

Planning Committee 7th December 1999

CHIEF EXECUTIVES OFFICE STRATEGY, REGENERATION & PLANNING GROUP

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

Proposed Oaklands Estate Conservation Area (CA No. 56)

(Thornton Ward)

Report to the Director of Strategy, Regeneration and Planning

Consulted Formally: CEO & Bor Sol.

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PURPOSE

To designate the Oaklands Estate (CA No.56)

RECOMMENDATIONS

(1) That the designation of the Oaklands Estate (CA56) is approved under section 69 of the Planning (Listed Building & Conservation Areas) Act 1990 as shown on Plan No. DES/PP/430

(2) That the detailed boundary of the extended area is approved as shown on Plan No. DES/PP/430

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 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 Deposit Draft Unitary Development Plan. Policy CI 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). 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 the borough.

1.4 A detailed assessment of the Oaklands Estate, has now been completed in accordance with the guidance referred to above. This guidance is concerned with the quality of existing buildings within the proposed conservation area, characteristic materials, vistas along streets and between buildings and the importance of landscaped areas.

2. Justification of the boundaries of the proposed conservation area

2.1 This proposed conservation area consists of two blocks of flats, Cubitt House and Eastman House. The blocks, both of five stories, are situated on Poynders Road at the Junction with Cavendish Road, Clapham Park. The estate is clearly defined within its own grounds with landscaping to the front and parking and play area to the rear.

3. The architectural and historical quality, character and coherence of the buildings and their style and materials and the contribution they make to the special interest

3.1 Oaklands Estate, Clapham Park

3.12 The Oaklands Estate on Poynders Road comprises nearly three acres and is located just south of Clapham Common. The name "Oaklands" is taken from the large house and grounds, which formerly occupied the site. The scheme was designed by the London County Council architect, E. P. Wheeler, who was responsible for many of the inter war public housing estates. The contractors for the building work were R. J. Rowley, Ltd., who commenced in January 1935 and finished in June 1936. The total cost of the construction work was £87,970. This project was one of the first to qualify for the Government subsidy payable under the Housing Act of 1935, introduced to provide housing for the relief of overcrowding.

'Up with the houses and down with the slums' was the Labour Party slogan in 1934, when for the first time the Party, gained control of the LCC. Slum clearance and new public housing had been taking place for decades but the demand for land from private builders and local opposition to the presence of public housing meant that the L.C.C. rebuilding programme was only able to operate effectively in a few areas. Almost half of the L.C.C.'s new tenement blocks constructed in the 1930's were put up in only four boroughs Southwark, Lewisham, Wandsworth and Lambeth. These boroughs were politically sympathetic and land was still available at reasonable prices.

E. P. Wheeler designed Oaklands Estate in true 1930's Cunard ocean liner style with strong sweeping balconies curving round the facade. The China Walk Estate, in Kennington is another L.C.C. scheme dating from 1928-1934. Recently designated by Lambeth as a Conservation Area (CA No.50) the China Walk Estate makes an interesting comparison with Oaklands Estate. The former is in the polite neo-Georgian style with restrained brick elevations and white timber sash windows, while the later is in the strikingly moderne style which was at its peak of popularity by the mid 1930's.

The main elevations are faced with multi-grey brick, with red dressings to the windows, the whole designed in the form of alternating bands of coloured brickwork. The reinforced concrete balconies and the top storey of the buildings are rendered and coloured cream. The Crittall steel windows, originally painted light green are now painted white. The flat roofs were asphalted. At the back of the buildings the base and balconies are in multi-grey bricks, with red brick walls behind the balconies. The capping to the balconies is red brick laid on edge as a soldier course. All the elements combine to reinforce a powerful horizontal emphasis.

The layout of the scheme is in the form of two open quadrangles, so that the living rooms generally have a southerly aspect and overlook Poynders Road. The blocks are five storeys high, with the top two storeys designed as maisonettes. The total accommodation comprises 185 flats, of which 25 have two rooms, 113 three rooms, 42 four rooms and 5 five rooms, housing, originally, approximately 900 people.

