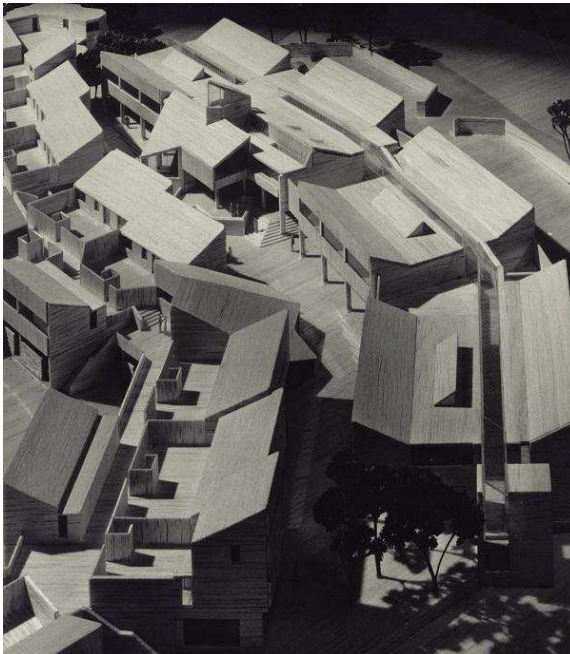


The Village Centre

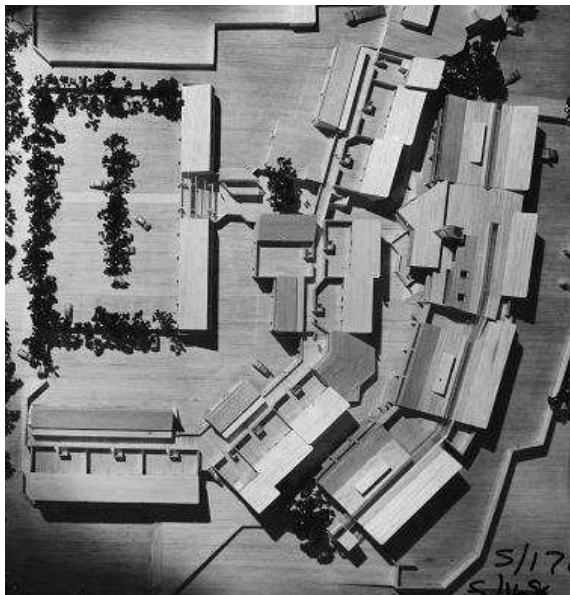
Design Principles

Planning permission for New Ash Green was at first refused by Dartford Rural District Council, then by Kent County Council and subsequently also refused on appeal to the Central Government inspectors.



However, Richard Crossman, the then Minister of Housing overruled his appeal inspector and granted consent on the grounds of the excellent quality of the design.

The Centre's Architect, Eric Lyons "wanted the Centre to be something other than the usual commercial ghetto and above all wanted it to be a part of the housing texture" designing the Centre buildings on the same scale as and using similar materials to the surrounding housing.



The Centre was to be more than just a collection of shops. It was to be the focus of the local community with housing, workshops, a large restaurant, retail and commercial units, offices, a public house and village hall.

Following her inspection in 2002, Elaine Harwood of English Heritage described the design of the Centre as a "tremendously impressive and innovative scheme designed on two levels around a pedestrianised street called The Row".



Ground Floor Layout

The meandering layout of the street plan is not an accident.

The architects, Eric Lyons and Partners, had produced many different street plans for the Centre including ones based on rectilinear arrangements around a central square.

However, they finally decided that the current layout was far more interesting and provided what Eric Lyons described as a place to explore.

The north east side of the main street, The Row, is arcaded to provide shelter from the afternoon sun whilst the north west side has no arcade to increase day lighting within the shop units on that side.



The streets are arranged in a 'T' shape with The Link leading into The Row joining it at the main staircase to the first floor covered shopping and restaurant area.

The main staircase is set at an angle to the streets to avoid the appearance of the Link being a cul-de-sac when approached from the main car park.

People arriving by bus from North Square and north car park are directed into the end of The Row by the shopping unit facing the approach.

In his "appraisal" of the Village Centre in the Architect's Journal of 4th July 1973, architect Ian Graham commented "The Row is more than just a shopping parade; it is the element which changes New Ash Green from a commuter housing estate into a village community, providing a focus where people meet, chat, browse in a friendly relaxed and thoroughly human environment".

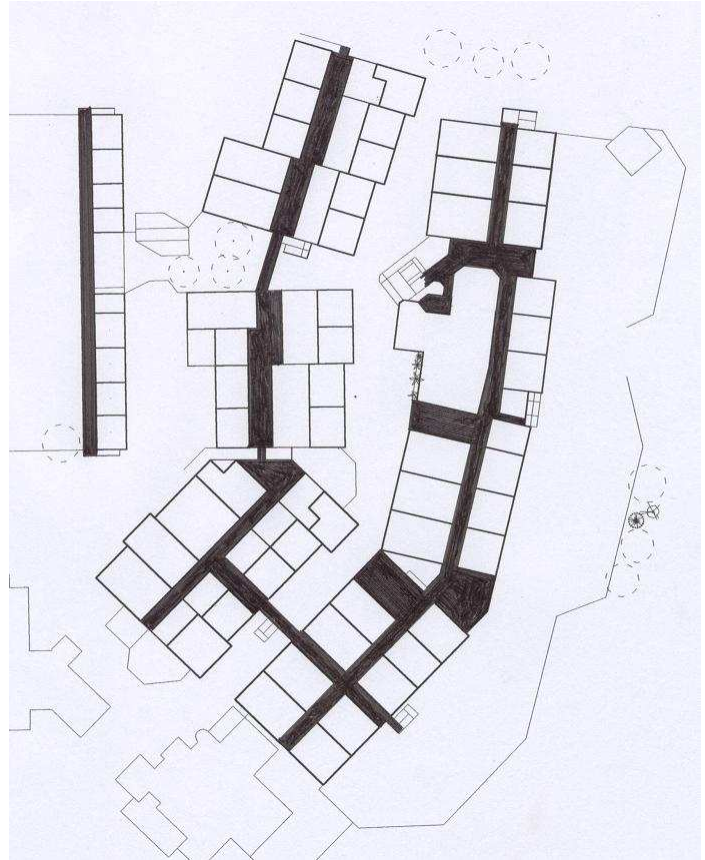


First Floor Layout

The first floor consists of Upper Street North (right on plan below), Upper Street South (centre) and The Studios (left).

Upper Street North is a glazed roofed pedestrian route connecting the concourse area at the top of the main stair with the restaurant, retail, commercial, workshop and office units at that level.

Its original design contained what its architect Eric Lyons referred to as "incidents" along its length to add interest and reduce the sense of enclosure along the route.



Upper Street South pedestrian access connects the upper parts of ground floor shops and first floor commercial units, light workshops, flats and maisonettes. It has bridge links with views down into The Link and The Row.

The Studios were intended as light workshops or commercial units and have a pedestrian access gallery with views down into the entrance to The Link from the main car park.

