



Aerial view of Uplands Estate (c. 1925) showing Highfield Lane with Church to left, Brookvale Road at top, newly completed Highfield Close upper centre, and construction of Orchards Way in progress in lower centre.



Highfield Close, mixture of houses for sale and flats for rent grouped around central garden with sunken pond.

THE UPLANDS ESTATE, HIGHFIELD, SOUTHAMPTON

The Uplands Estate was the first estate designed by Herbert Collins in Southampton and set the pattern for his subsequent work. Built speculatively, mainly in the 1920s and 1930s, it consists of about two hundred houses and flats intended for leasehold sale and private rental. The houses are built in pairs and terraces arranged in a variety of formal and informal groupings to take advantage of the carefully preserved natural features of the site. The houses are of two storeys in a Georgian cottage style, built of brick or rendered walls, with low-pitched plain clay or pantiled roofs. Front doors have various simple hoods derived from Georgian patterns; the sash or casement windows are divided into small white framed panes, often with projecting bays to the ground floor. The blocks of flats are carefully designed to fit in with the scale of the houses. All the internal roads on the estate are grass-bordered, and the groups of buildings are interspersed with trees and open spaces. Few of Herbert's later estates reached the high standard set at Uplands.

Herbert's father, W. J. Collins, bought the land for the estate and financed the building, with Herbert's younger brother Ralph as building contractor. W. J. Collins had moved in 1911 to Southampton, where his first home was 'Rowborough', 126 Highfield Lane, an imposing neo-Georgian house designed by William. W. J. Collins bought land on the adjoining Portswood House estate which was being developed with large individual houses, but his initial plans were turned down by the corporation. In 1920 Herbert designed a small house, Lepe Cottage, on part of the site, but the development company objected that its small scale was out of character with the rest of the estate; in retribution it forced W. J. Collins to build another house to its approval. This became 23 Abbots Way and was also designed by Herbert. No doubt frustrated by his efforts to build on his land on the Portswood House Estate, W. J. Collins proceeded to purchase the adjoining Uplands Estate to develop as he wished.

Uplands was formerly the home of the McCalmont family but like other estates in the area the house was demolished and the grounds divided up for building. The site covered about nineteen acres with several mature parkland trees, spinneys, an orchard and a stream. The first houses on the Uplands Estate were built along the south-east boundary of the site in Brookvale Road. They form a continuous terrace of eight houses with the central pair aligned to face down Abbots Way. The terrace is given a definite centre and ends by projecting these houses forward. The central pair have a wide shared entrance porch, supported by square columns, with a plaque above dated 1922. They are roughcast, with a projecting string course above the heads of the ground floor windows, and have red pantiled roofs. Round-arched passage-ways through the block provide rear access to the intermediate houses in the terrace. The end house, 59 Brookvale Road, larger than the others, was Herbert Collins' own home from 1922 to 1930.

The terrace varies in detail from the original design drawn by Herbert in London in 1921, which shows the houses with long, low leaded casement

windows, with broad curved bay windows to the two end houses and green cottage style front doors. As built, the houses are given a more assertive Georgian style which set the pattern for the rest of the estate.

The next houses were built further along Brookvale Road towards Highfield Lane in semi-detached pairs. These are larger, with four bedrooms, and in 1924 sold for £1,000 with garage. Between two pairs of houses is the entrance to Highfield Close, marked by two symbolic gate piers. A narrow grass-bordered road with a stream running along one side leads to a small square consisting of three roughcast blocks linked at the corners by round-arched walls. The centre sections of the blocks are flats for rental with a central communal door, while houses for sale are attached to both ends. The central square is intensively planted around a formal sunken pond with a statue in the middle.

