

ACTON TOWN CENTRE CONSERVATION AREA Character Appraisal



April 2009

ACTON TOWN CENTRE CONSERVATION AREA CHARACTER APPRAISAL

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1. Introduction

1.1. The definition and purpose of conservation areas

According to Section 69 of the *Town and Country Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990*, a Conservation Area (CA) is an “area of special architectural or historic interest the character and the appearance of which is desirable to preserve or enhance”. It is the duty of Local Authorities to designate such areas and to use their legal powers to safeguard and enhance the special qualities of these areas within the framework of controlled and positive management of change.

1.2. The purpose and status of this appraisal

Acton Town Centre CA was first designated in 1982 and extended in 1994 and in 2004 to include Alfred Road and Burlington Road, sections of Churchfield Road, Acton Station and Acton Bus Depot.

The scope of this appraisal is summarised in the following points:

1. Assessment of the special interest of the architectural heritage of Acton Town Centre CA highlighting elements of special merit, which contribute to the character.
2. Assessment of the actions needed to protect and enhance the special qualities of the CA.
3. Assessment of the need to revise the boundaries of the CA.

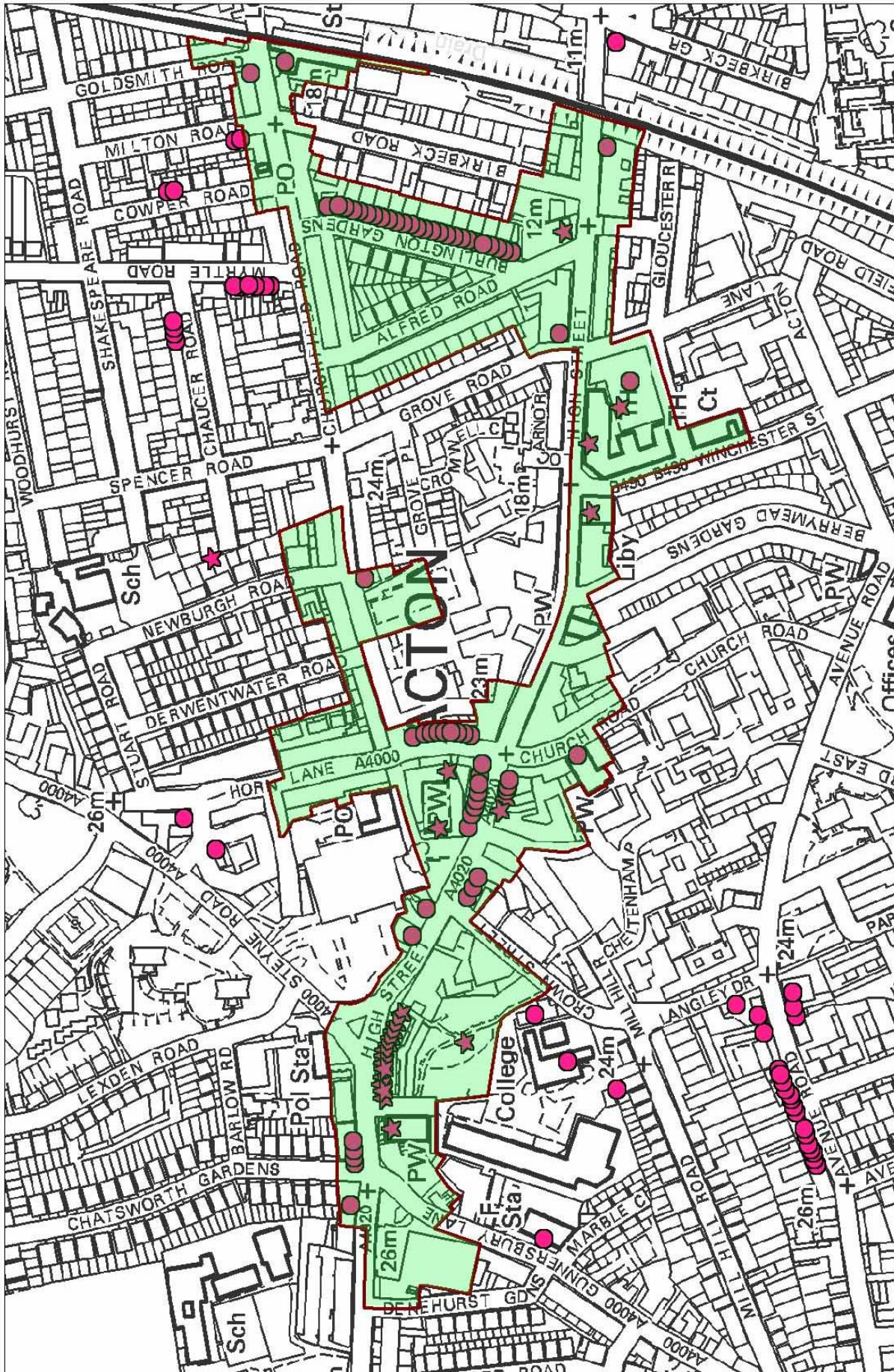
This document replaces the existing appraisal published in 1999. However, it is not intended to be comprehensive in its scope and content. Omission of any specific building, space or feature or aspect of its appearance or character should not be taken to imply that they have no significance.

The methodology of the CA Character Appraisal for Acton Town Centre follows the guidance provided by the *Planning Policy guidelines 15: Planning and the Historic Environment* (1994); the *Guidance on Conservation Area Appraisals by English Heritage* (2005); and the *Guidance on Management of Conservation Areas* by English Heritage (2005).

The analysis has been conducted on the basis of visits to the area, the involvement of local associations, and with consultation of primary and secondary sources on the local history and architecture.

Acton Town Centre Conservation Area Character Appraisal

- ★ Listed Buildings
- Locally Listed Buildings



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Acton Town Centre Conservation Area

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1.3. Summary of special interest

- Acton Town Centre CA is situated in the former historic County of Middlesex, in the eastern part of today's London Borough of Ealing. Acton Town Centre CA is divided between the Acton Central Ward and the South Acton Ward.
- The land-form is strongly defined by the varied topography and by the main thoroughfares: Acton High Street that runs across the whole length of the CA east-west, and the straight line of Churchfield Road which runs north to the High Street and almost parallel to it.
- The Acton village was recorded since 1222 and settled continuously into post medieval times. The parish church existed since 1231 and permission for market was granted in 1232. Acton was principally an agricultural community until the advent of the railways, and its growth in the later 19th Century was spectacular.
- Three “**Areas of Character**” can be distinguished within the Acton Town Centre CA: **1)** The High Street and Market Place **2)** Churchfield Road and Horn Lane **3)** The residential enclave of Alfred Road and Burlington Gardens (please see illustrative map on p20).
- The CA has mainly a late 18th Century, Victorian and Edwardian architectural heritage, with most buildings going back to the time when Acton started to expand and flourish after the advent of the railway. Building types are residential, civic offices, parades of shops, religious buildings and public houses.
- The CA has mix of uses. Retail, offices and civic function dominate the core of the High Street; Churchfield Road mixes retail and residential with a few public houses and the station; Alfred Road and Burlington Gardens are solely residential.
- The three areas of character display similar spatial relationships between buildings: The tight grain of the **Sub Area 1 and 2** have in part been interrupted by large expanse of over ground car parks or later developments with



Areas of Character map available on p20

Acton Town Centre Conservation Area Character Appraisal

more substantial footprint. Properties in the **Sub Area 3** sit on narrow plots, are located close to the streetline and still reflect their original Victorian arrangement.

- Mix of construction materials:
 - **Sub Area 1:** Red brick and stock brick stone dressing, roughcast render, Kentish rag stone and cast-iron details are prevalent
 - **Sub Area 2:** Red and stock brick, stucco trimming, sash windows, traditional shop-fronts with ornate corbels and finials.
 - **Sub Area 3:** Yellow stock brick laid in Flemish bond, low-pitch or hipped roofs with marked eaves with brackets. Roofs are covered with slates or flat tiles, stucco trimming and white painted timber sash windows are prevalent details.
- In **Sub Area 1 & 2** surviving remains of the 18th Century, Victorian and Edwardian architectural heritage have been embedded in later, poor quality developments and have been detrimentally altered with poor quality shop-fronts and unsympathetic additions or alterations which seriously put the character of the CA under threat.
- In **Sub Area 3** surviving elements of early boundary treatments are a precious remnant of the historic relationship between private and public spaces. Yet they have been lost in most cases.
- Trees along the streetline as well as trees and green fences around properties are an important part of the suburban character of the CA. Unfortunately front gardens in the residential enclave are poorly maintained and detract from the overall character of the streetscape.

2. Location and setting

2.1. Location and context

Acton Town Centre CA is situated in the former historic County of Middlesex. Acton Town Centre CA is divided between the Acton Central Ward and the South Acton Ward.

Acton Town Centre CA is 1,3 Km² in area and it is in the eastern part of the modern borough. It evolves on both sides of the Uxbridge Road that in this section takes the name of Acton High Street. The CA includes properties on the southern and some on the northern side of the High Street, from the junction with Gunnersbury Lane at its western end, to the railway bridge at its eastern end. The CA also includes King Street, Market Place, Horn Lane and Churchfield Road.

Acton Town is located between several neighbouring centres which are changing through redevelopment, these include: Shepherds Bush, Ealing Broadway, Chiswick, White City and Hammersmith.

Most common approaches to Acton Town Centre CA are:

- Along the Uxbridge Road from Ealing
- Along the Uxbridge Road from Shepherd Bush
- Along Gunnersbury Lane from the south – this approach is particularly common when getting into Acton by underground and getting off at Acton Town Station Tube Station
- Along Churchfield Road from Acton Central Station

Acton Town Centre CA is surrounded by other CAs that influenced its historical development and still provide its setting: Creffield CA on the western side, Mill Hill CA on the southern side, and Acton Park CA on the eastern side.



Approach to the CA from west along the Uxbridge Road



Approach to the CA from Gunnesbury Lane south of the High Street



2.2. General character and plan form

The plan-form of the central part of the CA is mostly determined by the presence of the main thoroughfare of Acton High Street that runs across the whole length of the CA east-west. In the northern part of the CA the plan-form is mostly determined by the straight line of Churchfield Road which runs almost parallel to the High Street - from the railway east, to St Mary's Church west. The residential enclave of Alfred Road and Burlington Gardens extends north of the High Street and south of Churchfield Road forming a well-defined triangle.

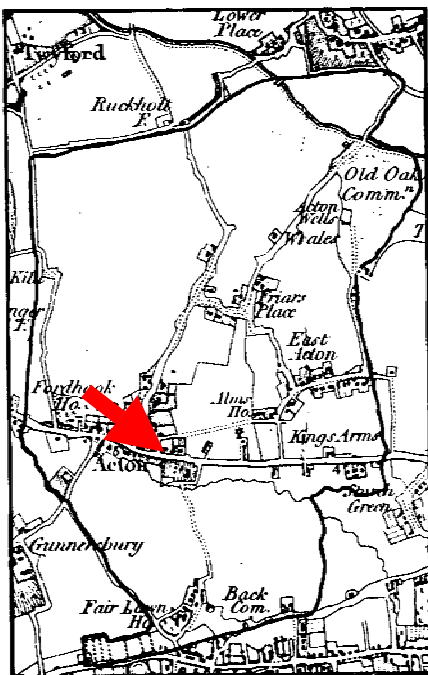
The CA contains **3** clearly distinguished **Areas of Character** both in terms of architectural language and uses. **Sub Area 1** is very much the heart of the old Victorian commercial and civic centre. The architectural character is very diverse: institutional, public buildings and shopfronts from the 18th, 19th and early 20th century are woven together with later post-war and more recent developments. The **Sub Area 2** includes Churchfield Road and Horn Lane. This area still has a strong commercial character but a much quieter and local feel to it. The **Sub Area 3** is solely residential and features houses dating from 1870 to 1890 with many commonalities in terms of materials and architectural details. Sub Area 3 still maintains the aspect of a middle class Victorian suburb.

