

ONslow VILLAGE CONSERVATION AREA

Study and Character Appraisal

Text only version. Approved as Supplementary Planning Guidance by the Executive Committee in November 2003. The document is currently in the process of being prepared for publication with the inclusion of maps and illustrations.

GUILDFORD BOROUGH COUNCIL

Adopted: 6th November 2003

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Onslow Village Conservation Area Appraisal 2003

This Conservation Area Appraisal will be used as supplementary planning guidance by the Borough Council when discussing with businesses their plans for the area and replaces the Onslow Village Conservation Appraisal of March 1990.

1 INTRODUCTION

What is a Conservation Area?

Conservation Areas are defined as 'areas of special architectural or historic interest, the character of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance'. Designation 'provides the basis for policies designed to preserve or enhance all the aspects of character and appearance that define an areas special interest'.

The Civic Amenities Act of 1967 introduced Conservation Areas in the United Kingdom. Guildford Borough Council is therefore required by law to protect designated areas from any alterations or development that would adversely affect their character and appearance.

The purpose and objectives of a Conservation Area Character Appraisal
The purpose of a Conservation Area Character Appraisal is to 'clearly identify what it is about the character or appearance of the area which should be preserved or enhanced, and set out the means by which that objective is to be pursued', and it is hoped that 'clear assessment and definition of an areas special interest and the action needed to protect it will help to generate awareness and encourage local property owners to take the right sort of action for themselves'. (PPG15:4.9)

Designation as a Conservation Area and the aim of this character appraisal is a preliminary positive action to enhance the Area. The process is a long-term approach, which aims to:

Improve the understanding of the history and the historical context, of this area of Guildford.

Avoid piecemeal erosion of the intrinsic character of the Conservation Area.

Provide residents with a clear idea of what it is about the conservation area that should be cared for and preserved.

Provide residents with a clear idea of what enhancements could be made to the conservation area.

Provide Guildford Borough Council with a valuable tool with which to inform it's planning practice and polices for the area.

How it will work

Conservation Area law concentrates on the importance of preserving the character and appearance of Conservation Areas. If you own property in a

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Conservation Area you will need to apply for permission to do certain work to your building and to trees.

You will need to obtain consent from the District Council for:

Work to Listed Buildings

Demolition

New development

Change of use

Work to trees

Advertisements

Onslow Village Conservation Area

Onslow Village was designated as a Conservation Area on February 7th 1990. It lies at the southwesterly tip of the Guildford's urban area, on land between the A3 and the Farnham Road. The Village is situated on the high ground of the Hogs Back above Guildford, with wide ranging views as far as the Crystal Palace and the Berkshire Hills.

The boundaries of the Conservation Area are defined as follows:

- To the north: the exclusion of Wilderness Court, Onslow Village Hall, Bannisters Road and most of Vicarage Gate;
- To the east: the exclusion of Henley Bank and Curling Vale;
- To the south: Farnham Road and Abbots Close;
- To the west: the boundary of Onslow Village Recreation Ground and the exclusion of Abbots Close.

The remainder of the Village, although not designated as a conservation area does have a distinctive historic character. This guidance has been written about the buildings within the Conservation Area. However, a lot of the advice equally applies to houses and roads in the rest of Onslow Village, especially those that are on the edge of the Conservation Area.

There is only one listed building in Onslow Village conservation area, that of Wilderness Farmhouse. It is a grade II listed building, which was built as a farmhouse in the late 16th Century. It has been both extended and divided in the 19th and 20th Centuries.

There are currently no locally listed buildings within the conservation area. Many buildings within the borough do not meet the listing criteria but do have an important local significance and are worthy of protection. The borough Council has commenced a Borough-wide survey in order to compile a list of buildings of local interest. Some buildings within the Onslow Village Conservation Area that could be considered for Local Listing will be detailed in a later document.

2 HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT

The history of Onslow Village started with the formation of the Onslow Village Association and its aim to tackle the acute shortage of decent working class housing following, the First World War.

