

ASSESSMENT OF THE APPROPRIATENESS OF THE BOUNDARIES OF THE DURHAM RD CONSERVATION AREA.

1. The Conservation Area was first designated in November 1990, and later extended in December 1992, by the addition of nos. 43 – 47 (odd nos.) Cottenham Park Rd. After that extension, the Conservation Area included the following properties:

- 2 – 48 (evens) and 1 – 47 (odds) Panmuir Rd.
- 83 – 121 (odds) and 116 – 160 (evens) Durham Rd
- 20 – 38 (evens) Cambridge Rd
- 43a/b – 53 (odds) Cottenham Park Rd
- 2/4/6 Orchard Lane

2. These boundaries remained unchanged at the time of initiating this boundary assessment and Character Appraisal (August 2006).

3. Prior to undertaking the boundary assessment specific proposals had been put forward by several local residents, seeking substantial extensions of the Conservation Area boundary.

4. For this reason this boundary assessment extends over a wide area, including not only the 1992 Conservation Area, but also properties in:

- Cambridge Rd (to the west of the Lambton Rd junction),
- Durham Rd (to the south of the Cambridge Rd junction),
- Panmuir Rd (northern end)
- Cottenham Park Rd (to the west of the Durham Rd junction),
- Melbury Gardens,
- Spencer Rd,
- Richmond Rd,
- Amity Grove,
- Cambridge Close,
- Laurel Rd, and
- Oakwood Rd

Assessment of properties within the existing Conservation Area boundary

5. The heart of the existing Conservation Area is the blocks of maisonettes which front onto Panmuir Rd, and Durham Rd (to the north of the Cambridge Rd) and which extend to the adjacent section of Cambridge Rd (north side), to the east of Durham Rd. These properties have a very strong sense of architectural cohesion, and some notable architectural detailing, which sets the character of this area apart from its immediate surroundings. Set against that however is the fact that some of these maisonettes have suffered as a result of insensitive changes which have been made, including most notably replacement of window frames.

6. The Conservation Area also extends northwards from these maisonettes, but is limited to properties on the eastern side of Durham Rd, up to Cottenham Park Rd, together with a few adjacent properties which front to Cottenham Park Rd.

7. This part of the Conservation Area is much more mixed in its character, It has much less architectural coherence, and it including some buildings of very limited architectural interest (146/148 Durham Rd, 2/4/6 Orchard Lane and 43 – 51 Cottenham Park Rd. However it also includes what is unquestionably the finest

building in the whole area, no. 53 Cottenham Park Rd, which is a Locally Listed building. This part of the Conservation Area also includes two pairs of semi detached houses (nos. 154 – 160 Durham Rd) and a detached house (152 Durham Rd), which are of sufficient interest to well deserve to be included in a Conservation Area.

8. Questions must therefore be asked as to whether 2/4/6 Orchard Lane and 43 – 51 Cottenham Park Rd warrant their status as Conservation Area properties.

9. In the case of 2/4/6 Orchard Lane the answer must clearly be yes. However this view is only based on the need to avoid fragmenting the Conservation Area into separated areas, (separating in particular the magnificent 53 Cottenham Park Rd from the main part of the Conservation Area to the south).

10. We now need to look closely at 43 – 51 Cottenham Park Rd. These properties are out on a limb, at the north eastern end of the Conservation Area, so the fragmentation issue does not arise. With the exception of no. 51 Cottenham Park Rd all of these buildings have been built since the designation of the Conservation Area.

11. These properties comprise 3 pairs of semi detached houses built in the early 1990s (43a/b, 45a/b and 47a/b Cottenham Park Rd), a newly completed development at 49 Cottenham Park Rd, and an older property at 51 Cottenham Park Rd.

12. With regard to the more recent buildings 43 – 47 Cottenham Park Rd, these buildings are heavily detailed, with red and yellow brickwork, and including some material which appears to be artificial stone, but which has weathered to appear like a concrete. The 3 pairs of semis have a strong architectural group value, though there are significant differences from one pair to the next.

