met with Liverpool architects in the city to speed-up operations. Licences for reinstatement of war destroyed houses needed to be obtained from the local authority. To qualify for building and restoration, the plans had to comply with both the building requirements and the byelaws of the local authority regarding facilities such as lavatories and bathrooms, yard-space, and rear entrances. [96] By 1952, a total of 186 war destroyed dwellings were rebuilt by the city council. [97] In addition, private enterprise rebuilt a total of 388 war destroyed dwellings in the city during the same period.[98]

Under the Defence Regulations enacted as a war measure, local authorities were granted powers by central government to requisition dwellings within their boundary

[93] LRO, 352 COU, Report of the City Architect and Director of Housing, Housing – Temporary Accommodation – The Siting of Bungalows, November 1944, 4, 9.
[94] LRO, 352 ARC/13, Housing Programme, 1 February 1949, 2; There had been difficulties in obtaining permission to develop the Belle Vale site, as the land was part of a 'first-class agricultural belt'.
[95]LRO, Hq 720.9.PUB, *Liverpool Builds 1945-65*, 20.
[96] *Liverpool Daily Post*, 31 July 1945.
[97] LRO, H711 COU, A Review of Housing & Planning, 1952, 38.
[98] Ibid, 45.

as a way of partially relieving the serious housing problem. Like many other local authorities, Liverpool City Council took advantage of these powers. At its peak, in December 1950, 2,170 houses were held under requisition in Liverpool by the city council and occupied by families who were the council's licensees. [99] In Liverpool, a total of 269 properties were requisitioned during the six years following the end of the Second World War. [100]

Quantitative outcomes

By the end of 1951 the annual rate of permanent housing completions of all types by the municipality and private enterprise combined was approximately 2,600 dwellings.[101] However, during the early years of the programme progress had been slow, as illustrated by the figures for municipal completions in Table 4.4. This was due to a combination of factors but principally, the availability of labour and materials, inadequate control of the housing programme and difficulties in identifying suitable sites for permanent housing development.

Year	1945	1946	1947	1948	1949	1950	1951	Total
Permanent municipal dwellings completed (all types)	Nil	234	991	1198	1504	1673	2178	7778

Table 4.4: Permanent housing completions by Liverpool City Council, 1945 to 1951. Source: LRO, Hq 720.9. PUB, *Liverpool Builds 1945-65*.

Table 4.5 sets out the figures for all categories of houses completed to the end of 1951. The local authority contribution made up 82.5 per cent of the overall total with

[99] LRO, Hq 720.9.PUB, *Liverpool Builds 1945-65*, 20.
[100] LRO, H711 COU, A Review of Housing & Planning, 1952, 38.
[101] LRO, H711 COU, Liverpool Development Plan, 1952.

private enterprise contributing the remaining 17.5 per cent. In terms of permanent completions, the figures are almost identical, with the local authority contributing 81.9 per cent of the total and private enterprise at 18.1 per cent, marginally shy of the permitted maximum of 20 per cent imposed by the centre. The proportion of war destroyed houses rebuilt in Liverpool at 8.8 per cent, was considerably lower than the 15.3 per cent rebuilt nationally. In Liverpool, temporary houses made up 25.8 per cent of the overall output, whereas on a national basis less than 10 per cent of the inclusive housing output comprised temporary accommodation.

	Permanent	**Temporary**	**War destroyed**	**Conversions**	**Others***	**Total**
Local Authority	7,778	3,648	186		45	**11,657**
Private Enterprise	1,720		388	360		**2,468**
Grand total	**9,498**	**3,648**	**574**	**360**	**45**	**14,125**

Table 4.5: Total dwellings of all categories provided in Liverpool (Municipal and private enterprise), 1945 to 1951. Source: LRO, H711 COU, A Review of Housing and Planning, 1952; LRO, Hq 70.9.PUB, *Liverpool Builds 1945-65*. * Denotes - mainly comprising houses for police and fire service personnel.

Assuming an average of four persons per dwelling, the city council and private enterprise between them had provided accommodation for over 56,000 people during the period. Despite this quantitative effort, on 30 June 1951, Liverpool's housing register numbered 49,418 families (Table 4.6). However, the actual number of new dwellings constructed, both permanent and temporary, was a sizable under achievement compared to that set out in the city council's 1944 post-war housing programme for the first six years following the end of hostilities. The construction of almost 9,500 permanent dwellings during the six-year period represented an annual

average of 1,583, well short of the 15,500 permanent dwellings (annual average 2,583) projected for the period in the 1944 plan. [102]

Category	Number of families
Without a separate home	37,738
Living in a separate home in insanitary conditions	3,146
Living in a separate home in overcrowded circumstances	4,561
Others	3,955
Total	**49,418**

Table 4.6: Liverpool City Council's Housing Register - 30 June 1951. Source: LRO, H711 COU, Liverpool Development Plan 1952.

In many respects, the quantitative housing drive in Liverpool mirrored in most part, the situation nationally. Shortages of labour and materials, particularly in the early stages of the programme did adversely affect quantitative performance, with low numbers of completions achieved in the city in 1945 and 1946. Indeed, the poor coordination of these factors at the national level was replicated on the ground in Liverpool by way of the letting of too many contracts and allowing too many housing 'starts' to commence. This led to hundreds of dwellings standing unfinished in the city for long periods in 1946. The practical implications of the financial squeeze on housing following the economic crisis of mid-1947 were played out locally by way of the strict housing quotas allocated by the Regional Offices of the Ministry of Health. As a result, greater control of the housing programme transpired. Thereafter, in Liverpool, quantitative performance increased and unlike the national programme, reached its peak in 1951. It is in this latter respect that local issues influenced the outcome; the catalyst being

[102] LRO, H711 HOU, Preliminary report of the City Architect and Director of Housing on Housing and Rehousing, 2 February 1944, 34.

the resolution of the row about housing densities and that relative to the development of land outside the city boundary.

Qualitative Performance

Housing standards

Upon the election of the Labour government in July 1945, local authorities were expected to build to the minimum space standards recommended in the 1944 report *Design of Dwellings* (Dudley Report). That report had concluded that a standard three-bedroom dwelling house should comprise no less than 900 square feet. This was formally communicated to local authorities initially by way of Ministry of Health Circular 200/45 and later through the *Housing Manual 1949* which had encompassed Dudley's proposals. [103] Furthermore, Local authorities were expected to follow the minimum housing and community standards recommended in the *Housing Manual 1949*. However, local authorities were afforded much flexibility relative to house planning and layout. [104]

Dwelling types and space standards

It was the stated aim of Liverpool City Council that the type of accommodation it set out to provide during the post-war period cover a wide range of types and sizes of dwellings in view of the magnitude of the housing problem that the city faced and the variety of household types that needed to be housed. [105] However, as Table 4.7 indicates, although during the period 1945 to 1950 a variety of dwelling types were provided including traditional houses, maisonettes, parlour and non-parlour flats and

[103] LRO, 352 ARC/47, Plans and files of the City Architect, *Ministry of Heath Circular 200/45*, 15 November 1945; Ministry of Health, *Housing Manual 1949*, London, HMSO, 1949.
[104] Housing Manual 1949, 41,42.
[105] LRO: H711 COU, *A Review of Housing and Planning, 1952*, 48.

accommodation for aged persons, over 63 per cent of the total was made up of flats. However, this was not altogether surprising, given the availability of land in the central areas of the city when the war ended, and land later made available there through slum clearance programmes. Liverpool's plans to build flats in large numbers in the central areas was met with much irritation by Lewis Silkin MP (Minister of Town and Country Planning). Indeed, the Minister opined (when he met representatives of the city council in April 1946) that Liverpool planned to build too many flats per acre over too large an area. [106] The provision of flats, whilst welcome in terms of alleviating the desperate housing shortage, was in many cases an unsuitable form of accommodation for many families in housing need.

Year	Aged Persons Cottages and Flats	Maisonettes	Houses	Flats (Parlour and non-parlour)	Total
1945					
1946			213	21	234
1947			453	538	991
1948	52		526	620	1198
1949	156	22	273	1053	1504
1950	120		258	1324	1702 *

Table 4.7: Types of permanent dwellings provided by Liverpool City Council 1945-1950. Source: LRO: H643 HOU, Housing Progress 1864 - 1951. * Note: total figure for 1950 conflicts with final official figures set out in Table 4.4.

In addition to flats, many hundreds of traditional two-storey permanent houses were constructed in Liverpool during the period, particularly in the sub-urban estates. As

[106] TNA: PRO, HLG 79/307, Note by RPO. 9 April 1946, 2-3.

shown in Figure 4.3, a three-bedroom house designed to accommodate five persons did, at in excess of 950 square feet, more than conform to the expected overall space standard and at 337 square feet to the aggregate living space standard. The house also contained two toilets, interestingly separate from the bathroom, that was itself located on the first floor. The three bedrooms met and in the case of the first and second bedrooms, exceeded the space standard advised. The size of the outbuildings at a total area of 58.5 square feet was well within the minimum advised in the *Housing Manual 1949.* On the Brook House Estate, where 800 dwellings were constructed during the period, the size of a permanent two-storey house (depending on the number of bedrooms it contained) ranged from 876 to 1028 square feet. [107] This was typical of the space standards adopted in two-storey houses built on sub-urban estates in Liverpool during the period. This all amounted to a major improvement as compared to the houses built by the city council during the 1930s.

It is clearly the case, that in terms of standards in the home, the Labour government was able to ensure that its policy of qualitative improvement was universally implemented. The government did this by requiring local authorities to seek approval from the Ministry of Health (via its regional offices) for each one of its housing schemes prior to the start of construction. As such, every project had to conform to the housing standards required by government. It was also in the interests of local councils to ensure that they did comply, as failure to do so meant that the requisite housing subsidy as set out in the *Housing (Financial and Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1946*,

[107] LRO, 352 ARC / 15, Brook House Estate.

would not be paid. This requirement was formally communicated to local councils in 1946, by way of Ministry of Health Circular 118/46. [108]