2.3. Landscape setting

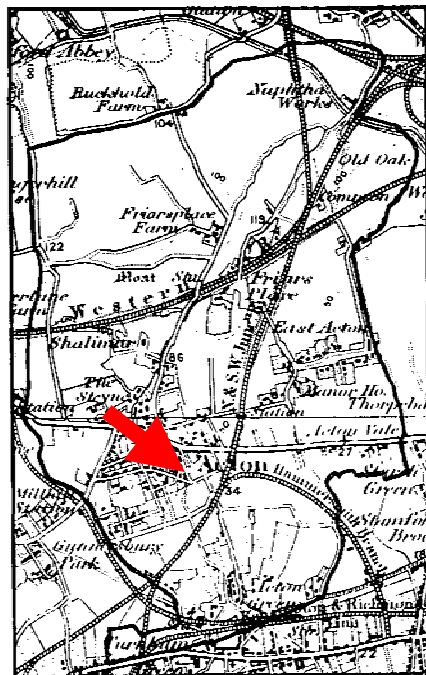
The landscape setting of Acton is determined by its varied topography. The land slopes from 50 m in the north-west corner of the parish to 6 m in the south-east, and it is drained by two main streams. The Bollo Brook rises near Fordhook and flows south-eastward to Acton Green, passing into Chiswick. The Stamford Brook's western branch, apparently rising near Acton Farm west of Horn Lane, flows south to meet another tributary, from Springfield near the Ealing boundary, at a point north of the Steyne and continues down the west side of the Steyne to cross the Oxford Road (today called Uxbridge Road) at the foot of Acton Hill. Thence it flows south-eastward south of Berrymead and across Southfield into Hammersmith, where it joins the eastern branch of Stamford Brook from Old Oak common.

London Clay covers the northern part of the parish as far south as Masons Green, Acacia Avenue, East Acton village and the site of Manor House, and Acton Park. Brickearth covers the rest of East Acton and the parish south of Uxbridge Road, except around Mill Hill and Heathfield, where Taplow Gravel lies along the south-western and western sides.

Acton Park east of the CA provides the formal recreational space to the CA and contributes to the open setting of the CA on the east side. Yet the railway tracks act as a physical barrier and the visual relationship of the CA with this important green space is limited.



1822



1876-7



1914

3. Historic development and archaeology

3.1. Historic development

The village of Acton has a long history, and the Anglo-Saxon name Acton, or 'oak settlement', was celebrated by the acorn motif, the latest incarnation of which crowns the clock tower of the 1930s Town Hall in the High Street. The Uxbridge Road connected London to Oxford. The Uxbridge Turnpike was opened in 1714, and a tollgate was opened in the Vale together with a coaching inn soon after. Acton was principally an agricultural community until the advent of the railways, and its growth in the later nineteenth century was spectacular. The population grew from 2,500 in 1851 to 37,000 in 1901. This growth was part of London's westward spread, which also led to the rise of the laundry industry and to South Acton being re-named 'Soap-Suds Island'.

Late-Victorian and Edwardian Acton was a thriving commercial centre and, as Pevsner states, Acton 'is typical of a once prosperous turn of the century suburban centre, with banks and pubs providing focal points around the small green in front of the church'. Manufacturing activity was reinforced by the big industrial estates that appeared in the 1920s and 30s in Acton Vale and along the new Western Avenue to the north. This success was celebrated by the quality of the public buildings from this period, especially the group around the Town Hall. Acton High Street with villas and larger houses.

The Town Hall site is some way to the east of the core of the town centre and lies within the former grounds of 'Berrymead' a manor of the Dean of St Paul's. In the early nineteenth century the house was rebuilt in a gothic style and given the name 'The Priory' and after various occupants, including Edward Bulmer Lytton, it became the Convent of the Nuns of the Sacred Heart, then later still, as its estate began to be developed, a Constitutional Club. It was regrettably demolished as recently as 1984 and the site is now occupied by the Salisbury Street car park.

The Library was built in 1898-9, and after this the area bounded by Acton High Street, Acton Lane, Winchester Street, and Salisbury Street, became the focus for a group of civic buildings. Firstly, the Baths built in 1903, which was followed by the Magistrates Court (across Salisbury Street from 'the Island') in Winchester Street in 1907 and the Town Hall in 1909.



St Mary's Church, 1900 c.



Churchfield Road was one of the important shopping streets in Acton, 1900 c.



Looking south from Horn Lane into Market place. Churchfield Road to the left, King Street to the right, 1900 c.



Woodlands Recreational Ground 1900 c.

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The site between the Baths and the High Street was planted and opened in 1911 as the King George V Garden – only to be built over with temporary huts, used for recruiting, during the First World War. In turn these were used by the Council and then subsequently taken down for the building of the King's Rooms in 1926, providing for the first time a direct connection to the Baths from the High Street.

1865 OS Map

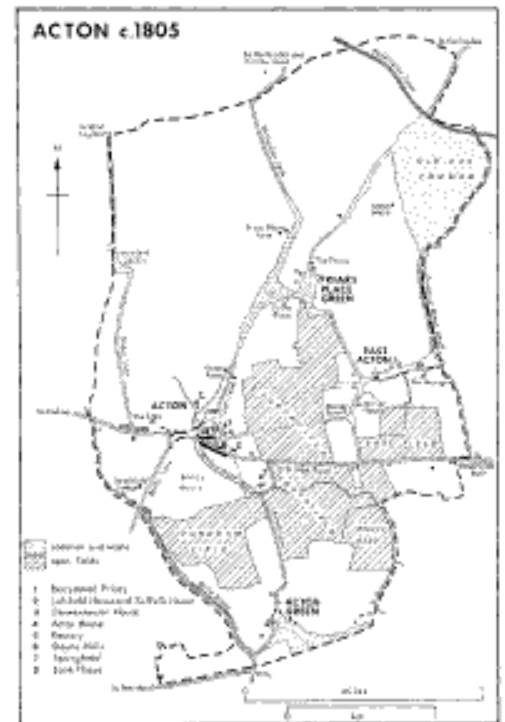
(This OS map was not fully available at the time of writing)

The western end of the High Street was called “Acton Hill”. On the site of the Woodlands Recreational Ground and Acton Hill Church appear the structures of the Wesleyan School. Both the southern and the northern side of the High Street appear fairly edified and the railway tracks are clearly marked on the eastern end of the CA.

1890 OS Map

The 1890 Map shows how the configuration and distribution of buildings along today's High Street still very much reflects its Victorian tradition. The Church of St Mary is clearly marked. A Public House appears on the site of the Kings Head pub. The bank on the south side of the Church (today's Barclays bank at nos 194-186) is clearly marked. The eastern section of the High Street is less edified with the site of the Library and Town Hall still empty and the large side of the Grove House in its extensive grounds occupying most of the northern section.

Market Place presents very much its current configuration, with a compact row of terrace houses on the eastern side and more scattered buildings on the western side. Horn Lane appears flanked by few large buildings set in extensive grounds back from the street line. On the western side of Horn Lane is the Rectory. Along Churchfield Road the site of today's Derwentwater Mansions is still empty and it is occupied by the grounds of Acton House. St Mary's Burial Grounds on the southern side of Churchfield Road is clearly marked. Further east along Churchfield Road, the southern section of the road is fully edified and offers very much its present configuration. The northern part is more sporadically edified with large plots still empty. Houses in the residential enclave at Burlington Gardens and Alfred Road appear in their present configuration. Roads branching south of the High Street, Winchester Road, and Church Road, are clearly marked and fully edified with row of terraced houses.



King George V garden – the site of today's Town Hall Extension. The Public Baths appear in the background.



The High Street looking from the corner of Mill Hill Grove towards Acton Hill, 1890c.

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1910 OS Map

By the 1910 OS Map, marked changes are recorded on the western end of the High Street: the Tramway Depot, the Acton Hill Methodist Church and the King's Parade appear in this OS map for the first time. The tramline runs all along the Uxbridge Road and hence Acton High Street. The Church of our Lady of Lourdes and the Bank at no 139 also appear here for the first time. The Public Library, the Town Hall and the public baths are now clearly marked.

Now also the northern section of Churchfield Road appears more densely edified. By 1910 Crown Street was created but it appears still undefiled.

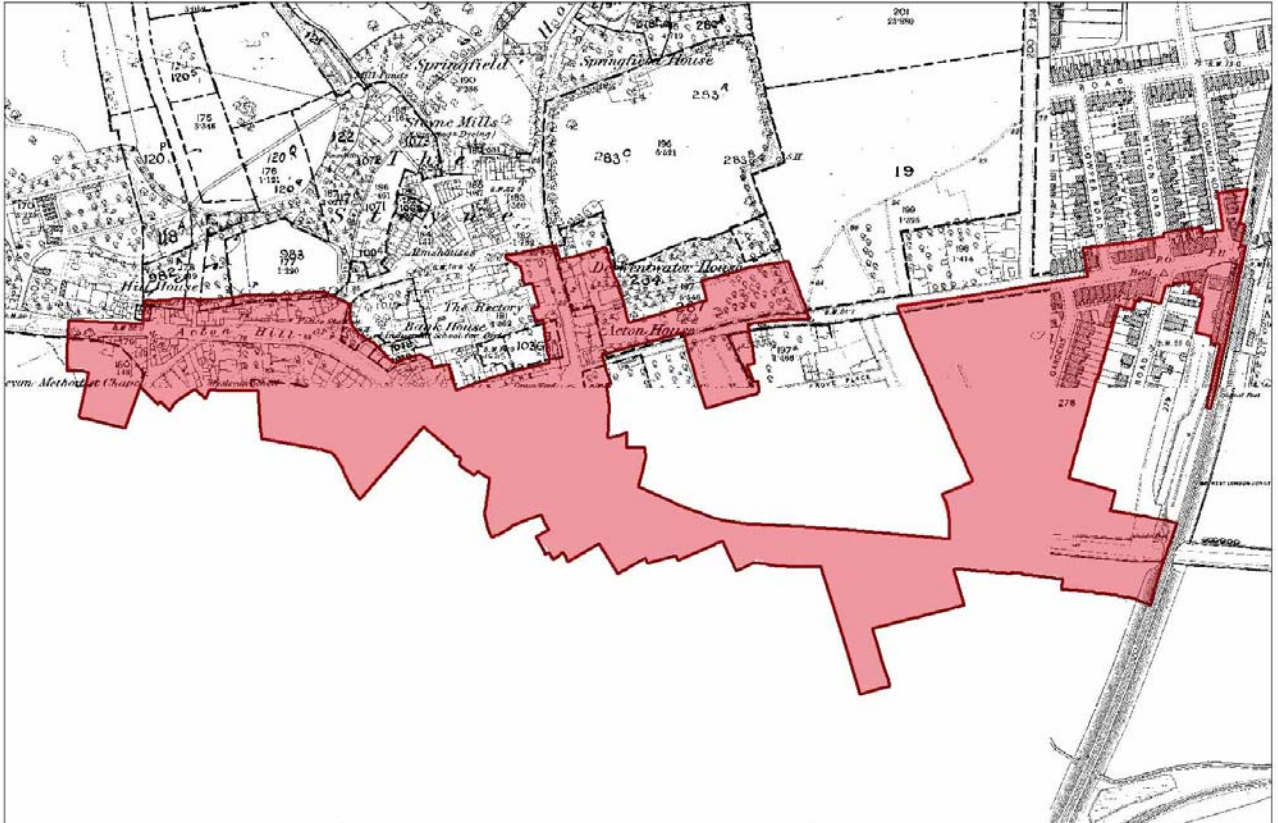
1930 OS Map

In the 1930 OS Map a general intensification of the built form is noted. In particular The Town Hall extension along the High Street, the Magistrate Court (marked a Police Court) and the King's Hall, are all clearly marked.