The Onslow Village Association acquired 646 acres of land from Lord Onslow in 1920 for approximately one quarter of its market value. The aim was to create a 'Garden City' that was modelled on the ideas of Ebenezer Howard's Garden City Movement. It was their intention to build a self-contained community with smallholdings, public buildings, open spaces, recreation grounds, woodland and a railway, as well as developing sites for churches, hotels and factories. On May 1st 1921, ten weeks after the formation of the Association, the foundations of the first two houses were laid and by March 1922 ninety-one houses had been built. Unfortunately due to a lack of funding the scheme never reached full completion, with about 600 houses were built. Original drawings however showed that there were further plans to develop the farmland at Manor Farm, north of the A3.

By the mid 1970's, one third of the properties were still owned by Onslow Village Ltd. Then, in 1984, the company was wound up and many shareholders and tenants had the chance to buy their homes at extremely affordable prices.

Onslow never got its railway station, however it did eventually get its woodland; The Onslow Arboretum, developed by Guildford Borough Council as a specialist collection of 80 tree species from around the world.

3 CHARACTER APPRASIAL

This should be read in conjunction with the Architectural Survey in Appendix 2.

Key elements

The Conservation Area is predominantly residential. Houses are one and a half and two storeys high, with light coloured render or red brick, there are also some bungalows. The buildings have uncluttered, steeply pitched clay tiled roofs with prominent gables and large brick chimneystacks rising above the roof level to create a distinctive roofline. The timber windows with small panes that still remain, and the close-boarded timber doors constructed to traditional designs, create a consistent linking feature throughout the properties. Natural materials and high quality craftsmanship were used in the design and building of the houses. The housing layout was carefully designed to create an overall picturesque appearance. Groupings are designed to emphasise particular features such as cross roads, road junctions and the natural topography. The curving narrow roads, elevated footways, green verges, prominent hedges and trees all add to the semi-rural theme of the village and they emphasise the strong relationship between the natural and built environment.

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The first phase of the Village was built along Wilderness Road and creates the central core to the Village. These dwellings are easily identified by their white rendered finish and steeply pitched clay tiled roofs, chimneystacks and distinctive small pane windows and boarded doors.

The Onslow Village Conservation Area has distinct details and features that help create its character and individual identity. These can be architectural styles, construction methods, materials, street surfacing and the setting within the landscape. Today the character and appearance of the Conservation Area can be characterised by the following, and it is this that we wish to conserve and retain:

- Good quality building materials and traditional craftsmanship.
- Distinctive beech hedges, high quality planting and trees.
- Houses designed in groups to harmonise with each other and create attractive spaces.
- The use of render, painted white or cream and red clay bricks and red plain clay tiles.
- Features such as chimneys, porches and gables are used to add individuality to buildings and character to the area.
- Buildings have a traditional plan form (roughly 6 metres deep) with prominent uninterrupted roofs.

3.1 BUILDINGS WITHIN THE VILLAGE

Extensions

Both single storey and two storey extensions should have fully pitched / tiled roofs to match the existing house. Two storey extensions are particularly problematic as they can be out of scale with the original building and create an unbalanced design.

The angle of the roof to any extension should match that of the existing roof. Flat roofed extensions are almost always unacceptable. However, high quality modern design that incorporates flat roofs may be acceptable in exceptional circumstances. Extensions should not be flush with the front main wall of the house, but should be set back, with a reduced ridge height in order to make the extension subordinate to the original building.

Front extensions are very prominent and apart from a small porch, additions are likely to be unacceptable. Extensions to the rear of properties should be designed with as much care as at the front or sides and are often visible from the public paths that run through the Village as well as from other properties. Therefore although the rear may give more potential for an addition a lower standard of design will not be accepted.

The character of an area is created as much by the spaces between and about houses as the houses themselves. It is therefore important to retain gaps and planned views between houses, to respect the character of the area and give separation between houses and avoid a terracing effect.

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Summary

- Many of the houses were built as one of a pair or form part of a group.
- The extension should read as secondary and subordinate to the main house.
- Established views and planned gaps should be maintained.
- Addition should be in character and materials with the original building and the surrounding area.

When considering an extension you should read the Borough Council's general design guidance "Residential Extensions".

Porches

Adding a porch or canopy is one of the most significant changes a householder can make to the front of a house as it involves a change to the entrance, which is the focal point. Small lead covered and clay tiled canopies are a common feature in the area; these should be retained as they form part of the local character. Altering the porch, via enclosing the sides should be avoided, as it is generally unsympathetic to the existing building.

