



Erith Road Conservation Area

Area Appraisal and Management Plan
February 2008

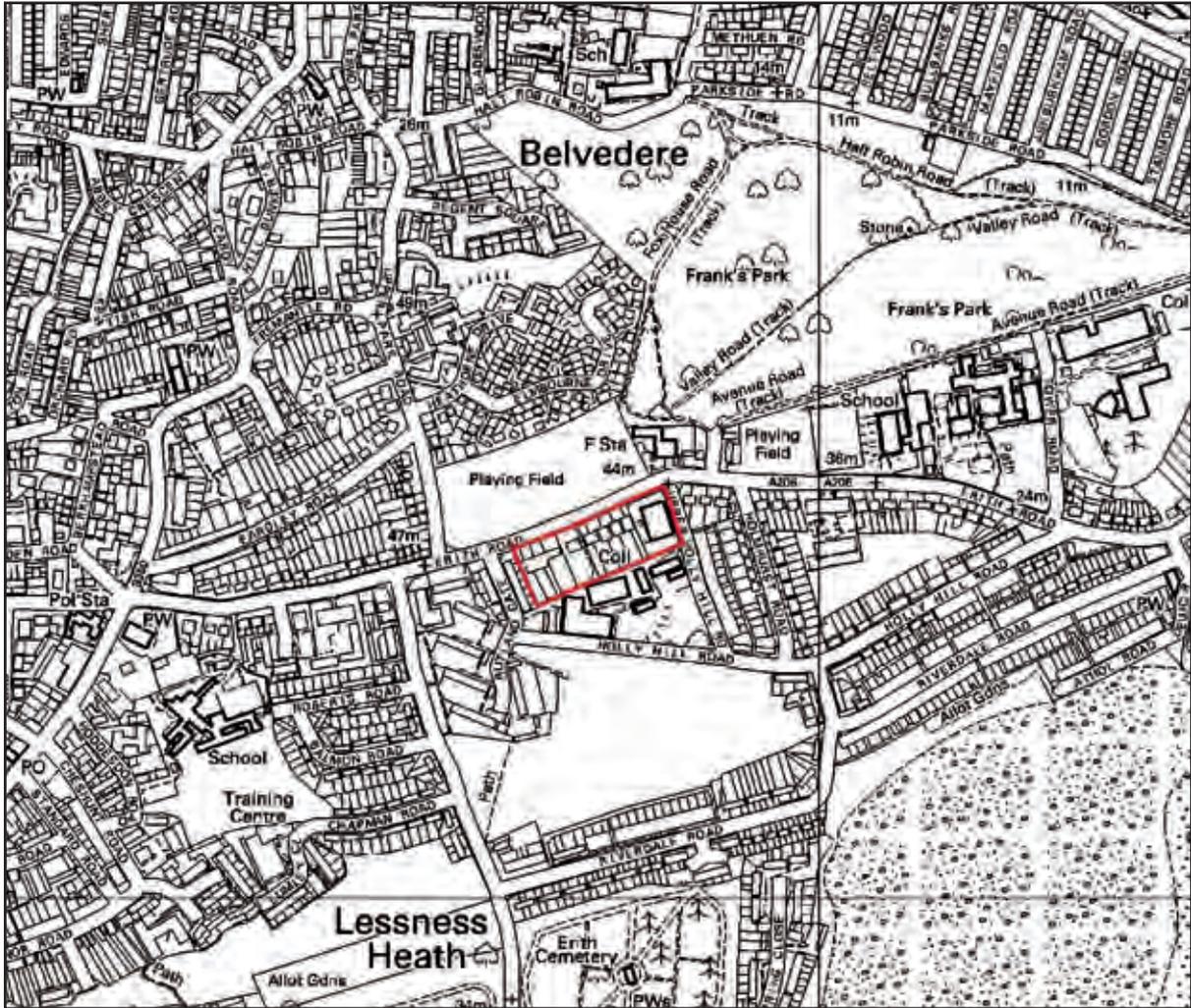
This document was produced by

London Borough of Bexley
Strategic Planning and Regeneration Department
Wyncham House, 207 Longlands Road
Sidcup, Kent DA15 7JH

and approved by the Cabinet Member on

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Location of Conservation Area



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Part 1: Conservation Area Appraisal

1 Introduction

- 1.1 Erith Road Conservation Area was designated on the 14th February 2004.
- 1.2 Under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, an area designated as a “conservation area” will be an “area of special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance”.
- 1.3 This document defines and records the special architectural and historic interest of the Erith Road Conservation Area and identifies opportunities for enhancement.

2 Planning and policy context

- 2.1 Bexley’s Unitary Development Plan (UDP) adopted on 28 April 2004 contains the Council’s policies and proposals for development, regeneration and land use in the borough. Policies which seek the preservation and enhancement of statutorily listed buildings, locally listed buildings, conservation areas and archaeology are also set out in the UDP and the emerging Local Development Framework (LDF).
- 2.3 This appraisal should also be read in conjunction with national planning policy guidance, particularly Planning Policy Guidance Note 15 - Planning and the Historic Environment (PPG15). It follows advice contained in “Guidance on Conservation Area Appraisals” and “Guidance on the Management of Conservation Areas”, published by English Heritage and the Planning Advisory Service (August 2005).

3 Summary of the special character and appearance of the conservation area

- 3.1 The special architectural or historic interest that justifies designation of Erith Road Conservation Area derives from the following features:
 - An interesting and virtually unaltered Victorian/Edwardian suburb consisting of the work of four different local architects.
 - A mixture of detached, semi detached and terraced buildings, characterised by red brick construction, timber gables, rooftop finials and gothic windows.
 - Mature trees and distinctive boundary walls.
 - Simplicity in the scale and proportions of architectural detail.
 - Symmetry between properties in each group of buildings
 - Elements of the private and public realm such as long and broad front gardens, wide pavements and road conveying a very spacious character.
 - Homes facing out on to an open park area.
 - Strong visual quality of the roofline distinguished by change and progression.
 - A streetscape enhanced by views between the buildings.
 - The landmark building of the former Technical Institute.
 - The attractive relationship of the former Institute building and Upper Holly Hill Road

4 Location, setting and boundary description

Location and context

4.1 The Erith Road Conservation Area is in the north west of the London Borough of Bexley. It is located on a ridge where the land drops away to the south, and lines Erith Road which follows the ridge between Erith and Plumstead.