Acton High Street from the foot of Acton
1890 c.

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1870 OS Map

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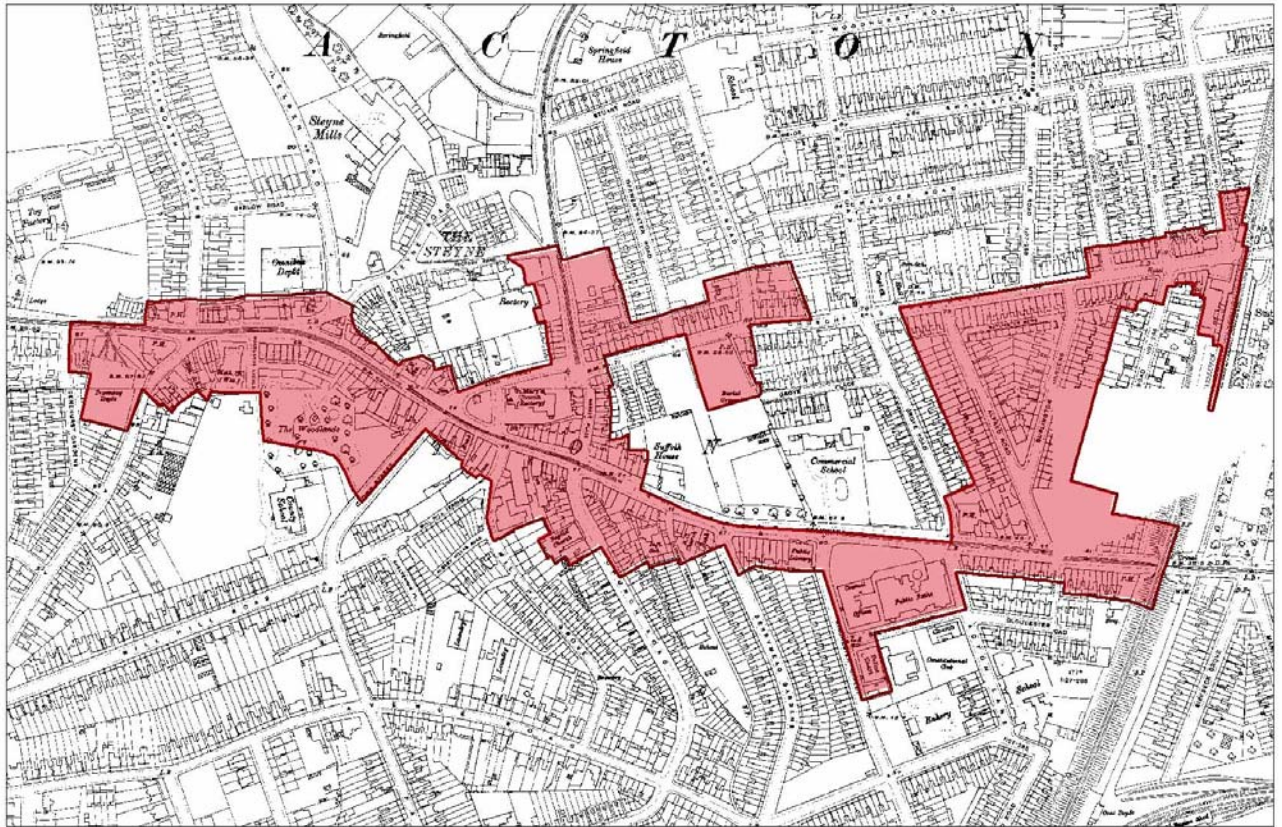
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1890 OS Map

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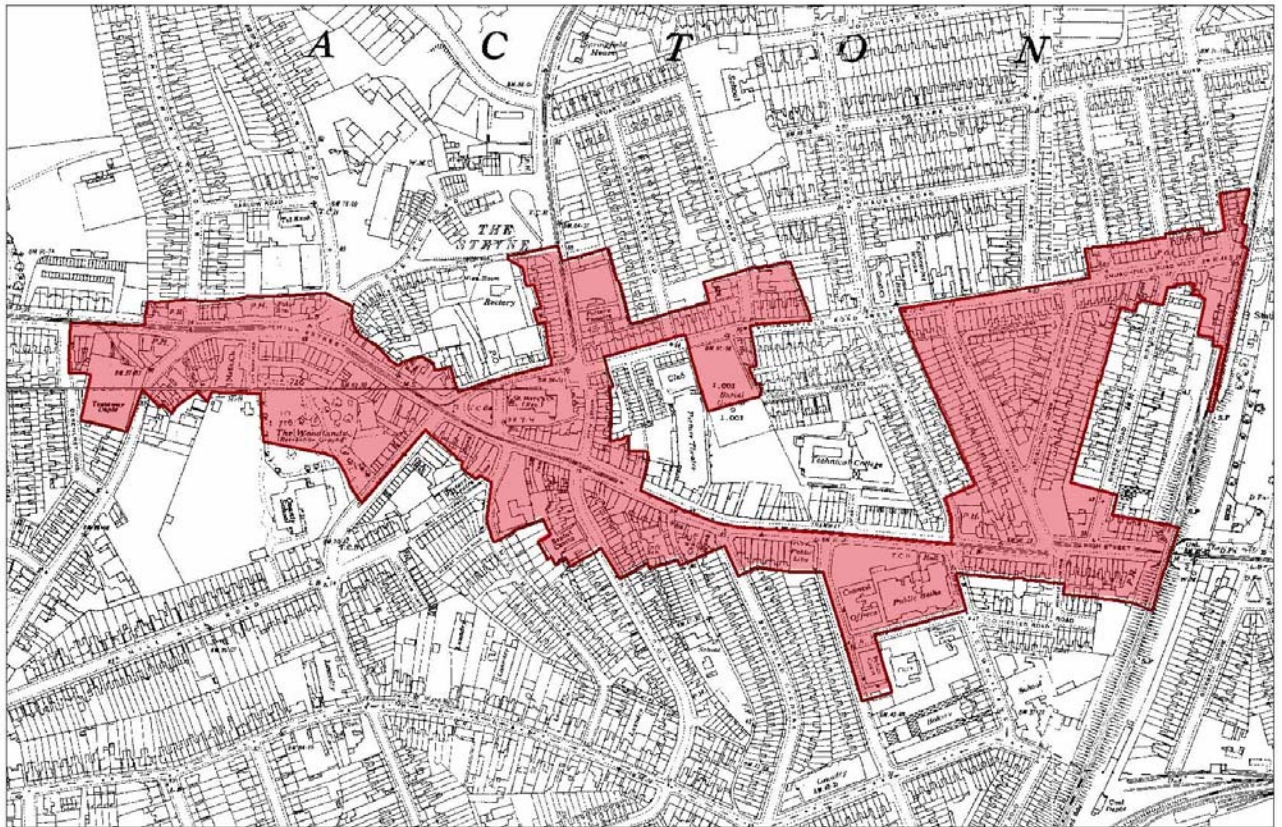


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1910 OS Map

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1930 OS Map

Scale: do not scale
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3.2. Archaeology

Acton Town Centre CA has a very strong archaeological significance. The Ealing Plan for the Environment (UDP) identifies the Area south of the Uxbridge as "Area of Archaeological Interest" (A1). The village was recorded in 1222 and settled continuously into post medieval times. The parish church existed in 1231 and permission for market was granted in 1232, and there was a medieval priory. An area of prehistoric and Roman finds is centred on Shakespeare Road, with further prehistoric finds south of the High Street.



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4. Spatial analysis

4.1. *The character and inter-relationship of spaces within the*

The townscape of Acton Town Centre CA is strongly determined by its varied topography. The Uxbridge Road followed the contours of the local hills, and it gives the present day Acton a surprising variation in levels and views both into and out the centre. The shallow curve running from east to west of the High Street produces a townscape of strong incident, including a constantly changing sequence of views with landmark buildings acting as points of orientation. Narrow side streets and alleyways that branch out from the High Street add to the strong physical permeability of the CA and to its distinctive character. On the eastern side of the CA, the rail tracks are a physical and visual barrier to the setting of the CA.

Approaching the CA from west the pedestrian precinct opposite to the Church is set on a slope – the space is mainly defined by the presence of St Mary's Church and Morrison's Supermarket. The western setting of this important public space is somehow disturbed on the western side by the large expanse of the foreground supermarket car-park.

East of St Mary's Church, the spatial character of the CA is defined by its main thoroughfares: Acton High Street in the core of the CA, and Market Place and Churchfield Road in the northern part of the CA.

The earlier urban grain of the main shopping areas along the High Street, Market Place and Churchfield Road is traditionally tight and minute. Only towards the western end of the High Street the Town Hall complex introduces some larger footprints, with the Town Hall and Public Baths buildings. Over the last decades this tight and compact grain has been fragmented in places with the introduction of some larger footprint of later developments or large over-ground service spaces with very little attention to the pattern of existing streets and buildings. These have resulted in fractures within the fine grain, and have created spaces of back land and service areas thus resulting in a loss of cohesion in the townscape and in poor connectivity. Remains of the early grain are still clearly perceivable within the townscape, but their original spatial context has somehow been compromised.

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The physical permeability of the CA provided by narrow side streets and alleyways that branch out from the High Street, somehow does not translate into a defined sense of orientation and direction and hence leads to a lack in easy visual permeability and legibility. Interspaces between buildings along the High Street have in fact been developed inappropriately and/or left as service spaces that do not promote visual connectivity and continuity with the High Street within the CA. Overall they are unsightly and do not invite pedestrian flow.

Woodlands Recreational Ground is the major open space within the CA. Yet its visual and physical connection with the High Street and the rest of the CA is poor. It is hidden away behind the Kings Parade with no proper way of access from and to the High Street. The green and well looked after space comes as a surprise when descending along Crown Street. However it is very difficult to discern its presence within the townscape.

