

PLANNING COMMITTEE (2nd May 2000)

Review of Existing Conservation Areas and their boundaries and the designation of new and extended Conservation Areas

Proposed extension to and partial de-designation of the Gipsy Hill Conservation Area(CA No.14)

(Gipsy Hill Ward)

Report by the Director of Regeneration

Consulted Formally: Borough Solicitor.

Authorised for submission by: Peter Holland – Planning Services Manager

Contact for enquiries: Edmund Bird – Borough Conservation Officer (tel: 020 7926 1215)

PURPOSE

To designate an extension to the Gipsy Hill Conservation Area (CA No. 14) and also to de-designate a small area of land.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- (1) That the Committee approves the designation of the extension to and partial de-designation of the Gipsy Hill Conservation Area (CA14), under section 69 of the Planning (Listed Building & Conservation Areas) Act 1990 as shown on Plan No.DES/PP/461 and large scale plan No. DES/PP/462.
- (2) That the Committee approves the detailed boundary of the extended/partially de-designated area as shown on Plan No. DES/PP/461 and large scale plan No. DES/PP/462.

For decision

1. Context

1.1 The function of the planning system is to regulate development and use of land in the public interest. The best of the Borough's built and landscaped environment can be valued and protected as part of this regulation through the designation of new conservation areas or the extension of existing ones. The enduring quality of these areas adds to the quality of life of the residents by protecting and enhancing the local scene and sustaining the sense of local distinctiveness and civic pride.

1.2 Existing Conservation Areas and their boundaries are currently being reviewed by the Council, in accordance with guidance contained within Planning Policy Guidance (PPG15) (sec. 4.3) issued by the Department of National Heritage and the Department of the Environment in September 1994, and Conservation Area Practice issued by English Heritage in October 1995. The importance of preserving and enhancing the character and appearance of areas of historic or architectural interest and setting high standards of design for new development in and around these areas is also a key policy contained within the Unitary Development Plan. Policy CD1 states that the Council will consider whether Conservation Areas should be extended or new ones designated in areas of special architectural or historic interest, the character of which is desirable to preserve or enhance.

1.3 A strategy for the review of existing conservation areas and the designation of new conservation areas was approved by the Environmental Services Committee on the 21st July 1997 (Ref.: ES 55/97-98). That report set out a methodology of the review based upon six main elements that include the inclusion of buildings of historic interest which were not recognised at the time of the original designation. This report identified three approaches for implementing this review: development pressures, pressure from local residents and a geographical basis starting with conservation areas in the north of Lambeth and currently focusing on the southern half of the borough.

1.4 The Gipsy Hill Conservation Area was designated in 1974 following pressure from the local community association earlier in the decade. Twenty-six years on, two anomalies have become apparent:

- (i) Firstly the omission back in the mid 1970's when the boundaries were drawn up on the vicarage to Christ Church – a fine Victorian detached residence on Highland Road immediately to the west of the church and the adjoining Goodliffe Hall, and secondly;
- (ii) Secondly an irrational boundary to the west of Becondale Road which currently cuts through two terraces of two storey housing built after the designation.

1.5 It is therefore proposed to include within the conservation area, the vicarage (which is currently the subject of a planning application to demolish the historic building and replace it with a modern development) and to re-align the boundary of the conservation area to exclude the 1980's terraces of houses (Nos. 1-10 Becondale Road). The remaining properties on Becondale Road would remain within the conservation area.

2. Justification

The vicarage to Christ Church is considered not only to be a fine example of mid Victorian domestic architecture but also an integral part of the Christ Church campus which includes the magnificent Grade II listed church tower, the church itself (rebuilt in c1985 after a disastrous fire destroyed all but the tower in 1982), the 1950's Goodliffe Hall and the vicarage. The vicarage is a most attractive red brick detached residence built in c1870 soon after the church was consecrated in 1867. The principle façade faces west – a two storey canted bay projects forward from the main gable end which is adjacent to a pointed arch in the gothic manner. The warm red brick elevations are relieved by stone dressings and a brick dentil course below the eaves – the plain slated roofscape is enlivened by several tall chimneys. The tower of Christ Church forms the backdrop to views of the vicarage thus reinforcing the important relationship of the two historic buildings. The vicarage stands on a prominent raised site above Highland Road set amidst a number of fine mature trees including horse chestnut, lime and sycamore. The Goodliffe Hall was designed by E.F Starling ARIBA (architect of the YMCA Croydon 1958 and St Barnabas Church St. Paul's Cray 1964) in 1964.

