



Royal Borough of Greenwich
Conservation Area Designation
Procedure Note November 2017



Section 1: Introduction

Why are conservation areas important?

- 1.1 Conservation areas are historic areas of distinctive quality and character which make a recognised contribution to our quality of life. In legal terms they are areas considered worthy of preservation or enhancement due to their special architectural or historic interest. They are a tangible connection to the past that can provide a sense of continuity and stability and a point of reference in a rapidly shifting world.¹ There are currently almost 10,000 conservation areas nationwide.
- 1.2 Royal Greenwich's conservation areas comprise an incredibly rich and varied heritage which ranges from the exceptional architectural ensemble of Baroque and Palladian buildings celebrating artistic and scientific endeavour within the Maritime Greenwich World Heritage Site, to the tour de force of early 20C picturesque garden suburb design that is the Progress Estate, and to the old village of Charlton with its remarkable cluster of Jacobean buildings. They also include an outstanding collection of landscapes of high historical, archaeological and environmental value, from the ancient common land of Plumstead and Woolwich, to the medieval royal parkland surrounding Eltham Palace, to Restoration era Greenwich Park, one of the earliest great formal gardens in the French style created for the Crown. The Royal Borough currently has 20 conservation areas which include London's first conservation areas designated in January 1968.²
- 1.3 Designating conservation areas is a way of managing change beneficially and in a way that conserves and enhances the historic environment. It is recognised that the local distinctiveness of a conservation area can often provide a catalyst for regeneration and inspire well-designed new development which brings economic and social benefits.¹ Research has also shown that conservation areas have a beneficial effect on property values (see 3.1 below). Conservation areas exist to protect the special architectural and historic interest of a place, including the features that make it unique and distinctive.

What Legislation and Guidance is there on designation?

- 1.4 Local authorities have a legal responsibility to designate conservation areas. The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 places a general duty on local planning authorities to determine which parts of their districts are areas of special architectural or historic interest and to designate those areas as conservation areas.³
- 1.5 This Procedure Note formalises the process by which the Royal Borough designates new conservation areas. There are no specific national criteria, although Historic England provides useful guidance on the designation of conservation areas within its advice note: *Conservation Area Designation, Appraisal and Management*, which has

¹ Historic England Advice Note 1: [Conservation Area Designation, Appraisal and Management](#), p. 1

² West Greenwich and Blackheath

³ [The Planning \(Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas\) Act 1990, section 69](#)

informed this Procedure Note. Historic England emphasises the role of assessment and appraisal within the designation process, which is why the Procedure Note ensures that historic characterisation forms part of the procedure. Royal Greenwich recognises the need to establish a consistent and objective approach which takes into account locally related criteria.

- 1.6 The National Planning Policy Framework states that, when considering the conservation area designation, local authorities should ensure that an area justifies conservation area status because of its special architectural or historic interest.⁴ To address this, this Procedure Note sets out detailed designation criteria for measuring special interest (see pages 4-5). This will ensure that there is robust justification for future designations and the concept of conservation is not devalued through designation of areas lacking special interest.
- 1.7 Community engagement and involvement is now an overarching aim of national planning policy. Public consultation therefore forms an integral part of the Royal Borough's designation procedure, which will enable communities and other stakeholders to have a say in conservation area designation. Consultation also provides an opportunity to test public support, which is important if policies directed towards preservation and enhancement are to succeed.

What are the implications of conservation area designation?

- 1.8 Conservation area designation introduces controls over the way owners can alter or extend their properties.⁵ In general, within a conservation area planning permission is required for demolition, some permitted development rights are limited, notice is required for works to trees and applications must be advertised to ensure local consideration through the planning process. These controls are generally considered beneficial since they can enhance property values. This has been confirmed by the London School of Economics in research on the effects of conservation areas on value.⁶ The requirement to advertise applications and the need to take into account local views may also be seen to be a positive benefit in protecting the quality of the area.
- 1.9 The local planning authority is under a general legal duty to ensure the preservation and enhancement of conservation areas. When exercising its planning powers the Royal Borough will therefore seek to approve new development or alterations which preserve the character or appearance of the area. This is reinforced by Royal Greenwich's local development plan policy DH(h) which states that planning permission will only be granted for proposals which pay special regard to preservation or enhancement of conservation areas and that, in addition, demolition of buildings and structures that positively contribute to the character or appearance of a conservation area will be resisted.

⁴ [National Planning Policy Framework](#), paragraph 127, p. 30

⁵ For information on planning controls within conservation areas, please consult the list of common building projects on www.planningportal.co.uk

⁶ Ahlfeldt, Gabriel M., and others., [An Assessment of the Effects of Conservation Areas on Value](#), (London School of Economics and Politician Science, 2012)

How are conservation areas identified?