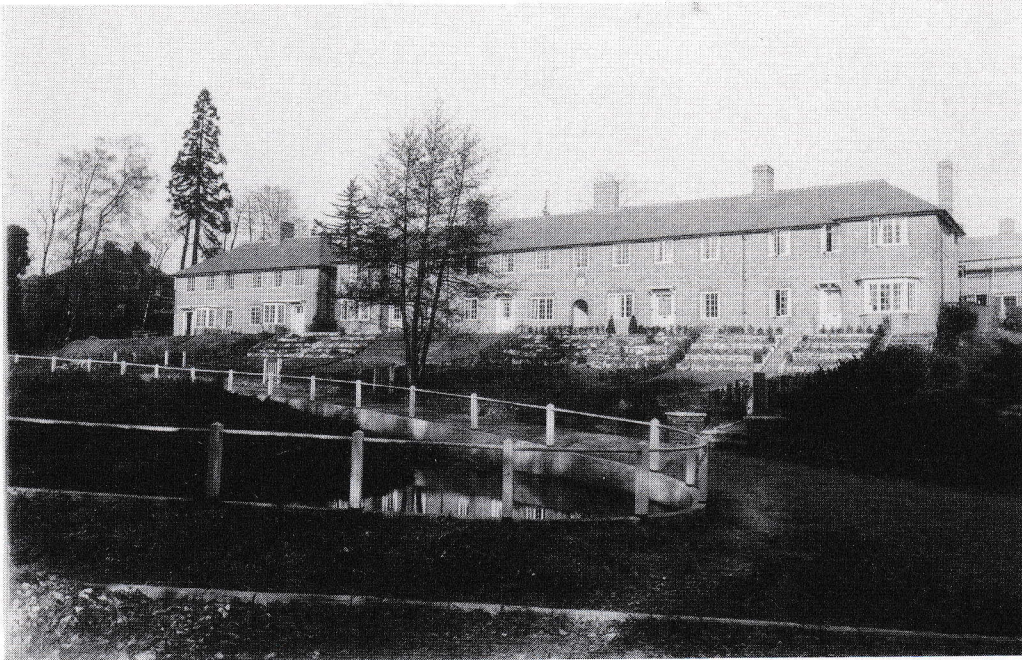
Development of the estate continued with the construction of Orchards Way, running south-west into the site from Highfield Lane. The road curves and dips down to a spinney which closes the view and screens the rest of the estate from Highfield Lane. Numbers 1 to 11 are dated 1924 and numbers 2 to 12 are built on top of a grassy bank with a brick footpath and a post and rail fence. Opposite the spinney is an irregular open green with houses grouped informally around it amongst existing trees. The green is left deliberately rough, with trees and brambles growing on it, and a stream runs along one side, separated from the road by a post and rail fence. The stream continues under the road through a conduit and out into Highfield Close where it feeds the pond in the central garden. Numbers 18 to 24 Orchard Way are a simple terrace of double-fronted houses built on a high bank above the stream. At the western end a footpath leads between the houses, past a block of flats and out through a gateway into Highfield Lane. The block of six flats is designed in the form of a large 'country house', built sideways to the road on the brow of the hill to take advantage of distant views to the south-east. The green in front of the flats is shown as a tennis court on the original drawing.

Back in Orchards Way, two pairs of double-fronted semi-detached houses were built facing the green opposite the terrace in 1926. A well composed block of garages was built on the third side of the green about 1930, of brick with a tiled roof surmounted by a timber louvre ventilator. Numbers 15 to 21 Orchards Way are a terrace dated 1927 which step up an incline away from the green, with semi-circular hooded front doors. The density of this part of the estate is about six houses to the acre, including roads and communal greens. W. J. Collins tore up his son's original plans for the rest of the Uplands Estate as he thought the density was too low and wanted to get a higher return on his investment. The housing in the rest of Orchards Way reflects this demand for higher density: there are fewer semi-detached pairs and most of the houses are in short terraces with little space between them. To compensate for this, the gardens are generally open plan with continuous lawns to give a feeling of space, instead of the dividing privet hedges and simple timber gates used on the earlier part of the estate.

Orchards Way continues with a white rendered terrace and turns in a broad curve marked by several large trees and the estate's one communal 'facility' — a brick-built 'Collins' postbox! The house on the outside of the bend are



Block of flats in Highfield Lane viewed through wrought iron gateway designed by Herbert which was removed during the Second World War.



Nos 18-28 Orchards Way in the 1920's, overlooking the green and pond.



The south side of Uplands Way viewed from the spinney.