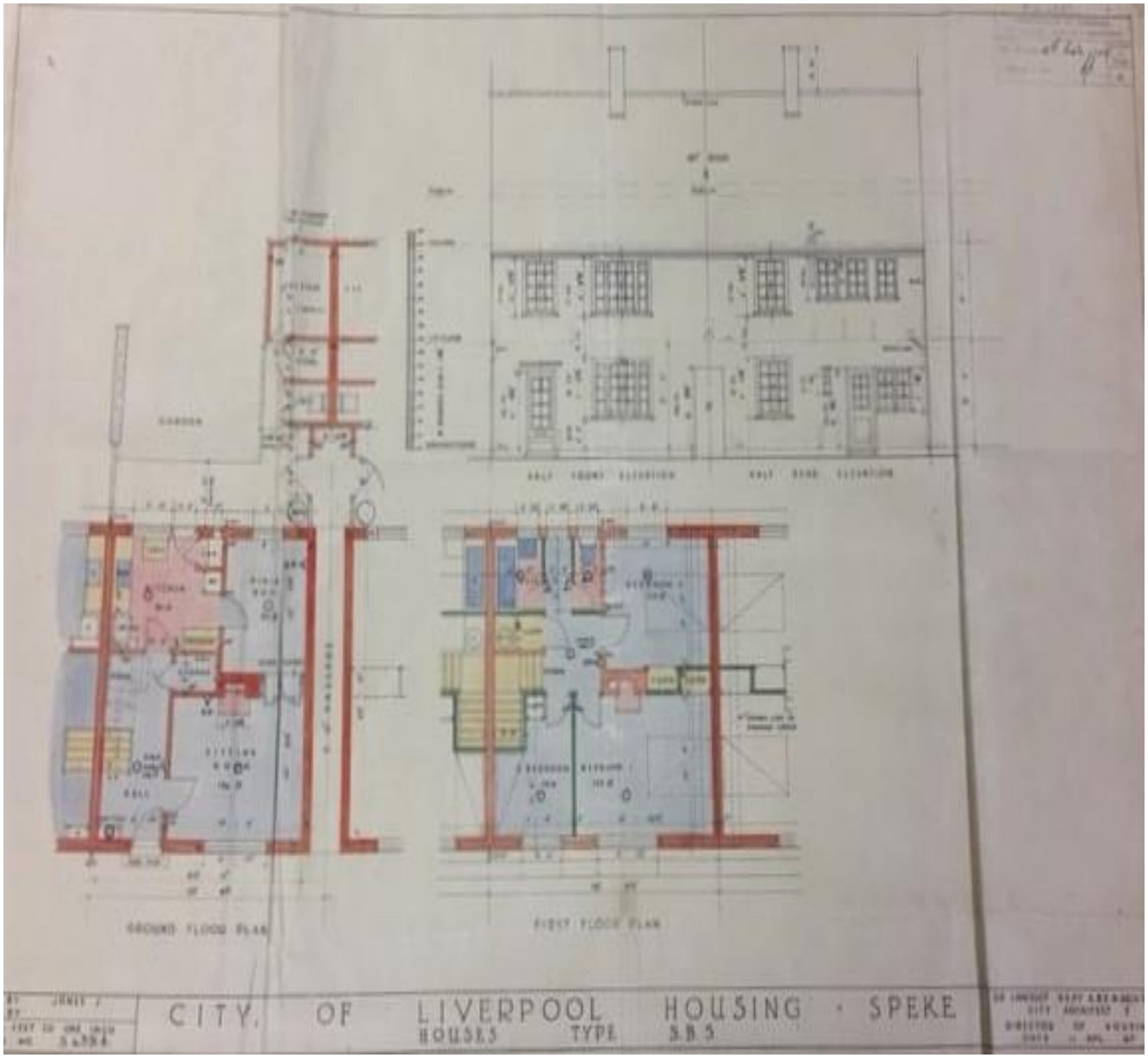


Figure 4.3: Plan of typical three-bedroom house for five persons built by Liverpool City Council. Source: Liverpool Record Office.

[108] TNA: PRO, HLG 101/227, *Housing (Financial and Miscellaneous Provisions) Act, 1946,* Circular 118/46, Appendix III, 12 July 1946.

Community standards

In 1944 the report *Design of Dwellings* had set out recommendations relative to the planning of post-war housing developments. The report proposed that in future great care should be given to the layout of areas where new houses were to be built, so to make them as attractive as possible. The report implored local authorities to plan new housing developments with the intention of adding positively to the beauties of the town and countryside, and to avoid making their housing estates merely unobtrusive, as had been the case during the interwar period.[109] Dudley urged that post-war housing developments should contain open spaces, safe pedestrian ways, primary and nursery schools and have shops within a quarter-of-a-mile walking distance. [110] The report also set out approximate figures for desirable net residential densities (persons per acre) that ranged from 30 (in open development) to 100 (in central area development). Only in exceptional circumstances, stated Dudley, should central area densities exceed 100 persons per acre. [111] The *Housing Manual 1949*, that covered both housing and community standards, in supporting Dudley's proposals was less numerically prescriptive on urban net densities, preferring to measure such on the number of habitable rooms per acre, arrived at by means of an estimated occupancy ratio based on persons per habitable room. [112]

Residential zoning proposals

Liverpool's blueprint for post-war housing development across the city formed part of an overall masterplan for the rebuilding of the city. A plan for the reconstruction of

[109] *Design of Dwellings*, 10.
[110] Ibid, 58 – 59.
[111] Ibid, 59 – 61.
[112] *Housing Manual 1949*, 19.

Liverpool had initially emerged in 1941. [113] This led eventually to the establishment by the city council of an all-party Post-War Redevelopment Advisory (Special) Committee in 1942, that was given responsibility to formulate proposals for a reconstruction scheme. [114] Its report entitled, *The Reconstruction proposals for the city*, was approved by the city council on 3 April 1946.[115] The report set out some basic proposals for the reconstruction of Liverpool, as a foundation upon which more detailed proposals would thereafter be built. The report's central feature was its proposals for the city's road system. The 'basic road plan' as it was called set out plans for four major radial roads, four ring roads (including an inner ring road) and four further roads: one arterial road catering for dock traffic only, two major local traffic roads and one sub-arterial road.[116]

The proposed main road structure provided a framework for the report's basic zoning or 'use zoning' proposals, specifying the type of development that would take place in designated areas of the city. The redevelopment of the city's central commercial and business area would take place within the boundary formed by the Inner Ring Road, flanked North and South by the Dockside Industrial Area. Four classes of residential area decreasing in density with increasing distances from the city centre were advised. High density housing featuring a proportion of flats, would form what was described as a Central Residential Zone. Adjoining what was described as a 'transitional area' situated immediately outside the Inner Ring Road, (an area that the report said should comprise buildings serving a variety of purposes), the report proposed an Inner Residential Zone described as an urban-type development of lower density housing.

[113] LRO, 711 SHE, 'The post-war reconstruction of Liverpool' – Speech by Alderman A. E. Shennan, delivered at the annual meeting of the Merseyside Civic Society on 10 December 1941, 17.
[114] The Post-War Redevelopment Advisory (Special) Committee comprised the chairmen of all the principal council committees together with a representative selection of aldermen and councillors.
[115] LRO, H 701 POS, First Report of the Post-War Redevelopment Advisory (Special) Committee on The Reconstruction Proposals for the city.
[116] Ibid, 10 - 15.

Adjacent to this, a Middle Residential Zone would be redeveloped providing housing at a density intermediate between the urban type of the Inner and Central Zones and the suburban type of the outskirts of the city. The area beyond the proposed third ring road would comprise an Outer Residential Area. [117] The 'use zoning' proposals set out in the 1946 report formed the basis of the land use categories contained in the Local Development Plan 1952 (Figure 4.4).

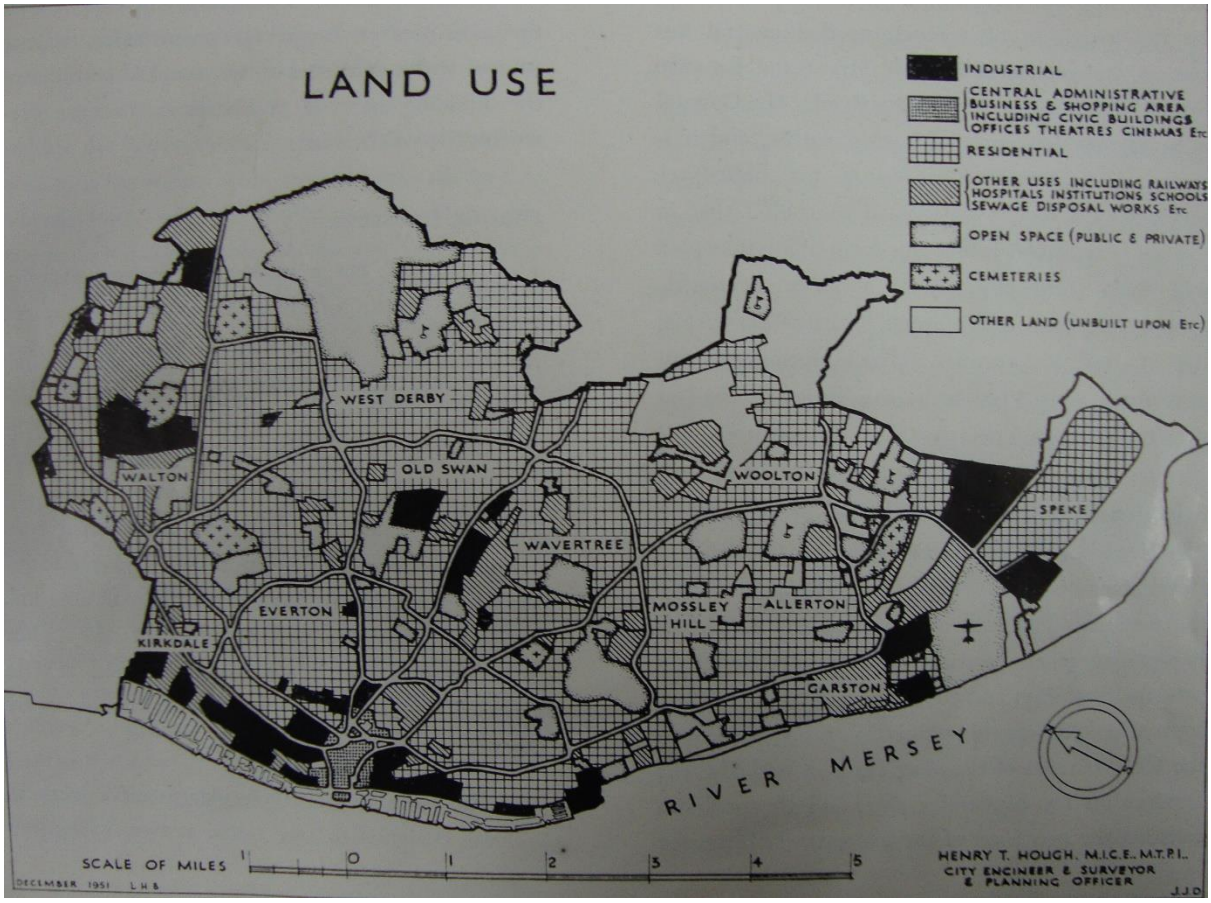


Figure 4.4: Map showing land use categories (including land designated for residential use). Liverpool Development Plan 1952. Source: LRO, A Review of Housing and Planning, 1952.

Neighbourhood Planning

Significantly, the proposals in the reconstruction plan gave a nod to the Dudley Report and its championing of neighbourhood planning.[118] As such, the plan advocated the

[117] Ibid, 16-19.
[118] *Design of Dwellings,* 9, 73-74.

fostering in the residential areas of a community spirit which would be achieved by their subdivision into neighbourhood units of suitable size, separated by attractive parkways linking them with a planned park system. Within such neighbourhood units, it was advised that provision should be made for community buildings, shops, open spaces and where desirable for local industry. [119] Dudley had stressed the importance of neighbourhoods comprising a mixture of household types. Liverpool later committed itself 'as far as possible' to ensuring its new housing projects were tenanted by a typical cross-section of the population. [120]

Notwithstanding that Liverpool ostensibly aspired to create neighbourhood units in the image articulated by Dudley, it was the issue of population density standards, a fundamental component of the concept of neighbourhood planning, that prevented Liverpool's early progress. The need for the development in the central area of the city of new urban housing projects built to modern density and amenity standards, meant that large numbers of the population would have to be rehoused in new suburban and peripheral estates. The high density of development in the older urban areas, meant that on their redevelopment only about 50 per cent of the population could be re-accommodated. Prior to their redevelopment, approximately 20 per cent of each acre was used for purposes other than housing, as against 50 per cent on their redevelopment. Therefore, on average, only half an acre instead of four-fifths of an acre was available for housing redevelopment purposes. Liverpool, short on housing land within the aegis of the city boundary was anxious to retain as large a central area population as was possible. The long-running impasse between the city council and MT&CP over central area densities and population overspill numbers compromised

[119] LRO, H 701 POS, First Report of the Post-War Redevelopment Advisory (Special) Committee on The Reconstruction Proposals for the city, 18-19.
[120] LRO: H711 COU, *A Review of Housing and Planning, 1952*, 48.

the council's ability in the early post-war years to comprehensively plan both the central residential neighbourhoods of the city and those outside its boundary. MT&CP used the latter as a bargaining tool to force Liverpool's hand on the former. Thus, the gestation period for qualitative outcomes relative to community standards was longer than initially planned.

