

## Golden Lane Estate Review – January 2023



The Golden Lane Estate in the City of London was designed by Chamberlain, Powell and Bon, and constructed between 1952 and 1962. The estate has been under the management of the City of London Corporation since its completion.

The estate shares similar design dynamics as Gibberds Somerford Grove Estate in Hackney. Gibberd had taught and influenced Chamberlain, Powell and Bon. (This is subject of a later comparison).

Built on a large bomb site that was acquired from the neighbouring Finsbury area, the estate was designed to take advantage of the existing multiple basement levels that were already in place from destroyed storage warehouses etc. this was to create varied height social spaces. The resulting urban landscape was designed to be minimalist in nature and was never intended to be viewed as a suburban environment.

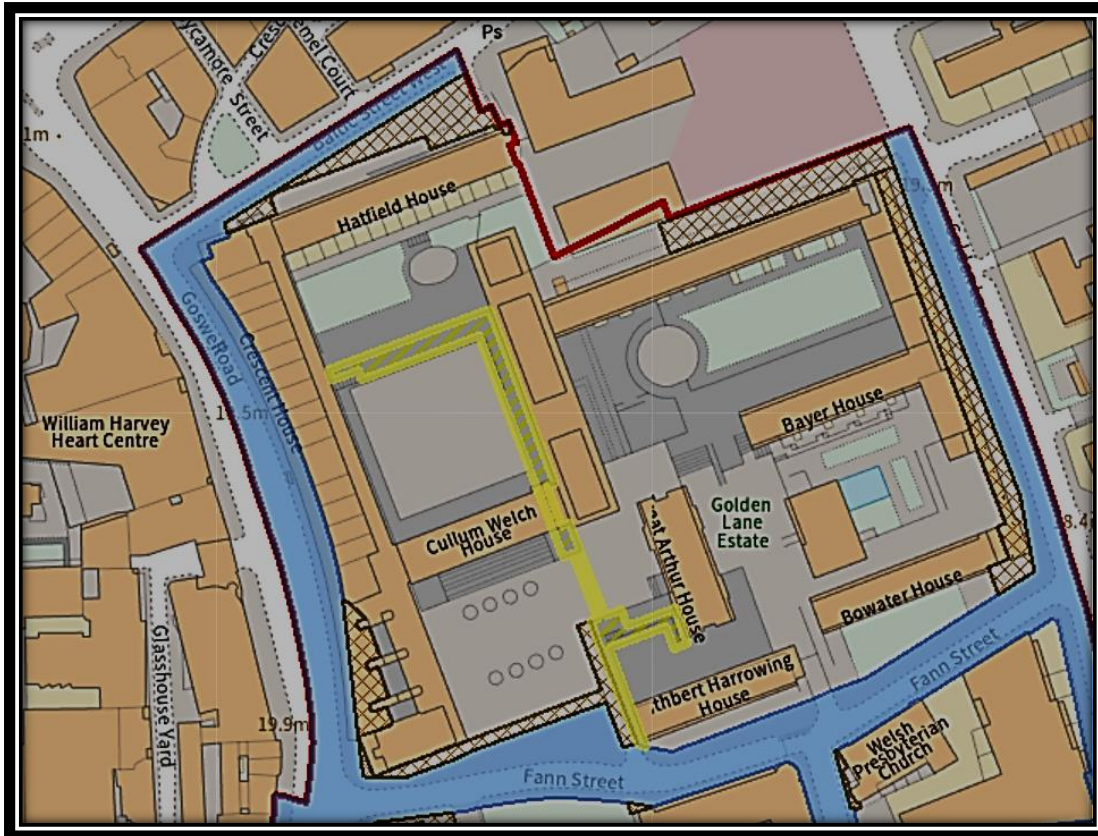
The central eye catching building, Great Arthur House, was initially the tallest public housing in Central London. The high tower was raised in height to allow for more open space within the estate. The remaining tenant blocks on the estate are low rise in design with shared walkways on each level.

The design and construction of the estate is thought to have heavily influenced the design of the neighbouring Barbican estate.

The estate is wholly private, formed of multiple blocks, it maintains a 50/50 split of socially owned and privately owned accommodation. The estate has a grade two listing for the majority of the plot, which limits scope and opportunity for change.

