architects who were members of a group which became known as the 'Amsterdam School'. In addition to Amsterdam South, which is the subject of more detailed analysis, other city extensions were built during this high point of urban design in Amsterdam: examples include a number of attractive garden villages built in Amsterdam North and Amsterdam East (Ons Amsterdam, 1973).

In London, the wonderful squares and crescents of the eighteenth century were built for the gentry and the wealthy upper middle classes (Figures 8.11 and 8.12). The boulevards of Hausmann in Paris were for the middle class, while the poor crowded into slum-like properties between the boulevards. The building in Amsterdam at the beginning of this century, in contrast, was mainly for the lower middle class and the working population. Giedion explains the development process which achieved this social programme in this way: 'Cooperatively organized building societies received building credits on very easy terms from the state, the credits being guaranteed by the community. Thus the whole tendency of the act (the 1901 Housing Act) was to make the city a decisive influence upon all building activity. At the same time the city made intensive (though not always successful) efforts to constitute itself a great land-owner and to acquire the land for its housing settlements before speculation forced up prices. And, like the nobles who were landlords in London, the city of Amsterdam leased the ground instead of selling it' (Giedion, 1954).

Figure 8.11 Bedford Square, London

Figure 8.12 Bedford Square, London

Another innovative feature of the Housing Act of 1901, in Holland, forced local authorities to determine extension plans for growth (Public Works Department, Amsterdam, 1975). As part of this programme of urban extension the well-documented plan for South Amsterdam was submitted in 1917 to the Town Council by the architect Berlage. The style of the plan and the power of its design approach set new standards in the planning of the city quarter. It may be true to say as a plan for a quarter it has not been equalled since. The planning was complemented by an architectural process which succeeded in building whole districts which were both homogeneous in design but also met the needs of the community. Developers, before receiving permission to build, submitted designs to a 'Commission for Beauty'. This commission insisted upon uniform street façades. The discipline of the commission encouraged a fine urban architecture to

develop, de Klerk and the other architects of the Amsterdam School responding to the challenge with flair and imagination (Figures 8.13–8.15).

Berlage drew up his first plan for Amsterdam South in 1902 at the time the Stock Exchange building in Amsterdam, his finest work, was nearing completion (Figure 8.16). This first plan has streets of sweeping ovals reminiscent of French garden designs in Hausmann's public parks for Paris in the mid-nineteenth century (Figures 8.17 and 8.18). The first plan is both romantic in character and organic in the shapes used to structure the quarter. The plan may also have been influenced by Sitte's strictures against the use of the forced axis and artificial grid-iron system of streets. Berlage was faced with the problem of giving identity to a large area of high-density housing. The essentially low-density garden city concept – even if Berlage had been aware of it – was not therefore appropriate for his purpose. Berlage relied upon the urban heritage derived directly from the Renaissance. Every neighbourhood within the quarter was to be dominated by an important public building. The neighbourhoods were therefore to cluster round a market, a theatre or college which was to give the neighbourhood its particular character. The quarter was structured to a human scale easily perceived and understood by its residents.

Figure 8.13 Amsterdam South, statue of Berlage

Figure 8.14 Amsterdam South