

# Plumstead Common Conservation Area: Conservation Area Management Strategy

March 2010



Early 19<sup>th</sup> c topographical water-colour of view to north from northern edge of Winn's Common over Plume of Feathers, Manor house, St Nicholas' Church, Plumstead Marshes, the River Thames and East London.

The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act, 1990, places a general duty on local planning authorities to formulate and publish 'proposals' for the preservation or enhancement of conservation areas. Further guidance is given in Guidance on the management of conservation areas (English Heritage, August 2005)

## **Executive Summary**

The aim of the Conservation Area Management Strategy policies for this area is the **protection of the period character of the area focusing on the area's buildings.**

This proposed Management Strategy makes eleven recommendations. The strategy

1. Reviews the Conservation Area's boundaries and recommends several small extensions;
2. Recommends that the Plumstead Archaeological Priority Area is extended to cover the whole of the eastern half of Plumstead Common, from Lakedale Road east-wards;
3. Reviews the schedules of Listed Buildings and Locally Listed Buildings and recommends additions to both;
4. Reviews use of planning control in the area and recommends sensitive planning control to ensure development avoids disturbing local character;
5. Recommends promotion of conservative repair principles;
6. Recommends the Council produce generic conservation repair guidance for repairs and minor changes;
7. Recommends specific guidance for managing changes to the Common itself
8. Recommends design guidance for new development & redevelopment
9. Recommends guidance on protection of views;
10. Recommends maintaining and enhancing the tree cover of the area by protecting Common, Street and other trees by encouraging new and replacement planting
11. Recommends preservation and enhancement of the character of the street scene
12. Monitoring and review after five years

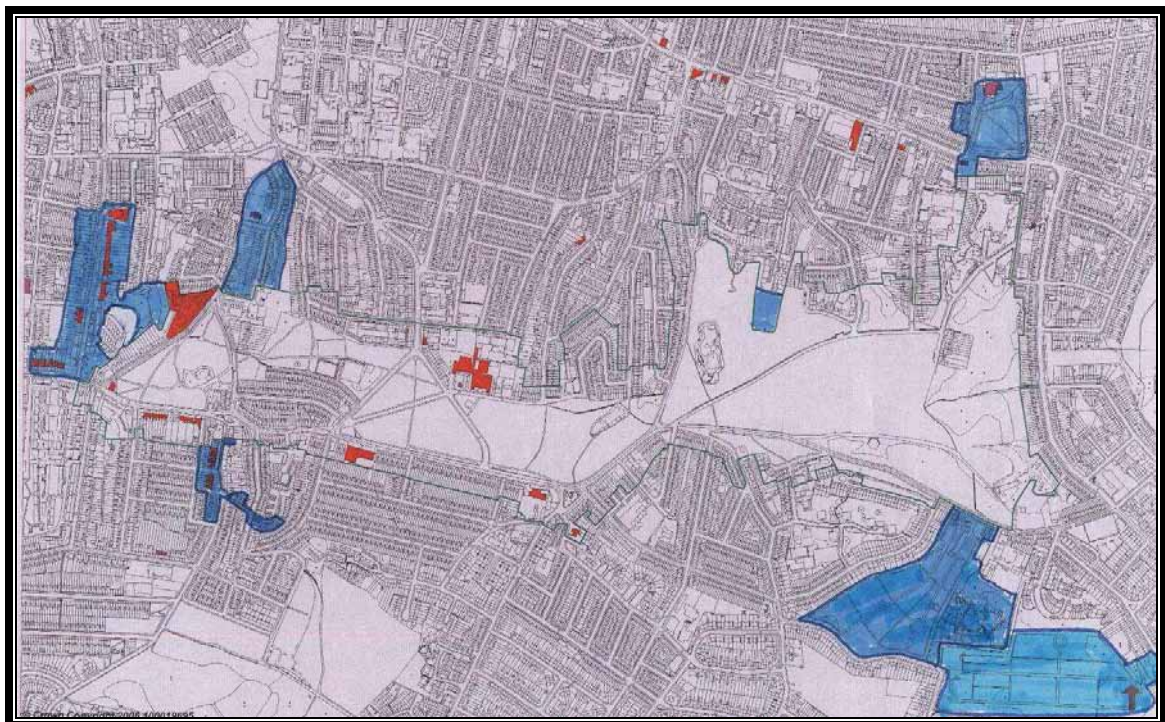
## **I. Review of Conservation Area boundaries**

The Conservation Area as originally designated largely followed the boundaries of the Common. The historical and character appraisal in Section 3 above has shown the extent to which the buildings surrounding the Common derive their character from their location on or near the Common itself. A visitor arriving at the Common in the 18<sup>th</sup> or early 19<sup>th</sup> century could not have avoided seeing the Common in its historic relationship with St Nicholas Church or the emerging developments on Plum Lane, Burrage Town and around the Vicarage. It therefore seems sensible to make small additions of the most historic parts of the fringe of the Common rather than to designate these as micro-Conservation areas in their own right.

The following areas and structures relate to the Common spatially and/or historically and may be considered as potential small extensions to the Conservation Area (clockwise):

- i. The Burrage Estate Area – the oldest estate in the Plumstead Common Area – early Victorian

- ii. The Vicarage Area – the 1793 Listed Vicarage and good Victorian housing in its environs
- iii. St Nicholas' Coombe – an area of wild land which logically forms part of the Common
- iv. The St Nicholas Area – the medieval church, former burial ground historic pub and ten houses - the best of the terraces hereabouts
- v. Woolwich Cemetery – the cemetery including the attractive frontage to Kings Highway, two 19<sup>th</sup> century cottages, a fine polychromatic chapel on the hill, Rockliffe gardens and William Barefoot Garden
- vi. Plum Lane Area – the attractive old Victorian cottages on the lower and older part of the historic winding Lane rising steeply towards Shooters Hill, plus the adjacent Palmerston Crescent Street, a quirky chapel and some listed Lubetkin modern movement houses.



Map 11: Plumstead Common Conservation Area (green boundary) – proposed extensions (blue)

**(i) The Burrage Estate Area:** this was the first estate to be developed in Plumstead; it lies on former Common land adjacent to the Common and has accordingly the greatest concentration of early-Victorian houses in the Area. The western portion of the Burrage Estate includes a number of interesting simple mainly terraced cottages and houses from the late-Georgian and early-Victorian period, unfortunately most of these have now suffered from external rendering, and door, window and roof replacement. The former St James church has been much altered but retains its striking west front. This, with the group of larger houses on Burrage Road and Plumstead Common Road close to the Common and the Nature Conservation site are proposed for designation.

*Burrage Road: 192-262; former St James church (then stage centre, now converted to housing); (191), 193-235, 261, 263, Trinity Methodist church (265), (St James church & 193-221, 225-235, 240, 248 = LL)*

Former garden to The Oaks (Site of Local Nature Interest)  
 Plumstead Common Road: 71-91 (71-89 = LL)



**Fig 1: Oaks Site of Local Nature interest Fig 2: Former St James Burrage Road Fig 3: Housing Burrage Road**



**Figure 6: Gabled housing Burrage Road, Fig 7: housing Burrage Road, Fig 8: Trinity Church**



**Fig 9: housing Burrage Road Burrage Road**

**Fig 4: street scene Burrage Road**

**Fig 5: housing**



**Figure 6: Electricity box with embossed Woolwich Coat of arms – corner of Burrage Road and Burrage Place**

**(ii) Vicarage Area:** 19<sup>th</sup> century development has detached Brambleberry the 18<sup>th</sup> century house and former Vicarage from the Common. However the intervening Victorian housing in Vicarage Park is good and the relationship with the Common is still there.

*Vicarage Road: Vicarage*

*Vicarage Park: complete*

*Manthorpe Road: complete*



**Fig 7: The Vicarage formerly known as Brambleberry**

**Fig 8: door detail**



**Figs 9 & 10: Manthorpe Road and view up this road to Vicarage Park**

**(iii) St Nichols Coombe:** A small portion of very steeply sloping fenced wild land survives – see map 9 above. This formerly lay within the curtilage of the Workhouse (later St Nicholas’ Hospital) but transferred to Council on the sale of the hospital for housing. Its Nature Conservation value is confirmed.

**(iv) St. Nicholas' Area:** The Plume and Feathers and the St Nicholas Church have a very long historical association with the Common and form the historic core of the village which, “owned” the Common. St Nicholas Gardens lies between the two and is the former church burial ground. It is desirable that this medieval relationship be reflected in the current Conservation Area designation.

*St. Nicholas Road: St. Nicholas’ Church, St. Nicholas’ Gardens (former burial ground)*

*Plumstead High Street: Plume of Feathers PH*

*St. Nicholas Road, 42-62 even*



**Fig 11: Plume of Feathers – 1922 drawing by Evacustes Phipson**

**Fig 12: Plume and Feathers late 19<sup>th</sup> c. photo**



**Fig 130: terraced houses St Nicholas' Road Fig 14: St Nicholas' Church**



**Fig 15: medieval blocked church door** **Fig 16: St Nicholas' Gardens** **Fig 17: Gates to St Nicholas' Gardens**

**(v) Woolwich Cemetery/ Rockliffe Gardens/ William Barefoot Garden Area:**

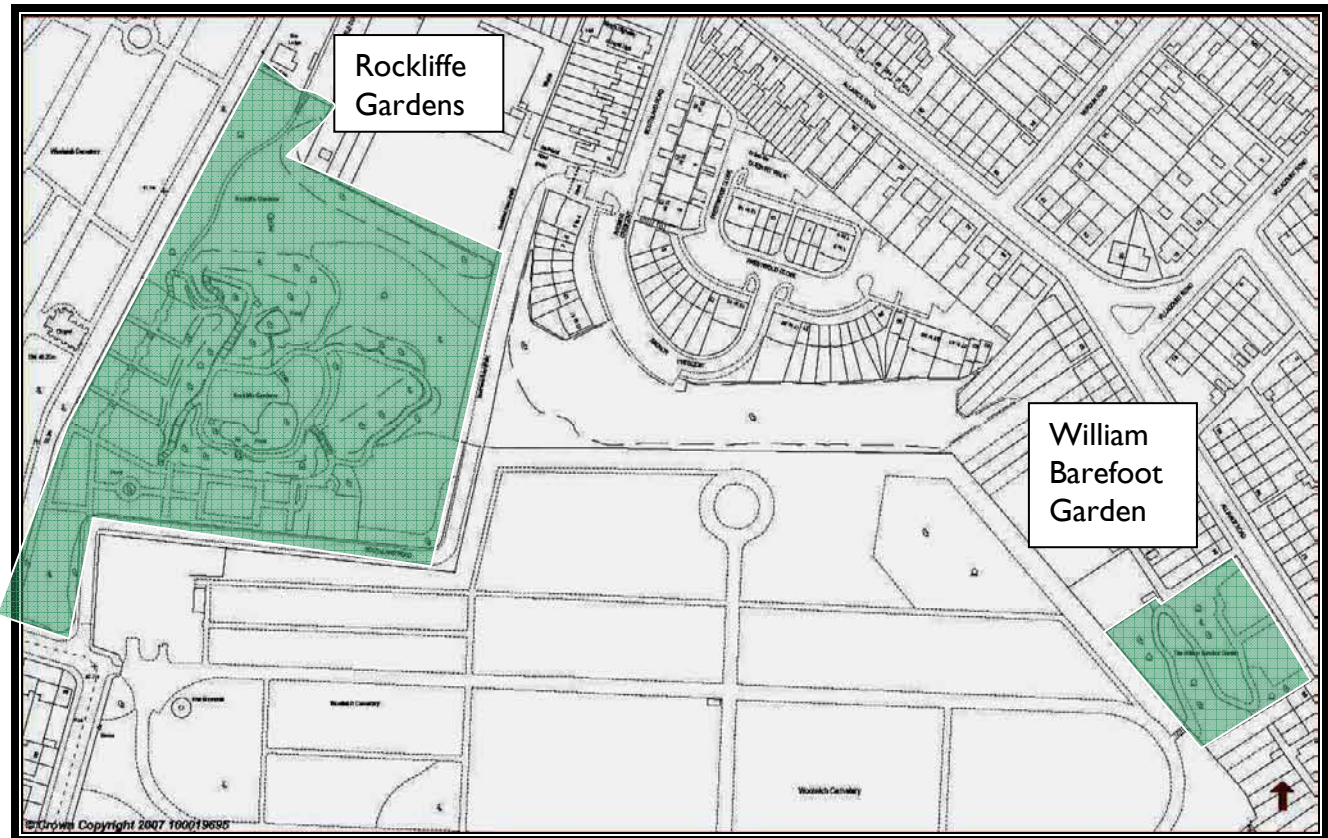
*Kings Highway 44-46*

*Cemetery including gateway piers, buildings behind and polychromatic large Victorian Chapel on hill. Nos. 44 & 46 are altered, but good old cottages.*

*Rockliffe Gardens*

*William Barefoot Gardens, Alliance Road*

**The Woolwich Cemetery** is an area of former wooded Common Land, it is preserved open land adjacent to the Common and, in its walls railings and chapel, contains structures of the same architectural period. The cemetery **Gothic Revival chapel** has good late 19<sup>th</sup> century ornamental brickwork mainly red and stands on the hill in a strong position. Rockliffe Gardens and William Barefoot Garden are two well landscaped gardens each successfully exploiting steep woody hillsides and industrial remains to create enclosed interesting landscapes of considerable character. Rockliffe Gardens includes walls steps paths and a pond.



**Figure 18: Rockliffe Gardens (top left), upper cemetery and William Barefoot Garden (bottom right)**

**Rockliffe Gardens** stands on the site of a former brick works, and was opened in early summer 1937 by the Mayor of Woolwich, Miss M Crout. In the 1840s the land was a farm called Tidneys Field. By 1869 brick works had been established on the north end of Tidneys and the field was dug out and used as a claypit. The brick works appear to have closed by the end of the 19th century. During World War I allotments were laid out at the south end of the site. Otherwise the field was used as a rubbish tip until the land was purchased by Woolwich Borough Council in January 1935. They realised the clay digging had formed a succession of interesting shapes on the ground, which would make a good garden. This area of Plumstead is also undermined by chalk workings, which have made big holes deep in the ground. The landscaping and layout was by Mr Tee, the Borough Engineer. Many parts of Rockliffe Gardens were in a landslide on 8 September 1937, affecting the children's play area at the northern boundary.





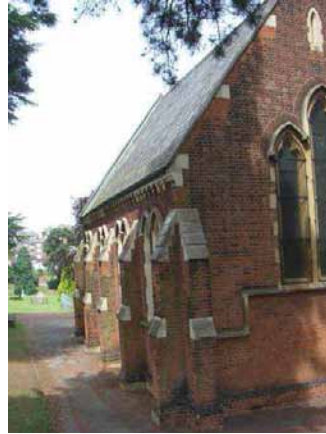
Figure 19: Aerial photo - Rockliffe Gardens (top left), upper cemetery and William Barefoot Garden (bottom right)



Figure 20: Woolwich Cemetery Chapel



Figure 21: Woolwich Cemetery piers and gates to Kings Highway



**Figure 22 & Figure 23: Woolwich Cemetery chapel**



**Figure 24: Rockliffe Gardens - pond**

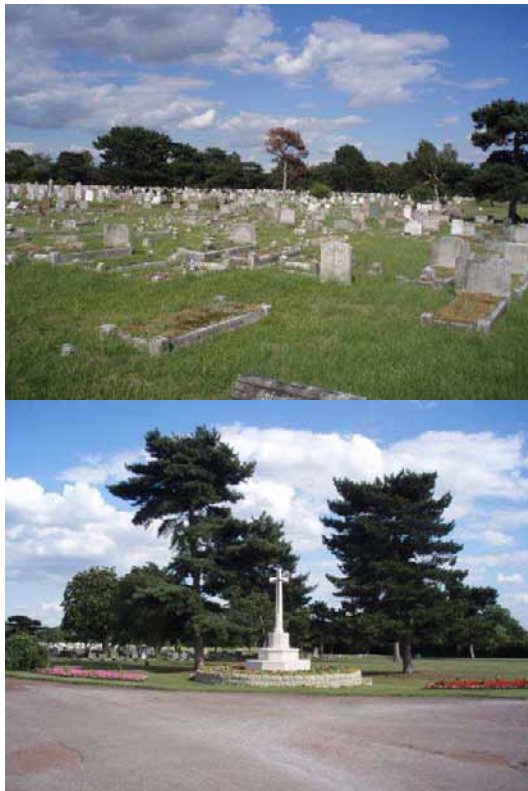
**Figure 25: Rockliffe Gardens**



**Figure 26 & Figure 27: Rockliffe Gardens**



**Figure 28: & Figure 29: entrance gate to Rockliffe Gardens**  
**Figure 30: Rockliffe Gardens**



**Figure 31: & Figure 32: Woolwich Cemetery - upper section**

**William Barefoot Garden** is a memorial to a notable Mayor of the Borough of Woolwich (mayor 1925-7). It appears to have been constructed in the late 1930s' and lies in an area above old chalk mine workings where there had been major subsidence. In the

1930s a large hole 35x10 feet appeared suddenly in Alliance Road. A local campaign led to the demolition of a number of 19<sup>th</sup> century houses. In the late 1930s after stabilisation the garden was laid out, but it was only in 1942 that it was named and dedicated by Lord Snell. It has fine 20<sup>th</sup> c. wrought iron gates – very similar to those in Well Hall Pleasaunce. There is a plaque to William Barefoot in the Well Hall Pleasaunce which was unveiled in September 1942, William having died the previous November. He had been a member of the Council for 33 years. At the unveiling ceremony, it was said that the Pleasaunce was largely a creation of Councillor Barefoot, who had laboured strenuously for the good of local people. Councillor Barefoot was born in Frances Street, Woolwich, spent his early married life in Griffin Street, Plumstead before moving to Spencer Gardens.



**Figure 33: gate to Woolwich cemetery - William Barefoot Garden**

**Figure 34: upper section of path in William Barefoot Garden**

**Figure 35: Alliance road entrance to William Barefoot Gardens**



**Figure 36: cottages at north end of Rockliffe Gardens**



**Figure 37: north end of Rockliffe Gardens**

**(vi) Plum Lane Area:**

*Plum Lane 2-58, (10-32 are locally listed), 13 (Brethren Meeting Room of 1865)  
Palmerston Crescent: 67-81 and St Michael's Cherubim & Seraphim Church, 74-84*

The winding Plum Lane links Plumstead to Shooters Hill; it appears to be of medieval origin and certainly long predates all buildings in the Conservation Area. The lower eastern part of the Lane includes a number of good early-Victorian cottages, some Locally Listed, and built before urbanisation in keeping with the rural character of the Conservation Area at this time.



**Figures 38 & 39: Cottages in Plum Lane area**



**Figure 40 Figure 41 Figure 42: Cottages in Plum Lane area**



**Figure 43: Plum Lane Chapel**



**Figure 44: Palmerston Street**



**Figure 45, Figure 46, Figure 47: 1865 well preserved Brethren Chapel 13 Plum Lane with sliding sashes**

## **2. Area of Archaeological Priority**

English Heritage recommends that the Area of Archaeological Priority be extended to include whole of the eastern half of Plumstead Common, from Lakedale Road east-wards. See Map in part 3 above. This is supported and should be carried through into the Local Development Framework (LDF).

## **3. Listed Buildings and Locally Listed Buildings review**

**Statutory List:** Unity Cottages, 102-4 Plumstead Common Road are a pair of semi-detached quiet but well proportioned Georgian cottages. Along with the Vicarage constructed 16 years before, and the probably later no 108, they are oldest surviving houses in the Plumstead Conservation Area. They are built in yellow stocks, with good proportions, low angled hipped roofs and surviving margin lighted front windows. Much of the front elevation seems to be much in its original condition. Although a later side

addition to no 104 detracts somewhat from its value – this extension is long established. Unity Cottages are named and dated to 1811 by a plaque on the front wall. The houses have group value along with 86-100, and 106-110. It is proposed that they be recommended to English Heritage for addition to the Statutory List of Buildings of Architectural or Historic interest. In the event that this recommendation is not implemented by English Heritage they should be added to the Local List.



**Figure 48: Unity cottages margin light windows**



**Figure 49 Date plaque**

**Figure 50: Old**

**Local List:** The following buildings and other structures are proposed for addition to the Local List:

- Electricity Box, on footway on south corner of Burrage Road and Burrage Grove
- St Michael's Cherubim and Seraphim Church, Palmerston Crescent - small 19<sup>th</sup> century church
- Cemetery Chapel, Woolwich Cemetery, Kings Highway - mid 19<sup>th</sup> century, interesting architecturally and of good build quality with polychromatic brickwork
- Gates Railings and Piers to Kings Highway, Woolwich Cemetery – Kings Highway
- Walls to older part of Cemetery, Woolwich Cemetery – Kings Highway
- 72-80 Plumstead Common Road – good large mid Victorian houses
- The Woodman PH, The Slade - mid 19<sup>th</sup> century Public House
- Catholic Church of the Holy Cross, The Slade – very plain and cheaply built shed-church – with historic and vernacular interest ;
- Evangelical Free Church, The Slade – red brick
- Disused steps in Green – The Slade Green
- Gates to William Barefoot Garden at junction with Alliance Road, similar to those at entrance to Well Hall Pleasaunce
- Brethren Meeting Hall, 13 Plum Lane – 1865 simple non-conformist chapel



**Fig 51: St Michael's Cherubim & Seraphim Church**



**Fig 52: 80 Plumstead Common Rd.**

**Fig 53: Surviving disused stone steps Slade Green**



**Fig 54: Evangelical Free Church of the Holy Cross**

**Fig 55: The Woodman**

**Fig 56: Catholic Church**





**Figure 57: Woolwich Cemetery gates and piers  
Woolwich Cemetery chapel**

**Figure 58:**



**Figure 59: Figure 60 & Figure 61: Burrage Road electricity box**

## 4. Planning control review

This Conservation Area has seen a large number of undesirable changes to buildings, especially rendering and painting of front elevations and replacement UPVC windows. Most of these changes have taken place without the need for planning control because of permitted development rights.

In other conservation areas, where the Council has made an Article 4 Direction to take control over minor changes, planning control in this area has often (but not always) succeeded in protecting the character of buildings. This might indicate the desirability of introducing an Article 4 Direction to prevent further disfigurements. However, unfortunately, the large number of houses already altered, suggests that this is likely to present difficult planning decisions.

**General repair strategy:** In this area, the widespread extent of minor alterations to date and the absence of an Article 4 Direction, indicates that an appropriate approach may be to encourage conservative repair standards, clarifying as needed where there are statutory controls and in these cases advise on the nature of the requirements. Conservation oriented detailed repair advice will help protect historic building fabric, emphasising the importance of, and methods of preservation of the original building materials – rather than their replacement

## 5. Conservation Repair Principles

Surviving unaltered houses in the Plumstead Common Conservation Area have period traditional character, which should be retained by conservative repair (this means retention of original building fabric). For owners and residents this will be money well spent, as, in addition to helping retain the special character of the area, sympathetic good repair and maintenance of period features and finishes, also retains and enhances property values. Where original features have been lost, it is desirable to reinstate these so far as economically possible.

The following principles are recommended for repairs or alterations to the fabric of a period building:

**Conservation** of a period building is essentially a matter of slowing down the natural process of aging and decay and of minimising replacement in repair. This is particularly important for windows, doors and roof slates or tiles. Replacement is often less necessary, and less desirable than might appear from the promotions of synthetic new products (e.g. PVCu or aluminium framed double glazing, or artificial slates).

The following principles are recommended:

- Regular maintenance and small scale repairs prevent decay
- Repair rather than replace – retaining the maximum amount of original fabric and only replacing it where absolutely necessary.
- Take special care to conserve original features which have been largely lost through past changes
- Carefully match repairs and replacements to the original
- Where possible reinstate missing architectural features
- Reverse damaging repairs and unsympathetic alterations
- Ask for expert advice and use traditional builders and craftsmen (or specialist conservation contractors) wherever possible
- Carefully consider the impact of changes to both the individual house and the estate as a whole.
- Details such as window and door patterns, roofing materials and decorative elements make a considerable contribution to the special character of the conservation area. Even minor changes can detract from the character, and value of a building.

**Maintenance:** It is important that essential structural work and steps to make a property 'wind and weather tight' are made a priority, before any other structural adaptations or the repair of architectural features is considered. Water ingress is the source of many

maintenance problems such as timber rot, spalling masonry, dampness and condensation. Roofing, guttering, downpipes and flashing should be inspected regularly and repaired as a priority in order to avoid large scale problems and intervention into the fabric of the building in the future. The repair of seriously damaged pointing, decayed and cracked brickwork, broken cills and the gaps around window and door openings should also be viewed as priority works.

**Slight structural movements** in a building are normal, particularly in London if the house is built upon shrinkable clay or other soils, which are susceptible to minimal movement. But sudden evidence of movement in a building, which has been stable for many years in the past, should be investigated. This is likely to be covered by insurance and should be investigated and monitored by specialist contractors (normally insurance company appointed) to ascertain the nature, direction and rate of movement.

## **6. Provision of conservative repair advice and advice on minor changes to buildings.**

The Council is recommended to produce a generic leaflet giving conservative repair advice and advice on minor changes to characterful buildings throughout the Borough. This will importantly encourage residents and owners to look after their property in an economical and sustainable way as well as preserving the historic and visual environment.

## **7. Changes on the Common itself**

The character of the Common – especially Winn’s Common - is primarily ‘undeveloped’ grassland open space; its character is potentially detrimentally affected by all intrusive manufactured structures. At present man made structures are largely limited to post and rail fencing, seating, and a few buildings ancillary to sporting and recreational uses.

**New buildings.** The UDP designation of Metropolitan Open Land (MOL) and associated policies (SO4, O1, O2 and O4) provides a comprehensive framework severely limiting built development on the Common. For example; buildings should not be located in nature conservation areas, should not be visually intrusive, should have minimal impact on open land and should not prejudice amenity (UDP O1). New buildings on the Common itself (even of a recreational nature) are likely to be detrimental to the grassland and open character of the Common. In exceptional cases where buildings are justified under MOL policy, new buildings should minimise damage to the character of the Conservation Area, e.g. by being discreetly located and designed in complementary materials to avoid creating a visual contrasting focus. Taking opportunities to remove redundant buildings may help enhance local character.

**Post and rail fencing:** where repairs have been carried out these have sometimes not followed the traditional style and materials. An agreed standard specification would help create consistency – especially if it is rigorously adhered to for all replacements. When resources are available, it will be helpful for non- conforming boundary treatments to be replaced. However in some instances a surviving attractive but different boundary treatment, (for example the railings at the Slade and at the bottom of King’s Highway and

opposite the cemetery) has been established for many decades. In such cases the surviving old treatment should be seen as historic, and may helpfully be maintained repaired and sympathetically restored.



**Figure 62: Post and rail**

**The Steps area – potential for enhancement:** Early 20<sup>th</sup> century postcards show that The Steps area was formerly more formal, more park like, and less wild in appearance. It is considered that the present wild appearance has now become established and is appropriate. Nevertheless, discreet maintenance or resurfacing may in due course be desirable.

**Wild areas** – The Parks Department are recommended to prepare a management plan in consultation with local community organisations. It should deal with the location and design of new buildings and in principle should limit or avoid built structures, new paths, or lighting, having regard to local needs and safety requirements.

## **8. Appropriate redevelopment and new development**

Status of the advice: Redevelopment, new development, substantial alterations or extensions and changes of use require planning permission. The appraisal contained in this section is not planning policy – although it may provide evidential support to interpretation of UDP and SPD policy. It should therefore be read in conjunction with the Council's planning policies contained in the UDP and any relevant supplementary planning guidance (SPG) or Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD). Where justified, this advice may be taken into account by the decision maker (i.e. Council or Inspector) as a material consideration in reaching the appropriate interpretation of adopted planning policy for this conservation area.

## **9. Guidance on protection of views**

The UDP identifies local views out (D27) and views of, or over local features worthy of conservation (D29). The views section of the character appraisal above considers these policies and (3.6) identifies four type of view in this Conservation Area worthy of protection. The UDP policies are considered to provide adequate support for this, and this management strategy recommends the appropriate protective use of these UDP policies – having regard to the character appraisal and the statutory duty to have regard to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character and appearance of the Conservation Area.

## **10. Trees within the Conservation Area**

The Conservation Area Management Strategy proposes maintaining and enhancing the tree cover of the area by protecting trees on the Common and in open spaces, street trees and other trees and by encouraging new and replacement planting. Trees on the Common are managed by the Parks Department.

A person wishing to prune, lop or cut down a tree within the conservation area must notify the Council of the proposal allowing at least six weeks before the work is carried out and stating the location, species, size of tree and work proposed.

There are a number of street trees in the area. The planting and management of Street Trees is carried out by the Council's Highways Department, to whom any queries should be addressed. The aim is to maintain a healthy tree stock for future generations, which will be achieved by selective removal and replacement of trees that have become "old and large enough to cause significant problems". The Council policy is that trees will not be removed unless they are

- in the way of development where there is no alternative for access for traffic and services
- causing damage to a property and pruning is unlikely to halt the damage
- causing a hazard to highway users

The interpretation of this policy should take into account conservation area designation and the contribution the existing tree makes to the character of the area.

## **11. Streetscape character and works**

The Conservation Area Management Strategy proposes preservation and enhancement of the character of the street scene by encouraging highways works to be sensitive to and prioritise the conservation and repair of features contributing to local character.

## **12. Monitoring and Review**

12.1 This guidance should be reviewed and updated after five years. It will be based on the following criteria:

- Development pressures (numbers of planning applications and their spatial distribution)
- Annual English Heritage survey of Buildings at Risk.