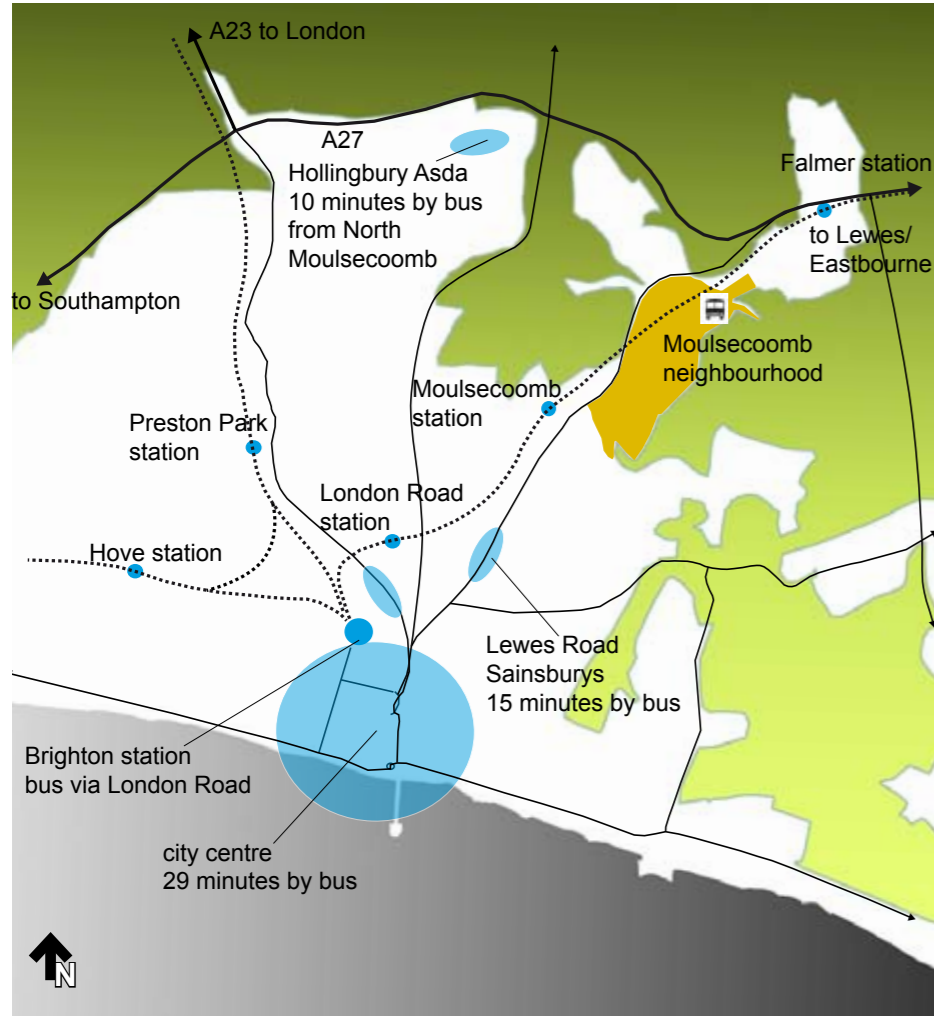


14 moulsecoomb neighbourhood

context



key stages of historic development

Until the 1920s this neighbourhood was open downland with the valley bottom sheltering nurseries and market gardens. Brighton Council acquired land in Moulsecoomb in the 1920s, and started to develop the Moulsecoomb estate in the form of a Garden Suburb with the intention of providing “homes fit for heroes”. Later extensions of North and then East Moulsecoomb took the estate out into relatively remote countryside. The development was an only partly successful attempt by the council to rehouse families from some of the slums of inner-city Brighton. The new residents worked 4 km away in Brighton, buses were infrequent and expensive, and few families were able to fully furnish their new and large homes. A central industrial estate was subsequently developed, which at one time in the 1950s contained one of the town’s largest single employers.