Golden Lane is a wholly permeable site, designed to allow permissive access at certain points.

There is a City walkway that traverses the estate from the northern end of Crescent House on Goswell Road and extends into the estate on the -1 level, this allows access to the Golden Lane sports centre/swimming pool continuing along Golden Lane tennis courts, below Cullum Welch House, returning pedestrians to street level beside Great Arthur House and Cuthbert Harrowing House.



When viewing the estate one tends to reflect to Oscar Newman's study on defensive space theory, the apparent large open areas within the estate that bear no signs of ownership or control and the lapse of personal responsibility that results from it. By comparison within the estate, the well maintained low rise accommodation, adjoined personalised garden spaces that has resulted in extraordinarily low crime rates, which has been maintained by residents enjoying tight control and ownership, whilst adopting positive relationships with estate management and their local police service.

In order to begin to look at the design out crime/antisocial behaviour potentials within the estate, it is equally important to understand the limitations imposed by the current Grade two listing status that was granted, covering various buildings and areas. I have attached the listing below, which would restrict development opportunities.

## Listing

### PRINCIPAL BUILDINGS

All the buildings on the site are separately listed, along with related sections of walls and raised pavements.

- Crescent House (flats, National Heritage List for England (NHLE) entry 1021941) including the ground floor shops and Shakespeare Public House is listed Grade II\*;
- Hatfield House (maisonettes, NHLE entry 1021942) including the garden wall to the rear, the brick and concrete ramp to the underground car park and the service road to the shops are listed at Grade II;
- Basterfield House (maisonettes, NHLE entry 1021943), including the steps to the courtyard garden are listed at Grade II;
- Bayer House (maisonettes, NHLE entry 1021944) including the raised pavement on the north side and steps on the south side that lead down to the pond garden, the decorative pavements set with planting and further steps to the community centre and pool are listed at Grade II;
- Great Arthur House (flats, NHLE entry 1021945) the List entry includes the roof garden and boiler house, is listed at Grade II;
- Stanley Cohen House (flats, NHLE entry 1021946) including the retaining walls to the estate fronting the estate are listed at Grade II;
- Bowater House (maisonettes, NHLE entry 1021947) the List entry includes the steps leading down to the garden, all listed at Grade II;
- Cuthbert Harrowing House (maisonettes, NHLE entry 1021948), the List entry includes the steps down to the garden and the access ramp to the underground car park, all at Grade II;
- Community Centre and pond surround (NHLE entry 1021949) includes the stepping stones, listed at Grade II, Recreation Centre and Tenants Hall (NHLE entry 1021950) listed at Grade II;
- Cullum Welch House (bedsits, NHLE entry 1021951) the List entry includes the underground car park and ventilation shafts above, the steps down from the courtyard to the games court and bin stores, all at Grade II;
- The Bastion (NHLE entry 1021952) including the granite sett paving, seats, steps and ramp are all listed at Grade II.

The names of the blocks are those of the streets that the estate replaced: Great Arthur, Bayer, Basterfield and Hatfield, or members of the City Corporation, including Sir Noel Vansittart Bowater, who laid the foundation stone in 1953.

The early blocks are highly glazed and brightly coloured, with Great Arthur House clad in appropriately golden yellow curtain walling. Cullum Welch and Crescent houses mark CPB's transition towards a tougher concrete aesthetic, and the higher grade for Crescent House reflects its influence on the later Barbican Estate, listed at Grade II.

The only landscape elements of the scheme which are not listed are: the south-west courtyard surface; the southern vehicular access from Fann Street and the central, surface vehicle car parking



area; the paved courtyard areas south of Cuthbert Harrowing House and the grassed area south of Bowater House: the former children's play area; the paving and service road north of Basterfield House and the triangular paved area north of Hatfield House.

