CONSERVATION AREA APPRAISAL

OF

NIGHTINGALE ROAD, UPPER NIGHTINGALE ROAD AND CEDARS AVENUE CONSERVATION AREAS

MARCH 2007
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1.0 Introduction and Executive Summary

Executive summary

1.1 This document seeks to appraise the existing conservation areas of Nightingale Road, Upper Nightingale Road and Cedars Avenue under one appraisal because of their proximity and the common characteristics they share. For the purposes of this document, they will be referred to as “The Area”.

Example of property type within the conservation area

1.2 The overall important character of the conservation areas are described later in the text. For the purposes of this summary, there are very good examples of Victorian and “Arts and Crafts” style buildings the important characteristics of which include the following:

- use of plum/cherry facing bricks often with decorative features in stone;
- use of terracotta tiles or pressed clay moulded bricks depicting the tudor rose and cross;
- decorative finials and terracotta chimney pots;
- bold chimneys;
- crested ridge tiles;
- widespread use of traditional materials including brick, clay, natural slate, wrought-iron and timber;
- detached houses set back behind attractive trees and substantial hedges;
- outstanding topography;
attractive open spaces around detached houses.

1.3 Three Rivers District Council has a duty under the Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (The Act) to designate as conservation areas any “areas of special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance.” The designation of a conservation area brings additional protection of trees, control over demolition and development as well as a requirement for a decision-maker, in exercising planning powers, to pay “special attention to the desirability of preserving and enhancing the character and appearance of the conservation area”.

1.3 This is reflected in the Three Rivers District Council Local Plan 1996-2011, which reaffirms the tests and considerations set out in PPG 15. Policies C1 relates to development within conservation areas, and C6 relates to demolition in conservation areas.

1.4 The Council is additionally required by The 1990 Act to keep conservation areas under review and to formulate and publish from time to time proposals for their preservation and enhancement.

**Purpose of the Statement**

1.5 Government policy guidance, provided in ‘PPG15: Planning and the Historic Environment’ (PPG15, 1994) expresses the need for local authorities to assess the special interest, character and appearance of conservation areas to assist in setting out planning policy and to inform development control. English Heritage has published guidance on undertaking Conservation Area Appraisals (2005) and this appraisal has been undertaken in accordance with their advocated approach.

1.6 PPG15 sets out a presumption in favour of preserving buildings that make a positive contribution to the character and appearance of conservation areas. In addition the guidance recognises the contribution of traditional surfacing and street furniture to the character of an area.

1.7 The aims of this appraisal are therefore to:

- set out the special architectural and historic interest of the “The Area” and to describe the special character and appearance that it is desirable to preserve or enhance;

- examine the existing boundaries of “The Area” and consider the potential for other areas to be included and, if appropriate, where existing areas should be excluded; and

- identify areas subject to pressure for change that would be adverse to the character and appearance of “The Area” as a result of permitted development and identify any areas where the removal of permitted development rights would safeguard the essential character and appearance of the area.
1.8 It should be noted that the appraisal does not represent an exhaustive record of every building, feature or space within “The Area” and an omission should not be taken to imply that an element is of no interest.

2.0 Planning History

2.1 The initial designation of the Nightingale Road Conservation Area was made in 1998.

2.2 On 12th November 1998, Three Rivers District Council Planning Committee resolved that an area of Nightingale Road, Rickmansworth, should be designated as a Conservation Area in terms of Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. It was also decided at the same meeting that Article 4(2) Directions should be served on the properties.

2.3 An Article 4 Direction can be defined as, a planning power used to safeguard the special character of an area. It requires applicants to seek planning permission from the Council for a range of works which could normally be done without consent. These include:

- Alteration, installation or replacement of doors and windows
- Alterations to a roof/chimney or removal of a chimney
- Any enlargement, improvement, alteration such as an extension or changes to architectural features (including building a porch)
- Provision of a hard surface on driveways for parking
- The erection, construction, improvement or alteration of a fence, gate, wall etc
- Exterior painting of previously unpainted surfaces or changes of external colour schemes, or covering walls by render or like finishes
- The installation, alteration or replacement of a satellite dish or antenna.

2.4 The existing Nightingale Conservation Area Article 4 Direction 1999 is included at Appendix 1.

2.5 The Upper Nightingale Road Conservation Area was designated on 9 January 2006.

2.6 The Cedars Avenue Conservation Area was designated on 3 April 2006.
3.0 History

3.1 The extract from the 1878 ordnance survey map attached at Appendix 2 shows that this area was undeveloped until the Metropolitan Railway was built in the late 1880’s, with the railway being pushed over ground through green fields on the edge of London beyond Finchley Road reaching Rickmansworth in 1887. These areas became known as Metro-land, the creation of the Metropolitan Railway’s Publicity Department devised as a catchy marketing brand name for the area north west of London in Middlesex, Hertfordshire and Buckinghamshire.

