

Vanbrugh Park, Greenwich

Chamberlin, Powell & Bon

Architectural assistants: B. Frost, M. Thomas

Structural engineers: Taylor, Whalley and Spyra

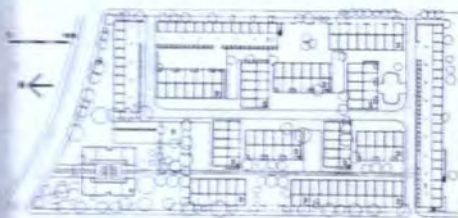
Quantity surveyors: Davis, Belfield and Everest

The majority of flats are concentrated in one eight-storey block (and one low-level floor of stores) at the north of the site to exploit the view to the north and to be unassertive when viewed from the heath which is surrounded by low and medium height buildings. The remaining flats are in the form of mews with a single storey of flats over garages. Because of access to garages, these are on the perimeter and the mews terrace facing the heath has garages on the inner side only, giving a continuous outer wall of old bricks and continuing the form of the old wall to Greenwich Park.

There is an access road down the centre of the scheme and a separate system of pathways, the principal one passing through the tall block to the heath via a bridge over a sunken section of the estate road. There being no through traffic, the road is as much a pedestrian way as the paths.

There are three type plans with two variations. In the tall block there is a two-room type and a variant formed by adding a second bedroom at

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1 View south down pedestrian way

2 Site Plan

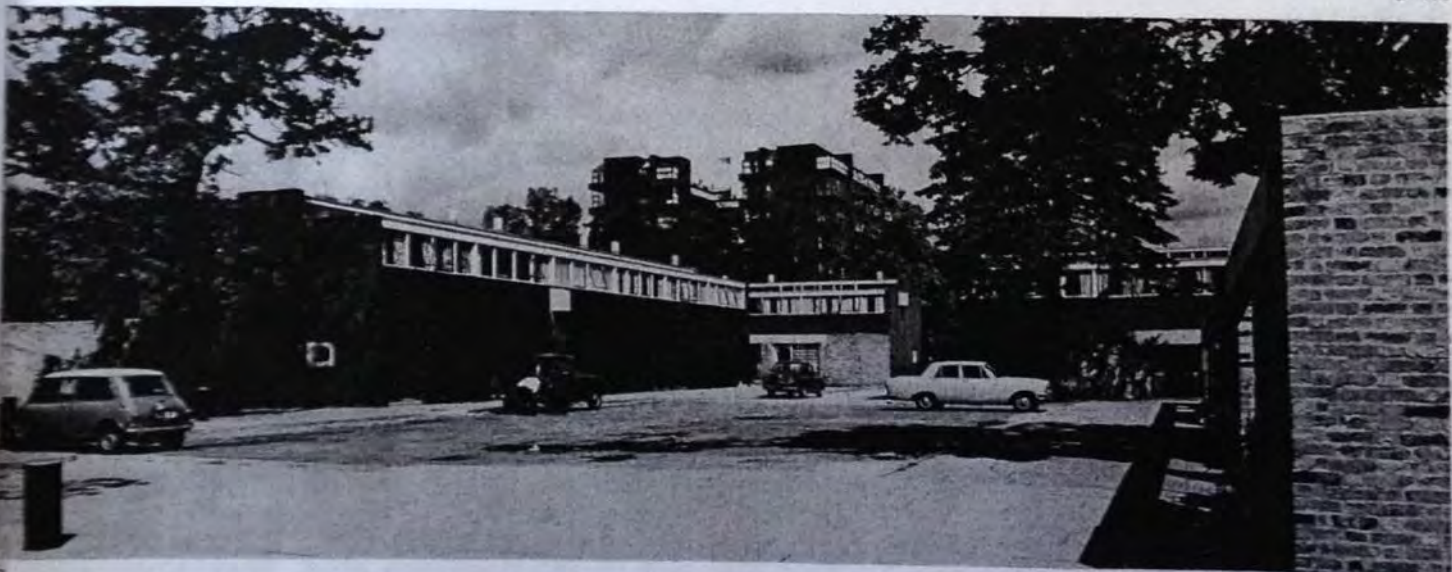
- 1 mews flats
- 2 four-bedroom houses
- 3 five-bedroom houses
- 4 tower block
- 5 pool

3 Central courtyard from the south

Photos: S. Lambert

The site is on the south side of Blackheath to the east of Greenwich Park with an area of 5.7 acres nett (just under 7 acres for density purposes). It is level, with a gravel subsoil. A hundred or two yards north of the site the land starts to fall quite steeply to the Thames valley. The density is 90 persons to the acre.

