

ACTON GREEN CONSERVATION AREA Management Plan

MARCH 2008

ACTON GREEN CONSERVATION AREA MANAGEMENT PLAN

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1. Introduction

This plan sets out the local authority's approach to managing the future of the Acton Green CA. It is based on an appraisal of the character of the CA, the statutory planning policies affecting the area, the role of other local authority services in the area, and the requirements and aspirations of local people – both residents and businesses.

It is very much a partnership document, 'owned' by all parties involved in producing it. This partnership approach means that the plan will be respected, and will be guided by the conduct of all the partners.

2. Policy

This Management Plan indicates how the policies in the Local Development Framework (LDF), along with other matters, will figure in the on-going management of the Acton Green CA. It is not a planning policy document itself however, and it does not form part of the Local Development Framework (LDF).

Ealing's Local Development Framework comprises a series of documents. The following documents have a bearing on the Conservation Management Plan:

- The 'Unitary Development Plan' (UDP), also known as the Plan for the Environment. This contains the statutory policies for development in the CA and elsewhere in the borough. Volume One of the UDP has policies for all types of development. There is a specific policy on conservation in Chapter Four on Design (policy 4.8). Volume Two of the UDP shows sites and areas across the borough. The Acton Green CA is indicated in Table 10.12 and Map 8 in Volume Two of the UDP. The UDP also has a "Proposals Map" which specifies the definitive boundary of the Acton Green CA. It should also be noted that the UDP comprises the development plan for the borough along with the Mayor of London's London Plan. For most purposes, the London Plan policies are reflected in the UDP, and there are cross-references to them in the UDP.

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- The series of Supplementary Planning Guidance and Supplementary Planning Documents provide more detailed guidance on how the statutory policies should be applied. These cover topics, sites and area.
- The Local Development Scheme sets out the programme of work on future planning policy. This includes reference to a Supplementary Planning Document on Conservation, which is currently being prepared, and which will be subject to formal consultation in the Autumn of 2007. In May of 2007, the Council's preferred options for the planning of the borough will be published.
- The Statement of Community Involvement sets out the Council's commitments to community involvement in all aspects of town planning, including matters pertaining to the Acton Green CA.
- There are also other documents providing background information and monitoring data in the LDF. All published information on the Local Development Framework is on the Council's web site at www.ealing.gov.uk/planpol

3. Conservation Area designation

Acton Green is one of 29 (twenty-nine) of L.B. Ealing's Conservation Areas (CAs) and it is managed, like the others, by the legal regulations of the *Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act, 1990*. The Council operates its responsibilities under the Act to "preserve and enhance" the character of the CA. The Council will also undertake regular reviews of the area to monitor the quality of development and the effectiveness of its policies and guidance.

3.1. Character appraisals

The Council has completed a Character Appraisal for the Acton Green CA, of which this Management Plan is a further part. The Appraisal has been produced to describe and evaluate the special architectural and historic interest of the CA. The statement of character will provide a basis from which to evolve not only the making of development control decisions, but also for the informed framing of design guidance. The Appraisal is the basis for the direction of this Management Plan, identifying the elements of special interest of the Acton Green CA that require attention or effort. The Appraisal also provides a valuable resource upon which to defend Appeals against refusal of planning permission.

3.2. Archives and the importance of the past

The CA contains a good deal of historic fabric and evidence of this has been included in the Appraisal to demonstrate the evolution of the area, particularly over the past 150 years or so.

Once an outlying hamlet, Acton Green became a parish with the building of St Alban's Church in 1877/8. In 1642 the Area of Acton Green formed part of the field battle of Brentford, when a Royalist assault on London led by Prince Rupert was repulsed by the Parliamentarians. Acton Lane was originally called Bromcroft Lane and houses of the same name (demolished in 1870c.) stood on its west side immediately south of Antrobus Road. The present day Acton Green is that remains of the ancient Common.

Archival material, taken chiefly from the local sources maintained by L.B. Ealing, has been included in the Appraisal to provide a sense of historical depth and to illustrate the reality of Ealing's past. Elements of this past may still be felt and understood, thus posing questions about protection and enhancement as the development of sites and to existing property within the CA inevitably unfolds.

4. Development control

As a result of the demand for development, the character of the CA is under constant threat posed by unsympathetic, poorly designed and executed new buildings, extensions and alterations. Most of these are already controlled by existing legislation, administered by the Council's professional officers. High quality development control plays an important part in managing changes to the CA.