The roofscape of the core shopping area is very varied as it is the result of buildings developed at different times and in different styles. The prominent gables of the late Victorian/Edwardian red brick buildings contribute to the punctuation of the roofline along the main shopping thoroughfare and to the strong vertical emphasis of the streetscape of the High Street. Along the Market Place, Churchfield Road and the residential area, the roofscape is less varied and more homogeneous.

The three sub-areas of character display rather similar spatial configurations in term height of buildings and size of plots, yet their architectural character and feel is quite different.

The overall scale of buildings in the CA is modest – mainly 3/4 storey on narrow plots on the High Street.

In sections of the High Street, historic buildings from Victorian and Edwardian times are grouped together forming a rather continuous street front. The narrow width of the High Street, combined with the very compact building front and the tight pattern of building's elevations, produces a marked vertical emphasis.

Market Place also presents a tight and continuous front on the eastern side. Here, due to the narrow width of the street and the tight patterns of elevations on the eastern side, the road offers a strong vertical emphasis.

In sections of Churchfield Road the street front appears rather continuous and compact with modestly sized building at 3/4 storey.

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However the northern side is architecturally less uniform as buildings have been developed sporadically. In addition the presence of several gap sites on both sides of the road dilutes the sense of cohesion of the street. Churchfield Road is rather wide compared to the height of buildings; this contributes to a less tight grain and a quieter feel.

Alfred Road and Burlington Gardens ascend the hill towards Churchfield Road and form a well defined residential triangle that acts as a filter between the busy traffic environs of the High Street to the south and the calmer and local feel of Churchfield Road to the north. The ascending topography accentuates the rhythmic succession of the late victorian properties. The scale is rather modest at 3- storey with half basement. Properties sit on narrow plot and are arranged either as terraced or as semidetached but with very narrow interspaces. Houses are also set very close to the streetline with very small front gardens.

4.2. Key views and vistas

The gently meandering profile of the Uxbridge Road also means that, as one moves along the modern High Street, the view is constantly changing. The changing vistas created by this curving street line on plan are given added emphasis and attraction by its rise and fall in section. At a more local level the narrow side streets and alleys that approach the High Street add a distinctive character. Many of these routes reflect the tracks and paths that originally led to and crossed the main road.

The moderately varied topography of the CA does allow for a few vantage points from which to obtain significant views in and out to the CA.

Views of the CA from the surroundings

The strong permeability of the CA and its raised topography allows from several views into the CA from its surroundings. The most significant one is the view of St Mary's Church from Mill Hill Park, at the eastern end of Mill Hill Road.

Views within the CA

Along the High Street, looking east the Town Hall complex is a distinct landmark that closes the view on this side of the High Street. The Town Hall and the adjoining Baths are an important civic group, which closes the vista along the curving High Street.

Looking west, the tower of the Methodist Church of Acton Hill raises above the compact pattern of the roofline in the High Street. Approaching the CA from Ealing the prominent position and imposing presence of the Church of St Mary's set in its large square creates a strong gateway element.

The view of the compact row of Victorian buildings and shopfront along the curving aspect of Market Place (both from the High Street northwards and from Horn Lane southwards) is very suggestive. This view is particularly interesting due to the strong modular rhythm resulting from the tight elevation patterns and the quality of the topography.

Another attractive view is the Tower of the Acton Hill Methodist Church seen from the green expanse of Woodlands Recreational Ground.

Views from the CA onto the outside

Views of the rhythmic succession of terraced houses along the residential streets is rather suggestive. Along Alfred Road and Burlington Gardens, in the Sub Area 3, the view of the modular rhythm of the elevations and roofs of the properties that flank either side of the two residential roads is an intrinsic element of the character of the residential section of the CA.



View from Langely Drive/Mill Hill Road across St Mary's Church and Mill Hill Terraces towards Acton Town



View of Acton Hill Methodist Church from the High street looking west



The curving line of Market Place from the southern end of Horn Lane



Acton Hill Methodist Church seen from Woodlands Recreational Ground

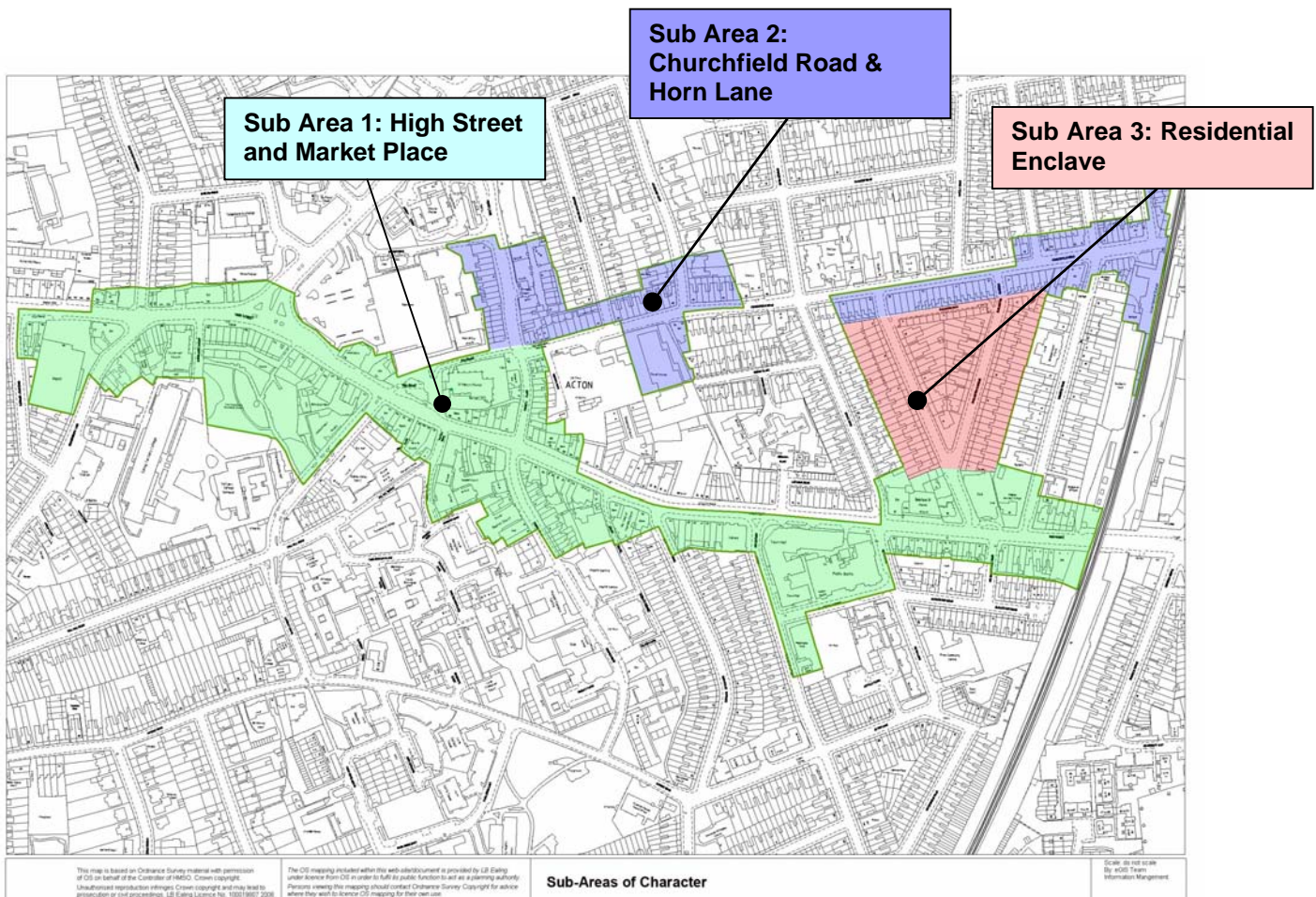
5. The character of the conservation area

5.1. Character Areas and the quality of architecture

This section deals with the value and location of prominent historical buildings within the boundary of the CA. It includes structures and areas that represent important architectural and natural landmarks in Acton Town Centre CA and that significantly contribute to its character. This section has been subdivided to reflect the fact that the character of the CA changes significantly within its boundary.

The CA breaks down into 3 Sub-Areas of character:

1. High Street - Market Place
2. Churchfield Road and Horn Lane
3. Residential Enclave



Sub Area no 1: The High Street

The High Street and Market Place are the historic core of Acton centred on the old London to Oxford coaching road on the top of Mill Hill and Acton Hill. There are signs of the original market town and one of the original coaching inns still exists, but the majority of the buildings were constructed in the Victorian period at the height of Acton's prosperity. The area is considered to be one of the few relatively unspoilt Victorian town centres in London, and many of the properties are included in the Statutory and Local Lists of Buildings of Special Architectural or Historic Interest. At the top of the High Street, just before the church, a plaque in the pavement marks the first shop of Mr Waite and Mr Rose, better known today as the highly successful store – Waitrose.

The High Street has a lively and varied character due to the multitude of activities as well as the variety of architecture. The main character is that of a bustling commercial centre. Institutional, religious, public, recreational buildings coexist along Acton High Street, resulting into a townscape of significant impact. There is an undoubted quality to many of the buildings in the CA especially along the High Street, but is the relationship of the buildings, streets, and spaces as a whole that provides the key to its character.

Apart from the linear High Street, there are two other urban spaces of townscape quality within this Sub Area of character. 1) The pedestrian precinct in front of St Mary's Church which replaced King Street and The Mount in 1992. The space is enclosed on the east side by the Church, Church Hall and Barclays bank, and on the north side by the Morrisons store. 2) Woodlands Park south of the High Street provides a mature landscape and recreation space close to, but rather hidden from the High Street and town centre.

An important part of the character of Acton own centre is the group value of its buildings and the way these buildings relate to each other. Many of the buildings have considerable architectural quality in their own right. This applies not only to those buildings listed as being of national architectural or historic importance, but to a number of others which are strategically located in key positions and which make an important contribution to the area's special character, including locally listed buildings and other buildings in Market Place, Churchfield Road and Church Road as well as in the High Street.

In townscape terms the most important buildings in the Sub Area of Character 1 are St Mary's Church, Acton Hill Church and Acton Town Hall and Baths. Both church towers are clearly visible from many different parts of the



Western end of the High Street with the King's Parade on the southern side and the tower of St Mary's Church on the northern side



Pedestrian precinct opposite to St Mary's Church



Late Victorian/Edwardian buildings along the southern side of the High Street



Woodlands Recreational Ground and listed Ice House

Acton Town Centre Conservation Area Character Appraisal

locality, rising above the surrounding development and providing that important sense of structure and location within the overall urban form.

Towards the western and eastern extremities of the High Street the character is less compact and several later intrusions within the earlier grain make the appearance a feel of the CA more fragmented.

5.1.1. Sub Area no 1 architectural interest

High Street (south side – from east to west).

As one approaches Acton High Street from the east, is a **locally listed** Public House at **Nos 1-3** and a row of terraced houses. The character here is rather fragmented and less tight as the street-front is less compact and the street width is greater than in the central part of the High Street. This fragmentation is augmented by the presence of large foot-print buildings (e.g. Beechworth House and the Bingo)

Progressing westwards, the Town Hall complex acts as a key gateway to the town centre. The group of buildings comprises the Acton Town Hall; the Town Hall extension, the Public Baths and the King's Rooms. Historically this group was an advertisement for the town progressive civic and community spirit.