The general proportion of units of different sizes was provided by the client, Greenwich Borough Council. The architects were, however, asked to prepare two alternative sketch schemes, one with houses and flats and one with flats only. The Council finally decided to pursue a solution of mixed houses and flats.

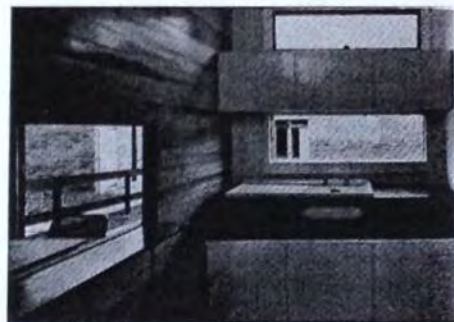




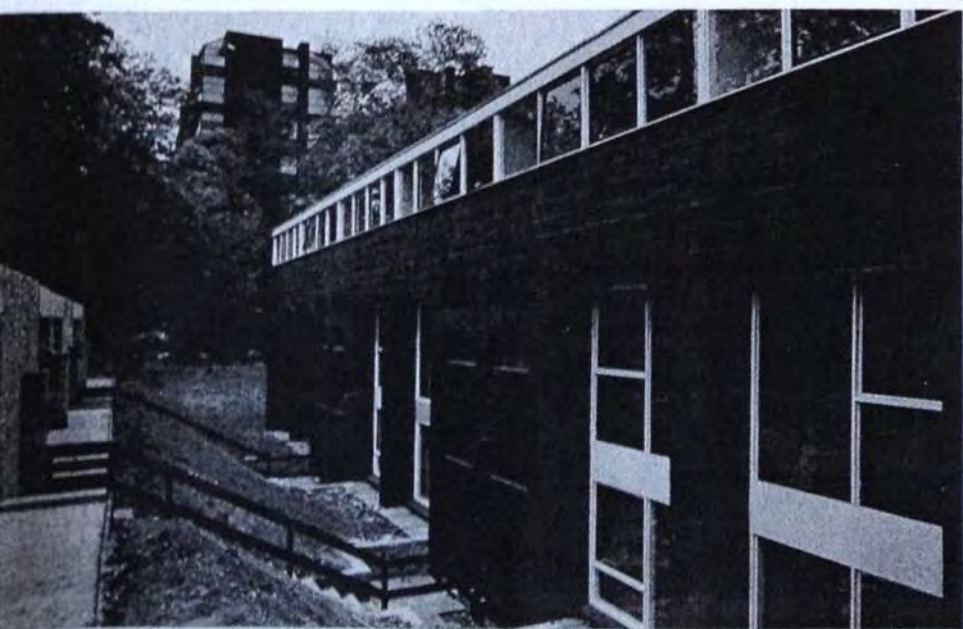
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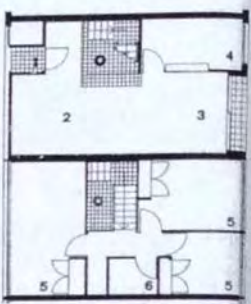
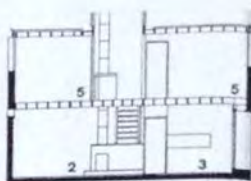
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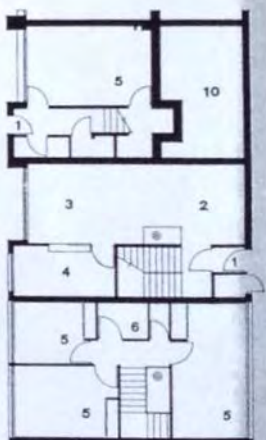
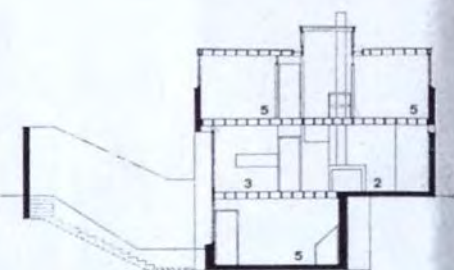
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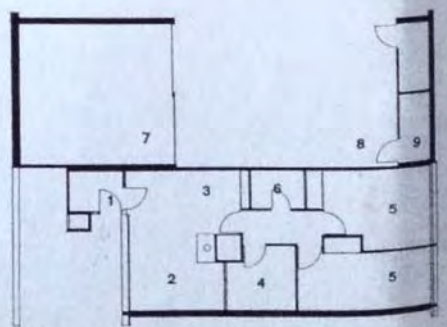
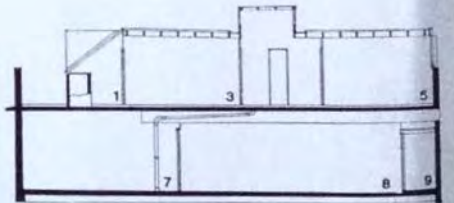
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1 Four-bedroom houses with the pool in the foreground

