

MOUNT STEWART CONSERVATION AREA DESIGN GUIDE 1994

This document is a duplication of the original Mount Stewart Conservation Area Design Guide 1994 as the original guide was a poor scan and hard to read. The original version is available from the Planning Service on request.

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1. INTRODUCTION

(a) The Reason for Designation Mount Stewart as a Conservation Area

The farmlands bounded by Woodcock Hill and Preston Hill form part of the Lyon Farm estate centred on John Lyon Farm in Preston Hill. Since the beginning of the 17th Century the income from the farmlands had assisted in maintaining Harrow School which John Lyon had founded in 1572. The farmhouse on Preston Hill was rebuilt in 1708-09 and survived until 1960. It was therefore the Harrow School authorities who, realising the value of their estate in the housing boom of the 1920s/30s, sold off land for development by F & C Costin and the roads on the estate were named after prominent Harrovians. By way of example, Lord Mount Stuart (1744-1814) was the eldest son of the third Earl of Bute, the Prime Minister, although there are other names like that of the 7th Earl of Shaftesbury who are better remembered today.

F & C Costin Limited, who had earned a high reputation for the quality of their housing, produced a pattern book of designs, although individual commissions were made when requested. Even when "pattern book" designs were chosen (and those commonly used on the estate were termed "Chatsworth", "Waverley", "New Mayfair", "Langham", "Cavendish" and "Dorchester" there was a wide selection of variable elevational treatments available. Mock-Tudor timbering in varying combinations is a common theme within the estate and is usually infilled with white stucco, but also sometimes with decorative brickwork of complex design.

The house designs include an extensive range of bay windows of two-storey and of first floor oriels. The casement windows include good examples of leaded light windows and of stained glass, and display a high standard of craftsmanship. Curved transoms, dentil courses and a range of mouldings contribute towards a high quality of external finish to the houses. The plan forms include deeply recessed porches which give an identity to the estate as a whole, and an opportunity for decorative brickwork details. This is particularly so where the staircases are expressed on the front elevation, producing panels of decorative brickwork to the ground floors.

The original tree planting scheme in the grass verges has been maintained and supplemented over the years and provides an attractive "garden suburb" setting appropriate for the housing estate.

When Mount Stewart was designated as a Conservation Area in January 1993, the following properties were included in the designated area:-

Abercorn Gardens 21-27
Bouverie Gardens 1-19, 2-22
Carlisle Gardens 1, 2-8
Grenfell Gardens 1-17, 2-18
Mount Stewart Avenue 1-37, 2-84. Mount Stewart School
Shaftesbury Avenue 1-103, 2-104
Sheridan Gardens 1-19, 2-26
Trevelyan Crescent 1-67, 2-74

Apart from Mount Stewart School, all of the properties are residential.

b) The Advantages of Conservation Area Designation

Conservation Areas are, by definition, areas of special architectural or historic interest, and the character of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance. The Council has a duty to decide which parts of the Borough should be designated Conservation Areas and to keep the question of designating further areas under review. The designation enables the Council to exercise control over the demolition of buildings and the loss of trees. Apart from this the Council has specific development control powers, and conservation area designation allows the Council to seek to extend them to cover development that can normally be undertaken without the need for planning permission

(c) The Need for Conservation Area Policies

The Mount Stewart estate possesses a character worthy for it has to be designated as a Conservation Area.

Over the years, changes have occurred to alter the external design of properties in a way which affects the character and appearance of the estate. Pressure for car parking facilities and for enlargement of the existing houses have led to changes in the original design. Nevertheless the estate possesses a character worthy of retention for it to be designated a Conservation Area.

Nevertheless there are trends and developments harming the character of the estate over which the Local Authority has little or no control, and which tend to have a visual effect detrimental to the, characteristic features concerned. The nature of these alterations is principally as follows:

(i) Infilling of recessed entrance porches

The deeply recessed entrance porches which give unity to the estate is the single most distinct architectural feature of the area. Progressively these have been infilled by enclosed storm porches altering the character of the area;

(ii) Changes in fenestration

The curved, Queen Anne-style transoms are another distinct architectural feature which is being progressively lost through replacement UPVC and aluminium windows;

(iii) Loss of original front walls

The covenants on the estate specified a distinct form of front wall involving oak posts and chains and/or dwarf brickwork. Many of these have now been lost and replaced by a mix of different designs, disrupting the character of the area;

(iv) Roof alterations

The age of many of the houses is such that roofs are requiring re-roofing, and it is important to ensure that plain red rather than interlocking tiles are used. Also, rooflights are beginning to appear, affecting the appearance and profile of the roofs;

(V) Loss of original garages

The front elevations of a number of properties have been disrupted by converting garages to living accommodation and adding windows to the frontage. This affects the character and appearance of properties as well as being contrary to the Council's borough-wide policy on retaining garage space;

(vi) Side extensions

The open spacious character of the estate is being disrupted by side extensions infilling the gaps between properties.