The current boundary to the west of Becondale Road makes no sense and is an anomaly resulting from the redevelopment of this site in the 1980's – years after the designation of the conservation area. The boundary bisects a number of individual properties resulting in the front rooms being within the conservation area and the back rooms lying outside – clearly a nonsensical situation. The modern houses, whilst a pleasant example of late Twentieth Century domestic design, are of a very different character and architectural period than the majority of properties in the conservation area which date from the middle decades of the Nineteenth Century (1840's to 1870's) – their exclusion in no way devalues the historic or architectural interest of the other properties on Becondale Road which will remain in the conservation area. The attractive line of trees on the footway in front of these modern houses would also remain within the conservation area.

3. Public Consultation

Letters of consultation were sent on 6th of March 2000 to the Crystal Palace Triangle Community Association, all occupiers of Burma Terrace on Becondale Road, all Ward Members and the owners of the vicarage (the Southwark Diocese) asking for any views within a 3 week period. No representations have been received from any occupiers to date, however two Ward members responded. Councillor Russell A'Court has endorsed the proposed alterations to the conservation area boundary as sensible, adding that it was hard to imagine why the vicarage was not included within the original boundary. Councillor Gareth Compton wrote to say that he 'wholeheartedly supports the proposal', commenting that in his view the exclusion of the vicarage from the original conservation area must have been an oversight at the time, adding that the vicarage is "an attractive and important local building" and that its loss "would have a deleterious effect upon the character of the area".

The Crystal Palace Triangle Association has written to support the inclusion of the vicarage within the conservation area – describing it as 'the last surviving example of the handsome warm red brick houses of that period in Highland Road', as being 'a handsome and original Victorian home in such an attractive and original setting' and as 'a point of reference to all who live around it or pass by it – a reminder of historical associations and visual quality'. The

Association also suggests the inclusion of further properties to the east of Gipsy Hill on Woodland Road, Beardell Street and Woodland Hill (a review of this area will be carried out at a later date when resources allow).

A letter has also been received from Howard Sharp & Partners Chartered Surveyors who are representing the South London Church Fund & Southwark Diocesan Board of Finance and are the agents for the proposed redevelopment scheme. They argue against the inclusion of the vicarage on the following grounds:

- (i) that detailed care and attention would have been paid to identifying boundaries at the time of the original designation and that the extension proposal is as a result of the application to redevelop the site.

RESPONSE – the original conservation boundaries were set over a quarter of a century ago – it is difficult to speculate upon the basis of the decision of the planners in those days, although it is certainly the case that Victorian architecture was not valued as highly then as it is today and the exclusion of the vicarage does appear to be an oversight. Under current criteria the property is considered worthy of inclusion by virtue of its historic and architectural interest, its attractive setting of mature trees, and its close relationship with the church buildings which are in the conservation area. The planning authority is conducting a review of all conservation areas in the borough – Gipsy Hill is one of the latest in a list of a dozen existing conservation areas that have been assessed to date.

- (ii) That they do not believe the vicarage building is of particular merit and that in historical and architectural terms it does not relate to the remainder of the church buildings – therefore the justification for the proposed extension is 'misconceived and inappropriate'

RESPONSE – the planning authority is of the view that the vicarage is of historic and architectural interest – it was built in the same era as the original church which is now a listed building and, along with its fine setting of mature trees, it is very much part of this group of church buildings.

- (iii) That they must record their client's disquiet at receiving this notification at a late stage in their negotiations with the Council concerning the redevelopment scheme.

RESPONSE - The conservation officer was not privy to these discussions, however it is somewhat surprising that given the obvious historic nature of the property and the far greater appreciation of our heritage these days rather than the mass destruction of historic buildings which prevailed a few decades ago, that the early advice of the conservation officer was not sought by the applicants. The planning officer consulted the conservation team as part of the normal consultation process given the location of the site immediately adjacent to a conservation area. Following a site inspection of the property, the historic and architectural interest of the building and the importance of its relationship with the adjoining church buildings which lie within the conservation area was immediately apparent and this report was compiled. The conservation officer is happy to commence negotiations with the applicant to discuss a way forward to achieve a possible remodelling or extension of the vicarage and/or erection of a new development alongside.