Acton Town Hall (**Grade II Listed**) was finished in 1910, to the designs of Raffles & Gridley working in collaboration with the Borough Engineer and Surveyor, D. J. Ebbetts. The building is of red brick and Portland stone and follows the idea of a symmetrical Baroque palazzo with a handsome seven-bay front to Winchester Street and with projecting pedimented end pavilions. All windows are framed with stone surrounds and those of the Piano Nobile are pedimented. This is a characteristic Edwardian building exuding civic pride and confidence in its rich architectural details and finishes. Moreover it provides a tangible link to the past history of Acton.

The stylish frontage of The Town Hall Extension (**Grade II Listed**) was designed under the directions of Robert Atkinson in 1938-39 and is a very strong presence within the Acton High Street townscape. Its style continues the architectural themes and materials of the main building, but in a more austere and simplified classical form, relying on its scale and massing for the townscape effect. This is particularly applied to the symmetrical angled corner with its tall-inscribed parapet. To Acton High Street the elevation is asymmetrical and is topped by a cubist cupola/ clock tower that punctuates the street scene. The area fronting the High Street is guarded by classical stone piers and cast iron railings, which while giving the building additional presence, they isolate it from street. The urban block is completed by the complex of the Public Baths which main entrance is along Salisbury Road.



The Town Hall



Town Hall Extension



Public Baths

Acton Town Centre Conservation Area Character Appraisal

The Public Swimming Baths (**Locally Listed**) were opened in 1904 and designed by D. J. Ebbetts. The complex is punctuated by the high Chimney (**Listed, Grade II**). The Bath presents a very robust and asymmetrical frontage of red bricks and Portland stone. The Chimney is a feature of particular architectural note with its tapering and square in plan and plain up to the elaborate decorative terracotta capping. The entrance to the Public Baths from the High Street is obtained thanks to the King's Rooms. The King's Rooms was built a few years later than the Public Baths, in 1926 to provide further facilities. The building is three-storey high, of red brick with white Portland Stone bands and dressings. It fits into a tight and angled site, reconciling the difference in angle between the rear gable of the larger pool and the line of the High Street. The principal frontage is six-bay long with an asymmetrically placed projecting entrance bay capped by an arched opening and stepped pyramid-roofed cupola. The red brick is carried around the corner into Acton Lane where there is a blank and unwelcoming end wall which is connected to the side frontage of the swimming pool, but to the west it is in a plain stock brick – no doubt designed to cater for future expansion. Overall the High Street frontage is a robust design contributing to the streetscape, but lacking the quality and refinement of the Town Hall extension.

In the vicinity of the Town Hall Further south along Winchester Street is the County Magistrates Court. It is an attractive, mainly single storey, classical building, concluded in 1907. Of brick and stone dressing and a steep welsh slate pitched roof, the entrance to Salisbury Road is marked by a central pedimented bay incorporating a carved shield of Middlesex. This is a small dignified building that in spite of some later inappropriate alteration still maintains most of its character and makes a very positive aesthetic and historic contribution to Acton Edwardian heritage.

Further west along the High Street and west of Winchester Road, is the entrance to the Acton Library (**Grade II, Listed**) built in 1898-9. With its robust and strongly modelled frontage to the High Street it is a remarkable episode within the street scene. The large amount of well-executed decorative carving on the main elevation is complemented by the impressive central gable topped by a chimney. Some of the original joinery remains to the frontage. The side elevation along Winchester Street has suffered from the effects of a 1960s first floor addition, which has replaced a gable and a steeply pitched roof and cupola with a rather blank and utilitarian structure.



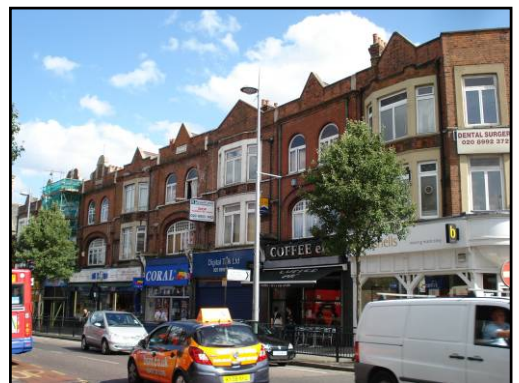
King's Rooms



County Magistrates Court



Acton Library



Royal Parade along the High Street

Acton Town Centre Conservation Area Character Appraisal

From nos 121-137 (odds) is the Royal Parade, an Edwardian terrace in red brick and stone dressing with roof parapet punctuated by pointed gables.

The Church of our Lady of Lourdes sits between two buildings at no 139 and no 143. The building at no 143 is a brutalist, concrete faced building with an interesting west-corner feature – yet it has very little connection with the more traditional architectural language of the High Street and it has been inappropriately altered. The Church is in yellow brick with stone dressing and it is very pleasant episode in the streetscape. Built in 1902 by E. Goldie it boasts an Italian Romanesque style with a steeply pitched front gable with a large round window with tracery to the High Street.

Further west, Oldham Terrace offers the distinguished presence of the synagogue.

Between nos 145 and 171 (odds) is a mix of buildings from different times and styles. A Victorian Italianate terrace in stock brick (from nos 147-159) with prominent cornices at parapet level is intercepted by a later elevation at nos 153-155. The terrace continues with 3-storey Edwardian buildings in red brick with stone dressing and with prominent front gables. The corner is terminated by a lower, two-storey, Victorian building with corner quoins that are now not very noticeable due to the white render.

On the south side, Church Road main building of interest is Acton Baptist Church (**Locally Listed**), with its Victorian eclectic elevation. Built in 1864 by W. Mumford boasts an agreeable classical front with a pediment and round-headed windows with idiosyncratic lamp-brackets.

From no 175 to no 189 (odds) is the George and Dragon Pub with a group of other early structures (from 177-181 **Locally Listed** – and then from 183–185 **Grade II, Listed**). Two distinct periods are distinguishable: To the left, later 18th Century, 3-storey and 3-bay with a single blank window to the central bay at first floor. The front is characterised by sash windows and stock bricks. The ground floor has a good Edwardian public house front.

To the right, is the earlier part, probably from the 17th Century. It is a timber framed building with stucco front and slate roof and with carriage entrance under bay window. On the right hand side, there is a modern shop at ground storey level. The origins of the building are clear from the rear with jettying and some 18th Century sash windows. The group is a reminder of the old village.

The corner building at no 191 is the only Victorian remaining in this block. From no 193 to 197 (odds) is a modern block with red brick cladding that attempts to reflect a traditional architectural language in terms of its



Church of our Lady of the Lourdes



High Street - Nos 145-171 (odds)



George and Dragon



Nos 199-211 with The Six Bells pub

Acton Town Centre Conservation Area Character Appraisal

detail and fenestration pattern, yet it lacks the definition, articulation and texture of its earlier counterparts, resulting in a rather boxy presence within the townscape.

From nos 199- 209 (odds) is an Edwardian terrace in red brick with stone dressing and prominent gables (**Locally Listed**). At ground floor level original shopfront corbels still remain. At no 211 is the Six Bells pub (**Locally Listed**). With its painted, ornate Dutch gable and its prominent chimneystacks, the pub makes a distinctive corner feature at the access to Crown Street south leading to Clyde Path to Woodlands Recreational Ground.

From nos 239-233 (odds) is a 1930 two-storey, red brick building – from 235 to 239 unlisted terrace probably on mid-Victorian structures.

As the High Street joins with the Uxbridge Road westwards, the impressive presence of the King's Parade (**Listed, Grade II**) effectively follows the curving line of the street and makes a striking townscape episode. It is a row of shops of 1903, by A H Sykes. Materials are red brick with terracotta bay windows, rough-cast gables and gabled plain tile and concrete tile roof with brick stacks. It provides as an unusual example of Art Nouveau architecture. Together with Acton Hill Church the Parade forms a gateway to the town centre from west.

Acton Hill Methodist Church (**Listed, Grade II**) built by Gordon and Gordon in 1907, is Rubble faced with a tower at the north-east angle in a free Gothic style. The elevation is defined by double-window to the north end of nave with triple window under. The entrance is marked by low entrance porch.

Approaching Acton Town Centre CA from West Acton, the imposing and varied profile of the **Acton Bus Garage** on the south side of the High Street act as a getaway to the CA.

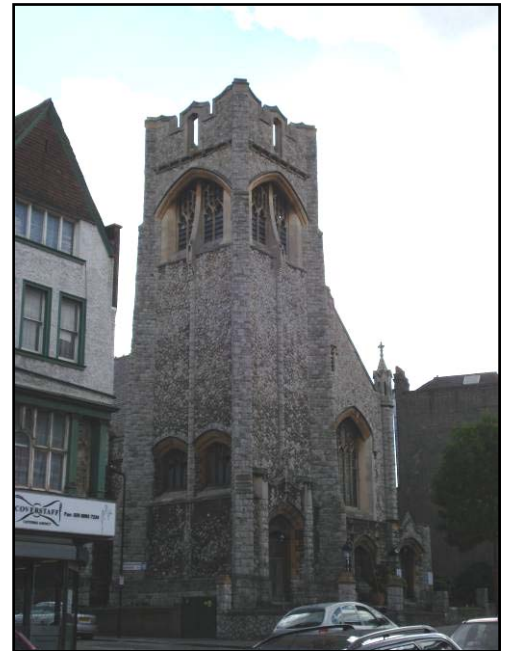
High Street (north side – from east to west).

From nos 2-10 (even) is an unlisted terrace. The Granada Social Club (**Listed Grade II**), the former Dominion Cinema of 1937 by F.E. Bromige dominates this section of the CA. The exterior is characterised by a gross bulgy brick curved elevation which makes a strong statement in the streetscape.

Very close to the cinema is Beechworth House. This is a detrimental, alien intrusion in the streetscape, and it adjoins to a pleasant **Locally Listed** Edwardian Pub, The Windmill, at no 50. The pub with its corner turret makes a gateway feature to the residential area to the north.



King's Parade



Acton Hill Methodist Church



Former Dominion Cinema

Acton Town Centre Conservation Area Character Appraisal

Then it starts a section that is out of the CA on the north side.

From no 156 buildings along the northern side of the High Street are again included in the CA. From no 156 to 170 at the corner with Market Place are not listed.

Back on the High Street from no 172 to 188 (Barclays Bank) are **Locally Listed**. The Barclays bank was built by the London and Slough Western Bank and dated 1884 with a fancy crown-stepped end-gable and unusually lavish Jacobean detail in brilliant red terracotta.

Prominently sited in the centre of Acton Town, the Church of St Mary's (**Grade II, Listed**) is a landmark from many points in the CA. In its present appearance, in red brick with stone dressings, the church was designed by Messrs Francis in 1865. The tower was constructed with diagonal buttresses and castellated parapet in 1877.

The Kings Head pub at no 214, (**Locally Listed**) is a strong corner building on the west, and the Six Bells pub and the Midland Bank building effectively completes the space on the south side.

The Midland bank at no 199 is from 1900 c. and has a very distinctive carved oriel window.

At no 216 further west is a **Locally Listed** social Club – ex Fire Station. With its picturesque half-timbered gable, the former fire station was built in 1899 and was converted to a social centre in the early 1990s.

The Woodlands, a small park with its **Listed Grade II** ice house, was the former gardens of a country house demolished in 1903. It provides a mature landscape and recreation space close to, but rather hidden and disconnected from the High Street and Town Centre.