4.2 The south side of Erith Road is occupied by three different building types. The properties comprise from the west, Nos 37-45 (odd) are two-storey terrace (originally known as Rutland Terrace); Nos 47 and 51 which are detached buildings; and Nos 57-71 (odd) which are pairs of uniformly spaced semi-detached properties. At the east end of the conservation area is Nos. 1-29 Old College Court, formerly the Erith Technical Institute building.



Street pattern and layout

4.3 The street pattern is of the linear form typical of suburban housing developed along a transport corridor and the layout of Erith Road Conservation Area is defined by its regularity and geometricity. The extent of the conservation area runs from the front corner of Old College Court at the junction of Erith Road across to the corner of No. 37 Erith Road, where it then runs back across the rear gardens of Nos. 37-71 and links up with the boundary of the former Erith Technical Institute building on Upper Holly Hill Road. Refer Townscape Analysis Map.

Landscape and setting

4.4 The topography of the area is characterised by the Abbey Ridge along which Erith Road runs in an east west direction. At the junction with Upper Holly Hill Road the steepness of the ridge is illustrated by the commanding 2-3 storey scale of the former Institute building. The open landscape to the north facing the conservation area is a playing field, which further enhances the openness of this setting.

4.5 The setting of the houses benefits from the large front gardens that are about 6 metres in depth and give the street a relatively spacious character.

The individual houses at Nos 47

and 51 Erith Road stand in generous plots, which are characteristic of the pattern of development of this period. With the exception of Nos. 57-71 the buildings have mature trees and shrubbery in the front gardens providing a natural interface to the road.



- 4.6 The buildings and the spaces between them are an important features of this group of houses and make a significant contribution to the open character and streetscape. Their setting is further enhanced by the wide pavements either side of the main road.

Designated conservation area boundary

- 4.7 The conservation area boundary has been selected to cover the surviving Victorian / Edwardian residential properties and their gardens and the Grade II listed, former Technical Institute building. To the north the boundary follows the kerb edge of the footway and includes the perimeter boundary walls of the properties numbered 37 to 71 Erith Road and the front boundary wall/railings of the former Technical Institute. To the east the boundary is the footway edge of Upper Holly Hill Road and includes the wall and railings of the Technical Institute building. The southern boundary runs along and includes the back boundary wall of the former Technical Institute and then follows the boundary fences behind 37 to 71 Erith Road. To the west, the boundary is the fence line between the house and garden of 37 Erith Road and the rear gardens of the properties 1 to 25 (odd) Rutland Gate. Beyond the boundaries, the character of the area changes significantly, thereby creating a strongly defined edge to the conservation area. See Townscape Analysis Map for boundary.

5 Historic development and archaeological potential

- 5.1 Erith Road has historically been, and remains, the main road transport route between Woolwich and Erith Town Centre. From about 1890 to 1910 the gathering pace of change in urban areas was such that it led to the creation of Victorian and Edwardian suburbs in places like Upper Belvedere and along Erith Road. These suburbs were dependent on public transport for access and were well linked to central urban locations. Proximity to shops, parks and other amenities, as those that at the time were found in Upper Belvedere village was essential to the new occupants on Erith Road.
- 5.2 As the village of Upper Belvedere evolved around Lesnes Heath, it centered on a location where several major transport routes and tracks intersected. Erith Road became a very popular location for the wealthy merchants of Woolwich and Erith who aspired to the rural idyll but could be close enough to the local centres of industry and commerce.
- 5.3 In the late 19th and 20th Centuries, Erith Road was developed in a fairly piecemeal fashion with large family villas being constructed alongside terraced properties and semi detached houses. Whilst the approach to planning was laissez faire it is noted that the Edwardians were highly sophisticated builders of new suburbs and their formulaic approach to new development led to spacious, bright and well-designed terraced properties, houses and villas.
- 5.4 All the buildings were constructed between 1902 and 1910. Plans from the old Erith Urban District Council show that Nos 37 - 45 and No.51 Erith Road were all designed by individual local architects. The former by Mr. William H. Wright of Plumstead and the latter by Mr. Harry Roberts of Vickers Road, Erith. Whereas, No. 47 and Nos. 57-71 Erith Road were designed and constructed by an Erith based company called Enness Brothers Building Contractors.
- 5.5 The former Technical Institute building was designed by W Egerton and constructed in 1906. It opened in the following year as a Technical Institute and the next 30 years were marked by rapid growth. The college was recognised by the University of London for its courses in engineering just before the second-world war.



- 5.6 The open landscape to the north originally formed part of the much larger grounds of the Royal Alfred Merchant Seamen's Institute, thereby providing an important historic association. The original house on the park was built in the early 18th century but was almost completely rebuilt in 1764 by Sir Sampson Gideon. The house remained in family ownership until 1865, when it was purchased by the Shipwrecked Mariners Society. The next year the Society received Royal Patronage and became the Royal Alfred Merchant Seamen's Institution for 'worn out and disabled merchant seamen'. In 1959 a new home was built on the site and it was replaced recently by modern housing, which can be seen from Erith Road.
- 5.7 There are no Scheduled Monuments within the conservation area. Whilst this location is not a known important archaeological area, it is possible that finds may occur

6 Spatial analysis

Character and interrelationship of spaces

- 6.1 The presence of the park on the other side of the road from the conservation area is a defining factor of the area - its immediate relationship to open space and the new houses behind are key to the overall spatial dynamic.
- 6.2 The Conservation area is defined to include one short terrace (Nos.37-47 Erith Road), three individual buildings and three pairs of semi-detached houses. The individual buildings numbered 47 and 51 Erith Road form a centerpiece of this composition and the former Technical Institute building forms a local landmark at the corner of Upper Holly Hill Road.
- 6.3 All the buildings are complemented by open front garden areas which contribute to the special character of the area. In addition to their architectural importance the centerpiece buildings are distinguished by the large spaces surrounding them. At the eastern end of the road the open appearance is enhanced by the spaces between the semi-detached houses.

Key views and vistas

6.4 The relatively open setting and the spaces between and around certain buildings creates strong compositions and views within the Conservation Area. Indeed, strongly profiled front elevations are readily appreciated from the roadside. The uniform proportions of the buildings, front walls and hedges and their gardens create a pleasing spectacle from either side of the road.