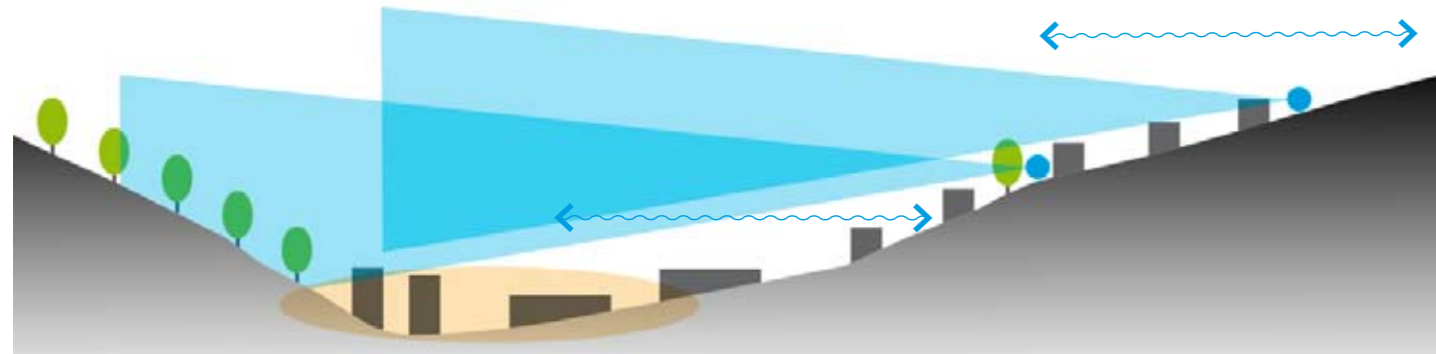
Moulsecoomb Place dates from 1790, and has a cottage attached which is reputed to be 16th century and the city’s oldest secular building.

topography & microclimate

Moulsecoomb lies northwest-southeast along the main Lewes Road valley and bulges often steeply south-eastwards up to open downland.

The views from the higher ground of the southeast, to the steep, wooded northwest valley-side can be spectacular. These views are sometimes