

Chapter 04: Non-Designated Historic Areas

Other non-designated historic areas.

Throughout the Conservation Areas and Historic Environment Folder, the rich variety of our built heritage has been shown. One may therefore get the impression that all the other areas in the Borough are somehow less important. This is not the case, as the Council wishes to protect its entire built heritage through positive management of change, which may include some sympathetic development.



Refurbishment schemes in Parkfield have made these properties attractive once again.

The Council recognises that although some areas, for example 19th and 20th century suburbs, high density terraced housing or pre- World War II suburban areas, may be considered ‘average’, or ‘nationally common’, there is a significant attachment from local people who value the character and/or appearance of their area. Whilst such areas have no specific legislation or planning policy protection, the Council recognises that these places comprise a historic environment setting and strong character and community identity. Therefore any change or development should maintain this local character in the widest sense.

This does not necessarily mean that there is any justification for designating additional Conservation Areas, or in Listing more buildings. Instead it is merely an acknowledgement that just because it isn’t identified as ‘special’, it does not follow that it is worthless.

Development Pressure

The character and distinctiveness of our built heritage is increasingly under pressure. National planning policy for housing encourages the intensification of housing development and in particular development on 'previously developed land'. This coupled with the demographic changes towards a need for smaller households, can result in individual home owners becoming increasingly tempted to realise the potential value of their property through development of large plots of garden land, subdivision of dwellings, or the demolition of large detached housing and their replacement with higher density flatted development. Whilst the Council recognises the importance of limiting greenfield development wherever possible, it is also noted that if a strategic approach is not adopted then such developments can contribute to the loss of character within such areas. Equally, areas of housing market failure, low demand and abandonment can present challenges in some areas.



“Ordinary” inter-war housing is becoming popular again because of its traditional look and quality construction

The issues addressed above highlight that change is unavoidable in some areas. Where development is proposed in these areas, the Council will take a strategic approach and consider any proposals in line with the Local Plan/Local Development Framework and any relevant advice and guidance, together with any other material considerations – including representations from interested parties. The Council considers appropriate design to be a significant factor in determining planning applications and will strive to achieve sustainable communities.

Assessing appropriate design

Defining a character for most areas is difficult. It is essential to tease out the important factors that give the area its appeal, and not be sidetracked by attention to numerous specific details.

It is impossible to provide a comprehensive guide to assessing a proposal's suitability, however some useful things to look at may be:

- a common building line
- building-to-gap ratio
- building footprint, and relationship to the rest of the site
- proportions of the building (height, width and depth)
- a common architectural feature eg
 - bay windows or porches
 - gabled or hipped roofs
 - dominant building material
 - particular window or door design
- garden design or landscaping
- orientation to the street

In order for new development to fit well in to an established area it should feature some of the characteristics of the neighbourhood, perhaps used in a contemporary way. However, just because something doesn't match exactly, does not mean that it is necessarily a bad thing. Our older built heritage is a product of a past time, and our modern needs, desires and styles have evolved. The key to success is in blending the new and the old to create a product of *our* time that is sympathetic to its setting in an older time.

As a "rule of thumb", development proposals in non-designated areas should be prepared as if they *are* in Conservation Areas, with a detailed design statement showing how a proposal evolved in design terms.

Developers should be mindful of why the design and layout of the area was done that way and understand the reasons for it. For example, ribbon development was to make the best use of existing roads and to capitalise on any passing trade, while market squares were to contain the activity on one place. Equally, some areas are orientated to protect against the elements, while some may be laid out in someone's idealistic pattern such as Royal Crescent in Bath. Whatever the reason for the layout and design, understanding it will invariably produce better development in the future.

The Council is committed to maintaining the character of its older areas, but will not allow them to be 'pickled in time' and stagnate. Whilst there is a presumption in favour of development, the planning process has been established to ensure that it is kept in check to produce well-designed and appropriate development. Housing intensification will only be suitable in certain areas where local character, the range of amenities and public transport can support greater density. Although not everyone will agree on all issues, where the benefits outweigh the disadvantages, planning permission will be granted. However, the Council will not compromise on good design.