6.5 The spaces between houses allow views through, notably to the sky and trees in the background, thereby contributing significantly to the overall character of the area.

6.6 The views at the eastern end where the college fronts the corner of Upper Holly Hill Road reveals an impressive view down to the open space of Lessness Heath and a backdrop of trees.

6.7 The junction with Upper Holly Hill Road also forms a fulfilling point at which to appreciate the length and breadth of the conservation area. The view westward from this point captures the essence of the area concerned, with a strong juxtaposition being formed of the buildings divided from the park by the road.

6.8 Taking an easterly view from the opposite end of the conservation area from outside No. 51, the turret/spire of the former Technical Institute building forms a focal point in the backdrop and contrasts with the monkey puzzle tree in the foreground.

6.9 On closer inspection, a dynamic symmetry of steep and prominent roofs and angles is evoked by the corner of the college against the last building (No. 71) in the terrace.

6.10 Significant views are marked on the attached Townscape Analysis Map.

7 Character analysis

Definition of the character of the area

7.1 The area has a spacious, open character and provides a strong example of the different types of housing being erected in the area in the early part of the 20th Century. The focus of the area is the individual buildings at Nos. 47 and 51 Erith Road, built by Enness Brothers and Mr Roberts respectively and the former Technical Institute designed for Erith Council and built by W Egerton. The open nature of the junction of Erith Road and Upper Holly Hill Road also makes an important contribution to the character and appearance of the area, reflecting the setback and grand nature of the Technical Institute.

7.2 Other principle features of Erith Road Conservation Area include the open garden spaces, the views between the buildings and the quality of the roofscapes in three different styles. The quality of the streetscene relies on the detail of individual building groups as well as the juxtaposition between terraced, semi-detached and detached properties.

Activity and prevailing or former uses within the conservation area

- 7.3 Erith Road developed primarily for residential use and most buildings in the conservation area remain in that use apart from No. 47 Erith Road which is currently used for educational purposes. The landmark Technical Institute building was originally built for education purposes but in recent years has been sympathetically converted to flats.

Architectural and historic character

- 7.4 The buildings in the Conservation area have a memorable appearance deriving from suburban architectural styles and local building materials. The plot widths of the two different building groups (Nos. 37-47 & 57-71) are regular and their roofline is generally uniform. Only the two detached houses have notable differences in their plot sizes and roof shapes. Yet there are a number of unifying architectural features across all three building groups, such as steeply pitched roofs, red brick and sash windows.

- 7.5 Nos. 57-71 Erith Road is a row of four pairs of semi-detached houses that are distinguished by the pattern of decorated timber gables, with roof finials and gothic windows. They were built in around 1890 and are all red brick apart from Nos. 57 and 59. The houses are identical in design, with later alterations. Each semi detached pair (Nos. 61/63, 65/67, 69/71) has a two-storey canted bay with a jettied gable on large timber brackets. The gable is decorated with applied curved timbers.



No.51

- 7.6 There is a distinctive stucco string course between floors and a small balcony at first floor linking adjacent bays. There are two doors in the central bay at ground floor level and two doors opening onto the balcony above. The window openings have flat gauged brick arches and all the window openings retain the pattern of four panes in the top sash and two vertical panes in a larger bottom sash. The external feature of boundary walls adds to the character. The walls on Nos. 51-69 Erith Road are built of over-burnt bricks.



No.57

- 7.7 No. 51, Oakhurst, is a good example of an early 20th Century detached house with a red brick front and yellow brick returns. It has simple and effective decoration with good attention to detail. This property retains its original open porch, which is supported on two columns with foliated capitals and a deep cornice that is distinguished by heavily crafted filigree detail. The front door has an overlight and side windows.
- 7.8 All the windows are original and are distinguished by their gothic arched frames. The left bay has two-storey canted bay with jettied gable on two timber brackets and the right bay has a tri-partite window on each floor. The windows are timber sash with a single pane in the bottom and multi paned glass in the top sash, which are divided by

rounded mullions that give it a distinctive gothic feel.

7.9 In contrast No. 47 Erith Road presents a different set of features. The body of the building is rendered in white and whilst it still has a canted bay window on both floors the decorative motifs are quite different, using instead a series of small oblong shapes. The openings on the left bay are much less detailed and consist only of four window panes. Whilst the roof retains broadly the same shape and pitch, there is a dormer in the gable fronting the road. The front door is clearly a recent addition. The quality of this building has been eroded during its period of occupation by Bexley College, including most recently the unauthorised replacement of windows.

7.10 There is a familiar design code in the final group of buildings at the western end of the conservation area. Such as the two-storey canted bay, distinguished by timber sash windows with a single pane in the bottom and multi paned glass in the top sash. There is an oriel style window on the first floor above the door. The rounded arch above the door is supported by simple columns and the decorative timber on the gables shares a common architectural language, with other houses in the conservation area. The buildings (Nos.37-45) at the end of the conservation area show a pleasing symmetry in the way they relate to the street.



7.11 Erith Technical Institute is a statutory listed Grade II building with a prominent turret and octagonal cupola. It is distinguished by the red brick design interwoven by terracotta friezes and ornamented by floral motifs. It retains the steep pitched roof, pair of chimney stacks, rounded terracotta arch above the door and sash windows. This is an extremely fine building which sits as a landmark structure at the eastern end on the conservation area.

7.12 Generally, throughout the conservation area the roofscape and profiles of these buildings offer an impressive visual sensation to the streetscape. The contrasting form is an important and appreciable aspect of the views from the front and also from surrounding open spaces and properties. The spaces, setting and variety of design all contribute to this area being one of the finest remaining examples of early 20th Century suburban development in the borough.

Buildings of townscape merit

7.13 These properties are good examples of relatively unaltered historic buildings which make a significant contribution to the character of the area. The terrace, Nos 37-45 (odd) Erith Road, as a building group is of Townscape Merit. The unity of form, scale and detailing of individual buildings contrasts against the diversity of pattern given by the different building groups.

7.14 The conservation area boundary has been selected to cover the residential properties and their gardens and the Grade II listed, former Technical Institute building. Whilst it is the group as a whole that contributes to the character of the conservation area, it is still worth picking out one group and one individual building that are distinct examples

of the style. In this respect No. 51 is a good local example of a 19th Century detached house and includes design qualities and materials typical of the local area. Additionally, Nos. 51-71 Erith Road (odd) are good example of semi-detached houses from this era and also represent typical design and materials of the area.