Roofs and Chimneys

The majority of the roofs have been built with a steep pitch of 45°- 55°. They are large and uncluttered, punctuated only by large brick chimneys that rise above the roofline. The roof tiles are plain red clay; when re-roofing or extending it is important that these match the existing tiles (second hand tiles are most appropriate).

Chimneys are a key feature of the skyline in Onslow Village. This is enhanced by the topography that allows views down on to the roofs. Most chimneystacks are located astride or close to the ridge and / or on the gable ends. They should always be retained and if unused vented internally in the stack.

Windows

Repairing the original window frames is always the preferred option to replacement. Where replacement is necessary try to match with the original style and materials as closely as possible. This means retaining the same number of panes and keeping to the same glazing bar pattern. The window openings size and position should not alter either, as this will upset the visual balance of the window. The frames should be made of timber and painted white. Particular care needs to be taken in certain cases as some of the houses in the Conservation Area do not have lintels above the window frames. This means that any replacement needs to incorporate a lintel to support the wall above.

UPVC and colour coated aluminium replacement windows are not appropriate for Onslow Village Conservation Area. They fail to replica the traditional design and quality of the original timber framed windows. Many of the original windows have already been lost Timber frame windows can be upgraded and made heat and sound efficient by correct weather stripping or secondary glazing on the inside.

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Dormers or roof lights are likely to disrupt the simplicity and clean lines of the Villages roofs cape. A small 'Conservation Roof light' on the rear slope will normally do no harm. This should be sited discretely and sit flush with the roof slope. Usually no more than one per roof slope will be appropriate.

Doors

The windows and doors are the focal point of the front façade and is therefore a very important feature. Modern doors do not suit older properties, and neither do doors made in mock historic styles. If the original door is beyond repair and has to be replaced, then the new door should match as closely as possible to the original style. Carefully note the panelling and glazing pattern, which should be repeated. Inappropriate doors not only affect the look of one property but also affect the neighbouring ones. All doors in the village were originally painted, so avoid varnished or stained finishes which do not maintain this character.

Gutters and down pipes

Most houses have cast iron gutters and down pipes, these have an appearance that is quite different from less appropriate modern plastic alternatives. Where replacement is necessary these should be replaced in the same material as the original. Aluminium may be a more reasonable alternative to cast iron. The cast iron hopper heads shall always be retained.

Walling and materials

Roughcast render and clay bricks are the most common treatment. The painting of walls and woodwork bright colours should be avoided, as should painting previously unpainted surfaces, as this can disrupt the unity of the group. When extending or altering a brick house you need to ensure that the bricks match the rest of the house in scale and design, but also match the bond and the mortar joint. The original mortar is lime rich with a neat joint that is flush with the brickwork, it is important to replicate this.

Satellite dishes

Satellite dishes can be very obtrusive and therefore they should be sited as discretely as possible, i.e. in the garden and screened by planting or attached to an outbuilding or other garden structure out of public sight. Only if these two options have been examined and are not possible should a dish be attached to the house, again this should be on a private side out of public sight. It should be the smallest size possible and of a grill construction rather than solid. You should refer to the Borough Council's general guidance on satellite dishes.

3.2 LANDSCAPE SETTING

Use and Activity

The land use and topography are distinctive characteristics of Onslow Conservation Area. The history of the village began as farmland and up to present day as a residential suburban community. There is also a row of

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village shops that, although being of a later date than the 1920's houses, visually complement the original village form.

Topography, Views and Vistas

The position of the Village combined with the street layout creates views and vistas into and out of the Conservation area along every road. The most important views out of the Village are that of the Cathedral and out across the surrounding open countryside. The winding roads are boarded by narrow paths and beech hedges, with raised verges and walkways. The narrow roads, the landscaping and the gaps between the houses create a suburban village character. It is important to retain these views and gaps to maintain the character of the area.

Landscaping and trees

Trees and open spaces contribute towards the special character of the area. Retaining mature trees and hedges is fundamental to preserve this character. Many trees are protected and their removal will only be permitted where a clear case exists. New trees should be native species that will add to the rural quality of the area, species such as Leylandii are not appropriate. Contact the Borough Council's Arboriculture officer for further advice.

