



Supplementary Planning Document  
London Borough of Merton



# Bertram Cottages Sustainability Appraisal



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# Sustainability Appraisal Statement for the Character Appraisal of Bertram Cottages Conservation Area

## Introduction

This statement sets out the findings of the Sustainability Appraisal into the character appraisal and boundary assessment for the above Conservation Area. A character appraisal is a document that looks in detail at the special character of a Conservation Area accurately describing the areas history, layout, land use, building form, architecture and urban space. It then goes on to recommend the positive and negative features and any suggested opportunities and recommendations within the Conservation Area. The boundary assessment is a separate document that looks specifically at changes to the boundary of the Conservation Area. It should be noted that the boundary assessment precedes the character appraisal and takes its recommendations into account.

The need to review and monitor the boundaries of the existing Conservation Areas through the preparation of Character Assessments is recognised in paragraph 4.28 of the Merton's Unitary Development Plan. And in paragraph 4.38 it sets out that these character assessments are to be published as Supplementary Planning Guidance SPG or, since the commencement of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act a Supplementary Planning Document.

## Background

The Government has recently made changes to the planning system through the commencement of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act. The new Regulations require that any document that needs to be termed a Supplementary Planning Document SPD has to undergo a Sustainability Appraisal, including character appraisal of Conservation Areas so that it can be a material consideration in any decision relating to development in the Conservation Area.

Sustainability and sustainable development has become a key issue for government and is reflected in the UK Sustainable Development Strategy and its four key aims. These are social progress, effective protection of the environment, prudent use of natural resources and the maintenance of high and stable levels of economic growth. There is a growing wealth of guidance being produced for planning which increasingly incorporates these issues.

This appraisal has been produced in accordance with the Consultation paper 'Sustainability Appraisal of Regional Spatial Strategies and Local Development Frameworks'. The appraisals level of detail has been applied in accordance with the spatial scale, size and possible environmental effects of the designation.

## Scope of the appraisal

To undertake scoping for a sustainability appraisal the document to be appraised needs to have strategic aims and objectives. In the case of a character assessment this is not possible as the main strategic objective of this type of document will be the same as the objective of the policy it is based on, ie to preserve and enhance the character of the conservation area. And this appraisal should not be looking at the policy as this will be the focus of an appraisal of the relevant Development Plan Document when this is undertaken. It should also be pointed out that the Character Assessment does not have any significant land use proposals for redevelopment nor does it include a major programme of enhancement therefore making it hard to come up with various options.

However, to be in compliance with the Regulations and the SEA Directive it is necessary to follow the process set out in ODPM guidance. Therefore it is necessary to consider options and environmental impacts. Environmental impacts are likely to be minimal as a Conservation Area is protectionist in nature. The only suitable alternative to carrying out the appraisal is the "do nothing" option of not doing the character appraisal at all. This option would not be acceptable because the council has a statutory requirement to undertake a character appraisal.

Any changes to the boundary of the conservation area will be appraised as well as any opportunities or actions that maybe recommended by the character assessment. The factual detail and description of the conservation area, which is the bulk of the document, is irrelevant to this process.

## Description of the conservation area

The conservation area covers 0.6 hectares and is situated 300m south of Wimbledon town centre between Hartfield Road and Gladstone Road. It is a residential setting. It is one of the smallest conservation areas in the borough therefore only has one distinct area. It was developed in 1870 by a wealthy philanthropist and was first designated as a conservation area in 1984. The layout of the cottages is one reason for the designation as it gets away from the rigid terracing system by creating two small squares. Another feature of the area is the original street furniture. All the properties are locally listed.

## Boundary Changes

There are no boundary changes.

## Actions

- An Article 4 Direction is recommended to cover the whole of the conservation area to control replacement of front doors and windows, the treatment of boundaries between gardens.
- Either expose the original finish of the road surface if the cobbles are still there or re-pave it in a suitable material.
- Remove the keep clear signs and other such inappropriate signage.
- Screen the houses at the northern end to improve the vista in the eastern square removing the telephone wires underground.

## The Sustainability Framework

The basis for the appraisal is the development of a Sustainability Framework. This is a draft set of objectives developed by the council that cover the sustainability issues for the borough. These objectives are developed through assessment of the objectives of various other documents from European Directives to the Mayors London Plan (Spatial Strategy) through to other council policy documents such as Merton's Environmental Action Plan. The baseline of environmental information is also taken into consideration when setting out the sustainability objectives. Many of the sustainability objectives are not relevant to the opportunities and proposed actions of the character appraisal but have been included anyway for completeness sake. Instead of tabulating the results a comments column has been included that hopes to consider the various types of positive and negative effects.

Topic	Objective	Comments
Land-Use	– Increase the use of urban brown field land	There are no proposals that affect land use.
Minerals and soils	– Where possible maintain and enhance soil quality	This is not relevant for this appraisal.
Waste	– Reduce the amount of waste generated, maximise reuse, recycling and recovery and reduce our reliance on landfill disposal	There is no proposal made that could improve waste disposal efficiency.
Carbon Reduction and Energy	– Ensure specific measures to improve carbon efficiency are used in new developments, refurbishment and/or renovations and extensions.	There is no proposal made that could improve energy efficiency. If an Article 4 Direction is implemented to prevent replacement of front doors and windows this would impact upon energy efficiency preventing draught reduction and improvements in thermal resistance.
Pollution	– Ensure the risks of pollution to human health and all areas of the boroughs environment are reduced	The negative effect that the local distributor road to west of the area should be noted for its noise and air pollution. There is no opportunity for re-routing though.

Biodiversity and the Natural Environment	– Further protect existing designated sites through the use of S106 agreements	There are no proposals that improve biodiversity.
the Built Environment and its heritage	– Encourage sustainably built development	This is not relevant for this appraisal but a sub objective for this objective should be noted. This states that the boroughs heritage will be protected and enhanced which by resurfacing the road surface and removing certain signage will improve the historic character of the area. Also the additional protection suggested for the buildings through use of an article 4 direction would add to this.
Basic Needs	– Increase the number of appropriate affordable housing units in Merton to reflect increases in demand	This is not relevant for this appraisal.
Work and the economy	– Maintain local employment levels	This is not relevant for this appraisal.
Health	– Improve health equality	This is not relevant for this appraisal.
Transport and access	– The need for travel is minimised	This is not relevant for this appraisal.
Crime	– Reduce the level of street crime	This is not relevant for this appraisal.
Education	– Increase educational attainment of the boroughs residents	This is not relevant for this appraisal.
Equity and Participation	– Poverty is reduced	This is not relevant for this appraisal.
Cultural, leisure and social activities	– Improve the access to and quality of open spaces	This is not relevant for this appraisal.

## Conclusions

The above table has highlighted that the main measure providing a negative effect would be the introduction of an Article 4 Direction. This would be designed to control changes to all windows and front doors which will impact upon the need to improve energy efficiency. However this would have to be balanced against the need to protect the heritage and character of the area and could be mitigated through the use of acceptable timber framed alternatives where replacement is absolutely necessary or use of specialist draught sealing that's now available for these types of windows. It should be noted though that many of the original windows appear to have been retained which will help support implementing this kind of restriction rather than in an area where many windows have already been changed for example. The negative noise impact made by traffic on Hartfield Road could be reduced through resurfacing with a quieter road surface.

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