7.15 The terrace and detached house both make a positive contribution to the varied townscape of the Borough and relate very well to the recognisable open and built environment. Property No 51 and Nos 61-71 (odd) are included on the Council's Local List. Refer appended Townscape Analysis Map.

7.16 Listed and locally listed buildings, and Buildings of Townscape Merit all help create the conservation area's distinctive and interesting historic townscape. As recommended in PPG15: Planning and the Historic environment, the general presumption should be in favour of retaining buildings which make a positive contribution to the character or appearance of a conservation area, which all buildings within the area do.

Trees, greenery and green spaces

7.17 The variety of building form on Erith Road has been enhanced by the growth of trees on the south side of the road, which make a positive contribution to the setting of the conservation area. There are mature shrubs and trees fronting Nos. 37-47, and No. 51 Erith Road is dominated by a substantial Monkey Puzzle tree. There are also some impressive hedges separating gardens in a number of places. Nos. 57-71 Erith Road have less in the way of vegetation in their front gardens.

7.18 Important trees have been identified on the accompanying Townscape Analysis Map. It is not appropriate or practical to identify every important tree that contributes to the character of the area and lack of a specific reference does not imply that a particular tree is not of value.

Assets of Erith Road Conservation Area (positives)

7.19 The main assets of the Erith Road Conservation Area are summarised below.

- Architectural and historic interest of each building group - there is an extensive range of gothic bay windows, roof finials and timber gables.
- Juxtaposition of three different building types, from terraced, semi detached and detached properties.
- Strong unity of composition of each particular building type.
- The set back of the houses offers wide open spaces and pavements, which in turn provides an attractive space.
- The street scenes, landscaping and views between buildings are especially important.
- Three different phases of roof gables offer an interesting visual perspective.
- The spaces between the different building types contribute to the streetscene.
- The junction with Erith Road and Upper Holly Hill Road offers interesting views to open space outside the conservation area.
- Dominant landmark building, Erith Technical Institute, at the entrance to the conservation area
- Views from Erith Road in an easterly direction capture the architectural detailing of the former Technical Institute.

The extent of intrusion or damage to the conservation area (negatives)

7.20 The extent of intrusion is illustrated by:

- New and replacement windows and doors have led to the erosion of some of the original unity and balance of the houses.
- The nature of a conservation area occupying just one side of a road highlights the relationship to the open playing field opposite. It therefore lacks a sense of enclosure.
- The group of modern flats at Nos.1-25 Rutland Gate, which detracts from the setting of the area.
- A number of cars are often parked on the roadway disrupting the open setting.

Problems and pressures

7.21 Problems and pressures in the conservation area are as follows:

- There is a high volume of traffic on the road.
- The main pressure for future development might generally take the form of extensions to the buildings, which could have an adverse affect on the harmony of the existing development.
- Increasing pressure from owners to make changes to the frontage of their buildings causes a minor yet cumulative impact on the appearance of the conservation area. This could potentially weaken the unity of the building form and threaten the historic character of the area.
- Roof extensions or rooflights to the front would be particularly disruptive where visible from the street. It is important to protect and retain the original ridge-lines and the rhythm established by the gables.
- Although they may be done in a way that is sensitive to scale, detail and materials, changes to the front elevations will still cause some impact on the homogeneity of the street form.

General condition

7.22 The area is generally well maintained and there are no problems with litter, paving or road surfaces. The brickwork is in good condition and a high standard of joinery is noted. However, several first floor balconies look worn and some window cills and surrounds are showing signs of weather damage. There is also some general wear and tear of architectural features where the stucco is cracking and the window lintels are in need of repair.

Opportunities for enhancement

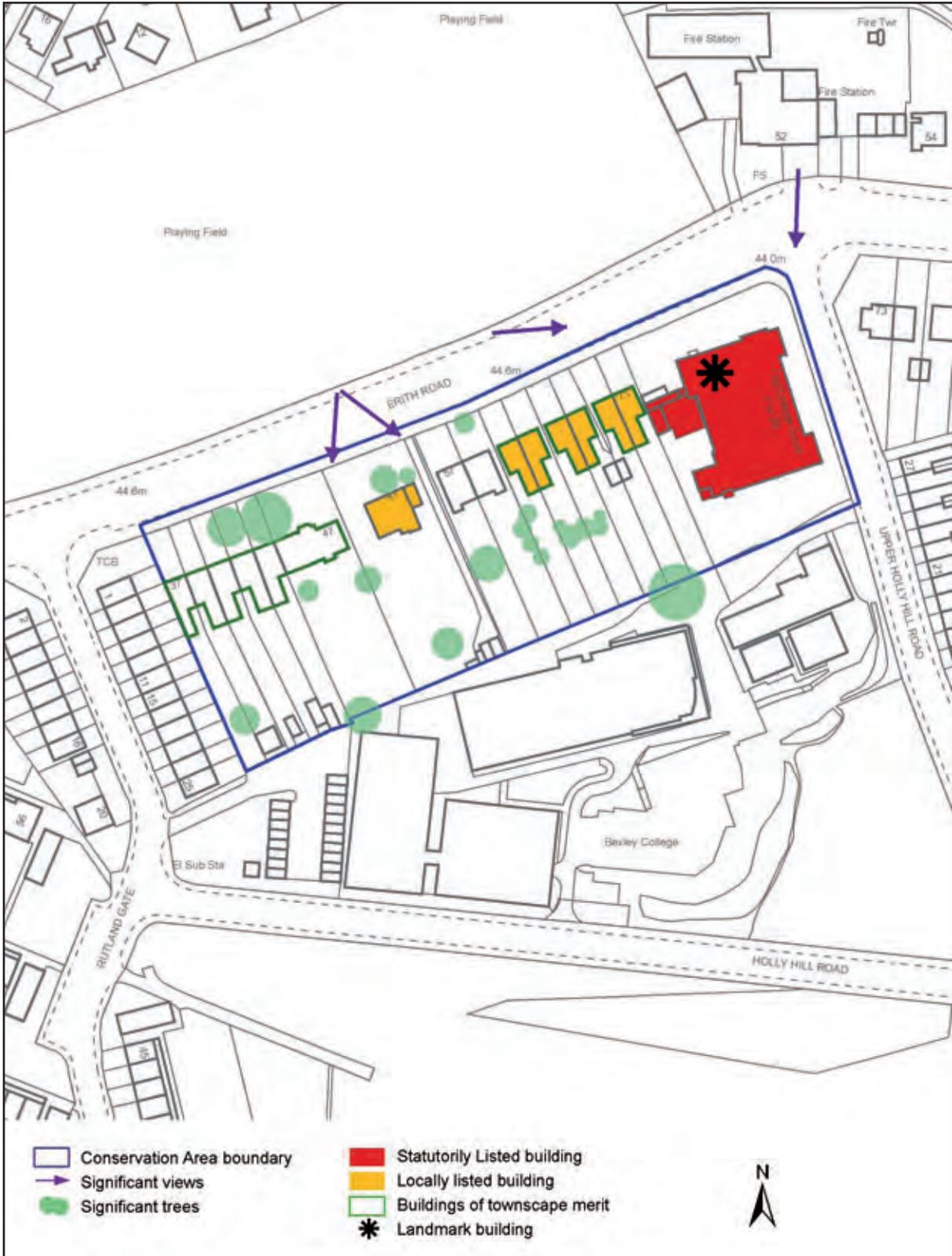
7.23 There is an opportunity to encourage the retention and reinstatement of original features, which would help to restore the unifying detail, which has been lost in development. It would be desirable for some of the houses that have been altered, to be restored more closely to resemble and harmonise with the unity of the Victorian/Edwardian grouping. Grants may be available from Bexley Heritage Fund to support necessary works to restore window, door and roof features. Whilst new replacement windows and doors may be necessary in some cases, there is a good opportunity to ensure they blend into the setting and location.