Drives, hard standings and garages

Many houses are at a higher level than the road on the and therefore it is not possible or desirable to create car parking. Where a drive is possible a discretely sited hard standing or steeply pitched garage in sympathetic materials may be possible without affecting the character of the area. A hard standing should be sited to the side of the house and slightly set back from the frontage. Ideally a hard standing should be two lines of good quality hard surfacing separated by a grass strip. Hogging, pea shingle or York stone slabs are acceptable materials. A minimum break in the hedge will ensure that the hard standing does not dominate the frontage or seriously interrupt the line of hedge.

Garages should only be considered where there is space for the garage to sit separately from the house, to the side and set back from the front of the building. It should be designed in sympathy with the house. Brick or rendered garages with plain clay tiled pitched roofs are appropriate. Doors should be traditional side hinged timber boarded, with vertical boards and painted.

Roads and front boundaries

The village's rural / suburban atmosphere is created by the narrow curving roads, lined with distinctive beech hedges and landscaping. The separation of paths from the roadside using hedges, small timber gates and steeply sloping verges adds to the sense of the area. Continuous hedging and well maintained front gardens give the area its unique semi rural character, with the roads being dominated by the trees and hedges, with the houses set back behind them. Hedges should be preserved together with traditionally detailed gates. Hedges are protected by restrictive covenants relating the houses.

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The Drive and The Crossroads

The Drive descends down from the Farnham Road to join the Crossroads, creating the main entrance to the Village and the Conservation Area. The Drive has few houses directly on it, however it does act as a key route, with steep verges and walkways, enclosed by hedging and mature trees. The Crossroads is the central junction for the four main roads that form the layout of the Conservation Area. The area currently has a local notice board and some cable boxes, however it is recommended that it be enhanced.

Wilderness Road and Farm Walk

The first phase of Onslow Village was built along Wilderness Road, which is still the central core to both the village and the conservation area. The semi-detached houses have a white rendered finish, with steeply pitched clay tiled roofs. The road slopes down from the Crossroads, curving round as it nears the Square. The road is bound by narrow paths and raised walkways, and beech hedged fronted gardens. The buildings are set back and forward of each other in pairs that turn the corners.

Farm Walk forms the western boundary to Wilderness Way, which leads the main track to the original Farmhouse and still leads to it today. The houses along this Walk are on higher ground as opposed to those on the east side of the Road and set back from the walkway by detailed front gardens. The topography of the land, means that some of the houses on Farm Walk are close enough to the road to have a drive and parking, these properties are located closer to the Crossroads junction. Beech hedging bound the gardens, which is then blocked from view along most of the Walk by the mixed hedging that separates the raised walkway from the road, creating an enclosed area.

Litchfield Way

The road bends round almost back on itself, starting and ending on Wilderness Way. The views along the road, are formed by centrally placed buildings, and views across to the Cathedral. The roads are bound by narrow paths or raised walkways, with simple railings and steps down to the road. The hedge-lined gardens, with mature trees form a fundamental part of the general character of the road and the area as a whole.

Manor Way

Manor Way is one of the straighter roads in the Onslow Conservation Area. The road follows the topography of the land by gently sloping up and down. The houses are built in pairs, with a more prominent building line than the rest of the Conservation Area. Their position in relation to the street is distinctive, the houses are set back from the road and the building line is broken by the gaps between the houses. One of the pairs of bungalows is located at the highest point of the road, with views across to the recreation ground. There are raised walkways, with grass verges and steps down to the road, boarded by simple plain railings. All the front gardens to the houses are bounded by beech hedging and mature trees.

Abbots Close

Abbots Close is a grouping of four large detached houses, that all have similar layouts. The two properties that are on the corner of Manor Way have additional integral garages. Privet hedges form the boundary to the properties, except where they front Manor Way, which is beech hedging.

