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# POLOGGY

# TYPOLOGY OF URBAN FORMS FOR LEWISHAM

## Introduction

The following section of the study sets out a classification of the various urban forms found in the borough, using a simple taxonomic methodology to gradually break down the various forms into finer levels of differentiation.

This typology is a bespoke approach which has been developed specifically to reflect the nature and types of development found in Lewisham.

The first layer of classification is between areas which are residential and areas which contain a mix of uses. Whilst this may include elements of residential accommodation such as flats over shops the prevailing character of the mixed use areas is non-residential.

## Residential development

Within the residential category there is a clear distinction between those areas which follow a conventional **perimeter block** layout and those (typically more modern) areas which have a looser **free form** structure, with more open plan layouts. The perimeter block form typically provides a clear and legible environment with a clear distinction between public and private space and a good network of streets that makes pedestrian movement easy. By contrast the free form areas tend to lose this clarity of structure, often at the expense of legibility, permeability or both. In addition, to these two forms, Lewisham also has a number of areas which can be described of **complex block** form - blocks which include cul-de-sacs.

The perimeter block classification is then broken down further to reflect the various densities found in the borough, ranging from

tight Victorian terraces through to low density, suburban inter-war development.

## Mixed use development

The mixed use classification is broken down into four broad categories: - centres, big box, industry and institutions.

**Centres** are the town, district and local centres which provide shops and services. This category has been further subdivided to reflect the broad spread which ranges from the primary centres of Lewisham and Catford which offer a high order of comparison shopping and leisure facilities through to the small tertiary centres and linear arrangements of shops found along key routes.

**Big box retail** development covers large volume retail buildings in a predominantly car-based setting. This includes examples such as supermarkets and retail warehouse style outlets.

**Industry** development primarily covers large and small scale industrial parks across the borough. Large scale industrial areas with warehouses and distribution facilities are included, as well as smaller workshop style units which frequently occur in rail arches.

Finally, **institution** development includes civic and business uses such as schools, hospitals and civic/community buildings. These areas typically have a public function and which sit within a site which as well as having a stronger landscape character than the big box development is also likely to have its own internal circulation between different elements of building.

## Green space

The role of green space throughout the borough is an essential part of its character. In many cases the parks were laid out alongside their adjacent residential communities and form the heart of neighbourhoods. This relationship is highlighted in the neighbourhood level characterisation in the next section. For the purposes of the typology characterisation, the green spaces have been grouped into four types: parks, allotments, sport and cemetery.

## Typology mapping

This section of the report provides a description of each of the typologies established in this classification system, including a review of the key features of urban form, buildings and streetscape/landscape. This is supported by a selection of photographs designed to portray the key features and built character.

Alongside this, each category also features a plan which shows where in the borough it occurs, along with a more detailed extract from the map which provides a greater appreciation of the urban form and block structure.

## Application of typologies

The categorisation of the borough into typologies has been undertaken through detailed survey. The predominant character of the block determines the typology assigned for each area. There will inevitably be exceptions within the block or area in some cases, but the most important overriding factor is the dominant form.



Urban areas which fit the description of **urban terrace** perimeter blocks are most likely to be Victorian and Edwardian terraces. By their nature they tend to be tightly arranged, regular rows of houses with on-street parking



**Suburban terrace** perimeter blocks share many of the urban characteristics of the urban terrace blocks. However, they typically date from a later period and are often arranged as blocks of four or eight homes rather than continuous terraces.



**Suburban** areas share many of the urban characteristics of the suburban terrace form. However, they are more typically a product of private sector development and so place a greater emphasis on the individuality of dwellings. The most common form of dwellings in this period is the semi-detached house.



The lowest density perimeter blocks are the **villas** which typically characterise some of the most sought-after areas of Lewisham. They feature large individual plots, able to accommodate significant houses which are often built to individual designs.



**Complex urban** blocks is the term used in this study to describe late Twentieth and early Twenty First Century urban development. These areas owe much to traditional perimeter block forms, but adapted to provide higher densities and accommodate parking.



**Complex suburban** forms describes the trend for cul-de-sacs in later Twentieth Century development. They feature generally low densities of housing and have generally poor permeability and legibility.



**Free form high rise** development are tall buildings set within areas of landscape and parking. These typically date from the 1960s and were built as part of public housing projects.



**Slab block** development is largely associated with post-war buildings which occur across the borough. However, it also relates to inter-war LCC development of low and medium rise flats.



**Free-form low rise** development in Lewisham is typically a product of the early post-war period. It features low rise terraces and detached buildings which have a fragmented urban layout.



Lewisham and Catford town centres are the only examples in the borough which can truly be described as a **primary centres**. This is characterised by the large scale of buildings and variety of comparison shopping, services and leisure opportunities available.



**Secondary town centres** relate to established urban areas and provide a mixture of comparison and convenience shopping. They typically have a much finer grain than a primary centre and are better integrated with their context



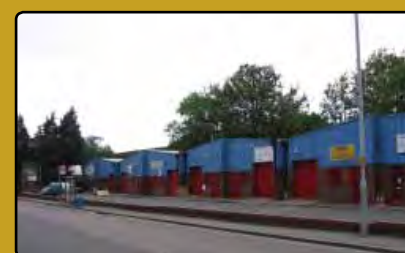
**Tertiary or linear centres** are the most modest collections of retail use. They are typically found as shopping parades within residential areas, but also include the elongated string of shops which trace the more significant historic routes in the borough.



**Big box retail** development describes retail areas which feature large buildings and which are predominantly car-based in terms of access and movement. This includes large scale retail warehouse style units and supermarkets.



**Industrial** uses in Lewisham include large scale shed and warehouse development, but also includes a significant number of small scale industrial areas around railway arches and in left over spaces between railway lines.



**Institutional** areas are normally associated with functions such as colleges, hospitals or civic buildings. They are typically characterised by collections of buildings, often within the middle of a site, and areas of open space which may include playing fields.



**Parks** vary in size across the borough and are often of a formal design. These include the areas of heath as well as the neighbourhood parks throughout the borough. The buildings around the edge of these parks have a strong relationship with the space.



**Allotments** are frequently located along rail lines and hidden within large perimeter blocks. They have a strong internal structure due to plot division. Due to their hidden nature often have limited impact on the wider character of an area.



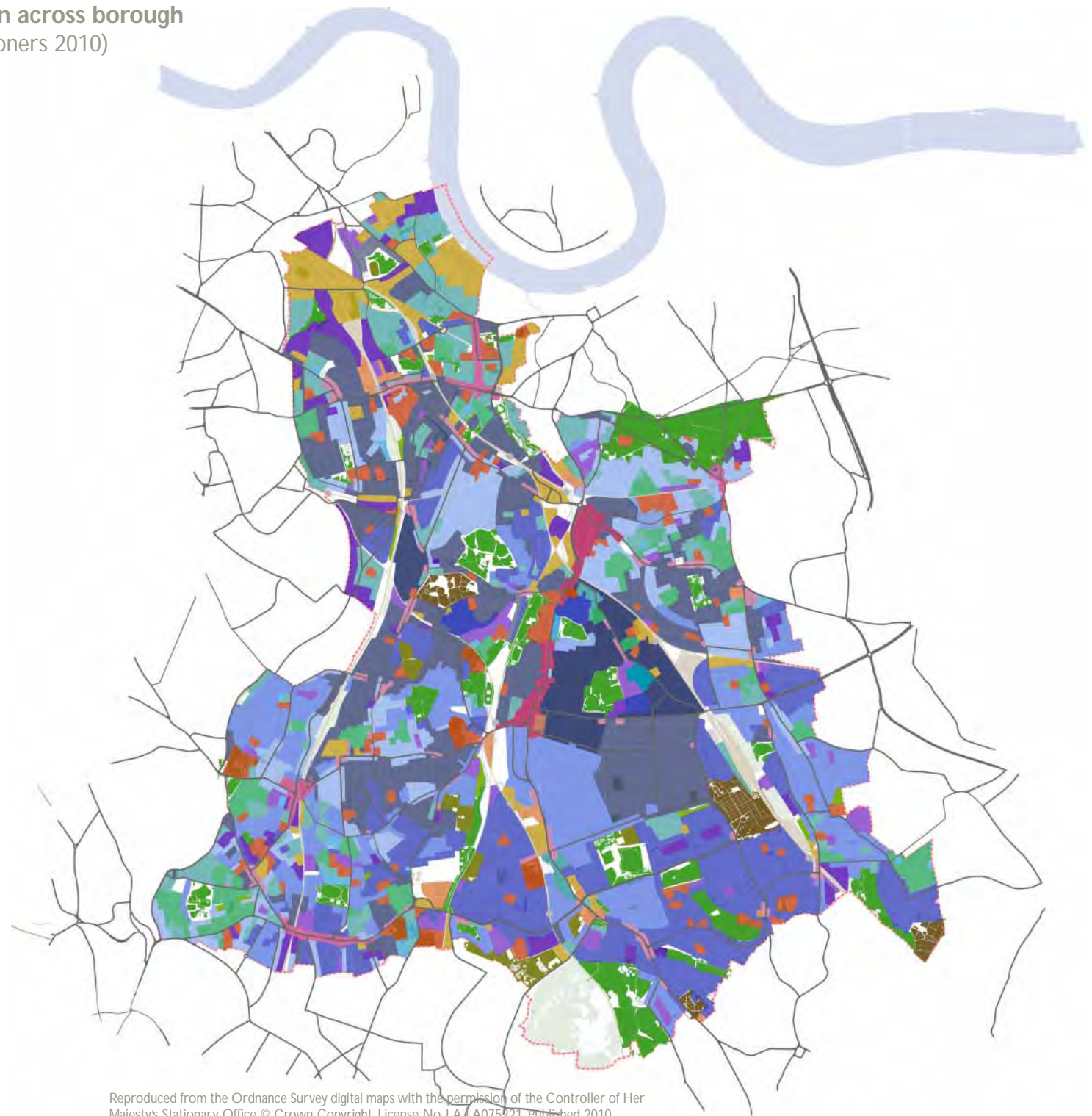
Green spaces primarily used and laid out as **sport** pitches and formal recreational space. Vary in size from large scale professional sports centre provision, to simple areas of grassland laid out with football pitches.



**Cemeteries** are also found in the borough and have a very distinct character and atmosphere given their specific function.



### Typology distribution across borough (Plan by Urban Practitioners 2010)



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# MIXED USE - CENTRES - PRIMARY

## Introduction

Lewisham and Catford town centres are the only examples in the borough which can truly be described as a primary centres. This is characterised by the large scale of buildings and variety of comparison shopping, services and leisure opportunities available.

## Urban Form

Primary centres are intensely urban environments with a strong focus on commercial activity and a scale and type of buildings not found anywhere else.

Whilst the street pattern has evolved from an original historic layout, and retains many of the original block dimensions, many of the plots have amalgamated over time to create larger retail units, including some such as the shopping centres which define an entire block.

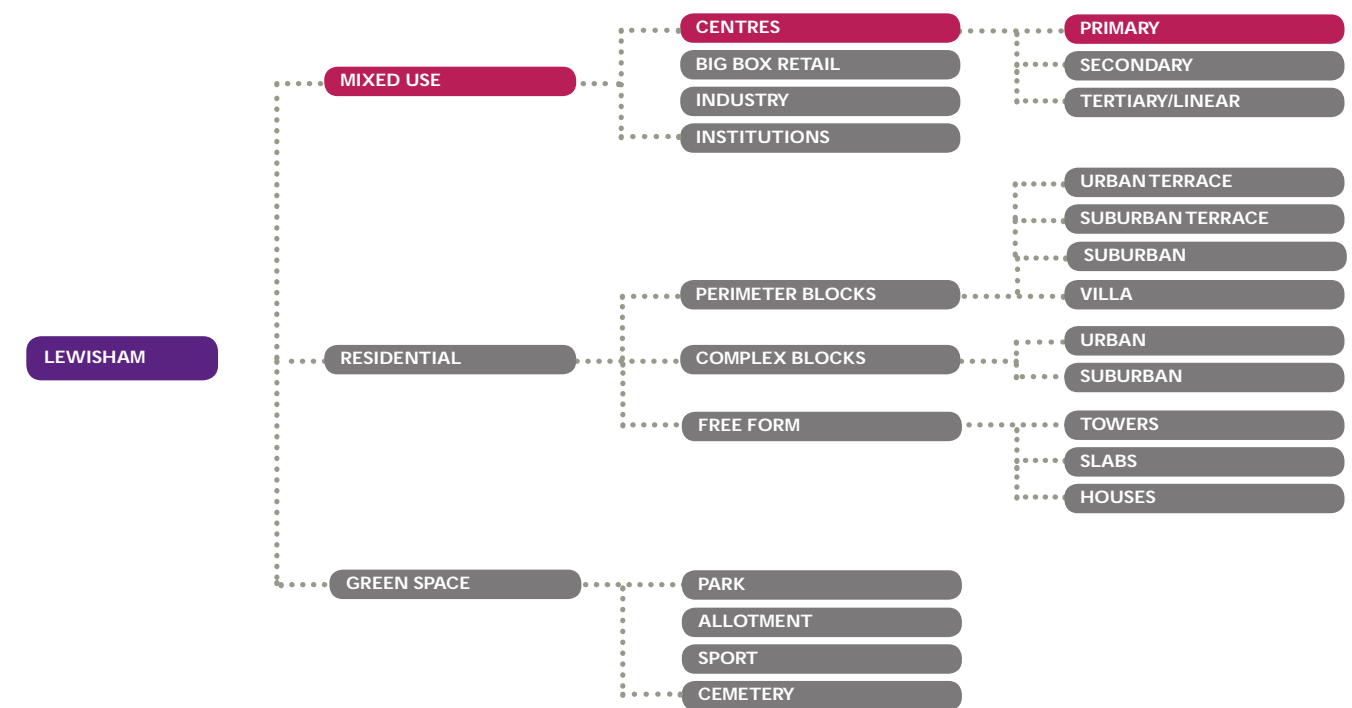
Land uses in the primary centre feature a mixture of comparison shopping, services and leisure uses. Convenience shopping is present as a peripheral element, whilst evening economy uses can play a significant role.