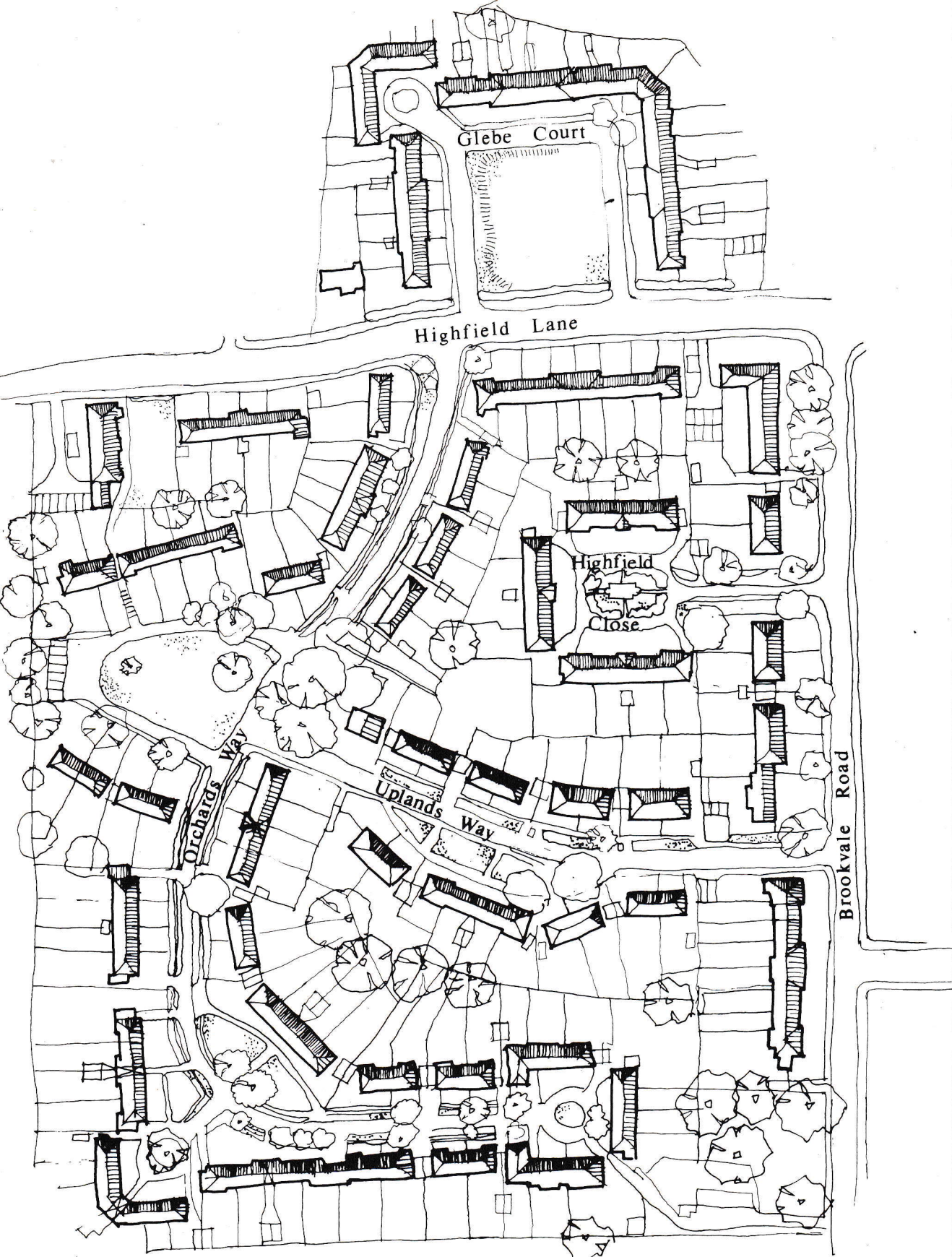
stepped back to form a partially enclosed square around a large cedar tree. The outside curve of the bend continues with numbers 68 to 80, incorporating areas of mansard roof to the first floor. They were built in the early 1930s and their front doors are a free adaptation of the more authentic panelled and hooded Georgian doors used on the earlier part of the estate. The doors are a single panel design, with a central letterbox and a half hexagon projecting hood with a fanlight composed of triangular glass panels.

The road continues, bordered with fruit trees retained from the old orchard on the site, and comes to an end with a small roundabout flanked by two short terraces. Development in the 1930s finished here, and the south-east boundary was enclosed by an open timber fence allowing views of the remaining orchard beyond. In 1948 a terrace of four houses was built along the boundary, but due to the shortage of building materials after the war the standard of detailing is poorer than the rest. A gate in the southern corner of the group leads to a footpath to Brookvale Road.