4 ISSUES, PRESSURES AND THEATS

Issues

- The current designation covers the area within the boundary of the development of the original village. This most clearly characterises the road layout, design of buildings and presence of hedges that creates the character of a 'garden suburb' village. The present boundary could be considered for extension to incorporate other roads that continue and contribute to the character of the area.
- Sites for new development must reflect the traditional form of the settlement, including its existing street pattern, open spaces and building layout. How the development relates to the landscape setting and topography should be acknowledged.
- Any new development should be small scale and informal. Inappropriate infilling development could erode the character of the settlement.
- Ensure that no new development occurs on the skyline or ridges.
- Whilst it is not necessary to copy the past, nor to stifle ingenuity or creativity, future development should reflect local character by relating to the form and scale of existing buildings and by using sympathetic materials in the functional tradition and not merely as pastiche.
- New buildings should face onto the road, should be a maximum of two storeys and of a similar density to those buildings already existing in the immediate vicinity.
- Shop owners should be encouraged to retain existing shop fronts.
- Original features, such as windows, doors, chimney's, hedges etc which contribute to the character of the building / area should be retained.
- Any repairs or replacements should match the originals in size, design, colour and materials.
- Trees and hedges should be retained to keep the rural character of the road layout and integrate buildings in the streetscene.
- Communication masts and associated equipment should not be sited where they would be dominant or intrusive in the village or in the surrounding countryside.

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- Revision of strategies for street lighting and furniture.

Pressure and threats

There has been a considerable loss of original features such as doors and windows from houses in the area. These have been replaced in a variety of designs, which detracts not only from the character of individual buildings, but also from the overall character of the area. Incongruous new additions have included modern doors, Velux rooflights and satellite dishes. Original and historic features should be protected and conserved, such as:

- The external finish of properties – to avoid inappropriate claddings and colour.
- Windows – including the retention of correct proportions.
- External doors, especially front doors.
- Hedges – to encourage retention / reinforcement of beech.
- Roofscape – to avoid the loss of clay tiles for modern substitutes, the insertion of rooflights and dormers.
- Hardstandings.

Conservation Areas are not museums; new development will continue to take place in them. They are, however, environmentally sensitive areas. Altering the appearance, form and size of any one building not only affects that particular building but can also affect the whole street. There is therefore a special responsibility to ensure that proposals are sympathetic to their surroundings. The use of materials and design styles, which reinforce and retain the areas distinct identity should be encouraged and promoted.

Guildford Borough Council and the Surrey Historic Buildings Trust are both able to make grants independently for the repair and maintenance of Listed Buildings. In addition, Guildford Borough Council may grant-aid the restoration, renovation or replacement of prominent external features on Local List buildings, and unlisted buildings within Conservation Areas. Grants may be available for works to prominent external features on Local List buildings and on significant buildings in a Conservation Area. For example:

- Repairing or replacing traditional timber windows.
- Reinstating a traditionally designed front door, in keeping with the character of the property.
- Re-roofing with natural clay or other appropriate, historically authentic materials

In order to prevent the further loss of original features of the area consideration is given to greater planning controls, through Supplementary Planning Guidance and applying Article 4 Directions to remove permitted development rights on specific features.

5 RECOMMENDED ENHANCEMENTS AND OPPORTUNITIES

The council has funds for its own environmental improvements in the Borough and these may include schemes within the Onslow Conservation Area.

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- Recommend specific buildings for Local Listing.
- Obtain additional planning controls through article 4 directions.
- The retention and enhancement of public spaces.
- The enhancement of points of arrival and departure eg. At entrances to the area, crossroads, car parks and bus stops.
- Retain and reinstate traditional surface materials.
- Tree and hedge planting.
- Crossways – upgrade shrub planting to corners, renew fencing where necessary, improve signage, and introduce seating.
- Improve planting near the commemorative seats by the telephone box in Wilderness Way.
- Car park by Onslow Village Hall – further upgrade the planting
- Possible tree or hedge planting in the front gardens of properties within the Conservation area.
- Advertise and administer grant aid to replace inappropriate windows and doors.
- Consider extending the Conservation area to include Banister Road and possibly curling Vale, Vicarage Gate and Friars Walk.
- The removal or reduction in height of the mixed hedging along Farm Walk, to allow views to the beech hedging and create a safer walkway.
- Continue liaison with Surrey County Council Highways Authority to ensure that street works preserve the character of the Conservation Area.
- Liase with Surrey County Council in order to maintain footpaths and walkways, with maintenance of trees and hedges.

It is hoped that this guide will help local people, the Council and developers to understand the context and character of Onslow Village Conservation Area and how best to retain it for the future.

Further Information;

Grants

Grants are available from the Borough Council and The Surrey Historic building Trust for the repair and maintenance of listed and non-listed buildings in the Conservation Area.

The Guildford Borough Local Plan contains relevant information and polices on development in the borough. For advice call 01483 505050.