4.1. Principles for development control

The Acton Green CA and its immediate surroundings are under some development pressure. Acton Green acts as a restful episode in the busy transport led surrounds with Chiswick Station on the south-western side, the railway embankment on the northern side and busy Acton Lane and South Parade on the west and north side respectively. Acton Green is surrounded by a variety of buildings amongst which are: a small Victorian/Edwardian parade of shops, a Victorian public house, Victorian terrace houses, turn of the century and 1930s block of flats. These provide a wide variety of architectural styles and details. Nevertheless the poor quality of later developments and the presence of gap sites provide opportunities for new improvements. Also, along the parade of shops and in proximity of the garage along South Parade. The residential sections of the CA, do not offer opportunities for major developments, yet they are under a lot of pressure for small-scale interventions to the residential properties. Sensitive and responsive management is required in order to cope with this pressure and the following principles will be adopted to guide the Council in its control of development:

- 1) The Council will apply the principles, guidance and regulations outlined in the *Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990* and the broader guidance of *Planning Policy Guidance Note 15 (PPG15)* and any subsequent revisions or additions.
- 2) The Council will apply the policies outlined in its *Plan for the Environment, the Unitary Development Plan (UDP)* as adopted in October 2004, until such time as these policies are replaced by policies in the emerging *Local Development Framework*.
- 3) The Council will require all planning applications to be supported by a Design and Access Statement. This should be a brief but thorough guide to the reasons for the development and how the design fulfils these, together with a

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statement concerning any access issues that may exist.

- 4) Officers of the Council can provide assistance to applicants with more information and with examples on file of successful Design and Access Statements.
- 5) A major requirement for any development proposal in a CA is quality, covering the design, materials, workmanship and execution.
- 6) The Council will not dictate on the choice of architectural styles of any proposed new buildings, extensions or alterations but the position may be simply put as follows:
 - Contemporary and Modernist styles are entirely acceptable if they are high in quality and provided that they remain sympathetic in the context and towards the host building and/or other neighbouring buildings

OR

- Replicas of good, older buildings may be preferred provided that they are properly researched and high in quality. The design, scale, massing and detailing of such Traditionalist schemes should accurately replicate the contextual, local materials.
- 7) The drawings through which proposals are submitted should clearly and competently demonstrate the intentions of the development, preferably being accompanied by photographs and anything else that can demonstrate the project's aims.
 - 8) The Council will make use of technically experienced and qualified Officers in guiding the assessment and determination of all applications received.
 - 9) Applications for work in CAs must be accompanied by clear indications of the materials to be used in producing the external finish and architectural details of the proposed buildings. Actual samples of the materials should be submitted as part of the preparations of the scheme and/or in the course of beginning on-site building operations.

- 10) Where possible, the Council recommends pre-application consultation. Planning Services and applicants may thus work jointly to produce schemes that are successful and high in quality. Experience has demonstrated that advance work of this sort is the most effective and efficient way of preparing applications.

5. Preservation and enhancement

5.1. *Understanding the asset*

The Character Appraisal of which this Management Plan forms a part is central to understanding the Acton Green CA and its future needs. As a result of the appraisal process, including the public consultation exercise, the aspects of the area that are under the most threat have been identified and a number of negative features, which need to be addressed in this Management Plan, identified. These are as follows:

Spatial:

- Busy traffic dominates surrounds of the Acton Green, along the main roads and junctions, this is exasperated by the very narrow pavements around the green and along Acton Lane. Acton Green Residents' Association identified the route of the 440 Bus along Acton Lane as augmenting the problems of noise and increasing traffic in the CA.
- Use of utilitarian materials such as concrete slabs and tarmac
- Areas of very poor paving with disturbed street surfaces
- Back land areas and gap sites that create fractures within the urban grain (e.g. electricity sub station and garage along South Parade)
- Unattractive and messy appearance of the small parade of shops along South Parade
- Loss of front garden boundary walls, trees and fences, forecourts of properties looking untidy and not well maintained

Buildings:

- Poor condition of some of the buildings in the CA

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- Poor quality later developments that are not sympathetic with earlier and valuable architectural remains
- Poor quality extensions and alterations generally
- Satellite antennas on front elevations
- Many buildings in need of repair and require restoration of lost architectural features such as cornicing, windows, doors and painting of the original brickwork
- Poor quality roofing materials, such as concrete tiles, have replaced the original natural slate or tile roofs
- Very poor later additions to the Church of St Albans

5.2. Maintaining quality

The Council's attention to quality in the Acton Green CA will be maintained through its contribution to the following elements of development and alteration.

