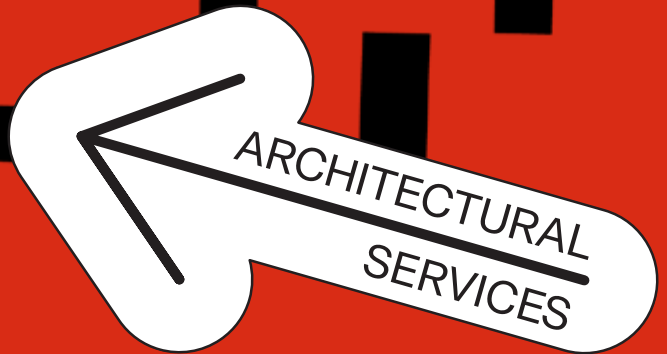
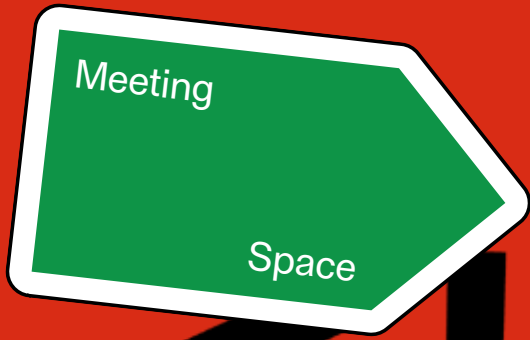


# *A Dispatch from the Site Office*



A Dispatch from the Site Office  
Master of Architecture Thesis by Adrian Pelliccia  
6/1/2024

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Special thanks to Leeland McPhail, Hasan  
Askari, Alex Croft, Jacq Hall, and all my friends  
at the BEB for their ongoing support and  
feedback

For Charles, who reminds me that everything is  
possible

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L: "Un Air Rose,"  
Bernard Lassus,  
1965

R: Place Leon Aucoc,  
Lacaton & Vassal,  
1996

In his essay "The Minimal Intervention," Swiss sociologist Lucius Burckhardt argues for using design as a tool to retrain the eyes of experts, bureaucrats, and politicians to better understand the existing built environment in order to eventually shift focus away from the addictive promise of change. As development and financial incentives have grown ever more tightly intertwined with one another, the willingness of city planning authorities and developers to use construction as the default solution to any urban problem only grows stronger.

Lacaton & Vassal's Place Leon Aucoc might be read as an especially emblematic (if extreme) example of the "minimal intervention" approach. When asked to "beautify" a public square in Bordeaux, the designers embarked on a rigorous close study of the square's existing conditions, and ultimately recommended that practically nothing at all be done. Their final design proposal, which was adopted and implemented,

consisted of a series of guidelines for maintenance and care for the on-site materials and nothing else.

Elements of this philosophy are also evident in Peter Elliott's work on the RMIT campus in central Melbourne. Over the course of almost two decades, Elliott's design practice made a series of incremental adjustments to the common spaces linking disparate campus buildings across the interior of a single city block. Budget and administrative limitations slowed the pace of work, and those delays ultimately resulted in a series of contributions to the urban fabric that feel like a genuine reflection of community use.

The resulting network of spaces can be read as an accumulation of "minimal interventions," each the product of an ongoing close engagement with the space and its real conditions. Crucially, the work never took the form of a comprehensive master plan, conceived to be implemented in one fell swoop. Instead, it's a cumulative patchwork of small contributions



that work in tandem to produce a tangible sense of place.

51N4E's project "Zin in Noord" charts a clear set of directives for engaging with real local histories and experiences manifest in the built environment. The practice performed a number of significant location-specific interventions in Brussels' disused World Trade Center at a range of different scales; the accumulated set of interventions went far beyond the typical community engagement process pursued by most architect-developer partnerships, and generated an alternative method for planning and designing the next phase of the building's life.

Assemble's ongoing work with the Granby Four Streets Community Land Trust in Liverpool situates local history and personal experience at the center of a process of ongoing reimagination and long term redevelopment. While Assemble initially developed a comprehensive long term plan for the area on behalf of the CLT,

their collaboration has focused on enhancing the neighborhood's existing qualities, and been driven in large part by long term residents. This place-sensitive process is also evident in the visual language the practice has used to represent this work. Because the bulk of the project's work takes place at the organizational scale, the subtlety of the intervention (and its tangible impact on the neighborhood's dynamic civic life) never proposes a wholesale reimagining, factors made all the more relevant by their legibility in the drawing.

In her 2020 essay "Toward an Office of The Public Architect," Ann Lui establishes the case for an architecture practice that acts as "a center for all things civic in the built environment." Her framework draws parallels to the emergence of the public defender service, and uses building code enforcement as a lens through which to understand the function of this office in community life. The Public Architect, she argues, can serve as a bridge between urban planning

L: RMIT Campus,  
Peter Elliott, 1995-  
2015

R: 51N4E, Zin in  
Noord, 2020

## INTRODUCTION



and the public. Architects command significant material knowledge and expertise not readily available in many other civic sectors, and are well positioned to understand and rearticulate the scope and complexity of the building and design process for a wider public.

In the UK, and in London especially, many of these tensions have come to a head in the process of social housing regeneration. The default policy of maintenance in London's social housing schemes right now is one of "regeneration," wherein homes that were previously developed to serve a social good are demolished or redeveloped into multipurpose districts zoned for various commercial purposes and loosely regulated on the open market. Residents are "decanted," placed in short term housing for years at a time, or displaced from their communities altogether. "Right to return" is often vaguely enforced and regulated, and frequently subject to new, more expensive market rates. New "affordable" properties frequently remain out

of reach, and can cost as much as 80% of the market rate. In estates where the question of regeneration comes to a balloted vote, residents are given the choice between two ends of a false binary: accept the highly disruptive and opaque process of regeneration and potential demolition, or continue to endure a regime of deliberate neglect, decay, and disrepair. The practice frequently drives displacement and disturbance in communities across the city.

The twin problems of housing access and affordability are often reduced to a question of supply and demand. Build more apartments and the market will correct itself, the popular thinking goes. It's a position that has informed much of the thinking around regeneration efforts at the local and national levels, and has generated schemes that pursue the construction of altogether new properties in a manner that's often blinkered and void of context. While the need for additional housing can't be overlooked, it's also impossible to ignore the fact

## A DISPATCH FROM THE SITE OFFICE



that many of these schemes center on tearing down an existing estate altogether in order to make room for new, privately managed high-density apartment blocks.

Any regeneration strategy that advocates for the destruction of existing housing during a crisis of limited supply ought to be examined critically and probed for alternatives. Besides sitting at odds with the supply and demand argument, demolishing an entire estate is a massively destructive act that drives a series of equally disruptive social and environmental effects.

This project intends to reframe the process of "regeneration" and its attendant political, social, and historical implications, by proposing a series of interventions that critique its most foundational assumptions and ideals. These explorations will happen at the scale of a single council estate currently slated for regeneration - the Wendling Estate in the Borough of Camden.



The work of this project has entailed a detailed analysis of existing conditions on the site, and proposes a series of maintenance interventions aimed at improving regimes of maintenance and care for the material wellbeing of the estate. Most importantly, this work is predicated on the permanent presence of design considerations on site.

This work proposes a new value system for the existing built environment, and questions whether we can alter our attitudes about preservation and historical value. By situating the design exercises in a clearly articulated and imaginable framework, it's my goal to scaffold these decisions in a clear vision for an alternative to existing systems of regeneration, and demonstrate how this new organizational system might affect a new way of understanding and analyzing the past while developing a set of tools for understanding the spatial implications of these planning processes and the ways in which they might be reimaged.

L: "Toward an Office of a Public Architect," Future Firm, 2020

R: Material Cultures, 2020



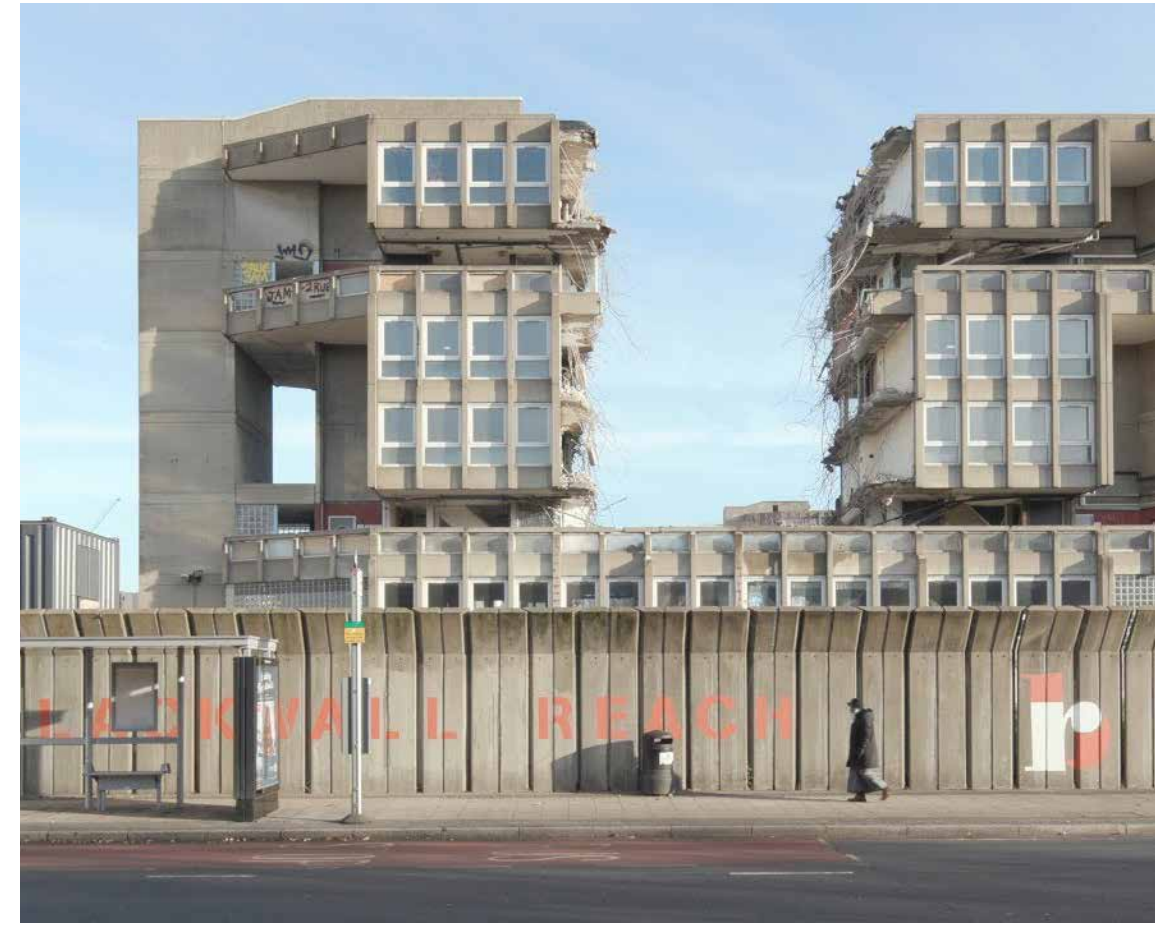
Robin Hood Gardens, 1972.  
Image: Sandra Lousada, c/o The Smithsonian Family Collection.

