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# John Innes (Wilton Crescent)

## Conservation Area Management Plan



A supplement to the John Innes (Wilton Crescent)  
Conservation Area Appraisal

**September 2010**

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## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

### **Background to the Conservation Area Management Plan**

- 1.1 This Management Plan has been prepared as a supplement to the Character Appraisal for the John Innes (Wilton Crescent) Conservation Area (2005).
- 1.2 The duty to designate conservation areas was introduced in the Civic Amenities Act 1967. Designation of the John Innes (Merton Park) Conservation Area in the following year was, therefore, a rapid response to the new provision that immediately recognised the significance of the area. The John Innes (Wilton Crescent) Conservation Area followed in 1984. The two areas are contiguous and there is much that unites them through the John Innes connection, which is why his name appears in their formal titles. More generally, however, the two areas are known as the Merton Park and the Wilton Crescent Conservation Areas.
- 1.3 While there are planning measures relating specifically to conservation areas (see section 3 below), their effectiveness depends upon the way in which the designated areas are managed. This is not simply a matter of controls being exercised by the Borough Council, there are incentives too, and significant contributions to be made by local businesses, residents and community groups. The purpose of a management plan, therefore, is to show how each can play a part in making the John Innes conservation areas a better place to live in, to work in and to visit.
- 1.4 The first step is to identify the special architectural and historic interest that justified designation. The Borough Council has done this in the character appraisal of the Wilton Crescent and Merton Park areas that were published in 2005 and 2006 respectively.
- 1.5 Having defined what is important, the Council now needs to consider how it will be looked after. For this, it has prepared management plans for the two areas so that future decision-making is coordinated with the common purpose of enhancing their qualities. This is the initial stage in a proposed series of management plans that will eventually cover all the conservation areas in the Borough.

## The need for proactive management

- 1.6 Government policy<sup>1</sup> has made it clear that conservation areas are not necessarily preservation areas. Change is an inevitable facet of modern life and the challenge is to manage change in a manner that does not lose sight of the special historic qualities of a place. Local authorities are expected to publish appraisals of their conservation areas, in order to identify their special interest, and then to prepare management plans to address the issues that arise from that analysis.
- 1.7 Proactive management of conservation areas gives clarity and robustness to decision making, which means that issues may be more defensible in, for instance, planning appeals.

## 2.0 IMPLICATIONS OF CONSERVATION AREA DESIGNATION

- 2.1 Designation as a conservation area brings a number of specific statutory provisions aimed at assisting the “preservation and enhancement” of the area. These are as follows:
- The local authority must review designations ‘from time to time’.
  - There is a particular duty to prepare proposals for the enhancement of conservation areas. Character appraisals and management plans form a significant part of that duty.
  - When using any powers under the Planning Acts, special attention must be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of conservation areas.
  - Extra publicity must be given to planning applications affecting conservation areas.
  - Conservation Area Consent is required for the demolition of any unlisted building in a conservation area (with certain minor exceptions) and the local authority, or the Secretary of State, may take enforcement action or institute a criminal prosecution if consent is not obtained.
  - Written notice must be given to the Council six weeks before works are carried out to any trees in the area above a minimum size (75mm diameter at 1.5 metres above the ground).
  - The display of advertisements may be more restricted than elsewhere.
  - The Council, or the Secretary of State, may take steps to ensure that buildings in a conservation area are kept in good repair through the use of Urgent Works Notices and Amenity Notices.

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<sup>1</sup> Planning Policy Statement 5 (PPS5) – *Planning for the Historic Environment* - 2010

- 2.2 Owners and residents can minimise the effects of change by employing skilled advice when preparing development proposals and by avoiding unrealistic aspirations.

## **3.0 SPECIAL ARCHITECTURAL AND HISTORIC INTEREST**

### **Wilton Crescent Conservation Area**

- 3.1 The conservation area for Wilton Crescent was designated in April 1984.
- 3.2 In 2004, a boundary review was undertaken as part of the work for the character appraisal. This proposed the deletion of modern development on the south side of Henfield Road and the addition of 255-263 Kingston Road in order to provide consistent coverage of Kingston Road across the two John Innes conservation areas and the Merton Hall Road Conservation Area.