compromised by unsympathetic building development, both within Moulsecoomb itself and along the Lewes Road.

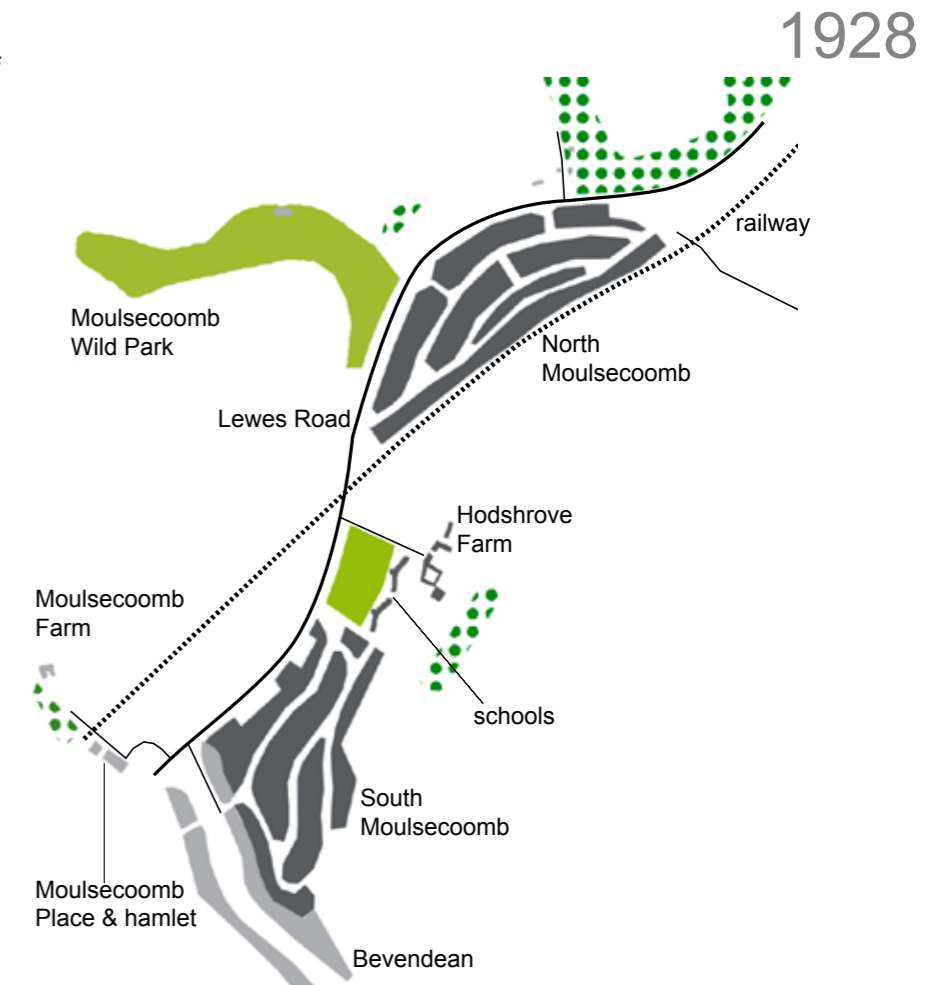
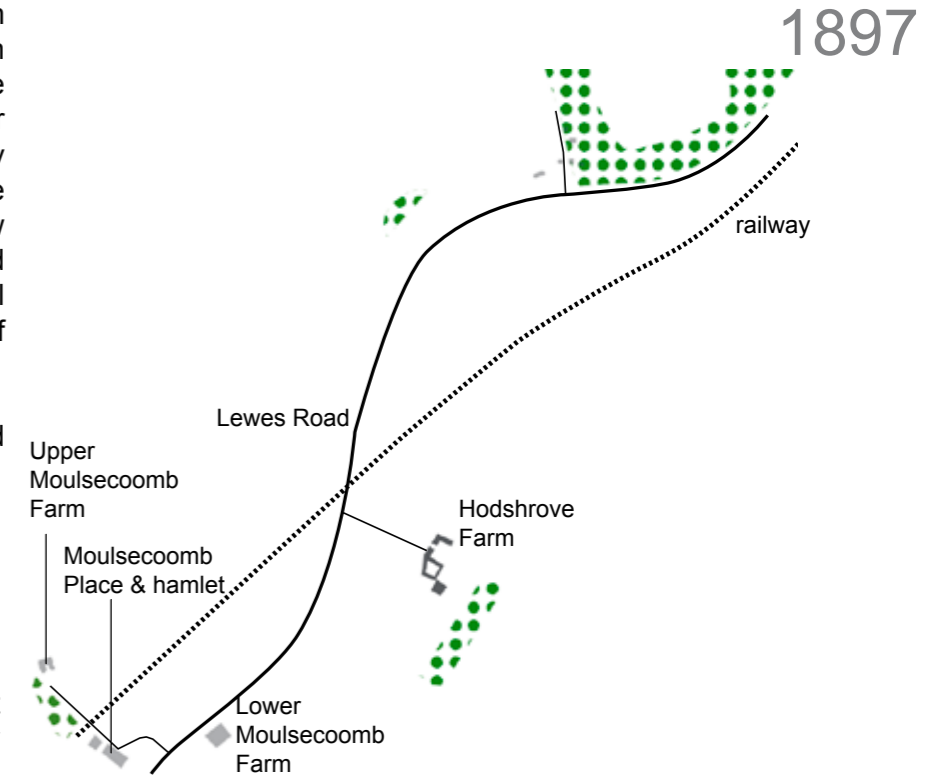
The higher southeastern flanks of the neighbourhood are often exposed to winds as are the open spaces lower down the southeastern slope, whilst the greater density of development at the valley bottom affords some shelter, despite the occasional wind funnelling along the Lewes Road corridor.