(Reference – Historic England - [Golden Lane Estate Designed Landscape, Non Civil Parish - 1468840](#) | [Historic England](#))



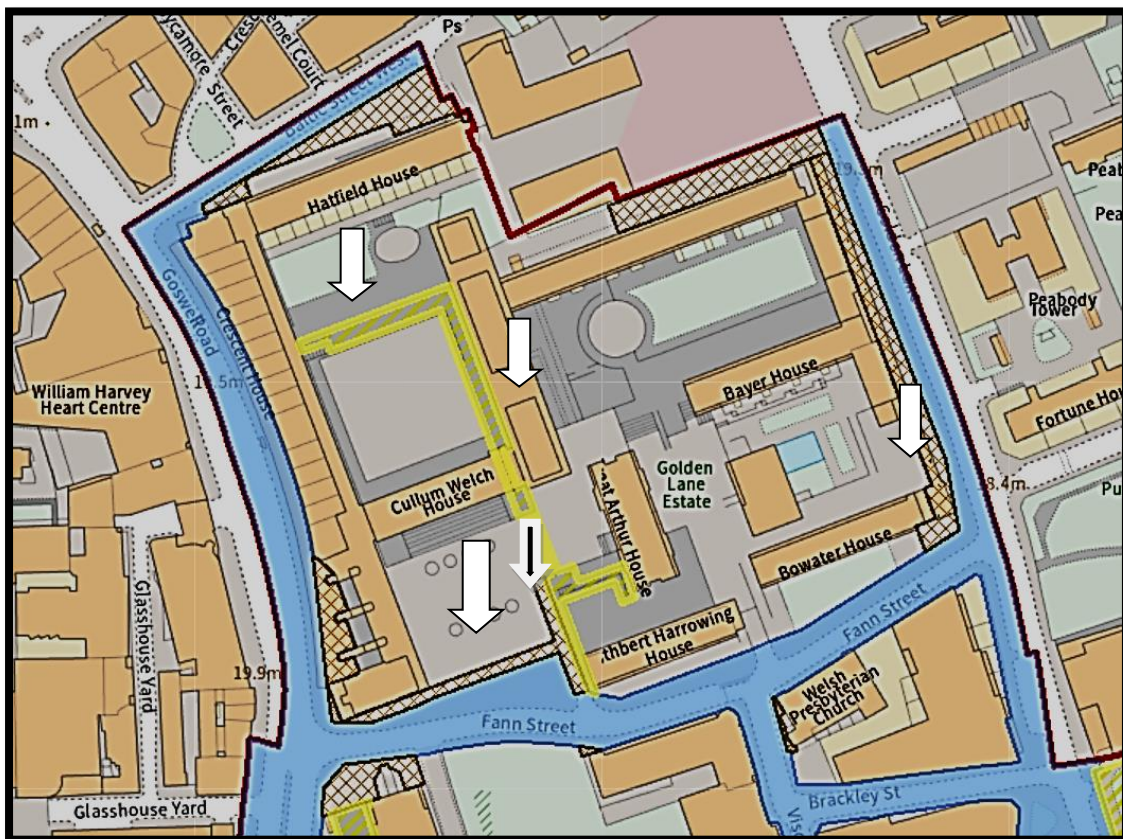
**Current issues on the estate that are affecting the local community:-**

Residents of the estate have raised a number of issues that have caused them varying degrees of concern and stress.

- Unauthorised filming within the estate
- Loitering of non-residents
- Drugs misuse – Casual passing foot traffic and active drug dealing
- Antisocial noise pollution

Alongside the issues raised, the following locations that have been flagged as associated activity spaces (nodal areas).

- South West Court – The space to the rear of the Shakespeare Public House/Crescent House
- The underground carpark, (access via Fann Street and Baltic Street West, beneath Hatfield House)
- The north west pathway from the rear of the shop parade, accessed via Goswell Road
- The south eastern communal areas of the estate, accessed via Golden Lane.
- The sheltered podium area of the estate adjoined to the sports centre.