When we think of social housing in the UK, often we think about London in the mid-20th century, and projects by socially motivated architects who were active in local planning and design. From Alexandra Road to Robin Hood Gardens, architects were at the forefront of delivering high quality, formally ambitious housing for all residents of the city. In the 1950s, the London County Council Architect's office was the largest architectural practice in the world, with an ambitious remit to remake the city.

Despite this legacy of progressive urban development, the following decades-long pattern of disinvestment, deregulation, and government-backed hostility towards social housing and the

people who live in it has generated a nationwide housing crisis.

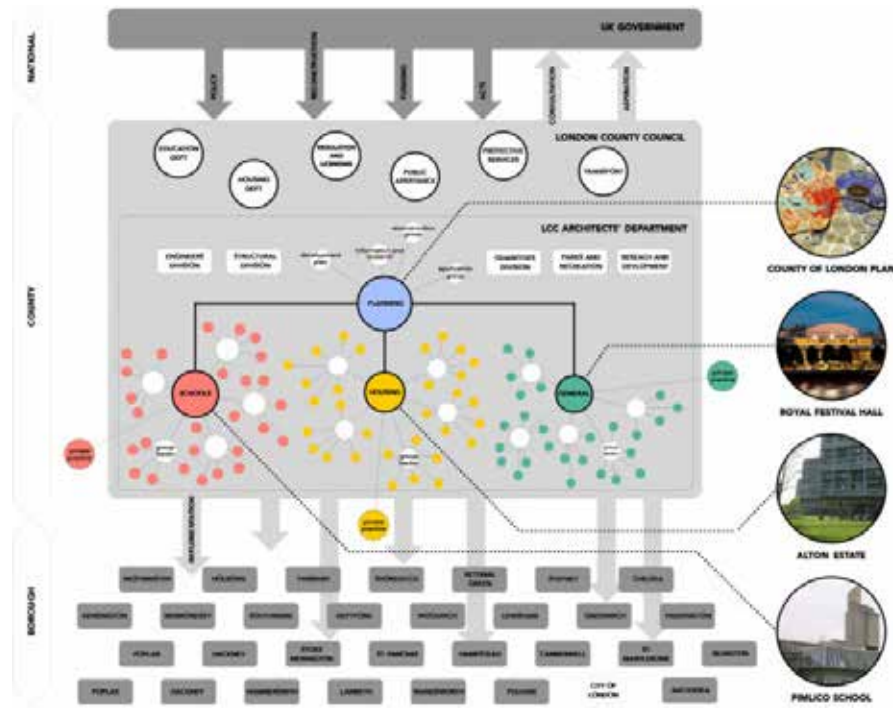
The country's social housing stock has been systematically diminished - parceled out for private sale to individuals and investors, transferred to private non-profit management organizations, or demolished altogether. In pursuit of ever more profitable private housing, local councils now implement regeneration plans that present a binary choice between total demolition and managed decline - plans which often result in displacement.



Robin Hood Gardens, 2017.  
Image: Dezeen.

## CITY, BOROUGH, ESTATE

The structure of the London County Council Architect's Office (Archis)



### THE LONDON COUNTY COUNCIL ARCHITECTS DEPARTMENT

From the middle of the 20th century until 1963, the London County Council (LCC) Architect's Office was one of the most exciting and innovative architectural design offices in the world. At its peak, it was also the largest architecture firm on earth, employing thousands of architects and planners to implement a bold, centralized vision for the city. Grounded in the belief that the built environment could reflect and respond to a range of social and political realities, the office's planning agenda touched everything from housing to schools and public cultural institutions. As part of a broader move towards decentralization, the LCC (and along with it, the Architect's Office) was abolished and replaced with the more atomized Greater London Council (GLC) in 1965.

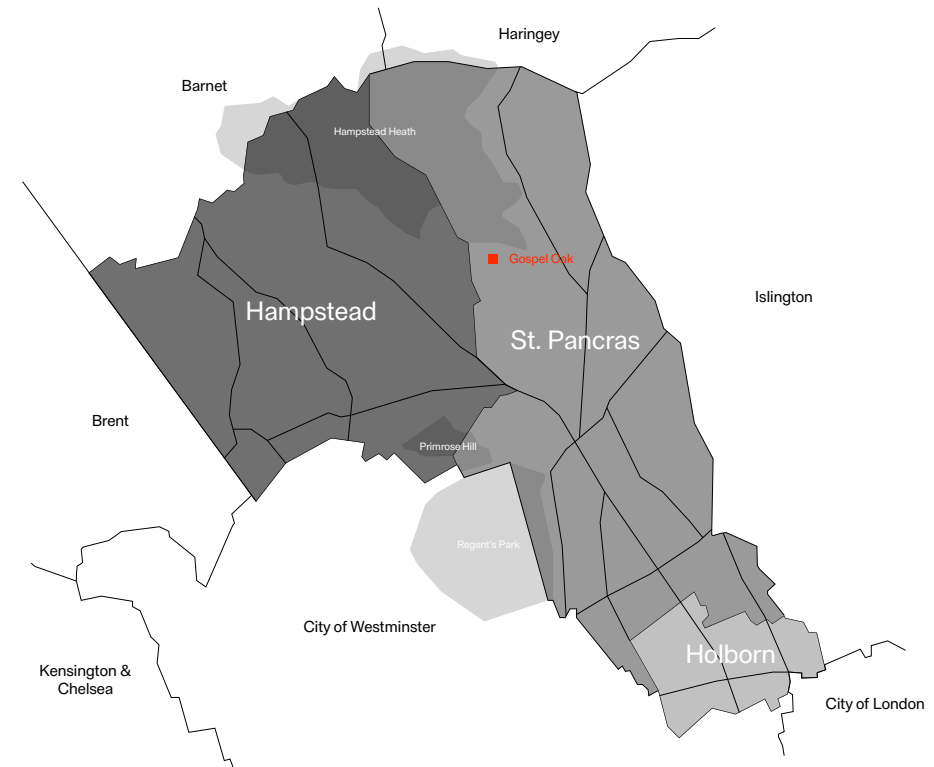
### THE BOROUGH OF CAMDEN & SYDNEY COOK

After the LCC was abolished, responsibility for planning and design was parceled out to local councils, which were themselves undergoing a major reorganization. As a part of the establishment of the GLC, the adjoining boroughs of Hampstead, St. Pancras, and Holborn were combined to form the new borough of Camden. The existing planning and design offices from each constituent borough were combined into a single organization under the direction of Sydney Cook, former lead architect of Holborn.

A number of factors conspired to make the output of this borough office particularly ambitious and rigorous. First, its central offices were situated nearby some of the nation's leading architecture schools, and had an uncommon access to a large pool of new

## A DISPATCH FROM THE SITE OFFICE

The component areas of the Borough of Camden (Mark Swenarton, University of Liverpool)

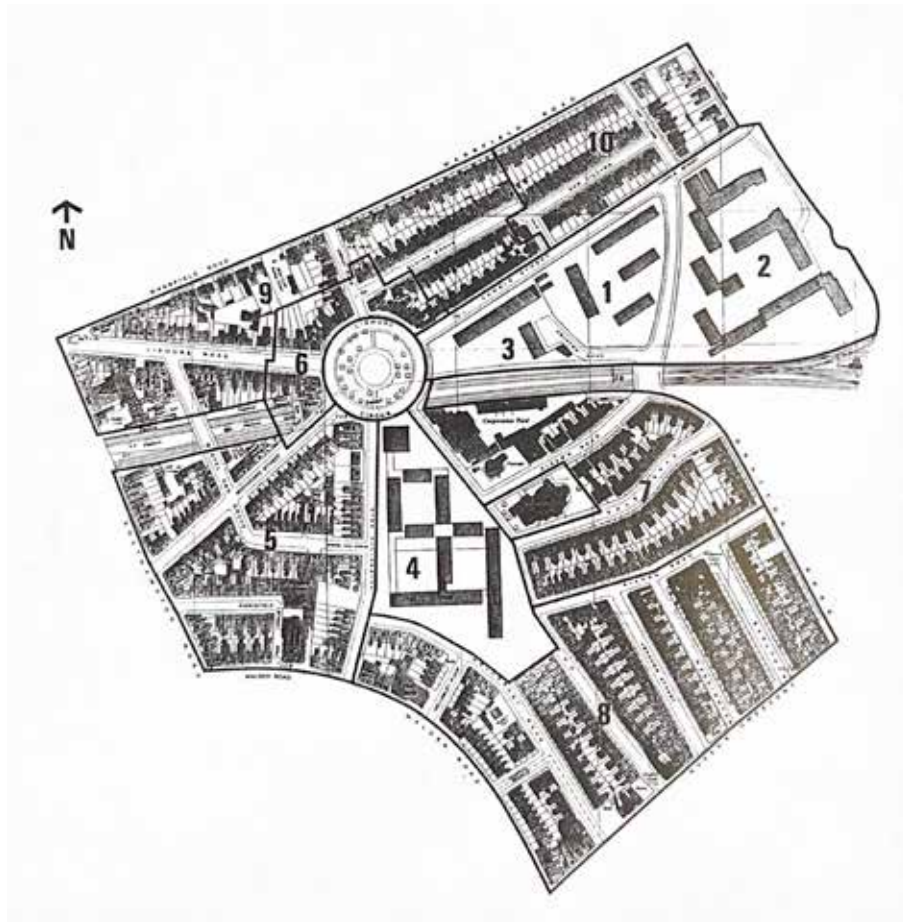


talent. Cook's leadership and focus on cultivating young talent contributed to developing a dynamic and engaging office and culture of design. Second, the three component zones of the new borough combined to form London's second wealthiest borough - a factor that allowed the borough architects office to pay competitive salaries to talented and forward-thinking designers. Finally, the presiding ethic of the office's work was progressive and centered on producing social assets that served a progressive vision for the state's role in organizing public and private life.

The borough office's trademark projects under the leadership of Sydney Cook were formally ambitious low-rise social housing projects. Many are still standing, and a number have achieved listed status, including Alexandra Road and Whittington.

The work of the GLC and the Camden Borough Architect's Office has been scattered, and records pertaining to all but the most notable projects are difficult to track, as accountability for their management and continued maintenance has been dispersed among private management companies and contract-bound service providers. The beginning work of a new architecture office, then, might be in the realm of documentation and analysis - to reconsider the existing as it currently stands.