typology

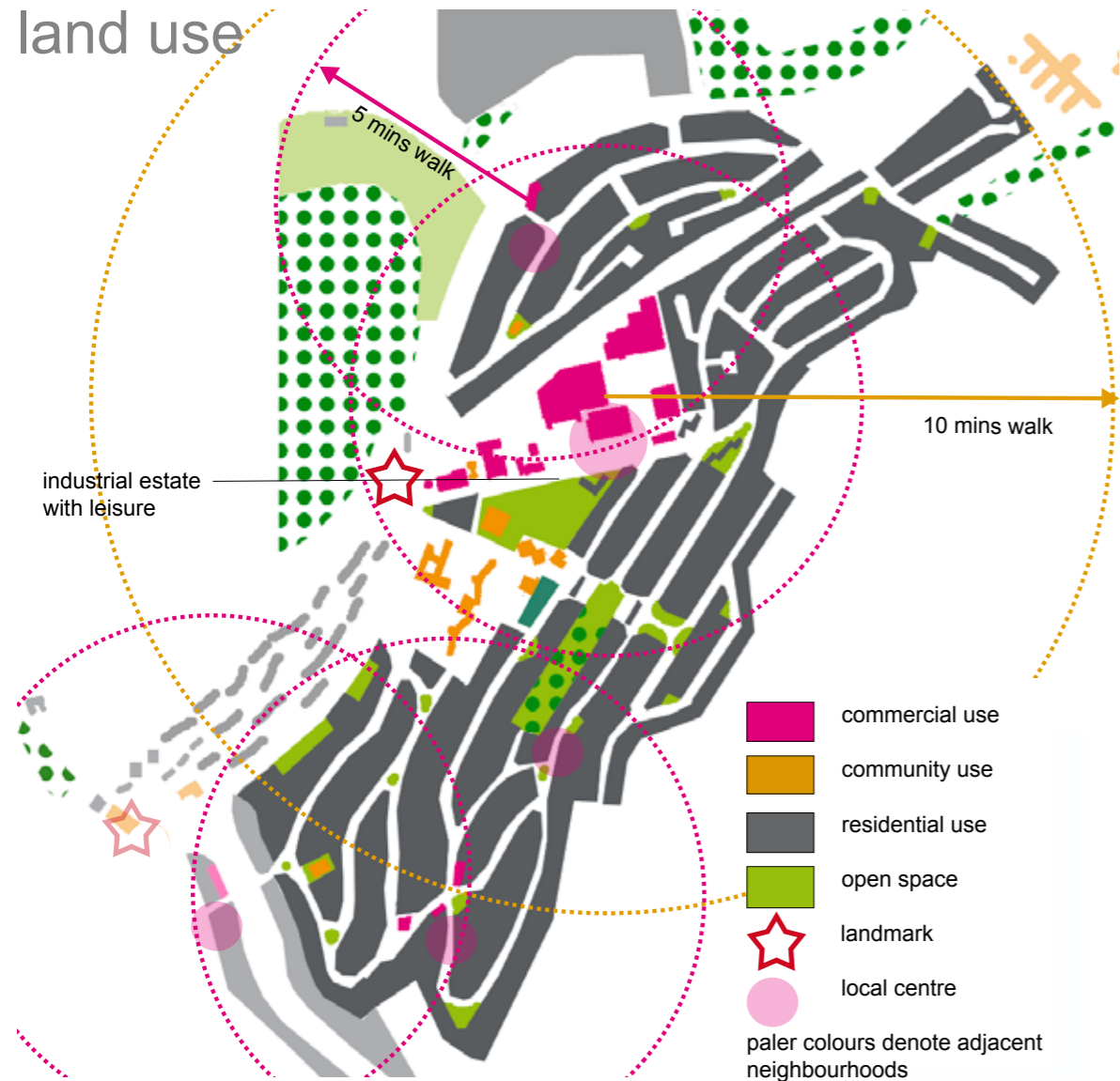
Moulsecoomb neighbourhood may be classified as suburban downland fringe with a 20th century residential suburb that was deliberately planned. Low rise, low density semi-detached and terraced housing much of which was built as public housing. Includes central area of community and commercial uses. Strong identity.

Refer to the introduction and summary for more information on landscape character types.