In most neighbourhoods classes of 'permitted development' will have no marked effect upon the general environment but in this Conservation Area which has special aesthetic significance, even a minor change could have unfortunate consequences and may spoil a particularly pleasing prospect.

(d) Means of Control

The Local Planning Authority has the following means of controlling development in the designated area:

1. In the case of rear extensions to single family dwellinghouses, single storey rear extensions will require permission if they extend beyond the rear wall of the original house by more than 4 metres if a detached house; or more than 3 metres for a semi-detached house. Rear extensions will also require permission if they extend beyond the rear wall of a side extension or are two storeys. All extensions to flats will require planning permission.

2. In addition the Council has sought additional powers to remove the right of residents to extend or alter their premises. Planning permission is now required for the following types of development which would otherwise not require permission.

A] All extensions to the side and front of properties (including the addition of a first-floor extension) and all street frontage alterations and additions, including the enclosure of entrance porches

(including recessed porches) and front balconies, alterations to chimneys, the application of render to existing brickwork and the erection of porches but excluding the replacement of doors. Alterations to window designs or materials on the street frontages, the change of roofing materials and the installation of roof lights on street frontages.

B] The painting of the exterior of any building, including walls and piers brickwork and timbering, but excluding the application of a British Standard white or off-white to existing render or stucco, window frames and sills, or a British Standard Black to existing mock timbering or windowsills or crosspiece /transom already painted black.

4. The mechanism by which a Local Planning Authority can control this type of development in a Conservation Area is known as an 'Article 4 Direction'.

(e) Conservation or enhancement

Granting permission for the construction of extensions or alterations to properties often represents a compromise or balance between the added benefits and amenities appreciated by the applicant or householder and the degree of amenity lost by neighbours and the impact of the development on the street scene. There is also an important balance to be met between retaining original character and preserving the estate in aspic and allowing it to change to meet current life styles in keeping with the special character of the area. Proposals in the Conservation Area should not only be well designed in the first place but should also make a contribution towards enhancing the quality of the area.

With a perception firmly in mind of what the special characteristics and architectural form are of the Mount Stewart Conservation Area and a knowledge of the pressures for change and alteration, the Local Planning Authority recommends the following Design Guidance for future development.

A Design Guide is, what it says, a guide: it is not absolute and cases will be considered on their individual merits. Nevertheless, the Design Guide does establish and recognise certain principles which are inherent in the design an architectural form of properties in the area. To relax such principles, would be to undermine the very concept of the Conservation Area. Attractive house styles with their component parts, spaces between buildings, landscaped rear gardens and street scenes, are fundamental principles of this 1920's/30's garden suburb and threats to this character will be resisted.

2. GENERAL PRINCIPLES

F & C Costin together with Preston Estates set out design and planning criteria and embodied them in the Title Deeds of the houses as restrictive covenants so that the future character of the estate could be preserved. They did not however foresee the pressures of present day developers who might seek to override such covenants.

The restrictive covenants generally allow for only detached or semi-detached houses with not more than three detached houses or two pairs of semi-detached houses of similar elevations in proximity.

No bungalows were to be allowed and no plot to be less than of thirty feet frontage.

Minimum sizes of the dwellings are stipulated and there are restrictions on use and construction of the houses. The design of the front boundary walls with oak posts and chains and/or dwarf brickwork is set out in most of the Title Deeds as well as the height and materials of the other boundary fences.

These designs standards together with the quality of the house designs and estate layout has brought the original concept to a successful and mature estate. However, current day development pressures are such that restrictive covenants can no longer be relied upon to protect/ the area.

The character and individuality of the estate derives from the F&C Costin Limited 'pattern book' from which individual designs were taken. However even when 'pattern book' designs were chosen a wide selection of elevational treatment was available.

The most used house designs were Chatsworth, Waverley, New Mayfair, Langham, Cavendish and Dorchester. Although a number of these are present in other Costins estates 'it is the large number of "Mayfair" and "Langham" houses that makes the

(i) *Mayfair Houses*

These characterful detached houses are usually set asymmetrically on their plots with the main front gable close to the side boundary. On the other side they have projecting stairwells. They typically have front oriel windows. They were voted house of the year at the 1934 ideal Home Exhibition. For the purposes of this guide the term "Mayfair" also applies to the later "New Mayfair" design.