3.2 Between 1919 and 1933 the Metropolitan Railways Country Estates Ltd developed a series of private housing estates all down the line at Neasden, Wembley Park, Northwick Park, Eastcote, Rayners Lane, Ruislip, Hillingdon, Pinner, Rickmansworth, Chorley Wood and Amersham. In the early days the estates company built some houses itself, but the usual pattern was to lay out an estate and then sell plots to individual purchasers wishing to have a house built to their own specifications. Later on the design and construction was usually undertaken by other companies who would offer the prospective purchaser a choice of house sizes and styles at a range of prices.

3.3 The houses in this area exhibit some features of the “Arts and Crafts” style,
Example of Properties on Cedars Avenue

3.4 The area is bounded on the north by the Chorleywood Road, Nightingale Road Conservation Area and the Moneyhill Road to the west. To the east of the area is the rear of the Rickmansworth Hertfordshire Police and Fire Stations plus the Long Island Exchange Hotel and garage premises in Victoria Close and to the south is the Uxbridge Road. Maps of the existing area boundaries are in Appendix 3.

3.5 The existing conservation areas comprise of the following properties:-

- Nightingale Road - 30 properties of which 2 have been added at a later date.
- Upper Nightingale Road – 27 properties of which 9 have been added at a later date.
- Cedars Avenue – 36 properties of which 3 have been added at a later date

Currently none of the houses within the existing areas are Listed or locally Listed, but it is considered that several of the properties would be appropriate for listing at some level.

3.6 The houses in the revised area include very good examples of Victorian and “Arts and Crafts” style buildings. They were built at a time when an increase in prosperity in Rickmansworth led to an extension of suitable dwellings; they are therefore, an important part of the town’s development and social history.
3.7 The character of this area is determined by the houses being regularly spaced with access ways to gardens behind. The scale and proportions of the buildings are mainly regular and are made to look larger than they actually are to give an impression of prosperity.

Semi-detached properties on Cedars Avenue

3.8 There are no other buildings or structures within the area. Aerial photographs of the conservation areas are in Appendix 4.

4.0 Character and Appearance of the Area

4.1 The character and appearance of an area depends on a variety of factors. Whilst the appearance of an area derives from its physical and visual characteristics (i.e. materials, heights of buildings, types and relationship of built form), character includes other less tangible effects relating to the experience of an area. This may include levels, types of activity and patterns of prevailing land uses. The character of an area may also differ according to the day of the week or time of day.

4.2 The assessment of the character and appearance of the area is based on the present day situation. Interest in an area may consequently derive from the combined effect of subsequent developments that replaced the earlier fabric as well from the original remaining buildings and street pattern and open spaces.

4.3 There is a presumption to retain buildings that make a positive contribution to the character of the area. Buildings considered to be good examples of design have also been judged as making a positive contribution to the character of the area. Detractors are elements of the townscape that are considered to be so significantly out of scale or character with their surroundings that their
replacement, with something of a more appropriate scale and massing or detailed architectural treatment would benefit the character and appearance of the area.

Detached property on Upper Nightingale Road

4.4 Detractors may also include unsightly gaps in frontages that disrupt the prevailing street pattern. Elements that are neutral broadly conform with the overriding scale, form, materials and elevational characteristics of their context. The integrity and nature of the context are consequently influential in making this judgement.

4.5 At present six trees within the area are covered by Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs) as highlighted on the boundary map at Appendix 3. In addition to these TPOs permission is needed to lop, top or fell all the remaining substantial trees (defined as having a trunk diameter of 75mm or more at 1.5m above ground level) in the conservation area. The Council must be informed in writing of proposals to lop, top or fell trees. No such work shall be undertaken until six weeks notice has been given to the Council which provides an opportunity for the making of a TPO should it be considered appropriate. If a tree is dead, dying or dangerous emergency works may be carried out. As the onus is on the landowner to prove that the work was necessary, the owner is advised to consult the district council in advance in such cases.

The trimming of existing hedges does not require permission. However, work to a line of trees which was planted as a hedge or boundary which has not been pruned as a hedge will require consent.

4.6 As previously stated the houses in this area are predominantly Victorian and “Arts and Crafts” style buildings. The houses within Nightingale Road and
Cedars Avenue are mainly semi detached properties built from cherry/plum coloured facing bricks often with decorative features in stone. There are a number of particularly fine examples of terracotta tiles or pressed clay moulded bricks depicting the Tudor Rose and cross. Many of the buildings have decorative finials and terracotta chimney pots which are characteristic of this style and age of building. The roofs are covered in slate or clay tiles and several properties have crested ridge tiles. The properties in Upper Nightingale Road are predominantly larger detached properties set back on larger plots of land, in some cases behind attractive trees and/or substantial hedges, which retain the characteristics listed above.

4.7 Many of the properties have original details and features still existing. A proportion of the buildings have original late Victorian or Edwardian windows and doors. In some cases stained and coloured glass remains. In some cases the gardens still remain although the majority have been turned into hard standing for car parking.

4.8 One of the properties which follows the Gothic Revival style has a particularly fine example of intricate barge boards, whilst another has a decorative Art Nouveau iron work balcony, very characteristic of its time.

Detached property on Upper Nightingale Road

4.9 This can be considered as archetypal “Betjeman country” with his eulogies on Metro land and its rolling hills, leafy streets, etc.