2 Living room in four-bedroom house

3 Standard kitchen

4 Five-bedroom houses

5 Plan and cross-section of four-bedroom house type

6 Plan and cross-section of five-bedroom house type

7 Plan and cross-section of mews flats

8 Mews flat access gallery with the tall block in the background

9 Mews flat: living room and kitchen hatch

10 Mews flats, access gallery with garages below

Photos: 1, 8 & 10, S. Lambert; 2, 3, 4 & 9, J. Mallby

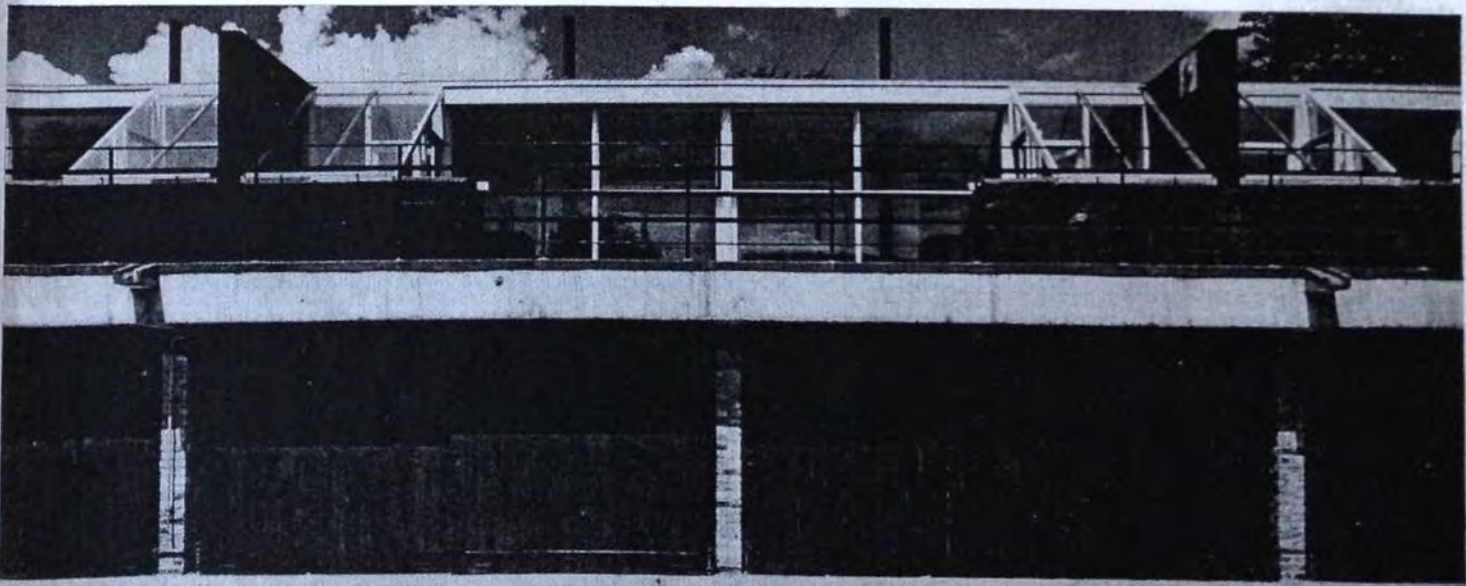
Key to plans