- 7.24 With the exception of Nos 57-71 Erith Road, there is already a comprehensive coverage of greenery and limited space for substantial extra tree planting. The safeguarding and maintenance of trees and hedges behind front walls should be an important part of the maintenance programme for the area.
- 7.25 Outside the conservation area however, the park to the north can potentially be improved and the fence on the roadside could be softened, perhaps by sensitive landscape screening. The introduction of trees and shrubbery to the front of Nos. 57-71 Erith Road would offer a more pleasing edge to the roadside consistent with Nos. 37-45, 47 and 51.

Potential for new development

- 7.26 The unity of form, scale and design of these Edwardian residences is such that removal and redevelopment would be undesirable. There might be potential for extensions to the rear as the back gardens are in general enclosed from view. Additional building to the side, front or at roof level will not be permitted and clearly designs that relates to the special qualities of the area might be favoured.
- 7.27 Any future alterations to buildings will be expected to preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the conservation area in line with Government advice and planning policies. Therefore, any plans for alterations or extensions will need to be in harmony with the materials of the existing building and character of the area.
- 7.28 The design, siting and general appearance of any extension should respect the style and character of the existing building and adjacent buildings. In determining the impact of any proposal the Council will take into account the overall form, shape and proportions of the extension; massing and day lighting issues, as well roof type, layout of doors, design and style of windows. The doors and windows of any extension should generally repeat the proportions, design, alignment and materials of the openings in the original dwelling.
- 7.29 Consideration may be given to the use of an Article 4 Direction to bring certain changes within planning control. This would allow the Council to make appropriate decisions where necessary to ensure that the cumulative effect of a number of small changes would not detract from the special character of the conservation area.

Townscape Analysis Map



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Part 2: Conservation Area Management Plan

1 Legislative background

- 1.1 The purpose of this Management Plan is to present proposals to achieve the preservation and enhancement of the conservation area's special character. The special qualities of the area have been identified as part of the appraisal process and this guidance draws upon that information. Both the Appraisal and the Management Plan will be subject to monitoring and review.
- 1.2 The document reflects government guidance as set out in Planning Policy Guidance Note 15 - Planning and the Historic Environment (PPG15) and English Heritage's, "Guidance on the Management of Conservation Areas" (August 2005). It is important that the development control process ensures the preservation of the special character of the conservation area and that opportunities are taken to identify and implement enhancements. The key aims of the Management Plan, supported by the Character Appraisal, are to:
- Raise awareness of the importance and value of the local heritage.
 - Identify distinctive built environment character areas within the conservation area; provide guidance; and set out objectives to preserve and enhance buildings, structures and features.
 - Identify distinctive public realm character areas within the conservation area; provide guidance; and establish key actions to preserve and enhance the landscape, open spaces and streets.
 - Provide tailored design guidance and set out actions for the enhancement of the conservation area.
 - Outline the key statutory requirements in respect of development within the conservation area; provide guidance; and set out actions to secure the proper and effective application of these requirements.
 - Propose the implementation of management procedures to co-ordinate the delivery of new works and maintenance of public spaces.
- 1.4 The Management Plan encourages the Local Authority, developers, development professions (e.g. planners, architects, landscape architects, highway engineers) and the local community to engage in the preservation and enhancement of the local historic environment. This will help secure the long-term viability of the conservation area as an important heritage asset.

2 Planning controls and the Council's Development Plan

- 2.1 Designation as a conservation area brings a number of specific statutory provisions aimed at assisting the 'preservation and enhancement' of the area. The local plan policies form the basis for making development control decisions with regard to new development and extensions. Also, in accordance with the Planning (Listed Buildings & Conservation Areas) Act 1990 there are a number of extra controls, which apply to existing buildings in conservation areas. Consent is needed for:
- Demolition of a building (apart from some minor exceptions).
 - Demolition of walls, gates or fences of over a metre next to a highway or over two metres in other locations.

