

Supplementary Planning Guidance for

DOWNNS HILL CONSERVATION AREA



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1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This statement provides advice and guidance, both to the owners and occupiers of buildings in the Conservation Area and to the Council, about the way in which the area should best be managed to preserve and enhance its character. It contains the Council's proposals for enhancement action in the Conservation Area over the next few years, together with specific proposals that may affect the area.
- 1.2 The London Borough of Bromley provides the Ordnance Survey map under license from the Ordnance Survey in order to fulfil its public function to publicise the boundary of the Downs Hill Conservation Area. Persons viewing this map should contact Ordnance Survey Copyright for advice where they wish to licence Ordnance Survey map data for their own use.
- 1.3 Together with general advice and guidance about Conservation Area law and policy that are available in a separate pamphlet, this statement forms supplementary planning guidance to the Bromley Local Plan. It is the product of a detailed process that commenced with appraisal of the Conservation Area and circulation of a consultation draft throughout the local community and to a wide range of interest groups and agencies. The consultative process included a public meeting to explain the draft and discuss issues in the Conservation Area. Feedback responses to the draft were encouraged and facilitated, and the views of the Advisory Panel for Conservation Areas obtained. Comments and suggestions have been considered, with the final statement revised and refined in the light of these.
- 1.4 This statement was adopted by the Development Control Committee on 8 February 2000 and updated, illustrated and re-paragraphed by the Council's Heritage and Urban Design Group in February 2002. For further information please telephone 020 8461 7646.
- 1.5 Very minor changes were then made to this Conservation Area guidance to rectify incorrect references, spelling, formatting and remove out of date contact details. This correction work was carried out in October 2020.

2 HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT

- 2.1 The 1863 Ordnance Survey shows the area of Downs Hill as meadowland known as 'Downs Meadow' and a small house named 'Down Cottage'. The land was formerly a part of the Beckenham, Place Park Estate acquired by the Cator family in 1773: a family that influenced the form and character of contemporary Beckenham. John Cator built Beckenham Place (Listed Grade II*) and laid out the surrounding park.
- 2.2 Debts built up during the ownership of John Cator's son, John Barwell Cator (1781-1858) and in 1825 Parliament sanctioned the sale of large tracts of entailed land, bound to a family by a longstanding trust. The development process began, starting first in Southend Road, Beckenham, and gradually extending eastward over the following century.
- 2.3 The opening of Beckenham Junction Station and the extension of the Shortlands line in 1858 made this previously rural area accessible to London. In 1884 Ravensbourne Station was opened, a step that opened up Downs Hill to potential development.
- 2.4 A development plan drawn up on behalf of the Cator family in the late 19th century was implemented slowly. The pattern of roads was a principal element decided on the drawing up of the Development Plan, including Foxgrove Road, The Avenue and Albemarle Road, all of which lead into Downs Hill and mark the first stage of growth within this area-of the estate. Ravensbourne Avenue and Farnaby Avenue situated on the other side of the Railway followed, including the development of Downs Hill in the 1930's.
- 2.5 In its present form, Downs Hill comprises a mixture of detached houses that loosely reflect the style of earlier developments of the Arts and Craft and Garden City Movement. Unlike other such estates in Bromley, little is known about the detailed history of the development of the road.

3 GUIDANCE STATEMENT

- 3.1 This guidance statement highlights important elements of the character of the Conservation Area that it is desirable to preserve or enhance and proposes ways in which the council will achieve this objective. Individual paragraphs provide guidance on specific issues; for example, the building materials, or construction methods that are typical of the Conservation Area.

CHARACTER AND APPEARANCE

- 3.2 Downs Hill Conservation Area consists of detached properties, unified by their common age of construction and their reference to neo-Tudor and neo-vernacular elements: historic materials and methods transformed to meet the requirements of the day. Design and the use of materials vary somewhat throughout the Conservation Area. However several unifying factors can still be identified. Some houses are of one and a half storeys: a two-storey house with loft space gaining light through dormers and roof lights. Other houses are slightly larger two storey, with first floor dormer windows set into the roof to achieve a cottage effect. Widespread use is made of the bay window (a common 1930's design element), applied timber framing and white rendered elevations. On the whole, original external features of the properties have been retained. Care will be needed to ensure that such exterior detailing is not lost during the repairs or alterations of the dwellings in the future.



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NEW DEVELOPMENT

- 3.3 The Council will expect all proposals for new development to conform to the character of the area, especially in regard to scale and height of construction, location within a plot and the design and materials used. It is hoped that all improvement works will take into account the character of the buildings and alter them as little as possible.