The Gospel Oak redevelopment plan at the time of the formation of Camden in 1965. Bacton (Area 4) was nearing completion, and the plans for Wendling (Area 5) had yet to be implemented in this comprehensive plan. (Image: Crown copyright Ordnance Survey, "Cook's Camden: The Making of Modern Housing," Mark Swenarton)



GOSPEL OAK

When Camden was officially reincorporated in 1965, Sydney Cook and his team inherited a number of developments in progress that had previously been managed by the borough of St. Pancras under the LCC. The largest of these schemes, in Gospel Oak, covered 55 acres and had already been partially developed. Phase one (which included the Bacton estate) consisted of 4 development areas and had been managed directly by the St. Pancras borough architect's office in collaboration with a roster of partner firms. Phase two (which included the Wendling estate) was to be overseen almost entirely by Frederick MacManus & Partners. While the firm did not fall under the formal purview of Cook's

public office, "the MacManus office provided a reserve army of architectural labour for the welfare state," and was for a time home to some of the most ambitious new graduates of London's architecture programs.<sup>7</sup>

Crucially, Gospel Oak was the site of the first resident-led effort to block state-backed redevelopment. Both St. Pancras and Camden produced development schemes that were predicated on the demolition of existing housing, and in 1966, residents successfully disrupted the effort. Though the proposals would later move forward, the public backlash was strong enough to set a precedent for community engagement and participation that has informed resident engagement efforts up to the present day.<sup>8</sup>

7. Mark Swenarton, "Cook's Camden: The Making of Modern Housing," p. 179

8. Mark Swenarton, "Cook's Camden: The Making of Modern Housing," p. 186

A DISPATCH FROM THE SITE OFFICE

Gospel Oak	Estate Name	Gross Area (Acres)	Date	Architect
St. Pancras				
Area 1	Barrington	2.2	1951-54	Powell & Moya
Area 2	Kiln Place	5.1	1957-62	Armstrong & MacManus
Area 3	Lamble Street Extension	1.3	1957-64	Armstrong & MacManus
Area 4	Bacton	3.75	1962-68	MacManus & Partners
Camden				
Area 5	Wendling	7.22	1964-71	MacManus & Partners
Areas 6 & 9	Waxham/Ludham	6.82	1968-72	MacManus & Partners
Areas 7 & 8	Weedington Road	15.62	1969-79	MacManus & Partners
Mansfield Road & Lamble Street		2.13	1972-80	LB Camden

The constituent estates of the Gospel Oak redevelopment effort ("Cook's Camden: The Making of Modern Housing," Mark Swenarton, p. 180).



A playground in the interior courtyard of the original Bacton Estate (Photo: Tim Crocker, Martin Charles)

**BACTON**

From 2011 to 2017, the Bacton Estate underwent a process of redevelopment in partnership with Karakusevic Carson Architects. The existing estate was demolished following a years-long consultation process with estate residents, and the new construction that followed at the northeastern edge of the site has been frequently cited for setting a new standard for estate redevelopment efforts across the city.

Phase 1 of the re-development project at Bacton has been hailed for its considerate tenant engagement strategies, elegant material palette, and generously proportioned new housing that both increased the estate's

residential capacity and generated new revenue streams for the council. Phase 2 of the Bacton re-development, however, has been stalled for years, pending identification of a suitable development partner. The empty lot that previously housed the Bacton low-rise development, which was originally built by the St. Pancras council architect's office, has been totally unoccupied and vacant since 2016. While the development managed to avoid the worst kinds of displacement endemic to so many other regeneration projects, other community resources have been lost, and further delays have soured attitudes about redevelopment in the area. A set of community studios has yet to be replaced, and the community is making do with a meaningful reduction in amenity.



An aerial view of the Bacton Estate, before demolition. (Photo: Karakusevic Carson Architects)



Karakusevic Carson's master plan for phases 1 and 2 of the Bacton redevelopment. The uncompleted phase 2 development is shown on the left half of the image. (Image: Karakusevic Carson Architects)



CITY, BOROUGH, ESTATE

An interior courtyard on the original Bacton Estate (Photo: Karakusevic Carson Architects)



A community design feedback event during the initial design phase of the Bacton regeneration scheme (Photo: Karakusevic Carson Architects)



A DISPATCH FROM THE SITE OFFICE



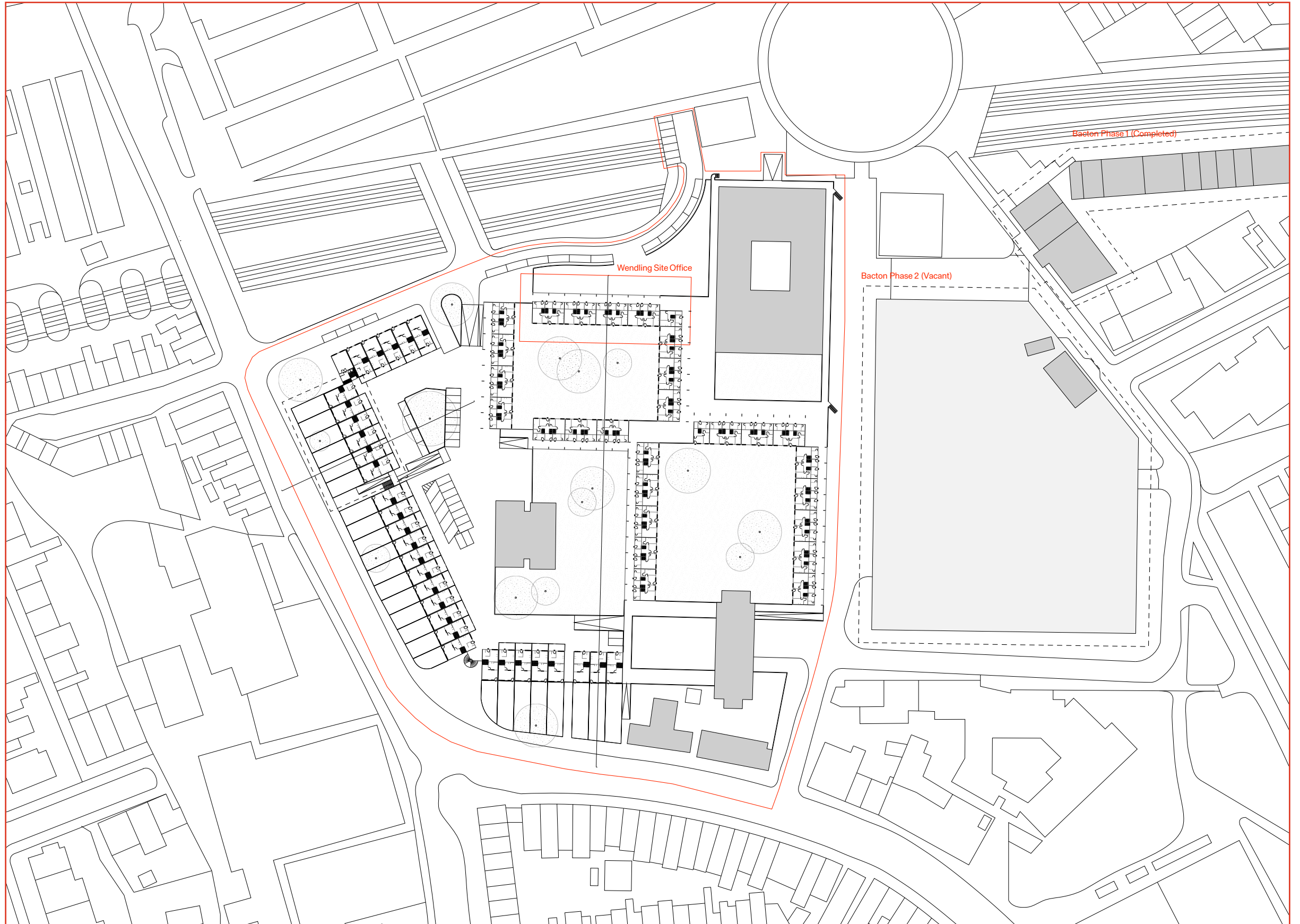
A view of the completed Bacton Phase 1 redevelopment (Photo: Camden Council)



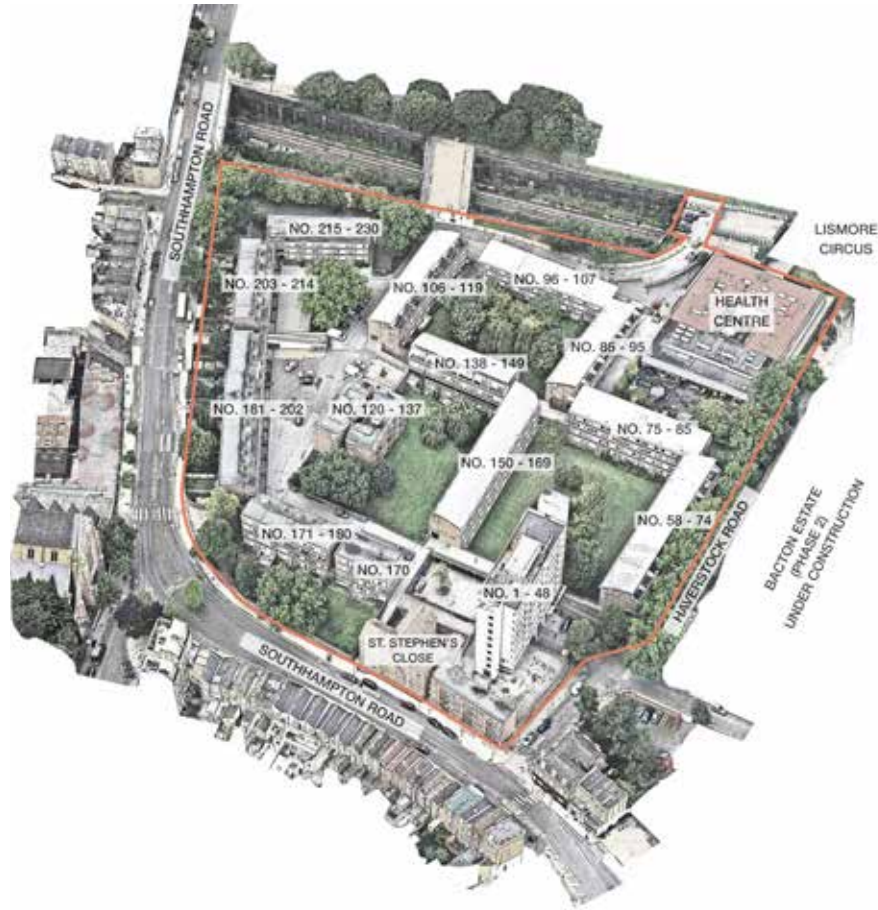
A view of a separate building in the completed Bacton Phase 1 redevelopment (Photo: Tim Crocker)

Next page: The Bacton Estate during demolition (Photo: Roll the Dice)





An overview of the Wendling Estate (Image: Metropolitan Workshop)



A photo of the interior courtyard of the Wendling Estate, taken shortly after its completion. No. 170 and No. 171-180 are visible on the left. (Image: Historic England)

WENDLING

The Wendling Estate was part of the second phase of the Gospel Oak redevelopment scheme, designed by Frederick MacManus & Partners. Construction got underway in 1965.

Architecturally, the houses on the estate bear many of the same hallmarks of other developments in Gospel Oak and across Camden at large. Each individual unit is directly accessible from a public walkway, ensuring that every house opens on to the outdoors. Most units, with the exception of those in the anomalous tower (No. 1-48) and flats at the center of the estate (No. 171-180) are organized as split level housing, with bedrooms arranged to face private gardens and common green spaces. A health and childcare

center anchor the northeastern corner of the estate near Lismore Circus, at the center of the Gospel Oak development zone.

In 2019, Wendling was earmarked for redevelopment by the borough, and following a process of community engagement and local campaigning, the question of estate regeneration was brought to a vote in 2021. After considering a range of possible interventions at different scales, residents were offered a choice between total demolition and redevelopment, or continuing the council's current system of occasional, as-needed repair. An overwhelming majority of those who participated in the ballot voted in favor of redevelopment, but plans have yet to move forward, and the fate of the estate is still unclear.



An entry to the Wendling Estate from Southhampton Road. No. 203-214 are on the left, and No. 181-202 are on the right.