- 2.2 Where a property lies within a conservation area, planning control is extended so that planning permission and conservation area consent will be required, for example:
- A dwellinghouse enlarged by more than 50 cubic metres or over 10% of the size of the original building, whichever is greater.
 - The construction of a detached building, enclosure or pool of over 10 cubic metres in the grounds of a house.
 - Cladding any part of the exterior of a property in stone, artificial stone, timber, plastic or tiles.
 - Enlargement of a house by additions to or alteration of its roof.
 - The installation of a satellite dish or antenna on a chimney, on a building over 15 metres in height or on a wall or roof slope, which fronts a highway (refer Government publication “A Householder’s Planning Guide for the Installation of Antennas, including Satellite Dishes”).
 - Notification must be given of felling or lopping of trees.
- 2.3 Conservation Area Consent is required for the full or substantial demolition of buildings within the conservation area. In accordance with the Government Guidance in PPG15 there will be a presumption in favour of retaining buildings, which make a positive contribution to the character or appearance of the conservation area.
- 2.4 Any application for the demolition of Statutorily Listed, Locally Listed Building or Buildings of Townscape Merit will need to be accompanied by a reasoned justification stating why the building should be demolished. The Council will expect the applicant to demonstrate that:
- The building is beyond economic repair.
 - The building has been offered on the open market at a realistic price.
 - If vacant, that alternative uses have been sought.
- 2.5 Where alterations are proposed, the reinstatement of original detailing and composition will be sought to reinforce the unity and cohesive quality of the townscape. The Council will seek to ensure that new development within the conservation area serves to preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the area in accordance with the adopted planning policies, the emerging Local Development Framework, and other published design guidance.
- 2.6 Furthermore, the Council will expect all applications for extensions and alterations to be particularly carefully considered and only well detailed schemes, using the characteristic and appropriate traditional materials, will be approved.

3 Listed buildings, landmark buildings, buildings of local architectural or historic interest and buildings of townscape merit.

- 3.1 Within the Erith Road Conservation Area are both individual and groups of buildings of considerable historic interest. Properties at Nos 51 and 61 to 71 Erith Road are included on the Local List of Buildings of Architectural or Historical interest and the Council will seek to retain these buildings and ensure that new development does not harm their character, appearance or setting. The terrace Nos 37-45 Erith Road, as a group is considered to be of significant Townscape Merit.
- 3.2 The former Erith Technical College, now named Old College Court, is a Grade II building on the statutory list. “Listing” covers both the interior and exterior of the

building, and all structures within the curtilage, which form part of the land and have done so since before 1 July 1948. Listed Building Consent is needed for all alterations and extensions, which affect the architectural or historic interest of the listed building. The building has been converted into residential flatted properties. Within the conservation area it is considered to be a Landmark Building situated on the prominent corner of Erith Road and Upper Holly Hill Road. The roadside railings which contribute significantly to the setting are protected by the listing.

4 Erosion of character

- 4.1 Increasing pressure from owners to make minor changes to the frontage of their buildings has had a cumulative impact on the appearance of the conservation area. This weakens the unity of the building form and threatens the historic character of the area. New and replacement windows and doors has led to the erosion of some of the original unity and balance of the houses. It is imperative that small but important period architectural features, which add to the historic interest of the building group, are protected. For example, there is an extensive range of gothic bay windows, roof finials and decorative timber gables.
- 4.2 In a similar manner, the context of the original roofscape and gables is an important feature, which adds rhythm and continuity to the streetscene and the conservation area. Roof extensions or rooflights to the front would be particularly disruptive where visible from the street. It is important to protect and retain the original ridge-lines and the rhythm established by the gables.
- 4.3 In general terms, the appraisal identified that the following alterations pose a threat to the special character of the area
- Loss of timber windows and doors;
 - Alterations to window/door openings including infilling open porches;
 - Removal of chimney stacks, pots and roof features including finials and barge boards;
 - Removal and/or alterations to front boundary walls and hedges;
 - Creation of forecourt parking and hard-standings, in place of front gardens.
- 4.4 These minor works and alterations to unlisted buildings, in use as single family dwellings, are normally carried out without planning permission from the Council. Development of this kind is called "Permitted Development" and falls into various classes, which are listed in the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 1995.
- 4.5 Where the quality of an area is being eroded by alterations the Council may make use of what is termed an Article 4 Direction. This may be used to withdraw permitted development rights for a prescribed range of development which materially affect aspects of the external appearance of dwelling houses in conservation areas. This includes the erection, alteration, or removal of a chimney; various kinds of development fronting a highway, waterway, or open space, such as the enlargement, improvement, or other alteration of a dwelling house; alterations to windows or doors; the construction of an external porch; and the painting of a dwelling house, or of a building or enclosure within its curtilage. It may also be used to withdraw the permitted development rights to demolish a gate, fence, wall or other means of enclosure, if it is within the curtilage of a dwelling house and fronts a highway or open space. It is proposed that the Council will consider whether the houses in Erith Road Conservation Area should be subject to an

Article 4 Direction, which could bring many of these alterations under planning control.

- 4.6 As an aid to protecting the character of the area the Council will ensure that unauthorised development is subject to effective enforcement action. This is to protect the special qualities of all the buildings which contribute to the character of the area including notable Locally Listed buildings, Buildings of Townscape Merit and the wider area generally and to ensure that detrimental unauthorised alterations throughout the area are rectified where legal powers permit.
- 4.7 The Council may assist with the provision of grant aid for projects, which restore or reinstate the original features of the building and will contribute to achieving higher standards of preservation and enhancement. The Council will oppose those alterations, which pose a special threat to the character of the area.

5 Trees, landscape and space between buildings

- 5.1 The variety of building form set back from the highway is enhanced by the existing trees and landscaping, which make a positive contribution to the setting of the conservation area. For example, No 51 Erith Road has a substantial and impressive Monkey Puzzle tree. There are also mature shrubs and trees fronting Nos 37-47 Erith Road and there is some impressive hedges separating gardens in a number of places. There is an ongoing need to maintain the hedging and boundary walls on the road frontage. Boundary walls at present are a variety of styles and materials but are consistent along terraces and groups of houses, thereby reinforcing continuity.
- 5.2 Within conservation areas, anyone intending to lop or fell a tree greater than 75 mm in diameter at 1.5 metres above the ground must give the Council six weeks written notice before starting the work. This provides the Council with an opportunity to assess the tree to see if it makes a positive contribution to the character or appearance of the conservation area.
- 5.3 The Council will consider the use of Tree Preservation Orders in appropriate circumstances where a tree has significant amenity value or is considered to be under threat. This will include trees both within and outside the area, where these contribute to the setting of the area or views identified in the appraisal.
- 5.4 It is also essential to maintain the harmonious juxtaposition of the three different building types, from terraced, semi detached and detached properties, as this creates a strong unity of composition of each particular building type. The space between the buildings offers views to trees and greenery and provides a visual break between building types. It is important to retain this continuity and maintain these open green views as breaks in the urban built environment.