- 1.10 Conservation areas may be identified in several ways, such as:
- a. recommendations within historic characterisation studies as part of evidence collection for master-planning, for the local development plan or in response to development proposals
 - b. proposals received from local community groups working on neighbourhood plans

How can conservation areas be nominated?

- 1.11 The Royal Borough welcomes submissions from community groups, amenity societies and schools. A nomination should be accompanied by a detailed statement which includes the following information:
- a. Mapping information to indicate the area proposed.
 - b. Historical research to indicate the area's historic development.
 - c. Photographs and historic maps and images to support the application.
 - d. In depth assessment demonstrating how the area meets both designation criteria (see Section 3 below).

Nominations should be sent by email to Planning.Policy@royalgreenwich.gov.uk or by post to: Planning Policy Team, Royal Borough of Greenwich, 5th Floor, The Woolwich Centre, 35 Wellington St, London SE18 6HQ

Section 2: Conservation Area Designation Procedure**Procedural Stage 1: Pre-assessment**

- 2.1 A nomination will proceed to the next stage if a detailed statement is received which contains the information set out in paragraph 1.11 above and this information is considered sufficient to take forward.

Procedural Stage 2: Historic Characterisation & Boundary Identification

- 2.2 Historic characterisation is undertaken to articulate special interest in order to support designation. This can take the form of a full character appraisal or a historic characterisation study. Sometimes the latter will already have been carried out as evidence collection for master-planning or for the local development plan.
- 2.3 The draft conservation area boundary is defined.

Procedural Stage 3: Public Consultation on Draft Boundary & Assessment

- 2.4 A cabinet member report is prepared setting out the reasons for proposed designation, requesting agreement on draft boundary and authorisation for public

consultation; report is submitted for consideration with appended characterisation study (or extract) and draft boundary.

- 2.5 The Cabinet Member considers whether to authorise public consultation.
- 2.6 Four-week public consultation commences inviting comment by interested bodies, including Historic England, conservation and community groups, other stakeholders, members of the public and the relevant area planning committee and Ward Members.
- 2.7 Notice of the consultation is published on the Royal Greenwich website, including details of how interested parties can comment. The documents placed for consideration will be the nominee's statement (if relevant), map of the draft conservation area boundary and a link to the historic characterisation study.
- 2.8 In the light of the consultation comments, the area is assessed against the designation criteria and buildings which are positive contributors to the special interest of the area are identified.

Procedural Stage 4: Ratification and designation

- 2.9 Results of consultation are reported to Cabinet with a recommendation and any changes made to the draft boundary as a result of the consultation.
 - 2.10 Cabinet resolves whether to designate.
 - 2.11 Secretary of State and Historic England notified (statutory requirement).
 - 2.12 Notice of designation and schedule of properties affected published in London Gazette and at least one local newspaper (statutory requirement).
 - 2.13 Notification of properties in the new conservation area given to ensure land and property owners are fully conversant with new responsibilities.
 - 2.14 Designation registered in the Local Land Charges Register.
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Section 3: Conservation Area Designation Criteria

Criteria for measuring special interest and identifying the boundaries of new conservation areas

3.1 The factors which contribute to the designation of a conservation area are architectural and historic interest and townscape quality which, in combination, create a distinctive identity. The following two criteria are measures against which new conservation areas in Royal Greenwich will be selected and their boundaries defined.

a. Architectural and Historic Interest

Consideration is given to whether the built form possesses sufficient architectural and historic interest to qualify for designation. The following aspects will be appraised:

- i) Do the majority of buildings have some strong intrinsic architectural or historic merit by virtue of age, design, technology, materials or form?
- ii) Does the area include a number of existing designated and other heritage assets?
- iii) Are any buildings associated with a particular industry or individual with a particular local interest?
- iv) Does the area have a distinctive character derived from its historic pattern of land uses and settlement?
- v) Are earlier historic layouts and boundaries visible in the modern street patterns?
- vi) Do the buildings illustrate the historic development of the area or settlement?
- vii) Do the buildings include good examples of the work of well-known architects?

b. Townscape Quality

Consideration is also given to the townscape quality of the area and whether there is sufficient justification for the introduction of conservation area controls. The following aspects will be appraised:

- i) Do a high proportion of buildings contribute positively to the special interest of the area?
- ii) Does the area have a distinctive character derived from a particular style of architecture or characteristic building materials?
- iii) Does the area have a distinctive character derived from topography or landscape elements such as open spaces, green areas, parks, gardens and trees?
- iv) Do the buildings retain original features and fabric such as shop-fronts, doors, windows, porches, stucco detailing, chimney stacks, brickwork/stonework etc.?

- v) Does the area have a distinctive townscape character derived from the relationship of buildings and spaces between them?
- 3.2 To qualify for conservation area status nominated areas will need to demonstrate significant aspects of both the above criteria: architectural/historic interest and townscape quality.
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