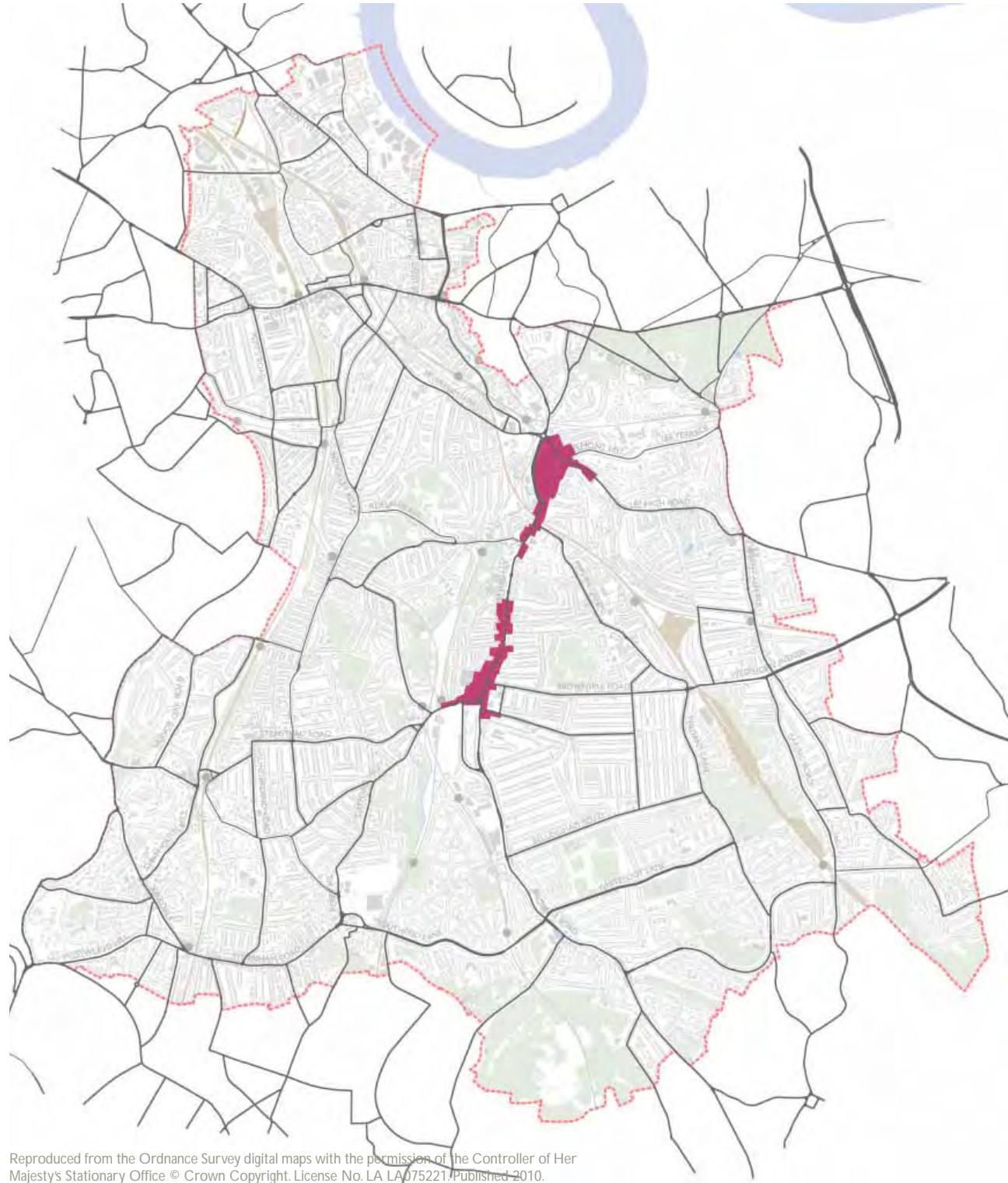
## Buildings

Buildings in the primary centres vary significantly in scale and form, and cover a wide range of periods and styles. There are some examples of historic fabric retained in the main areas and these provide a human scale and fine grain of unit size. However, there is also a significant proportion of post-war buildings, including the substantial Lewisham shopping centre (formerly the Riverdale Centre).

## Streetscape

The streetscape in this typology is intensely urban, with significant areas of pedestrianisation and lacking in any substantial street greenery. This partly relates to one of the main functions of the High Street which is to provide a location for the market, which requires clear space.





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# MIXED USE - CENTRES - SECONDARY

## Introduction

Secondary town centres relate to established urban areas and provide a mixture of comparison and convenience shopping. Whilst they tend to feature a scale or building which is larger than the surrounding residential area, they typically have a much finer grain than a primary centre and are better integrated with their context.

## Urban Form

The structure of the centre is based around very conventional traditional shop formats facing onto the street and does not typically feature shopping centre or other deep formats of retail. In some instances one or two shop units have been amalgamated to create larger premises whilst some larger units such as smaller town centre food stores provide a more substantial offer. However, this is an exception to the typical pattern which is for a single storey of retail with either office/storage space above associated with the store or in some instances residential accommodation.

The layout of secondary centres is largely dictated by the historic street pattern of the area, and in the case of many of the key centres such as Forest Hill this pattern was the result of village settlement before the widespread urbanisation of the area.

## Buildings

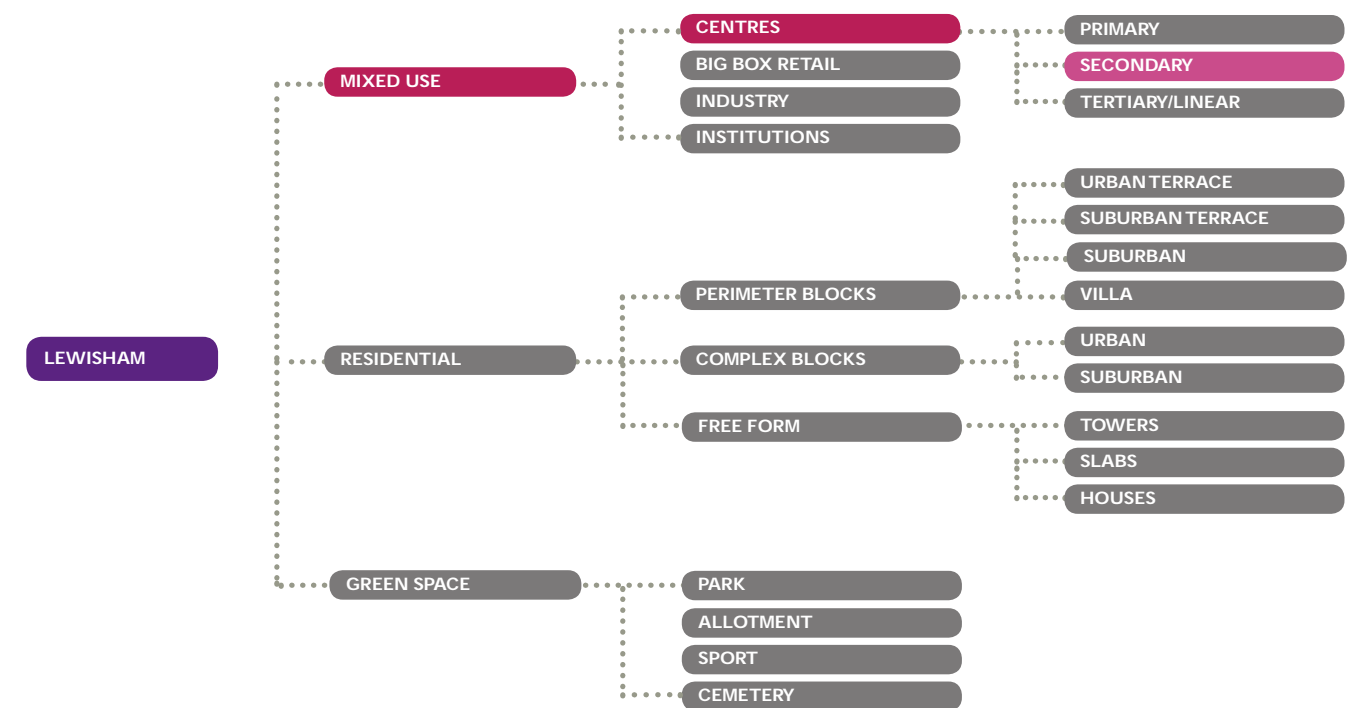
The mix of buildings in secondary centres is more likely to feature a good selection of historic forms, either purpose-built as shops but also as conversions from residential accommodation. Shops which have been

converted from residential accommodation often feature a projecting ground floor element, built where the garden of the house would have been.

Many of the buildings in secondary centres have a strong three storey character, with space above the shops used either for storage and ancillary space or for residential accommodation.

## Streetscape

Streets in secondary centres tend to be very urban in character and dominated by traffic movement. Pavements vary in width, but are usually more cluttered than in residential areas, including a higher density of bus stops, bins, A-boards, café seating and other paraphernalia. Due to the busy nature of many of the roads passing through these centres they are also likely to feature controlled junctions and crossings, adding to the visual clutter.



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# MIXED USE - CENTRES - TERTIARY/LINEAR

## Introduction

Tertiary or linear centres are the most modest collections of retail use. They are typically found as shopping parades within residential areas, but also include the elongated string of shops which trace the more significant historic routes in the borough.

## Urban Form

Tertiary and linear centres are by their nature very elongated. Where they are discreet areas of shopping within an otherwise residential context they may account for a short parade or street of shops.

As with the secondary centres, the tertiary centres are based around a conventional street. They are most likely to feature a mix of local and convenience shopping (ranging from conventional corner shops through to large food stores) along with a jumble of more specialist shops ranging from small niche uses through to secondhand car showrooms. The provision of short-stay parking on street in reasonable proximity to shops is a key element of ensuring that they continue to be viable trading locations.

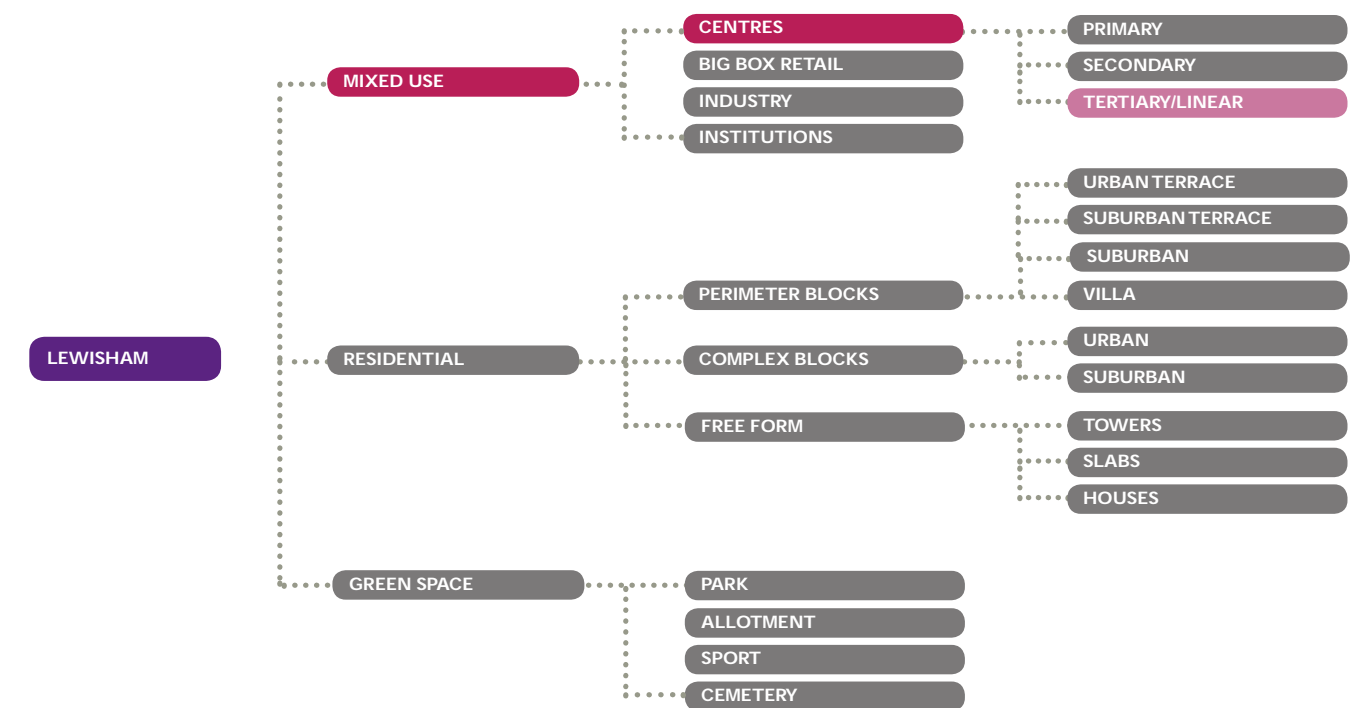
## Buildings

Buildings in tertiary centres include a mix of custom-built units and conversions from residential units. They bear a close comparison with the residential areas surrounding them and typically have a fine grain of domestic scale plot widths. Some tertiary areas of development clearly show that they originated as shop units, whilst others, particularly those with single storey front extensions show conversion from

earlier houses set back from the road behind a garden. What is noticeable is that the villa style of development, particularly those with an elevated main floor are not conducive to shop conversion and so have often remained despite pressure from surrounding development.

## Streetscape

The streetscape of the tertiary mixed use centres is variable. In some areas it is similar to that of the Secondary mixed use centres with busy streets with significant numbers of pedestrians and a busy through flow of traffic. The street profile may be narrower than in secondary mixed use centres and often has narrow pavements but the character of the area can be similarly vibrant. Other Tertiary mixed use centres are quite different and have a more suburban character.



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# MIXED USE - BIG BOX RETAIL

## Introduction

Big box retail development describes retail areas which feature large buildings and which are predominantly car-based in terms of access and movement. This includes large scale retail warehouse style units and supermarkets.

## Urban Form

Big box developments are those which feature large volume buildings, to accommodate retail uses such as supermarkets, DIY stores or car showrooms. By their nature they tend to be very car-based and most typically feature a large box building separated from the road by a large car park.

The urban grain in big box areas varies, but is typically not friendly to pedestrians with the expectation that most or all customers will arrive by car or van. More recent food store designs retain the option to walk to the store from the surrounding urban area but this is clearly not a priority.

Retail parks place a high importance on clear legibility and easy wayfinding, using simple road structures and obvious layouts coupled with clear signage to make orientation easy.