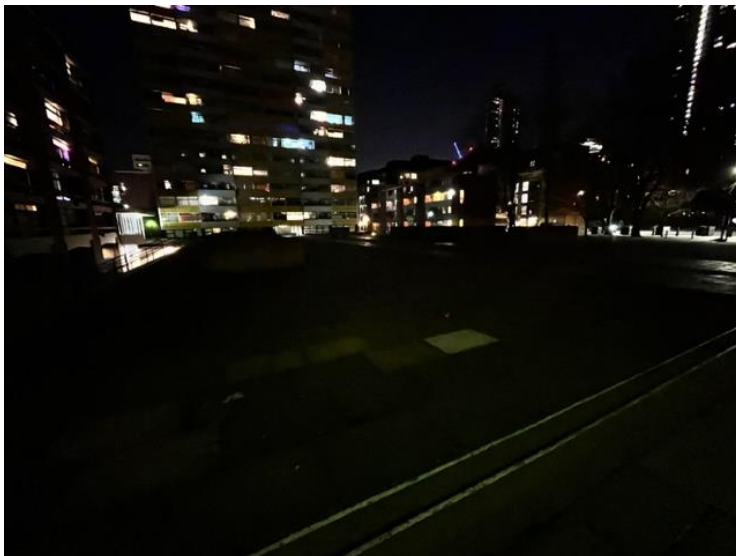
Unauthorised filming within the grounds of the estate has been noted as a significant issue by the Golden Lane Estate Residents Association (GLERA). This issue has caused some amount of confrontation and consternation between those there filming music videos for social media and residents who have been impacted by noise pollution and a general feeling that their private space has been trespassed.

Notable areas for this activity within the estate have been the south west court of the estate and also the carpark areas within the basement areas. It is surmised that these areas are attractive backdrops for certain music genres, especially within the Grime or Drill scene.

Persistent use of the areas around the south west court of the estate, the vehicular ramp to the underground car-park area from Fann Street and also the car park areas linked have been noted by residents.

### **Observations and potential for change**

#### **South West Court**



*South West Court - GLE*

At Street level on the south west court of the estate abutting Crescent House and bordering Fann Street, there is an undefined space which has for many years attracted pedestrian foot traffic and causal users of the space. Due to the nature of the site and its apparent public appearance, this is currently limited opportunity to detract unwelcome/unwanted traffic and visitors. A simple yet potentially effective solution would be to introduce a clear demarcation of the area, with the use of a low level fence, running from the rear of the Shakespeare Public House, along to the existing bollard line beside the car park entrance would begin to define the space and provide opportunity to introduce signage and rule setting. Whilst the fence in itself will not offer meaningful restriction, it would introduce a passive one and define the space as a private area. The fence should be sympathetic to the design of the estate, but there is an opportunity to design one which would really encapsulate the surrounding architecture.

A simple Court style, wrought iron fence, no more than a meter in height would in my opinion be sufficient.



Lighting is a major issue after dark within this area of the estate and is a fairly common issue across the footprint.



*South West Court – from Crescent House*

Crime studies on the effects of improved street lighting generally (Welsh, B. and Farrington, D.F. 2008) indicated that overall the introduction of street lighting had a positive effect on crime levels, generally reducing them by 21% on average. It should be noted that a further study was conducted prior to this (Painter and Farrington 2001) which indicated that depending on what type of lighting introduced, the financial savings on reduced crimes greatly exceeded the cost of lighting installation and maintenance. The general feeling of safety of the estate would be significantly improved by improved lighting.



There is a distinct lack of formal surveillance on the Golden Lane Estate and whilst generally in prior surveys, residents have been generally against the introduction of it, it should be considered as a potential option. Placement of the cameras could be done with care and consideration should be given to their placement on local authority highways where possible.

Should a tall CCTV mast be erected on Fann Street, it could potentially be used to cover areas of the estate within it's line of sight. Careful placement of the camera would be needed due to the current treeline.

I would highlight that an effective lighting strategy is intrinsically linked with an effective CCTV strategy should they be considered. CCTV will not work without the other.