1) Quality of applications

In line with PPG15, the Council will not accept outline applications for proposals in CAs. Full applications will be required to be supported by properly drafted, accurate, scale drawings with plans, sections and elevations. In many cases for large schemes the Council will also expect analytical drawings, showing proposals in context, either through streetscape sections or three-dimensional images.

2) Quality of materials

The Council will, where possible, require that materials proposed are submitted as part of an application and not as a Condition.

3) Details

Where appropriate to aid in the assessment of an application, the Council may require the submission of large-scale construction detail drawings. This enables officers to check the quality of what is proposed and ensure that on site design is not left to the builder.

4) Experienced persons

The Council will always advise that applicants appoint both consultants and builders who have experience in historic building work.

5) U-PVC (Unplasticised Poly Vinyl Chloride) in window frames and other architectural elements

The Council has a well-founded preference for traditional, renewable materials and will therefore exercise its powers to advise and to insist, in cases where appropriate against the use of architectural elements and fenestration details in U-PVC or other manufactured substitutes. For buildings which are in commercial uses, or for flats, planning permission is usually required to install such windows and the Council can take enforcement action against any windows which have been installed without permission. For family houses, although there are currently few (if any) in the Acton Green CA, the Council can also control the use of such modern details and materials through an Article 4 Direction. More information is provided in section 5.7 – *Article 4 Direction considerations for the Acton Green CA*.

Plastic window frames and doors are not felt to be able to replicate the quality and appearance of original timber windows in CAs. U-PVC is non-renewable and contributes to pollution. When used elsewhere on buildings, such as porches, barge-boards and conservatories, it can have a negative effect upon visual appearance that should not be permitted in CAs. Depending on the individual circumstances, aluminium may not be considered an acceptable replacement for steel in window frames.

Generally, the Council believes that it is the attention to detail and the specific concern about quality at all levels that will help to preserve or enhance the character and appearance of the Acton Green CA.

6) Alterations and extensions to roofs and their covering materials.

The roofscape is an important element of the character of the CA. Any works whether for new buildings, extensions, alterations or the replacement of existing roof coverings, require planning permission to ensure that special care and attention is paid to the scale, the massing, the design and the materials employed.

- **Dormer windows**

Inset dormer windows will usually be accepted on the rear roof slopes but only rarely on the front or the side. They should not dominate the roof slope.

Dormer windows should be of traditional design. A roof shape in keeping with the original profile is preferred but a flat roofed dormer may be necessary in smaller or shallower roofs, to allow 500mm to the ridge, valleys and hips. All dormer windows should be finished with moulded eaves, cornices and timber fascias. Where possible the window(s) of the dormer should align with the windows of the main house.

- **Roof extensions**

Roof extensions should be built within the existing roof slope: they should not be wrapped around two roof slopes, exceed the height of the ridge, or form a continuation of the wall below. Changing a hipped roof to a gable should be avoided.

The ridge of the roof should not be raised to accommodate greater headroom: this will change the proportion of the house and may spoil the character and uniformity of the street scene.

- **Rooflights**

Rooflights will usually be acceptable on the rear roof slopes and on occasion on the sides. Any rooflight should be a “conservation rooflight” which lies flat in the roof.

- **Tiles**

Tiles /slates should match the original in type, material and colour, and should be laid using original techniques.

- **Chimneys**

Chimneys are a particularly important element of the character of the Borough’s CAs and the Council has a clear preference for the retention of existing chimneys where they contribute positively to local character and for ensuring that new proposals that include chimneys are high in quality of design, materials and execution.

7) Extensions

The proliferation of unsightly and over-scale rear, side or roof extensions are regarded as detrimental to the historic environment of Acton Green CA. For this reason, applications for extensions of this sort will be carefully considered and, where necessary for the preservation of local character, will be resisted.

8) Brickwork

The management of brickwork and the pointing of walls is a critical issue in preserving detail in the Acton Green CA. The Council will discourage the use of rendering, pebble dashing, painting and other new surfaces over existing original brick facades.