Posters at the Wendling Estate leading up to the vote on regeneration. (Image: Westminster Extra, 2021)

Wendling is at an inflection point. The process of development next door at Bacton had the makings of a responsible regeneration playbook, but hit a major roadblock when financing and construction partners backed out of Phase 2. In the interim, the vacant site of Bacton's Phase 2 serves as an urgent reminder of the current system's inadequacies and inability to deliver its most ambitious promises. Even so, the process of regeneration for Wendling managed to advance.

How were the processes that brought us to this stage designed and implemented? What forces have made it possible to convert one of the world's most ambitious, creative, and well-resourced social housing programs from a public good to a private asset? Why have

supposed strategies for renewal resulted in so much disruption, demolition, and displacement? What role have architects played in this transformation? What might a design practice that operates outside of the demolition-decline binary look like?

A cohesive, ambitious, and actionable future for housing can be achieved again. Envisioning an alternative future for estate regeneration will require a new framework for valuing the existing, and an ambitious re-framing of the way we manage the processes of maintenance, design, and community engagement. Developing this alternative, however, requires a deeper understanding of the forces that brought us to this stage.

Opposite: Signage at the vacant site of the Bacton Phase 2 development.



WENDLING & ST STEPHENS CLOSE

WENDLING & ST STEPHENS CLOSE

# 1. The regeneration process – past and future

## Journey so far

We understand that there has been a long history of discussions about regeneration. The long period of time spent on consultation has been frustrating.

A further test of opinion survey was held in July 2020, where 78% of residents who returned the survey form (64% turnout), indicated their support for the redevelopment proposal.

Since that time the Steering Group has supported officers in preparing for ballot and 4 virtual workshops have been held (including the current workshop for which this booklet has been written).

The council's Cabinet at its meeting in December 2017, agreed to begin again engagement with residents on the future of the estate. Feasibility work and extensive resident engagement was undertaken in 2018 and 2019 to explore options for the future of the estate in partnership with residents and to prepare an 'indicative business case'.

This identified full redevelopment of the estate as the preferred option for most residents and the best option to achieve the goals we all have for new homes and improvements.

This option was then agreed as the council's preferred option by Cabinet in July 2019, subject to a resident ballot taking place and a business case coming back to cabinet after ballot.



# What does your vote mean?

## What would a YES vote mean?

Camden Council will move forward with the redevelopment option for Wendling and St Stephens Close to move ahead with the regeneration of the estate.

There will be ongoing consultation after this decision, ensuring that residents remain involved in the ongoing design and delivery process.

## What would a No vote mean?

Camden Council will not continue to develop the preferred option for regenerating the estate. It may develop further proposals with residents.

Wendling & St Stephens Close are not on the current major works programme for 2019 – 2024. This means that there will be no kitchen, bathroom or window replacement works in this period.

Regardless of any ballot decision by residents, ongoing responsive repair works will continue across the estate.

VOTE YES

VOTE NO



How do I know if you need the consultation materials in another format or language. Contact: Accessible Information Services, Adult Welfare Services, Camden, LA02 8RST, 020 7464 7464



How do I know if you need the consultation materials in another format or language. Contact: Accessible Information Services, Adult Welfare Services, Camden, LA02 8RST, 020 7464 7464



Above: An excerpt from Camden Council's literature on the resident feedback and ballot processes.

## THE BALLOT

Once the decision to bring demolition to a vote was finalized, status quo sequences of community engagement and feedback got underway. Metropolitan Workshop, a community engagement specialist contracted by the Camden borough council, led Wendling residents through a series of exercises to identify issue areas and opportunities for spatial and material improvement. Participation in this process was fairly limited, and some events only reported drawing two attendees at a time.

Following this renewed engagement process, residents were presented with a range of possibilities for different scales of redevelopment on the estate. Each possibility

was designed to achieve a certain benchmark of additional housing that would increase the estate's overall capacity and further diversify the different types of property tenure at Wendling.

The range of options would eventually inform the content of the ballot, and presented varying levels of possible intervention, ranging from "No Action" to "High (Full Demolition)." The "Low" intervention option would pursue only additional infill building on vacant space in the estate, and promised retrofits and upgrades to existing housing. The "Medium" option involved the demolition of around half of the existing estate, and would see the construction of a substantial amount of new housing. Additional interventions would be

made to rework circulation and public spaces across the estate. The "High" option proposed the wholesale demolition of the estate, and the construction of altogether new buildings with a substantially higher capacity. Each proposal came with a pro-con list that spoke to specific resident feedback.

After a period of community feedback, and following an editing process led by the council and their community engagement partners, the range of options that appeared on the resident's ballot was whittled down to "High (Full Demolition)" ("Yes" on the ballot) and "No Action" ("No" on the ballot). The resulting all-or-nothing decision presented a nuanced and complex situation as a choice between two extremes, and the consequences of voting


"No" were made explicit in extensive promotional materials shared throughout the estate in the weeks leading up to the vote: because Wendling was not on the borough's list of priority estates for the coming legislative period, voting "No" would be equivalent to forfeiting the right to request critical repairs to kitchens, windows, and bathrooms.

Resident feedback was straightforward - much of the content of the Resident's Brief, compiled by Camden Council and Metropolitan Workshop, focused on calls for more space, upgraded fixtures and finishes, and community connection. Faced with a single alternative, 72% of eligible Wendling residents cast their ballots in July 2021. 75% voted "Yes" to total demolition.<sup>10</sup>

Above: An excerpt from Camden Council's literature on the resident feedback and ballot processes.

10. "Wendling and St Stephens Close Estate ballot: Residents vote 'Yes' to new homes and redevelopment," Camden Newsroom, July 2021.

**OPTION 1: LOW (NO DEMOLITION OF HOMES & REFURBISHMENT)**



**OPTION 1: LOW**

**YOU SAID:**  
Feedback from the October exhibition told us that this was not people's preferred option because:  
• It doesn't offer enough benefits to the whole estate  
• It builds too close to some existing windows and balconies  
• It does not address anti-social behaviour

**WE DID:**  
However, some people liked that this option would be less disruptive and keep the community together.  
We have tried to remove some of the infill buildings that would impact most on the existing homes. We have also been exploring the possibilities of reducing technical difficulty and disruption.

**RESIDENTS' BRIEF**  
Use the dials to tell us how well you think this option scores against the Resident's Brief?


**FINANCIAL VIABILITY**  
• Some of the new homes will be sold to pay for the affordable homes.  
• If there is any surplus money this can be used to fund further improvements to the estate but this will be less likely with this option as less new homes are being built.  
• Infill build costs are higher than building on a clear site.  
• If costs were too high, we could not build additional affordable homes.

**BUILDABILITY**  
• The health centre and nursery would need to be relocated temporarily as part of the option. The Hotel would be moved permanently.  
• Building so close to existing buildings can be challenging.  
• There would likely be disruption caused by building work which we would try and minimise using modern methods of construction.  
• The infill buildings would impact on some of the windows of the existing buildings.

**SUSTAINABILITY**  
• For any new homes, Camden would meet sustainability criteria of being more energy efficient and more accessible.  
• This option would bring 30% of homes on the estate up to current sustainability standards.

**TELL US WHAT YOU THINK!**

**OPTION 2: MEDIUM (PARTIAL DEMOLITION & PARTIAL REFURBISHMENT)**



**OPTION 2: MEDIUM**

**YOU SAID:**  
Feedback from the October exhibition told us that people liked this option because:  
• It is a good compromise on new and existing buildings

**WE DID:**  
However people did not like this option because:  
• It is unfair that some people get new homes and some people do not  
• The new buildings were too 'blocky'  
• The new building might block light to existing windows and balconies

**RESIDENTS' BRIEF**  
Use the dials to tell us how well you think this option scores against the Resident's Brief?

**FINANCIAL VIABILITY**  
• Some of the new homes would be sold to pay for the affordable homes.  
• Any surplus money this could be used to fund further improvements to the estate but this would be less likely with this option as fewer new homes are being built.  
• This would involve partial demolition of podiums and some entrance areas, which would be technically complex and disruptive and therefore expensive.  
• If costs were too high, we could not build additional affordable homes.


**BUILDABILITY**  
• The health centre and nursery would need to be permanently relocated elsewhere on the estate. The Hotel would be moved permanently.  
• There would be a mix of infill and new build, which would require difficult building techniques and methods.  
• The provision of heating services would be complex, as the district heating plant would need to be demolished and re-provided.  
• There is likely to be disruption caused by building work but we would try and minimise this by using modern methods of construction.

**SUSTAINABILITY**  
• For any new homes, Camden would meet sustainability criteria of being more energy efficient and more accessible.  
• This option would bring 77% of homes on the estate up to current sustainability standards.

**TELL US WHAT YOU THINK!**

WENDLING & ST STEPHENS CLOSE

**OPTION 3: HIGH**



**OPTION 3: HIGH**

**YOU SAID:**  
Feedback from the October exhibition told us that this was people's preferred option because:  
• It offered a new home for everybody on the estate  
• Met the priorities of the Residents' Brief more than the other options  
• All homes get private outdoor space

**WE DID:**  
However some people were concerned that:  
• The new buildings might look too tall

**RESIDENTS' BRIEF**  
Use the dials to tell us how well you think this option scores against the Resident's Brief?

**FINANCIAL VIABILITY**  
• Some of the new homes would be sold to pay for the affordable homes.  
• This option would be better value as it would be less technically challenging to build, therefore less expensive.

**BUILDABILITY**  
• The health centre and nursery would need to be permanently relocated elsewhere on the estate. The Hotel could be moved permanently or might be relocated on the estate.  
• Demolishing the whole estate and redeveloping it would actually make things forward and simpler in terms of building.  
• All residents would need to move home.

**SUSTAINABILITY**  
• For all new homes, Camden would meet sustainability criteria of being more energy efficient and more accessible.  
• This option would bring 100% of homes on the estate up to current sustainability standards.

**TELL US WHAT YOU THINK!**

**HOW OPTIONS WILL BE ASSESSED**

**THE OPTIONS** We are currently exploring three options for the estate: low, medium and high. By the end of the process we expect to be in a position to narrow this down to a proposed option.

1 **LOW** Minimal demolition of existing buildings with demolition of existing homes with new build.

2 **MEDIUM** Partial demolition of existing buildings with significant new build.

3 **HIGH** Full demolition of existing buildings with full scale new build.

**WE WOULD LIKE TO HEAR YOUR FEEDBACK ON OUR APPROACH TO ASSESSMENT.**

ST STEPHENS CLOSE

**BUSINESS AS USUAL: MAINTENANCE OBLIGATIONS**

**THE PLANNED WORKS PROGRAM**  
Planned Works are carried out by the Council as a priority team, in 5 year cycles, in order to maintain and improve overall housing stock. Planned works include, but are not limited to:  
• Shared repairs, including roof, concrete  
• Repointing, plaster, stone, grouting and other masonry  
• Heating, hot and cold water  
• External fixtures and furniture  
• Repainting door entry systems, landscaping etc.  
The current planned works program for the next 5 years 2019 to 2024 is incorporated within the borough and Wendling & St Stephens Close is not included in this program.  
A residents letter (with participation) is where the letter that explains the works to be carried out. These letters will be sent to all residents in the estate. If you have any queries, please contact the council's housing department on 020 7552 3000 or visit the council's website.