## The Underground Car Park



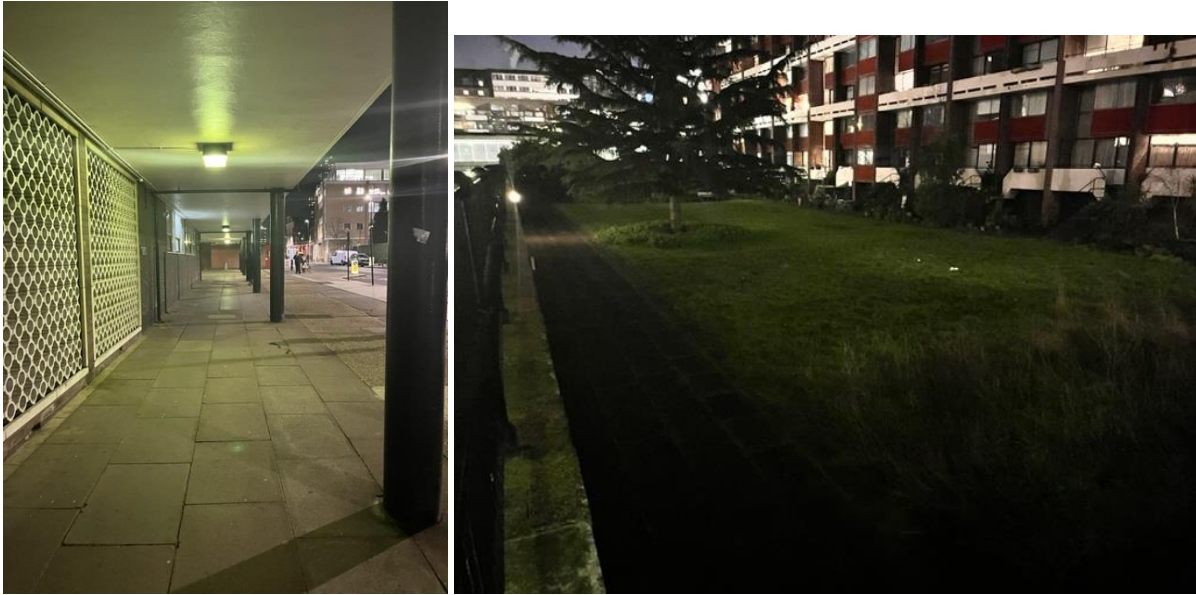
Whilst at the site I have noted that there is access control to the car park beneath the site, albeit, this has been not in operation at periods and is very permeable to cycle and foot traffic. CCTV within the basement car park area is very limited and unmonitored. Lighting again is poor, with some lights still operating with the sodium vapour style/orange bulbs. Whilst poorly lighting an area, orange light does cause colour perception issues and are not recommended.

I would recommend that a lighting strategy is developed to introduce new LED lights to improve the general lighting and also to provide a feeling of safety to those using the carpark. In order to rid the car park of the “urban” perception, consideration should be given to a coat of paint in a light grey/white. This would again raise lighting levels and provide a feeling of “good upkeep”.

It is understood that the car park and access road are listed, but application should be made for change to improve the location.

Whilst these areas are private, there is limited signage, no physical definition of the space and free and unfettered access.

**North-west Podium seating area and covered area above the Leisure Centre**



The eastern side of the estate, bordering Golden Lane is a quiet zone, that has in the past attracted those misusing illicit substances and other youth using the quiet darkened area to gather. Since the completion of the Queen Elizabeth Line (Crossrail) the space has been increasingly used as a cut through for commuting pedestrian traffic and was included in the routes, albeit going through a private estate.

Whilst it can't be denied that there is merit in pedestrian foot traffic during the day to provide a natural form of surveillance, acting as a deterrent to those who would engage in unwanted behaviours, it cannot be ignored that the passing traffic would have little invested in bringing this to the attention of the authorities. Weighing this up, the natural surveillance does weigh more in favour of being there, but this would cease once light levels on the estate dropped to a point where such activity could not be viewed with ease.

Consideration could be given to the closure of these gates past a certain time at night. Clear indication of the closure times could be clearly advertised to warn pedestrian traffic in advance.

Again this area does suffer from poor lighting after dark, with Basterfield Gardens being completely devoid of light at night. Whilst some may appreciate this, the space then is significantly underutilised after daytime hours, which in some instances lead to others occupying a space. This can also provide a feeling of being unsafe due to a lack of visibility. In my opinion dusk till dawn lighting should be installed within the Basterfield Garden space to increase visibility, ensuring that this space can be actively used to its full potential by residents.



The walkway leading behind the parade of shops beneath Crescent House has long been an area of activity. It forms the central access point to the Golden Lane Leisure facility (Fusion).

It was highlighted as part of the estate that was actively used by non-residents to utilise as an activity space during the day, particularly in warmer months. Whilst little harm was identified as a result of this activity, nocturnally the space was highlighted as a concern by residents.

It was explained that groups of youths will gather at the location to engage in antisocial behaviour and filming.

The noise and other behaviour generated in this zone cannot be underestimated due to the close proximity of the residents of Hatfield House to the north.

Whilst this area is subject of the grade two listing, potential for consideration to the addition of lighting and installation of CCTV.