CHANGE OF USE

- 3.4 Downs Hill has continued to retain its residential character. Changes of use will only be acceptable where, in the opinion of the Council, have no detrimental effect on the character of the area. Loss of residential units will be resisted.

ADVERTISEMENTS

- 3.5 Due to the nature of Downs Hill, there will be little demand for advertisements. Should any be required, the Council will wish to reduce visual clutter that poorly designed and located advertisements can sometimes cause. Advertisements that require consent will be restricted to properties that depend on advertising to carry out their business. Advertisements, which, in the Council's opinion, detract from the character of the area, will be resisted or made subject to discontinuance action where necessary. Traditional forms of signage (painted boards or brass plates) are to be preferred over modern forms (such as Perspex or posters). Illuminated signs are not felt to be appropriate within this residential area.

MATERIALS & METHODS

- 3.6 The houses have largely rendered elevations. Neo-Tudor detail is normally present on front facing gables or on alternative floors. The render is applied in the panels between the timbers. Secondary walls are also rendered using the same method and level of detail. The render is usually finished in white paint. When well maintained, render is highly durable, however if left unpainted, it can weather and decay, damaging the appearance of the property and causing the need for extensive repair. When repair, alteration or new construction is undertaken, a render matching the existing should be employed.

EXTERIOR DETAILS

- 3.7 The most common exterior detail is the use of applied timber framing which has a considerable decorative effect, particularly when applied on the principal gable facing the street. Many of the houses have framing as a purely decorative element with no structural function. One or two houses do have structural timber framing, a more closely authentic approach to "Tudor" construction that probably indicates their design and construction for an individual client. Timber framing is generally stained, or painted black.

- 3.8 The neo-Tudor character is developed by the use of tall red brick chimneystacks. These sometimes provide an externally visible detail throughout an elevation. Others rise through the roof. Many have multiple shafts and intricate chimney heads.
- 3.9 Red clay tiles are used extensively in sections of tile hanging, especially on front gable elevations between the first floor and eaves level, as are small areas of tarred and sometimes waney-edged weatherboarding.
- 3.10 Where brick, tile, weatherboarding or timber details are present, they should be maintained and extended if necessary, using matching materials. When planning permission is necessary, the conservation of such details and the use of appropriate materials in new work will normally be required.



WINDOWS & DOORS

- 3.11 In keeping with the neo-Tudor style of the houses, two main window types are present. Some windows have timber-framed casements with diamond or square set leaded lights. The frame and casements have a white paint finish, or are stained to match the decorative timber cladding of the host dwelling. Other houses have small pane metal casements typical of the era: these are often painted dark blue or black. The area makes widespread use of oriel windows, single and two storey bays, again a characteristic architectural detail of their time.
- 3.12 The character and appearance of the area will best be conserved by the maintenance of the existing windows and doors in-situ. Where replacement or new windows are required, they should be designed to closely match the

originals, preferably with any leaded glass retained. It should be noted that uPVC replacements will seldom be a good match as they fail to replicate the appearance of original windows, and neither preserve or enhance the character of the Conservation Area.

PORCHES

- 3.13 Most original houses were designed with a porch as an integral element of their front elevations. These were often incorporated beneath a jettied front gable or alternatively covered by a downward extension of the main roof.
- 3.14 Every effort should be made to retain those porches that remain as designed. The construction or enclosure of a porch with standardised contemporary materials, such as uPVC will seldom be appropriate, and would not preserve or enhance the character of the area.

ROOFS

- 3.15 The roofs in the Conservation Area are covered with red clay tiles. The characteristic roof shape within the Conservation Area is hipped or half hipped, with a uniform pitch on most houses. More elaborate gable walls usually face the street. Roofs often extend downwards on the front elevation to cover a single storey porch or a garage.
- 3.16 Planning permission is required for most alterations to the structure and the pitch of roofs in the Conservation Area. Alterations should be carefully considered to ensure that they relate well to the established character of the host dwelling.

DORMERS AND ROOF LIGHTS

- 3.17 Many properties in the Conservation Area have hipped dormers, generally located on the extension of the roof over a porch or garage. If a dormer is required, it should be designed in a size and style that matches any dormers existing on the host or adjacent buildings. Large dormers that break or protrude above the main roof ridge will be resisted.
- 3.18 Care should be taken not to over complicate or clutter the roofscape with the addition of large numbers of dormer windows. Where a roof already contains a dormer, the use of a roof light may be more appropriate. If roof lights are to be used, they should be divided by glazing bars and fitted flush with the roof surface.