**RESPONSIVE AND REACTIVE REPAIRS**  
The responsive and reactive repair service deals with minor or day to day maintenance problems and health & safety issues.  
This service is normally operated when residents call the call centre to report repairs.  
Responsive repairs continue on the estate regardless of whether any decision is taken to redevelop partially or in full.  
Where any significant works are required to any individual home, these will be considered on a case-by-case basis. This is the same as the service you currently receive and is the same as any estate in the borough not going through a regeneration programme.

**IN-FILL & PARTIAL REDEVELOPMENT**  
Any infill or partial redevelopment options will involve construction work within the estate to build new homes. Such works may also involve some limited associated works to existing buildings within the new homes.  
This will depend on how much can be afforded through the project where the cost of work would need to be considered against how many new build homes could be delivered through the project.  
Any other works that may be required within homes or more extensive works required to the estate or to houses without the benefit of any infill or partial redevelopment option for the estate, but would form part of any future planned works programme.

**NEW HOMES**  
NEW HOMES

**RETAINED HOMES**  
RETAINED HOMES

INVESTORS BY WHOLESALE PAID FOR BY PLANNED WORKS PROGRAM  
RESPONSIVE REPAIRS PAID FOR BY RENT COLLECTED  
PAID FOR BY REDEVELOPMENT & SALE OF PRIVATE HOMES

WENDLING & ST STEPHENS CLOSE



# Yes

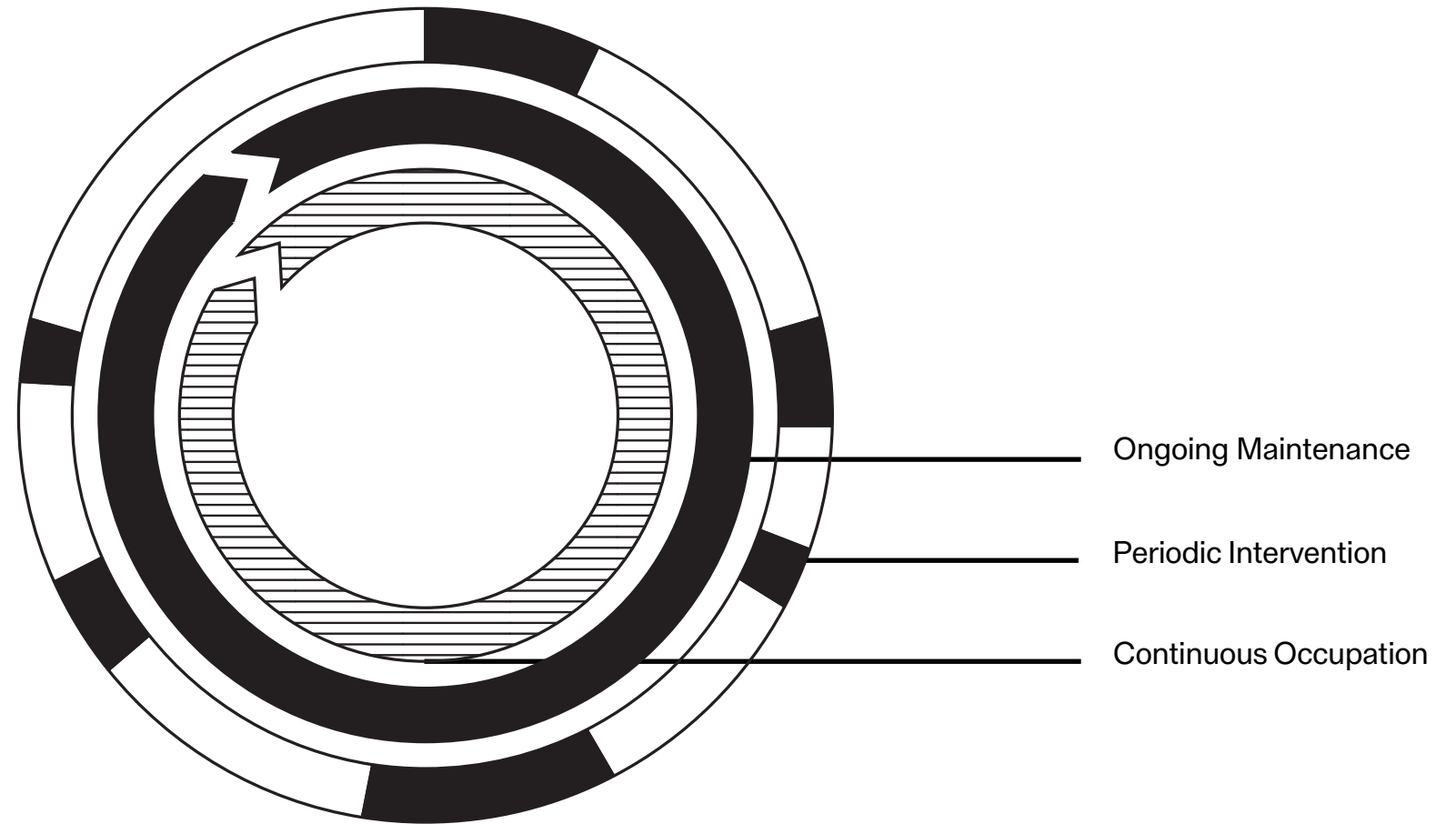
*A “yes” vote supports Camden Council’s regeneration proposal, which includes the total demolition of the Wendling Estate and the replacement of existing structures with new market rate and social housing*



# No

*A “no” vote opposes Camden Council’s regeneration proposal, and would see the estate continue to be deprioritized for individual fixes and large-scale refurbishment projects*





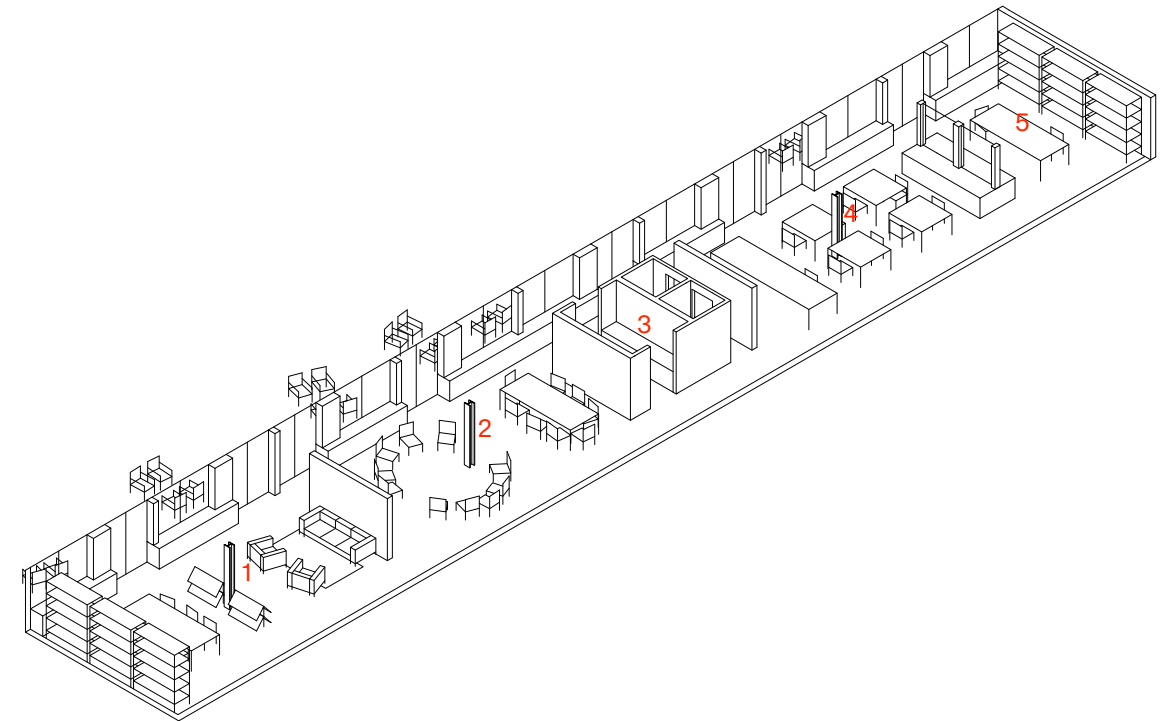
Why do so many strategies for renewal continue to result in demolition, displacement, and dereliction?

How might an architecture office operate outside of the demolition-decline binary, and what might it look like?

A PERMANENT SITE OFFICE



A DISPATCH FROM THE SITE OFFICE



- 1. Community Archive & Living Room
- 2. Meeting Space
- 3. Kitchen & WC
- 4. Architectural & Design Services
- 5. Custodial & Material Resources

A PERMANENT SITE OFFICE

The process of regeneration at Wendling is currently being orchestrated by a series of outside assessors and contractors, all contracted by the council.

What if the process was instead managed by a permanent team that engaged in a process of continuous maintenance, analysis, and community building?

In her essay “Toward an Office of

a Public Architect,” Ann Lui argues for a mode of architectural practice that operates as a public service - a resource available to all who are navigating the process of altering or adjusting the built environment.<sup>9</sup> A permanent site office builds on this idea by consolidating work that might otherwise be handled by the current disparate set of outside actors - rather than creating a network of contingent contractors and client-service relationships, the permanent site office would consolidate the work

Opposite: An exterior view of the Wendling Site Office.

9. ““Toward an Office of a Public Architect,” Ann Lui, Log 48, 2020.

### A PERMANENT SITE OFFICE



of maintenance, design, community consultation, and analysis.

The impact of this way of working on the local built environment would be substantial. For instance, imagining this office as a distinct and permanent facet of life on the estate makes the material considerations outlined in the Resident's Brief a consistent priority, and not a set of problems to be solved through a singular comprehensive redesign. The permanent site office is an

architecture office that condenses ongoing processes of maintenance and care with community engagement and design. The office includes space for custodial management - material upkeep and repair, a material resource center where specific design decisions can be discussed in detail, a community archive that houses building documents and records of the estate's continued development.

It also represents an alternative method of practice that places

### A DISPATCH FROM THE SITE OFFICE



design services at the heart of community life. Because it is so closely embedded in the ongoing operation of the estate, the permanent site office affords a significant level of freedom from the sort of unilateral planning and decision making that expects a full suite of issues and problems to be addressed all at once. Its permanence and accessibility makes it possible for residents to engage with its work at any scale, and presents the opportunity to engage design solutions and

opportunities as they arise.

Wendling's permanent site office is situated at the ground level of Building E, in spaces that previously served as garages and storage. The garage's load-bearing walls have been removed or punctured to create an open bar plan with easy street access along its full length. The new inserted steel structure, marked in orange, allows programmatic flexibility along the full space. The doors can open to the patio to substantially expand

A PERMANENT SITE OFFICE



the meeting space's capacity, suitable for a small meeting or a large town hall. In one bay at the far end, a material resources center allows residents to sample and touch materials old and new, while at the opposite end, a community archive houses not only permits and building documentation, but also elements of local history.

Bookended between these bays is the design office proper, where the public architect might be working on a retrofit to accommodate

intergenerational family structures, or upgrading a balcony. Architectural services here are a public good, and can act as a broker between disparate processes - from negotiating with the council, to functioning as a site for new skill acquisition, to clarifying the terms of a renovation or redevelopment person to person.

