

## IDEAL VILLAGE, BORDESLEY (AREA 2)

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The Ideal Village is very easy to miss, as it is now very much on the margins of the inner-city, but this was not always so. Built between 1908 and 1914 by Barry Parker and Raymond Unwin, the area was surrounded by countryside on all sides (although Birmingham was only ¼ of a mile distant to the west.). The housing was of a superior quality to what was about to surround it: 440 houses were individually designed and intended for housing artisan workers. The pair eventually went on to build Welwyn Garden City in Hertfordshire.

The area contains a large school built four years previously to the commencement of housing construction, it at present offers places to over 600 primary and nursery students but it must have struggled to fill places in the early years when it stood alone in green fields. Nearby there is a small formal park surrounded by the village housing. When I was a child there was a park keeper and a “keep off the grass” policy, but it has now returned to nature and one of the two entrances has had the gates welded shut. There was a church in the area from 1912 but residents had to wait until 1914 for a pint when the nearby Sampson and Lion opened (now run by an Islamic charity). Before that they would have to walk half a mile to the Custard House in Blake Lane.

In 1990 the Village was designated as a conservation area with many restrictions on what work was allowed on houses. Despite over 50 prosecutions for violations such as installing UPVC double glazing and artificial roof tiles, the conservation status was abandoned in 2004 and residents are able to legally do what they were doing anyway.

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