1 entrance
2 living room
3 dining room
4 kitchen
5 bedroom

6 bathroom
7 garage
8 covered road
9 store
10 unexcavated



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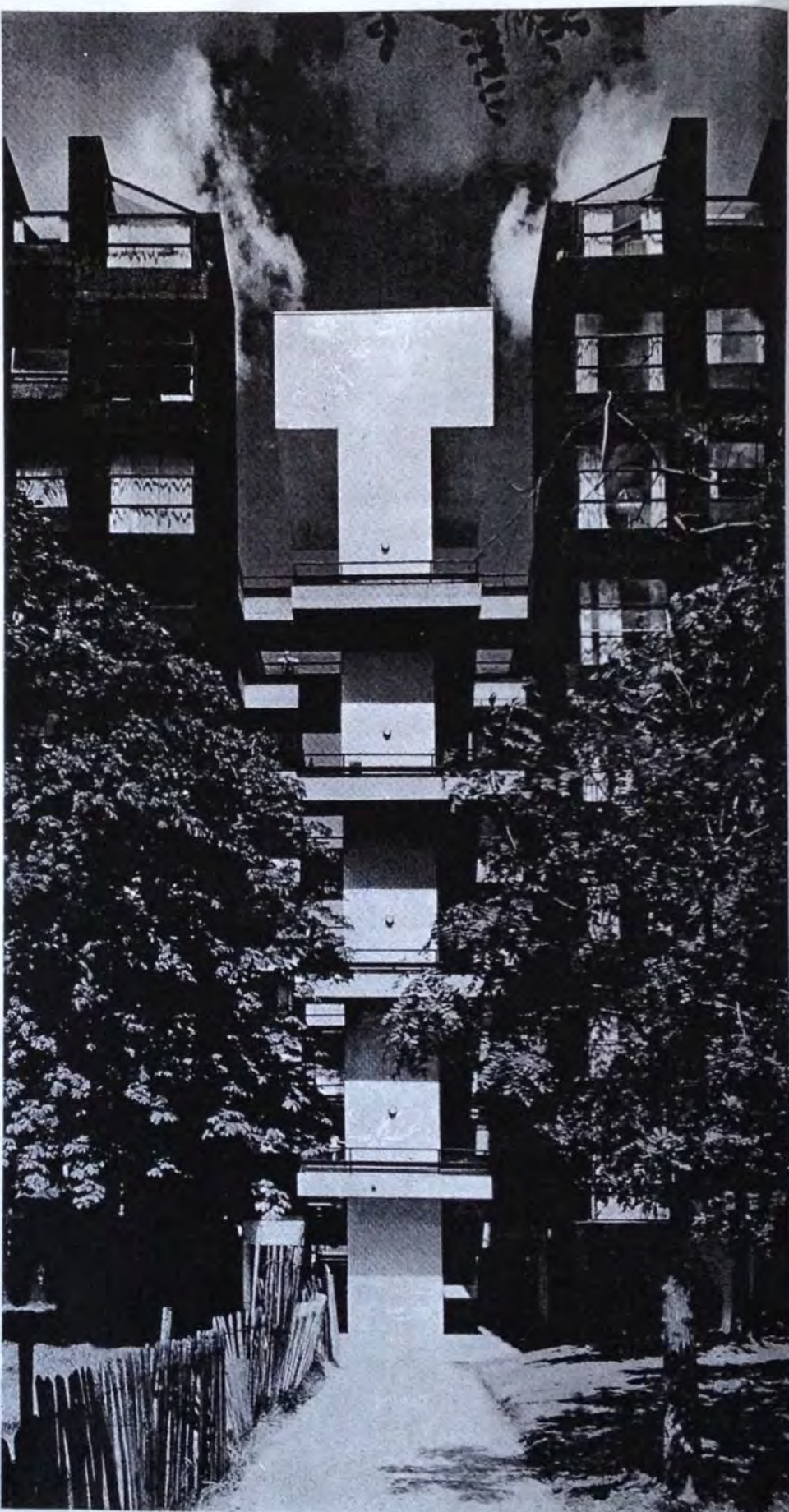
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the end of the block. The mews flat type with three rooms is consistent, while the four-room houses have a variant where a fourth bedroom is added—at a lower level—exploiting dips in the site on the lines of the old basements.