6 Setting and views

- 6.1 The setting of the conservation area is very important and development that adversely affects the immediate setting and longer views, into and from the conservation area, will be resisted. The important views are identified on the Townscape Analysis Map in the character appraisal. The Council will seek to ensure that all development serves to respect these important views.
- 6.2 With respect to the adjacent open space to the north of the conservation area - there is an uncomfortable relationship and this presents an opportunity to develop a softer urban/green space relationship. It is recommended that the boundary fence

be softened in places by structured tree planting with appropriate native species. At peak times there is a high volume of traffic on Erith Road, which detracts from an appreciation of the view.

- 6.3 The Council will ensure that all development respects the important views within, into and from the conservation area, as identified in the appraisal. The Council will ensure that these remain protected from inappropriate forms of development and that due regard is paid to these views in the formulation of public realm works or enhancement schemes in accordance with Adopted UDP and other guidance.

7 The public realm and enhancement

- 7.1 Pavements in the conservation area have generally been resurfaced using modern paving materials. Lighting is provided by late twentieth century, utilitarian columns which are simple, slender and unobtrusive. In general highway signage, traffic calming measures and other structures can all serve to detract from the quality of the public realm and character of the area, and redundant modern features should be removed. The reinstatement of traditional flagged pavements and replica lighting could potentially reinforce the identity of the area and the public realm. A critical audit of the public realm should be undertaken to identify redundant features and opportunities for enhancement, subject to resources.
- 7.2 The Council will seek to ensure that any surviving historic streetscape features are retained, and that any future highway works will bring a positive improvement to the character or appearance of the conservation area. All works should accord with the spirit of English Heritage's 'Streets For All' 2004.

8 New buildings and building extensions

- 8.1 New developments in conservation areas should aspire to a quality of design and execution, related to its context. This will normally involve respecting values established through assessment of the significance of the area.
- 8.2 In Erith Road Conservation Area the main pressure for future development might generally take the form of residential extensions, which could have an adverse affect on the harmony of the existing development. Further development might be permissible in some instances, as long as the proposals utilise current enclosed areas at ground floor level to the rear and are designed in a way that is sensitive to scale, detail and materials.
- 8.3 There is an opportunity to improve the boundary at the western end, where it fringes the block of flats on Rutland Gate, as it is currently a weakness of the area in general. Some degree of tree screening could improve this relationship.
- 8.4 There is an interesting visual pattern created by the buildings that evokes a specific set of spatial relationships and views: Any development on Erith Road or Upper Holly Hill Road should not impinge on this harmony.

9 Solar panels and wind turbines

- 9.1 In general terms the installation of solar panels and/or wind turbines within or adjacent to a conservation area would introduce alien features and by their inherent design they will be visually intrusive. In terms of the main conservation principle that any proposed development should "preserve or enhance" the character of the conservation area

any installations may be problematic. The Council has published guidance, which provides information on the subject. Please refer "Solar Panels and Wind Turbines: A Householder Guide on the Need for Planning Permission and Building Regulations approval" (Jan. 2007).

10 Monitoring change

- 10.1 It is recommended that the physical environment of the conservation area and key sites adjacent to the conservation area is monitored by carrying out detailed surveys, including a dated photographic record, on a regular basis, so as to identify any unauthorised work and consider whether enforcement action should be taken.
- 10.2 Any previously unreported unauthorised development or work identified by the detailed survey would then be considered by the Planning Control Enforcement Team for action, resources permitting.

11 Boundary review

- 11.1 The appraisal identified that the existing boundary was generally a good reflection of the area of special character and consequently no revisions are suggested to the existing designation.
- 11.2 The Council will maintain the defined boundary of the designated area but will continue to review the appropriateness of the boundary in future reviews in accordance with best practice and guidance on management of the historic environment.

12 Community engagement

- 12.1 It is mentioned in recent urban design publications that, "people make places". Although the Council has planning powers it can exercise over development and may, when funds are available, carry out enhancement works, ultimately the quality of any place depends on all the people who affect the area. In predominately residential areas such as Erith Road Conservation Area, the owners of property play a key role in affecting how the area looks. Good communication between local residents and the Council is one way of helping owners and the Council carry out appropriate works and take informed decisions that are of benefit to the area.
- 12.2 To that end the Council will seek to maintain and promote close collaborative working with the local residents and any association on issues relevant to the management of the area, including proposals for development and enhancement, within and adjoining the conservation area. It will also improve dialogue with the wider community. This may include the production and distribution of information leaflets, subject to resources.
- 12.3 The following actions have been taken to ensure that this appraisal and management proposals are accepted and acted upon by the local community.
- 12.4 Public consultation - The Erith Road appraisal and management plan were subject to public consultation in 2007. As part of the consultation exercise comments are being sought from the Conservation Advisory Committee, local amenity/history groups, local partnerships (as appropriate), organisations such as English Heritage, etc., and individual owners/occupiers of all of the properties affected. The document was also placed on the Council's website, in local libraries and contact centre. A letter advising of these arrangements was delivered to all properties in the area. the results of the consultations were considered by the Cabinet Member, the text was revised and

adopted. Copies of this document are available both as printed documents and on the Council's website.

- 11.6 The Council will seek to improve communication with local residents and where it can help and encourage local residents to engage and assist with pursuing conservation objectives

Appendices

1 General guidance to homeowners on repairs to historic buildings in conservation areas

Note: Before starting any work, property owners are advised to contact the Council.

Roofs

The roof is often an important feature of a historic building and the roofscape can often make a significant contribution to the character of the area. The retention of its original structure, shape, materials and features is important. Historic roof materials and features such as chimneystacks, chimney pots, dormers, roof lights, as well as details such as decorative ridge tiles and finials all form an integral part of the character of the building and the area. The loss or inappropriate alteration of historic materials and features is likely to be harmful to the appearance and character of historic buildings and areas.

The Council encourages the retention and reinstatement of traditional roofing materials. When roofing materials are replaced, it is important that as much as possible of the original material is re-used. When practical, original material should be re-used on visible areas, with matching new materials on other parts.

The addition of modern features, such as roof lights, is likely to be harmful to its character and appearance of the building and area, and should be avoided at all times. When replacement of materials and features becomes necessary, the replacement should respect the design and material of the original and the age and character of the building and/ or the area.