Market Place

The curving and ascending aspect of Market Street, the sense of enclosure resulting from the special relationship between the height of the buildings and the contained width of the street, add to the townscape value of this section of the CA and to its character and atmosphere.

The eastern side of the street is lined by a compact row of Victorian terraces with shops at ground floor and accommodations to the upper floors (from no 1 to 9 are **Locally Listed**). The three-storey, simple terrace follows the curving line of the street augmenting the sense of enclosure and intimacy of the environs. The mid-Victorian terrace is in stock brick with stucco trimming and prominent parapets hiding the line of the roof. Shopfront corbels still survive and add to the texture of the elevations at ground floor level. The western side of Market Street is lined by buildings of different form and styles, some of which are of later origins.



St Mary's Church



The Kings Head Pub



Old Fire Station



Market Place - east side

Acton Town Centre Conservation Area Character Appraisal

This, added to the presence of considerable gaps, results in a less compact and coherent character both in terms of built-form and in terms of architectural language.

Sub Area no 2: Churchfield Road and Horn Lane

Churchfield Road runs north to the High Street and it is lined by modest early and mid 19th century terraces and villas. Not all the northern side of Churchfield Road is included within the CA. Buildings from no 48 to no 86 (even) are excluded as they are either later of lesser quality than their neighbours. Horn Lane runs north of Market Place but only its southern end is included in the CA.

5.1.2. Sub Area no 2 architectural interest

Churchfield Road

The eastern end of Churchfield Road is marked by the railway tracks and by the Acton Central Station (**Locally Listed**). The station was the first station in Acton and opened in 1853. The line was extended to provide commuters' route to Broad Street in the City in 1865 and the station was then rebuilt in 1876. It is one of the few examples left of the North London line, the platforms still have their iron work and fringed canopy. The handsome station building is now Acton Park Wine Bar.

Along the southern section of Churchfield Road a group of 3 Victorian terraces at nos 33 to 63 is of particular interest. These are 3-storey terraces in light stock brick, with projecting shopfronts at ground floor with distinctive decorative corbels surmounted by prominent finials. The first floor windows are finished with a classical pediment. The properties are topped by stuccoed decorated band below the projecting eaves. The roofline is made by low-pitch roofs but they are hidden behind a stuccoed parapet.

Shopfronts in Churchfield Road have particular prominence, they are very often projecting from the building line and they retain some original details as decorative corbels and original mosaic forecourt.

Horn Lane

The line of the street continues that of Market Place northwards, yet it offers a quieter and less tight aspect. The western side is occupied by traditional, turn of the century small terraces with shops at ground level and accommodation above.

The eastern side is occupied by a clean, bright contemporary design development – Avingdor Court - for affordable housing. Its presence reinforces the street scene while generating a semi-public internal street for residents.



Dewenwater Mansions



Acton Central Station



Nos 33-63 Churchfield Road



Avingdor Court in Horn Lane

Sub Area no 3: Residential Enclave

The Sub Area 3 forms a well-defined triangle of Victorian terraces along Alfred Road and Burlington Gardens. This residential enclave is bounded by the High Street to the south and by Churchfield Road to the north. The architectural language is very consistent with most houses dating from around 1870 to 1890 and still retaining the character of a middle-class, late Victorian suburban development. On the outer part of the residential triangle properties are arranged as terraces, whilst on the inner part properties are semidetached but very closely arranged.

5.1.3. Sub Area no 3 architectural interest

Burlington Gardens

Accessing Burlington Gardens from the High Street the ascending aspect of the street towards Churchfield Road, contributes to its townscape impact. Houses are aligned on either side of the road with properties on the eastern side being of particular merit. These are urban, stucco-trimmed terraces. The three-storey, with half-basement properties, are in stock bricks, with low front boundary wall with piers. The elevations are characterised by a recessed stuccoed entrance porch and a canted bay-window at ground floor level. Windows at the Piano Nobile are surrounded by prominent classical mouldings with side corbels and pediment. The top floor parapet is supported by eaves with brackets, a typical feature of the houses of the time. The compact aspect of Burlington Gardens is in contrast with other roads in Acton that were developed in a piecemeal fashion.

Alfred Road

The western side of Alfred Road is lined by Italianate terraces. The three-storey with half-basement properties are in grey/brown stock bricks. The elevations are characterised by an arched, recessed, stuccoed entrance porch and a canted bay windows at ground floor level. The grouped arched-windows surmounted by a stucco pediment at the first floor are the distinctive feature of the elevations. Properties are separated from the street by a low boundary wall with cast iron railings and piers in line with the entrance pathway leading to the steps to the entrance porch. Roofs are hipped with projecting soffits supported by brackets and are intercepted by substantial chimneystacks with clay pots.



Junction between Burlington Gardens and Alfred Road



Alfred Road



Burlington Gardens



Locally Listed terrace in Burlington Gardens

5.2. Key unlisted buildings

A number of unlisted buildings in Acton Town Centre CA contribute positively to the character of the area despite not meeting the criteria for statutory or possibly local listing. They reflect the age, style and material of a substantial number of buildings in the CA and are a reminder of the gradual development of the settlement. The following buildings already mentioned in the previous sections are considered a positive contribution to the character of the CA.

Sub Area 1:

Church of Our Lady of Lourdes
Terraces at nos 217-229 (odds) and nos 225-231 (odds)
of the High Street
Magistrates Court
The King's Rooms

Sub Area 2:

Terraces along the southern side of Churchfield Road
St Mary's Burial Ground
Development at Horn Lane – Avingdor Court

Sub Area 3:

Terraces along Alfred Road



Victorian terraces in Alfred Road



Terraces at nos 217-229 (odds) and nos 225-231 (odds) in the High Street

5.3. Building materials and local details

The architectural heritage of the CA is extremely varied. Therefore a wide range of material and architectural details coexist without defining a very strong predominant pattern.

Sub Area 1

Red brick, stone dressing, Portland stone, terracotta details and cladding, slates or flat tiles are predominant materials in the late Victorian/Edwardian architectural heritage of the **Sub Area 1** in the CA. Stock bricks laid in Flemish bond are found in 18th Century remains, but are also used for secondary elevations or are hidden underneath the render of properties along the High Street. Stock bricks are also used for the parade of shops along Market Place and in some Victorian terraces at nos 182-172 along the High Street. In general it is possible to state that mid-Victorian buildings tend to have stock brick elevations while late-Victorian, Edwardian and 1930s buildings tend to have red brick elevations. Kentish ragstone is the characteristic material used for Acton Hill Methodist Church. Roughcast render and elaborate stucco embellishments are particularly used for the King's Parade.

Very prominent and highly decorative pointed or arched gables, very elaborate mouldings and/or stone or stucco string courses define façade patterns of many late Victorian/Edwardian properties along the High Street and. Very prominent gables often hide pitched roofs in slates, or low-pitch roofs are hidden behind parapets of mid-Victorian buildings.

Timber sash, 2/2 or 1/1 are predominant in mid-Victorian properties. Later buildings tend to have a mix of sash and casement (very often multi-paned) timber windows.

Cast iron railings in a low Portland stone kerb are found on the boundary wall of the Acton Town Hall.

Some original mosaic paving in shop forecourts survive along the High Street. Original decorative Corbels also survive.



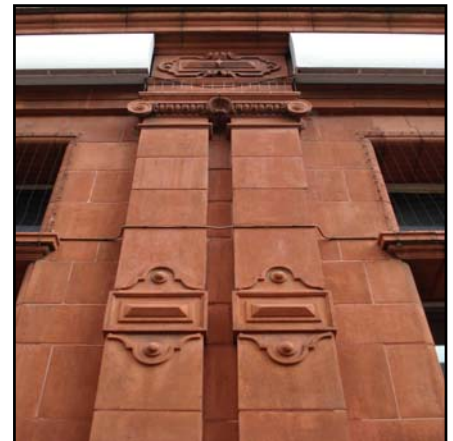
Timber sash in Market Place and decorative stucco string-course



Prominent gables, red bricks in Flemish bond and stone dressing



Roughcast render, tile-hanging and mix of timber sash and casement windows



Terracotta tiles cladding



Cast iron railings with Portland stone piers and kerb

Acton Town Centre Conservation Area Character Appraisal

Sub Area 2

At the western end of Churchfield Road red bricks with some modest stone dressing are dominant. Whiles at the eastern end of the road stock bricks are predominant. The predominant brick bond is Flemish. Stucco trimming with classical mouldings defines the elevations of the Victorian terraces on the southern side. Shop fronts are in section projecting from the building line. Very prominent corbels surmounted by distinguished finials, define the architectural rhythm at ground floor level. Most terraces are finished with a stuccoed parapet with decorative cornices supported by decorative brackets.

Large timber sash (1/1 and 2/2) are prevalent.



Projecting shopfront in Churchfield Road



Examples of shop-front decorative corbels



Typical mid-Victorian sash (2/2) with classical stucco trimming with central key stone, side corbels and top pediment



Stuccoed parapet, with decorative brackets and finials



Remains of original shop forecourt with interlocking tiles

Acton Town Centre Conservation Area Character Appraisal

Sub Area 3

Prevalent building materials in the residential enclave of the CA formed by Alfred Road and Burlington Gardens are yellow stock bricks laid in Flemish bond. Windows and doors in the mid/late Victorian properties have Italianate stucco surrounds, some with unusual decorative patterns. The original front yard treatments were a low brick wall with stone coping and brick piers and simple cast-iron gates, unfortunately very few are left.

Timber sash, 2/2 or 1/1 are predominant. Ground floor canted bay windows characterise a good number of residential late Victorian properties in the residential enclave.

Arched recessed porches embellished with Italianate stucco trimming are typical of Alfred Road. Grouped tripartite, arched windows topped by triangular pediment are a distinguished feature of the elevations. The hipped roofs with projecting eaves have decorative brackets.

Traditional doors are generally 4-panel timber with squared fanlight.

The traditional roof form is hipped covered with flat tiles or slates – although not many properties still retain their original roofing materials.

Along Burlington Gardens, terraces have a strong classical character: stuccoed canted bay and stuccoed recessed porches, pedimented first floor windows and stuccoed parapet with brackets are all elements typical of a classical language. The roofline is hidden by the top parapet.



Italianate, tripartite window with stuccoed pediment and arches with key stone supported by decorative capitals



Original boundary treatment in Alfred Road: low brick wall and piers with cast iron railing



Mid-Victorian, Italianate window with stucco pediment, key stone, corbels and projecting cill



Raised ground floor canted bay-window



Four-panel timber door with square fanlight inserted in recessed, stuccoed porch

5.4. Contribution of open spaces, trees and landscape

The green space of Acton Park east of the CA, provides the CA with a formal recreational space for residents and visitors to the CA. This is identified as Metropolitan Open Land within Ealing's UDP.¹

Woodlands Recreational Ground is tucked away from the High Street and is a restful episode within the buss of the shopping area. It also provides the setting for the interesting Listed Ice House and the rear of the Acton Hill Methodist Church Tower. Woodlands Recreational Ground is a registered Public Open Space in Ealing UDP.²

St. Mary Burial Ground along Churchfield Road is a small and calm space that contributes to the quieter and more local character of Churchfield Road.