The Permanent Site Office demystifies an opaque process, and opens the door to a new pace of operations. Rather than seeing

A DISPATCH FROM THE SITE OFFICE

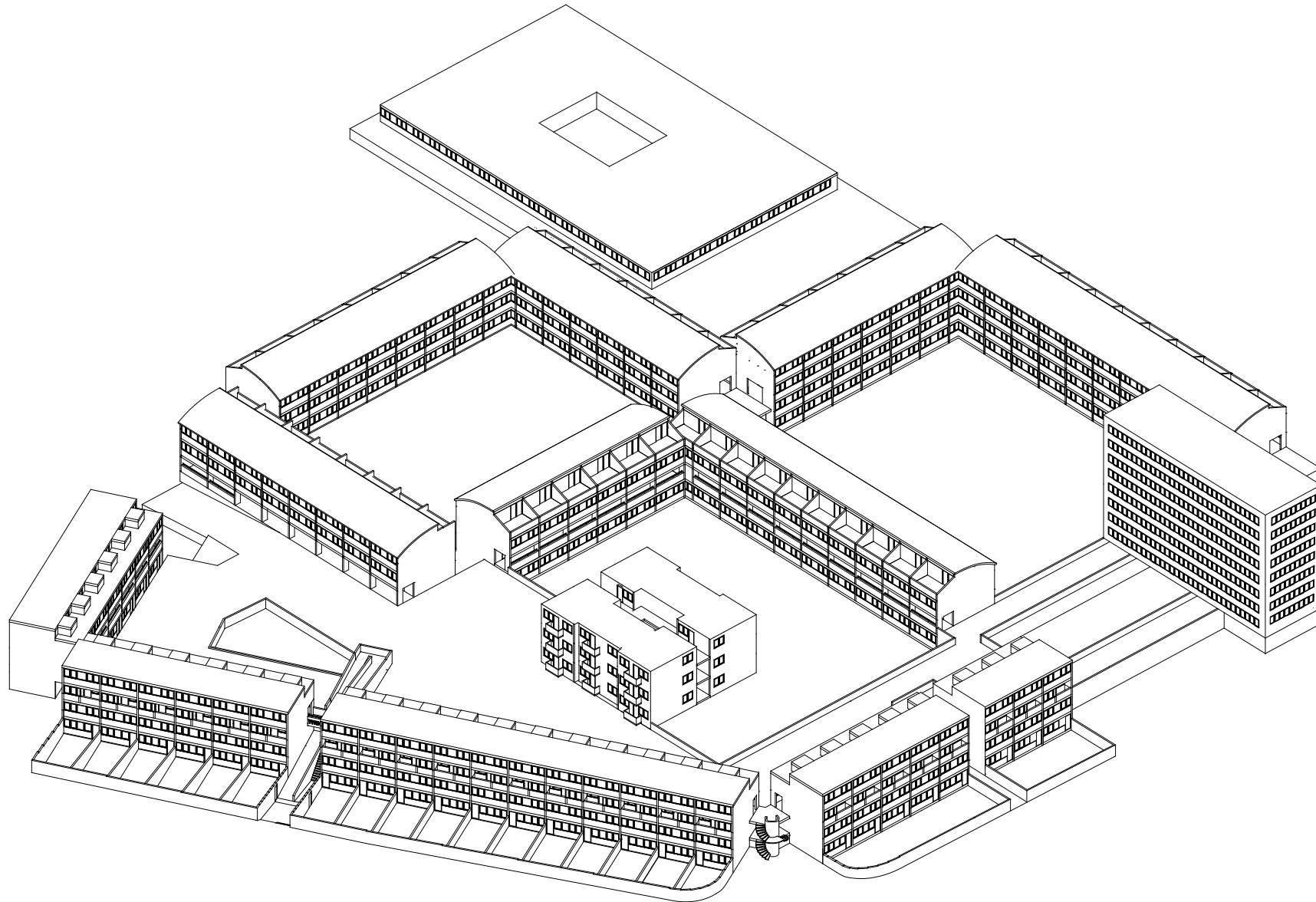


the estate as a series of problems that need to "fixed" in a single move (through a process like demolition), the on-site, public architect can work at a slower pace of building transformation and across a range of different scales.

The act of demolition, as a necessary precursor to regeneration, carries with it the allure of starting over from scratch. It also comes with significant risks - including displacement and social cleansing - and at substantial

environmental cost. All of these processes reduce life on the estate to a set of problems in need of a unilateral solution.

The Site Office offers an alternative method for public practice, that builds on a legacy of public architecture in service of social housing - not as a one-off problem, but as a resource that compels care, upkeep, and active consideration.



## INTERVENTIONS

Over the course of the feedback process led by Metropolitan Workshop and Camden Council, a suite of wants and needs was compiled into a “Resident’s Brief,” a document intended to reflect a comprehensive range of issues, complaints, and areas for improvement identified by residents of the Wendling Estate.

Individually, the ideas outlined in the brief represent a series of legitimate

concerns around factors like safety, space, and upkeep. Many of them would be effective starting points for a process of reimagining the estate as a site undergoing a constant process of upkeep. As a set, however, they present a vision of a place with such a varied range of spatial needs that demolition might be the only effective recourse for dealing with these issues comprehensively, effectively, and efficiently.

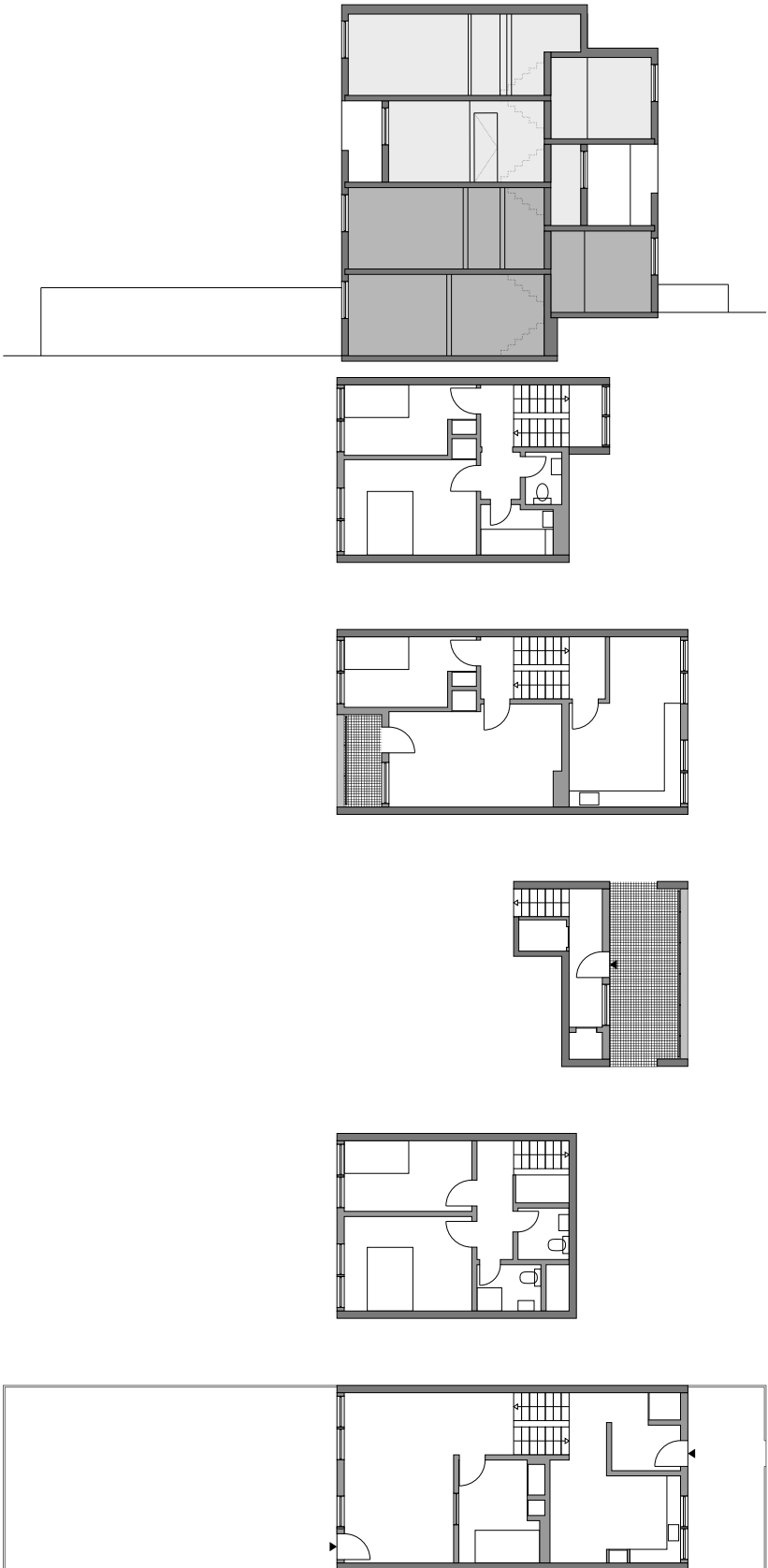
By reading the brief as a series

of component parts, and acknowledging their fundamentally anecdotal representation of life at Wendling, the individual objectives can be read as more granular design provocations that can be addressed at a more personalized scale.

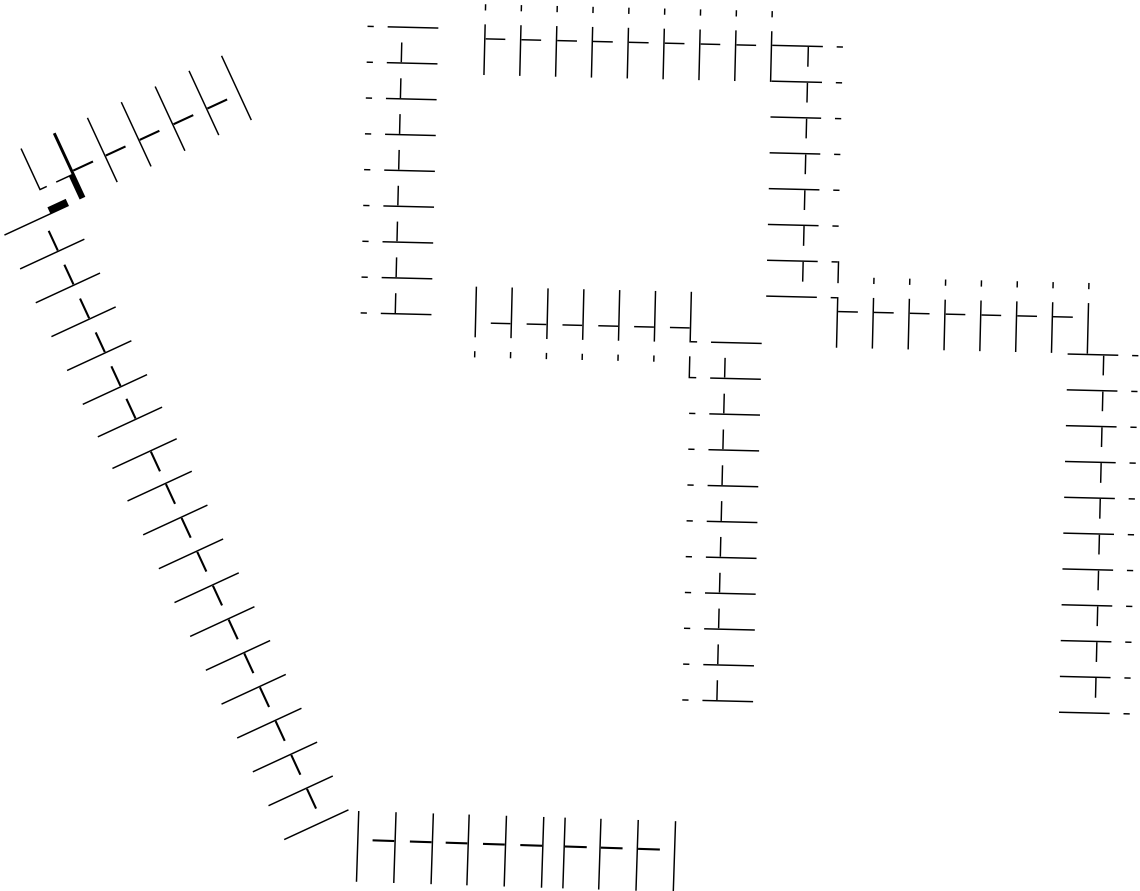
The interventions that follow use the contents of the Residents Brief as a starting point for the work of the permanent site office. What could the future of Wendling look like without the specter of

demolition? Architectural services here are a public good, and a site of continued negotiation between residents, designers, and the local council. The Permanent Site Office demystifies an otherwise opaque process, and opens the door to a new pace of operations. Rather than seeing the estate as a series of problems that need to be “fixed” in a single move (as with demolition), the on-site, public architect can work at a slower pace of building transformation, and across scales.