There is little one could do architecturally to this area to effect change without breaching the listing.

There are some difficulties in the installation of lighting on certain areas of the estate. The estate is listed and the landscapes around the estate are included in the main. Another issue is the potential impact that this would have on residential blocks on the Golden Lane estate. The design of many buildings and locations of the apartments/flats, would mean direct light pollution affecting them. Whilst in the studies on light generally indicated a reductive effect on crime, it should be noted that crime on the estate is incredibly low and increasing the lighting, could potentially increase activity.

The area above Fusion Leisure which is covered and well lit. This has reportedly become an area of congregation for young people. This space is included within the listed status and is barred from environmental change. The area is one that I would generally say is unnecessary and should be

closed off to deny access as it services no useful purpose. As it stands, the introduction of planters to try and break up the space could be a consideration and prevent gathering.



### **The Cost effectiveness of CCTV.**

The introduction of CCTV onto the Golden Lane Estate is an interesting question. Whilst the majority of studies into the effectiveness of CCTV show reduction in crime, this was only when other measures were implemented at the same time, such as fencing, lighting, security/policing patrols. Interestingly CCTV had little to no significant impact on crime statistics within housing estates. (Piza, E. L., Welsh, B. C., Farrington, D. P., & Thomas, A. L. (2019))

Further studies in Australia, concluded that the deterrent effect of CCTV will fade after a period of time and may cause displacement of the issue. The studies concluded that CCTV had little effect on antisocial behaviour on its own. (Lawlink 2000)(Tilley 1999).

In conclusion, all of the studies showed some effect on crime reduction, but to vary effect. Vehicle crime was most reduced, whilst violent crime and antisocial behaviour the least, this coupled with the minimal effect found on housing developments, would conclude that within this area, it would potentially not be cost effective or maintain any initial reductive effect.

### **Comparison with Somerford Grove.**

The Somerford Grove Estate, Hackney was designed and built within a similar period to the Golden Lane Estate and shares some common features. I have selected this estate due to the shared design features and similar architectural approach. The estate does not have any listing from Historic England.

The Somerford Grove Estate is situated north of the City of London within the Metropolitan Borough of Hackney. Occupying nine acres of land cleared for development following the war, it was built between 1947 and 1949, the post-war estate breaks from the existing pattern of long straight streets lined with two- and three-storey terraced houses. Instead, Frederick Gibberd grouped the new buildings to form a series of closes and courtyards, each with their own character; axial views across the site are contrasted with these more intimate enclosed spaces. The landscape and floorscape are designed to create visual interest – the latter designed to correspond with the facades of the

Comprising a mixture of three- and four-storey modern flats, terraced houses and bungalows with gardens and pitched roofs, the scheme can be seen as an exemplar of ‘mixed development’, as well as an important contribution to English post-war modernism.

The estate enjoys a very well defined space from Kingsland Road, with walled gardens and was originally open at the front to allow residents to access the estate from Kingsland Road. This entrance has since been closed with palisade fencing. It is unclear why this was done, but one can only surmise that it resulted from complaints of unwanted persons gathering or entering the site from this point.

The estate, for the majority of residents, is now accessed via Somerford Grove and Gardens. The estate enjoys a closed and private feeling, with well-tended walled garden spaces, used predominantly for recreation. Whilst the majority of the estate is inhabited by social tenants, it does have an incredible feel of ownership.

During summer months, its reported that the gardens are vibrant with colourful flowers and vegetable gardens that the residents tend to.

Whilst surrounding areas are relatively high in crime, the Somerford Estate has maintained low crime levels, this could be as a result of active ownership and definition of space by the local community.

### **Conclusion**

Whilst there is opportunity for environmental change within the estate, the constraints of the listed status will limit opportunity. It is my belief and opinion that establishing a less permeable estate will have some effect on crime and antisocial behaviour, but this would have to be coupled with a robust lighting strategy where possible, the introduction of some form of formal surveillance and also the increase in patrols from police and security during the effected time periods.



Community planting projects, to introduce active spaces within the permitted locations, should be encouraged. Turning the current drab environments within the estate, into vibrant colourful spaces would in my opinion do much for neighbourhood development.

The definition of the space should be the first approach. The general public have such a perception that the estate is open for public use, the definition and re-adoption of ownership by residents is key to the area being a private space.

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