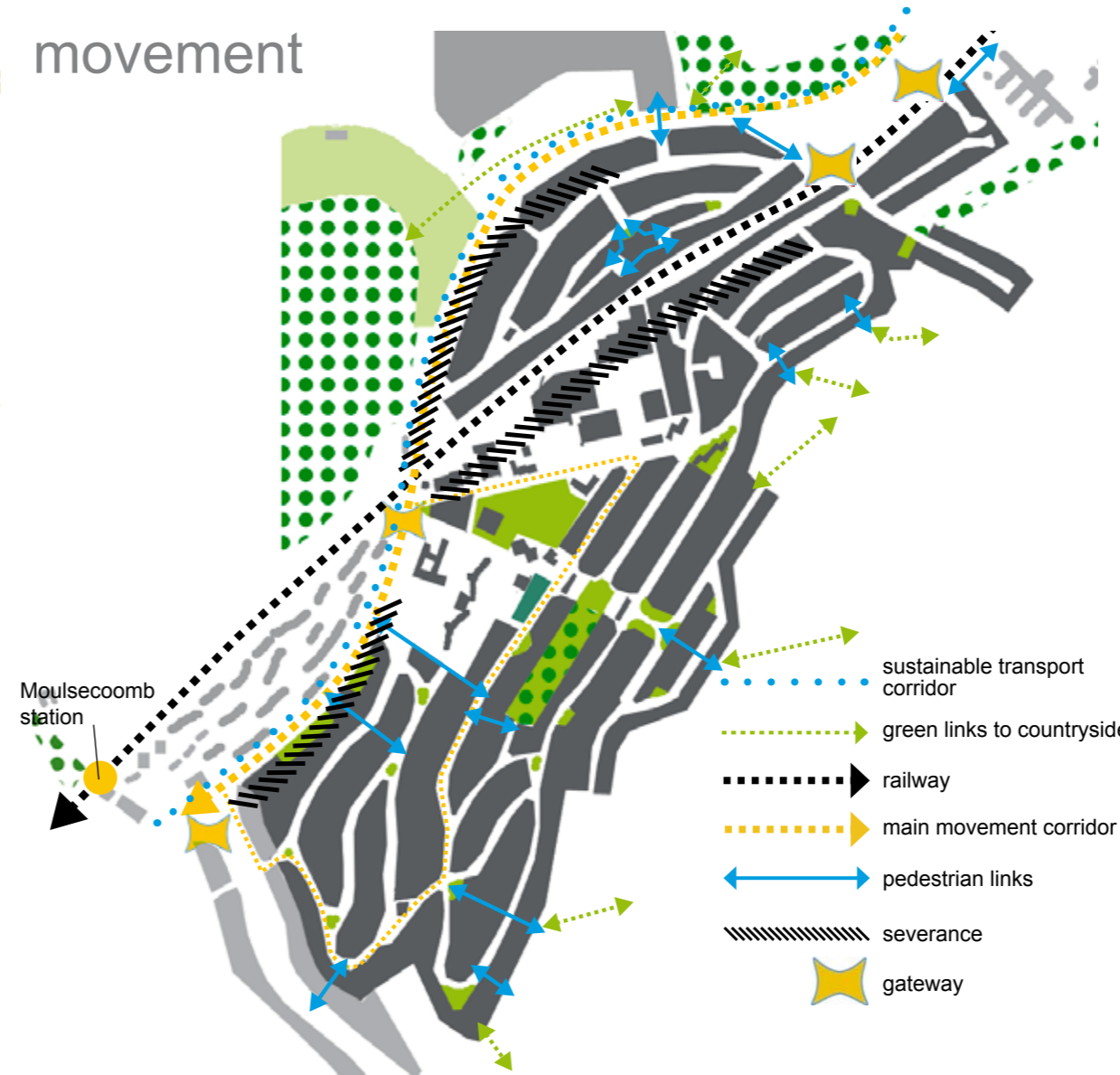


14 moulsecoomb neighbourhood

key characteristics
land use



movement



• **Land use:** The major land use of Moulsecoomb is public housing. A large area at the centre of the neighbourhood is made up of low rise community and commercial uses, including an industrial estate of large sheds, a leisure centre, health centre and schools. Local services are located throughout and just outside the neighbourhood, affording reasonably comprehensive coverage to all but the more extreme north-eastern and eastern parts.

• **Scale and density:** The neighbourhood is dominated by two storey terraced and semi-detached residential development, many of the terraces being in groups of four units, with two three storey staggered linear flat blocks, resulting in a gross density of approximately 21 dwellings per hectare (note that the extensive post-war Bates Estate of linear flat blocks to the southwest is included in the Lewes Road Corridor section of this study). There has been a more recent redevelopment in North Moulsecoomb on a similar scale and density, though on a cul-de-sac layout which backs onto the main street. The housing stock is, especially in the earlier phases, of a large size and historically has been home to some of the city's largest families. There has been an extensive refurbishment programme which has improved the housing stock.

• **Architecture:** Development is generally in the form of plain, simple two storey houses

with pitched roofs and brick or rendered elevations, set behind small front gardens with low boundary walls or fences. Some houses are enlivened by bays or porches and a few have mock Tudor details. There are no landmark buildings or features of particular distinction.

• **Movement:** The neighbourhood is located to the east of the Lewes Road sustainable transport corridor, astride the Brighton to Lewes (and ultimately Ashford) railway line, though the two nearest stations lie outside. Vehicular access is mainly facilitated via the central Moulsecoomb Way and off the wide centrally grassed Highway/Avenue from Bevendean to the south. The car is the most popular mode of transport to access work though the percentage is not as high as for more affluent outlying neighbourhoods (see appendix 2).

Heavy traffic and poor pedestrian crossings create severance along the Lewes Road from residential areas and parkland to the west, whilst the railway line effectively cuts Moulsecoomb in two. Pedestrian movement is often made unattractive by narrow and sometimes long and steep footpaths linking parallel streets along the sides of houses, that are poorly lit and not overlooked. There are good green links to the surrounding downland particularly to the east, though only after negotiating pedestrian crossings or the aforementioned narrow footpaths between houses.



Moulsecoomb Way & Lewes Road



Recent streetscape near Moulsecoomb gateway



Typical street layout, North Moulsecoomb



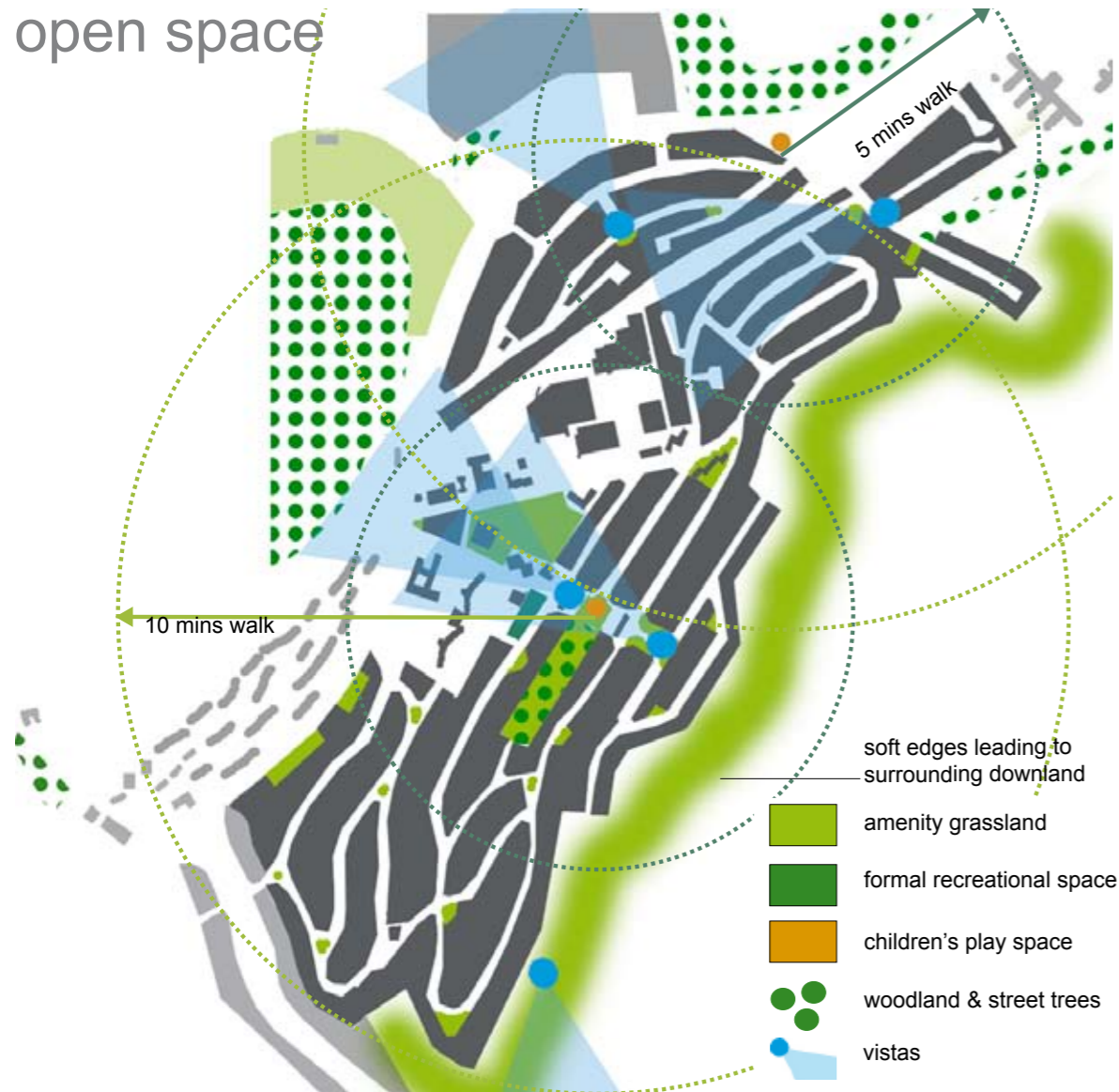
Shopping parade, North Moulsecoomb



Poor public realm in North Moulsecoomb

14 moulsecoomb neighbourhood

open space



character area



• **Socio-economic characteristics:** Moulsecoomb appears to be socially quite homogeneous, dominated as it is by large families on lower incomes with slightly greater affluence to the south. Over 60% rent their homes, almost all from the local authority though there is some outright ownership (see appendix 3). The area has some direct employment in the industrial estate and is therefore not entirely a commuter suburb of the city. There is a high proportion of self-employed tradespeople.