13. The design of no. 49 Cottenham Park Rd follows that of 43 – 47 above, with the conspicuous addition of an incongruous pseudo gothic window on the front façade. The roof form also differs from that used at 43 – 47, being in part, a pastiche version of a mansard roof, which echoes the roof at no. 51.

14. This group (43 – 49) can be criticised as a clear example of pastiche architecture. The detailing appears to be over-fussy and heavy handed. The buildings also seem to have no very clear architectural identity, combining pastiche traditional designs (classical, gothic and neo vernacular) with post modernist influences. The use of reconstituted stone or concrete for the detailing is another weak feature in the design of the building. The buildings could not be held up as a good example of the architecture of their day.

15. No 51 Cottenham Park Rd is a 2 storey symmetrical building with a further floor above contained within a mansard roof, part hidden behind a high parapet wall. The front entrance is a weak feature, and the quality of the brick used is also disappointing. The historic maps suggest a construction date of around the 1920s. The architecture and form of the building are quite different to the adjacent building at 53 Cottenham Park Rd. On balance it is felt that this property does not warrant inclusion in the Conservation Area.

16. It is therefore concluded from this assessment that nos. 43a/b, 45a/b, 47a/b, 49 and 51 Cottenham Park Rd should be deleted from the Conservation Area.

Assessment of properties outside the existing Conservation Area boundary

17. As indicated in para 4 above, a wide area has been surveyed, with a view to seeing potential for enlargement of the Durham Rd Conservation Area. This area has been considered from the points of view of:

- the architectural qualities of buildings
- architectural cohesion of buildings (group value)
- the extent to which architectural quality has been eroded as a result of subsequent insensitive alterations
- the quality of street design
- the quality of trees and other vegetation
- the way in which buildings and properties relate to the street.

18. From this assessment the following conclusions have been drawn, (they are illustrated on plan no. DLU/2270):

- The whole of Cambridge Rd has a high standard of street design and an impressive scale and character.
- There are small but rather isolated groups of buildings which have some architectural interest, these comprise
- The locally listed buildings at the south end of Durham Rd.
- A scatter of arts and crafts buildings in Richmond Rd, which display similarities with some of JS Brocklesby's houses in Merton Park, though many have been the subject of adverse alterations.
- A 1930s block of flats at the corner of Durham Rd and Richmond Rd has distinctive "moderne" architecture of the period.
- A cluster with architectural group value in respect of what are known as the "quarter houses", in the western sections of Cottenham Park Rd, Melbury Gardens, Cambridge Rd, and throughout Oakwood Rd and Laurel Rd, though many have been the subject of strongly adverse alterations.
- A scatter of attractive small scale Victorian cottages in the form of semis and terraces, in Richmond Rd, though many have been the subject of adverse alterations.
- Several runs of semi-detached houses of generally pleasing design and group value, some of these runs have been the subject of alterations which are damaging to their cohesiveness.
- A dominant church at the junction of Spencer Rd and Durham Rd, which replaces an earlier church on the site, (which the historic maps indicate would have dated from around 1900/1910). The post 2nd world war replacement building is only of limited architectural interest, being traditional in its architectural approach at a time when more forward looking architecture was sometimes employed for new church building schemes.
- There has been widespread insensitive alterations to a large number of properties, including in particular many of the "quarter houses" and some of the arts and crafts houses.
- A very poor design relationship between houses and the street in the majority of the "quarter houses" streets.
- A lack of coherent character in the area immediately to the north of Cottenham Park Rd, with a disjointed relationship between buildings, and in places poor presentation of buildings towards the street, although there are in places some mature trees on the street frontage.
- Overall the character of several streets is disrupted as a result of the introduction of a scatter of large blocks of inter war and post war flats, which are markedly out of scale and out of character with the rest of the

street (eg Richmond Rd, Spencer Rd and the northern part of Durham Rd).