4. Effects of Designation/Partial de-designation

Under the Town and Country General Development Order 1995 (the GDO) and the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (the Act), conservation area designation has a number of practical implications for the area. These are outlined below:

- i) Designation would take effect on the date of the Committee's resolution to agree to the recommendations in this report.
- ii) Conservation Area Consent is required to demolish buildings within a conservation area (section 74 of the Act).
- iii) Consent for all advertisement hoardings, temporary or permanent, is required.
- iv) The Council must be informed of all works to trees within a conservation area 6 weeks in advance to give time to issue a Tree Preservation Order, if required.
- v) The design quality of all new development in a conservation area is important. Planning Policy Guidance: Planning & the Historic Environment (PPG 15) and Section 72 of the Act state that all development is required to preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the conservation area. PPG 15 goes on to state that new buildings should respect their context, as part of a larger whole which has a well established character and appearance of its own.

The partial de-designation removes the anomaly facing the occupiers of Nos. 1-10 Becondale Road that the above regulations may apply only to certain parts of their dwellings.

5. Procedure after Designation.

Following Committee approval of the report a number of actions would be undertaken:

- i) The owners of properties within the two areas effected by the extension and partial de-designation of the conservation area would be informed in writing of the designation, which would also be advertised in the local press and the London Gazette.
- ii) English Heritage and the Borough Land Charges section would be notified of the decision.
- iii) The production of a character statement and design guidance for the conservation area with its revised boundaries would be reported to Committee for approval as resources permit.

6. Legal Powers and Advice

- 6.1 The Planning (Listed Buildings & Conservation Areas) Act 1990 gives the Council power to review existing conservation areas and their boundaries - Section 69 (2) states that: "It shall be the duty of a local planning authority from time to time to review the past exercise of functions under this section and to determine whether any parts or any further parts of their area should be designated as conservation areas; and if they so determine, they shall designate those parts accordingly".
- 6.2 Section 69 (4) states that: "The designation of any area as a conservation area shall be a local land charge."
- 6.3 Section 70 (5) of the Act states that the Local Planning Authority (LPA) should publish notice of any designation, variation or cancellation with particulars of its effect, in the London Gazette, and in at least one newspaper circulating in the area of the LPA.
- 6.4 Section 71 (1-3) of the Act identify future duties on the Council associated with a designation stating:

"(1) It shall be the duty of a LPA from time to time to formulate and publish proposals for the preservation and enhancement of any part of their area which are conservation areas.

(2) Proposals under this section shall be submitted for consideration to a public meeting in the area to which they relate.

(3) The LPA shall have regard to any views concerning the proposals expressed by persons attending the meeting."

7. Environmental Implications

The designation of this extension and the partial de-designation of the Gipsy Hill Conservation Area provides the Council with additional development control powers to protect and enhance this small area and also removes these additional powers from the identified properties on Becondale Road. It also places a duty on the Council to include this area within a plan outlining the aims of preserving and enhancing the conservation area as a whole.

8. **Financial Implications**

Approval of the recommendations will result in the expenditure of about £50 for advertising the designation in the South London Press and the London Gazette - the requisite budget is held by the Planning Division Business Unit.

9. **Staffing and Accommodation Implications**

There are no direct staffing implications as a direct result of this report. The duty to prepare public design guidance and enhancement schemes is already a part of the conservation team's future work programme.

10. **Equal Opportunities**

There are no implications for equal opportunities as a direct result of this report.

11. **Background Documents**

Planning (Listed Buildings & Conservation Areas) Act 1991
DoE & DNH (now DCMS)- PPG 15: Planning & the Historic Environment (September 1994)
English Heritage: Conservation Area Practice (October 1995)

12. **Audit Trail**

Committee deadline: 30 th March 2000			
Author: Edmund Bird - Conservation Officer			
Date drafted: 20th March 2000			
Consultation with other Officers/Directorates			
Date	Name	Directorate	Response Received
	Chris H Lee	B SOL	29/3/2000
Date sent to Committee Secretariat:			
Date received by Committee Secretariat:			
Date sent to Councillors:			