## Buildings

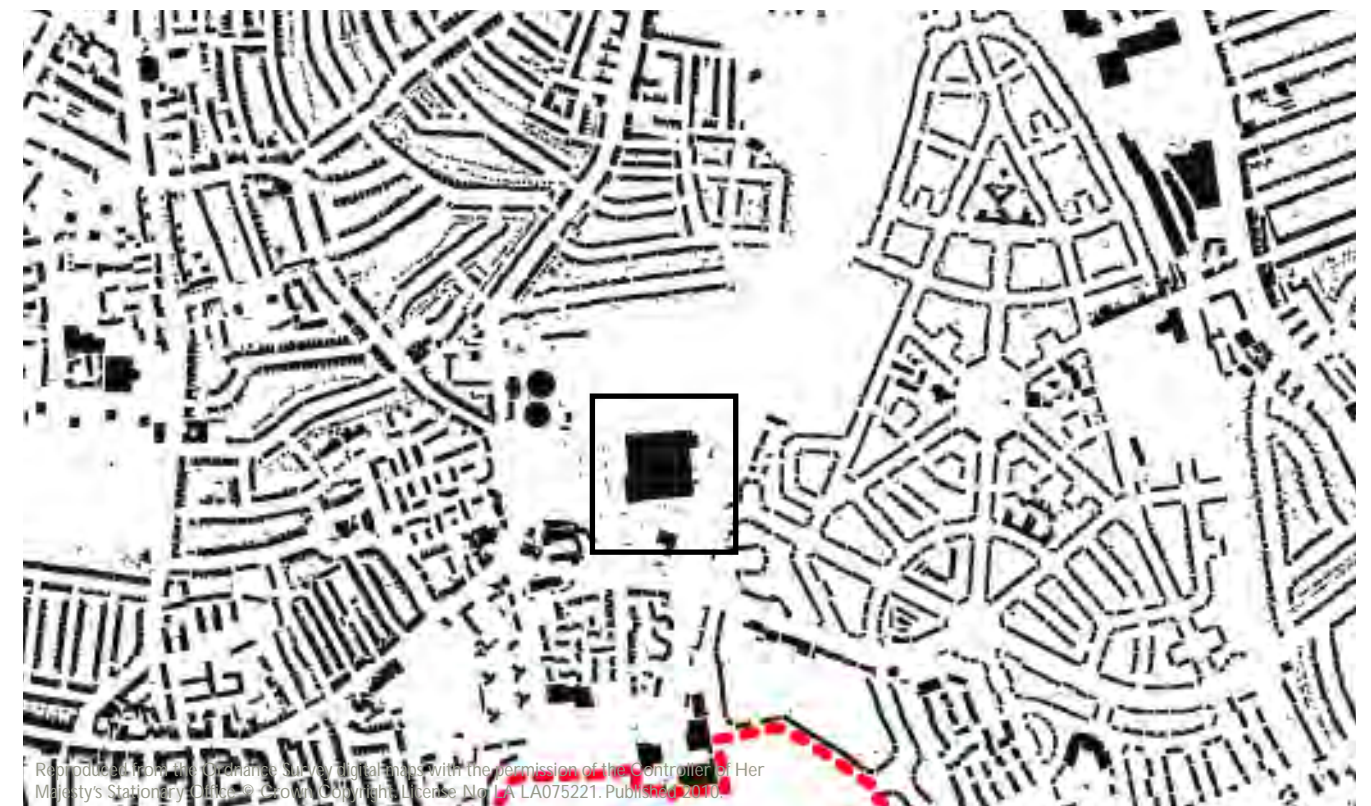
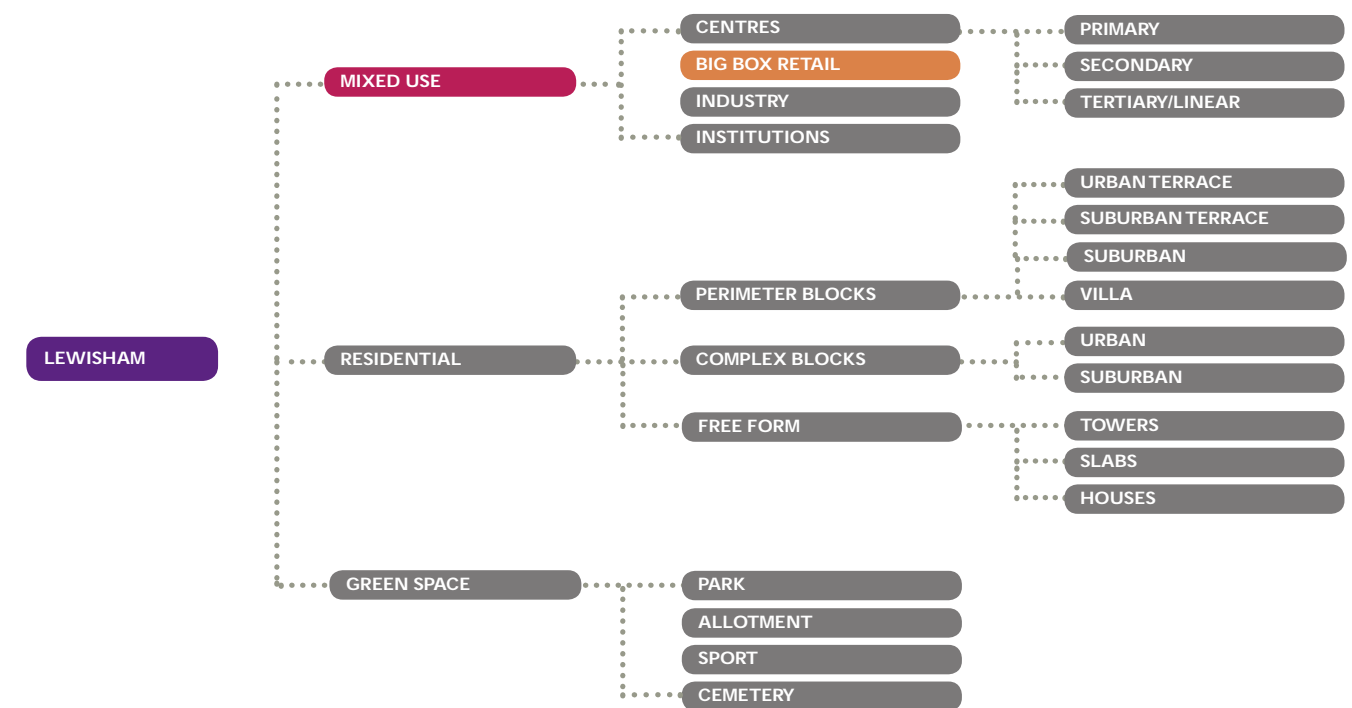
Buildings within the big box typology are typically large and simple and frequently have only a small area of windows relating to the entrance. Most retail buildings in these areas are likely to be relatively young, reflecting the rapidly changing developments in shopping formats and habits.

Buildings of this type are unlikely to have any significant reference to local building forms and materials, and whilst supermarkets have historically used areas of pitched roof and traditional materials to ape local forms this is not generally regarded as successful.

## Streetscape

The streetscape and landscape of 'Big Box' areas is typically extensive forming large areas of open (unbuilt) space which is often publicly accessible. These areas contribute to the openness of a local area and give a sense of space in otherwise densely built-up areas however much of it is bland and poor quality. The areas are characterized by large expanses of hard-surfaced parking areas with wide roads and little vegetation. Roads are typically tarmac with concrete kerbs and well lit with standard highway lighting. Parking areas are normally surfaced in tarmac or concrete block with a range of modern street furniture particularly bollards. These extensive areas of impermeable surfacing are typically drained to a piped drainage system which results in a low percentage of rainfall permeating the ground naturally and replenishing the groundwater store.

Many of the supermarket car parks have some planting comprising young ornamental trees set within the parking areas and a mix of low maintenance evergreen shrub species. However, establishment rates of these are slow and canopies are small so the percentage tree cover is very low. Landscapes are typically well-maintained with closely mown grass, clipped evergreen shrub areas and litter-free paved areas.



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Much of the streetscape and landscape is in private ownership but the boundary between public and private ownership is normally undefined.



# MIXED USE – INDUSTRY

## Introduction

Industrial uses in Lewisham include large scale shed and warehouse development, but also includes a significant number of small scale industrial areas around railway arches and other left over spaces.

## Urban form

Most of the industrial areas of development in Lewisham are in the north of the borough, gathered amidst the criss-crossing lines of railway which cuts the various zones off from one-another and renders them largely unsuitable for residential development. The layouts of the industrial uses vary considerably, but in many cases they incorporate the arches of the railway network as useable space as well as including a range of sheds of varying sizes.

Other smaller areas of industrial development exist across the borough, usually taking advantage of former railway land or other interstitial space left over by previous phases of development.

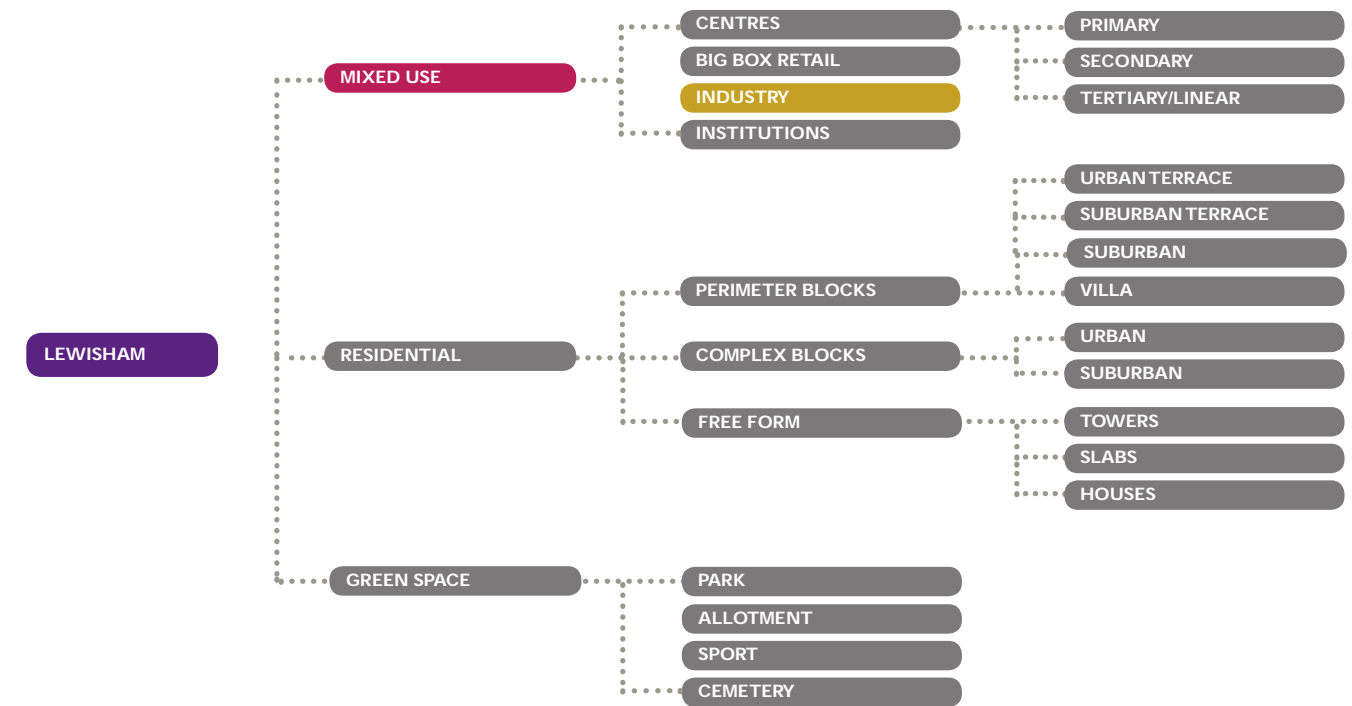
## Buildings

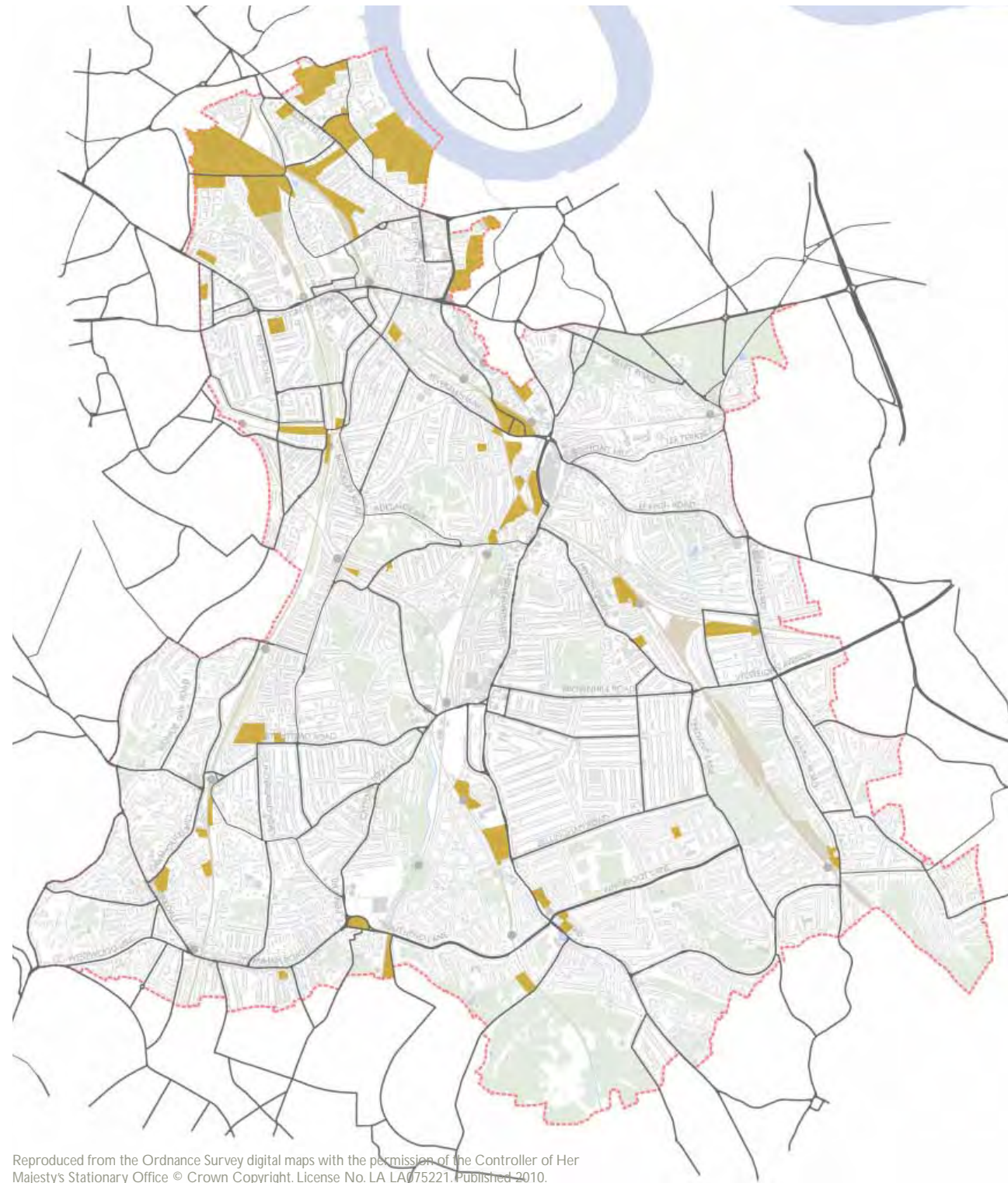
Very few industrial buildings in Lewisham are of significant interest, most being simple brick or metal sheds. Convoys Wharf occupies a significant element of the borough's river frontage and is a particularly large example of the borough's industrial legacy. Some examples of older industrial buildings can be found at Lower Creekside, and this area retains an atmosphere of the older industrial and wharf uses that used to dominate the area. A particularly visible industrial building is the large power station in the north of the borough

which, with its near neighbour, the Millwall FC ground, provides a striking landmark.

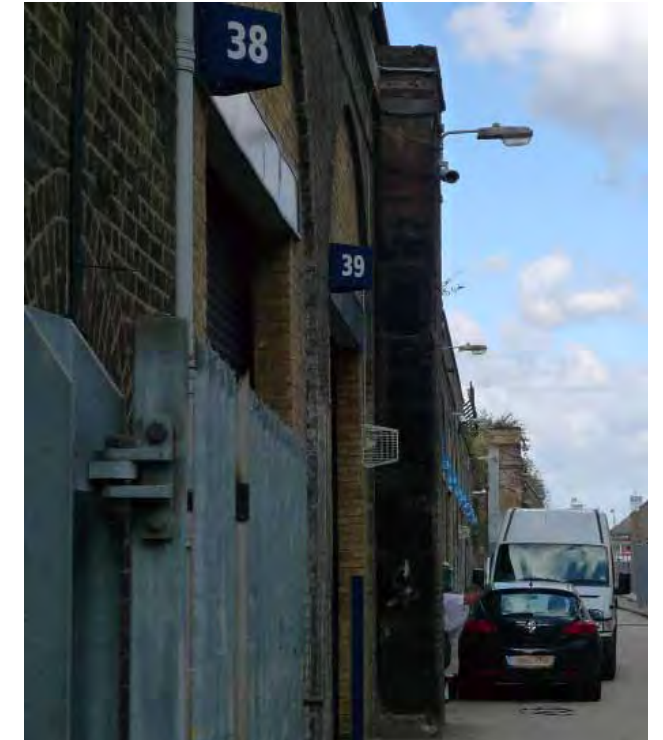
## Streetscape

Streetscape in industrial areas is designed to be tough and cheap to repair, often including details such as high kerbs to prevent over-running by lorries. Many smaller industrial estates or clusters of buildings feature no pavement, effectively on the understanding that the whole area is given over to work and process and that casual passers-by are not expected.