The presence of healthy and mature broadleaved trees along the streets is critical for the character of the CA and is intrinsic to the very historical image of Acton as suburb. Also in the residential enclave, mature trees and green hedges complement the architecture and frame views within the CA.

5.5. The extent of intrusion or damage (negative factors)

Recent developments or later replacements of earlier buildings have had a detrimental impact on the CA. In particular poor architectural quality of recent building works, that have come to replace high Victorian and Edwardian buildings ignore the character and quality and spatial character of the earlier grain, thus creating fractures and visual gaps in the continuity of the streetscape. This results in a fragmented townscape where fine Victorian and Edwardian remains have, in places, lost their original context and are set between gaps or later developments that are completely alien to their quality, architectural expression, scale, massing, façade rhythm and proportions.

The Morrisons large, unbroken footprint and especially its over-ground car park create a large gap site within the town centre that breaks continuity and adds to the unwelcoming environs of the Steyne Road Junction.



Woodlands Recreational Ground



St Mary's Burial Ground



¹ UDP, Vol 1, p. 45, policy 3.4, Vol 2, p. 4

² UDP, Vol 1, p. 45, policy 3.4, Vol 2, p. 12

Acton Town Centre Conservation Area Character Appraisal

Equally, the huge car park of the Oaks Shopping Centre facing onto Churchfield Road is a fracture within the continuity of the streetscene.

Later developments of very poor quality include:
Several single storey service structures scattered all across the CA.

40-48 High Street – Beechworth House

28-31 King Street, Providen House

Also there are a number of underused sites and poor internal linkages within the CA that do not help the internal connectivity and contribute the fragmentation of the townscape.

- The junction at Steyne Road and Uxbridge Road is currently thought as road-dominated environment surrounded by very poor and characterless buildings or not paying any attention to any buildings of merit. This certainly not a welcoming gateway into Acton.
- The Tram Depot offers a very distinguished front on the Uxbridge Road when arriving to Acton from Ealing. Yet the site is currently redundant and its forecourt derelict. The building would benefit from a program of heritage-led regeneration.
- The Town Hall site is underused and its fabric is tired and run-down. There is scope for some heritage-led regeneration that could include, the Town Hall Complex, Library and Public bath to make it the eastern Acton Gateway.

A number of other threats to the special character of the CA are due to inappropriate development or alterations to the original properties and to their layout.

One bold example of inappropriate alteration is The Redback public house which has been painted inexcusably garish and vulgar colours.

Especially in the residential enclave, the loss of front garden trees and fences together with the loss of garden walls constitutes a threat to the character of the area. Boundary walls were an important element of the character of the 19th century. However, large portions of original boundary walls and fences have been demolished and were either not replaced or replaced inappropriately. This has resulted in a significant loss of definition of the streetscape and a loss of the original spatial hierarchy between public and private spaces with the CA. Later boundary walls have been executed with materials, design or technologies that are inappropriate with respect to their context.



Gap site along Churchfield Road with the over ground car-park of the Oaks centre



40-48 High Street – Beechworth House



Gap/service area facing onto the High Street between the Old Fire Station and the King's Head Pub (Morrisons in the background)



Service area at the rear of Beechworth House facing onto the residential enclave

Acton Town Centre Conservation Area Character Appraisal

The thinning of trees and hedges along properties' boundary also contributes to create an undistinguished and neglected feel.

Gap sites exist also in the residential enclave where the service areas at the rear of buildings along the High Street face onto the residential streets. (The service area at the rear of the bingo and at there tear of Beechworth House are particularly detrimental).

A number of other threats in the CA include:

- Extensions that are disrupting the traditional spatial relationship between buildings.
- Bulky dormer windows at the rear, at the front and at the side of properties, that disrupts the original proportions and character of historic properties as well as the roofscape of the CA.
- Each building period/style identified within the CA displays a very distinct character reflected in the design and quality of the joinery. The loss of the traditional fenestration patterns together with later doorways where materials, design and decoration patterns are not in keeping with the character of the property are a major concern for the quality of the architecture in the CA. Inappropriate replacements weaken the finish of the houses and give them a bland look.
- Inappropriate roofing materials
- Satellite dishes placed on front elevations create visual disturbance.



Conversion of the front yard to hard standing and loss of boundary treatment



Inappropriate window replacement with UPVC



Service area at the rear of the High Street facing Alfred Road in the residential enclave. This results into an unsightly gap-site within the streetscape



Parade of uncoordinated front-dormer windows disrupting the roofline

5.6. Public realm and street furniture

It is felt that the public realm of the CA could be greatly improved.

The impact of traffic is highly detrimental to the character of the CA. Fumes and noise make shopping more difficult and make pavements and outdoors cafes' seating less relaxing.

Pedestrian connects needs to be improved. Connection with Acton Town Station, and Acton Central Station and connections with green spaces are also difficult due to poor legibility.

Pavements are in the standard concrete slabs and not always well maintained. Coloured and studded sections at crossings and elsewhere are discordant resulting in visually untidy spaces. Pavements in High Street are narrow and respond to the modest scale of the street width and buildings' height, yet this contributes to a sense of clutter. The eastern end of the High Street, the street width is slightly wider and larger buildings like the Town Hall Extension would require a wider pavement that would better contribute to their setting. The large paved area opposite to St Mary's Church treated with granite slabs, creates a public realm with a very open aspect and the correct setting for the imposing tower of the church and the neighbouring historic buildings.

The edge between private forecourt (with public right of way) and Council pavement is poorly resolved. Forecourts are untidy and poorly maintained.

Bus stops are crowded and on narrow pavements where bus shelters do not provide little protection from rain.

The street furniture is not in character. It would be desirable for it to be coordinated properly. At the moment railings along the main thoroughfare restrict pedestrian movements and create visual clutter. Various service boxes, facilities and obsolete posts act as obstacles and compete visually with buildings, planting and the already jumbled and bold shopfront advertising. Phone boxes are of the standard modern type.

This results in an unattractive pedestrian environment, with street untidiness and poorly maintained pavements.

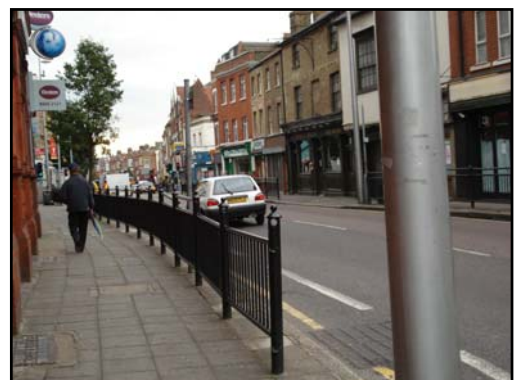
New street lights along the High Street has been recently installed. The new 10 meters aluminium lamp-posts are of simple but elegant design, with circular lamps and brackets for banners.



Obsolete street furniture that creates visual clutter in the public realm



Concrete pavements with colored studded section at crossing



Railing obstructing pedestrian flow



Poorly treated and maintained shop forecourts

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The new posts coexist with a number of other examples of lamp-posts mainly hockey stick within the CA. Although it is acceptable that different areas of the CA employ different lighting treatments, along Churchfields Road and the residential enclave the standard hockey sticks should be replaced with more in-keeping lamp-post that could complement the character of the architecture. In particular heritage posts would be more appropriate in most places in the residential enclave.

There are few traditional post-boxes in the CA, cast iron and painted bright red. Unfortunately, due to the general clutter on the pavements, e.g. less attractive service boxes and cabins, their visual appreciation is impossible.

More well-designed litter bins would also assist in keeping the area tidy and visually pleasant.

The addition of public seating would be desirable where pavements are large enough to accommodate them.

Shopfronts design and advertising is one of the major problems of the CA. Acton Town Centre CA has some very good remains of original, late 19th century/early 20th century shopfronts, with original corbels and pillars. The Council advocates the use of traditional materials and design, but appears to have been largely ignored in Acton Town Centre CA.

A considerable number of buildings within the shopping thoroughfares of the CA are considered to be of value.

Shopfronts should attempt to follow the precedents set by those around them and by the architecture of the building in which they sit.

In Acton Town Centre CA shops that are considering renewal of their shopfronts should consult with their neighbours to coordinate appearance across the clusters of their larger buildings.

The shopfronts of Acton Town Centre are quite an assorted collection ranging from pristine corporate shopfronts to the seemingly temporary shopfronts of the one pound store. There is very little consistency or continuity within the shopfronts and the ad hoc size and heights of the fascia's result in a very untidy parade.

5.7. General condition

The overall condition of most of the fabric in the CA is mediocre. In the residential enclave the state of neglect of some properties' front yards cluttered with fly-tipping is a concern for the CA.

Most buildings along the High Street would benefit from some maintenance, repair and refurbishment works.

In some places pavements and kerbs are in poor condition and could be improved.



Large service cabinet in the proximity of St Mary's Church graveyard spoiling the setting of the listed building



The tight succession of shopfronts and advertising tags along the High Street



One of the many examples of inappropriate shopfronts



Fly-tipping in the conservation area

The Council is working towards the integration of the Town Hall with the new development and towards a strategy that would secure continuous maintenance of the fabric thence avoiding the threat of becoming a “building at risk”.

5.8. Problems, pressures and capacity for change

Sub Area 1 & 2:

Acton Town Centre Conservation Area contains several areas of back land that are underused and contain low quality buildings that detract from the setting of more valuable neighbours and cause undesirable fracture in the urban grain of the CA. The Ealing Unitary Development Plan identifies a number of “Development Sites” within the Acton Town Centre CA³, in particular:

- **Site no 7** – (A1) Churchfield Road, Hoopers Mews (includes 133-137 Churchfield Road & Car Park, Hoopers Mews & 9-9a Market Place
- **Site no 9-** (A3) 10-20 Horn Lane
- **Site no 10** – 264-278 High Street
- **Site no 11** – (A5) 40-48 (Beechworth House) & 48a High Street W3
- **Site no12** – (A6) Acton Town Hall, High Street and Baths, Salisbury Street, W3

Sub Area 3:

There is little capacity for major change within the residential enclave of the CA. Over the course of the years all plots have been developed in a reasonably sensitive manner. Further intensification could detract from the traditional layout of properties, which is one of the elements of special interest. The proliferation of inappropriate roof developments should be stopped as it creates severe disturbance to the architectural and townscape quality of the CA. Further control of replacements in historic properties should be exerted as the latter are a harsh threat to the character of the area.

³ Ealing Adopted Plan for the Environment, 2004, Vol 2, pp. 64, 65

6. Suggested boundary changes

The Appraisal of the Acton Town Hall CA and of its immediate surrounds had shown no need to revise the extension of its boundary. Significant areas in the surroundings of the CA and part of its setting are already protected by the CA status (i.e. Acton Park, and Creffield CA).

7. Community involvement

In accordance with English Heritage guidance, the Council has involved key stakeholders during the appraisal process, a list of which is appended. This initial consultation process has been undertaken in a number of on site meetings with representatives of local amenity groups and in the form of a questionnaire sent to key stakeholders based in and around the CA. The questionnaire called for careful consideration and in some instances detailed responses. Due regard to the questionnaire responses has been paid in this text.