### **Summary of special architectural and historic interest**

- 3.3 While the mediaeval settlement of Merton gave Kingston Road the sinuous form that it has today, this is the only evidence of early history in the Wilton Crescent area.
- 3.4 The land to the north of Kingston Road was bought by John Innes to add to his holding at 'Lower Merton' and it was developed as part of his garden suburb initiative. As with Merton Park, the principal architects were Henry Quatermain and JS Brocklesby. However, unlike Merton Park, the houses tend to be at a higher density. Indeed, Quatermain's first houses north of Kingston Road were the terraces built in the 1870s in Kingswood Road.
- 3.5 Characteristics of the Wilton Crescent area include:
- the informal layout
  - a high quality of building details and
  - the strong contribution made by planting and street trees

## **4.0 CHALLENGES FACED IN THE WILTON CRESCENT CONSERVATION AREA**

- 4.1 There is an overwhelming view that the special interest, character and appearance of the Wilton Crescent Conservation Area are important to life in the area today.

- 4.2 A range of issues that may affect the historic character of the conservation area have emerged from site surveys, from the Character Appraisal of Wilton Crescent (2005) and from public consultation, the Council's Conservation and Design Advisory Panel (CADAP), the John Innes Society, and Council Officers.
- 4.3 The main issues are:
- Building maintenance and repair.
  - Loss of original architectural detail.
  - Tree management.
  - Street frontages.
  - Design of new development.
  - Traffic, pedestrian movement and parking.
  - Public realm, street furniture, street lighting and signage.
  - Policy and guidance.
  - Opportunities for enhancement.
- 4.4 In response to the main issues identified above, the following section sets out proposals for the future management of the conservation area. Appendix 1 contains an Action Plan that shows how the proposed recommendations might be achieved in the short, medium and long term.

## 5.0 MANAGEMENT PROPOSALS

### Building and Planning

#### MP 1: Monitor Building Condition

*The condition of all historic assets should be assessed regularly and measures put in place to require improvements should a site begin to have a detrimental impact on the area.*

- 5.1 The general condition of properties in the area is good, although there have been occasional cases where repairs have not been addressed.
- 5.2 Where the condition of a listed building or key unlisted building gives cause for concern, appropriate steps should be sought to secure the future of the building. Such measures include the use of statutory powers, such as an Urgent Works Notice, to secure the preservation of the building by protecting it from further decay.

- 5.3 Where the appearance of a site is detrimental to the neighbourhood, consideration should be given to serving a Section 215 Notice, sometimes called an Amenity Notice. This requires the proper maintenance of the property or land and it specifies what steps are required to remedy the problem within a specific time period.
- 5.4 In some cases, the appearance of sites can be improved through careful development.

### **MP 2: Protect against loss of architectural detail**

*The special qualities of all key unlisted buildings should be protected by means of an Article 4 Direction.*

- 5.5 Small changes such as replacement of front doors and windows with uPVC 'imitations', infilling of porches and painting of masonry are cumulatively eroding the special historic character and damaging the appearance of historic buildings. The Article 4 Direction plays a vital role in bringing some minor changes within the control of the planning system, but it does not extend to all the key unlisted buildings in the conservation area.
- 5.6 It is recommended that a photographic survey is undertaken as a baseline record for measuring change, monitoring building condition and to provide evidence for effective enforcement. For the latter, however, it is important that the record is updated every four years because breaches more than four years old cannot be enforced against.<sup>2</sup> Communities can assist with this work.

### **MP 3: High quality design of new development**

*The redevelopment of sites or buildings, which fail to enhance the character or appearance of the conservation area should be encouraged as and when they become available for renewal.*

- 5.7 Three architects with their own distinctive styles contributed to the historic street scene in the formative years of the John Innes area. Later developments have to date had little coherence and some house extensions have been at odds with the historic design of the host building in terms of size, design and materials.

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<sup>2</sup> The four year rule applies to enforcement against works carried out without planning permission or contrary to a condition of an existing permission. There is no time limit for enforcement related to listed building consent.