Sub-Areas

4.10 There are no sub-areas.
5.0 Audit

5.1 An audit of the fabric of the Area has been undertaken to identify buildings that contribute to the area’s character and appearance, elements of streetscape interest and other elements that detract from its character and appearance.

5.2 Currently there are no buildings in the Conservation Area included on the Statutory List of Buildings of Special Architectural or Historic Interest.

5.3 In addition currently there are no Locally Listed Buildings. However, there are a number of individual buildings and groups of buildings that contribute to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area. Whilst some of these buildings may have experienced minor alterations over the years, they contribute as part of a group. The assessment of whether a building makes a positive contribution to the special architectural and historic interest of a conservation area is based on guidance provided in English Heritage’s publication ‘Conservation Area Appraisals’.

5.5 Elements of streetscape interest and important views. The character and the appearance of the Conservation Area are not solely a function of its buildings. There are many important views throughout the conservation area.

5.6 Elements within the public realm, such as original pavement materials, boundary walls, signage and vegetation contribute greatly to the area’s quality, character and appearance. The following elements of the area’s streetscape are considered to be of interest:

- mature hedges in front of a number of houses;
- attractive architectural details

Semi-detached properties on Nightingale Road
5.7 **The Detractors.** Inevitably there are buildings (and street furniture) that detract from the character and appearance of the Conservation Area. This may be due to a building’s scale, materials, relationship to the street or due to the impact of alterations and extensions. There are also structures and elements of streetscape (e.g. visual clutter from excessive signage or advertisements) that impinge on the character and quality of the Conservation Area.

5.8 The white lines and associated road markings related to the Rickmansworth CPZ and parking restrictions detract from the character of the conservation Area.

5.9 In a number of cases newer vehicle crossovers have been installed with a differing surface finish that clashes with the original footway and detracts from the appearance of the area. It was also noted that a significant amount of patching had been carried out to the pavements which again had been finished in differing materials detracting from the appearance of the area.

5.10 The primary cause of change to the character and appearance of residential streets has been incremental changes to domestic properties. Much of the development that has occurred does not, however, fall within the remit of planning control. The main issues are set out below. An “Article 4(2) Direction has therefore been applied to the original Conservation Area and is being considered for the new Conservation Area.

5.11 **Original features:** There is some evidence within the Conservation Area of the loss of original and traditional features.
5.12 **Painting:** The rendering and painting of brickwork has occurred on some properties within the Conservation Area. This has had a detrimental effect on the integrity and consistency of frontages in the area.

5.13 **Building Extensions:** There have been a number of building extensions of varying sizes added to properties within the conservation area and although these have in most cases been designed to replicate the features of the original buildings the use of modern building materials has in some cases had a detrimental effect on the visual continuity of the property frontages.

Build extension on Nightingale Road

5.14 **Hardstandings:** The introduction of hardstanding within the front gardens of the majority of properties to enable parking (where space allows) has led to the loss of front garden walls and a reduction in the amount of vegetation on the frontage in a number of locations. The effect of this is to disrupt the visual continuity and enclosure of the frontage. This erodes the character and appearance of the street. Within the Nightingale Road element of the revised area, this now requires planning permission under The Article 4 (2).
Hardstanding on Nightingale Road

6.0 Conservation Area Boundary review.

6.1 The revised area includes the existing conservation areas of Nightingale Road, Upper Nightingale Road and Cedars Avenue, it is not considered that further boundary reviews are required at this time.

7.0 Summary

7.1 The revised Conservation Appraisal Area including the existing Nightingale Road, Upper Nightingale Road and Cedars Avenue Conservation Areas is an important planned development. Of the original houses many remain.

7.2 The fact that the 19th Century Ordnance Survey maps show that this area was undeveloped until the arrival of the Metropolitan Railway is important, as it indicates that this was a planned estate on completely undeveloped land.

7.3 There is a widespread and overwhelming use of traditional and high quality materials and this is important.

7.4 A number of the houses are large and detached, set on large plots. Density of dwellings per hectare is low.

8.0 Developing a Management Strategy

8.1 BVPI 219c formalises the requirement for the Council to draw up and publish proposals for addressing and implementing recommendations for action contained in the Appraisal. This includes:
- policy guidance to enable planning applications to be processed
- consideration of resources needed to sustain historic environment
• mechanisms for monitoring change
• enforcement strategy to address unauthorised development
• use of Article 4 powers
• action to ensure repairs of buildings at risk
• Enhancement/regeneration schemes if appropriate
• strategy for management and protection of important trees, greenery and open spaces
• What are the resource implications for the Council??
• community consultation on the draft Appraisal and the Management Strategy

8.2 In line with the Guidance on the Management of Conservation Areas published by English Heritage in conjunction with the Planning Advisory Service, it is considered that the development of the Management Strategy should be based on the character appraisal that is provided by this document. As such it is not proposed that any detailed work should be undertaken on this Strategy until there has been full consultation undertaken on the Conservation Area Appraisal and a finalised document has been approved by the Executive Committee of Three Rivers District Council.

9.0 Bibliography


Statutory Instruments