

Figure 9.23 Hembrugstraat
by de Klerk, use of space
within the street block



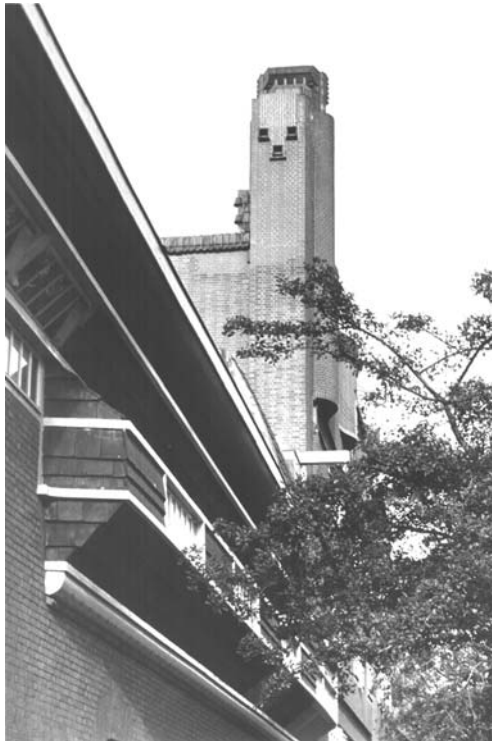
in roof tiles, though this part of the building is structurally and visually part of the vertical wall plane. In places, windows follow their own capricious external pattern, with little regard for internal requirements. At the base of the triangular block is the most

extravagant gesture, a tall tower, celebrating nothing more than two flats which sit beneath it and a small path within the block which leads to a small community room. The street block, nevertheless, is intensely human in scale and delightfully individual in expression. The project at Hembrugstraat remains a fine model for the treatment of a street block in the sustainable city of the twenty-first century.

THE SUPERBLOCK: UNWIN

In an essay '*Nothing to be Gained by Overcrowding*', Unwin demonstrated the mathematical truth that perimeter development is more cost-effective than the

Figure 9.24 Hembrugstraat
by de Klerk, details



typical nineteenth-century byelaw housing laid out in long parallel rows of streets (Unwin, 1967). In his article, Unwin presents two diagrams for a 10-acre plot. One shows typical rows of terraced housing with streets between; the other places dwellings around the perimeter. The demonstration shows clearly that when all the items making up the cost of the development are considered – including savings on roads and service runs – the cost for the more open and less crowded perimeter scheme is less. Unwin used this idea of the perimeter block in some of his work in Letchworth, incorporating, within the courtyard, allotments, for tenants, while the house fronts faced onto public greens (Figures 9.25–9.27). In the USA, experiments in superblock design were conducted by architects such as Perry, Stein and Wright (see Figures 8.1 to 8.3). The result is Radburn housing which takes the ideal of perimeter planning and distorts it out of all recognition, in order to service the motor car. In its purer forms, the Radburn system offers little privacy and an unclear definition of front and back. The superblock – as visualized by Unwin and when small in extent, or when broken by busy pathways – is still a useful concept for urban housing, particularly when perimeter development surrounds private gardens and/or allotments.

RICHMOND RIVERSIDE
DEVELOPMENT, SURREY:
ERITH AND TERRY

Quinlan Terry's redevelopment of Richmond Riverside, completed in 1988, is a major contribution to urban design and town planning. Opinion is divided about the architectural integrity of this attempt at

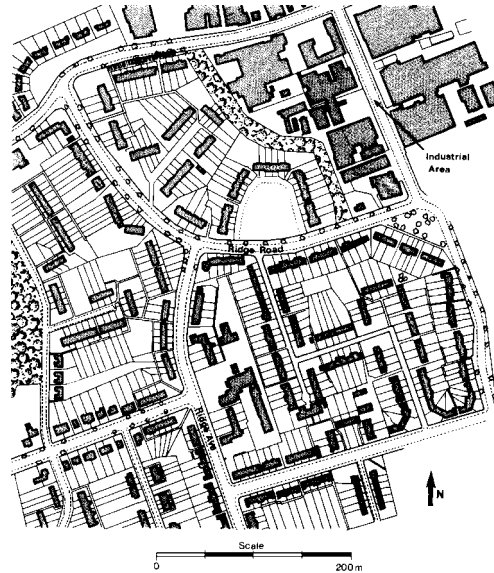


Figure 9.25 Letchworth, the superblock



Figure 9.26 Letchworth, use of space within the block



Figure 9.27 Letchworth, the Greens