



Supplementary Planning Document
London Borough of Merton



South Park Gardens Sustainability Appraisal



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Sustainability Appraisal Statement for Character Appraisal of South Park Gardens 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 13.4 hectares immediately to the east of Wimbledon town centre in a predominantly residential setting. It is dominated by the gardens that give it its name around which a number of concentric roads are set out. Apart from the gardens the area is entirely residential and 200 plus properties range from late nineteenth to early twentieth century build. They all however have basic features in common and a good number of them are locally listed. The gardens are included in the national Register of Historic Parks and Gardens.

Boundary Changes

There are no proposed boundary changes.

Actions

- Removal of asphalt where used and replacement with suitable coloured brick paving
- Reinstatement of a bandstand in the gardens
- Removal of the chain link fence around the gardens and replacement with railings
- Article 4 direction to prevent the removal of front gardens for parking
- Replacement of standard double yellow lines with thinner ones where appropriate
- Reduction in the number of road sign clutter at the junction of Prince's Road and Queen's Road

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.	There are no Article 4 Directions preventing the replacement of front doors and windows suggested. This perhaps is due to the fact that some of the buildings are locally listed.
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Further protect existing designated sites through the use of S106 agreements 	There is no extra protection proposed for trees through preservation orders.
the Built Environment and its heritage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Encourage sustainably built development 	This is not relevant for this appraisal but two sub objectives for this objective are. 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. The second regards flooding. If asphalt is to be replaced with brickwork it may be possible to use some form of porous paving thereby reducing runoff.
Basic Needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Increase the number of appropriate affordable housing units in Merton to reflect increases in demand 	This is not relevant for this appraisal as no housing is to be provided.
Work and the economy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Maintain local employment capacity 	This is not relevant for this appraisal as no employment sites are located in the Conservation Area.
Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Improve health equality 	This is not relevant for this appraisal.
Transport and access	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – The need for travel is minimised 	An article 4 direction to prevent the conversion of front gardens for parking spaces would reduce the ease of parking for residents which may encourage them to reduce their use of a car.
Crime	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Reduce the level of street crime 	This is not relevant for this appraisal.
Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Increase educational attainment of the boroughs residents 	This is not relevant for this appraisal.
Equity and Participation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Poverty is reduced 	A sub objective of this topic is relevant where the action to reintroduce a bandstand is concerned. This would help to encourage a more vibrant community by developing a performance space in the park.
Cultural, leisure and social activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Improve the access to and quality of open spaces 	A sub objective of this topic is relevant where the action to reintroduce a bandstand is concerned. This would help to encourage access to cultural and leisure facilities by developing a performance space in the park.

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 enhance the heritage of the area like reducing the street clutter for instance. A major beneficial effect would be preventing the conversion of front gardens to parking spaces by use of an Article 4 direction. This would encourage people to use their cars less by making it less convenient to access their cars. Secondly this would also reduce the coverage of front gardens with hard standing thereby reducing run off and potential flood impact. Reducing the rate of run-off could also be improved by use of porous brickwork if tarmac paving is to be replaced. A final beneficial suggestion would be the reinstatement of a bandstand to the park which would benefit the community at large and not just those who live in the conservation area.

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