INTERVENTIONS



A DISPATCH FROM THE SITE OFFICE

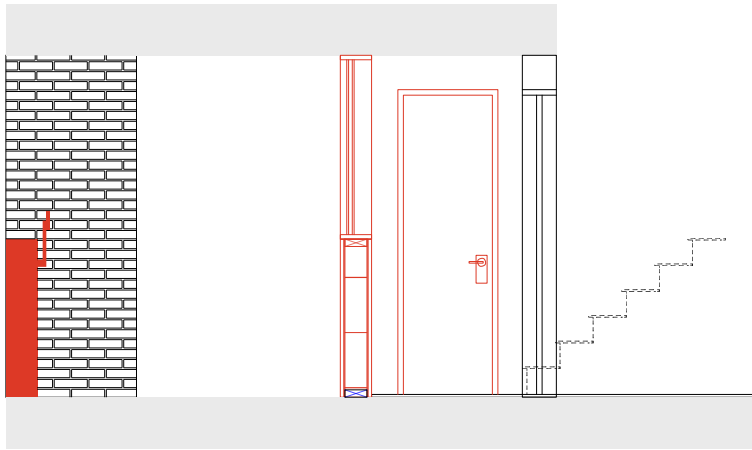


Above: A structural diagram of the buildings on the Wendling Estate.

Left: A plan and section analysis of typical three bedroom apartment buildings on the estate.

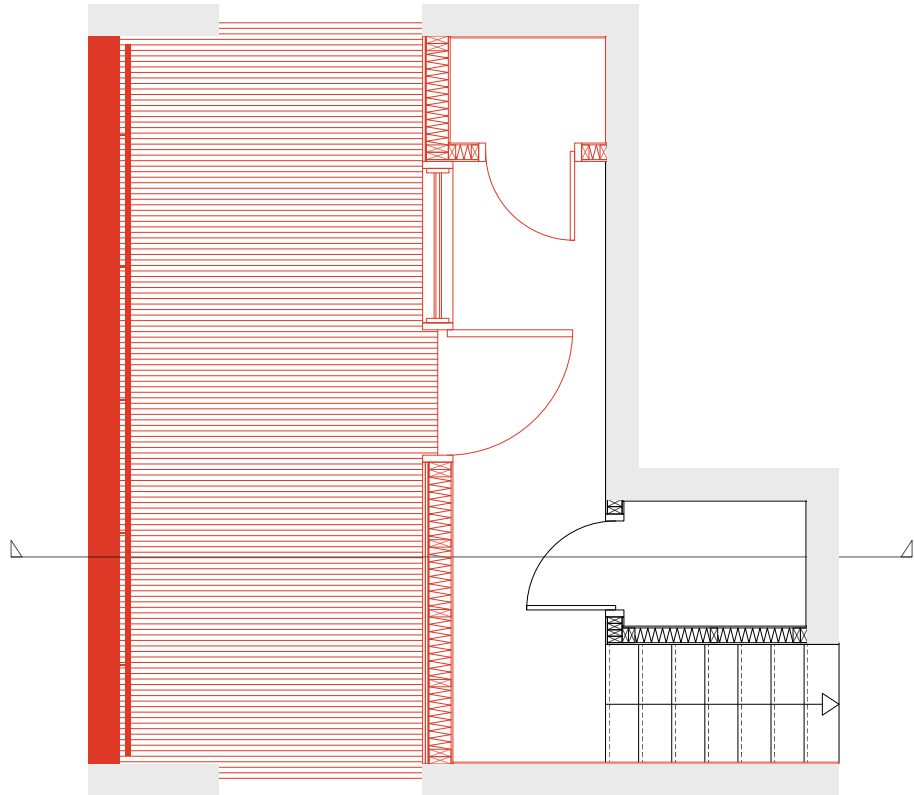
## INTERVENTIONS

The exterior entry corridors are currently narrow and closed off from the common area below by a brick wall and railing. Passage by the deep brick columns is narrow. The heaviness of the material can make the experience of the space fairly cold and isolating.



The entry halls for these units are fairly tight and dark, as the deep corridor leaves these spaces persistently shaded.

The large single pane windows are approaching the end of their lifespan, and their replacement offers an opportunity to reimagine the entry sequence.



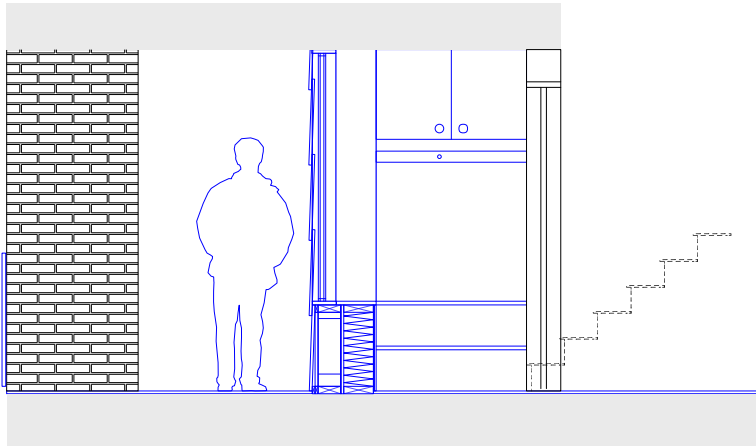
## A DISPATCH FROM THE SITE OFFICE



A model study of the existing conditions demonstrates the tight passage and unusable space between columns and infill railings.

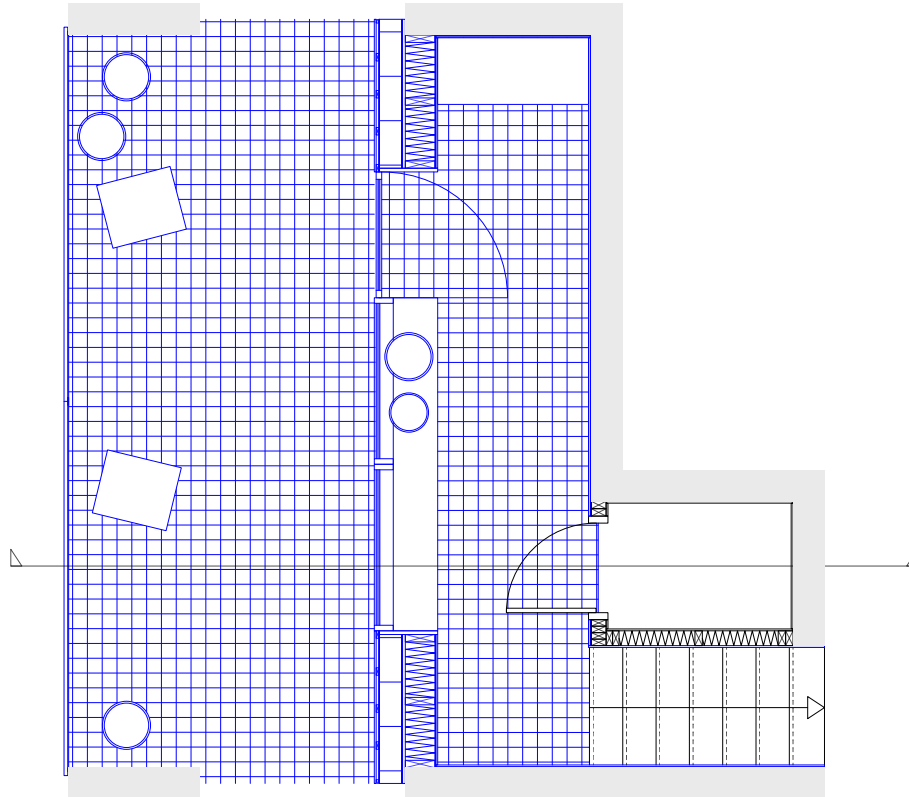
## INTERVENTIONS

Larger windows increase natural light penetration to the entry hall. Replacing the windows offers an opportunity to rethink the composition of the infill wall assembly.



A thicker, more insulative wall assembly affords the chance to install a deeper windowsill, and the expanded window dimensions create space for a sill that might double as a bench or a low surface for houseplants.

Replacing the brick wall and railing in the corridor with a powder-coated steel mesh panel increases visibility to and from the corridor. It also deepens the usable space in the corridor, and creates opportunities for more sociable common spaces.