Chimneys

Chimneystacks are both decorative and functional features of the roofscape and can be important indicators of the age of a building and its internal planning, and they should normally be retained, even when no longer required. Chimney pots can sometimes be significant decorative features in their own right and can be important as part of the roofscape, which will be damaged if they are removed or replaced with an inappropriate type.

Dormers

Original dormers should be retained and carefully repaired. If beyond repair they should be reconstructed using traditional materials with all historic features reproduced. Enlargement of existing dormers on principle elevations should be avoided. Any new dormers should respect the symmetry of either an individual building or a terrace. Where new dormers would be inappropriate to the type of building or the proposed position, new, recessed 'conservation' roof lights may be acceptable, but not on prominent or generally visible roof slopes.

Fascias

Features such as timber bargeboards and fascias should be preserved and, if replacement becomes necessary, it should wherever possible replicate the design and material of those original to the building. The addition of bargeboards and fascias to buildings that did not

previously have such a feature will normally be resisted, where they would detract from the character of the building or the area.

Walls

Walls are the main structural fabric of any building. Alterations to the wall surfaces will have a significant impact on the overall appearance of a historic building. Every effort should be made to retain or re-use original facing brickwork and stonework. Alterations or repairs to external walls should respect the original material and endeavor to match it in appearance. Particular care should be paid to re-pointing brick or stonework. Methods should be employed to minimize damage to historic building materials: an appropriate lime mix mortar should be used and should match the appearance of the original pointing. Brick or stonework should not normally be rendered unless the surface was rendered originally. It may be necessary to remove more recently applied render if this is damaging the surface beneath.

Painting and stone cleaning

Painting or re-painting involving a change of colour will affect the character of a historic building. Previously unpainted surfaces should not normally be painted over. In many cases, the colour of the paint may be less important than the first application of an unsuitable covering, which could damage the original fabric and be damaging to remove. Cleaning can have a marked effect on the character of historic buildings and affect the historic fabric. The cleaning of an individual building within a terrace would obviously affect the appearance of the terrace as a whole. All cleaning methods can cause damage if carelessly handled. Cleaning with low-pressure water and non-abrasive brushes is often the preferred method. Other methods including abrasive and chemical cleaning can damage wall surfaces and destroy detail and should generally be avoided. Consideration should be given as to whether such cleaning is either necessary or worthwhile to remove corrosive dirt or to achieve a major improvement in appearance.

Windows and doors

Door and window openings establish the character of an elevation; they should not generally be altered in their proportions or details. The depth to which window frames are recessed within a wall is a varying historical feature of importance and greatly affects the character of a building – this too should be respected.

Windows - The size and shape of window openings, window frame details, arrangement and detail of glazing bars, and the method of opening are important characteristics of a historic building or an area. The traditional material used for windows in most historic buildings is timber, although occasionally the original windows are metal. It can often be difficult to introduce new materials without altering the appearance or character of the area.

Wherever possible, original windows should be retained and repaired. Improved heat and sound insulation can be achieved in unobtrusive ways by draft-proofing and soundproofing measures, rather than replacement of the original window. When necessary, replacement or repaired windows should accurately replicate the size and shape of original timber frames and glazing bars in all respects.

Doors - Doorways form an important element of historic buildings and can add to the character of conservation areas. Together with the door surround, fanlight, steps and original door furniture, doors can provide a significant and prominent feature. In recent years there has been a trend towards the replacement of historic timber front doors with modern doors

of inappropriate materials and design. To preserve the character and appearance of historic buildings and areas, it is important to retain the original front door, door surround, fanlight and other features wherever possible. When necessary, replacement or repaired doors should accurately replicate the original design in all respects.

Window and door materials

In most situations timber should be used for the replacement of historic windows and doors; generally UPVC cannot satisfactorily replicate the historic detailing and character of these features. UPVC windows and doors can degrade and discolour; they are not completely maintenance free and can be difficult to repair. Developments in timber preservation, finishing materials and manufacture can produce timber windows and doors with a significantly longer life than UPVC.

Rainwater Goods

Original rainwater goods are an integral part of the design and character of an historic building. They will normally be cast iron, which if properly maintained should last many years longer than replacement plastic goods. Cast iron gutters, down pipes and hopper heads etc. should be retained wherever possible. Where rainwater goods are required to be renewed, the replacement should replicate the original in all respects. Suitably profiled cast aluminium may be an acceptable alternative to cast iron in certain situations. However, plastic rainwater goods should be avoided on buildings where cast iron has been previously used. Additional rainwater goods should be kept to a minimum and should not disturb or break through any decorative architectural features.

Boundary Walls and Railings

Boundary walls and railings are important architectural and streetscape features. The loss or alteration of these features over time has been detrimental to the overall character of the Borough's historic areas and buildings. Distinctive boundary elements include brick and stone walls, gates, cast iron railings, and stone and brick plinths piers. Historic boundaries should be retained, repaired or reinstated as necessary using appropriate techniques and detailed to match the original. Particular care should be taken to repair or reinstate existing walls using appropriate techniques and materials. Stonework if appropriate should be locally sourced. Special care should be taken to use the correct lime mortar mix and method of pointing in brick or stone walls.

Minor additions

Features such as aerials, satellite dishes, burglar alarms, cctv cameras, heating system flues and vents should be kept to a minimum, and where necessary should be installed in locations and in a manner that will not harm the appearance or character of the building or area.

2 Contacts

For information on listed buildings and conservation areas in Bexley Borough.

Mr M Nicholls / Mr G Fraser
London Borough of Bexley
Strategic Planning and Development
Civic Offices, 2 Watling Street,
Bexleyheath, Kent
DA6 7AT

Tel: 020 8303 7777

Email: martyn.nicholls@bexley.gov.uk / gordon.fraser@bexley.gov.uk

For further information relating to listed buildings and conservation areas:

English Heritage (London Region)
3 Bunhill Row
London EC1 8YZ

Tel: 020 7973 3000

Email: customers@english-heritage.org.uk

For an excellent range of technical advice leaflets:

The Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings (SPAB)
37 Spital Square
London E1 6DY

Tel: 020 7377 1644

Email: info@spab.org.uk

If you would like to know more about the services the Council provides, or would like either a translation of this document or the information in a different format, please call our Customer Contact Centre on 020 8303 7777 and press 0, quoting reference:

