

Progress Estate Conservation Area

Character Appraisal



Traditional townscape in Ross Way

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Introduction

This Progress Estate Conservation Area Appraisal consists of

- A **definition** of special historic and architectural interest,
- An **Explanation** of Conservation Areas and Article 4 Directions,
- A **Character Appraisal** which identifies the main elements that contributes towards the special architectural or historic interest of the Conservation Area.

There is a separate **Conservation Area Management Strategy** which identifies strategies for how refurbishment, repair and upgrading of the properties can be achieved whilst minimising losses of the character of the houses.

I. Executive Summary - Definition of the special historic and architectural interest of the Conservation Area

The Progress Estate is a very fine early example of garden suburb townscape design. It was constructed in ten months in 1915, by the Government's Office of Works, to house munitions workers at Woolwich Arsenal. It has been evaluated as "*the first and most spectacular of the Garden suburbs built by the government during the First World War to house munitions workers*" ... "*a tour de force of picturesque design* (Sir Nikolaus Pevsner *Buildings of England - London: 2*, p 307). The following characteristics define the special character of the Conservation Area:

- the area's period quality as a remarkable early example of Garden Suburb planning, with picturesque street layout, green spaces and relatively low density;
- the stylistic character of the houses built as English romantic cottages;
- the use of quality detailing and materials associated with fewer budget controls than normal, consequent on the need to build at speed in war time;
- the product of talented architects in the Office of Works under Frank Baines;
- the consistent use of characterful originally oak front garden fences in a design particular to the Estate;
- the use of natural mottled green and blue Westmoreland slate – often laid in diminishing courses;
- the use of a limited range of front doors which differentiates the identity of the Estate;
- the Estate's particular picturesque cottage townscape style;
- the survival of nearly the whole Estate of 1200 housing units - with minimal infill or demolition;
- the completed character of the Estate,
- the picturesque effect of designing in footpaths connecting the streets;
- the use of a standard six light vertical wooden casement window module.

2. Explanation: Conservation Areas and Article 4 Directions

What is a Conservation Area?

Conservation Areas were first designated in England following the 1967 Civic Amenities Act. Local planning authorities are obliged to designate and review conservation areas under the provisions of the 1990 Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act. These are defined as '*areas of special architectural or historic interest the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance*'. There are now more than 8000 throughout England and Greenwich has 20 Conservation Areas. **The Progress Estate Conservation Area** was designated by the Planning and Development Committee of Greenwich Council in 1971.

Which properties are in the Conservation Area?

The Conservation Area covers the whole of the Progress Estate which comprises:

Admiral Seymour Road (Complete)
Arsenal Road (Complete)
Brome Road (Complete)
Cobbett Road (Complete)
Congreve Road (Complete)
Cornwallis Walk (Complete)
Dickson Road (Complete)
Downman Road (Complete)
Franklin Passage (Complete)
Granby Road (Complete)
Lovelace Green (Complete)
Martin Bowes Road (Complete)
Maudsley Road (Complete)
Moir Road (Complete)
Phineas Pett Road (Complete)
Prince Rupert Road (Complete)
Rochester Way (475-513 + 496-532)
Ross Way (Complete)
Sandby Green (Complete)
Shrapnel Road (Complete)
Well Hall Road (105-175 + 182-416)
Whinyates Road (1-51 + 2-86 Complete except for no 53)

What restrictions are there throughout the Conservation Area? In the Conservation Area:

- The demolition of buildings, or substantial portions of them, is unlawful without prior Conservation Area Consent from the local planning authority.
- Conservation Area Consent is required for the substantial or complete demolition of a garden wall.

- Householders living in single family occupied houses (i.e. not flats or converted houses) generally have permitted development rights to make minor changes. But the Article 4 Direction, almost entirely removes these, see below.
- Where there are no permitted development rights, or where these have been removed by an Article 4 Direction, the change to or removal of part of the building (such as a removal of or alteration to a chimney stack, window replacement) will require planning permission if the result will alter the external appearance of the building;
- Special controls apply to works to trees within a conservation area. The local planning authority Tree Officer should be contacted for details of these requirements.
- Planning applications are judged against stricter criteria within conservation areas where all proposals must seek to preserve or enhance the special character or appearance of the area.
- Proposals for development on land outside but affecting the setting of the Conservation Area will be assessed for their impact on the character and appearance of the Conservation Area and may be refused if this is judged to be detrimental.
- Conservation Area status will also affect the decisions taken when it is judged expedient to take enforcement action.

What is an Article 4 Direction?

Single family occupiers of residential houses (as opposed to flats) have a special right to make certain specified minor changes to the external appearance of the house. These rights are explained in the free government (Office of the Deputy Prime Minister - ODPM) leaflet "*Planning: A guide for householders*". These changes cannot be made without permission to non-residential buildings or where the house has been converted into flats, or as on the Progress Estate where there is an Article 4 direction.

In some situations, for example in the Progress Estate Conservation Area, it is desirable to limit or withdraw these permitted development rights, to enable full control over alterations to the appearance of buildings. To achieve this, a Local Council as Planning Authority, has used its power to make an Article 4 Direction which has the effect of withdrawing these permitted development rights.

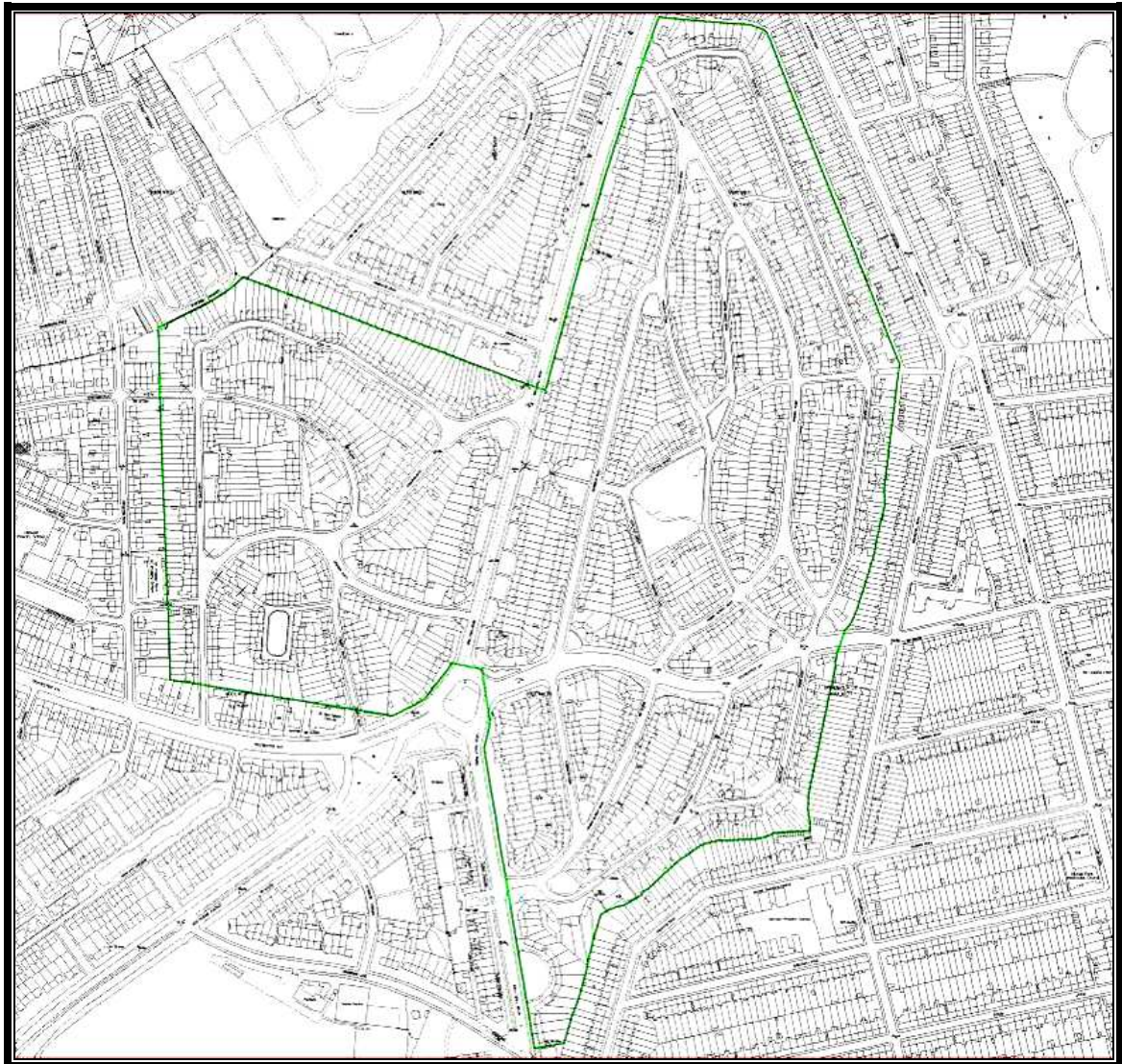


Figure I: Map of Progress Estate Conservation area

Effect of the Progress Estate Article 4 Direction (A4).

The Progress Estate A4 brings under planning control otherwise uncontrolled changes to external appearance caused by building, altering, installation or carrying out of works to:

- Front or side entrance doors
- Front and flank windows
- Front or side gates, fences or walls
- Porches
- Garages
- Front or side extensions or additions
- Roofing materials
- Cladding to any part of the exterior
- Whole or substantial demolition of a building or structure greater than 4060 cu.ft. (115 cu.metres)
- Felling, cutting back or pruning any tree over 3 inches (76 mm) diameter
- Satellite dishes fronting the highway.

Where a householder wishes to make a change which is controlled by virtue of the Article 4 Declaration (for example, to replace windows), s/he must first make an Application for Planning Permission. There is no fee for this. **The Progress Estate Article 4 Direction** was sought by the Council on 4th December 1973, and subsequently approved by the Department of the Environment on 28th May 1974.

The Planning Policy Context: Planning applications must be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. In policy terms, this Conservation Area Character appraisal is a supporting document, relating to, and to be read with, current national and local planning policy. The key planning policy documents are:

The Mayor of London's London Plan. The Mayor undertakes to work with strategic partners to protect and enhance London's historic environment (Policy 4B. 10) and expects Boroughs to ensure that the protection and enhancement of historic assets in London are based on their special character (Policy 4B. 11). The London Plan also contains proposals for protecting and managing strategic views, including those of central London from Greenwich Park and Blackheath Point.

Greenwich Planning policy: The Council adopted the Replacement Unitary Development Plan (UDP) on 20th July 2006. The more relevant development planning policies in the Greenwich UDP are its design policies. The most relevant UDP Policies are: Urban Design (D1 & D2), Trees (D 8), Residential Extensions (D9 & D10), Telecommunications (D11), Satellite Antennae (D12), Street Furniture (D14), Advertisements (D15), Conservation Areas (D16 & D17); Listed Buildings (D18-22); and Buildings on the Local List (D23). These can be found on the Council's website. Greenwich Council has started work on a new type of statutory plan, the Local Development Framework (LDF). This will be a suite of documents that will eventually replace the current Greenwich Unitary Development Plan (UDP).

Relevant Supplementary Planning Guidance: In addition to Development Plan policies, decisions on planning applications should take into account relevant Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) and any Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD) produced under the new LDF regime. The most relevant are Supplementary Planning Guidance on Residential Extensions, on Shopfronts and on Conversions.

Designation of Conservation Areas: There is a legal duty for all local authorities to keep under review and designate as conservation areas those parts of its area of "special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance". Planning Policy Guidance Note PPG 15, Planning and the Historic Environment, sets out current government guidance on Conservation Areas and Listed Buildings. There are currently 20 conservation areas in the London Borough of Greenwich.

Listing: English Heritage lists buildings of special architectural or historic interest on behalf of the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport. The Secretary of State is

also responsible for the scheduling of ancient monuments and the registering of historic parks and gardens.

Planning applications should be determined in accordance with the development plan (to be replaced by the 'local development framework'), unless material considerations indicate other wise. The development plan comprises the London Plan, the Greenwich UDP (currently the second deposit draft) and relevant Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) and any Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD).

Published Conservation Design Guidance: In 1980 the Council produced a guidance leaflet to making alterations to houses in the Conservation Area under the Article 4 Direction. Although re-issued in October 1998, this now needs revision and re-issue as an adopted Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) on making minor changes in this Conservation Area – in particular those controlled under the Article 4 Direction. The Council separately plans to produce a non-statutory guidance leaflet on repairs and minor changes for the Borough as a whole.

3. Character Appraisal

Planning Policy Guidance Note 15 emphasises the need for local planning authorities to assess the special interest, character and appearance of conservation areas. In order to define these issues it is desirable to prepare an initial appraisal of each conservation area. The following appraisal uses the criteria recommended in English Heritage's guidance note "Conservation Area Appraisals".

1. Location and Setting:

The Progress Estate, originally known as the Well Hall Estate, is located on the south facing wooded slopes of Eltham Hill and Woolwich Common, a little north of the former Well Hall at the point where Rochester Way crosses Well Hall Road. The land appears to have been part of the Page Estate – which owned Well Hall and, latterly, Well Hall Farm. Well Hall is visible at the bottom of the 1870 OS map (above) just next to the southern tip of the Conservation Area - shown superimposed in green. The railway can be seen, with its line diverted to the south to avoid the old Well Hall. As the map shows, before construction in 1915, there were no buildings on the land now comprising the Progress Estate – which was farmland straddling the Well Hall Road, and mainly used for market gardening.

2. Origins and historical development.

Well Hall Road: Well Hall Road appears on Roque's 1741-1745 map of London, and historically connected the country village of Eltham with the industrial town of Woolwich.

Well Hall: In 1915 during construction of the Progress Estate, Edith Nesbit, the author of *“The Railway Children”* and other children’s books was living nearby in an 18th century house Well Hall, her husband Hubert Bland a founder of the Fabian Society having died in 1914. Edith Nesbit died in 1924 and the house and grounds were purchased by Woolwich Council in 1929. Most of the old buildings were demolished and by 1936 the grounds had been laid out (using unemployed labour) into a public park, incorporating a Tudor barn and other remains and named on the suggestion of a local headmistress *“Well Hall Pleasaunce”* and now a Conservation Area. The Progress Estate now lies north of this Pleasaunce and between it and the open space and woods of Woolwich Common.

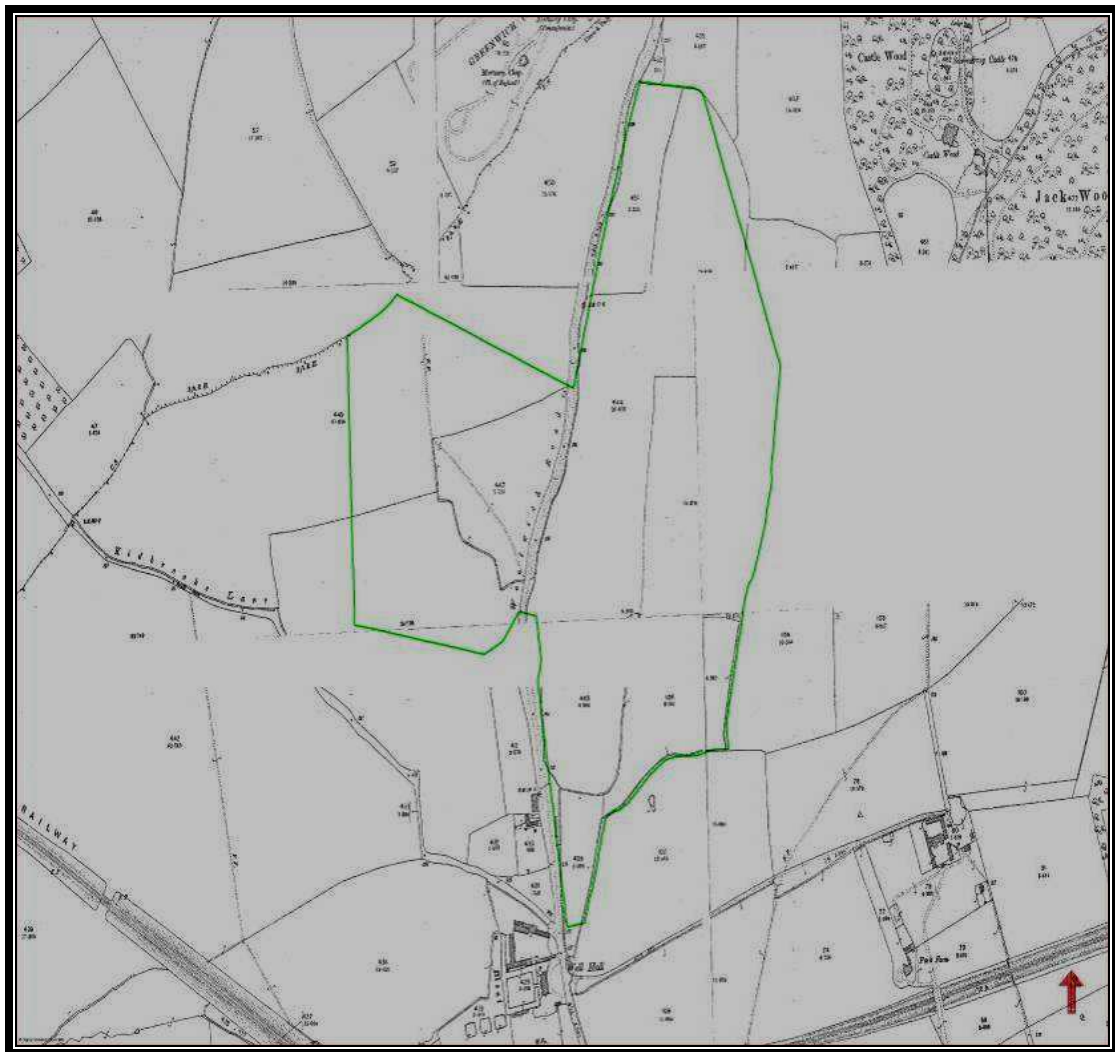


Figure 2: Progress Estate Conservation Area boundary superimposed on 1870 OS Map – Well Hall is located at bottom centre (just outside CA)

In 1915 Well Hall Road already possessed a tram line, and in 1916 a bus route was started along this road to help workers from the Estate reach employment in Woolwich. In 1911, Eltham was a quiet village with a population of 13,450, but by 1916 the new Ordnance Survey map shows shops and a new estate immediately opposite Well Hall. At the outbreak of the war in 1914, the Woolwich Arsenal employed 10,866, but by

January 1915 the numbers had swollen to 30,000 – and by mid May 1915, the demands for munitions and guns led the figure to 74,647. In 1915 there was a most urgent need for housing for the Arsenal's workers.

Construction work in 1915¹: On Friday the 8th January 1915 a meeting of the Ministry of Munitions, the Office of Works, and the Local Government Board agreed a scheme of 1200 houses for Well Hall to be constructed in six months. The Local Government Board insisted that the work be to the highest town planning standards. The scheme then proceeded at astonishing speed. On Saturday, Frank Baines the Chief architect of the Office of Works and his senior architect A.J. Pitcher visited the site. Frank Baines (later Sir Frank) was a former pupil of the important Arts and Crafts Architect C.R. Ashbee. On Sunday, four architects each made a layout for the site. The layout selected was by Mr. Phillips who had not seen the site. He then worked through the night from 8pm to 8am to complete the layout by the Monday morning. Within 10 days of that first Saturday standard type elevations and a detailed design for the layout of the first 40 houses had been completed. By 27th January the tenders returned showed previous cost estimates to be too low. It was agreed that in order to meet as far as possible the ambitious timescale, it would be necessary to build on “a prime cost” basis.

On 22nd May 1915, the first block of houses was complete and by 20th July 1915, 800 houses were complete and the LCC had agreed to take over management of the scheme. By August, the first 273 houses were occupied and rates were being charged on them. By 15th September 1000 houses were complete, and the Estate was completed and all houses handed over in December 1915. Already the LCC had arranged temporary class rooms for 680 children from the Estate. Over 5000 men had worked on the site, and at one point completions were at the rate of one house every two hours.

Post 1915 management: The Estate remained in LCC management until 1920 management passed to the Office of Works. In 1925 the Estate was sold to Progress Estates Ltd, a company in which the Royal Arsenal Co-Operative Society (RACS) had a large interest. The Government had already sold 64 houses and by 1950 a further 400 had been sold on 99 year leases. In 1980 Hyde Housing Association bought 500 houses from the RACS at a cost of £4,000 per unit.

Conservation Area Designation and management: The following chronology summarises the Conservation Area management work undertaken by the Council

- 1971 Estate designated a Conservation Area;
- 1973 Article 4 Direction made;
- 1977 press release reminding residents of need for planning approval under Article 4 Direction;
- July 1978 - public meeting and exhibition;
- 1980 – first Estate design guide published
- September 1993 – guidance reviewed – local residents association further consulted

¹ See for example John Kennets useful account freely available on line at <http://www.ideal-homes.org.uk/>. The ideal-homes site is also a good source of information about other estates in the area.

- June 1994 revised leaflet giving Guidelines and Design Advice issued.
- October 1998 - revised design guide was issued and distributed to all households in 1999.
- March 2001 a leaflet giving revised guidance on replacement windows issued as an addendum to 1999 leaflet.

3. Archaeological significance

The Progress Estate represents a tangible reminder of a significant aspect in the history of the nationally important Royal Arsenal, Woolwich. The Royal Arsenal Co-operative Society begun in 1868 by Arsenal workers was responsible for much of the house building at the fringes of the historic town from that time. Progress Estate therefore represents the Governments response to this social evolution.

There are no known sites of archaeological significance within the Estate. Well Hall, which has been inhabited since medieval times and has a surviving Moat, a Tudor barn and remains of walls and other structures, lies just across the road at the south end of the Estate. Well Hall's archaeology has been studied. Up until the 1930s there were a pair of 17th century cottages in disrepair on Well Hall Road (locally and informally called Nell Gwynne cottages). The 1890 and 1870 OS historic maps suggest that in the 19th century the only houses on Well Hall Road were just north of Well Hall and Kidbrooke Lane. Overlaying the contemporary OS map onto the historic maps suggests these cottages lay on the site of the petrol station on Tudor Parade – or perhaps next door at Tudor Court. It is emphasised however that all these sites lie just outside the Conservation Area

4. Character and relationship of spaces

There are two public spaces in the area, Lovelace Green and the smaller Sandby Green. Both are enclosed by houses and are designed to act as village greens providing a townscape focus, visual green amenity space and recreational area. There are also some publicly maintained lawned and planted green verges – for example on the east side of Well Hall Road (it is possible, as Beaufoy suggests that these were originally communal front gardens). In addition, the Estate has been designed to exhibit a large number of private spaces in the form of front, side and rear gardens. These are generally both contiguous to and visible from the public realm, and make an important contribution to the quiet garden suburb quality which makes the area so special.

The effect is supported by a relatively lower **density** for the area characteristic of the premium attached to spaciousness in this early Garden Suburb example of town planning.



**Figure 3: Lovelace Green –
Note designed enclosed village green character**

The design principles informing the street layout appear to have been

- Special attention to picturesque planning creating townscapes and vistas – for example the wide curved avenues, narrow lanes and passages, restriction of scale of houses to two floors.
- Accommodation to contours
- Departure from the normal grid layout with prescribed road widths – to meet picturesque garden suburb town planning
- Use of rhythms established by architecture (e.g. sequences of stepped gables) to create movement and to lead the eye along
- Introduction of Rochester Way as a major through route to meet the wishes of Woolwich Borough Council
- Creation of characterful and varied key views and vistas: in particular at Ross Way, Lovelace Green, and Phineas Pett Road

The use of numerous other devices such as carriage type undercroft arches to maintain enclosure on connecting pedestrian footpaths (at Sandby Green and Ross Way).

5. Townscape features and setting

The picturesque townscapes of the Estate have been much remarked upon over the last 90 years and are its very special feature. Townscape here is an aesthetic assemblage of street layout combined with architectural effect. Principles include

- continuity, enclosure, contrast and surprise
- continuous unfoldment – design in motion – using a variety to devices such as curves fences and fresh architectural groupings

Ingredients include the use of:

- Contoured lanes
- Raised pavements
- Designed unfolding views – reminiscent of Gordon Cullen’s townscape and, the estate is in fact reviewed by him in his book “*Townscape*”
- Narrowness of some streets
- Architectural rhythm created by consistent scale and projecting features such as tile hung gables
- Enclosed and verdant footpaths

The noted picturesque examples of Ross Way, Phineas Pett Road and Lovelace Green and Franklin Passage well demonstrate this:



Figs 4 & 5: the Ross Way 'German village' - & old photo of the street shortly after construction



Figure 6: Phineas Pett Road



Figure 7: Lovelace Green



Figure 8: pedestrian passage looking through to Ross Way



Figure 9: Franklin Passage - a through footpath flanked by cottages

6. Former and current uses

Prior to the 20th century, the entire area was used as farmland, close to Well Hall and, latterly, used for market gardening. The current uses are almost entirely residential. The Estate was designed and built without any schools, shops, churches, public halls or other non residential buildings. However there was a depot and Estate office at Ia Downman

Road and Progress Hall, a Community Hall constructed later in Admiral Seymour road between nos. 12 and 14. There are churches and schools and shops near the Estate.

7. Architectural and historic qualities of the buildings

In architectural and historic terms, the Progress Estate houses are a successful sophisticated exercise in the picturesque tradition of garden suburb town planning. There was a conscious attempt to emulate the organic growth of the traditional English village – so that it would appear to have grown over time rather than being (as it was of course) designed to look like this. Historically it is significant that the Estate was designed as the period of English Picturesque, Arts and Crafts planning was coming to a close. The work at Well Hall Estate learns from and re-presents much of the best of Letchworth, Bourneville, Port Sunlight, Hampstead Garden Suburb and the pre 1914 LCC cottage estates. After the 1914-1918 War, picturesque estate design was more or less abandoned in favour of the more severe neo- Georgian style, which more easily lent itself to standardisation and financial stringency over cost of labour and materials.

Factors which contribute to this architectural effect include

- Group character, emphasised by winding estate layouts, variation in plot layout, rhythmic stepping or modelling of gables and roof forms, consistent garden setting and low density,
- A rich use of townscape design techniques to achieve rhythms, movement and novelty
- Cottage style architecture, organised around small individually designed groups of houses
- Designed and disciplined variety – supported by availability of a variety of materials and traditional skilled labour,
- Deployment of a number of standard architectural features in various ways to achieve a controlled effect. The architectural features include restriction of scale by confining all houses to two floors, extensive repetitive and varied use of gables, swept roofs, silhouettes and other devices to emphasise roofscapes in a village and cottage character, a standard vertical six light window module, windows nestling under low eaves, dormers with pitched and often hipped roofs, usually tile covered, expressed chimney stacks, coloured roughcast, covered veranda's and porch canopies, substantial quantities of high quality tile hung slate or clay vertically hung tiles,
- Use of gardens and retention of trees to create townscape and enclosure in which planting dominates buildings – especially in Franklin Passage and on Sandby and Lovelace Greens;
- Development of several aesthetically different small areas on the Estate: for example; the flats on Granby Road – the “German Village” on Ross Way (actually more like a traditional English fishing village, say in Cornwall or Yorkshire) - the strong dominating movement achieved by the single curve of Phineas Pett Road – the two village greens (Lovelace and Sandby), the extensive use of strong roofs, swept roofs

and slates in the Dickson Road area, the Letchworth style set back butterfly junctions,

- 'M' shaped roofs

8. Contribution made by key unlisted buildings

None of the buildings on the Estate are Listed; on the other hand almost all belong to the original development scheme. All the original estate buildings contribute, for their architecture, for their group value, and as part of the Estate's picturesque townscape.

9. Significant local details and their conservation

The strongly unified character of the Estate is created by details which carefully balance variety and restraint. The local details which contribute to the character of the Progress Estate Conservation Area include:

- Architectural details contributing to picturesque, organic, cottage and village character
- Characteristic estate layout details – as reviewed above
- Porches
- Doors
- Roofs
- Walls
- Windows
- Consistent boundary details and standard garden layouts

Architectural details: The basic design framework comprises two floor cottage style houses with front gardens. The basic ingredients are:

- A **consistent scale** achieved by restricting dwellings to two floors
- a palette of only **four front door types** (although unfortunately many have been replaced unsympathetically)
- A consistent fenestration pattern made up from a module whose **base unit is the vertical six light casement window**. These are then arranged in various ways commonly in rows of three or four units, but sometimes as narrow as one unit, or in pairs or in wider groups of five, seven, or even ten units. A small number of steel windows set in wooden subframes follow the same rhythm and proportions,
- The irregular and varied yet rhythmic use of **gables**, with gables in different blocks expressed variously, frequently mounted in rhythmic series, often projecting, sometimes jettied out, sometimes with tile or slate hanging,
- The **chimney stacks** are strongly expressed. Although commercial considerations dictated smaller stacks than were desired by the architects. To enhance the historical effect they are in brick and may project from flank walls, or rise up with stout and high stacks.
- The **windows** which at first floor level are eaves level (giving a 16th or 17th century look), some with thick stone like mullions,

Characteristic estate layout details include:

- a consistent use of a “**semi Arcadian**” **form of enclosure** in which, whilst buildings enclose spaces, significantly this is supported by green space and trees
- the small village **green type open spaces** at Lovelace Green and Sandby Green, each bounded by houses to create enclosure
- the consistent general **garden suburb low density** varying only from 11-13 units per acre
- the designing in of **gaps between groups of houses**
- the occasional provision throughout the Estate of **wide and substantial side gardens**
- the use of **pedestrian footpaths and passage ways** between groups of houses
- **winding roads**, sometimes narrow and following contours (for example Ross Way, Phineas Pett Road)
- **raised pavements** (Ross Way)



Figure 10: one of a number of original porch styles

Figure 11: recessed porch

Figure 12: original use of small canopy to protect from door from weather

Porches: Open frontages express a welcoming human face to the street and these are a feature of the style of this warm and friendly estate. A few of the houses on the estate were built with **open** porches under a hipped tiled canopy. These contribute to the character of the area as they are – they should be conserved and not enclosed at the front. Where an ill-considered design has been introduced in the past, reinstatement of the original open frontage will always be worthwhile. Any new porch will need to be in

keeping with the style of the house – i.e. small in scale and keeping within the building line of the existing bay, or infill space between garages and bays.



Figure 13: use of half timbered medieval character to create porch enclosure

Figure 14: Granby Road recessed porch to minimise bulk and effect of a building of four flats

Figure 15: enclosed front porch with cottage style canopy and inappropriate replacement door.



Figure 16, 17, 18, & 19: Progress Estate - the four original front door types

Doors: There were several original designs of timber front door on the estate. The most commonly copied and thus most widespread unit seen today is modern in style with six lights at the top. This is not appropriate on many traditional cottage style houses where the style of door was and should be square panelled with three lights at the top. A third style of door is square panelled with no glass – this was used for example on buildings divided into two or four flats. See photographs below. Doors are, in consequence, often a carefully designed feature of the original house. The character and variety of the Conservation Area's surviving original front and other doors is a significant element of the area's special character.



Figs 20, 21, 22, 23 & 24 some beautiful surviving original doors **Figure 25** is a recessed original door

Conservation: Wherever possible original doors need to be conserved and repaired. As well as giving a better appearance, this is usually both cheaper as well as more durable than replacement. Decayed timber can usually be replaced with a matching piece of seasoned timber and for this reason, the replacement of original doors, which are in a repairable condition, will now no longer be permitted. Replacement of original doors is not conservation and is rarely necessary. Replacement with modern ‘off the peg’ designs always detracts from the character of the individual property and its contribution to the street scene as a whole. This also may result in the loss of distinctive door furniture such as letterboxes and door knockers. Mock-Georgian type doors and similar “off-the shelf” varieties are not considered acceptable. Rarely where replacement is unavoidable, the new door must carefully matches the design and detailing of the original door on that house – it is insufficient to install a match to another door used on the estate. The design should pay particular attention to the glazing configuration and panel mouldings reusing original ironmongery such as door knockers and letter boxes.

Roof details: A significant proportion number of the original roofs and gables were covered in fine multi coloured natural slates – normally Westmoreland, often laid in diminishing courses. A few houses may have been covered in Cornish ‘Delabole’ for example at the lower end of Whinyates Road. These are now historic slates with the

quarries closed up. Matching slates for all these houses are now very hard or impossible to source. So when refurbishing the roof it is most important to retain and re-use original slates. Old slates are usually in good condition and the only problem is nail rot. They should be carefully removed and stacked on the roof according to size. A minimum recovery rate of 80 – 90% should be insisted on in the contract. A builder's recommendation for replacement may reflect a financial interest (such as the potential resale of the old slates) or problems in sourcing appropriate skilled labour.

Where relaying has been needed because of nail rot, the recovery rate has been very high – over 80% - enabling full relaying of 'Westmorelands' at the front and over half at the rear. In some cases good Welsh blue slates have been used to fill the shortfall at the rear where the Westmoreland slates have run out. Unfortunately, although the Welsh blue is a fine good looking slate and is well laid, this does not produce a good match. A better solution would be to use new green Brazilian slates –these are cheap durable and sometimes come ready drilled.



Figure 26: extensive use of fine Westmoreland roof and hung slates

Figure 27: Westmoreland slates to roof and upper story in Phineas Pett Road

The remaining houses were originally covered with orange red clay tiles. It is not known what manufacturers or product specifications were used. An agreed replacement tile for an originally tiled roof is the “Acme Heather sand faced”. This is the main product used by the Hyde Housing Association.



Figure 28: on the left fragment of original Clay tile, on the right an example of the approved Acme sand-face replacement

Ridge tiles should be re-used if possible, or otherwise replaced to match the type removed, e.g. half-round. **Roof vents** should not be required, as the roofs generally have ample overhung ventilated eaves. Ridge vents can be used if needed and the unit is discreet. Roof vents should not be positioned on the main roof slope, this is poor practice and unsightly. **Chimney stacks and pots** make a contribution to the street scene and should not be reduced in height and pots should be retained. Even where chimneys are redundant they perform an important task of ventilating the dwelling structure.

External Walls: The walls of the houses were mainly constructed from unpainted lime and sharp sand render – and this unpainted finish has character which should be retained. However, the Article 4 Direction for the Progress Estate does not include control of over-painting – and one result is the increasing numbers of painted ‘white’ houses appearing on the Estate. This changes the original deliberately designed ‘village’ character of the estate making it more ‘seaside’. Painted lime render will not breathe so well, encouraging the building up of internal condensation and damp, and tending to the characteristic flaking off or bubbling of the external paintwork.

An original finish that survives is rare and should be conserved, for historic interest, character and appearance. Therefore, whilst it not subject to planning control on this estate, to leave unpainted render as is, is sound structurally and makes good sense visually. If painted render needs to be repainted (as it will), the old surface may be removed as far as practical and then repainted with a lime rich wash. Rather than white this should be gently cream coloured – Such a colour washed lime looks ‘Kent vernacular’ (like e.g. Faversham) and helps suck out moisture from the render.



Figure 29: original unpainted render – in happy contrast with brick chimney



Figure 30: Admiral Seymour Road – tile hung first floor above brick ground floor

Brick detailing: The external walls of a significant minority of houses are constructed from good quality textured reddish-brown clay brick – the original bricks may be from Belgium. They are generally in good condition and normally will not need repair or maintenance. The re-pointing of brickwork should only be carried out if it becomes essential, i.e. if a section of pointing mortar has badly eroded – this normally happens behind leaking downpipes. Care must be taken to match the composition, the strength and the original colour of the mortar, which should be finished with flush joints. The original mortar on the estate was lime rich, which is beneficial.

The painting of exterior brickwork is damaging and should definitely be avoided. This will detract from the original character of the houses. It will also make the brick work impervious to moisture transfer, and create dampness problems. Cladding any part of the exterior of a property with stone, artificial stone, pebble dashing, cement rendering, timber, plastic or tiles is damaging. Re-covering of the bays with tile hanging to match the original tiles is appropriate and acceptable but requires consent.

Windows: Nearly all the window designs on the estate are made up of multiples of a basic six light timber casement unit, subdivided by thick mullions. These old windows are an important element of the unified character of the Conservation Area. The original timber is superior in durability to that which is obtained today – it is generally much heavier slow growing first growth timber – and is well worth conservation. The houses with original or replica wooden framed windows look like real period houses but houses with replacement UPVC windows look spoilt and inauthentic. The extent of window replacement is such that in 2005 only about 10% of the original houses retain their original wooden framed windows, the estate suggesting that the character of the original timber casement windows has not been fully appreciated. Losing its old windows will always damage the design character of a building in the conservation area. One point of view is that there is no longer any point in trying to protect the old windows – and that they are no longer part of the dominant character of the estate. The Council does not support this position and considers the remaining original survivors have considerable conservation value and should be preserved by repair.

Wooden windows have bars which are simpler to repair or replace. Repairs to the original joinery can increase the life of windows, which is better than wholesale replacement. Repairs may be carried out by inserting a new section or 'scarfing' in timber on site. This straight forward carpentry technique is described in an inexpensive leaflet on timber window repairs (Townsend, A and Clarke, M (1988) *Repair of Wood Windows* SPAB Technical Pamphlet 13) published by The Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings, 13 Spittal Sq. London E1: website http://www.spab.org.uk/publications_Q&A_timberwindows.html. Where it is really necessary to install new replacement windows the original design and proportions needs to be replicated, including copying the glazing bar widths and profiles on all units. Aluminium and UPVC windows are a poor and inauthentic compromise which will not be genuinely able to meet these specifications. Window frames are finished in white, the colour of the original windows.

Double glazed UPVc windows have been marketed upon the basis that traditional windows lack the thermal efficiency of modern alternatives. On the Progress Estate noise is rarely a serious problem and the houses are reasonably energy efficient. Double glazed windows will reduce natural ventilation. If really desired, secondary glazing can be employed behind the existing window without detracting from their design as an inexpensive alternative to sealed double-glazed units. The cost of installing double glazing or modern PVCu windows is considerable and an expense that is often not recouped through energy savings, even in the longer term. For private owners, the investment is frequently not reflected in the resale value of a property, particularly if the windows are insensitive and unsympathetic to the character of the area.

Steel windows: there are a few surviving examples of leaded lights in steel Crittall windows set into wooden frames. These are original and should be retained.



Figure 31: original leaded Lights in steel windows set in wood frames.

Figure 32: possibly original Crittall windows? Former estate manager's house 40b Whinyates Road

10. Predominant building materials, features, textures and colours

The Estate is unusual in the variety of materials employed. One reason was the need for speed and the difficulties of sourcing uniform supplies of the large quantities of materials required for an estate of this size. With over 5000 men working, materials were brought in as available. The need for speed meant there was no time for the original designs to be cost evaluated, cheapened, standardized and simplified. All this facilitated a picturesque approach to individual detail design – an approach which would have been supported and influenced by Sir Frank Baines, who was a pupil of the important Arts and Crafts architect CR Ashbee. By the end of the war, it became clear that the era of standardisation was in the ascendant and the Well Hall Estate may be considered as perhaps a last gasp of the Picturesque.

Materials include

- Walls: these were originally mainly sand coloured unpainted render, there is also some use of brick, some hung tiled first floors, and some half timbered framing;
- Timber framed windows
- Timber front doors
- Green Westmoreland and grey Cornish Delabole slates
- Timber fences – with distinctive design, originally in oak
- Architectural ironmongery – especially exterior letter boxes and door handles, early ‘bakelite’ handles inside
- Timber porches



Figure 33: chipping from green Westmoreland slate – the mottled darker appearance of those on houses is a result of weathering and soot.

Figure 34: tile hung gables contrasting with original unpainted and white painted render



Figure 35: fine slate laying in diminishing courses; Figure 36: fine slate laying in diminishing courses

Figure 37: rare survival of Cornish slate on Winyates Road



Fig 38: relaying Westmoreland slates on Dickson Road;



Fig 39: rear of house showing relayed Westmoreland slates – with central band of good Welsh slates



Fig 40: Westmoreland slates laid in diminishing courses – notice very large slates at bottom

Features The ‘English village’ cottage vernacular quality of the Estate is enhanced by

- the carefully designed textures and colouring of **render**
- the use of **dormers** often with hipped or pitched capping roofs
- occasional use of **M shaped swept roofs**

II. The contribution made by natural features – green spaces, trees, and hedges.

The Estate was consciously designed as a Garden Suburb, using a variety of devices to create garden character bringing the countryside in the town. These included

- country style cottages
- trees and gardens making an important contribution to form of enclosure (semi Arcadian form)
- front gardens
- side gardens
- two village style ‘greens’
- wooden (originally oak) fences and hedges – with little use of garden walls
- the careful avoidance of trees being cut down during construction. This was achieved by adjusting siting of new buildings, for example, setting back houses from the road where trees would otherwise be compromised. On the other hand there was no provision for new tree planting.



Figure 41: generous front gardens contribute to garden suburb character

Front gardens and fences: The boundaries between the front gardens and the street footways were originally formed by a distinctive specially designed style of oak fences with gates to match. These fences play an important part in giving unity to the Estate’s

character. The standard style uses two horizontal rails supporting vertical posts arranged in long and short groups of three.



Fig 42: fence detail;



Fig 43: 1915 photo showing original fence in Dickson Road;

The estate fences have been generally well maintained and replaced, although a number have been replaced with a clashing material or design, (and in a few cases brick walls or no boundary treatment at all). The large majority of houses are still enclosed by fences of the traditional design. It is probable that none of the original 1915 oak fences survive, but if there are any, they will be survivors of real period value. If the present fences need replacement, the replacement should be bespoke made with the joiner instructed to make a close replica – selecting a good example to measure and draw the characterful original style joinery and details.



Figure 44, Figure 45 & Figure 46: characteristic fences as front boundary treatment



Figure 47: the specially designed boundary fence



Figure 48: Fence design on Well Hall Road – this is a good copy of the original specification for the Well Hall Road frontages which were designed to a different pattern to the rest of the estate.

Brick walls, railings and metal gates or other forms of boundary treatment are rarely found and are out of character with the estate.

Hard standings in front gardens: The estate was designed without any residential off street parking. The creation of off street parking on this estate will require changes to fences and a footway cross-over – which will impact detrimentally on the appearance of the conservation area. The introduction of a paved, concrete or other hard standing into a front garden to create car parking space will significantly damage the character of the estate.



Figure 49: visually problematic hardstandings – showing partial loss of boundary fences



Figure 50: Inappropriate hardstandings from Ross Way

12. Extent of loss, intrusion or damage.

Although the main character forming features of the Estate remain intact, some of the less fortunate results of contemporary pressures for change (common to many early 20th century residential areas) can be seen on the Progress Estate. In addition to the effects of time, the causes can be traced to

- decay of building fabric associated with wartime evacuation and low maintenance standards at the time;
- problems of achieving authenticity in contemporary maintenance;
- An apparent desire on the part of some owners to personalize their property.

Among the more evident or ill-considered changes have been:

- **The loss of original wooden frame windows:** Unfortunately, few of the characterful and attractive original wooden frame casement opening windows now survive. Visual inspection suggests that the conservation value of most of these surviving originals is appreciated by their owners – and that they have been deliberately preserved and retained for their contribution to the house’s architectural character. The replacement windows, on the other hand, are rarely framed in wood and are mainly white UPVC windows roughly conforming to the original fenestration pattern. In many cases they appear to be roughly in accord with the design guide and have been granted consent under the Article 4 Direction. The problem with these windows is only partly that they are made with thicker and uglier frames. Sometimes the window is not subdivided into small lights. In other cases the large light is divided into inauthentic diamond leading or stick on glazing bars. Sometimes materials such as PVCu or aluminium glazing bars may be used - which may not be in keeping. Whatever the detailing and construction and whatever the material, all these replacement windows have a manufactured regular square appearance which contrasts poorly with the weathered and traditional construction of these picturesque vernacular cottages. Therefore genuine **conservation** – by which is meant the retention of surviving period wooden windows is both desirable and important. Part of the problem has been ambiguity in the adopted Planning Guidance leaflet. It would be helpful if revised design guidance produced be specific to this Estate and be unambiguous on - the minimum **planning requirements** for conservation of *in situ* original windows, on the circumstances and specifications for replacements; - and on any supplementary advice on good practice.
- **Crittall Windows:** There are a very small number of old steel Crittall windows, sometimes set into timber subframes – for example, at the former Estate Manager’s house at 40 a & 40 b Whinyates Road. These appear to be original and should be conserved.
- **Front doors:** most of the original front doors have regrettably been replaced. In many cases this would seem to have been carried out for reasons of individualisation, rather than necessity. The worst examples for their effect on local character are the ‘Carolina’ style pseudo Georgian with semi circular fanlights set into the door itself. These do not conform to the published design guidance. But action to reinstate a more appropriate appearance will rarely be possible because, under the Town Planning Acts, unauthorised changes more than four years old are immune from enforcement action. Most of the UPVC ‘replicas’ are little better. Many replacements conform to the design guide and may well be permitted – but detailed examination reveals that the joinery details are different and that are not good copies. Often the replacement may have changed the original style to the six light ‘modern’ door. The above comments on specific unambiguous requirements for windows apply equally to doors.
- **Porches:** The enclosure of front doors by porches has occasionally been carried out – mainly with unfortunate results
- **Roof materials:** the original roof materials varied, substantially due to shortages of materials at the time of construction. Particularly regrettable has been the loss of

some original natural slates, or where the subtle varied shades of the original have been lost in a more uniform replacement slate.

- **Render:** the original stone yellow render was left unpainted; unfortunately many of the rendered walls of the houses have since been painted – usually white.
- **Parking in front gardens:** Although this is not a common problem and there are remarkably few examples, those front gardens that have been converted to parking are significantly intrusive and disrupt the carefully designed townscapes.
- **Satellite dishes:** A number are inappropriately located on the fronts or sides of cottages
- **Boundary walls and fences:** The loss of aspects of the traditional front garden boundary treatment is detrimental to townscape
- **Infill:** In spite of the low density and the large side gardens the number of infill schemes which have been permitted is extremely limited. On Cobbett Road there is one infill house at the edge of the Estate (number 24) – this recent house, whilst being in scale, fails in its design detailing to listen to and follow the character of the Estate. It reads as a minor slightly alien intrusion. Another scheme has been agreed on appeal opposite on the side garden of no 23. It appears that a similar scheme is envisaged for the old depot site on Downman Road.

13. Neutral parts of the conservation area

There are few neutral buildings in the Progress Estate; this is because almost all the houses of the entire original Estate survive. There are a few rebuilds following war bombing, for example on the west side of Well Hall Road (312-324?). A special quality of the Estate is the way the variety is consciously artistically disciplined within certain design parameters. The result is that the Estate as a whole has consistent architectural style character and standard, all the houses having group value. A very small number of buildings are later infill additions for example the houses at the south end of Cobbett road. These, through their design weakness, are better regarded more detrimental than as neutral.

14. Problems, pressures and capacity for change

The Progress Estate Conservation Area has been designated since 1971 and has had an Article 4 Direction since 1973. Some planning conservation standards have become long established which today from a conservation viewpoint appear as very regrettable; in particular, the permitting of widespread replacement of the original windows and doors. Conservation of original fabric of the small number of surviving originals should now be a priority.

There are a number of issues and pressures within the Progress Estate Conservation Area, in particular:

- The **Green Westmoreland and Cornish Delabole slates** are generally in good condition and capable of many years of service, however there is a general problem of

nail rot, which requires maintenance and eventually careful recovery and re-laying or re-hanging using copper nails

- The **enclosure of porches** – this needs to be controlled through careful enforcement
- The **painting of the original sand coloured render** is becoming more frequent. The current position in which painting is permitted development not covered by the Article 4 Direction should be changed.
- The **large side gardens** are vulnerable to pressure for infill schemes – clear and adopted planning policy and careful planning control are needed
- **Loss of boundary fences** and associated creation of off street parking – again hardstandings are permitted under the Article 4 direction – and this should be changed
- The damaging effect on roovescape of **dormer windows and roof lights**: The estate was designed and built entirely on two floors – ground and first floor and its roovescape is an important visual characteristic. Although a number of houses were designed and originally built with dormers on the front elevation – these were at first floor level. Dormer windows and roof lights are damaging where inserted on front or side elevations. Rear elevations are usually hardly visible from the street, and in such cases, suitably designed dormer windows (visually appropriate to and in keeping with the house) will not damage the area's character. But they need to be small – with the front face no greater than one square meter, well set in from the roof ridge and eaves, have pitched and possibly hipped roofs; and the materials and details of design should be in keeping with the style of the house.



Fig 51: Original front dormers at first floor level on Downman Road – with hipped and pitched capping roofs.

- **Rear Extensions and Conservatories:** The rears of many of most of the houses within the Estate continue the cottage character of the front. A ground floor kitchen or bathroom extension has generally ensured subordination of the extension to the scale and character of the main building.
- **Satellite dishes** on front facing walls, roof slopes or chimneys are visually intrusive. Locations, which hide the dish from view, such as on rear elevations or in rear gardens, are better. Alterations to houses to provide telephone connections, burglar alarms, central heating and other services have disfigured the exterior of a few properties, with awkward multiple runs of pipes, cables and boxes. The siting of additional services should be discreet and is at the discretion of the building owner, not the supplier or contractor.

New Infill development and redevelopment: The development of the Progress estate has been complete since 1915, and the existences of gaps at the sides of the houses are designed features of the estate supporting the garden suburb character by giving the houses a relaxed, garden setting. For these reasons, infill development at the

sides of houses will be damaging. The original houses form 99% of the stock and were designed to be in scale with each other. They are now all 90 years old and retain their original period character. The redevelopment of houses will therefore generally be intrusive



Figure 52: site of approved new House adjacent to 23 Cobbett Road – Scheme opposed by Council and Residents but approved by Inspector on appeal

Article 4 Direction issues: Although 30 years old, the detail of the Article 4 Direction is considered generally satisfactory. The inclusion of controls over hardstandings and over painting would assist the identified need for control over further painting of render.

Potential for works of enhancement: On the Progress Estate there has generally been significant investment in repair and maintenance, although not all the original features have been well preserved. The general process of change has resulted in some unwelcome changes. However, conservation is generally popular and, in spite of cost, a number of residents have carried out thoughtful well designed repairs, for example to original timber windows.

When resources permit, the following restoration works are recommended to owners as beneficial in principal:

- **Windows:** It is worthwhile to reinstate timber windows using original timber profiles. This would be appropriate where replacement of original timber windows has been carried out and the result has been or UPVc plastic, or aluminum frames, or loss of internal sub-divisions, or installation of oversize glazing bar widths;
- **Front doors:** although large numbers of original doors have been replaced, there were originally only four types of front door on the Estate – see illustration. The most common is the six light three vertically paneled ‘modern’ door;
- **Porches:** Re-instatement of original front door entrances by removal of enclosures to porches.
- **Reinstatement of original roofing materials** and traditional tile hanging – especially the grey-green Westmoreland or Delabole slates which were often laid in diminishing courses. These may no longer be available and it will be difficult to get a good match. The original slates possessed an attractive interesting green blue colouring and also a tonal range yielding a mottled effect – which is a characterful feature worth seeking out in any reinstatement. Second hand slates may occasionally be available.
- **Reinstatement of rainwater goods.** These were originally in cast iron; some have been changed to PVC – these are not durable. Extruded or (better) cast aluminium products look appropriate and better.
- **Hardstandings:** Removal of hardstandings insensitively laid out for car parking space and reinstatement of front gardens,
- **Fences:** Repair, or, where lost or in-authentically replaced, reinstatement of original pattern wooden garden fences and gates.

15. Consultation

The public consultation exercise on the draft Progress Estate Conservation Area Character Appraisal and Management Strategy included: -

- A mail drop of letters advertising a 'drop-in' session and explaining the appraisal made 2 weeks before to each of the 1500 houses and maisonettes in the Conservation Area.
- A 'drop-in' session on Tuesday 8th May 2007 from 4 pm – 7 pm in the Progress Hall – a large community hall in Admiral Seymour Road on the estate. The caretaker had made available tables and chairs a space in the centre of the hall. Three Conservation officers were in attendance.
- Letters inviting comment sent to the local Residents Association, the Eltham Society, and the Woolwich and District Antiquarian Society.
- Publishing the character appraisal to download on the Council's website
- The character appraisal was made available to be read in the Council's Planning Office.

About 30 people visited during the three hour drop-in session. The general tenor was supportive and appreciative of the research which had gone into the appraisal. Several people had read the appraisal in detail and wanted to discuss finer points of historical detail. Issues raised and discussed included:

- the meaning and scope of the Article 4 direction
- Standards for door replacement – plastic doors – identifying original doors
- Standards for replacing roof tiles
- Standards for window conservation and repair, UPVC windows, Steel windows
- desirability of distributing guidance leaflets to residents
- Desirability of advice leaflet for new residents
- Desirability of design guidance on rear extensions - flat vs. pitched roofs
- Desirability of better enforcement & need for the Council to patrol and inspect for unauthorised changes
- Need for simpler DC procedures for minor works
- Need for more controls over parking in front gardens
- Were there controls over removing rear extensions?
- Undesirability of Replacement of concrete streetlights – dislike of replacements – controls over street furniture
- Desirability of selectively lifting tarmac to re-expose cobbles
- Re-painting render and pebble dash
- Undesirability of fence painting
- Planning control over routing of boiler outlet pipes
- Perceived poor condition of Progress Hall
- Help needed by older infirm people to find joiners
- Acceptable locations for satellite dishes
- Good practice Repair advice

Nine written responses were received; suggestions included:

- More control over proliferating satellite dishes
- Some replacement materials considered ‘dreadfully wrong’, such as metal railings, wood-look UPVC windows, and UPVC doors
- Awareness issues: every house should have a leaflet
- Need for more consistent enforcement
- Parking in front gardens
- Conservation of street furniture

4. Contacts and further advice

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5. Glossary

Bay and bow windows – these are windows projecting out from the wall. A **bay** window is canted and has an elongated hexagonal plan form.

Casement window – a window that opens on hinges.

Dado – a moulded section, which runs around the wall at approximately waist height.

Dormer – a projecting window inserted vertically into a sloping roof with its own roof and sides, known as cheeks.

English bond – bond refers to the pattern in which the bricks of a wall are laid. English bond is where bricks are laid with alternate rows of headers (where the brick is laid with the short end visible) and rows of stretchers (laid lengthwise).

Flemish bond – the pattern created where a brick wall is laid with alternate headers and stretchers (see above), which are aligned, in each alternate row.

Gable – The end wall of a building where the roof reaches its peak. A pointed gable follows the slope of the roof against it. A Dutch gable is one with curved or scrolled sides.

Glazing bars – a light piece of timber, which divides a sash window into smaller compartments. Glazing bars have different designed profiles according to the curvature – some of the most common being called *ovulo*, *ogee* and *cyma*.

Leaded lights – window where the glass is held in place by strips of lead usually arranged in a grid or diamond pattern.

Oversailing brick courses – a decorative technique where each ascending layer of bricks protrudes slightly above the previous layer.

Permitted Development – development that can be undertaken without planning permission as defined in the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 1995.

PVCu – refers to the material which mass produced modern window units are constructed from. The plastic used is subjected to a chemical process, which hardens it to make it rigid. PVC stands for Polyvinylchloride.

Raised and fielded – a timber panel sunk into the body of a door whose raised centre portion is reached by tapered edges.

Roughcast – a render coating containing coarse aggregate.

Rustic brick – facing brick with surfaces improved by a sand covering, or with a scratched texture applied before firing, often with variegated colouring

Soffit – visible underside of an arch, or underside of any architectural element such as a door or window architrave

Spalling – decay process whereby layers of stone flake away from the surface.

Stock brick – the term 'stock' refers to the name of the mould in which these bricks were originally handmade. The term now refers to the traditional bricks made from London clays, which were produced in a range of yellow and brown tones.

Stone dressings – the finishes, mouldings and ornaments that surround door and window openings as well as the ornamentation at the tip of gable roofs.

Timber fillets – in carpentry this term refers to a small piece of timber, which can be pieced into joinery to repair and restore it.

Timber fretwork – regular and repeated decorative timber pattern which often appears on the front of porches.

Vousoir – a wedge shaped stone or brick forming part of an arch.