From the outset the neighbourhood was beset with a range of difficulties and social problems. These have continued into the post-WWII era and beyond. Lying so far out of town the early inhabitants found transport to work limited and expensive. Retail and service provision was limited, and rents were high. With the closure of the factories in the 1970s there was a period when the area suffered high unemployment, minimal services, and high degrees of drug related crime. Problems continue with high unemployment, seasonal labour, run-down facilities and some drug and driving related crimes. Many of these difficulties have been addressed with regeneration budgets and strategies.

• **Open space:** Moulsecoomb is mostly surrounded by downland, open to the east and wooded to the west, where it is formally known as Moulsecoomb Wild Park. This

is a Local Nature Reserve. Hodshrove Wood is an important space which is species-rich, of around one hectare, within the neighbourhood. There are the characteristic small triangular spaces where streets converge from different levels and substantial grass verges. Regular cutting means that these grassed areas have little to contribute to local bio-diversity. Chalkland species have started to colonise where this has been reduced.

Formal recreation space is provided close to other community uses and across the busy Lewes Road outside Coldean on the fringes of Moulsecoomb Wild Park. Smaller children's play areas can be found to the north and in the centre. The south of the neighbourhood is poorly served.

• **Character area:** Despite the severance caused by the railway line Moulsecoomb, having developed over a short period of time, can, like its neighbours, Coldean and Bevendean, be considered as one homogeneous character area.

Moulsecoomb Character Area: is largely a low density inter-war and post-war public housing suburb, originally designed on garden suburb principles, on the edge of the Downs. Mainly two storey terraced and semi-detached family houses but includes a central mixed use area with community and commercial uses.



Large greens divide dwellings



1920s housing



Higher density, landscaped flat development



1960s flat-roofed housing



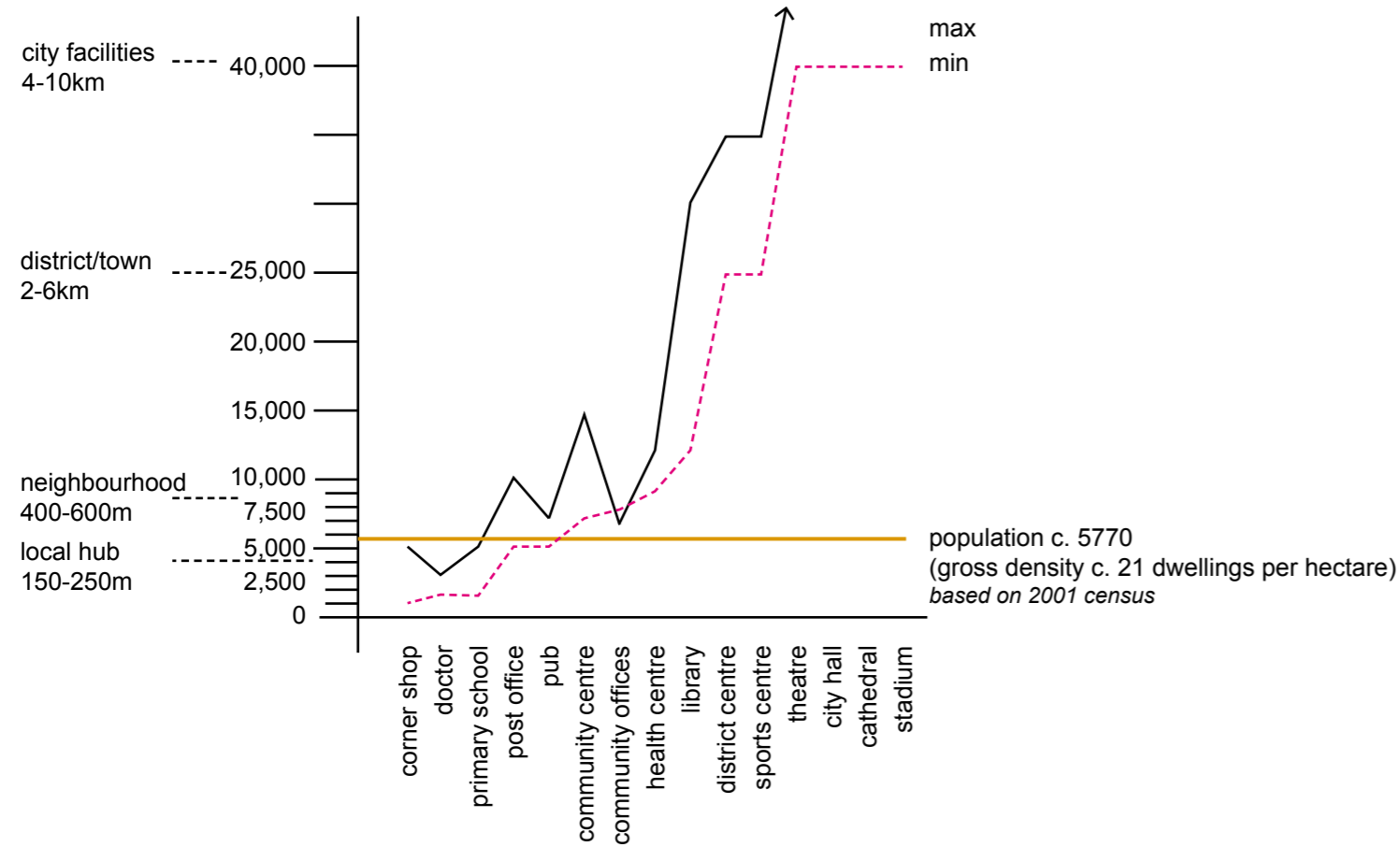
Mock tudor chalet housing, South Moulsecoomb