8. Summary of issues

- The state of neglect of some open/public spaces in the CA
- Several back land areas and gap sites that create fractures within the urban grain
- Poor connectivity
- Poor quality later developments that are not sympathetic with earlier and valuable architectural remains
- Poorly designed shopfronts and uncoordinated street furniture
- Loss of front garden trees and fences
- Loss of front yard walls to create parking for cars
- The poor condition of most buildings in the CA
- The general inappropriate design of recent developments in the residential enclave:
 1. New boundary walls with inappropriate material and design with the addition of out of character decorative railings
 2. Changes to the fenestration
 3. Continuous porches
 4. Bulky dormers that disrupt the roofscape
 5. Satellite dishes placed at the front of properties

9. Planning and Policy framework

A summary of the principal legislation and policy guidance applicable to Acton Town Centre CA is set out below:

The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 sets out the process of assessment, definition, or revision of boundaries and formulation of proposals for CAs as well as the identification and protection of Listed Buildings. Authorities are required to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of the CA, or in case of Listed Buildings, to have special regard for their preservation in the exercise of their powers under the Planning Acts.

Planning Policy Guidance (PPG) Note 15, for local and other public authorities, property owners, developers, amenity bodies and public, sets out Government policies for the identification and protection of historic buildings, CAs, and other elements of the historic environment. *Ealing Council's Unitary Development Plan (UDP)* or *Local Development Framework (LDF)* includes its statutory policies for implementing the Acts and apply the PPG. This Appraisal should be taken into account when considering planning or listed building applications within the Conservation Area.

The prime objective of the relevant legislation and guidance is the preservation and/or enhancement of character or appearance of CAs. Any proposed developments which conflict with that objective should be normally expected to be refused. PPG 15 and local policy also support a presumption in favour of preservation of any buildings or objects which are considered to make a positive contribution to the character of a CA. At the same time, it is recognised the need to accommodate changes which respect or reinforce the character of the area in order to maintain its vitality.

Many local planning policies – not only those for design and conservation – can affect the developments in a CA. For instance policies on sustainable development, meeting housing needs, affordable housing, landscape, biodiversity, energy efficiency, transport, people with disabilities, employment and town centres can all influence development and the quality of the environment in CA. However, policies concerned with design quality and character generally take greater importance in CAs. The adopted UDP's section on Urban Design includes policies dealing with:

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- Design of Development (4.1)
- Mixed Use (4.2)
- Landscaping, Tree Protection and Planting (4.5)
- Statutory Listed Buildings (4.7)
- Conservation Areas (4.8)
- Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Interest Areas (4.9)
- Commercial Frontage and Advertising Signs (4.10)

Throughout the Urban Design section, references are made after each policy to further relevant documents and policies, including:

- *SPG 5: How to Prepare an Urban Design Statement*
- *SGP 12: Greening Your Home*
- *Ealing LA21: Keeping Your Front Garden Alive*
- *PPG 15: Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas*
- *PPG16: Archaeology and Planning*
- *PPG 19: Outdoor Advertisement Control*
- "By Design - Urban Design in the Planning System: towards a better Practice"(CABE & DETR, 2000)
- "By Design – Better Places to Live: A Companion Guide to PPG 3" (CABE, 2001)
- *The London Plan*, Policy 4B.5, 4B10, 4B11, 4B12, 4B14

Policy 4.8 for CA states:

- The Council will preserve or enhance the character and appearance of CAs and their setting.
- New developments, built or otherwise within or adjacent to the CA, will be permitted provided that they are well related to the existing character of the area in terms of its historic and architectural quality and green setting. The Council requires that any development proposal adhere to the Council's specific CA guidelines.
- The council will refuse planning permission and CA consent for development of existing buildings, unless the proposed replacement development will preserve or enhance the character of the CA. Where appropriate, the Council will also make Article 4 Directions that restrict development rights granted by the General Permitted Development Order.
- It is the Council's intention to create new and extended CAs in the Borough, in areas which merit this status, having regard to the individual quality of the area as a whole.

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The criteria for further designation or extension of CAs are sets out as:

- The area concerned must be the setting for one or more of the following:
 1. Listed Buildings, or a group of buildings of good design from any period especially when they create an attractive townscape.
 2. Urban open spaces or historic village greens.
 3. Features of historic or archaeological interest including industrial or transport heritage.
 4. Landscape features including, water, trees, and gardens of value for their plant, wildlife or their amenity of the surrounding area.
 5. An historic street pattern.
- The area should have some cohesion of character worthy of preservation.
- The benefit of preserving that character must be considered to be greater than the loss of certain permitted development rights having regard to the financial and resource implications of such action.

Detailed advice on policies contained in the UDP, on restrictions on Listed Buildings, residential and commercial properties in Conservation Areas, and for guidance on the procedure to apply for permission, can be obtained from the London Borough of Ealing, Planning and Surveying Services, Perceval House, 14-16 Uxbridge Road, London, W5 2HL, Tel 020 8825 6600, email: planning@ealing.gov.uk, or, alternatively, from the Council's website at www.ealing.gov.uk.

10. Glossary

Ashlar hewn blocks of masonry neatened and laid in horizontal courses

Arch the spanning of an opening by means other than a lintel. Most commonly arches are curved and made up of wedge shaped blocks. Numerous variations exist e.g. Blind, Triumphant, Vernacular

Band an unmoulded, projecting string course, often delineating a floor/storey

Bargeboards projecting boards set against the incline of the gable of a building

Bay the vertical division of the exterior, (or interior) of a building marked by a window opening. They may be Round, (or Canted) or Square

Bond style of laying Headers, (bricks laid with the long side at right angles to the face of a wall), and Stretchers, (bricks laid with the long side along the face of the wall), within masonry courses. Flemish Bond is where alternate Headers and Stretchers are used in the face of the wall. English Bond is where alternate courses of bricks in the facing wall are either Headers or Stretchers

Buttress a mass of masonry or brickwork projecting from or built against a wall to give additional strength

Capitals the top or head of a column, pier or pilaster, which relate to Classical architecture

Casement window a window hinged vertically to open like a door

Cladding an external covering applied to a structure for protective/aesthetic purposes

Coade Stone an artificial cast stone used from the second half of the 18th Century for decorative keystones

Column an upright, often supporting, structure either, round, square or rectangular in form

Coping a capping or covering found on top of a wall. They can be flat or sloping to discharge water

Cornice a projecting, decorative moulding found along the top of a building refers to a cornice made up of a series of small square blocks Dentil Cornice

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Corbel a projecting block, usually stone, supporting a horizontal beam

Course a continuous layer of stones or bricks found in a wall. Referred to as String, (horizontal) or Soldier (vertical)

Cupola a dome that crowns a roof or turret

Curtilage the available space attached to a property which forms a singular enclosure

Door hood a projected moulding above an exterior door designed to through off the rain

Dormer window a projecting window placed vertically in a sloping roof with a roof of its own

Dressings a decorative feature made of stones, most commonly set around windows

Eaves the underpart of a sloping roof overhanging a wall, (Oversailing), or flush with it

Elevation the external wall or face of a building

Façade commonly the front face of a building

Fanlights a window, often semi-circular with radiating glazing panels, found over a door in Georgian buildings

Fenestration the arrangement of windows in a building

Finial a formal ornament, (usually in Fleur-de-Lis) at the top of a gable, pinnacle or canopy

Footprint the total area over which a building is situated

Gable the triangular upper part of a wall found at the end of a ridged roof

Grain refers to the arrangement and size of buildings in the urban context

Hardstanding an area of hard material used for parking cars within the cartilage, (often front garden space) of a house

Hipped roof a shallowish pitch with sloping at the vertical ends

Keystone central wedge-shaped stone at the crown of an arch

Mortar mixture of cement, (or lime), sand and water laid between bricks as an adhesive

Lintel a horizontal supporting element of timber, metal or stone found across the top of a door or window

Mansard roof has a double slope where the lower part is steeper than the upper part

Moulding a continuous projection or groove used decoratively to throw shadow or rain water off a wall

Mullion a vertical element (glazing bar) that divides a window into two or more lights

Pantile a roofing tile with a curved S shape designed to interlock

Parapet a low wall used as a safety device where a drop or edge exists

Pediment a low pitched Gable above a Portico

Pier a solid vertical masonry support (or mass) found in buildings and walls

Pilaster a shallow pier projecting slightly from a wall

Pinnacle a small pyramidal or conical shaped crowing element

Pitched roof the most common type. Gables exist at each end of the pitch

Plinth the projecting base of a wall or column

Pointing the exposed mortar finish to brick or masonry joints

Polychromatic multi-coloured brickwork

Portico a roofspace open or partly enclosed

Quatrefoil a set of decorative openings, often leaf shaped cut into an arch

Quoins dressed bricks found at the corners of buildings, usually laid so that the brick faces are alternately large and small

Ragstone rubble masonry, rough building stones or flints, generally laid in irregular courses

Recess space set back in a wall, often the setting for an entrance porch

Render plaster or stucco applied to a wall

Rooflight a window set flush into the slope of a roof

Rusticated masonry cut in huge blocks, often in its original hewn state, that is normally found on the lower half of buildings

Sash window a window that is double hung with wooden frames (sashes) that slide up and down with pulleys

Sepulchre a recess with Tombchest designed to receive an effigy of Christ

Sett paving slabs

Sills the horizontal element found at the base of a window or door frame

Stucco a form of plaster used internally or externally to decorate or protect

Transom a horizontal bar of stone or wood across a window

11. Bibliography

English Heritage, *Guidance on Conservation Area Management Plans*, 2005

English Heritage, *Guidance on Conservation Area Appraisals*, 2005

Ealing Council, *Adopted 2004 Plan for the Environment*, 2004

Jonathan Oats, *Acton – A History*, 2003

Pevsner, N., *The Buildings of England. London 3: North West*, 2002

Ealing Library Service and Rowland, R.N.G., *Acton as it was*, 1993

12. Appendix - Stakeholder consultation

12.1. List of stakeholders consulted

Ealing Civic Society

Acton Town Centre CA Planning Advisory Panel

Wards Councillors

12.2. Acton Town Centre Conservation Area Appraisal Questionnaire

1. Please list any special qualities, distinctive features or areas, which you consider a positive contribution to the Conservation Area.
2. Can you identify any key feature – within the built or natural environment – that you feel have been eroded over time?
3. Can you identify any development that has taken place since designation, which you feel had a negative impact of the character of the conservation area? If yes, why?
4. Can you identify any areas on the attached map that you consider should be included or excluded from the Conservation Area? Please give your reason.
5. How effective do you consider the present controls over development to be? Please explain.
6. Apart from the Listed Buildings within the Conservation Area, are there any buildings or structures that you consider are of architectural or historical significance? Please give details.
7. Can you identify any open spaces, significant trees or hedges that you feel make a significant contribution to the special character of Conservation Area? Please list
8. What would you say were the most significant views, vistas or panoramas, within, into or from the Conservation Area? Please give details.

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9. In your opinion, what impact does road traffic have upon the Conservation Area?
10. Do you think there are any areas that would benefit from being car-free? If so please describe.
11. Are the streets and public areas generally appealing and easy to use? Please comment.
12. Do you think that street furniture in character with the Conservation Area? If not, what improvements could you suggest?
13. Do you have any concerns about personal safety within the area? Please give details.
14. Do you feel that sufficient Conservation Area direction exists to guide development proposals? Please give details.