In the 1930s, Uplands Way was constructed between the green in Orchards Way and Brookvale Road. The line of houses on the southern side is curved, forming a wide grass verge with a group of trees, preserved on one corner. Herbert Collins applied for planning permission in the late 1950s to build houses on the spinney at the corner of Uplands Way and Orchards Way, this was refused but he was given permission to build a small pair of flats on part of the site, Spinney House. In 1956 Herbert built a block of four flats, called 'Unity House', on the corner of Uplands Way and Brookvale Road. The walls are rendered and the block has an unusual low pitched copper roof.

Further along Brookvale Road at the corner with Highfield Lane, Herbert built a large 'L'-shaped block of flats. Amongst the garages at the rear is the Uplands Estate office from which the houses were sold. Nos. 88 to 102 Highfield Lane is a terrace of eight houses which carefully step up the incline. Opposite is Glebe Court, built by Collins in the 1930s on land between Highfield Church and the Vicarage. To the north the site was thickly wooded and sloped steeply down to a stream, making it unsuitable for building. In 1940 Herbert Collins gave two acres of the sloping 'Glebe Copse' to be held in trust as a bird sanctuary and for nature study by members of Southampton youth organisations. The rest of the site he developed around three sides of a large square green, with the fourth side formed by an existing tall holly hedge along the Highfield Lane boundary. Glebe Court is more formal and larger in scale than the rest of the Uplands Estate, although the recessed north-west corner recaptures some of the small-scale intimacy of Highfield Close. The central block of flats facing the green has a third storey under a mansard roof and successfully resolves the problem of building a continuous terrace on a sloping site by forming a link between the lower flanking houses.

Development of the Uplands Estate took place mainly between 1922 and 1936, with some later infilling. Herbert Collins was also building other estates around Southampton at the same time and used similar houses and layouts, particularly on the Bassett Green Estate. Ralph Collins employed a labour force which was used on the various estates as necessary and most of the building work was done on



Site Plan, Uplands Estate.

site, allowing a great variety of detailing. The Uplands Estate had a narrow gauge railway track running all over the site during building. Many of the houses were built from 'clamp' burnt bricks which may have come from the nearby Kimber's brickworks on the University site — used for their cheapness and interesting 'flared' appearance. They were often combined with red kiln brick dressings and laid in English garden wall bond, with a projecting three brick deep string course in Flemish bond. Further interest was given to the brickwork by filling the 'putlog' holes left in the walls by the timber scaffolding with layers of cut roof tiles.

Although most of the houses on the Uplands Estate appear similar there are various differences in layout and detail. On plan, the width of most of the houses exceeds the depth, in contrast to the long and narrow houses adjoining the estate in Heatherdene Road. This contrast is emphasised by the generous 3 ft. wide front doors of the 'Collins' houses which lead into short wide entrance halls. Many of the house are double fronted, with a full depth sitting room to one side of the entrance, and dining room with kitchen behind to the other side. The sitting room has a long window to the front elevation, sometimes a bay, and French doors opening onto the garden at the opposite end of the room. Whichever way the house faces it receives sunshine at some time in the day. The kitchens have a range of built-in cupboards and dressers; all the internal joinery is purpose made to Herbert's designs. To reduce the number of chimney stacks, fireplaces are grouped together, often resulting in rooms with corner fireplaces.

The houses were sold on 999 year leases and subject to a ground rent of £10 a year. Prices ranged from £800 to over £1,000 depending on size and location. The early residents included friends and relatives of Herbert Collins and many members of the nearby University College.

The leasehold scheme for the Uplands Estate followed those previously drawn up at Letchworth and Welwyn Garden City where the development companies retained the ownership of the freehold as a means of ensuring planning control. The restrictions in the leases seem dictatorial and take away much of the usual freedom enjoyed by owner-occupiers. Lessees are under covenant to paint the interiors of their houses every seven years and externally every three years, the colour not to be changed from the original. Amongst other restrictions, lessees must not hang washing in the garden on Sundays or after midday on weekdays.