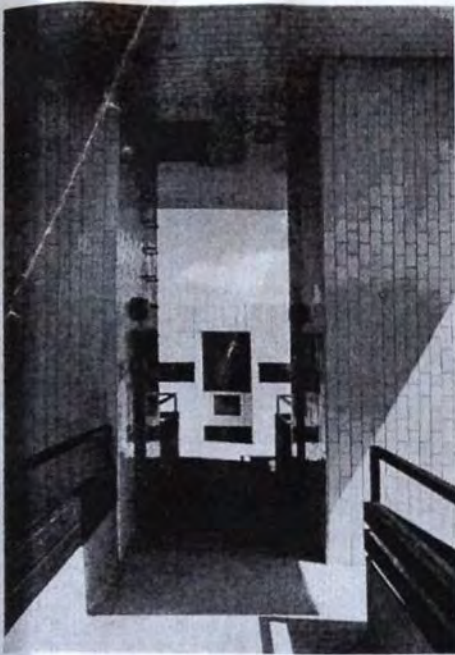
The plans in the tall block are conventional, but the mews flats have an outlook from the living room over the access way. For a degree of privacy a glazed porch projects forming a terrace recess. The house plans centre around the stove, which is encased with blockwork forming a large mass for the retention and diffusion of heat at a low surface temperature in the manner of continental stoves. The stove block which forms the landing of the stair provides heat by convection to the bedrooms.

The external walls of both the mews flats and houses are of cavity construction, both leaves being of concrete blocks containing their own additional cavities. This gives a good degree of insulation, but is not in conformity with the London Building Acts, which leaves the matter largely to the discretion of the District Surveyor, who proposed several possible treatments, including rendering and tile hanging. A thick elastic paint-like finish was finally accepted and this has unfortunately faded, the original neutral brown fading to pink. It was the architect's original intention to apply a thin permeable decoration to cover damage to blocks, which can quite easily be chipped or scored. Having seen the blockwork undecorated, it became clear that this would have given the best appearance had it been allowed.

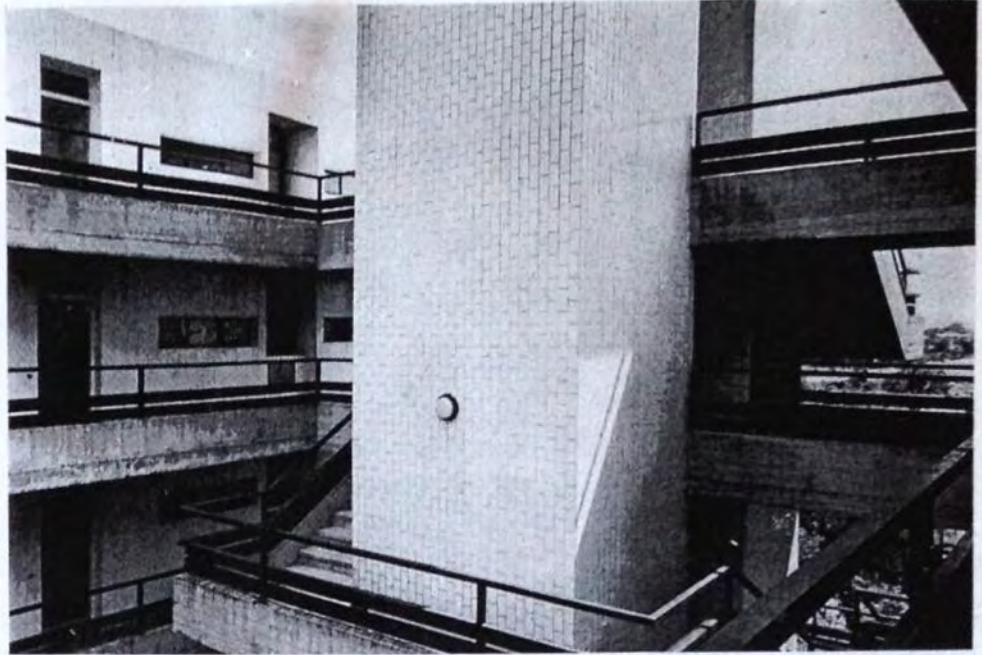
The tall block is of reinforced concrete, pick hammered and with the normal Thames valley ballast aggregate. To mask the inevitable rust stains from displaced wire stirrups and from pyrites in the aggregate, it was the architect's intention to stain the concrete with a thin watery stain that would soak right in and give the appearance of a naturally very dark concrete of a brownish colour. Creosote was at first considered. The stain ultimately selected did soak in, but it dried, forming a seal so that any overlapping of coats produced dark irregular bands. It is hoped that in time this will weather.