As shown in Table 4.8, the provisionally agreed densities that broke the stand-off in 1949, although much reduced from that proposed in the *Merseyside Plan 1944*, were in fact well in excess of those proposed by Dudley. Furthermore, the inner densities set out in the Local Development Plan in 1952 that was published in compliance with the requirements of the *Town and Country Planning Act 1947,* also exceeded that which Dudley had advised. However, as we have seen, the *Housing Manual 1949* was much less numerically prescriptive relative to net densities and by 1949 compromise was essential for Liverpool to move forward with its housing strategy both quantitatively and qualitatively. Indeed, following the 1949 breakthrough progress in both contexts was made.

Density Zones / Various Reports	***Riverside***	***Inner***	***Central***	***Middle***	***Outer***	***Outskirts***	***Open D'ment***
Design of Dwellings (Dudley Report) 1944		*75*	*100 (120 in exceptional c'stances)*		*50*		*30*
Merseyside Plan 1944	*184*	*136*			*100*	*50*	
Provisional Densities January 1949		*120*	*140*	*100*	*75*		
Liverpool D'ment Plan 1952		*140*		*100*	*40-56*		

Table 4.8: Liverpool: Population density standards. Sources: *Design of Dwellings* (1944); *Merseyside Plan 1944* (1945); LRO, 352 ARC/13, Housing Programme, 1 February 1949; LRO, H711 COU, A Review of Housing and Planning 1952, 30.

Notwithstanding the afore-mentioned difficulties, there were some notable successes relative to neighbourhood planning in the city. The Cantril Farm Estate on the outskirts of Liverpool, that between 1946 and 1951 saw the construction of almost 720 dwellings, typified the neighbourhood unit concept. It contained both houses varying in size and type and had its own shopping centre. Furthermore, sites were scheduled for a church, library, primary and nursery schools, and a health clinic. The Brook House Estate, a large development situated likewise on the outskirts of the city, was planned to accommodate a civic centre, a shopping centre, and a local church. In accordance with neighbourhood planning principles the estate comprised a variety of dwellings including both houses and flats. Interestingly, the centre of the estate was planned with the higher type of building predominating, to create the atmosphere of a town centre.

One of Liverpool's most ambitious housing projects, the township at Speke on the outskirts of the city, was started in 1937. When housebuilding recommenced in 1946, speedy progress was made and by 1950 1,842 post-war dwellings had been

completed. On completion of the township in 1957, Speke contained approximately 6,000 dwellings of varying types and sizes including 294 ‘larger houses’ with a garage and four bedrooms for professional persons and managers. [121] Built in accordance with the concept of neighbourhood planning, Speke not only incorporated houses, flats, and accommodation for older people, but also a large industrial estate providing employment within easy reach of local people. Liverpool City Council described Speke as a ‘self-supporting community unit’ and as such comprised, in addition to the industrial estate, ‘all ancillary buildings’ including schools and a civic centre, that was planned to contain a swimming bath, public library, clinics and a community centre (Figure 4.5). Whilst the philosophy in the planning of such neighbourhoods was, in most cases, sound, the practice was less so, with the provision of some of the community services lagging-behind the completion and occupation of the residential areas.

[121] LRO, Hq 70.9.PUB, *Liverpool Builds 1945-65*, 30, 35; Stanley Gale, *Modern Housing Estates* (1949), 230.

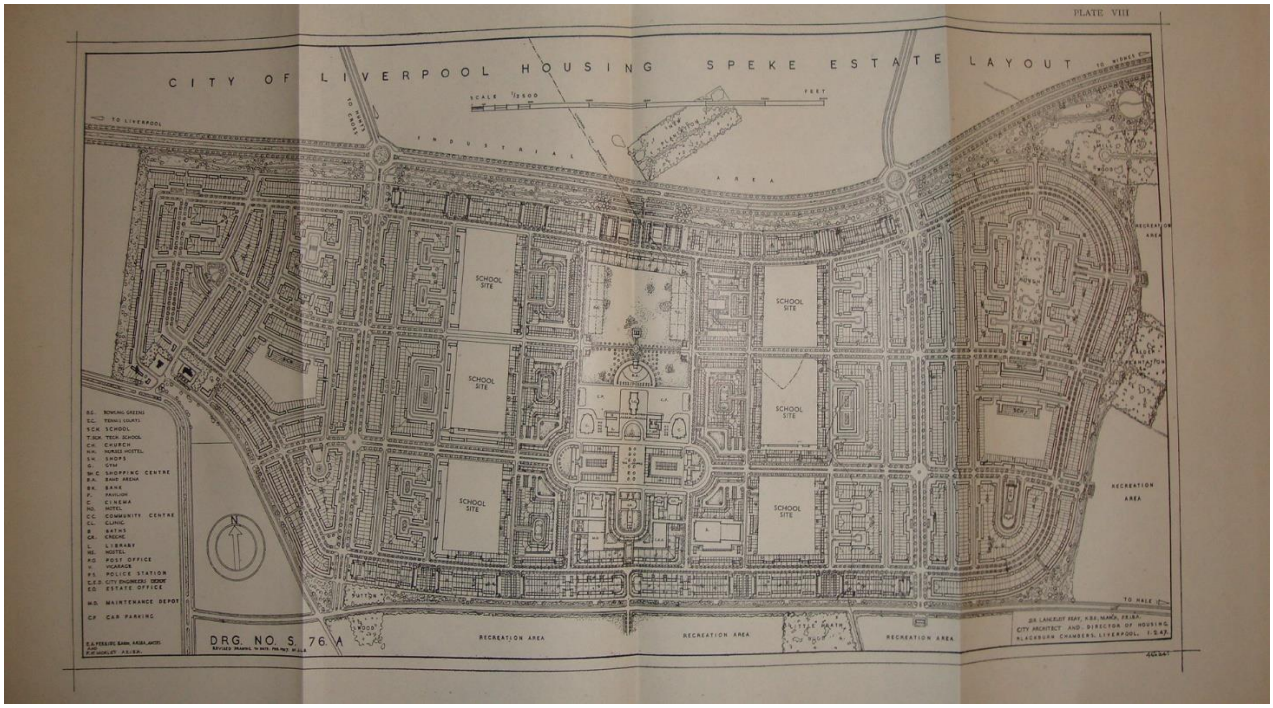


Figure 4.5: Speke Estate Layout. Source: Gale, *Modern Housing Estates* (1949), 230.

Liverpool provides further evidence that neighbourhood planning was, in practice, an important feature of the Labour government's post-war housing and reconstruction endeavour. It is clearly the case that Liverpool's housing and reconstruction plans embraced the development of neighbourhood units (relative to variety of house types, layout, and community facilities) espoused by Dudley and later the *Housing Manual 1949*. The Labour government had given much encouragement to such development. Whilst it is acknowledged that it took some time before most of these projects were completed, the genesis of their practical implementation can be traced back to the immediate years after 1945.

Access to municipal housing

We have seen that, during the interwar years many of the poorer sections of the community were unable to obtain the tenancy of a council house in Liverpool. This was primarily due to cost. In the absence of a rent rebate scheme the weekly rental of

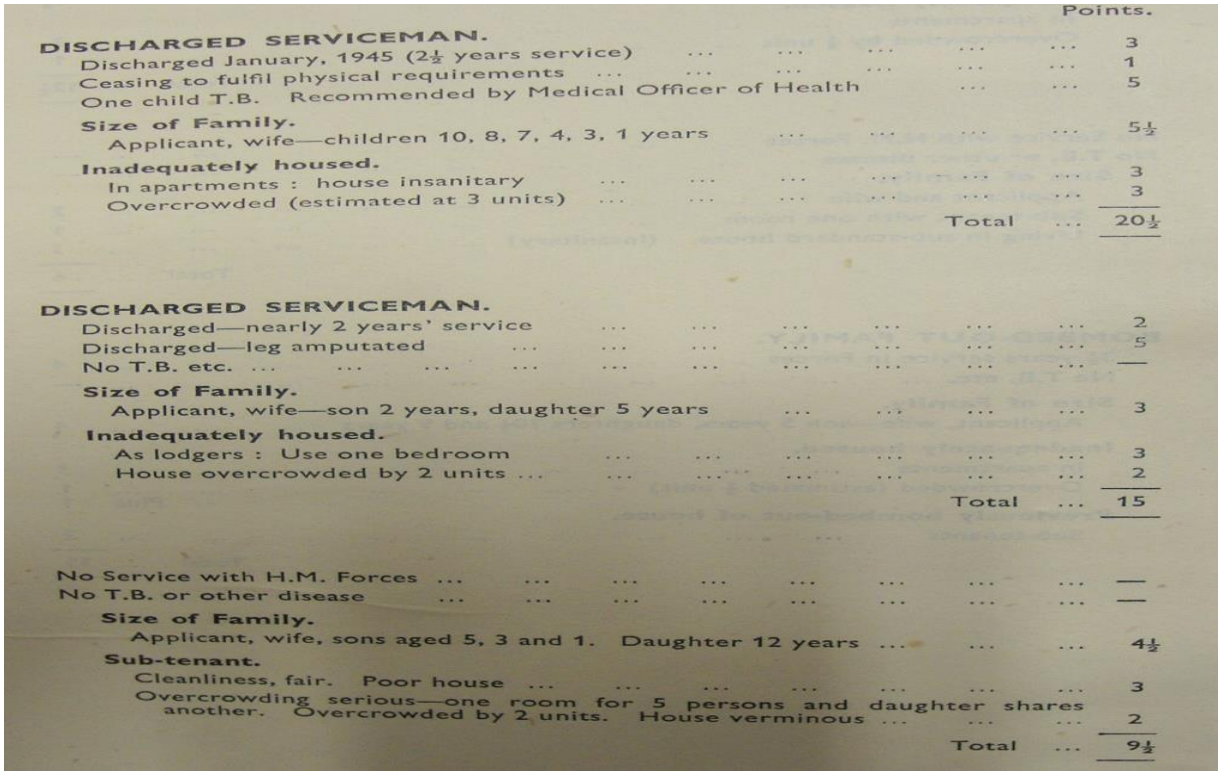
a municipal tenancy was too costly for a great number of working-class households in the city. This resulted in many poorer families not registering on the housing waiting list at all, despite living in insanitary or overcrowded conditions. The problem was compounded by the housing allocation policy that had been adopted by the city council during the interwar period. In essence priority was given on the basis not of housing need but on ability to pay. In this respect, a so called 'sorting' process was operated where older dwellings, generally of a poorer qualitative standard were offered to less affluent households. It was also the case that tenants, having fallen into rent arrears, were compelled to transfer to houses commanding a smaller rent. Upon taking office, the Labour government had advised local authorities that post-war permanent dwellings should be allocated based on housing need. However, considerable discretion was afforded to local councils in this matter. In Liverpool, where housing need was great when hostilities in Europe ended in May 1945, the vexed issue of affordability and the system by which municipal tenancies were allocated, loomed large.