EXTENSIONS

- 3.19 The present form and detailing of front elevations often contribute to the character of the Conservation Area. Extensions should generally reflect the style, proportions, materials and details of the host dwelling and should not be so large or prominent as to dominate or compete with it in visual terms.

- 3.20 In keeping with the neo-Tudor style of the dwellings, extensions should generally match pre-existing detail; tile hanging, weather boarding, or rendered and timber clad elevations, the adoption of matching detail should be considered. It will usually be appropriate to mark new development by making it subservient in scale to the host: for example, by reducing the height of the roof ridge and marking the original exterior wall of the host building with short return.

LAYOUT & NEW DEVELOPMENT

- 3.21 There are no vacant plots available for immediate development in the Conservation Area. The large rear gardens of many houses, although not visible from the street, represent an approach to layout typical of their period and contribute greatly to the character of the area. For this reason, and due to the fact that satisfactory access would be difficult to gain, backland development will normally resisted.



TREES

- 3.22 Conservation area designation gives the Council special power over all trees in the area. Anyone proposing to do works to a tree must give written notice of their proposal to the Council. They may not go ahead until the Council has given its consent, or six weeks have expired.
- 3.23 In addition, there are a number of tree preservation orders. This gives the council the right to further protect and enhance trees within the Conservation Area.

Consent must be obtained before any works commence. Failure to observe any of these provisions can result in prosecution.

FENCES, HEDGES & WALLS

- 3.24 The houses are fronted with relatively low, informal stone walls constructed from dressed and rubble stone, often combined with re-used red brick and tile. Alternatively, low hedges are used and some frontages are completely open plan, with grass lawns extending to the road. This tendency towards openness provides views across the front elevations of the houses and the spaciousness typical of this period of development.
- 3.25 Existing walls should be repaired or extended in the same material and manner as those existing. The construction of large areas of high front boundary enclosures will be resisted where it appears that this would affect the open nature of the area.

HARDSTANDINGS

- 3.26 In keeping with the construction of the road in the motor age, the houses in Downs Hill Conservation Area often have adequate drive and garage space. Hardstandings are often crazy paved, to match the informal layout of garden walls. There will be little need for the construction of new hardstandings within the Conservation Area. The loss of front garden space, trees and landscape in order to create additional vehicle hardstandings will normally be resisted.



GARAGES

- 3.27 A number of houses in the Conservation Area have integral garages as part of their original design. The remaining houses have purpose built detached garages, quite often on, or recessed behind the general building line. They are normally of brick construction covered by a downward extension of the main roof or a small pitched roof of its own. Walls are often rendered and clad to match the material and finish on that of the host building. Garage doors are often of vertical plank construction with white or raw timber finish to match original windows and doors.
- 3.28 Any new garages should be constructed in materials and using details that are compatible with the host or adjacent dwellings.

4. LISTED BUILDINGS

STATUTORILY LISTED BUILDINGS

- 4.1 Statutory Listing means that the building is protected by law. This protection extends to the inside; back, front, sides and roof of the building. It also extends to any object or structure fixed to the building as well as to any freestanding objects or structures, which lie within the curtilage of the building and which were erected before 1 July 1948.
- 4.2 Downs Hill Conservation Area has no statutorily listed buildings.

LOCALLY LISTED BUILDINGS

- 4.3 In addition to the statutory list, Bromley Council has also compiled a list of buildings considered to be of local importance and special to the Borough. There is no categorisation for locally listed buildings and listed building consent is not required to alter them. Normal planning regulations apply: this means that some alterations to houses and most alteration to flats and commercial premises will require Planning Permission.
- 4.4 In recognition of its local architectural and historic significance, the following building is locally listed:

117 Foxgrove Road



5. ENHANCEMENT ACTION BY THE COUNCIL

- 5.1 The majority of buildings in the Conservation Area are private dwelling houses; therefore, giving little scope for direct Council action to enhance them. Their repair and improvement will generally be a matter for their owners.

6. ADVISORY PANEL FOR CONSERVATION AREAS

- 6.1 The Council will-ensure that development control in conservation areas is undertaken with the aim of preserving or enhancing the character and appearance of the Conservation Area. It does this by undertaking appropriate consultations and by referring applications to the Advisory Panel for Conservation Areas (APCA). The Advisory Panel for Conservation Areas consists of independent representatives of relevant professions (such as architecture & town planning) and interest groups (such as the Council for the Protection of Rural England & The London Borough of Bromley Residents' Federation). Each conservation area is entitled to an APCA representative, usually nominated by the local residents' association.

7. FURTHER INFORMATION

If you have a conservation area question or wish to make a development proposal in a conservation area, please contact planning@bromley.gov.uk