

HARINGEY BUILDING DESIGN SERVICE INVOLVEMENT IN BROADWATER FARM AFTER 1985

Haringey Building Design Service

Between 1979 and 1985, a responsive, quality building design service accountable to local communities was developed in Haringey Council. It involved establishing multi-disciplinary, area-based design teams responsible to area committees.

These proposals, which were based on the ideas of the New Architecture Movement and developed by John Murray a founder member of NAM and a Haringey resident, coincided with a number of other factors¹, which lead to the ideas being developed in Haringey.

By 1985, the Architects service had developed into eight multi-disciplinary, area-based design teams accountable to area committees. This included a site based multi-disciplinary design team established on the Broadwater Farm Estate following riots in 1985. Also in 1985, John Murray became the elected head of the new service, Haringey Building Design Service (BDS).

Encouraged by the Chief Executive, Roy Limb, Building Design Service ensured that tenants' representatives were involved in appointments to the new BWF Design Team. The discussions involved working methods and accountabilities. BDS implemented a 10-year £80m estate action programme. They ensured the use of local labour and, as part of a policy to encourage local young people to become involved in architecture, each team including the Broadwater Farm Team, appointed two local young people as trainee architects.

The first Team Leader was Raj Rajkumar a senior architect whose experience included working on the Broadwater Farm Estate. He established the site based team and developed the initial working relationship with the tenants.

He was followed as Team Leader in date by George Nicola, an experienced architect who worked closely with Dolly Kiffin and the Youth Association to develop a successful team well integrated into the local community. The team ensured that contractors working on the estate employed local labour and encouraged BWF Youth Association Coop to carry out work on the estate. This culminated in the Enterprise Workshops, designed by the Broadwater Farm team, being built by the Youth Association Coop itself. This building went on to receive an award from the Prince of Wales.

¹ Under the then Housing Chair, George Meehan, Haringey Council had pioneered the involvement of tenants in the design of a new housing cooperative at Pelham Court in Tottenham. Bert Dinnage of the Borough Architects Service designed the scheme. The first phase was completed in 1980.

John Murray, one of the founders of the New Architecture Movement who lived in Haringey approached Bert Dinnage to discuss how a new form of public design service could develop incorporating his experience at Pelham Court and the ideas of NAM.

New Labour councillors such as Jeremy Corbyn and Bernie Grant who were elected in 1978 supported the proposals. They themselves had campaigned for neighbourhood committees, which included tenants' representatives as well as councillors.

The then Borough Architect Alan Weitzel was sympathetic to the new ideas and supported change.