14 moulsecoomb neighbourhood

appendix 1: population & density

Population numbers able to support community facilities.

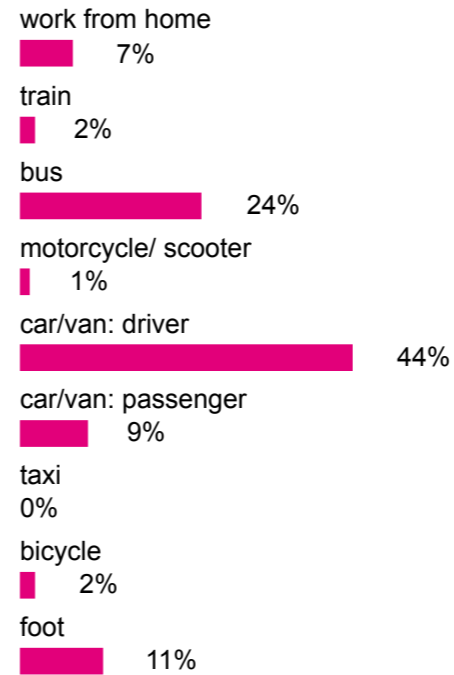
Source: Towards an Urban Renaissance, 2002



appendix 2: travel to work

Statistics illustrating methods of travel to work.

Source: City Stats, Census 2001

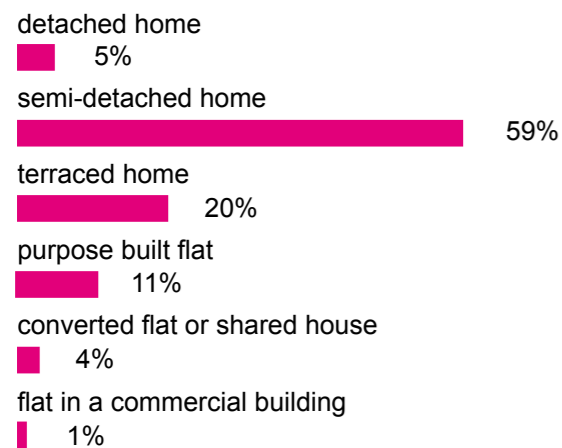


The information from the 2001 census and the Acorn profiles were based on the best fit of the smallest enumeration districts. This was obtained from Citystats website, which is now www.bhlis.org

See pages 8 and 11 for city-wide comparisons and more information

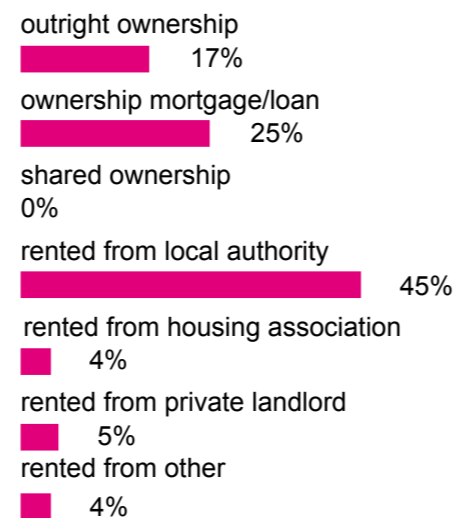
appendix 3: social mix accommodation types

Source: City Stats, Census 2001



tenure types

Source: City Stats, Census 2001



demographic types

Source: City Stats, Acorn data