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# MIXED USE - INSTITUTIONS

## Introduction

Institution areas are normally associated with functions such as colleges, hospitals or civic buildings. They are typically characterised by collections of buildings, often within the middle of a site, and areas of open space which may include playing fields.

## Urban Form

Institutional uses such as large schools, hospitals and civic functions create a distinctive urban form. They are typically characterised by buildings standing within grounds, and particularly in the case of older examples they are likely to present a formal and sometimes symmetrical frontage to the street. Given that for many buildings such as schools and hospitals security is a significant issue it is quite typical to find that the buildings have a strong boundary treatment and limited points of entry which allows for close monitoring. Although these boundaries are usually defined with railings to offer visibility they do create an isolating effect which removes these buildings from their community to a degree.

One significant impact of an institutional site can be the disruptive effect that a large enclosed area can have on the network of pedestrian routes in the area. By being a substantial body of land which doesn't provide through-routes it can reduce the frequency and directness of pedestrian routes and make journeys longer. However, it is also notable that a campus area also typically has its own internal circulation, linking different buildings and spaces together.

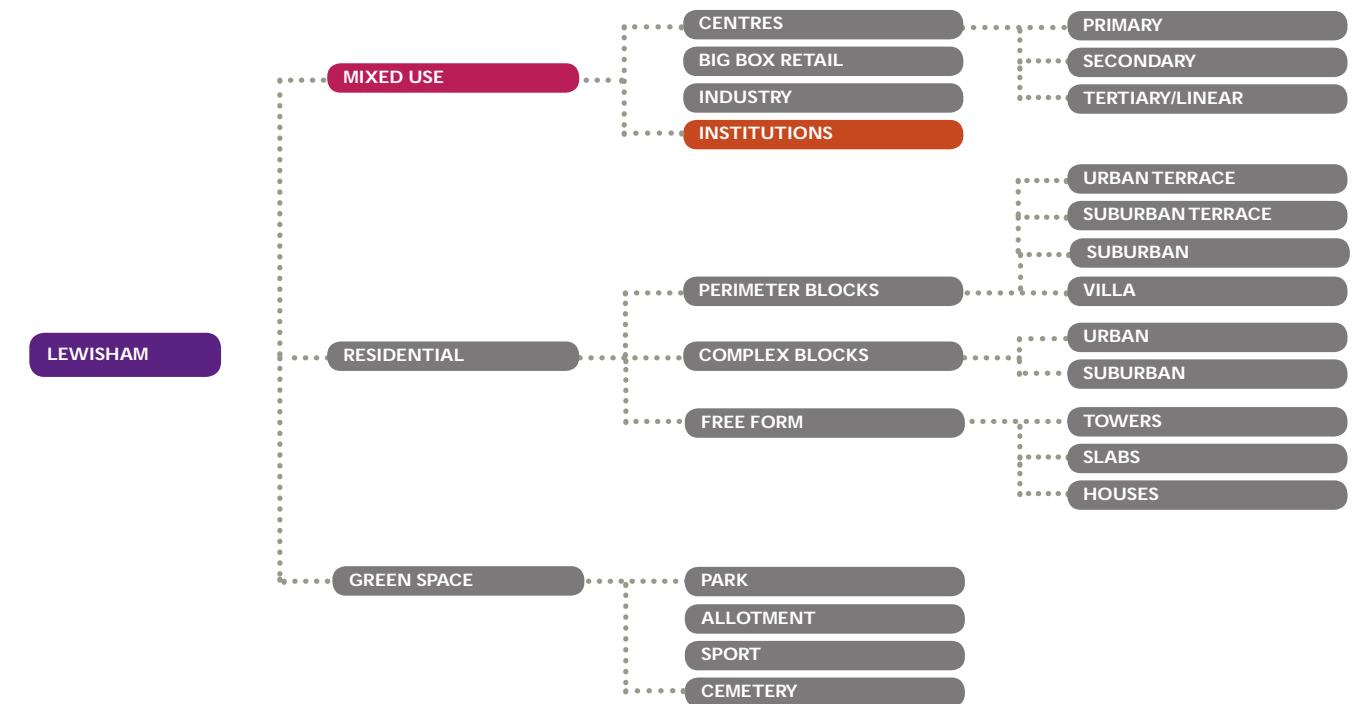
## Buildings

Buildings which fall within the institution typology vary widely in their built character, ranging from stout Victorian and Edwardian schools through to very low-rise 1960s schools and more expressive modern designs. However, there are a number of factors which tends to be common to campus developments regardless of their period or origins:

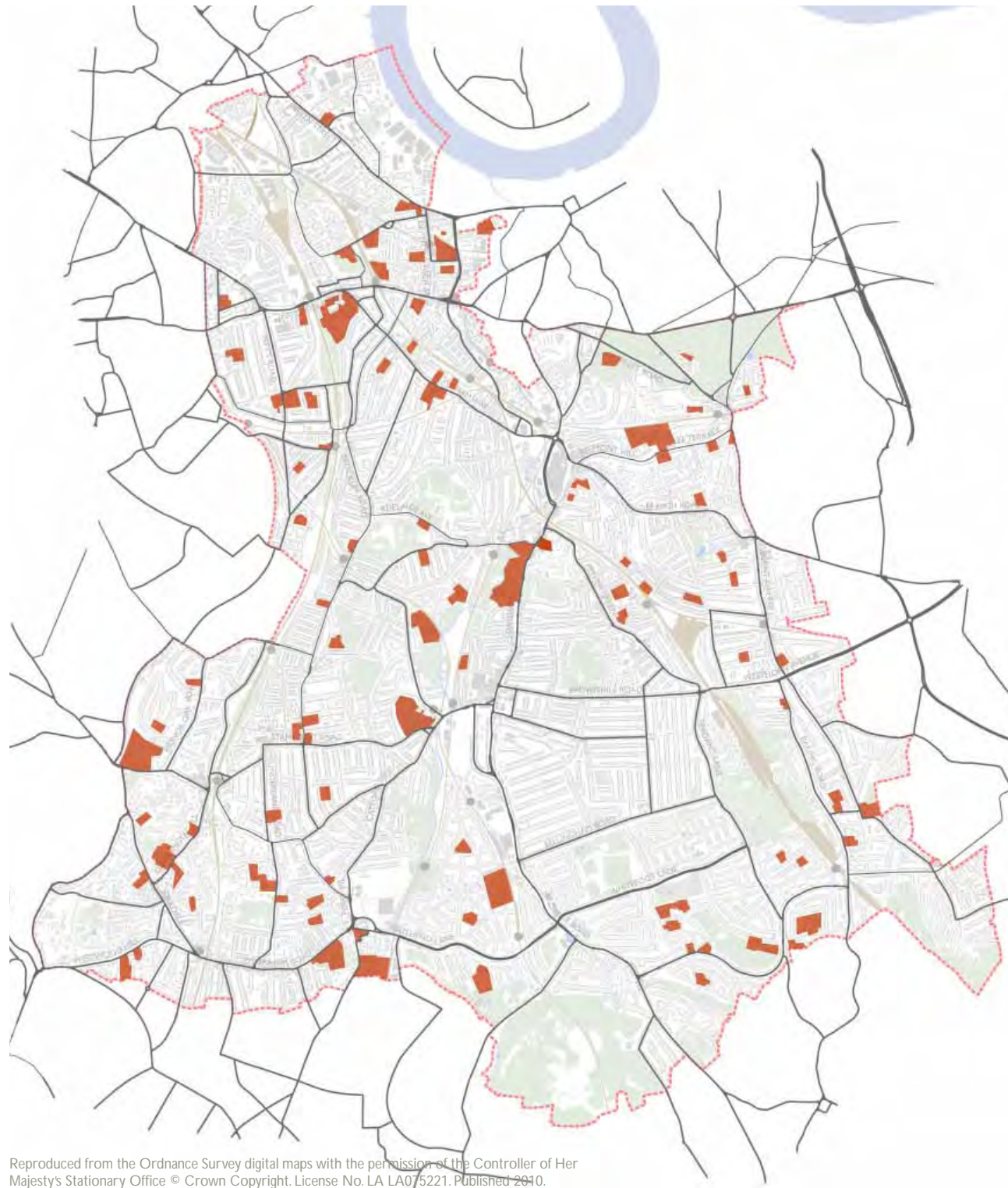
- Most campus developments have been formed over time, and include buildings from more than one period. This can cover a range of approaches, from well-integrated and sensitively designed additions to temporary structures;
- It is common for an institutional site to accommodate more than one use or a large use which has several distinct components - examples would include the departments of a hospital or a school divided into a number of age bands;
- It is usually the nature of campus buildings to have a public function, and as a consequence it is common to have a clearly defined main entrance. In the case of more traditional structures such as Victorian and Edwardian schools this is clearly articulated through the architecture. However, schools built in the 1960s and 1970s often lack the natural signposting which makes them legible.

## Streetscape

Most of the institutional buildings in Lewisham exist with a tight urban context. As a result most of the schools feature very little green space and feature mainly hard standing which



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can be used for play all year round. Trees are also few and far between.

Some more substantial examples such as Goldsmiths College have elements of more formal landscaping, responding to the dignity of the building. However, even here the main function of the space is to provide hard standing for cars.



# RESIDENTIAL - PERIMETER - URBAN TERRACE

## Introduction

Urban areas which fit the description of urban terrace perimeter blocks are most likely to be Victorian and Edwardian terraces. By their nature they tend to be tightly arranged, regular rows of houses with on-street parking.

## Urban form

Urban terraced perimeter blocks are typically arranged in a manner which optimizes available land, using a regular grid as far as possible within the constraints of topography and existing historic routes. In the case of Lewisham, there is an interesting contrast between urban terraces developed on the flat land in the centre of borough and those on the more dramatic topography at the outer areas. Whilst regular terraced forms are common in the central, flatter sections of the borough, the street patterns in the hillier parts of the borough tends to be less regular, and hence less suitable for terraced housing. Hillier areas are also likely to be later epochs of development which typically feature more suburban forms.

Houses are arranged in a regular terrace along the residential streets with back gardens backing onto one another, giving a typical block depth of approximately 50 to 55 metres, measured between boundary lines. Where the perpendicular intermediate routes are significant in their own right the houses are turned to face onto them, creating short terraces between regular junctions. In other cases where the route is more secondary, the terraces simply terminate in a gable end and garden wall.

This grid system provides a high degree of permeability and is generally easy to navigate on

foot. In some areas featuring relatively narrow streets, one-way systems have been introduced which can make wayfinding by car more complicated.

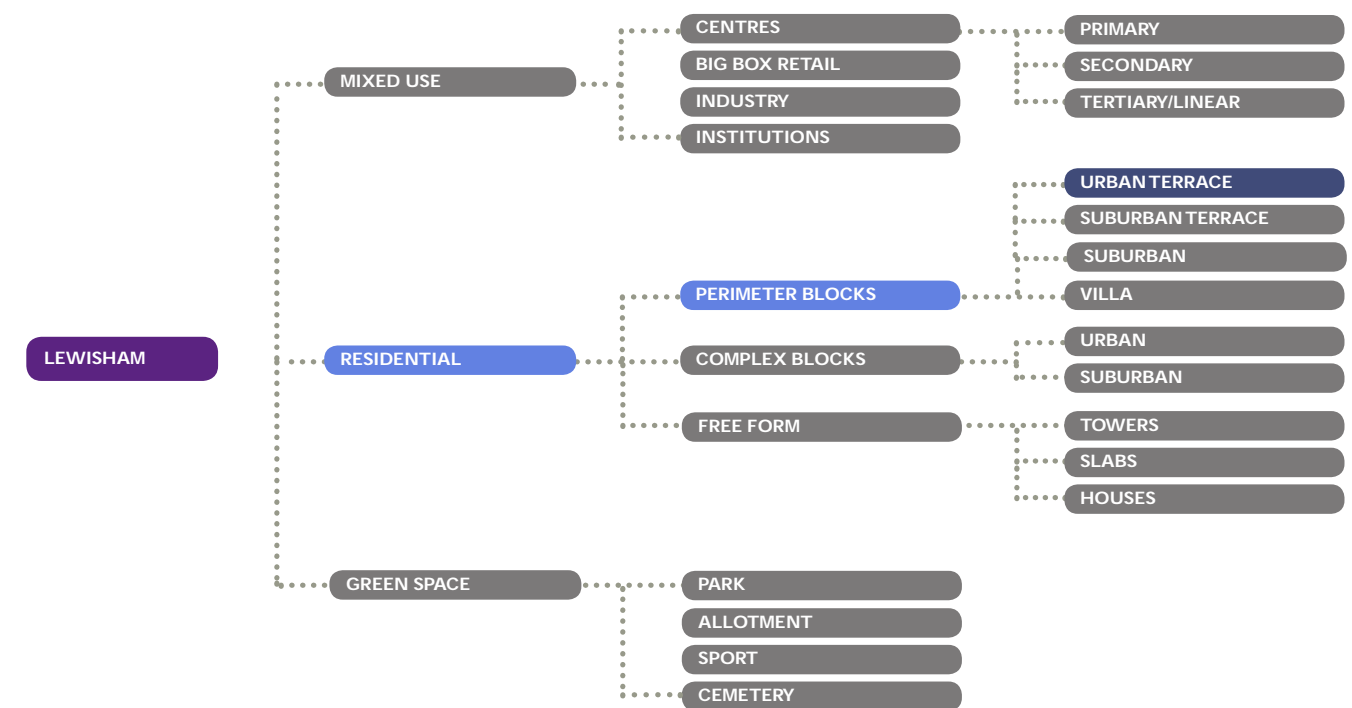
## Buildings

Houses within a high density area typically date from the Victorian and Edwardian periods. They are most likely to be built to a regular design in significant groups, although there is still likely to be some variation along a street. Plot widths vary, but are typically between four and five metres. This establishes a high frequency of front doors with a strong rhythm and relationship to the street. It also ensures that the buildings tend to have a deep plan in order to provide sufficient accommodation, creating the well-recognised L-shape configuration which is so common to this period.