Allocation of municipal dwellings

It was in this context that, on 6 June 1945, just prior to the election of the Labour government only a few weeks later, Liverpool City Council amended its housing allocation policy. [122] In essence, the 1945 review resulted in the introduction of a points system based on four main priority categories namely: service in HM Forces (or the Merchant Navy); health or size and condition of families; lack of or poor condition of current accommodation (including overcrowding) and length of time on the housing register. Each category was divided into sub-categories attracting weighted points

[122] LRO, 643 HOU, Report and recommendations of the Allocation of Houses (Special) sub-committee on the allocation of houses (as amended by the city council on 6 June 1945).

values. Service in HM Forces potentially carried the most points depending on length of service and / or injury sustained during service. Each application for housing was assessed relative to the information contained in the required application form and allocated the requisite number of points in line with the aforesaid criteria. Figure 4.6 provides three examples of points allocated in line with the system adopted in 1945.



Points.

DISCHARGED SERVICEMAN.

Discharged January, 1945 (2½ years service)	3
Ceasing to fulfil physical requirements	1
One child T.B. Recommended by Medical Officer of Health	5
Size of Family.	
Applicant, wife—children 10, 8, 7, 4, 3, 1 years	5½
Inadequately housed.	
In apartments : house insanitary	3
Overcrowded (estimated at 3 units)	3
Total	20½

DISCHARGED SERVICEMAN.

Discharged—nearly 2 years' service	2
Discharged—leg amputated	5
No T.B. etc.	—
Size of Family.	
Applicant, wife—son 2 years, daughter 5 years	3
Inadequately housed.	
As lodgers : Use one bedroom	3
House overcrowded by 2 units	2
Total	15

No Service with H.M. Forces	—
No T.B. or other disease	—
Size of Family.	
Applicant, wife, sons aged 5, 3 and 1. Daughter 12 years	4½
Sub-tenant.	
Cleanliness, fair. Poor house	3
Overcrowding serious—one room for 5 persons and daughter shares another. Overcrowded by 2 units. House verminous	2
Total	9½

Figure 4.6: Example of points allocated to housing applicants in line with Liverpool City Council's housing allocation policy, Source: LRO, 643 HOU, Report and recommendations of the Allocation of Houses (Special) sub-committee on the allocation of houses (as amended by the city council on 6 June 1945),9.

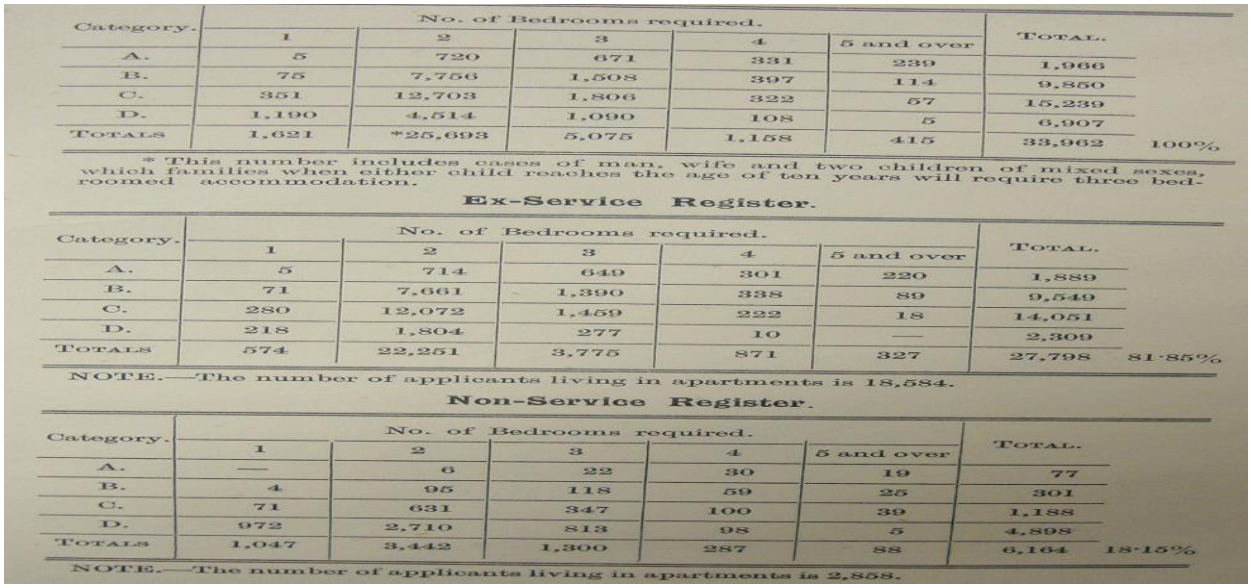
Applications were then placed into priority order categories in accordance with the number of points allocated. Category 'A' (20 points and over) being the highest priority group and category 'D' (less than 10 points) the lowest. Special priority was afforded to newly married couples with 20 per cent of all available tenancies being so allocated. The allocation of dwellings for both the aged and single people was excluded from the new points system and left to the Allocation of Houses (Special) sub-committee to administer. The allocation policy was subsequently reviewed and amended in May

1947 and again in July 1948 in acknowledgement of the high number of applications received from those who had served in the forces and in recognition that a proportion of available tenancies should be allocated to ordinary civilians and to key workers. As such, the housing register was divided into three groups. [123] The 1948 review amended further the proportion of tenancies allocated to the respective groups that had been identified in the 1947 review, as follows: Service in HM Forces (70 per cent of available tenancies); Civilian applications (20 per cent) and key workers (10 per cent). The 20 per cent quota for newly married couples although retained was achieved mainly through the allocation of temporary bungalows, with a preference given to those couples that included expectant mothers.

The introduction of a points system based, in part, on housing need, was a major shift from that which had pertained during the interwar period. It acknowledged that such a system was fairer and more transparent than previous arbitrary and opaque methods and that, on becoming available for letting, dwellings should be offered in order of the urgency in which accommodation was required. Furthermore, in implementing a points system, it was the city councils stated intention to prevent the undesirable segregation of the interwar period. [124] As Figure 4.7 shows, by 1948 the number of households recorded as requiring accommodation had reached unprecedented levels. Indeed, the number registered on the housing waiting list on 1 January 1948 was 33,962 with 27,798 (81.85 per cent) of applicants having served in HM Forces. Of the 1,966 applicants allocated the highest priority, 1,889 (96 per cent) had served in the forces,

[123] LRO, 643 HOU, Report and recommendations of the Allocation of Houses (Special) sub-committee on the allocation of houses (amended scheme) to be submitted the city council on 7 May 1947; LRO, 643 HOU, Report and recommendations of the Allocation of Houses (Special) sub-committee on the allocation of houses (further amended scheme) to be submitted the city council on 7 July 1948.
[124] LRO, 643 HOU, Report and recommendations of the Allocation of Houses (Special) sub-committee on the allocation of houses (as amended by the city council on 6 June 1945).

the majority of whom required two or three-bedroom accommodation. The decision to allocate 70 per cent of available tenancies to those who had served in the forces was therefore not disproportionate, given also that many in that group were presumably in serious need of a home. Furthermore, the proportions allocated to civilian and key worker applicants recognised that urgent housing need also existed amongst other sections of the community.



Category.	No. of Bedrooms required.					Total.	
	1	2	3	4	5 and over		
A.	5	720	671	331	239	1,966	
B.	75	7,756	1,508	397	114	9,850	
C.	351	12,703	1,806	322	57	15,239	
D.	1,190	4,514	1,090	108	5	6,907	
Totals	1,621	*25,693	5,075	1,158	415	33,962	100%

* This number includes cases of man, wife and two children of mixed sexes, which families when either child reaches the age of ten years will require three bedroomed accommodation.

Ex-Service Register.

Category.	No. of Bedrooms required.					Total.	
	1	2	3	4	5 and over		
A.	5	714	649	301	220	1,889	
B.	71	7,661	1,390	338	89	9,549	
C.	280	12,072	1,459	222	18	14,051	
D.	218	1,804	277	10	—	2,309	
Totals	574	22,251	3,775	871	327	27,798	81·85%

NOTE.—The number of applicants living in apartments is 18,584.

Non-Service Register.

Category.	No. of Bedrooms required.					Total.	
	1	2	3	4	5 and over		
A.	—	6	22	30	19	77	
B.	4	95	118	59	25	301	
C.	71	631	347	100	39	1,188	
D.	972	2,710	813	98	5	4,898	
Totals	1,047	3,442	1,300	287	88	6,164	18·15%

NOTE.—The number of applicants living in apartments is 2,858.

Figure 4.7: Analysis of housing register applications on 1 January 1948, Liverpool City Council. Source: LRO, 643 HOU, Report and recommendations of the Allocation of Houses (Special) sub-committee on the allocation of houses, July 1948, 7.

On the face of it, the new policy represented a much more progressive attitude to the allocation of municipal tenancies in Liverpool. However, substantial vestiges of the more cynical interwar 'sorting' process remained. This is apparent from a private and confidential report to the housing committee in September 1951, that considered the issue of slum clearance in the central area of the city. [125] Amongst its recommendations, the report requested authorisation from the committee for the City Architect and Director of Housing to take the necessary action to effect transfers of

[125] LRO, 352 ARC/47, Housing Programme: Slum Clearance and Central Area Redevelopment, 6 September 1951, 7.

families from existing council dwellings to the new peripheral estates, to free-up as many lower rental dwellings as possible for occupation by families affected by the slum clearance programme. Therefore, the policy of allocating council tenancies based on ability to pay was still active in Liverpool in 1951. Furthermore, it shows that the interwar practice of allocating to poorer households' older accommodation, that was likely to be of a reduced qualitative standard, was also much in evidence. Such action flew in the face of the city council's stated ambition of June 1945 to prevent the undesirable segregation of the interwar period.

Affordability

In 1945, despite the implementation of a points-based system for the allocation of council dwellings, Liverpool City Council continued to practice the use of 'sorting' in parallel with its points-based system. In the absence of any formal rent rebate scheme, the strategy which the city council perpetuated in its attempts to provide the urban poor with affordable accommodation was to allocate to such families the least desirable and potentially, poorer quality council dwellings. [126] These were let at a low rental that, ostensibly in the view of the city council, avoided the necessity of the low-income tenant requiring a rent rebate. This practice was not confined to Liverpool and was quite widespread throughout Britain during the period but, is typical of a conservative-liberal ideology.[127] However, for such a practice to succeed, it was essential that a range of quality of accommodation for any given family size was available across the council's housing stock. Having been involved in municipal housebuilding since the mid-nineteenth century, Liverpool had built-up a large housing

[126] Liverpool City Council did not introduce a formal rent rebate scheme until July 1961. See: LRO, H333.63 HOU, Rationalisation of rents and the introduction of a rent rebate scheme, 13 July 1961.
[127] Stephen Merrett, *State Housing in Britain*, 1979, 176.

portfolio, that by 1945 stood at over 42,000 properties and included a range of dwelling types. [128]

As shown in Table 4.9, by 1951 Liverpool not only had an extensive range of dwelling types across its housing stock, but the range of rents also levied covered a wide gamut too. Indeed, the weekly rental of the cheapest three-bedroom non-parlour house at 11s. 9d. was almost 25 per cent more expensive than the cheapest pre-1914 artisan and labourers dwelling containing three bedrooms. There was also a stark difference in the cost of renting a flat. A standard type three-bedroom flat in a three-storey block commanded a minimum rent almost 40 per cent more than that of a three-bedroom tenement flat in a block over three storeys.

Type of dwelling	**Minimum weekly rental (1951)**	**Maximum weekly rental (1951)**
Bed/Living room Artisan & Labourers dwelling	3s.0d.	3s .5d.
Three-bedroom Artisan & Labourers dwelling	8s. 9d.	10s. 2d.
Two-bedroom tenement flat (in block over three storeys)	8s. 4d.	10s. 1d.
Three-bedroom tenement flat (in block over three storeys)	9s 11d.	11s. 9d.
Four-bedroom tenement flat (in block over three storeys)	11s. 1d.	12s. 10d.
Flats for aged persons	4s. 2d.	6s. 8d.
Three-bedroom non-parlour house	11s. 9d.	22s. 2d.
Four-bedroom parlour house	23s. 10d.	49s. 9d.
Temporary bungalows – two bedrooms.	16s. 10d	17s. 1d.
Standard type three-bedroom flat (in three storey block)	17s 9d.	35s. 9d.