(ii) Langham Houses

These are semi-detached properties with prominent front gables on each half of the pair and gable ends. Usually elaborated with herringbone brickwork.

The first key principle of this design guide therefore is to retain the distinctive features of the "pattern book" houses and to resist the watering down of their character and the homogenisation of the estate.

The second key principle of the design guide is to protect the open character of the estate. The overall layout of the area takes advantage of the natural contours of the ground to achieve constantly changing views within the original planning criteria. This is well illustrated by the road patterns with the double bend of Mount Stewart Avenue, the straight line of Shaftesbury Avenue, the curves of Trevelyan Crescent, and the culs-de-sac of Sheridan Gardens, Bouverie Gardens, and Grenfell Gardens.

The original tree planting scheme in the grass verges continues the estate theme with variety of ornamental species, colour and foliage. Where necessary the Council has replanted street trees and maintains the grass verges so that the original concept has been largely preserved.

3. REAR EXTENSIONS

(a) Single Storey Rear Extensions

These will normally be acceptable at the rear of residential properties in the Conservation Area where they comply with Council standards in terms of maximum depth for extensions. For a detached dwelling, the maximum depth normally permitted is 3.5 metres and 3 metres for a semi-detached, measured from the rear main wall of the property. The acceptable maximum height of the extension is approximately 3.2 metres with a flat or pitched roof. The impact of individual extensions on neighbouring properties will, however, need to be assessed. No flank wall windows will be permitted for extensions on the plot boundary with neighbouring properties.

The design of the extension must be acceptable in terms of its external appearance being sympathetic with the character of the original dwelling house and window openings in the extension should relate to those above in the dwelling house.

(b) Two Storey Rear Extensions

These can be acceptable in certain circumstances on detached and semi-detached dwellings. The Council's main standard restricts the depth of extension to half the distance measured between the side wall of the extension and the midpoint of the nearest window of a habitable room in the neighbouring dwellings.

Because of their height, such extensions can have a substantial impact and it is important that they remain subsidiary features to the design of the original property. Extensions which substantially enlarge and change the original character of houses will not be permitted. Where extensions would result in undue enclosure or loss of light to neighbouring houses and their gardens, a further reduction in depth may be required.

Two storey extensions will be required to have a roof style to match the existing (e.g. a pitched and hipped red plain tiled roof). The character of the Conservation Area is not only that which is visible from a road or footpath but is also appreciated by residents of the estate from private garden areas.

4. SIDE EXTENSIONS

The design of the side extension should match the "pattern" of the original house. Houses with hipped roofs should have hipped side extensions. Similarly gabled houses should have gabled side extensions. They should be red plain clay tiled to match the original materials. The detailing of side extensions should follow the design and materials of the front elevation. Repeating mock timberwork, tiling herringbone brickwork, balcony features, window designs etc. Wherever possible original chimneys should be maintained.

(a) Properties at the heads of culs-de-sac

Bouverie, Grenfell and Sheridan Gardens each have several properties at their heads with splayed building lines.

Here it is essential to maintain gaps between the dwellings. Normally a maximum of half of the area between the original dwelling and the side boundary should be infilled, there should be at least a 1 metre set in from the property boundary at the frontage, with a greater set in towards the rear of the plot.

For asymmetric detached properties, to maintain the visual prominence of the front gables, extensions on this side should be set back at least 1 metre from the front main wall (not the bay). On the other side the front of the property can follow a set back of 0.5m from the front building line.

(b) Side extensions to other properties with a single storey gabled garage

These are a particular feature of the area, with gables perpendicular to the front building line, views to the trees and gardens behind strongly contribute to the open character of the estate. The loss of these through the development of side extensions will therefore be resisted. Also many properties on the estate have side kitchens which would be seriously affected by side extensions to the next door property. If the other half of a garage pair has been lost to a two-storey side extension then (c) below applies.

(c) Other Properties

Wherever possible a minimum gap of 2 metres should be maintained between properties at ground and first floor levels, normally by a 1 metre set in from the property boundary on each side.

If this is not achievable (through for example the need to maintain an integral garage) then the gap must be provided at first floor level. In either event the first floor side extension should be set back from the front main wall by at least 1 metre. However for "Mayfair" type houses in all cases there should be a set back from the front main wall of at least 3 metres on both floors.