- 5.8 Pastiches of the styles of the three architects should not be a planning requirement although it has been particularly successful where a new building has formed part of a row of houses from the original John Innes era.
- 5.9 For other sites, design could be more contemporary but using materials sympathetic to the locally listed buildings. Architects would be expected to show an awareness of the history and development of the conservation areas. Any extension or alteration should respect the style of the original building and its context in the street scene. These considerations should also apply to development proposals outside the boundary if they are nonetheless likely to have an affect on the character or appearance of the conservation areas.

#### **MP 4: Protection of front boundary walls and fences**

*Front boundary walls and fences that contribute to the character and appearance of the conservation areas should be maintained and restored where necessary and fully protected by an Article 4 Direction.*

- 5.10 Pressure for off-road parking has resulted in the loss of front boundary treatments; walls, fences or hedges. This is almost always to the detriment of the street scene. In some properties, the creation of a hard standing for vehicles and removal of front boundary is already controlled through the existing Article 4 Directions.
- 5.11 Walls and fences can be controlled through an Article 4 Direction, but hedges cannot. However, complaints about high hedges can be made to the Development Control Section of the Council. Complaints about hazardous overhang of green boundaries should be made to the District Officers within the Street Management Section of the Council.



### **MP 5: Incorporating energy efficiency measures**

*The special characteristics of the conservation area should be taken into account when considering the installation of renewable energy systems. Advice on energy efficiency for older buildings should be added to the Council's existing supplementary planning guidance on design.*

- 5.12 It is clear that a rising expectation for micro generation may have a significant affect on the appearance of neighbourhoods. English Heritage has anticipated this by publishing guidance and setting up a specific website (see references at Appendix 2), which contain advice on energy efficiency and historic buildings. The National Trust is acquiring considerable practical experience of energy efficiency measures which protect both the appearance and fabric of their buildings. They are prepared to share their experience with local authorities, property professionals and property owners. They warn that use of inappropriate measures can cause irreparable long term structural damage.

### **MP 6: Additional Policy and guidance**

*Further design guidance and leaflets, especially regarding the implications of Article 4 Directions, should be prepared to build upon existing supplementary planning guidance and advice.*

- 5.13 The adopted Unitary Development Plan and emerging Local Development Framework (LDF) provide borough-wide policy in relation to conservation areas. There is also existing and proposed guidance on a range of general topics.
- 5.14 There is now a need for more specific controls and guidance to support the managerial approach that is necessary for the long term future of the John Innes Conservation Areas. It is important to establish these needs now so that they can feed into the programme for the LDF.

## Trees, Hedges and Verges

### MP 7: Tree Management

*All significant trees within the public realm should be identified and priorities and resources agreed for their maintenance, remedial works or succession planting.*

- 5.15 Street trees, trees in parks and open spaces and privately owned garden trees make a vital contribution to the special interest of the conservation areas but they can cause problems through overhanging branches and sometimes due to mechanical damage from roots. Subsidence problems in the area are rare as the soils are mainly non-shrinking, although shrinkable clays are present at depth.
- 5.16 As trees become old, or diseased, they may need to be felled and replacement planting undertaken. Horse Chestnut trees are currently threatened by a cocktail of problems including Horse Chestnut leaf miner, Parakeet damage to young shoots, Phytophthora and Bleeding Canker, which cause a range of problems including bark death, canopy thinning, dieback and sometimes complete death of the tree. Honey fungus is present in the area and is sometimes destructive, possibly due to the overuse of fertilisers, fungicides and herbicides in private gardens, which can disrupt the natural soil flora of the area.
- 5.17 The preparation of a Tree Management Strategy for the conservation areas could be undertaken as a partnership between local groups and the Council. Indeed, Merton Park is the only part of the Borough where agreement already exists between the Council and local groups on the species for future planting
- 5.18 The Strategy should be based on a full tree survey, which identifies prevalent tree species. These include the dominance of London planes and silver birches in Wilton Crescent, as well as individual and distinctive trees. This understanding will then inform suitable planning for maintenance, succession planting and further development of the tree stock. Trees, which may need tree surgery, those whose roots have disrupted the pavements, and where branches obstruct pedestrians, should be noted and an appropriate management plan proposed and implemented.

### **MP 8: Tree Preservation Orders**

*Tree preservation Orders should be considered for all major trees and tree groups as identified in Para 25 of the Character Appraisal.*

- 5.19 Recommendations for Tree Preservation Orders and further tree planting could also be made. A 'walking trail' based on the trees is another possible outcome of this work.