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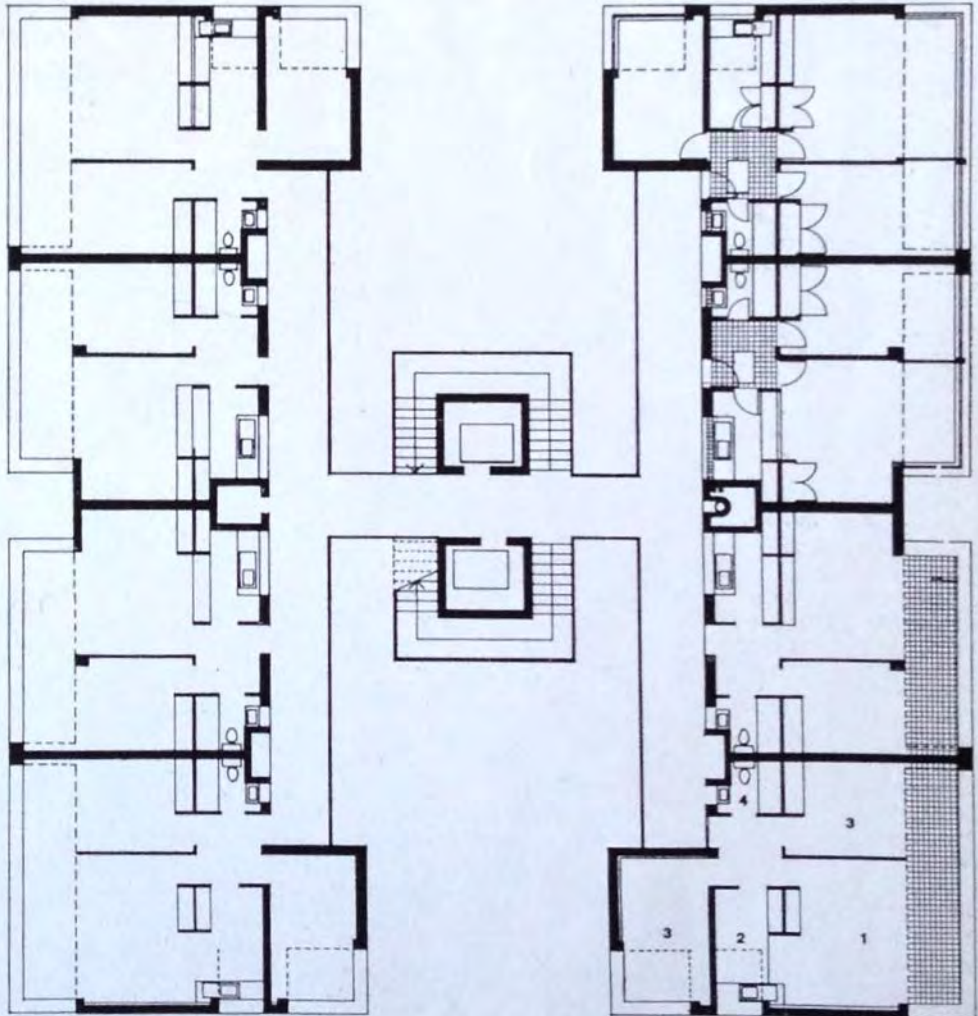
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- 1 Tall block from the east
 - 2 Stair and lift shaft of tall block
 - 3 Bridge on the top floor in the tall block, showing the two lift shafts and the soffit of the water tanks above
 - 4 Stair and access gallery of the tall block
 - 5 Top floor living room in the tall block
 - 6 Living room and kitchen hatch
 - 7 Typical floor plan—to the same scale as plans on p. 551
- 1 living/dining
 - 2 kitchen
 - 3 bedroom
 - 4 bathroom

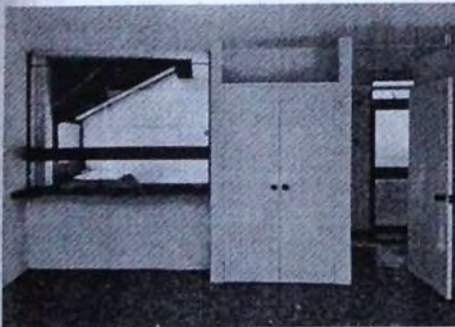
Photos: 1-4, S. Lambert; 5 & 6, J. Maltby



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