- There are large numbers of properties of unexceptional architectural quality, which lack the distinctiveness normally associated with Conservation Area.
- In the centre of the area Melbury Gardens (public park) is addressed by building frontages on the north and south sides (a positive relationship), but has building “backs” on the east and west sides, (a negative relationship).
- There are some small areas immediately adjacent to the Conservation Area, to the south, which have some interest, and which may warrant an extension to the Conservation Area (see paras 19 – 24 below).
- There are several very small areas (eg. small runs of houses) which have come out fairly well from the assessment, but these are remote from the existing Conservation Area, and from each other, which could not be included in the Conservation Area without also including many properties which would not warrant inclusion.
- The intensively developed streetscape of Amity Grove has been greatly eroded by insensitive alterations to building frontages and front gardens, and by some subsequent redevelopment.

19. The overall conclusion: as far as potential extensions to the Conservation Area are that the following properties are considered to be of sufficient character and distinctiveness to warrant Conservation Area status, and they are located in such a way that the Conservation Area could be extended to include them, without the need to include larger numbers of properties of lesser value (see plan DLU/2261):

- Nos. 61 – 79 (odds) Durham Rd
- 100 – 106 and 106a (evens) Durham Rd
- 3 – 23, 23a and 25a (odds) Cambridge Rd

20. Nos. 61 – 79 Durham Rd comprises a run of 5 pairs of semi detached houses, with strong architectural group value, and good, if not outstanding, architectural value. They represent examples of substantial Edwardian suburban houses for the well off middle class market of that period. There have been some adverse changes made to these houses, and in one case this change has been seriously detrimental, but overall, and on a fine balance of judgement, it is considered that their inclusion in the Conservation Area would be appropriate.

21. Nos. 100 – 106/106a Durham Rd comprise a two pairs of fairly unexceptional Victorian semi-detached houses. The houses are not large, and the architecture and detailing are not of any special note, when compared to the many other houses of this type that exist elsewhere. They do however have architectural group value. The case for including them within the Conservation Area mainly rests on the need for the Conservation Area to have regard to the character of an area, rather than the character of individual buildings. On this basis these properties help to define, enclose and influence the character of this part of Durham Rd. They do not detract from that character, and perhaps most importantly their inclusion would work in support of the inclusion of the houses opposite (see para 20 above).

22. Nos. 3 to 25a Cambridge Rd are a mixed bunch from an architectural point of view. However as with the other Cambridge Rd properties (see para 23 – 24 below), the street design is a factor which counts in support of Conservation Area status. The staggered terrace at 3 – 11 have strong architectural group value, but the other buildings are “one offs” from an architectural point of view. Nos. 3 – 11 have unusual

design characteristics, and an unusual and distinctive building form. The design seems to be more Edwardian than Victorian, and there are some attractive arts and crafts touches.

23. By contrast the properties at 13 – 23 Cambridge Rd have a feeling of high Victorian gothic about them. Some of these houses are quite grand, others are of medium scale. Generally the architectural quality of these buildings is good or very good, as examples of their type, and the extent of adverse changes made is quite limited. These properties are powerful in their influence of the sense of place in this part of Cambridge Rd, working in conjunction with the maisonettes at 24 – 34 Cambridge Rd in enclosing the street.

24. Numbers 23a and 25a are each “one offs” from an architectural point of view. These two buildings mark the two southern corners of the crossroads (Cambridge Rd and Durham Rd), and their position is prominent as a result. No. 25a is a modern house which has taken the opportunity to echo, in a more contemporary style, the corner towers and conical roofs which mark the two northern corners of this junction. By contrast no 23a is an apologetic building of the 1950s, which fails, in terms of its scale and its design, to respond to its important position. These two buildings could justify conservation status on account of the important focal positions that they occupy, in the one case the building responding well, in the other poorly. Including no. 23a within the Conservation Area would be on the basis of seeking a better building to replace the existing one.

Overall Conclusions

25. The conclusions of this report (see plan DLU/2261), are that the following properties should be taken out of the Conservation Area:

- 43a/b, 45a/b, 47a/b, 49 and 51 Cottenham Park Rd

26. The following properties should be incorporated into the Conservation Area:

- 3 – 23, (odds), 23a and 25a Cambridge Rd
- 61 – 79 (odds) Durham Rd
- 100 – 106/106a (evens) Durham Rd

27. The draft Conservation Area Character Assessment has been prepared on the basis of this suggested revised Conservation Area boundary.

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