Table 4.9: Liverpool City Council. Gross rents charged for houses and flats in 1951. Source: LRO, H643 HOU, Housing Progress 1864 – 1951, 48-49.

[128] LRO, H643 HOU, Housing Progress 1864 – 1951, 6, 25, 27.

Such disparities were due not only to the age, condition and facilities contained in the different types of accommodation that formed Liverpool's municipal housing stock, but also to the various Housing Acts under which the respective dwellings were erected and the level of subsidy attached to them. In this respect, Liverpool had determined to take only part advantage of one of the provisions of the *Housing Act 1936*, which allowed subsidies and rents received for houses built under different housing statutes (except for those built under Addison, which were controlled by the Ministry of Health), to be pooled through the statutory Housing Revenue and Equalisation Account. This the Housing Committee did, relative to the majority (but not all) of the flats subsidised through the Housing Acts of 1924, 1930 and 1935 only. [129] The policy of selective pooling would seem to have been fostered to expand the number of low-demand, low-rental dwellings available to further enable the 'sorting' process. To have 'pooled' all eligible dwellings across the entire housing stock would have enabled cheaper rents across all categories which in theory would have been much more affordable, therefore facilitating access more widely. This Liverpool chose not to do.

Rent setting

The gulf between the lowest and highest housing rents was also aggravated by Liverpool's approach to rent setting and the periodic imposition of rent rises. During the early post-war years Liverpool did not undertake a comprehensive review of its rent setting policy on any logical basis. Instead, rents were generally fixed by comparison with existing rents which themselves lacked reference to a common standard. [130] During the period 1945 to 1951, the policy adopted was to impose either

[129] LRO, 352 MIN/HOU, Housing Committee Minutes, 'Amendment of Rents 1945/46', 19 April 1945.
[130] See: LRO, H333.63 HOU, Rationalisation of rents and the introduction of a rent rebate scheme, 13 July 1961.

a flat rate increase across almost the entire housing stock or to increase rents on selected dwellings only. Such periodic increases were imposed usually to cover the increase in general rates and to fund a rise in repairs and maintenance costs, which had gone up substantially since 1945. Indeed, between the period 1945/46 and 1947/48, the cost of repairs and maintenance was reported to have increased by almost 150 per cent. [131] Conservative controlled Liverpool was also reluctant to increase the level of support provided by the general rate to finance municipal housing in the city. This would have potentially assisted in reducing overall rent levels. [132] In addition to widening the gulf between and within property types, the council's policy relative to rent setting also exacerbated the practice of sorting. The rents charged for the new permanent dwellings built during the period, were generally set at higher levels than the national average for similar house types. Described by Liverpool's Director of Housing as 'fair rentals for these improved types of houses (…) ', a three-bedroom permanent house completed in Speke in the first quarter of 1948 commanded a gross weekly rent of 23s.0d. [133] This was over 21 per cent higher than the 18s. 0d. per week quoted by Aneurin Bevan as the average gross council house rent in 1947. [134] Indeed, it was more than double the 10s. 0d. per week net guideline rent aspired to in the *Housing (Financial and Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1946*. However, the two-bedroom temporary prefabs provided in Liverpool were let at a net rent of 10s.0d. per week, equivalent to the national average for such dwellings. (13s. 9d. – 14s. 9d. gross). [135]

[131] LRO, 352 COU, Report of the City Treasurer and the City Architect and Director of Housing, Housing Repairs and Rents, July 1948, 2.
[132] Ibid, 4.
[133] LRO, 352 MIN/HOU, Housing Committee Minutes, 18 March 1948.
[134] LHASC, Research Series R.D. 41-82, 1947-48, 'Housing Finance: Rents of Council Houses', R.D. 62/July 1947.
[135] LRO, 352 MIN/HOU, Housing Committee Minutes, 12 July 1945.

Rent Arrears

To gage if municipal housing rents in Liverpool were generally more affordable during 1945 to 1951 than they were during the interwar period, an analysis of housing rent arrears during the period provides a guide, albeit a less than perfect one. However, it is an exercise worth undertaking given that rent arrears during the 1930s remained a stubborn problem. To undertake such an analysis, the official accounts of Liverpool City Council's Housing Committee in respect of financial years 1945/46 and 1950/51 have been examined. For the year ending 31 March 1946 Liverpool City Council reported total rent arrears of £32,211 that represented 3.32 per cent of the total expected rental income from council dwellings. [136] During the period 1 April 1950 to 31 March 1951 rent arrears totalled £24,725 that represented 2.074 per cent of expected income from housing rents. [137] The figures indicate that arrears of rent fell during the period by 1.246 per cent. However, the introduction in 1948 of a system of National Assistance, that included the provision of an allowance for rent, most probably had a positive effect on the rent paying capacity of the poorer tenant. Data on rent arrears does not, of course, provide a definitive answer to the question of affordability. Indeed, it provides only an indication of affordability in respect of 'in-situ' tenants, not those who aspired to become council tenants.

However, it seems that, in the absence of a rent rebate scheme, only the more affluent working-class households would have been able to afford the gross rent of one of the new permanent dwellings built during the period. At 23s. 0d. per week, for a three-bedroom house, such dwellings were relatively expensive (albeit reasonable compared to rents charged for comparable Addison houses in the early 1920s).They

[136] Ibid, 21 February 1946.
[137] Ibid, 21 June 1951.

were approximately 27 per cent higher than the national average and represented slightly less than 20 per cent of the average weekly wage of an adult male manual worker in the UK. (In Liverpool, the average wage would have been markedly less).[138] It seems also that the poorer working-classes continued to be allocated the cheaper, less desirable types of accommodation; a policy that continued to be actively facilitated through the 'sorting' system. However, because of the increased numbers of older, less desirable dwellings made available at lower rents, as a result of selective 'pooling' and a policy of arbitrary rent increases, it seems likely that access to council accommodation was overall marginally more widely available during the period.

The analysis has shown that in terms of access and affordability, the Labour government had little control over policy locally in these areas. Whilst the government aspired to rent levels of ten shillings (net) per week, the reality was that it had no powers of enforcement. This was also the case relative to the allocation of council dwellings. The advice from the government was that council dwellings should be allocated on housing need, but as we have seen in Liverpool, this was not necessarily the case.

Conclusions

The purpose of the chapter has been to determine how Labour's housing programme was translated at the local level and to ascertain if this resulted in changes to local housing policy and practice. This has been done by way of an analysis of Liverpool City Council's housing strategy relative to the council's approach on matters ideological, quantitative, and qualitative during the immediate post-war years. In so

[138] The average weekly wage of a full-time manual worker in the UK is recorded as being £6.7 (£6. 14s. 0d.) in 1948. See: Office for National Statistics (ONS): *Average gross weekly earnings 1938 – 2016*. [http://www.ons.gov.uk].

doing, an investigation of Liverpool's policy on both housing allocations and the fixing of municipal rents, including the city council's attitude towards rent relief, has sought to determine if those families most in housing need were on the one hand given priority status and on the other, able to afford to take on a council tenancy. This also provided the opportunity to explore claims that municipal rents were generally beyond the means of the poorest households and that rent rebate schemes went into decline during the period. [139] The assessment of both quantitative and qualitative performance has sought to establish to what extent plans for post-war housebuilding in the city were achieved. To afford context to the analysis, a brief historical background about Liverpool's development was provided together with details of housing progress in the city from 1919 to 1945, including the city council's approach during the 1920s and 1930s to its policy on rents and in qualifying access to municipal housing.

Quantitative performance

It is clear than in terms of quantitative performance, the number of permanent dwellings completed in Liverpool between 1945 and 1951 fell short of that which was planned by the city council in its post-war housing plan, published in 1944. At 9,498 permanent dwellings completed the total was well short of the 15,500 planned. It represented an annual average of 1,583 completions that denoted a deficit of 1,000 dwellings on that intended and 1,656 less than the annual average output achieved interwar. This was not surprising given the councils over ambitious post-war plans, the shortage of building labour and materials and the dearth of housing land within the city boundary. The long-running dispute with MT&CP about central area densities and

[139] Peter Malpass, 'The Wobbly Pillar', *Journal of Social Policy*, 32, 4, (2003,) 589 – 606; Peter Malpass, *Housing and the Welfare State: The Development of Housing Policy in Britain* (Basingstoke, 2005), 62 – 72.

population overspill numbers and the wrangle with Lancashire County Council over plans for the development of land at Speke and later at Kirkby further compromised Liverpool's housing drive. Furthermore, during 1945, 1946 and to a lesser extent 1947, progress was particularly slow. Indeed, this was testament to the initial inability of the Labour government to properly coordinate the housing programme with the availability of labour and materials. However, permanent completions achieved during 1949, 1950 and 1951 (when the dispute with MT&CP and Lancashire County Council was, by and large, resolved and when greater central control was exerted on the housing programme), showed a marked improvement. If one takes, for example, the total number of municipal completions in 1951 at 2,178 and add to it a further 20 per cent, representing private sector activity, at 2,613 overall completions, this signifies a number slightly more than the annual average planned in the 1944 post-war programme. Indeed, the number of municipal completions for 1949, 1950 and 1951 at 5,355 represented almost 69 per cent of the council's overall output. Put another way, Liverpool's quantitative performance, once the Labour government had taken action to stabilise the housing programme, equated (more or less) to, and in the case of 1951, marginally exceeded that which was initially planned. It was also significant that Liverpool embarked on a programme of slum clearance right the way through 1945 to 1951, despite there being no new specific subsidy for the demolition of slum dwellings. Nationally, little slum clearance activity took place during the period, so Liverpool's programme, whilst untypical, was nonetheless progressive. Indeed, the 2,004 insanitary dwellings demolished during the period represented a number equalling 14.18 per cent of total housing completions (temporary and permanent), which demonstrates how central slum clearance was to the city's housing strategy.

The contribution made to quantitative performance by Liverpool's temporary housing programme was substantial. The government's allocation of 3,648 temporary bungalows to Liverpool City Council represented more than 31 per cent of the total municipal output and, almost 26 per cent of the overall total for the city. This represented an amount two and a half times higher than the national average for temporary accommodation. Such numbers demonstrate both the urgent housing need in Liverpool when the war ended, and the level of destruction sustained in the city during the conflict. It also partly explains why Liverpool was keen to embark on the production of its own version of the temporary bungalow. However, it seems that the city's initial plan to erect 21,500 temporary bungalows during the five-year period following the wars end, whilst at the same time embarking on the construction of thousands of permanent dwellings, was both overly ambitious and ill judged, given the shortages of labour and materials, the priority afforded nationally to the permanent programme and the dearth of housing land within the city environs.

It can be concluded that Labour's housing programme had a profound effect on Liverpool's quantitative performance. As we have seen, housebuilding in the city during the period mostly mirrored the various stages that Labour's programme passed through. In the early stages progress was slow, with inadequate central control of the programme resulting in hundreds of dwellings locally standing unfinished for long periods. However, during 1947/48, when the national programme was stabilised and eventually brought under control, this was translated locally by the implementation of a strict quota system that ultimately led to a more stable annual output of completed dwellings and in the case of Liverpool, increased housing completions. As we have seen, there were several local circumstances peculiar to Liverpool that affected

housing progress, but it is clear that Labour's national programme had an acute influence on quantitative performance locally.