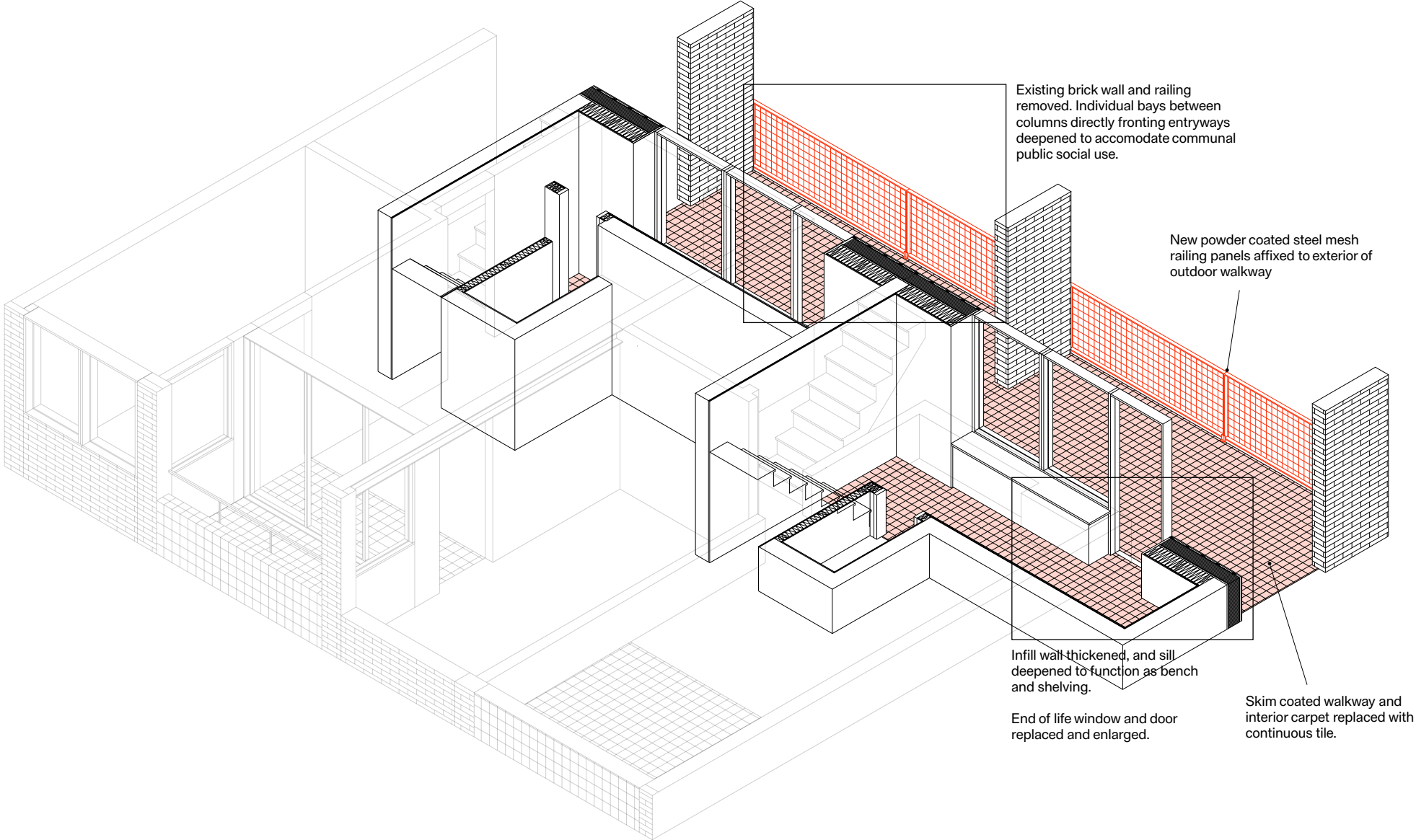


## A DISPATCH FROM THE SITE OFFICE



Replacing the concrete skim coating in the corridor with tiles that extend indoors connects the exterior and interior, and conveys a sense of continuous, occupiable space.





Existing brick wall and railing removed. Individual bays between columns directly fronting entryways deepened to accomodate communal public social use.

New powder coated steel mesh railing panels affixed to exterior of outdoor walkway

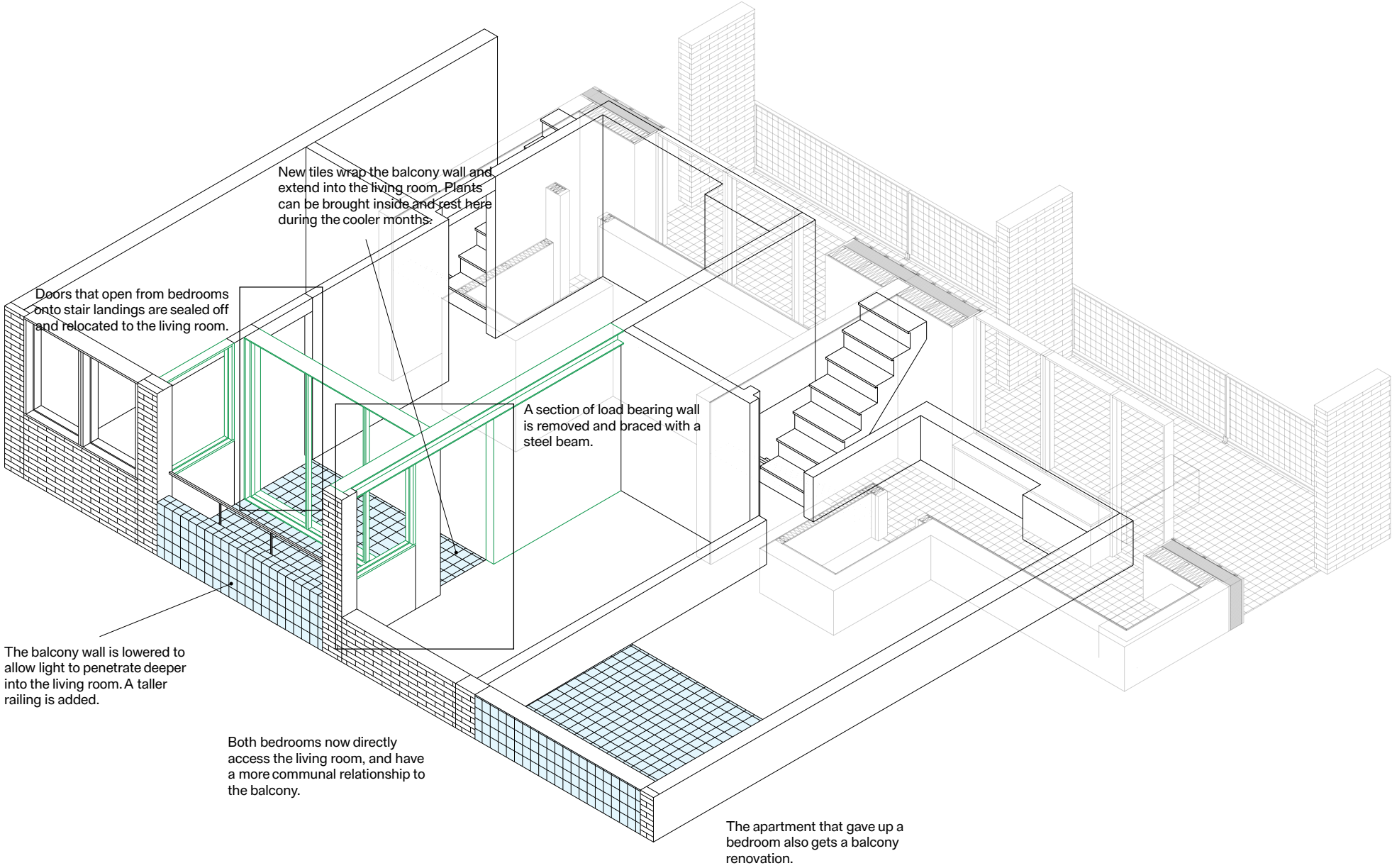
Infill wall thickened, and sill deepened to function as bench and shelving.

End of life window and door replaced and enlarged.

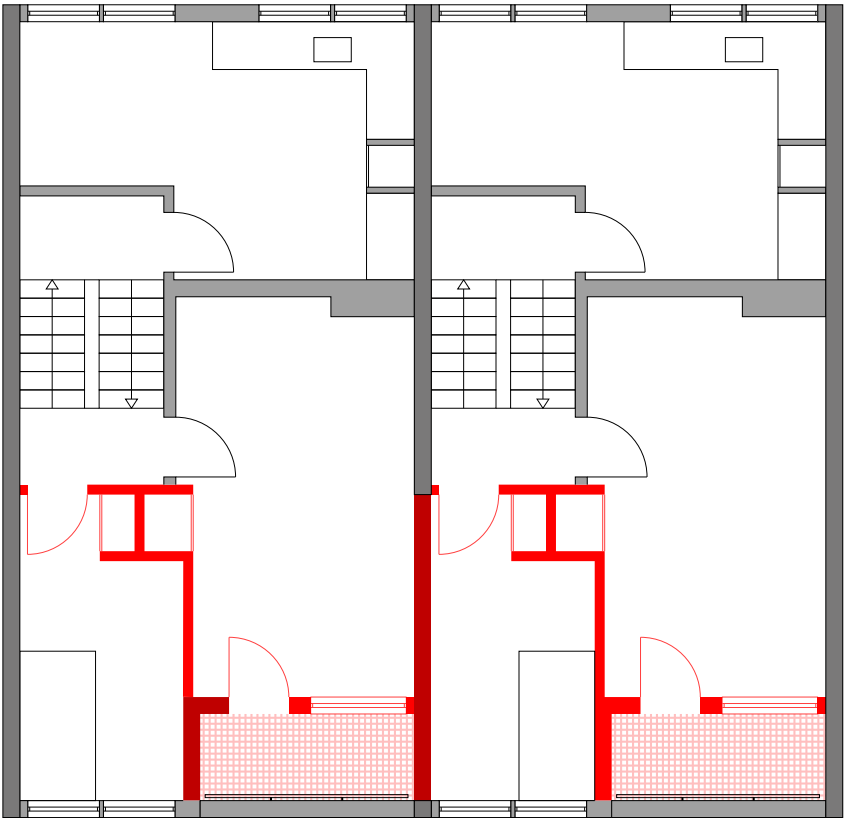
Skim coated walkway and interior carpet replaced with continuous tile.





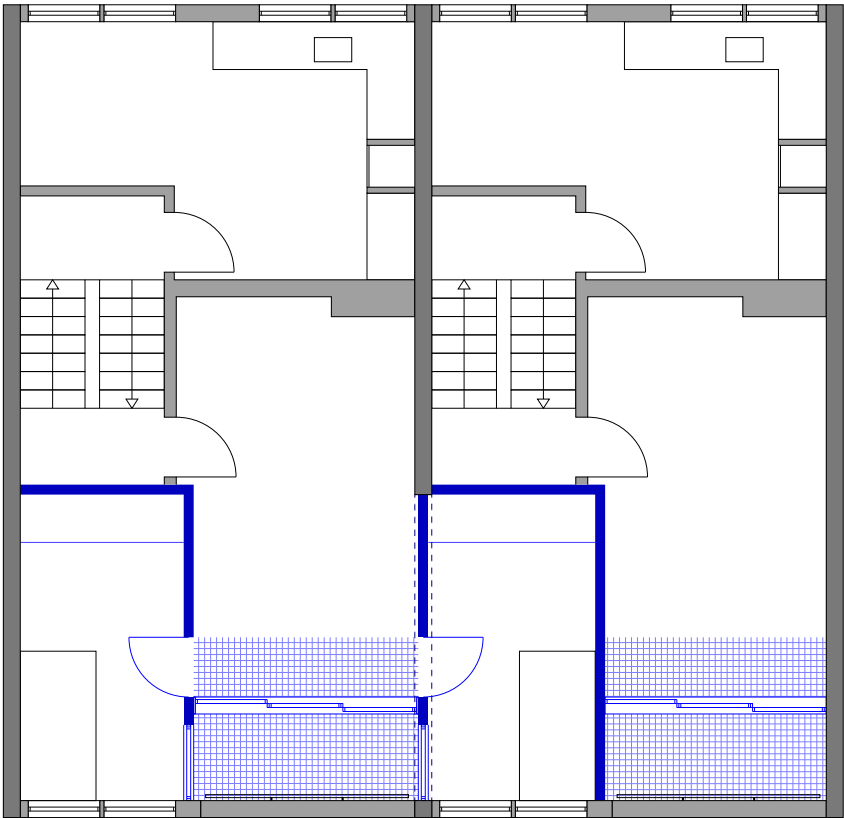


INTERVENTIONS



The existing condition of two adjacent units partaking in a "room-borrowing" scheme.

A DISPATCH FROM THE SITE OFFICE



A plan reflecting the impacts of "room-borrowing" - allowing one unit to absorb a single bedroom from the neighboring unit.





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*Wendling  
Site Office*