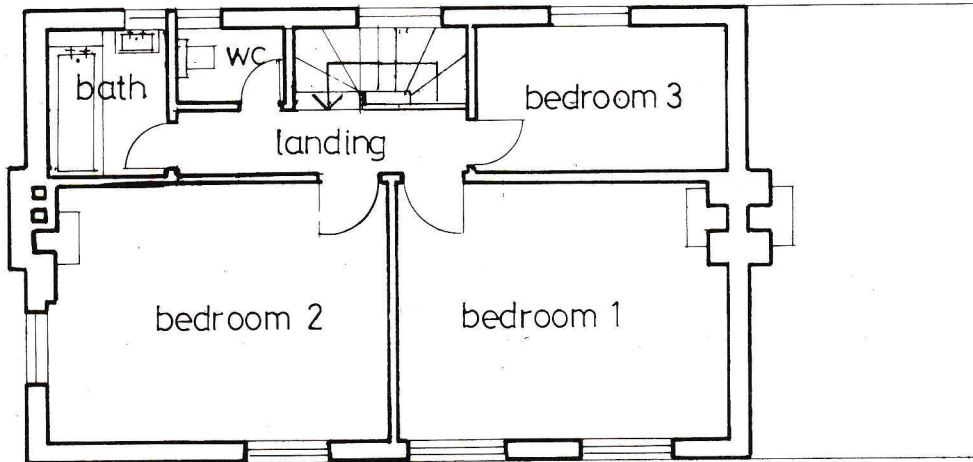
As on the Rookfield Estate, the byelaws did not allow grass verges between the footpaths and the roads, so the internal roads were not made up and adopted by the local authority. After a few years when the gravel roads of Orchards and Uplands Ways needed repair, Herbert approached the residents and suggested they form an association to carry out repairs and maintenance of the estate. As a result, the Uplands Estate Houseowners Association was constituted in 1936 and the roads were made up. The objects of the association were to maintain the open common spaces and the roads, and to enforce the covenants in the leases. Membership was restricted to the residents on the internal roads of the estate and the annual subscription was one ninetieth of the total maintenance and running costs incurred by the association.

The Leasehold Reform Act of 1967 meant the estate could no longer be run on the lines set out in the original leases and the lessees would be able to purchase the

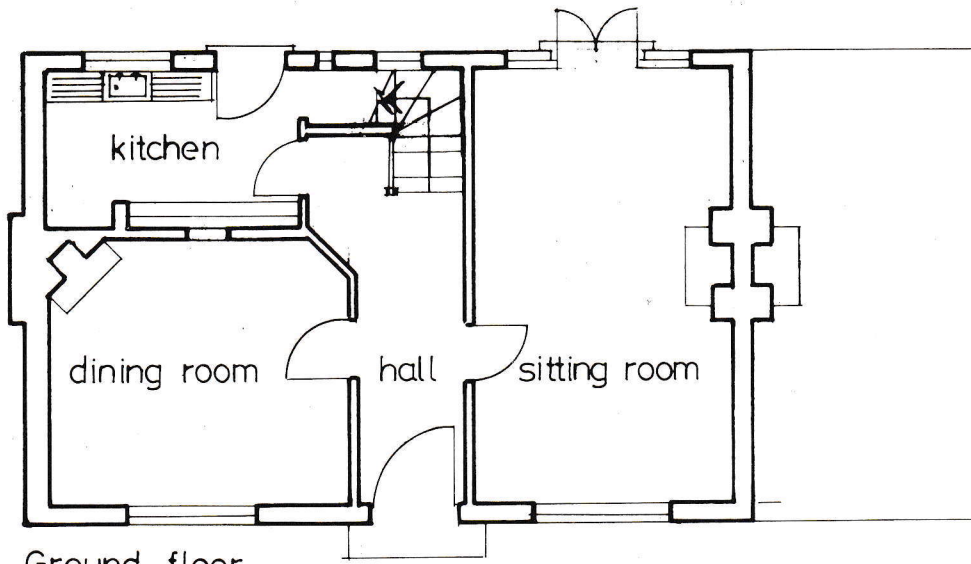


Photographs of a house on the Uplands Estate furnished by Messrs. Heal & Son Ltd., London from the original sales brochure for the estate entitled 'Ideal Labour-Saving Houses'.

freeholds of their houses. The freeholders would no longer be held under covenant not to alter their houses and residents feared that this would lead to a change of character of the estate. The residents' association, in consultation with Herbert, decided to apply for a certificate of management to maintain the estate in perpetuity. The Uplands Estate was one of the few estates in the country to apply to the High Court for a Section 19 agreement under the Leasehold Reform Act. This was granted, obliging the freeholders to conform to a modified version of the original lease, unlike those on other 'Collins' estates around Southampton where many of the houses have since been altered.



First floor



Ground floor

A typical 'Collins' plan, where width exceeds depth.