Qualitative performance

The analysis has clearly demonstrated that housing standards (notably space standards) in the new permanent dwellings built in Liverpool during the period represented a marked improvement on that which pertained in the 1930s. It was in the sphere of housing standards that Labour's housing programme had the most profound effect, transforming local housing policy and practice relative to space, facilities and equipment contained in newly built municipal dwellings. As we have seen, Labour was able to achieve this by making minimum housing standards (articulated in the *Housing Manual 1949*) a prerequisite for the receipt of housing subsidy from the national Exchequer.

It has been shown also that despite some shortcomings there was a definite movement to improve community standards in Liverpool during the period. In addition to that which the Labour government advised as good practice in the *Housing Manual 1949*, Liverpool's 1946 blueprint for the post-war reconstruction of the city that seems to have been heavily influenced by the Dudley Report, was the inspiration. The plans' championing of neighbourhood planning, by way of the creation of neighbourhood units through the sub-division of the proposed residential zones comprising a mixture of household types, signalled a break from the residualisation of the interwar period of which Dudley had been a major critic. However, Liverpool's stated commitment to 'as far as possible' ensure its new housing projects were tenanted by a typical cross-section of the population, whilst rhetorically progressive was, in reality, rendered rather

hollow by virtue of the informal practice of ‘sorting’ in the allocation of municipal tenancies.

In many cases, the provision of community facilities in the sub-urban neighbourhoods, a fundamental component of the concept of neighbourhood planning, lagged-behind the construction and occupation of the houses and other dwellings. In mitigation, housing did have priority over other construction projects during the period, so it was perhaps inevitable that this happened. Such facilities were however strategically planned and featured prominently in the blueprints for the neighbourhoods developed during the period. Furthermore, they signified a commitment to the ethos of neighbourhood planning and a definite move away from the construction of the ‘unobtrusive’ housing estates that had been synonymous with the 1920s and 1930s. Liverpool provides further evidence that neighbourhood planning was, in practice, an important feature of Labour’s post-war housing programme.

Access to municipal housing

It was in the sphere of access to municipal housing that Labour’s housing programme had the least impact on the ground and, consequently seems to have provoked little fundamental change locally. The analysis has shown that in terms of access and affordability, the Labour government had little control over local policy in these areas. Whilst the government advised a guideline rent of ten shillings (net) per week for a new three bedroom dwelling, the reality was that it had no powers of enforcement. This was also the case relative to the allocation of council dwellings. The advice from the government was that municipal dwellings should be allocated on the basis of housing need, but despite Liverpool City Council’s adoption in 1945 of a ‘points-based’ allocation system, it seems that this did not necessarily happen in the city. Liverpool

continued to operate (in parallel with the points-based scheme) the somewhat cynical system of ‘sorting’. As we have seen, this policy, that the city council had adopted in the 1920s, ensured that only the more affluent working classes were allocated the more expensive (and presumably more desirable) dwellings. The upshot of the council’s decision to make only limited use of rent ‘pooling’ was to increase the number of low-rent, less desirable dwellings (mostly flats), thus perpetuating its ‘sorting’ policy. This seems to have been Conservative controlled Liverpool City Council’s ‘informal’ response to calls for the implementation of a formal rent rebate scheme, which principally on ideological grounds the city council vehemently refused to do. The study of Liverpool did not provide any conclusive evidence about the rise or decline of rent rebate schemes nationally during the period. However, given that the policy of ‘sorting’ was said to be widespread, it seems unlikely that the prevalence of rent rebate schemes took on a rapid upward trajectory during the period.

In a perverse way, it appears likely that by way of steadily increasing the number of less desirable properties at low rents, access to a council dwelling in Liverpool was more widely possible (and affordable) than it had been during the 1920s and 1930s. That municipal rent arrears in Liverpool appear to have been a less stubborn problem than it had been interwar supports this proposition. Furthermore, in the absence of a formal rent rebate scheme, the implementation by the Labour government of the *National Assistance Act 1948*, that provided an element of financial assistance towards rent, ultimately helped make a municipal tenancy more sustainable.

CONCLUSIONS

The housing record of the Labour governments of 1945 to 1951 has, over many years, provoked much debate and indeed some controversy. This study has endeavoured to provide a comprehensive assessment of Labour's post-war housing record, facilitated by way of asking a series of relevant research questions and through the adoption of an original and innovative methodological approach by which to answer such. The research questions and methodology evolved following the undertaking of a systematic review of the historical and specialist housing literature covering the period. The literature review established that interpretations of Labour's housing record fall into three distinct categories. In summary, much of the literature assessed Labour's record as a quantitative underachievement, based primarily on the number of new permanent dwellings completed; some authors focused more on the quality of the housing provided; and some embed their analysis of houses built within the ideology of the welfare state. It is marked that the literature showed scant evidence of an endeavour to integrate these three positions. Indeed, there appeared to be a distinct lack of an attempt to quantify the qualitative aspects or to analyse how much quantity and quality are part of an ideology of welfare and wellbeing. Furthermore, the review of literature showed that beyond the quantitative, much of the assessment is predominantly based on a descriptive analysis and argued interpretation. This, it is considered, runs the risk of ignoring the complexity of the politics of housing and, of distinguishing the different interrelated elements that allows for the comprehensive assessment that this study aspires to provide. This was the catalyst to the evolution of the methodology implemented; one that can facilitate such perspectives on this important area of Labour history. Indeed, that is why the adoption of a methodological

approach, encompassing both a systematic descriptive analysis and an intersubjective methodology, comprises an integral component of this study.

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The analysis to establish by how far the housing policy of the 1945 to 1951 Labour governments was driven by an ideology based around welfare state notions, found a high level of correlation between the two. This challenges the views of those authors, particularly Donnison and Malpass, who have embedded their analysis of Labour's post-war housing record in the ideology of the welfare state.[1] Donnison's assertion that Labour's post-war housing policy suffered from a lack of radicalism, falling short of the reforms carried out in health, education, and social insurance; and those of Malpass that housing was (in terms of the welfare state), a 'wobbly pillar', are weakened by the comprehensive analysis carried out in chapter one of the study. The investigation found that the ideology of the welfare state, epitomised in its defining features of the malleability of society, economic intervention by the state, universal provision and the health and wellbeing of citizens, were inherently present across all four major areas of Labour's housing policy aims: quantity, quality, affordability and planning and the control of land use. That is not to say that Labour should not have gone further. Donnison's thesis chastises Labour for not bringing the private rented sector under public control. This study has established that Labour seriously considered such a course, but most probably rejected the proposal not on ideological grounds but on grounds of financial economy. However, on the back of this proposal, Labour did legislate to make council housing available for general needs by way of the

[1] D.V. Donnison, *The Government of Housing* (Harmondsworth, 1967), 163 – 168; Peter Malpass, 'The Wobbly Pillar', *Journal of Social Policy*, 32, 4, (2003,) 589 – 606; Peter Malpass, *Housing and the Welfare State: The Development of Housing Policy in Britain* (Basingstoke, 2005), 62 – 72.

Housing Act 1949. Likewise, Malpass' claims about unaffordable municipal rents and rent rebate schemes going into decline, thus preventing poorer households from accessing council housing, do have traction up to a point. In Liverpool, for example, rents for new permanent dwellings were well above the national average and, to compound the problem, Liverpool City Council vehemently refused to bring in a rent rebate scheme. These were matters which were left to the discretion of individual local authorities and over which central government had little or no control. This weakens the notion of universal provision and affordability, fundamental to welfare state ideology. However, Malpass, appears to neglect the fact that Labour did provide a generous subsidy (although ultimately inadequate) for a guideline weekly net rent in the public sector and legislated to control rent in the private sector. Furthermore, quantitatively, Labour built more than 1.2 million new permanent dwellings (over one-million council dwellings), and provided over 490,000 other units of accommodation, which more than likely helped facilitate greater access to council housing. Moreover, the Liverpool study did conclude that overall, access to municipal accommodation in the city was probably more available than it had been during the 1920s and 1930s. This was likely due in some part to Labour bringing in the *National Assistance Act 1948*, that included an element for housing rent. Although both Donnison and Malpass acknowledge Labour's outstanding qualitative performance, they appear not to have equated this fully with welfare state notions. Indeed, dwellings constructed to a high specification set in well-planned communities is universally acknowledged as contributing to improved health and wellbeing. In Liverpool, it was found that new permanent houses built in the city during the period represented a marked improvement on those built during the 1930s. The practical implementation of neighbourhood units with open spaces and community facilities was an integral

component of housing development in the city. This will have markedly benefited tenants' general health and overall community wellbeing. Is there then justification in Donnison's and Malpass' overall conclusion that ultimately, housing was a welfare state failure? Based on the analysis of correlation between Labour's housing policy aims and that of welfare state ideology and indeed the practical implementation of elements of such in Liverpool, it appears that Labour's housing policy was aligned both in theory and practice to the values and defining features of the welfare state. On this basis, there appears little justification in the judgement that Labour's housing record was a welfare state failure.

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The investigation into quantitative performance carried out in chapter two of the study was provoked by the claim by numerous authors that, as a result of building too few houses, Labour's post-war housing record has to be judged as an underachievement.[2] However, the analysis concluded that despite organisational and administrative failures, shortages of labour and materials and, measures brought in to curtail the housing programme following the financial crisis of 1947, Labour's quantitative performance represented a substantial achievement. This challenges the view of those authors who have branded Labour's housing record a quantitative failure. These include Marwick, who claimed that the universalist principle, embodied in the

[2] Henry Pelling, *The Labour Governments 1945 – 51* (London, 1984), 110; John Burnett, *A Social History of Housing 1815 – 1985* (London, 1986), 278 – 330; David Kynaston, *Austerity Britain: 1945-51* (London, 2007), 156; Peter Hennessy, *Never Again: Britain 1945-1951* (New York, 1993), 169 – 174; Alison Ravetz, *Council Housing and Culture: The History of a Social Experiment* (London, 2001), 95 – 97; Nicholas Timmins, *The Five Giants: A Biography of the Welfare State* (London, 2001), 148; Arthur Marwick, 'The Labour Party and the Welfare State in Britain, 1900 – 1948',*The American Historical Review*, 73, (1967).

preference for public over private sector housing, ‘foundered completely on the failure of the government to build enough houses.’ However, Marwick’s analysis appears to have overlooked the provision of over 490,000 additional units of accommodation, over and above the more than one-million new council dwellings constructed during the period. As such, Marwick asserts that Labour’s housing ideology was compromised. But, as we have seen, Labour’s post-war housing ideology was marked by more than quantity; it was characterised also by the desire to raise-up citizens through the provision of high-quality dwellings set in heterogeneous communities containing all the social and industrial facilities and amenities required for a better life. This study has assessed qualitative performance, in terms of housing and community standards, as representing a substantial achievement. Given that Labour presided over the building of more than 1.2 million new permanent dwellings mostly of a high qualitative standard, Marwick’s thesis is somewhat less pungent. Many of the authors who have branded Labour’s housing record a quantitative failure appear to have neglected that a high qualitative specification, particularly in terms of space, facilities and equipment meant also that post-war dwellings required more materials and labour and consequently, were markedly more expensive to construct compared to those pre-war. This study has shown that a typical three-bedroom house built in 1947 required twice as much labour and one third more materials to build and was more than three times more expensive than its 1939 equivalent. Therefore, even in the most favourable of economic circumstances, an enhanced qualitative will impact the quantitative; even more so given the economic austerity of the years immediately post 1945. It is palpable that claims of quantitative underachievement appear to be based on either a failure to meet public expectations or, that Labour did not totally eliminate the housing shortage, or both. The analysis of quantitative performance carried out in this study

has measured Labour's performance in terms of what was initially planned and that which was eventually achieved. As we have seen, the result was that in most cases achievement exceeded that which was planned. This measure also identified instances of quantitative underachievement: targets for the number of permanent prefabricated houses built or building during the first two post-war years and, the 1947 objective for the number of dwellings completed were not met. The Labour government's early targets were, given the immediate post-war economic dislocation, something of a stretch. It is not then surprising that there was an element of under-performance. Indeed, the study has shown that in Liverpool, the city council's initial housebuilding targets were naïve, to say the least. As we have seen, organisational and administrative shortcomings and, materials and labour shortages contributed significantly to unmet targets. Such problems were clearly replicated 'on the ground' in Liverpool where during 1946 hundreds of dwellings remained unfinished and where early quantitative progress was slow. However, when the housing programme nationally became more stable and balanced, quantitative performance in Liverpool improved substantially. Given that in quantitative terms most of the Labour government's planned housing targets were achieved and that in qualitative terms housing and community standards (which we have acknowledged impact quantitative outcomes) represented a substantial achievement, there is little foundation to justify the claim that Labour's housing record was an underachievement.