Such two storey side extensions will be constructed with a pitched roof and will result in the ridge of the roof being lower than on the existing dwelling house. The setting back at the front and side is necessary to retain gaps between existing dwellings and to reduce visual impact.

(d) Side extensions to corner properties

Open gaps giving views of roads leading off should be maintained, the borough standard of a 2 metre gap on the return frontage should be maintained. A larger gap may be required if the open gap is a particular feature, therefore there should be no breach of the side road building line on the return frontage. If there is decorative brickwork on the return frontage then a side extension may not be appropriate.

(e) Garages

Where it is possible to provide a garage with an internal clearance of 2.1 metres garage space should be retained. Garages should not protrude forward of the main front wall as this introduces a pitched roof often linked to the front porch which introduces an uncharacteristic horizontal emphasis.

The conversion of garages of above this dimension to habitable accommodation will normally be resisted (in line with borough wide policy) as this can have a disruptive effect on the appearance of the frontage (particularly for "Langham" style properties), and adds to parking on the frontages and consequent loss of garden area and appearance. Use of modern 'up and over' garage doors is acceptable.

5. VEHICLE HARDSTANDINGS AND HIGHWAY ACCESS

Details of vehicle hardstanding and vehicle driveways must be satisfactory and in keeping with the character of the area. The provision of parking spaces in front gardens, requires an access to the highway, which interrupts the continuity of front garden hedgerows, walls and fencing. The parking of vehicles directly in front of properties also affects the character and setting of the building.

In accordance with borough wide policy no more than 50% of front garden areas should be hard surfaced, to ensure a minimum of half the existing front garden amenity area is retained as a soft landscaped area. The retention and provision of grassed or planted areas should be encouraged.

Hard standings of red stone paving, red tarmacadam, and brick on edge or with brick paviours will be encouraged. The use of black tarmacadam or concrete are not considered appropriate.

The formation of a second access will therefore only be approved in exceptional circumstances, where there is sufficient space for turning (12m width X 9m depth) which should also ensure pedestrian safety and retention of an adequate front garden area.

Hardstanding materials should be in sympathy with the overall character and setting of the street scene. Car parking spaces will need to be of minimum size 4.8 metres by 2.4 metres with appropriate manoeuvring area in front of the spaces in order that vehicles can turn within the curtilage.

6. ROOF EXTENSIONS AND ALTERATIONS

(a) **Front dormers**; in accordance with borough wide policy, these will be resisted.

(b) **Side dormers**; as the plot widths on the estate are not very wide it is difficult to provide side dormers without them being obtrusive. On "Mayfair" type houses they detract from the vertical emphasis of the houses and are not normally permitted. On other house types modest side dormers may be permitted, provided they have hipped and pitched ends, are set centrally within the roof away from the ridge and hip lines and do not "wraparound" onto the rear of the roof. They should take up no more than 2/3rds of the width or height of the roof.

(c) **Rear dormers**; these may be acceptable providing they meet the dimensional criteria set out in (b) above. Care should be taken with the scale of rear dormers on corner sites where they would be visible from side roads.

(d) **Rooflights**; these should be located where they would be not visible from the street usually on the side or rear elevation, should not take up an excessive proportion of the roof, and be of the "flush" design.

Replacement of red plain clay tiles with concrete overlapping pantiles or tiles of another colour will not be permitted.

7. FRONT EXTENSIONS AND PORCHES

Infilling of entrance porches requires permission but will not normally be permitted for Mayfair houses with recessed porches. This process has been particularly disruptive of the character of the estate. Where these and other properties were originally designed with recessed porches then extensions in front of the building line will not normally be permitted.

Where other properties have external or overhung porches then enclosure may be acceptable providing that the open design style of the original porches is maintained. It is desirable to retain or reproduce original features in the new porch such as original fretwork oriels, and columns. Further detailed advice on acceptable porch design is available from the Council.

First floor front extensions infilling the front gaps on "Langham" properties or infilling a front balcony on other house types will be resisted.

8. WINDOW DESIGN

The distinctive character of many of the dwellings in the Conservation Area can be attributed to, amongst other factors, window design and detail on the front elevations. In particular the following are distinctive features which should be retained in any proposed alterations to windows on the front elevation of dwellings:

1. Curved transom features on bay windows
2. Oriel windows on the frontage
- 3 Stained glass and leading.

In the case of replacement windows and double glazing proposals on street frontages, window styles sympathetic with the character of interwar period properties are required and those which are not will not be acceptable. Wooden windows are the original and preferred material being more sympathetic than certain alternatives. Every effort should be made to restore and repair the original windows before replacement windows are considered. Secondary: glazing enables double glazing to be installed whilst retaining the original windows.