9) Rear plots, outbuildings and boundaries

Whilst most of the residential buildings in the of the CA face onto the street, with concealed gardens and yards behind, a substantial number of properties are set back from the streetline with front yards. The management of front yards is crucial both for the appearance and character of the street as well as for the architectural character of properties.

Elsewhere in the existing CA, the Council will ensure that the removal of existing traditional boundaries and gardens will be resisted and that proposals to replace or develop boundaries or front or side gardens will be appropriate in their materials and of high quality design that is compatible with the historic character of the CA. The removal of mature trees, unless dead, should not be permitted in order to create hardstandings.

A number of service buildings and the garage, and a few unsympathetic later constructions, detract from the general quality of the CA.

As opportunities for new improved development occur, the Council will seek to ensure that any new buildings “preserve or enhance” the CA and that, where possible, negative features are removed.

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Garden buildings should be small scale and sited discretely, taking care not to locate too near trees. They should be for ancillary garden use and comprise a single, modest-sized room. Timber is the most appropriate material to ensure they blend with the landscape.

10) Shopfronts and signage

A small parade of shops (from no 61 to 65 in South Parade) is within Acton Green CA. They could potentially significantly contribute to the character and quality of the CA, therefore any attempt to improve their appearance should be made.

At no 61, the Acton Green CA retains an example of appropriate shopfront. The Council should encourage for the remaining shops in the parade to follow the pattern of no 61. Firm development control and possibly grant aid is required to ensure that the appearance of the CA is incrementally improved, and the Council will take enforcement action against owners of shops who install new shopfronts or who alter their existing shopfronts without planning permission.

The Council will therefore pay special attention to applications to alter or develop these commercial frontages and will ensure that proposals are high in overall quality and make a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the CA.

11) Satellite Dishes and Telecommunication Installations.

Satellite dishes are a common problem in many CAs. They disfigure the fronts of historic buildings and also cause a loss of historic character when fixed in locations that may be seen from the streets and open spaces.

In the Acton Green CA, satellite dishes are regarded by the Council as not being in character and therefore will only be acceptable when they cannot be easily seen from the streets or other public parts of the area.

The rules governing satellite dishes in CAs are significantly tighter than outside such areas. These state that the installation of a satellite antenna on any building or structure within the curtilage of a family house in a CA is only permitted development if the following conditions are met:

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- The dish does not exceed 90 mm. in any dimension;
- No part of it must exceed the highest part of the roof;
- It is not installed on a chimney;
- It is not on a building exceeding 15 metres in height;
- It is not on a wall or roof slope fronting a highway or footway;
- It is located so its visual impact is minimised;
- It is removed as soon as it is no longer required; and
- There is not a dish already on the building or structure.

Similarly, strict controls exist on commercial buildings and flats, and it is likely that planning permission will be needed for any satellite dish which is on the front elevation of a building, or a roof facing the highway. If in any doubt, contact the Council's relevant development control officer.

Telecommunication installations are regarded as causing great potential harm to the historic character of the Acton Green CA. The law governing the erection of masts and antennae is complex and whilst some companies have licences which allow some structures to be put up in CAs without planning permission, the legislation does allow for consultation with the local authority concerned before the work is put in hand. Further information can be found in the second edition of PPG8 *Telecommunications*.

5.3. Preserve or enhance

As outlined in Planning Policy Guidance Note 15 (PPG15), proposals for work within the historic environment and, in particular, within CAs must, as a minimum, preserve the character of the CA.

The Council supports this standard as a basic requirement but will always encourage applicants and their agents to develop schemes that will actively enhance the character of the CA. In meeting these fundamental requirements the Council will require that proposals are demonstrably a faithful replication of the local historical precedent or a high quality contemporary building as described above in 3.1.

5.4. Elements at risk

As previously described in the Appraisal and summarised in section 5.1 of this document the quality of the Acton Green CA has been damaged to a degree by a variety of factors including:

1. Impact of the busy traffic and poor pedestrian movements between the green and surrounding roads
2. Poor quality later developments
3. Uncoordinated and average quality street furniture
4. Shopfronts that are badly detailed and in poor condition
5. Satellite ditches on main elevations
6. Loss of historic features on many of the buildings
7. Buildings in need of repair and improvement
8. Use of poor quality materials for roofs, windows and fencing

The Council regards it as important to improve these negative features and to ensure that actions are taken to positively preserve or enhance the Acton Green CA in the following ways:

Issue 1: The Council's *Development Strategy for Ealing Centre*¹ – in the *Easier Movement and Transport* section proposes the enhancement of public transport and the introduction of traffic calming measures to be implemented by 2012.