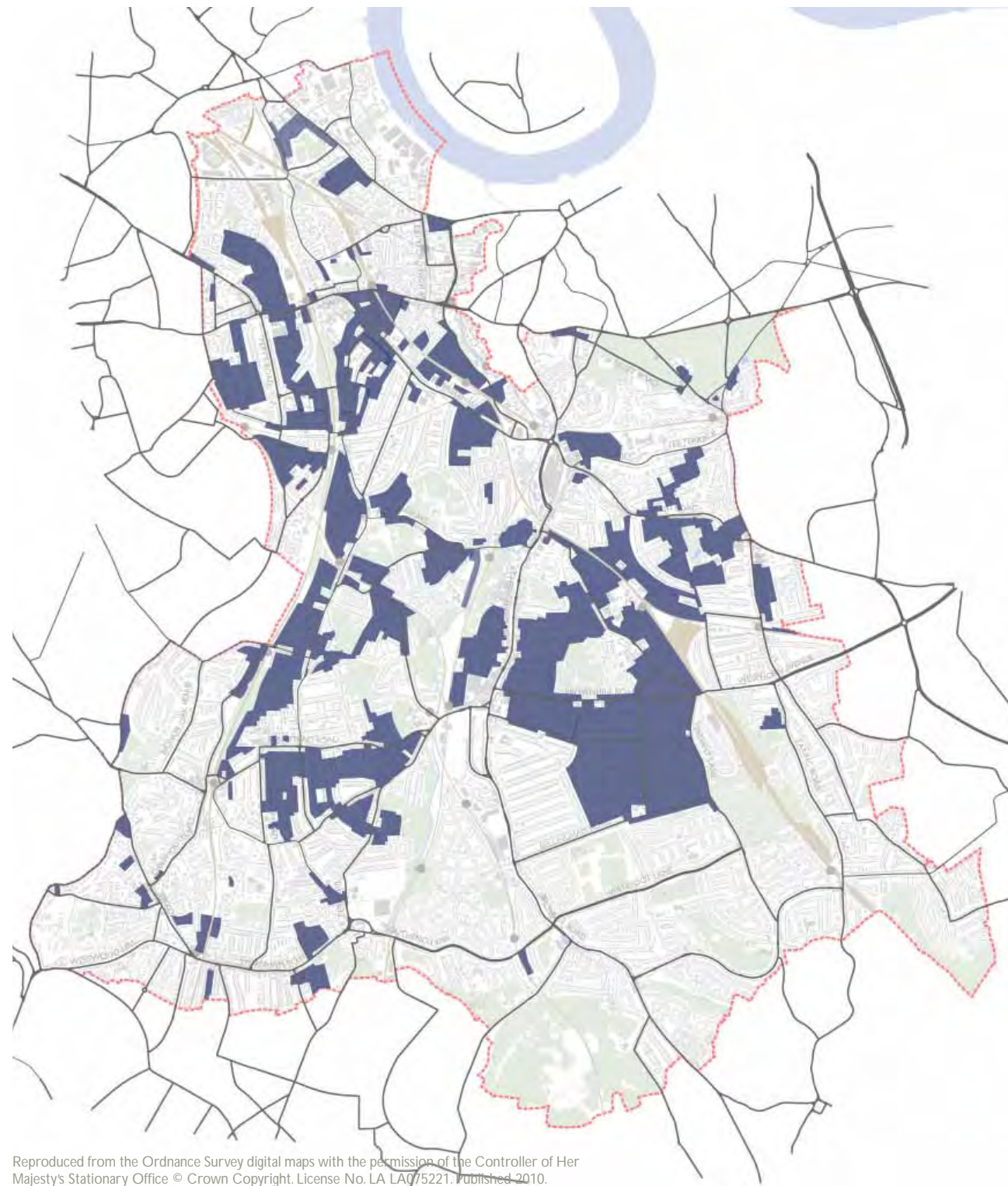
It is very common for buildings in this category to feature bay windows, often surmounted by gables at the roof. This can lend a very strong repeating motif to a terrace which establishes a clear unity of design and also creates a clear vertical scale. Victorian buildings are most likely to feature details such as bays and gables in largely stone or re-constituted stone. Later Victorian buildings, merging into the Edwardian period show a greater exuberance in the design and are more likely to feature external timber work in porches, gables and sometime even balconies. Building height is most likely to be two storeys, although there are some examples which feature additional attic roof space.

## Streetscape and landscape

Streets typically have a narrow profile and have terraced properties on both sides of the road. Most streets have very shallow front gardens,



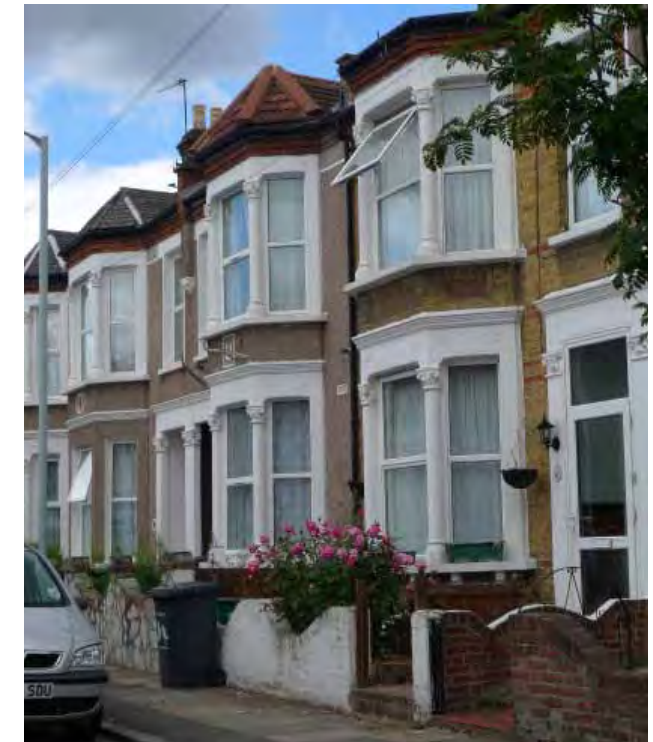
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often as little as 1- 1.5m deep. These are generally paved or surfaced in concrete with no planting and a variety of boundary treatments including low walls and different types of fencing often in poor condition. This mix of boundary treatments often creates a poor quality streetscape. In a few cases mature privet hedges planted behind a low brick wall provide visual and habitat value to the streetscape. Streets are generally dominated by on-street parking on both sides of the road.

The street character is normally strong and coherent due to the consistency and rhythm of the terraced architecture. However, the variety of boundary treatments and the introduction of late twentieth century changes to doors and windows etc has weakened this to some extent.



# RESIDENTIAL - PERIMETER - SUBURBAN TERRACE

## Introduction

Suburban terrace perimeter blocks share many of the urban characteristics of the urban terrace blocks. However, they typically date from a later period and are often arranged as blocks of four or eight homes rather than continuous terraces.

## Urban form

As with the urban terrace blocks, suburban terrace development is formed of perimeter blocks which together create a network of streets. The overall layout of the urban structure tends to fall into three broad types:

- Regular grid, taking a regular form of parallel streets;
- Flexible grid, taking a more relaxed and organic form, introducing curved roads and creating variations in block depth; and
- Planned layouts, featuring a network of streets and spaces which together establish an overall pattern, often geometric and with elements of symmetry.

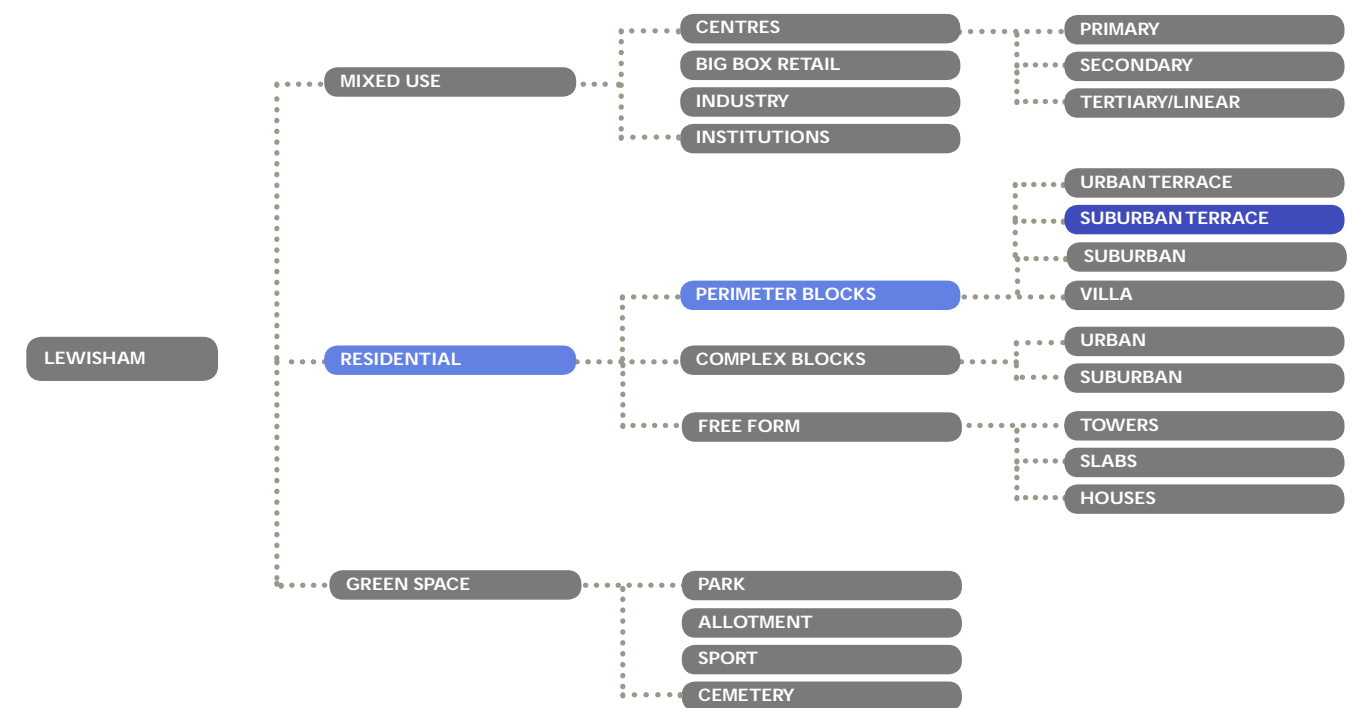
Whilst the regular grid forms share many attributes with the urban terrace blocks, the other two forms include a number of variations. With the flexible grid plan, found in areas such as Downham, careful design has included gentle curves, variations in block size and elements of re-entrant forms where square blocks contain a very small element of cul-de-sac within them. Whilst this gives the impression of a gentle and organic network of streets at ground level, the planned nature of the layout becomes apparent in maps and aerial photos, with parallel streets and consistent block depths.

The planned layouts, of which the Bellingham Estate is perhaps the most complete example, feature strong geometric forms, giving an overall clarity an order, but with a richness and variety which contrasts with the regularity of a simple grid. In the case of the Bellingham Estate, the radial nature of the pattern creates a number of awkwardly shaped blocks. These are used efficiently either through indentations and re-entrant forms or through placing other uses such as allotments or schools within the block.

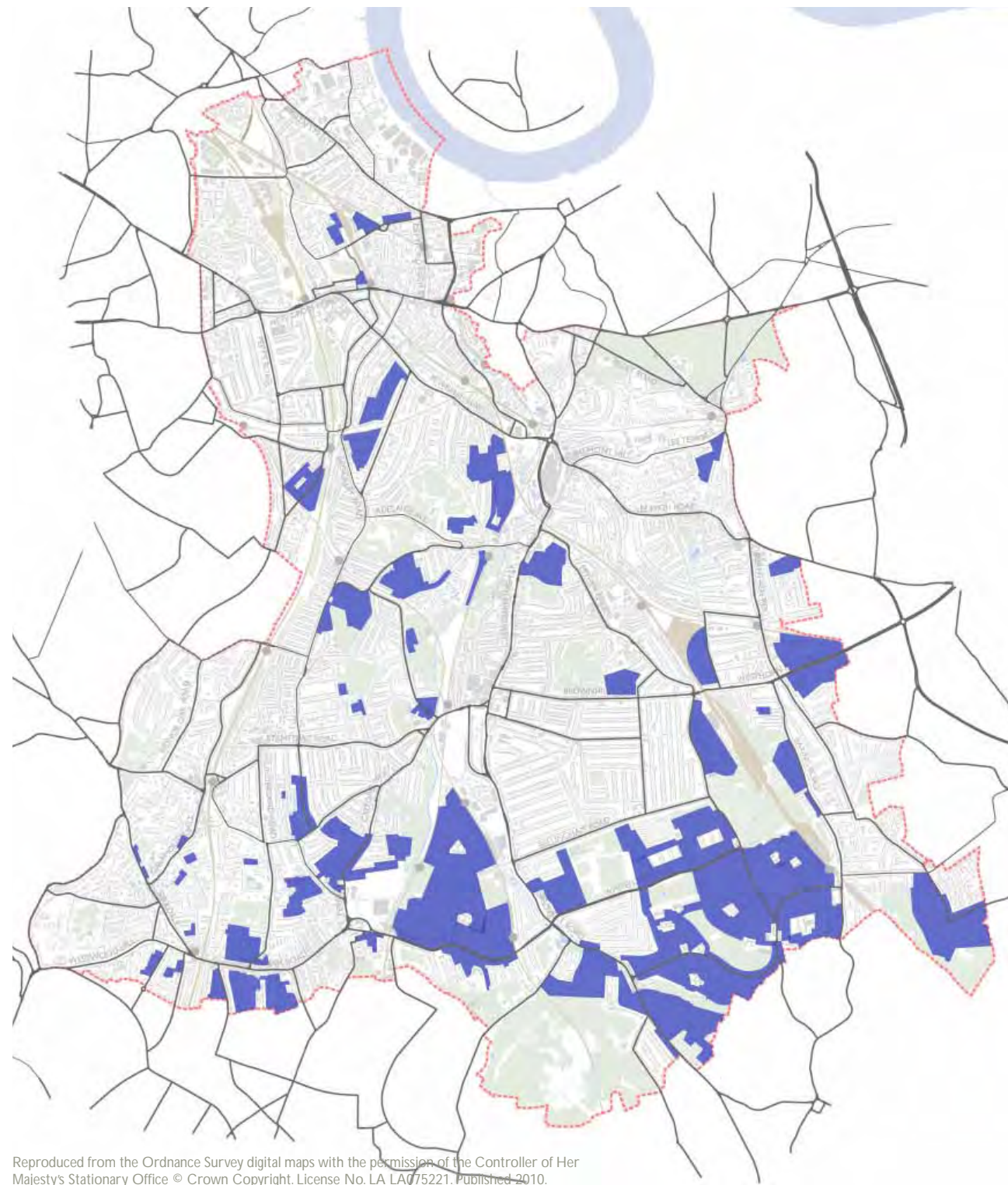
## Buildings

Buildings in the suburban terrace areas are likely to be relatively plain and modestly sized family houses. They are most typically associated with inter-war public sector housing which drew heavily on the influences of the garden city movement both in planning and architectural terms. The houses are therefore relatively cottage-like in their proportions compared to the more urban and vertically proportioned houses found in the preceding Victorian streets.

As well as relatively modest proportions, these buildings also typically feature quite modest detailing and a limited palette of materials, a reflection of the need to build to a budget. However, what is noticeable is that whilst the more suburban styles strive for individualism, the terraces, and most particularly the LCC schemes, are based around the approach of group composition. Each collection of buildings is designed as a cohesive group, often with strong symmetry and sense of order.



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## Streetscape

Streets in this typology typically have a much wider profile than the urban terrace typology and with a considerable variation in streetscape and landscape character. The street cross-section is commonly symmetrical and on either side comprises residential properties set back from the road with private front gardens of three to six metres. In keeping with the more rural influences of the garden city movement, the front boundary is often defined by fence and/or privet hedging rather than a wall or railings. Roads are typically six to seven metres wide often lined with trees and with pavements (1.5 – 2m wide) on both sides. Some streets also have a grass verge (1 – 2m wide) separating the road from the pavement and normally incorporating tree planting.