UPVC and Aluminium windows reproducing or restoring the original window design can be acceptable providing that care is taken to mimic transom designs, leaded windows are mimicked with lead strips, the thickness of frames in double glazed units match existing timber surrounds, and an acetate replacement is made for stained glass features.

Window frames should preferably be painted in the original white, although some sills and the crosspiece/transom separating the upper and lower levels of windows are painted black and preferably this should be retained, or one of the original colours used such as green. The council may be prepared to permit other colours for windows which do not detract from the area.

8 OTHER ALTERATIONS TO STREET FRONTAGE ELEVATIONS

Original mock timberwork, tiling, stucco and render, herringbone brickwork, balcony features and other decorative brickwork features to be maintained.

No rendering or painting of existing unpainted brickwork.

Mock timberwork to remain painted British standard black. Stucco and render to remain painted British standard white or off white.

Front Doors

There will be a preference for retaining original front door designs, particularly where these contain leaded glass and front panels; however there is no planning control over this although the Council can provide advice as necessary. .

10. CONVERSION TO FLATS

When considering planning applications for flat conversions the scheme will be assessed not only in terms of the standard criteria for flat conversion but also in terms of the suitability of physical alterations to the front of the dwelling house to provide separate access points to the proposed flats and other alterations to windows and elevations of the dwelling house. The size of the front garden for car parking will be taken into consideration, given that no more than 50% of the front garden should be hard surfaced to provide off-street parking spaces for the proposed flats.

The standard criteria for flat conversion as set out in the Local Plan are that the proposed flats, would need to be of adequate size in terms of individual room sizes and minimum internal floor space.

11. FENCES, WALLS AND HEDGES

Much of the present street character is derived from the presence of low walls and hedges which mask the original plot boundaries and which enclose front gardens in the Conservation Area. It is considered that these should be retained or provided wherever possible.

Ideally these should be of the original design for the estate with undulating brickwork with clinker, wooden posts and possibly chains, however other designs may be acceptable providing these use red bricks and adopt a design style which enhances the character of the area. The painting of such walls is not permitted.

Proposals to remove hedges and substantially widen vehicular access points will be strongly resisted. Hedges should be retained or planted and the suitability of side fences and Side walls will depend on design, style, materials and treatment of boundaries.

12. TREES

All trees within the .Conservation Area have special protection, whether they are covered by a Tree Preservation Order or not, ornamental trees of a wide variety of species are one of the key features of the conservation area. Persons wishing to carry out works to any tree in the Conservation Area, must give six weeks' notice of their intention to the Council. Where work is begun or a tree wilfully

damaged or destroyed without the requisite notice being given, and the Council's specific consent has not been obtained within the statutory six weeks period, the person will become liable to penalties. .

In the case of trees in the Conservation Area which are covered by a Tree Preservation Order, consent to fell a tree will not normally be given. If felling is necessary, the owner will be required to replant with a tree of appropriate size and species. Any person who cuts down, uproots or wilfully damages or destroys a tree, will be guilty of an offence and liable to a fine not exceeding the statutory maximum or twice the sum which appears to be the value of the tree.

13. DEMOLITION OF BUILDINGS

The consent of the Council is required for the demolition of buildings or parts of buildings within the Conservation Area. However, there are certain types of small buildings where demolition will not require consent, such as buildings with a cubic content not exceeding 115 m², or any building erected as "permitted development" within the curtilage of a dwelling house, such as a garden shed.

Where permission is required for demolition of buildings or parts of buildings in the Conservation Area, this will not normally be granted, because of the detrimental effect on the visual amenities of the Conservation Area resulting from demolition and clearing of sites and the removal of buildings of architectural or historic interest.

14. INFILL AND BACKLAND DEVELOPMENT

This would be strongly damaging to the plot pattern and open garden character of the estate and will not be permitted.

15. SATELLITE DISHES

These should not be located on chimneys or on the front elevation of houses. They may be appropriately located on the side of buildings providing they are of an appropriate scale, are not obtrusive and where possible are screened by landscaping.

16. MOUNT STEWART SCHOOL

This is an attractive school built in the 1950s surrounded by a mature hedge. Alterations to the buildings should maintain the curving roof forms and not detract from the cloistered character of the central enclosure. Temporary buildings should not be visible from the street.