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In terms of qualitative performance, Labour's post-war housing record relative to housing standards has been universally viewed as a success. However, there is some scepticism about the record in terms of community standards (the development of neighbourhood units and mixed communities) . Here, Labour's embrace of the concept

of neighbourhood planning is commended, but its practical implementation less so. [3] The investigation into qualitative performance carried out in chapter three of the study, coincides with the aforesaid judgement on housing standards, but provides a more positive assessment of community standards. In this respect, the analysis found that neighbourhood planning was in many cases put into practice (in the form of neighbourhood units and mixed communities) in a variety of settings, including inner-city, outer areas and in the development of New Towns. This challenges the view of those authors sceptical about its practical implementation during 1945 to 1951. This holds importance relative to making a judgement about the overall success of Labour's qualitative performance.

Indeed, as we have seen, the study has identified that Labour's post-war housing policy was driven by an ideology based on welfare state notions. In terms of the practical implementation of that philosophy relative to housing and community standards, this study has established that overall qualitative performance represented a substantial achievement. In that sense, it can be confidently said that ideologically, Labour's desire (in terms of housing) to improve the health and wellbeing of its citizens was delivered by way of the provision of high-quality dwellings and communities. Aneurin Bevan, the Minister of Health was instrumental in driving qualitative performance. Indeed, it is clear that without his socialist ideological commitment and considerable political skills, housing and community standards would not have fared so well.

[3] Steven Fielding, Peter Thompson and Nick Tiratsoo, *England Arise! The Labour Party and popular politics in 1940s Britain* (Manchester, 1995), 102 – 107.

In carrying out the analysis of qualitative performance, the study measured standards planned against standards achieved. It is marked that relative to housing standards (space, facilities, and equipment in the home), almost all those planned were achieved and, in some respects, over-achieved. This was a remarkable feat, given the shortages of essential building materials, the increased cost of such and the general economic disorder of the period. In Liverpool, for example, the average post-war three-bedroom, two-storey house built to accommodate five person was approximately 200 square feet larger than the 1930s equivalent built in the city. Furthermore, such houses in the city comprised two separate toilets, which constituted a marked improvement on the standards of the 1930s. However, such improved standards did have consequences for quantitative performance, and as we have seen, Aneurin Bevan fought and won many a battle against reducing quality in favour of quantity.

It is, of course, acknowledged, given the extent of housing need, that the requirement to build new dwellings took preference over the provision of some of the community facilities that make up neighbourhood units. However, such facilities, including shops, pubs, community halls, clinics and civic buildings featured in plans and in many cases were incorporated in the initial phases of development. The examples of such provided in chapter three are testament to this. In Liverpool too, the general concept of neighbourhood planning was both embraced in the city council's proposals for the post-war reconstruction of the city and formed an integral part of the so-called 'self-contained' community at Speke and in the development of the Brook House estate.

The success of the post-war Labour government's qualitative housing record in terms of housing standards has been universally recognised. The analysis carried out in this study concurs with that view and furthermore, has identified practical examples of neighbourhood planning having been carried out in a variety of settings. On this basis,

it is considered that Labour's qualitative performance during 1945 to 1951 was an overall success and represents a substantial achievement.

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How Labour's housing programme was translated at the local level was considered in chapter four of the study. This was done by way of a case study that focused on Liverpool. It looked at Liverpool City Council's post-war housing strategy relative to the construction of permanent and temporary dwellings, housing and community standards, housing allocations and the fixing of municipal rents, including the council's attitude towards rent relief. In addition, the case study sought to establish if Labour's housing programme resulted in changes to local housing policy and practice. The case study found that it was in the spheres of quantitative and qualitative performance that Labour's housing programme had the most influence in Liverpool. However, it was established that Labour's programme was able to exert little control over housing allocations and overall, on the level of council rents.

Liverpool's quantitative efforts mirrored in most part, the course of the national programme. It made a slow start with many hundreds of dwellings standing incomplete during 1946. The rate of completions then made a surge from 1947 onwards and unlike the national programme reached its peak in 1951. Indeed, it was the point at which greater central control of the housing programme was exerted nationally, that Liverpool's quantitative performance improved. However, it would be inapposite to judge Liverpool as typical relative to quantitative output, for two principal reasons. Firstly, Liverpool was short of housing land within its own environs and was reliant on land outside the city boundary to progress its quantitative efforts. In this respect, a dispute with Lancashire County Council delayed progress being made. Secondly,

Liverpool was involved in a long-running quarrel with MT&CP over population density standards in the central areas of the city and was unable to fully progress its housebuilding strategy until this issue was resolved. Liverpool failed to meet its target for housing completions overall, which was not surprising given the impractical goal the city set itself in 1944. However, the output in 1951 of permanent dwellings matched the annual average completion rate for the first six post-war years in the 1944 programme. The twin issues of the imposition of greater central control and the resolution of the afore-mentioned local issues were central to this relative success.

Labour's housing programme afforded a profound influence in Liverpool relative to qualitative performance. As the case study has shown, housing standards, and those specifically relative to overall space in the home increased considerably on that provided in the city by the municipality during the 1930s . During the decade before the Second World War, the average three-bedroom house comprised approximately 760 square feet. Because of the Labour government's insistence on improved housing standards as advised in the *Housing Manual 1949*, such houses built in the city after 1945 were 200 square feet bigger overall than the 1930s equivalent. Furthermore, other facilities, including the provision of two toilets and the inclusion of outbuildings also enhanced qualitative performance. In terms of community standards, it appears that Liverpool was receptive to both the concept and in part, to the practice of the development of neighbourhood units, including the construction of a variety of types and sizes of dwellings (although it is acknowledged that Liverpool built a lot of flats), and the provision of community facilities and open spaces. This was influenced not only by the advice contained in the *Housing Manual 1949*, but also by the provisions of the *Town and Country Planning Act 1947*, including the requirement to produce a Local Development Plan. Chapter three of the study has revealed examples of similar

good practice by other local councils and New Town Development Corporations during the period. However, the case study found that Liverpool did not in practice fully embrace the idea of mixed communities. This was the result of an ideologically driven housing allocations process that facilitated access to the more desirable (and thus more expensive) council properties, only to the more affluent working-class households. A policy that had its origins in the interwar years. As we have seen, Merrett states that this practice was quite widespread throughout Britain during the period.[4]

Despite the adoption in 1945 of a points-based policy, it seems that 'ability to pay' continued to play a major role in Liverpool City Council's housing allocation process. Ideologically, then, Conservative controlled Liverpool appears not to have embraced Labour's philosophy of the provision of dwellings based on housing need. It appears also that it was on ideological grounds that Liverpool refused to implement a rent rebate scheme to assist poorer households. Furthermore, the city council was resistant to increasing the contribution from the general rate fund to further subsidise council housing. As we have seen, factors including increased materials and labour costs, that made the building of new permanent dwellings considerably more expensive, rendered unsustainable Labour's policy (supported by housing subsidy) of a guideline net weekly rent of ten shillings. Indeed, the case study found that the cost of renting a new municipal dwelling in Liverpool was 21 per cent more expensive than the national average, which at 18 shillings per week was 80 per cent more than the ten shillings guideline.

[4] Stephen Merrett, *State Housing in Britain*, 1979, 176.

In Liverpool, Labour's housing programme mostly influenced housing policy and practice in terms of qualitative and quantitative performance. The most profound change locally was in housing standards, specifically those relative to space and facilities in the home. There were changes too in respect of community standards. The city council embracing in part the concept of neighbourhood planning. Liverpool City Council's quantitative strategy regarding the construction of new dwellings was tightly controlled from the centre. This resulted in year-on-year increases in output. It appears that only superficial change occurred in Liverpool relative to housing allocation policy but, in terms of council rents, the city council appeared to follow a similar course to that which it had pre-war.

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The housing promise, contained in Labour's manifesto for the 1945 general election, *Let Us face the Future*, was bigger on rhetoric than it was on specifics. [5] However, four broadly defined policy areas were set out in chapter one of the study: Quantitative performance; Affordability; Qualitative performance and Planning and control of land use. It is in these areas that we shall consider the question: *Did the Labour governments of 1945 to 1951 achieve their housing aims?*

When Labour left office in October 1951, it had presided over the construction of more than 1.2 million new permanent dwellings. A further 490,000 units of accommodation of various types had also been provided, including more than 157,000 temporary prefabricated bungalows. The Labour government decided to adopt the target set by the wartime coalition government for the number of dwellings built or building in the two years following the end of the war in Europe. It also inherited the wartime

[5] The Labour Party, *Let Us Face the Future* (1945).

governments target for the temporary bungalows programme. Labour added the target of 100,000 prefabricated permanent dwellings built or building in the two years following the end of the European war. These targets were broadly achieved, apart from the target relative to permanent prefabricated dwellings which was underachieved. Later, in 1947, the first formal target was set for permanent completions. This target was not achieved, due mainly to the most severe economic turbulence that resulted in the adoption by the government of a new economic strategy, that had profound consequences for the housing programme. However, the housing target set for 1948 was considerably over-achieved and targets for 1950 and 1951 were also exceeded. The analysis carried out in chapter two of the study has argued that the comparing of outcomes planned with those achieved is an appropriate measure to evaluate quantitative performance. In so doing, the study has assessed the Labour government's quantitative record as representing a substantial achievement.

The Labour government, in an attempt to make council housing more affordable, introduced a housing subsidy that was calculated to produce a guideline net weekly rent of ten shillings for a new three-bedroom house. At the time, the subsidy was considered generous and was seen also as an incentive to boost quantitative output. It increased the money value of the Exchequer contribution from a ratio of 2:1 to 3:1 payable over 60 rather than 40 years. Easing the financial burden on local councils. As we have seen, a three-fold increase in house construction costs caused by an escalation in the price of labour and materials that was exacerbated by inadequate central control of the housing programme, rendered the ten shillings guideline rent completely unsustainable. The study has provided evidence in chapter one where it was established that average gross council house rents in 1947 were 18 shillings per

week. In chapter four, the study found that in Liverpool, a newly completed three-bedroom house was let at a weekly gross rent of 23 shillings. These figures represent amounts considerably more than the ten shillings guideline and illustrate the government's failure to exert control over rents in the municipal sector.