Most of the houses in this typology were not planned with car ownership in mind and as a result car parking is accommodated in an ad hoc manner often dominating the streetscapes. Many streets have parked cars often on both sides of the road and many front gardens have been converted to provide off road parking. The loss or reduction of front gardens to provide parking often has a detrimental effect on the quality of the streetscape as garden vegetation is lost, boundary hedges are removed and the frontage line of properties is broken by the creation of new crossovers.

Front gardens (where they have not been paved over to create off road parking) make a valuable contribution to street character. Gardens are typically well-maintained with a variety of evergreen and deciduous shrubs and herbaceous plants and are normally bordered with low brick walls.



# RESIDENTIAL - PERIMETER - SUBURBAN

## Introduction

Suburban areas share many of the characteristics of the suburban terrace form. However, they are more typically a product of private sector development and so place a greater emphasis on the individuality of dwellings. The most common form of dwellings in this period is the semi-detached house.

## Urban form

As with the suburban terrace type, suburban blocks provide a grid network of streets. The blocks are typically deeper at around 70 metres, creating larger plots, and can vary significantly in length, depending on the pre-existing routes and other constraints.

Like the suburban terrace form, the grid layouts can be categorised into regular grid and flexible grid. However, the planned geometric forms found in the public sector housing are less common here. Another notable influence in suburban areas is their relationship with the landscape. Being developed during the inter-war period, there was significant pressure to expand attractive areas of the borough which could be accessed by train. In many instances this meant developing in more hilly areas than previously, effectively ruling out a regular grid system in favour of an amorphous structure which could be adapted to suit the terrain. This approach, found in locations such as Forest Hill and Honour Oak Park owes much to the earlier Villa style developments begun in the Victorian and Edwardian period.

## Buildings

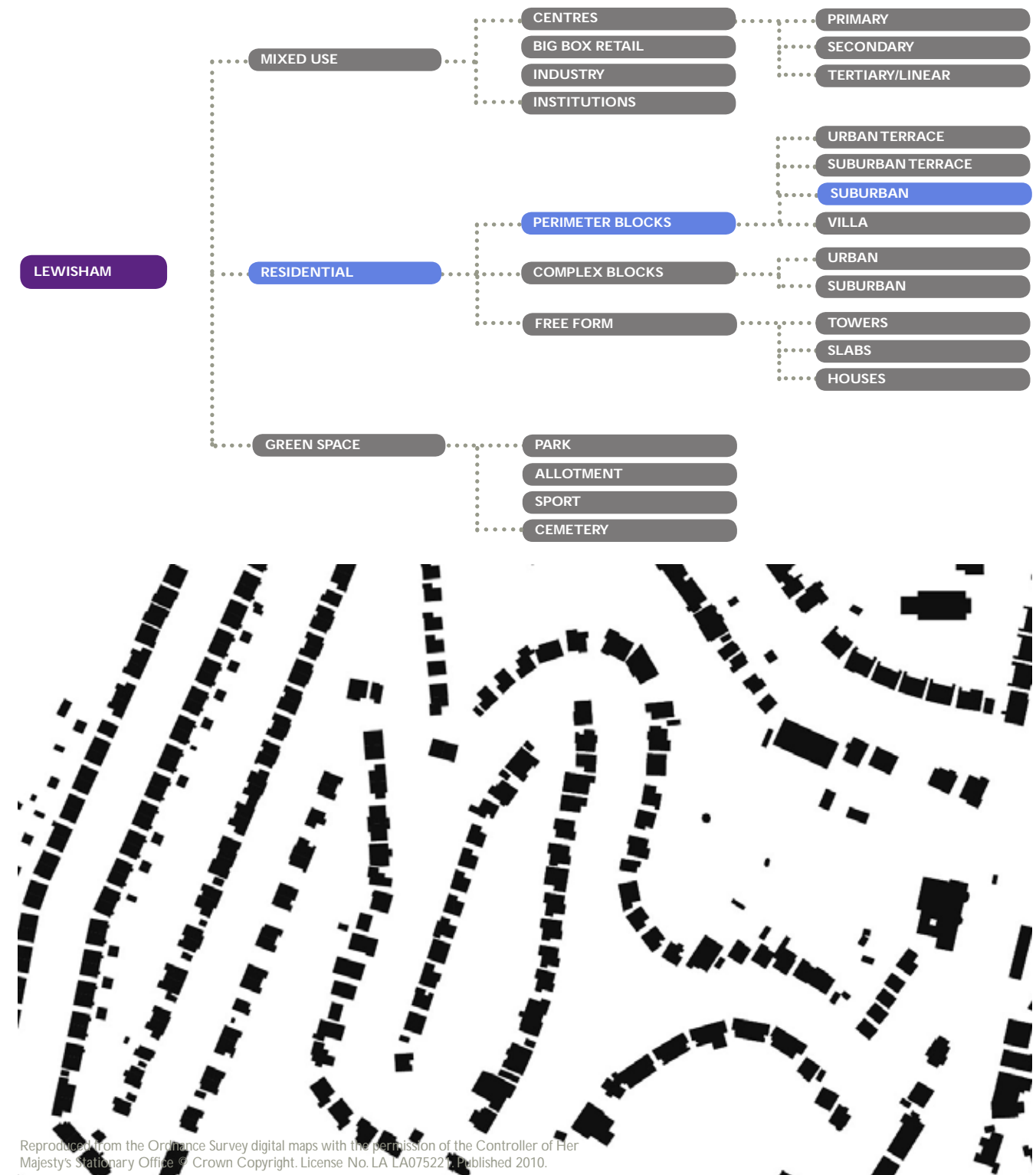
Buildings within the medium density areas are most likely to be semi-detached or smaller detached houses. Examples can be found from a wide range of periods. Whilst the earliest typical examples are Edwardian the most common period for this style is the inter-war years.

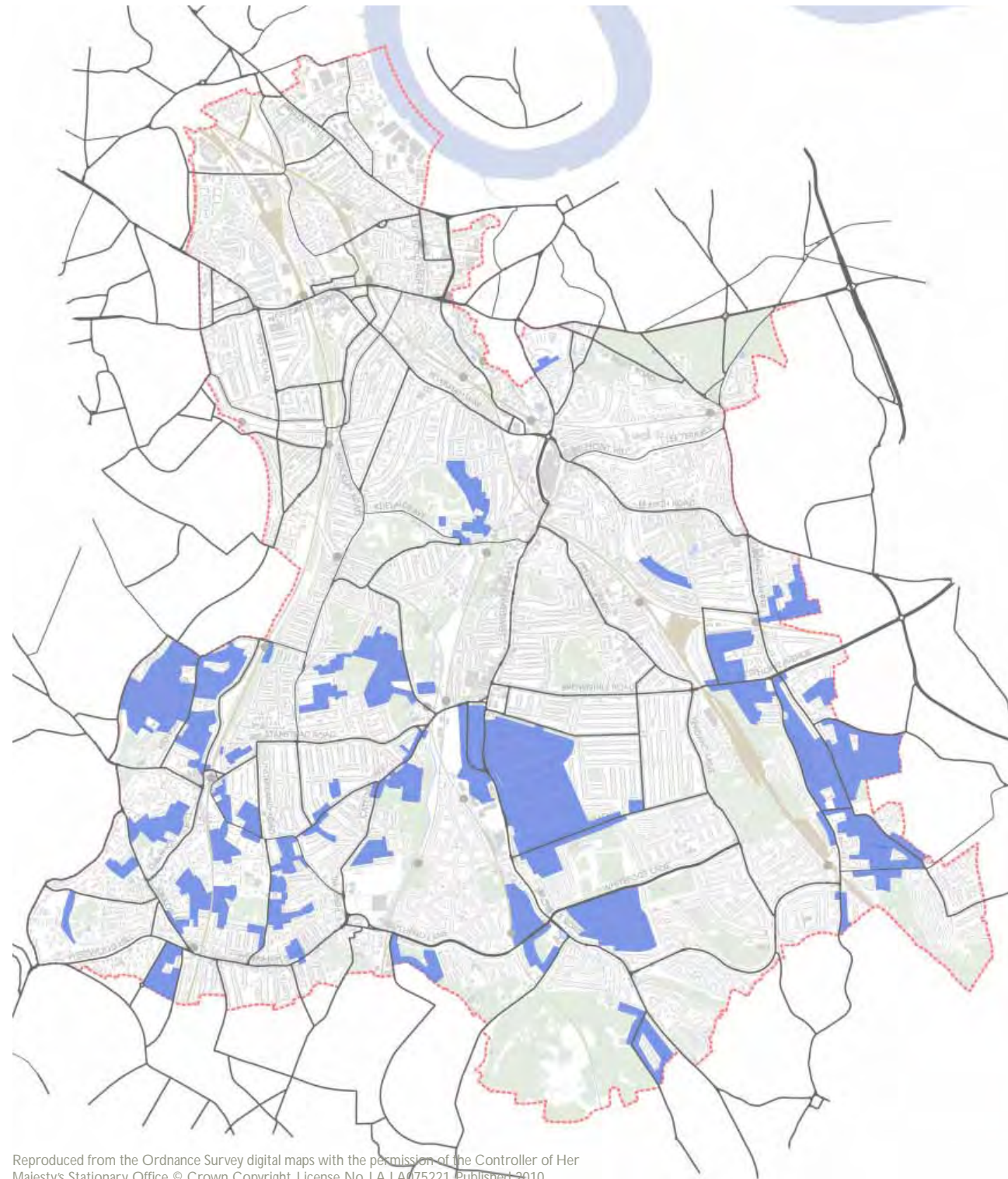
Both regular and flexible grid areas are most likely to have been built by private developers and builders. As a result, they typically feature a richer architectural palette which can include a high degree of variation between plots.

Areas developed by private sector developers are also likely to feature a significant degree of variation in the building design, resulting from plots being bought and developed on an individual basis, either speculatively or to commission. This results in a wide range of plot and building configurations, giving a less defined rhythm to the street. Plot widths also vary, typically ranging from 7m wide up to just under 10m wide. However, whilst building design and configurations vary there is often a relatively consistent approach to the styles and fashion of the period in which the streets were built out which establishes a reasonably cohesive feel. There is also a reasonably consistent building line, which contributes to the cohesiveness of the street. Buildings are most likely to be two storeys, although three storey examples can be found.

## Streetscape

Streets in the suburban areas tend to be relatively wide and generous in comparison to earlier more urban forms. Unlike the





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suburban terrace, which was designed without car-ownership in mind, suburban development is more likely to be designed around car ownership. However, this has not prevented a significant loss of front gardens to parking provision.

The gardens themselves tend to be richer and more varied than other areas, with the more substantial space allowing greater scope for inventive planting.





# RESIDENTIAL - PERIMETER - VILLA

## Introduction

The lowest density perimeter blocks are the villas which typically characterise some of the most sought-after areas of Lewisham. Whilst the block layout may be regular or flexible, they feature large individual plots, able to accommodate significant houses which are often built to individual designs.

## Urban Form

Villa development in Lewisham is largely a product of the Victorian period and is a reaction to the urban conditions being experienced in the city centre during the period. The arrival of the railways through the early Victorian period opened up significant areas of potential development land and made commuting possible for the well-to-do. The response was to produce large houses which were urbane and sophisticated in their appearance and share many of the design influences of more urban properties but which are planned as detached or semi-detached buildings within their own plot of land. They therefore existed as a balance between the fashions of the city and the attractions of the country and pre-figure a similar approach to suburban housing during the boom years of the inter-war period in many other areas.

Development of villa properties is spread throughout the borough, wherever there was early access available by rail. Being some of the earliest forms of suburban development they are typically close to stations or can be found on or around the major historic routes. These historic routes would have been the most prestigious and appealing addresses before the widespread use of the car.

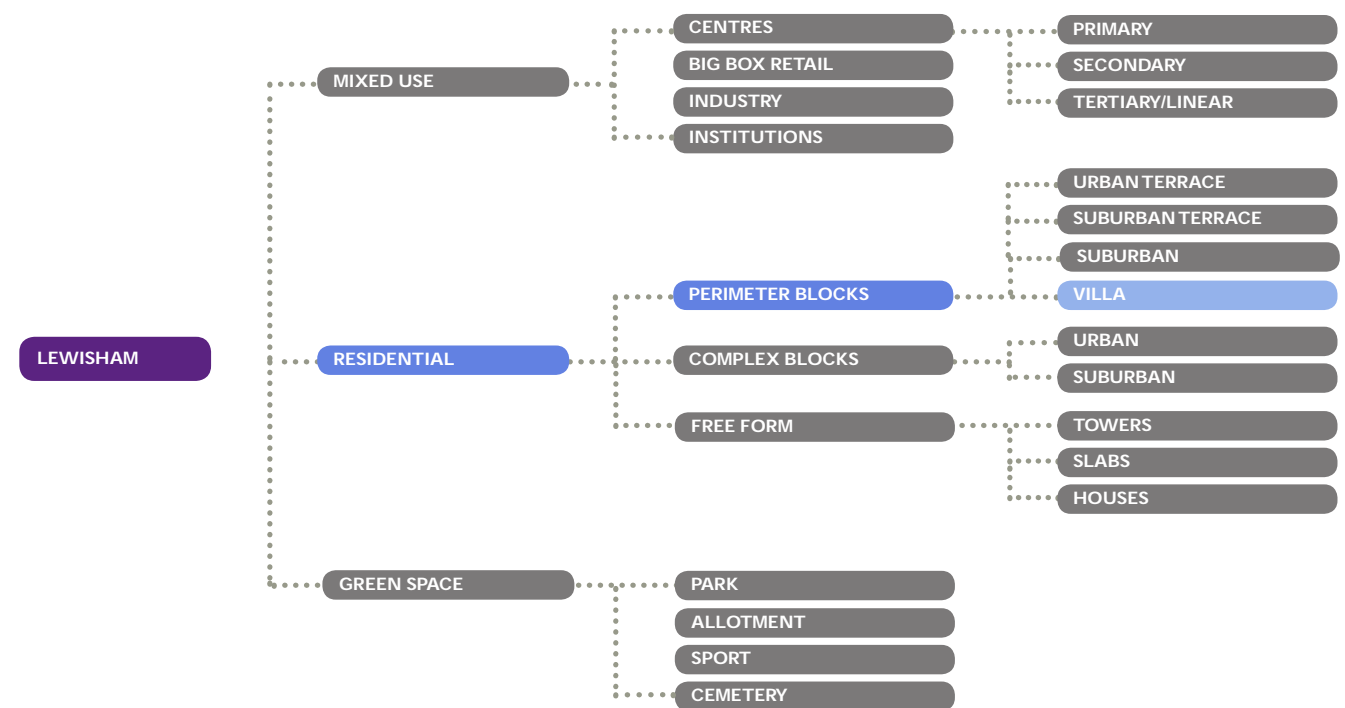
There are a number of key features which characterise the urban form of villa development:

- Buildings generally sit within a plot, with a clear break between buildings, often emphasised by the use of hipped roofs. Whilst this has in some instances been partially in-filled, the impression of separate buildings is retained;
- Villas are typically set well back from the street, allowing for significant planting in the front garden and also having the advantage of being able to accommodate the later addition of parking without it completely dominating the garden;
- The detached or semi-detached nature of the type means that they are conducive to creating free-flowing layouts rather than the more regular grids of their terraced contemporaries; and
- Villas, particularly the larger ones on more significant routes, use a raised ground floor above a semi-basement to elevate the main living space above the thoroughfare in the manner of a classical piano nobile.