### **MP 9: Preservation of hedges**

*The re planting of holly hedges, where they have been removed, and regular maintenance of existing hedges to prevent the hazardous overhang of branches should be encouraged.*

- 5.20 Street frontages are the most visible aspect of the conservation areas and most are in private ownership. The areas are noted for the prevalence of holly hedges and where these have been removed it is almost always to the detriment of the area.
- 5.21 Replacement of green hedges with fences or other 'hard' boundary treatment can be unsightly as they erode the sylvan and semi-rural quality of the locality. Regular maintenance of existing hedges is required to avoid overgrown and untrimmed hedges causing obstructions and becoming a hazard to pedestrians.

### **MP 10: Improvements to the public realm**

*Lost verges should be replaced, redundant crossovers removed and footways, granite kerbstones and grass verges re instated as and when necessary. Parking on verges should be discouraged with the use of discreet signs, with enforcement being used where necessary*

- 5.22 The quality of the public realm plays a significant part in defining the character of the conservation area. In some parts of the conservation area, road-side grass verges have been removed while parked cars are damaging existing grass verges.

- 5.23 Pavements in the area are constructed mostly with modern materials and, although in generally good condition, there are areas that are uneven and could present a trip hazard. In most cases it is the root growth of mature trees that has disrupted the pavement.
- 5.24 Original granite kerbstones contribute to the mature character of the area and reinforce the sense of quality in the conservation area. These small details, taken together, can have a very significant impact on the character of the conservation area and their specification in all new works to the public realm should be carefully considered.

### **Traffic, Parking, Street Lighting and Furniture**

#### **MP 11: Rationalise and coordinate street furniture**

*All road signage and street furniture should be rationalised and coordinated in line with the principles set out in the Council's 'Merton Street Design Guide'.*

- 5.25 The conservation area suffers from a plethora of different styles of signs and a co-ordinated approach to all street furniture would benefit the areas. No new street furniture should be added into the streets unless absolutely essential and all historic street furniture should be preserved and maintained.
- 5.26 Where new street name signs are required, the blue 'conservation area' type with the holly leaf motif should be used in all cases.

#### **MP 12: Traffic Management review**

*Traffic control measures should be reviewed, to ensure that safety and environment are equally well served, and the provision of additional pedestrian crossings should be considered.*

- 5.27 High volumes of traffic using Kingston Road and elsewhere are causing problems of noise, air pollution, hazards to pedestrians and severance of pedestrian routes. Problems arise from the speed, volume and weight of vehicles. Certain roads are used as 'rat runs' to shorten journeys and are congested at rush hour and school run times.

- 5.28 Traffic calming measures have gone some way to reducing traffic speed and controlling traffic but the accompanying signage and junction entry treatments do not always sit well with the strong historic character and appearance of the conservation area because of their uncompromisingly modern materials, colour and design. Neither are they wholly popular with road users and pedestrians. Any review of traffic management in the area should, therefore, take account of efforts made elsewhere to make measures as unobtrusive as possible.

#### **MP 13: Street lighting review**

*Street lighting should be of an appropriate design and specification for its location, meeting the required standards without wastage or light pollution. When new replacement light fittings are installed, consideration should be given to their replacement with a unit of a more appropriate design for the conservation area location.*

- 5.29 Street lighting levels are adequate generally, but light pollution and energy efficiency is a contemporary concern that may not have been considered when the existing provision was installed. In addition, many of the light fittings in the conservation area are of a utilitarian design and their future replacement with units more in keeping with the character of the conservation area is desirable. There is an inadequate level of lighting in Wilton Grove.

#### **MP 14: Accommodating parking**

*Measures to control parking in the conservation area should be reviewed with a focus on reducing the intrusion of signage and yellow lines. In addition, the loss of front garden space to large areas of hard surface to accommodate parking should be discouraged. When parking in front gardens is being considered, the scheme should be designed with the retention of the soft landscaping and front boundary being of paramount importance.*

- 5.30 Availability of parking has improved since the introduction of controlled parking zones (CPZs), otherwise known as 'residents parking', but long-term parking by out-of-area vehicles in non-CPZ areas, is a cause for concern.

