



# John Innes (Merton Park) Sustainability Appraisal

# Sustainability Appraisal Statement for Character Appraisal of John Innes (Merton Park) 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 five key aims. These are living within environmental limits, ensuring a strong healthy and just society, achieving a sustainable economy, promoting good governance and using sound science responsibly. 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 guidance '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 its 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 which is one of the larger conservation areas in the borough at 31.63 hectares. It is situated approximately 1 kilometre to the south of Wimbledon Town Centre, and approximately 1.2 kilometres to the north-west of Morden Town Centre. It is bounded by two other conservation areas to the north and west. Its designation incorporates the southern part of the mediaeval village of Merton along Kingston Road. Located within it is the parish church where a church has stood since 1115. The railway forms the eastern boundary of the conservation area. The bulk of the conservation area was constructed during phases starting in the 1870s through to the early 1900s. Most of the development was completed by the 1930s and could be termed a "garden suburb". Whilst the area is predominantly residential dwellings of two storeys there are a number of playing fields and schools. One important feature is the use of holly hedges throughout the area which adds the rustic and semi rural character of the area.

There are two Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINCs) defined within the Conservation Area. They are at the Playing Field in Church Lane and the churchyard and Glebe Field. Both of these sites are defined as sites of local importance.

There are eight statutorily listed buildings within the area including the Grade II\* listed Church of St Mary and 139 locally listed buildings. There is a great deal of architectural similarity between the buildings in the conservation area and can be most likened to 'domestic revival' and 'arts and crafts' styles. Most of the conservation area lies within an Archaeological Priority Zone. There are existing Article 4 directions for certain parts of the area that prevent changes in windows and doors, any alteration/enlargement of the dwelling houses and any alterations to fences, gates and boundary features.

## Boundary Changes

There are proposed boundary changes as follows:

- The addition of all properties in Manor Gardens.
- The deletion of 62 Mostyn Rd
- The deletion of all properties in Stratton Close
- The deletion of the Merton Park Primary School, Erridge Rd
- The deletion of 2a/2b Poplar Rd

## Actions

- Dead street trees within the Conservation Area should be removed and replaced. The poor quality holly tree within the grass "island" in the footway close to the Kingston Rd/Church Lane junction should also be removed and replaced with new tree planting. The stunted cherry trees in Mostyn Rd should be replaced with new street trees of a more suitable species, (possibly horse chestnuts).
- Redundant crossovers (in Mostyn Rd) should be removed and the footway and grass verges reinstated.
- In conjunction with street repairs, re-introduce rows of granite gully setts where they are currently absent.
- Article 4 Directions should be sought to protect the holly hedges within property frontages within parts of the Conservation Area. This would involve the withdrawal of permitted development rights in respect of construction of vehicle hard standings and the creation of vehicle accesses.
- Article 4 Directions should be sought to protect the small-scale alterations on the houses within the Conservation Area, including replacement of front doors, infilling of porches, painting of masonry and replacement of windows on the front elevation of buildings.
- Prepare a design brief for the sensitive development of the existing car park site at Church Path, with particular regard to the improvement of definition of the street frontage, footpath connection to Erridge Rd, and views of the Glebe Field.
- If in the future, the possibility of redevelopment of the Wykeham Lodge site were to be envisaged, then a design brief for the sensitive development of the site should be undertaken,

with a view to securing an improvement of definition of the street frontage, the design of the frontage space, and the positioning, design and materials to be used for any new buildings.

- The 100 mm wide yellow parking control lines should be amended to the narrower 50 mm. width, so as to reduce their intrusive appearance.
- The re-introduction of the distinctive gates and gate posts (as seen at 12 Church Lane) should be encouraged in conjunction with planning applications for development.
- Tree Preservation Orders shall be considered for all significant trees and tree groups, which are placed at risk of removal as part of any tree works in a conservation area.

## 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 aims to summarise the various types of positive and negative effects.

Topic	Objective	Comments
Land-Use	– Increase the use of urban brown field land	This is not relevant for this appraisal.
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	This is not relevant for this appraisal.
Carbon Reduction and Energy	– Ensure specific measures to improve carbon efficiency are used in new developments, refurbishment and/or renovations and extensions.	Any future redevelopment of Wykeham Lodge may need to consider the use of renewable energy equipment.
Pollution	– Ensure the risks of pollution to human health and all areas of the boroughs environment are reduced	This is not relevant for this appraisal.
Biodiversity and the Natural Environment	– Further protect existing designated sites through the use of S106 agreements	Many of the actions will help to protect the existing biodiversity of the area for instance replacing dead trees and protecting existing holly hedges with Article 4 directions.
the Built Environment and its heritage	– Encourage sustainably built development	Any future redevelopment of Wykeham Lodge would need to be carried out sustainably.  Two sub objectives for this objective should also be considered. The first states that the boroughs heritage will be protected and enhanced. The additional protection suggested for the buildings through use of an article 4 direction would add to this. If the area were to be undesignated then there would be less chance to protect these buildings from demolition.
Basic Needs	– Increase the number of appropriate affordable housing units in Merton to reflect increases in demand	Any future redevelopment of Wykeham Lodge would need to contribute towards affordable housing.

Work and the economy	– Maintain local employment capacity	This is not relevant for this appraisal as no there are no proposals that affect the employment sites in the Conservation Area.
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 as no actions to reduce parking provision are proposed .
Crime	– Reduce the level of street crime	Any future redevelopment of Wykeham Lodge would need to consider design issues that may help reduce street crime.
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

There are no actions highlighted in the above table that would have a negative effect in sustainability terms. There would be a number of minor beneficial actions that would help protect the heritage of the area and maintain its biodiversity like an Article 4 direction to protect the existing holly hedges. Any redevelopment of Wykeham Lodge would need to take into consideration guidance for sustainable construction. This would be provided in a development brief.

Mike Carless