## Buildings

Buildings which can be classed as villas vary widely in style and detail, ranging from the Regency period through to Victorian gothic and later Edwardian. However, they tend to have a number of common features:

- They are commonly designed to be seen as individual buildings rather than forming part of a terrace. There are a number of features which emphasise this such as the use of hipped roofs, often with low pith and

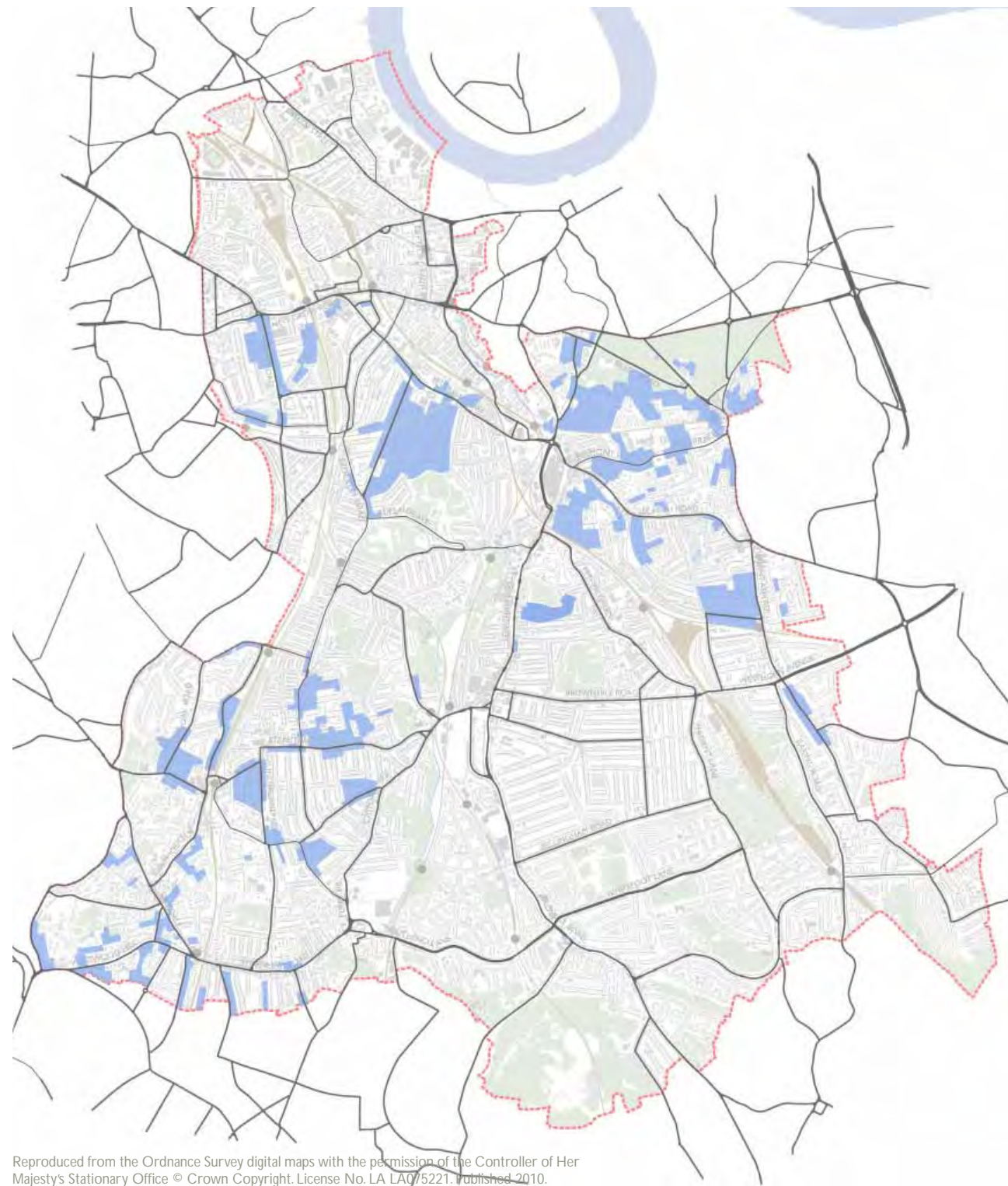


large bracketed eaves, or the inclusion of stair-well and other minor windows in side elevations;

- They tend to be influenced by the urban fashions of the period, featuring predominantly vertical proportions and fine detailing in elements such as sash windows. This also extends to the inclusion of basements or semi-basements with a series of steps leading from the pavement up to the front door; and
- They are generally significantly larger than later suburban housing, both in terms of the number of rooms, but also in the scale and proportion of the buildings themselves which are taller, wider and have more generous floor-to-ceiling heights than later domestic development.



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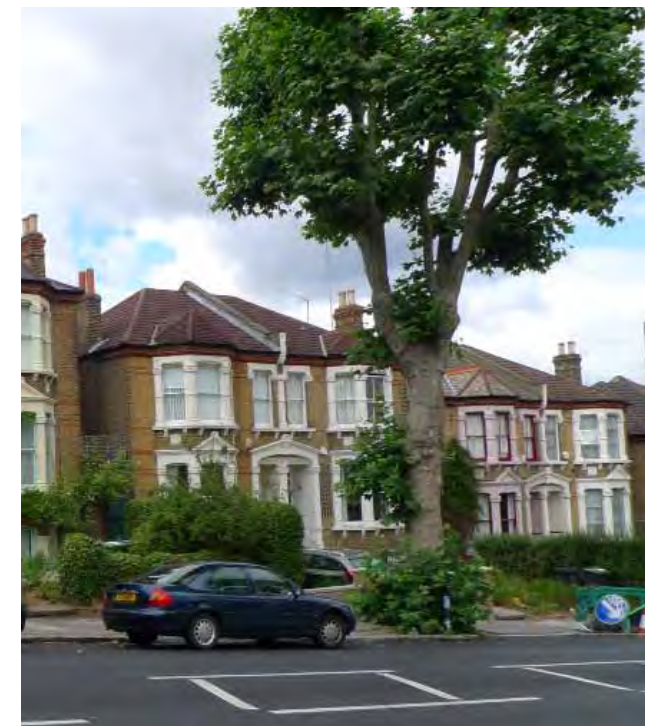
Modern development has had a significant impact on the recent history of the villa type. Being large buildings in large plots and often on main roads, they have been susceptible to conversion to flats and also to redevelopment to provide site for post war apartment buildings. Whilst some of these schemes retain the basic massing and scale, they typically use a more domestic floor-to-ceiling height to squeeze in additional storeys within the same overall envelope.

### Streetscape and landscape

Villas are commonly associated with some of the larger and more important routes in the borough. These are often very substantial in scale and feature large mature trees such as London Planes. The fact that the buildings are typically set well back from the edge provides a buffer against the impact of traffic and offers opportunities for both significant planting and an element of off-street parking whilst retaining landscaping.

The large scale of some of the villa buildings is helpful in giving dignity and significance to some of the most important routes through the borough. However, as already noted, they are susceptible to conversion or redevelopment to flats which can have a detrimental effect on the external appearance of the building and also the proportion of the garden which is turned over to parking.

Away from the main routes the streets laid out with villa development retain a grander scale than those areas laid out for terrace development and are more likely to feature large street trees. This sense of spaciousness is further emphasised by the depth and richness of planting in the front gardens and by the lower density of parking on street.



# RESIDENTIAL - COMPLEX - URBAN

## Introduction

Complex urban blocks is the term used in this study to describe late Twentieth and early Twenty First Century urban development. These areas owe much to traditional perimeter block forms, but adapted to provide higher densities and accommodate parking.

## Urban Form

The complex urban blocks are most commonly a product of recent development, and feature a mix of flats and town houses. Learning from the strengths of traditional perimeter blocks, there is a strong relationship between the building frontages and the public realm. The block structure tends to follow a grid system but uses a squarer block form than traditional development, giving blocks which have four equal sides. The mix of flats and houses ensures that a complete perimeter can be built up where desired.

The high density of this form of development creates a high level of demand for parking. Although this has been controlled through later planning limits on parking provision, schemes designed in the 1908s and 1990s are often dominated by parking both in the public space, in front gardens and within the blocks.

The complex urban block form offers a reasonable network of streets and spaces, providing relatively safe routes for pedestrians through well overlooked areas. Legibility is also reasonable, with some schemes having a clear hierarchy between elements that aids wayfinding.

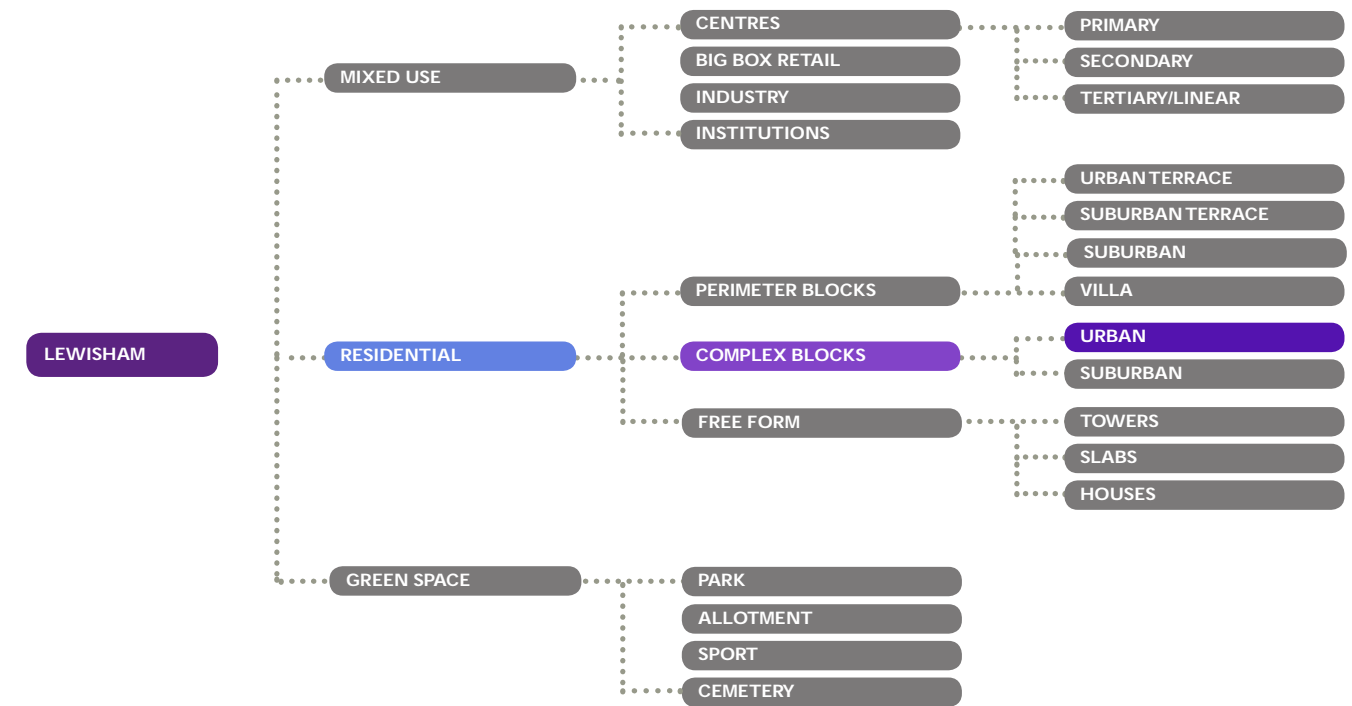
## Buildings

Buildings in this form of development vary significantly in their design approach and quality. However, they usually feature a limited palette of materials and details, often constrained by cost to relatively simple forms and cheap detailing. Another key characteristic is that, as with most modern domestic buildings, the floor to ceiling heights are relatively small and are consistent throughout the building. This contrasts with the earlier Victorian and Edwardian properties which have more generous heights and frequently have a dominant ground or piano nobile storey with a reducing hierarchy of storey heights above.

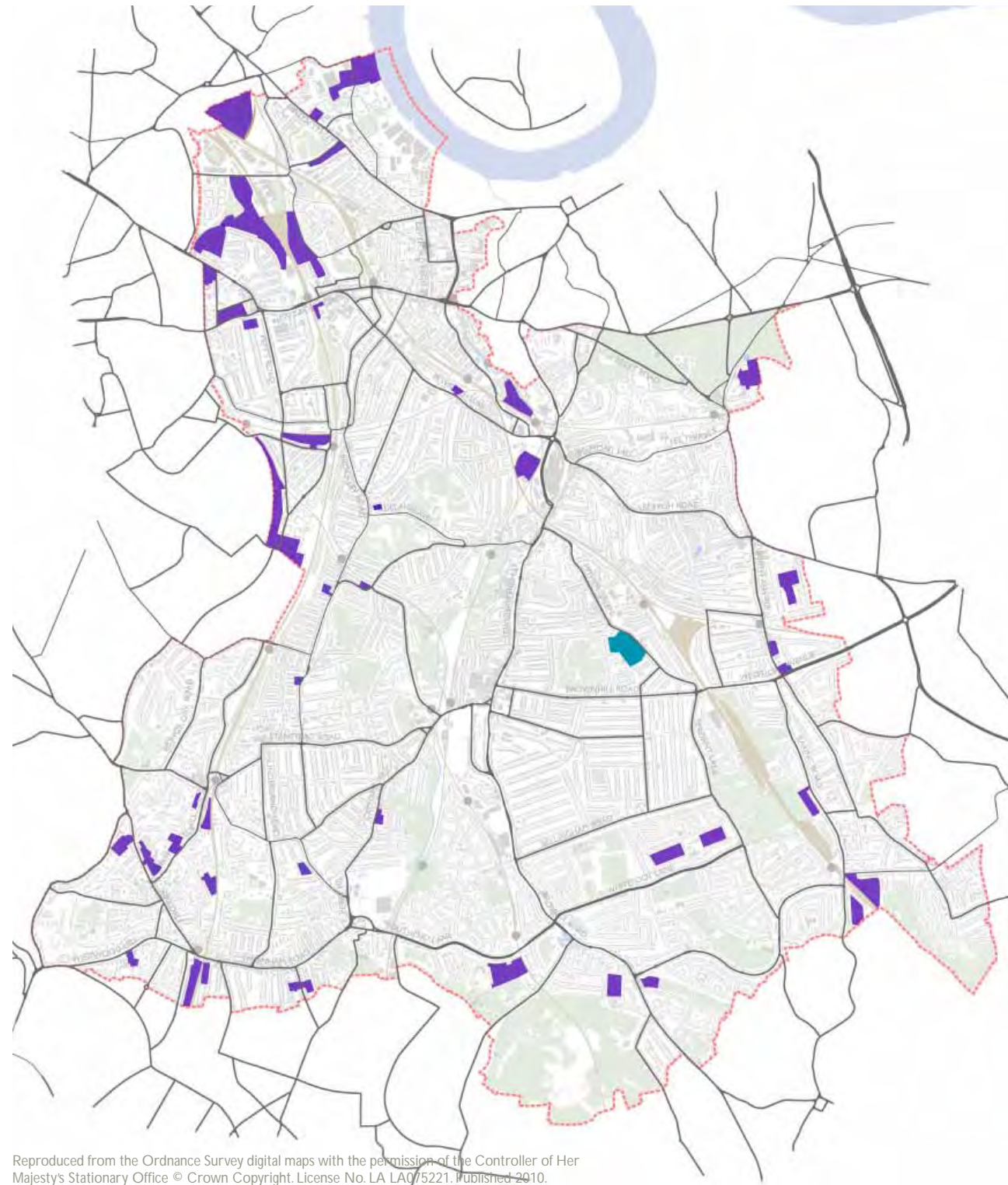
Where houses are included in a building group these are most typically a narrow-plot terraced house, often rising to three storeys to deliver the most habitable space within a compact area.