- 5.31 Competition for parking space adds pressure to the demand for off-road parking on former front gardens, which has a detrimental effect on the appearance of the conservation areas through the loss of trees and shrubs and the removal of front boundaries.

### **Specific Opportunities for enhancement**

- 5.32 A number of specific improvements, some public and some private, would be welcome. The most significant are:
- Remedial works to uneven pavement surfaces.
  - Whenever the opportunity presents itself, encourage the planting of new holly hedges and encourage the re-introduction of distinctive gates and gateposts where there is historic evidence of their former existence.
  - Improve the appearance of the cycle path from Wilton Grove/Henfield Road to Kingston Road.
  - Improve the roundabout at the northern end of Wilton Crescent.

### **Implementation and review**

- 5.33 It is important that the strategy for future management should be more than a 'wish list'. In addition to a series of recommendations, the strategic aspect must include timescales and responsibilities. These are provided in the Action Plan at Appendix 1, which establishes a managerial approach to the John Innes Conservation Areas.
- 5.34 The Plan includes actions for ongoing, short, medium and long term timescales. The latter may only be aspirations at present, pending the development of resources, but it is important for the areas to have ambitions.
- 5.35 Resources, however, are not the issue for immediate actions. Spending decisions are constantly being made and the challenge is to ensure that those investments are made in ways that benefit the special character of the conservation areas.
- 5.36 Resources are equally an issue for private owners. Assistance is provided by the organisation *Maintain Britain's Heritage* and the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings' (SPAB) *National Maintenance Week*, both of which can be harnessed to good effect in Merton.

### **Periodic review**

- 5.37 While the Action Plan assigns responsibilities and timescales to the projected tasks, the management aspect will only be meaningful if the programme is subject to periodic review in order to evaluate progress. It is recommended that reviews should be undertaken on a five-yearly basis, in line with best practice for the review of conservation area appraisals, although individual projects may develop programmes of their own.
- 5.38 Responsibility for conducting the review is with the Environment and Regeneration Department of Merton Borough Council.

## Appendix 1. The Action Plan

This Action Plan demonstrates how the management proposals in Section 5 of this document might be achieved in the short (up to 1 year), medium (up to 3 years) and long (over 3 years) term or ongoing.

<b>Proposal: MP 1- Monitor building condition.</b>
<b>Action:</b> Community and Council to bring forward areas of concern.
<b>Responsibility:</b> Council (Urban Design & Conservation), local community
<b>Timescale:</b> Ongoing.

<b>Proposal: MP 2 – Protect against loss of architectural detail</b>
<b>Action:</b> Review existing Article 4 Direction periodically and ensure local awareness of the implications.
<b>Responsibility:</b> Council (Development Control, Urban Design & Conservation)
<b>Timescale:</b> Medium term

<b>Proposal: MP 3 – High quality design of new development</b>
<b>Action:</b> Work with Development Control, including at pre-application stage, to develop high quality proposals for new development
<b>Responsibility:</b> Council (Urban Design & Conservation)
<b>Timescale:</b> Ongoing

<b>Proposal: MP 4 – Protection of front boundary walls and fences</b>
<b>Action:</b> Review existing Article 4 Direction periodically and ensure local awareness of the implications through preparation of additional guidance
<b>Responsibility:</b> Council (Environment & Regeneration)
<b>Timescale:</b> Medium term and ongoing

<b>Proposal: MP 5 – Incorporating energy efficiency measures</b>
<b>Action:</b> Update and revise existing design guidance
<b>Responsibility:</b> Council (Urban Design & Conservation).
<b>Timescale:</b> Longer-term

<b>Proposal: MP 6 Additional policy and guidance</b>
<b>Action:</b> Prepare additional guidance to raise public awareness of the significance of the area
<b>Responsibility:</b> Council (Urban Design & Conservation).
<b>Timescale:</b> Medium-term.