Although the government's priority was focused mainly on housing in the public sector, it nonetheless introduced legislation to protect tenants in the private sector. Such measures included the introduction of rent control on new houses built for private let. Such houses had been exempted from rent control during the period 1919 to 1939. Tenants of furnished properties were afforded protection by the introduction of rent tribunals. In addition, rent tribunals could extend the security of a tenant's lease on a rented property and review payments made by the tenant to the landlord in respect of accommodation, furniture, and other items. The rent tribunals were given powers to recover excess payments, by way of a reduction in rent. It is clearly the case that Labour acted robustly to afford protection to private sector tenants.

The Dudley report that appeared in 1944 was the seminal document that set the standard for post-war housing. Dudley's recommendations, that had been somewhat diminished (relative to space standards) by way of advice contained in the *Housing Manual 1944*, were quickly adopted by the Labour government in 1945. Labour set about ensuring that housing standards, particularly in terms of space, facilities and equipment were implemented in the new permanent dwellings built by councils across the country. It did this by way of the application of tight control over housing plans by the regional offices of the Ministry of Health and by attaching conditions to the approval of housing subsidy from the national Exchequer. In chapter three of the study, the housing standards planned were compared with those achieved. This was considered an appropriate measure to evaluate qualitative outcomes. Although the practical

implementation of neighbourhood planning lagged that of the development of housing, the analysis of qualitative performance concluded that overall housing and community standards represented a substantial achievement.

The *Town and Country Planning Act 1947* was arguably one of the most radical pieces of legislation affecting housing. The passing of the 1947 Act fulfilled Labour's manifesto commitment to implement a full programme of land planning and the pledge that housing should be dealt with in relation to good town planning, including pleasant surroundings, green spaces, and attractive layout. This more strategic approach to planning offered support to the concept of neighbourhood planning including improved housing and community standards. The statute was ideologically radical in that it vested the control of land use in public hands.

The 1947 Act became the foundation of modern town and country planning in Britain, and together with the *New Towns Act 1946* created a system of land use control and a machinery for positive town construction. The creation of new towns facilitated by the 1946 Act not only provided a further vehicle for the building of public sector housing for rent, but it also enabled the creation of more heterogeneous communities. In this respect planning, as a means to enhance the malleability of society was crucial to the success of Labour's housing programme.

It is clearly the case that the post-war Labour government's housing policy aims relative to quantitative performance, affordability, qualitative performance, and planning and the control of land use, resulted mainly in successful outcomes, but there were some failures. (See also Table 5.1).

Housing policy/aim	Planned	Achieved
Quantitative performance	(a) 300,000 permanent dwellings built or under construction by 30 June 1947. (b) 100,000 permanent prefabricated dwellings built or under construction by 30 June 1947. (c) 240,000 permanent dwellings built in 1947. (d) 140,000 permanent dwellings built in 1948. (e) 200,000 dwelling built in both 1950 and 1951. (f) 165,000 temporary houses by end June 1947.	(a) 105,000 houses built and 242,000 under construction by 30 June 1947. [6] (b) 22,446 permanent prefabricated houses completed and 42,565 under construction in England & Wales - 31 December 1947. [7] (c) 189,000 dwellings built in 1947. (d) 251,000 dwellings built in 1948 [8] (e) 205, 000 and 202,000 dwelling built in 1950 and 1951 respectively. (f) 157,000 temporary houses erected. [9]
Affordability	(a)Housing subsidy introduced in 1946 designed to provide for guideline net weekly rent of ten shillings per week. (b)No formal plans in manifesto for rent control in private sector	(a) In 1948 average gross council house rents were reported as 18 shillings per week. (b) A series of legislation introduced to control private sector rents.
Qualitative performance	(a)Minimum of 900 square feet in a three- bedroom dwelling. (b)In flats, room sizes same as houses for same number of occupants. (c) Outbuildings minimum 70 square feet. (d) Improvements re heating and cooking facilities, kitchen storage, bathroom facilities provision of two toilets in four-bedroom houses. (e) Neighbourhood units and mixed communities, easily accessible community facilities & amenities & houses of various types and sizes.	(a) 900 – 950 square feet standard & 1,030 square feet in larger dwellings. (b) In flats room sizes same as in houses & normally larger. (c) Outbuildings 50 and 70 square feet. (d) All recommendations incorporated in 1949 Manual & often exceeded, e.g. two toilets in larger three-bedroom houses to accommodate five persons. (e) 1949 Manual championed neighbourhood units and gave clarity on layout, structure, facilities, and dwelling types. Several developments modelled on neighbourhood unit and mixed communities concept.
Planning and the control of land use	Manifesto promised a full programme of land planning. There were no plans included for development of new towns.	Introduced radical planning legislation by *Town & Country Planning Act 1947* & with *New Towns Act 1946* a system of land use control and machinery for positive town construction created. This strategic approach to planning supported concept of neighbourhood planning & improved housing and community standards.

Table 5.1: Summarising pre-post analytical table of planned and achieved policy aims.

[6] Wartime coalition government's 'objective' of 750,000 additional dwellings set out in Cmd. 6609 was achieved by1948.
[7] Figures not available for Scotland. Assume 100,000 target marginally underperformed.
[8] Over-achieved by 111,000 dwellings (+79 per cent).
[9] Programme curtailed due to high costs and conflict with permanent housing programme.

Appendix 1

Summary of major housing legislation, 1919 to 1951[1]

This chronology represents a summary of the major housing legislation with respect to council housing in England and Wales during the period 1919 to 1951.

Housing and Town Planning etc. Act, 1919.

Often referred to as the Addison Act. A duty was imposed on local authorities to survey the housing needs of their area and to make and carry out plans for the provision of houses required therein, following the agreement of the Ministry of Health. Local councils were responsible for the fixing of rents subject to the approval of the Ministry of Health. Up until March 1927, rents were to be based on the controlled rents of pre-war housing, allowances being made both for the superior use-value of council dwellings and for variations among tenants in their ability to pay. All losses up to the product of a one penny rate were to be borne by the local authority and any further losses by the Exchequer.

Housing (Additional Powers) Act, 1919.

A major purpose of this statute was to provide a subsidy to private housebuilders. In addition, it provided local councils with the power to stop private building in their area when this interfered with the supply of available labour and materials for municipal housing schemes. Local authorities were also permitted to raise money for their housing programme by way of the issue of local bonds.

[1] See Stephen Merrett, *State Housing in Britain* (London, 1979), 309 – 314.

Housing Act, 1923.

Often referred to as the Chamberlain Act. The statute introduced Exchequer subsidies for housebuilding in a new form. As such, the subsidy was available to both private enterprise and local councils on dwellings with specified lower and upper limits of size, facilities, and equipment. The subsidy was set at £6 per annum per dwelling and payable for twenty years. A contribution from the local rates was not required. There were no limitations on rent levels or on the price at which dwellings might be sold. However, the subsidy was only available on those dwellings built before 1 October 1925. Furthermore, local councils were allowed to build only if they were able to persuade the Minister that this was preferable to unrestrained private building. As regards slum clearance, the Exchequer underwrote one-half of the annual loss on approved projects.

Housing (Financial Provisions) Act, 1924.

Often referred to as the Wheatley Act. Dwellings built by local authorities under the 1924 Act were afforded a subsidy of £9 per dwelling, per annum in urban parishes and in rural parishes £12. 10s per year. In both cases over a period of forty-years. The Exchequer subsidy was conditional on the local authority making a contribution from the local rates of 50 per cent of that provided centrally. The rate of subsidy was to be reviewed every two-years. Average rents were to be fixed relative to controlled rents in pre-war dwellings unless this led to an annual rate subsidy of in excess of £4. 10s per dwelling. The 1924 Act envisaged a large growth in housebuilding by local councils. It empowered the Ministry of Health to end its subsidy if housing completions

were less than 190,000 in the two-year period 1925-26, 255,000 in 1928-29, 360,000 in 1931-32 and 450,000 in 1934-35.

Housing Act, 1930.

Often referred to as the Greenwood Act. The criteria for designating clearance areas were redefined. A duty was placed on local councils to rehouse all those displaced by slum clearance schemes. Annual subsidies were to be paid at a rate of £2. 5s. per person rehoused in urban parishes and in agricultural parishes £2. 10s per person. In both cases over forty-years. At the point when the cost of acquiring and clearing sites exceeded the sum of £3,000 per acre a further subsidy of £1. 5s. per person, per annum was payable for those rehoused in flats. The annual contribution from the local rates was fixed at £3. 15s per dwelling for forty years, regardless of the size of the Exchequer subsidy. As regards dwellings provided by rural district councils for the agricultural populace, the county council was compelled to pay £1 per dwelling, per year for forty-years. Rent levels were required to be reasonable and local councils were given powers to grant rent rebates. Each local authority with a population of over 20,000 was to produce a plan for dealing with slum clearance and for providing additional houses during the following five-year period. This exercise was to be repeated at five-year intervals. In addition, the 1930 Act set out criteria for ‘Improvement Areas’ where extensive demolition was deemed inappropriate.

Housing (Financial Provisions) Act, 1933.

This statute repealed the 1924 subsidy on all dwellings for which plans had not been approved by 7 December 1932. The Act required all local councils to produce an area survey to assist in the abolition of the slums over a five-year period. The surveys replaced the programmes required by the 1930 Act. A building society scheme was also introduced providing cheap finance for investment for rental by private enterprise.

Housing Act, 1935.

The Act made it a duty of local councils to survey the extent of overcrowding in their municipalities and to make plans for providing ample accommodation. On completion of the five-year programme to abolish the slums a five-year programme to abolish overcrowding was to follow. Subsidy was made available to local councils to reduce overcrowding only in three special cases: if it was necessary to build flats, a subsidy adjusted to site cost was offered; an annual subsidy not more than £5 per dwelling could be given to local councils if their programmes and financial resources meant the liability imposed on the rates would be unsustainable; where new houses were provided to reduce overcrowding amongst agricultural workers an annual subsidy of £2 to £8 per dwelling for forty-years could be given, with a mandatory proportionate rate contribution. Overcrowding was defined to exist where either: (a) it was impossible for persons of opposite sex of at least ten-years of age (excluding married couples) to sleep in separate rooms. Kitchens were counted as rooms if they could be used as living rooms; or (b) the number of persons per room (not including babies under 12 months and counting children aged one to ten years as one-half), exceeded two in a one-room dwelling, three in two rooms, five in three rooms, seven and a half in four rooms, ten in five rooms. In addition, the 1935 Act made some changes in the terms

of compensation in compulsory purchase and required the introduction of a single Housing Revenue Account for each local authority.

Housing Act, 1936.

An amending and consolidating Act.

Building Materials and Housing Act, 1945.

The 1945 Act made financial provision for the Ministry of Works to purchase in bulk both building materials and equipment, including complete prefabricated bungalows. The so called ‘prefabs’ could be supplied to local authorities at reduced prices .

Housing (Financial and Miscellaneous Provisions) Act, 1946.

The 1946 Act introduced a standard annual subsidy of £16. 10s. per house, to be supplemented by a mandatory contribution from the local rates of £5. 10s. payable over sixty-years. In addition, special subsidies were payable for dwellings built for the agricultural population, housing in impoverished areas, flats on expensive sites, multi-storey blocks of flats with lifts and for houses built on sites where subsidence was a risk. An additional capital grant payment was also payable on certain categories of permanent prefabricated houses.

Housing Act, 1949.

This Act gave the local authorities powers to provide housing accommodation for any member of the community, not exclusively for the 'working-classes'. It also afforded financial assistance for the improvement or conversion of houses by either local councils or private individuals. Approved schemes carried out by local councils received a subsidy from the Exchequer of three-quarters of the annual loss estimated to be incurred, payable every year for twenty years. In addition, subsidy was made available for the provision of hostels by a local authority and for houses constructed in stone or other materials to preserve the local aesthetic.

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