

Conservation Areas

Advice for Households

Merton Park Ward contains several Conservation Areas (CA): John Innes Merton Park CA, Wimbledon Chase CA and parts of John Innes Wilton Crescent CA and Merton Hall Road CA. This pamphlet, prepared in 2012, explains the rules governing alterations to buildings in these areas. The text was provided by MPWRA in response to requests from our residents who wanted a clear explanation of do's and don'ts. So, as well as explaining the background, it also provides practical advice on how properties can be modified within the rules – and what is not allowed. We hope that if you are considering work on your property and you live in a Conservation Area you find this leaflet useful.

1. Introduction

This guide explains the implications of “Conservation Area” designation on your property.

Conservation Areas were introduced by the Civic Amenities Act 1967 as “areas of special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance”

Since then Merton has recognized the architectural and historic qualities of many parts of the Borough through the designation of 28 such Conservation Areas.

Conservation Area status, therefore, helps to protect the identified unique character of an area. Maintaining your property to a high standard will not only enhance its value but also help to ensure that these important areas are preserved and remain pleasant environments in which to live.

To secure the objective of the preservation of special character, the Council’s planning controls are more stringent in conservation areas

2. Identifying Areas for Designation

The character and appearance of Conservation Areas can vary widely, from whole town centres to squares, terraces and smaller groups of buildings. In selecting areas for designation, the Council has developed a set of criteria based on Government Guidance. These are:

- the age of building of historic interest
- the potential threat to the character from redevelopment
- whether there are listed buildings within the area
- any uniformity of architectural style to reinforce the identity of the area and to distinguish it from neighbouring areas
- the quality of trees or other vegetation
- the layout of the area and the quality of public spaces
- the quality of architecture and architectural detailing on the buildings and the degree to which architectural details have remained intact.

3. The Effects of Designation

Conservation Area status helps to protect groups of buildings as well as whole areas by ensuring that their traditional character and attractiveness are not lost. The designation of Conservation Areas can have the following significant effects:-

- It gives the Council control over demolition of dwellings by requiring that Conservation Area Consent be sought when demolition, or partial demolition, of a building is envisaged.
- It requires that prior notification should be given to the Council by anyone who wishes to fell or lop a tree, in order to allow a Tree Preservation Order to be made if that is appropriate.
- It has the effect of reducing the size of an extension to a dwelling which can be carried out without the need to seek planning permission.
- It has the effect of giving a stronger basis for judging planning applications from the point of view of design by requiring the Council to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of an area.

4. Alterations, Repair and Maintenance

Permitted development rights allow many changes to be made to buildings without formal permission. These alterations may be small in scale but can have a significant impact on an area which benefits from a special character. Unsympathetic alterations e.g. installation of non-original style replacement doors and windows can seriously affect the character and charm of a traditional house and significantly reduce the value of an older house and make it more difficult to sell.

5. Design Guides and Character Assessments

Design guides are available for many of the Council's conservation areas and these highlight the main architectural features and important qualities that contribute to the character of a conservation area.

The council will review and monitor the boundaries of existing conservation areas through the preparation of character assessments. The assessments also make a number of proposals which are aimed at either protecting the special character of the area, where it is seen to be under some threat, or enhancing the character of the area where there are opportunities to do so.

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6. Other Controls

Apart from its location within a Conservation Area, other designations may affect your property, for example it may be a statutory or locally listed building. In some areas there are also Article 4 Directions which limit the extent of works that can be undertaken without the benefit of planning permission. Furthermore, most building works also require Building Regulations Approval.

6.1 Statutory Listed Buildings:

Statutory Listed Buildings are identified by the Department of National Heritage and graded according to their importance. These buildings are protected; they cannot be demolished, altered or extended without Listed Building Consent.

6.2 Locally Listed Buildings:

These are buildings that the Council has identified as being of local architectural or historic interest. Although inclusion of a building on a local list does not alter its status legally, the Council is committed to the protection of these buildings and will resist their demolition. If necessary the Council will make representations to the Secretary of State to try to get a threatened building included on the statutory list.