The Council could in fact consider the installation of some traffic management measures to try and reduce the speed of through traffic along the main thoroughfares and other improvements to provide greater pedestrian priority.

Issue 2-4: The appraisal has identified areas of back land and gap sites that create fractures within the urban grain and contribute to poor connectivity (e.g. garage along South Parade, over-ground car parking west to the electricity substation).

¹ *Ealing Centre – A Strategy For Sustainable Improvement 2002-2012*. October 2002

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The Council should look into relocating those facilities in a more suitable location and should facilitate the appropriate use/development of the identified sites.

This will hopefully create not only an architectural environment of much higher quality but also provide a much more suitable setting for the valuable early architectural properties of Victorian and Edwardian times and designated buildings.

Issue 3: The stakeholders consultation responses suggest that the CA Panel and Resident's Association are happy with the existing street furniture.

The Council believes that the short stretch of shopfronts within the CA requires improvement. Matters such as signage and advertising are already controlled through existing legislation. The Council will ensure that in future all such changes adhere to the *Shopfront Guidance* leaflet and other guidance contained within the UDP and subsequent documents. The provision of grants from the Council would help to ensure that local businesses improve their frontages.

Issue 5: The control of satellite dishes has already been discussed in section **5.2 Maintaining quality**. Usually planning permission is needed if the satellite dish is visible from the public highway and the Council will enforce against unauthorised dishes.

Issue 6 and 7 See **5.2 Maintaining quality**

Issue 8: Several of the historic buildings in the CA are in need of some kind of improvement, e.g. replacement of UPVC windows, re-roofing in traditional materials, or repairs to details such as corncicing, eaves and verges. A grant scheme, such as the Townscape Heritage Initiative scheme, which is a partnership between the Council and the Heritage Lottery Fund, could provide the funding for a range of improvements and repairs. Subject to the Council being able to provide match funding, and the support of English Heritage, a grant scheme would help to encourage local property owners to improve their buildings, including new shopfronts.

5.5. Monitoring and Review

The Council will review its CA Appraisals as part of a five-year programme of regular review and monitoring in compliance with policy reflecting the obligations imposed by the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.

5.6. Conservation Strategy and Practice

Ealing Council is in the process of reviewing its 29 designated CAs, some of which have in place Article 4 Directions (A4D) where these are appropriate. To maintain all aspects of the “special character and appearance” of the 29 CAs, the Council will need to retain technical advisors specializing in the preservation and conservation of historic buildings, landscapes etc. A regular five-year cycle of study and review will also be needed to be maintained to assess and monitor the CAs with the aim of the preservation of the areas in the long term. Overall, the Acton Green CA must be protected for both its residents and business owners, and a programme of improvements instigated to achieve its preservation and enhancement.

5.7. Article 4 Direction considerations for Acton Green CA

When or after designating a CA, the Council can bring under planning control a number of changes to single family houses meaning that all significant changes or developments would require planning permission (called an Article 4 Direction – A4D). In properties that are presently in commercial uses or are used as offices, such changes, including replacement windows (a particular problem in the CA) already require planning permission. However, the two residential sub areas of the CA contains a number of single family dwellings where an A4D would ensure that the architectural interest of the buildings was not eroded by incremental, unsympathetic changes. In particular the CA Panel and the Acton Green Resident’s Association have considered inappropriate window replacements as one of the most serious problems in the CA. The Council could consider if it is appropriate to propose the application of A4D in parts of the CA and for selected classes of development, i.e. window and door replacements.

The adoption of an A4D would result in the requirement for planning permission to be obtained for all new windows and doors.

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The serving of an A4D on family houses, and stricter development control over incremental changes to commercial and flatted properties, will in time result in improvements to the visual appearance of the CA, but also in a substantial restriction of the Permitted Development Rights.

6. Consultation

The strength of the Acton Green CA Appraisal and Management Plan relies on the knowledge and commitment of, residents, and other key stakeholders.

Both documents have been produced in partnership with members of the local community who have provided the authors of this work with the expert views and knowledge to help positively shape the future of the CA. Wider views will be sought for both the Appraisal and Management Plan during the next five-years, before next CA's review.