## Streetscape

Complex urban blocks typically have a reasonably well defined public realm due to the consistent approach to perimeter block development. However, there are a number of key differences between this type of development and the more traditional high density perimeter terraces which can be seen elsewhere in Lewisham. The streets and public spaces are typically designed with the aim of accommodating the car and providing sufficient parking for all the residents. This has the effect that many houses are set back behind gardens which feature parking and many flatted developments face onto large areas of parking either within a public space as part of the street or accommodated within the block. This has the effect of significantly enlarging the amount

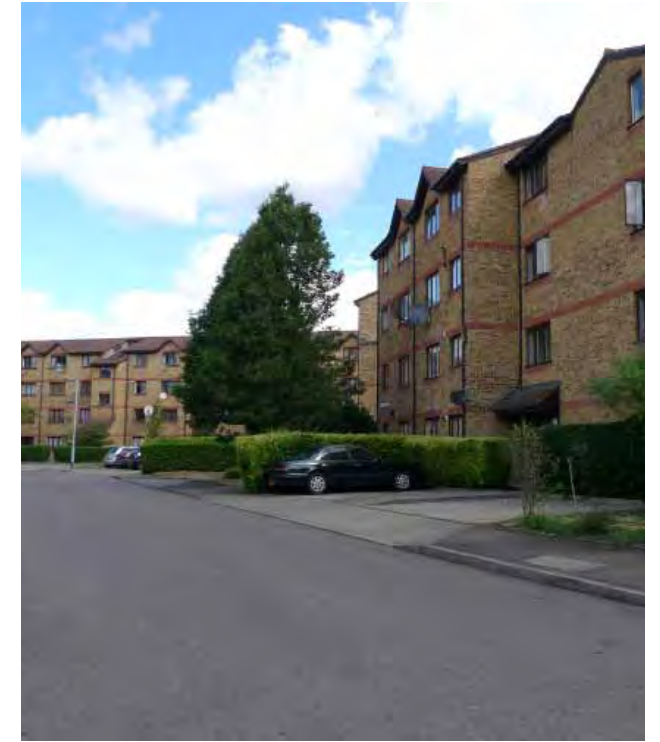


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of street space, with frontage-to-frontage distances substantially larger than in many older areas and much more space given over to hard standing. Coupled with this the urban blocks, whilst taking the basic characteristic of perimeter development also feature internal parking courts, mews and re-entrant forms which break up the clarity of public and private space.



# RESIDENTIAL - COMPLEX - SUBURBAN

## Introduction

Complex suburban forms describes the trend for cul-de-sacs in later Twentieth Century development. They feature low densities of housing and have generally poor permeability and legibility.

## Urban Form

The modern form of cul-de-sac development has had relatively little impact on the overall form of Lewisham, with the bulk of the urban area being built out before the form reached its peak period of development in the late Twentieth Century. However, cul-de-sacs do play a noticeable part in small to medium size infill projects, typically filling in the middle of a large block or more often taking advantage of a small interstitial space left between other developments, industrial areas or railways.

Being relatively confined element of development, they do not feature the same issues as larger planned estates of cul-de-sac development which can be difficult to navigate and which often appear very monotonous. However, they do feature the same key attributes of lacking legibility and permeability.

The overall urban form of the suburban cul-de-sac tends to feel dictated by the highways layout, featuring buildings arranged to fit around a road and turning head rather than creating a coherent public space.

## Buildings

Post-war suburban houses vary widely in form and design but have a number of particular characteristics which can be applied to achieve

significant variations. They are unlikely to have a tight relationship to the street and so can feature significant modeling to the front elevation, including substantial projecting elements to create dynamic forms; in later suburban forms it is common for the building frontage to be dominated by the presence of an integrated garage.

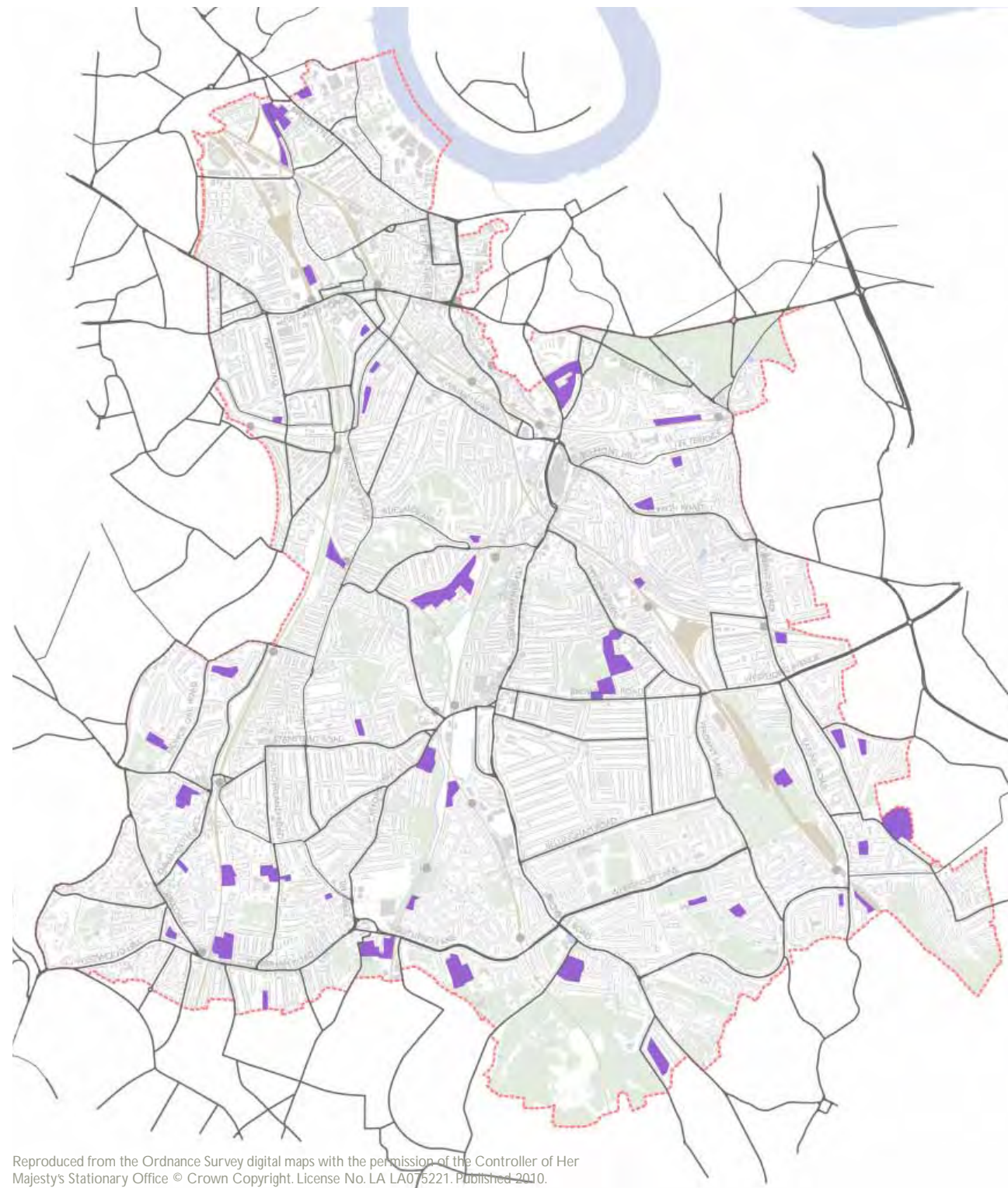
Building proportions are generally squat, with relatively low floor-ceiling heights by comparison with pre-war and inter-war buildings – this in turn has a significant impact on the scale and proportion of windows. External materials and details are likely to be from a limited palette and very simple, with chunky boxed eaves and relatively unsophisticated approach to the assembly of elements. In some examples, additions such as bay roofs, porches or even chimneys may be one-piece fibre-glass structures.

Plot configurations vary enormously as most are grouped in an irregular way around a curving street layout. However a common feature is that houses in this form rarely feature gardens deeper than 10 metres, creating a minimum back-to-back relationship which maintains a basic level of privacy.

## Streetscape

Cul-de-sac streetscapes are typically open with few boundaries between the public and private realm. Housing is typically arranged in an informal layout resulting in an irregular street profile. Front gardens vary in depth from two to six metres or more and typically have no boundary treatment between the pavement and garden. Gardens are often open areas of mown grass with limited low shrub planting but





are rarely used as amenity spaces. There are typically few or no street trees along the public highway but some small ornamental trees have been planted in private front gardens.

The flow of pedestrian and traffic movements are normally low due to the absence of through traffic and pedestrian through-routes. Consequently, the character of these areas is typically quiet and low key, often feeling closed and semi-private.

Most roads are tarmac with concrete road kerbs, standard highway lighting and tarmac pavements on both sides. Car parking is accommodated mainly off road in garages and private driveways although most roads still have some parking on road (normally on one side only).



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# RESIDENTIAL - FREE FORM - TOWERS

## Introduction

Tall buildings set within areas of landscape and parking. These typically date from the 1960s and were built as part of public housing projects.

## Urban form

High rise residential buildings typically occur as part of a wider residential area. However, their special nature creates its own small area of character which breaks from the normal building-street relationship. They typically feature a single point of access which may relate to the street but may also relate to the location of parking.

Tall buildings are balanced by elements of open space, and particularly in the case of residential towers they are likely to sit within a space, either hard or soft landscaped. The spaces provide amenity for the residents of the tower and also frequently include element of parking.

Some tall buildings, particularly in the southern part of the borough sit within mature woodland. This allows development to be present whilst also retaining a large proportion of trees and allowing the buildings to work within steeply sloping sites.

## Buildings

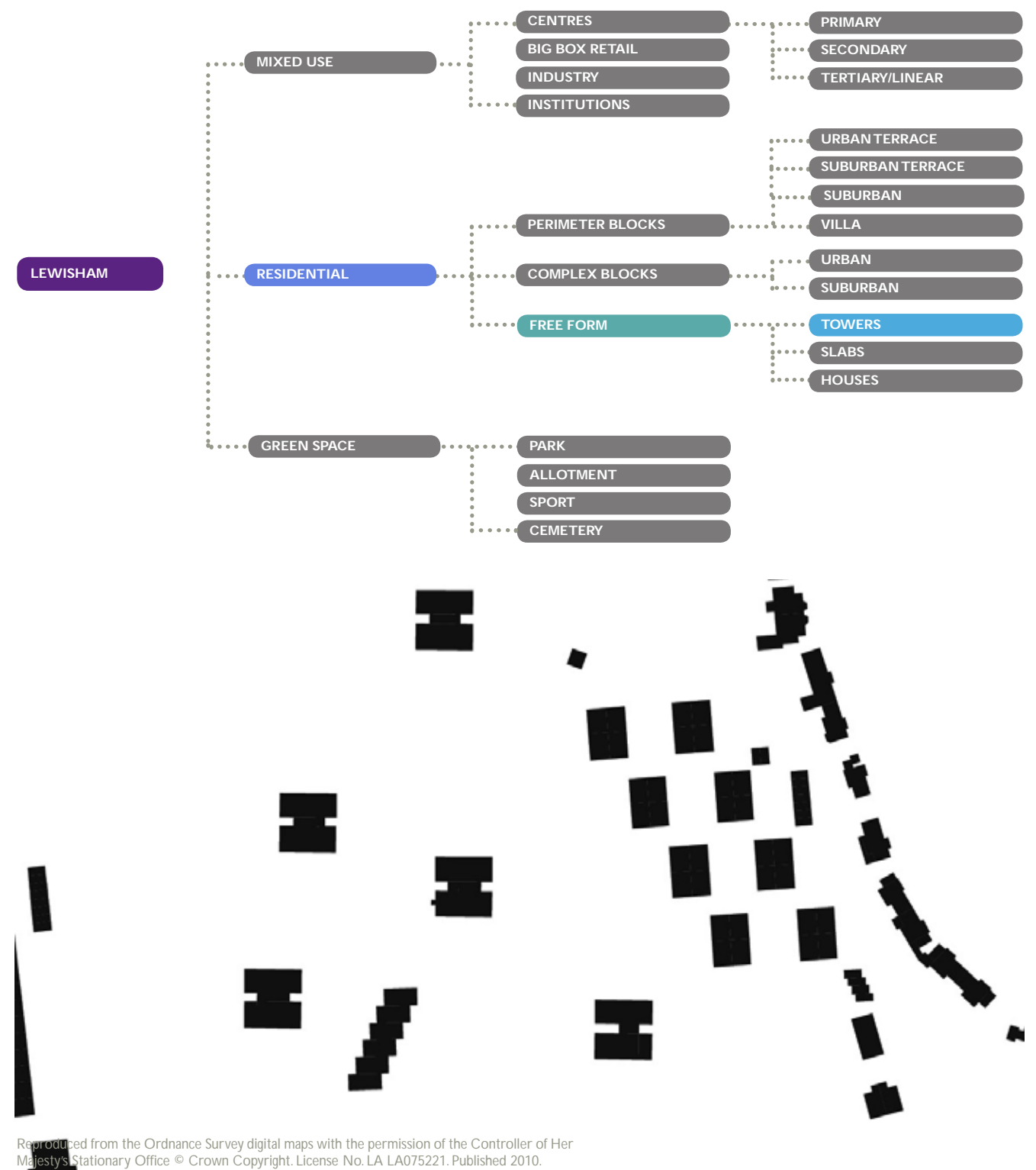
The examples of tall residential buildings in Lewisham typically date from the 1960s. Whilst they vary in height and form they are typically between ten and fifteen storeys tall although exceptions which exceed this include the three towers on the Pepys Estate in the north of the borough and the tower in the

centre of Lewisham. The residential towers, and particularly the taller ones, built during this period typically do not include any balconies or other private amenity space such as roof terraces and hence rely on the provision of amenity space in the surrounding area.

The majority of the towers in the borough do not sit on a podium block or other arrangement which gives them a more human scale and which enables them to engage in a positive way with the surrounding public space. This creates issues of management and security at ground level and fails to establish a strong frontage which would contribute to pedestrian safety.

## Streetscape

The streetscape and landscape in this typology is similar to that of the previous typology. Street profiles are generally wide with substantial areas of open space between the residential blocks and the surrounding roads. The spaces around the residential blocks are typically low key amenity spaces with substantial areas of mown grass areas and scattered blocks of low maintenance shrub planting (predominantly evergreen). Some include small paved seating areas with standard local authority benches, litter bins etc. The areas typically have a strong municipal character as the landscaped areas are generally designed and managed by or on behalf of the Local Authority with a limited palette of materials and planting species. The ownership of the landscape however is often ambiguous with no clear signs as to whether spaces are private for residents use only or are public open spaces for the wider community. The boundary between the public highway and the amenity





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space is rarely defined with a wall or treatment which contributes to this ambiguity.

Roads are typically concrete or tarmac with concrete road kerbs and standard highway lighting. Footpaths are usually tarmac or concrete slabs. Parking is often prominent with considerable amounts of on street parking and large off-road parking areas.