The design also incorporated ventilated rooms on the top floor, accessible to all the tenants, for drying domestic washing. The description in the Architect's Journal in 1936 describes each flat as having a kitchenette equipped with a larder, a dresser, shelving, and a copper from which hot water was supplied to the bath. The flats were also provided with refuse bin chutes. All of which were innovations.

4. The contribution made by trees, open spaces and other natural elements to the character of the proposed conservation area.

When the scheme was laid out as many of the existing trees were preserved and provision was made for planting a number of small ornamental trees in the quadrangles. When comparing original photographs of 1936 with the estate today many of these original trees still exist. These mature trees make an important contribution to the estate. As tall as the blocks, the trees along Poynders Road make an interesting visual barrier between the traffic and the flats.

In the courtyard at the back of the blocks there is off street parking for the residents, a relatively new introduction, while the original 1936 concept of a children's playground laid out, away from the street, with swings and seesaws still exists in a modern form.

5. The relationship of the built environment to the landscape including significant landmarks, vistas and panoramas.

There are later post war developments to the north east built circa 1950's which have not been included within the proposed conservation area as they are not of the same quality as the earlier 1930's Oaklands Estate.

6. Conclusion

This area has been carefully assessed in accordance with the criteria recommended by English Heritage and the Oaklands Estate, Clapham Park is considered worthy of Conservation Area status by virtue of its historic and architectural character and is a fine example of L.C.C. public housing of the 1930's.

7. Public Consultation

Letters of consultation were sent out in August 1999, asking for the views of the Lambeth Housing Department Clapham Common Housing Office and of the owner/occupiers of the flats.

8. Effects of 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) As this Conservation Area consists wholly of flatted accommodation there are no permitted development rights.
- iv) Consent for all advertisement hoardings, temporary or permanent. Is required.
- v) 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.

9. Procedure after Designation.

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

- i) The appropriate London Borough of Lambeth departments will 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 character statement and design guidance for the whole of the extended conservation area would be reported to Committee for approval as resources permit.

10. Legal Powers and Advice

10.1 The Planning (Listed Buildings & Conservation Areas) Act 1990 gives the Council power to declare a new conservation area or extend an existing one. 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".

10.2 Section 69 (4) states that:

"The designation of any area as a conservation area shall be a local land charge."

10.3 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.

10.4 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,"

11. Environmental implications

The designation of the Oaklands Estate Park Conservation Area provides the Council with additional development control powers to protect and enhance this small area, 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.

12. Financial Implications

Approval of the recommendations will result in the expenditure of about £30 for advertising the designation in the South London Press and the London Gazette - the requisite budget is held by the Planning Division Business Unit.

13. Staffing and Accommodation Implications

There are no staffing implications as a direct result of this report and it is not anticipated that the additional powers associated with the extension of the conservation area will generate additional workload for Development Control and the Conservation Officer. The duty to prepare public design guidance and enhancement schemes is already a part of the conservation team's future work programme.

14. Equal Opportunities

There are no implications for equal opportunities as a direct result of this report, however any improvements to the urban environment gained as a result of extending the conservation area should benefit all groups in society. Any improvements will of course take into account the needs of people with mobility problems (e.g. traffic calming initiatives).

15. Background Documents

Planning (Listed Buildings & Conservation Areas) Act 1991
Department of the Environment & Department of National Heritage: Planning Policy Guidance
(PPG 15); Planning & the Historic Environment (September 1994)
English Heritage: Conservation Area Practice (October 1995)
The Architect's Journal, April 9th 1936
London Housing, G. H. Gater, Clerk of the Council, Pub. London County Council, 1937.
Research & report compilation by Antonia Powell, Assistant Conservation Officer

16. Audit Trail

Committee deadline:					
Author: Edmund Bird - Conservation Officer					
Date drafted:					
Consultation with other Officers/Directorates					
Date	Name	Directorate	Date Sent	Date Cleared	Date Returned
	C Lee	BSOL	28 .07.99	-	No rep
	S Whitaker	CEO	28 .07.99	—	No rep
	Clapham Common Office	Hsg Dept	28 .07.99	-	No rep
Date sent to Committee Secretariat:					
Date received by Committee Secretariat					