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<b>Proposal: MP 7 – Tree management</b>
<b>Action:</b> Prepare Tree Management Strategy.
<b>Responsibility:</b> Council (Environment & Regeneration).
<b>Timescale:</b> Ongoing

<b>Proposal: MP 8 - Tree preservation Orders</b>
<b>Action:</b> Carry out tree survey and implement Tree Preservation Orders as appropriate.
<b>Responsibility:</b> Council ( Tree Officers - Development Control)
<b>Timescale:</b> Short to Medium Term

<b>Proposal: MP 9 – Preservation of hedges</b>
<b>Action:</b> Monitor overhanging vegetation, liaise with local property owners.
<b>Responsibility:</b> Council Officers within Street Management Section, local community.
<b>Timescale:</b> Ongoing

<b>Proposal: MP 10 – Improvements to the public realm</b>
<b>Action:</b> Carry out a survey of existing and ‘lost’ verges. Close liaison with traffic and parking management section on future works
<b>Responsibility:</b> Council (Traffic and Parking Management), local residents
<b>Timescale:</b> Short-term and Ongoing

<b>Proposal: MP 11 – Rationalise and coordinate street furniture</b>
<b>Action:</b> Compile an audit of all street signs and furniture with a view to removal of all unnecessary clutter and ensuring a coordinated future approach.
<b>Responsibility:</b> Council (Conservation Team and Highways).
<b>Timescale:</b> Medium-term

<b>Proposal: MP 12 – Traffic management review</b>
<b>Action:</b> Review traffic control measures including the designation of a 20mph zone.
<b>Responsibility:</b> Council (Highways and Engineers).
<b>Timescale:</b> Medium-term

<b>Proposal: MP 13 – Street lighting review</b>
<b>Action:</b> Carry out a review of street lighting and when lighting is upgraded, replace with more suitable units
<b>Responsibility:</b> Council (Highways and Engineers)
<b>Timescale:</b> Ongoing

<b>Proposal: MP 14 – Accommodating parking</b>
<b>Action:</b> Consult local residents and businesses to agree where parking might be allowed and review provision, focussing on reduction of signage and yellow lines.
<b>Responsibility:</b> Council (Traffic and Parking Management), local residents and businesses.
<b>Timescale:</b> Medium-term

## Appendix 2. References

LB Merton: *John Innes (Wilton Crescent) Conservation Area Character Assessment* (2005)

LB Merton: *John Innes (Merton Park) Conservation Area Character Assessment* (2006)

LB Merton: *Merton Street Design Guide* (2006)

Dept. of Culture, Media and Sport: *Heritage Protection for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* – 2007

English Heritage: *Guidance on Conservation Area appraisals* – 2005

English Heritage: *Guidance on Management Proposals for Conservation Areas* – 2005

English Heritage: *Streets for All* – 2005

HMSO: Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990

HMSO: PPS 5 – *Planning for the Historic Environment* – 2010

Websites:

[www.merton.gov.uk](http://www.merton.gov.uk)

[www.english-heritage.org.uk](http://www.english-heritage.org.uk)

[www.climatechangeandyourhome.org.uk](http://www.climatechangeandyourhome.org.uk)

[www.maintainourheritage.co.uk](http://www.maintainourheritage.co.uk)

[www.spab.org.uk](http://www.spab.org.uk)

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John Innes (Wilton Crescent) Conservation Area Management Plan

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- Albanian** Nëse ju nevojitet ndonjë pjesë e këtij dokumenti e shpjeguar në gjuhën amtare ju lutemi shenojeni kutinë dhe na kontaktoni duke na shkruar ose telefononi duke përdorur detajet e mëposhtme.
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- Tamil** இந்தப் பத்திரத்தின் எந்தப் பகுதியும் உங்களின் மொழியில் விளக்கப்படுவது உங்களுக்கு வேண்டுமானால், தயவுசெய்து பெட்டியில் அடையாளமிட்டு, கீழுள்ள எங்களின் விபரங்களைப் பயன்படுத்தி எழுத்துமூலமாக அல்லது தொலைபேசி மூலமாக எங்களைத் தொடர்புகொள்ளவும்.
- Urdu** اگر آپ اس دستاویز کے کسی حصے کا ترجمہ اپنی زبان میں حاصل کرنا چاہتے ہیں تو دئیے گئے باکس میں صحیح کا نشان لگائیے اور ہمارے درج ذیل رابطے پر یا ٹیلیفون کے ذریعے باہر تحریری طور پر رابطہ کریں۔

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