

Shrewsbury Park Estate Conservation Area

Character Appraisal and Management Strategy



Laing Estate street scene



Moderne suntrap style of house

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Introduction

The Shrewsbury Park Estate Conservation Area covers a high quality 1930s estate designed by the house builder John Laing and Son and laid out near the top of Shooters Hill in the grounds of Shrewsbury House.

This Shrewsbury Park Estate Conservation Area Appraisal and Conservation Area Management Strategy consists of:

- A Definition of the Conservation Area's special historic and architectural interest;
- An explanation of Conservation Areas and Article 4 Directions;
- A character appraisal identifying the main elements that contribute towards the special architectural and historic interest of the Conservation Area, and
- The Council's proposals for a Conservation Area Management Strategy. This promotes conservation, and provides guidance on the protection of the character of the Estate – in particular on how maintenance and refurbishment of the properties can be achieved whilst preserving the character of the houses. Appropriate maintenance techniques, reinstatement of architectural features, well judged repairs and minor alterations may preserve or enhance the area's special architectural or historic character. The last part of this section gives guidance on the planning requirements for more substantial changes.

1. Definition of the Conservation Area's Special Historic and Architectural Interest

The special character of the Conservation Area is defined principally and substantially by the Laing Estate. Its principal characteristics are:

- The green and period character of the street layout;
- The verdant street scene;
- The hilltop setting;
- The views;
- The style and detailing of the period domestic houses; and
- The retention of Shrewsbury House and grounds at the centre of the Estate
- The 1912 Fire Station

These features are explained in Section 3 below.

2. Explanation of Conservation areas and Article 4 Directions

2.1 What is a Conservation Area?

Conservation Areas were first designated in England following the 1967 Civic Amenities Act. Local planning authorities are obliged to designate and review Conservation Areas under the provisions of the 1990 Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act.

Conservation Areas are defined as 'areas of special architectural or historic interest the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance'. There are now more than 8,000 throughout England and the Royal Borough of Greenwich has 20 Conservation Areas. The Shrewsbury Park Estate Conservation Area was designated by the Planning and Development Committee of the Council in January 1992.

2.2 What is an Article 4 Direction?

In general, planning permission is normally required for any material alteration to the external appearance of a building. However, single-family occupiers of residential houses have permitted development rights to make certain specified minor changes to the external appearance of their house. On the Laing Estate, a number of these permitted development rights were withdrawn in November 1994, enabling the Royal Borough to consider whether alterations are consistent with the character and appearance of the conservation area. The Council authorised seeking the Shrewsbury Park Estate Article 4 Direction in November 1994, and the Direction was subsequently made by the Department of the Environment.

2.3 Effect of the Shrewsbury Park Estate Article 4 Direction

The Shrewsbury Park Estate Article 4 Direction brings under planning control the following categories of development:

- 1 The installation or alteration of windows and doors
- 2 The erection of an extension of any size, to the front, side or rear of a dwelling house
- 3 The enlargement of or addition to the front, rear or side roof slope, including the installation of dormer windows, roof lights or alterations to chimneys
- 4 The recovering of a roof with replacement tiles
- 5 The erection of a porch outside any external door
- 6 The provision of a hard surface within the curtilage of a dwelling house; for example, for the parking of vehicles
- 7 The installation or replacement of a satellite antenna on a dwelling house or within its curtilage
- 8 The erection or alteration of a gate, fence, wall or other means of enclosure

Where a householder wishes to make any of the above changes (for example, to replace windows), the householder must first obtain planning permission. There is no fee for this.

2.4 Which properties are under the Article 4, and which are in the Conservation Area?

The Article 4 Direction covers the whole of the Laing Estate. The broader Conservation Area comprises the Laing Estate, and also part of Eaglesfield Road and the part of Kinlet Road not on the Laing Estate. Please refer to the plan on page 6.

The Laing Estate comprises:

Ashridge Crescent: 1 to 105 (odd); 2 to 58 (even)

Bushmoor Crescent: 1 to 31 & 43 to 49 (odd); 2 to 74 (even)

Kinlet Road: 1 to 47 (odd); 2 to 38 (even)

Mereworth Drive: 1 to 63 (odd); 2 to 56 (even)

Plum Lane: 183 to 223 (odd)

The remainder of the Conservation Area

The following properties are in the Conservation Area but are not part of the Laing Estate and are not subject to Article 4 Controls:

Eaglesfield Road: former Fire Station, 5 to 45 (odd); 2a to 62 (even),

Kinlet Road: 49 to 53 (odd);

Bushmoor Crescent: Shrewsbury House

2.5 What restrictions are there throughout the Conservation Area?

Houses outside the Article 4 Direction are subject to Conservation Area controls only. In the parts of the Conservation Area not subject to the Article 4 Direction and in the Conservation Area as a whole:

- The demolition of buildings, or substantial portions of them, is unlawful without prior Conservation Area Consent from the local planning authority.
- Conservation Area Consent is required for the substantial or complete demolition of a boundary gate, wall, fence or other means of enclosure.
- Householders living in single-family occupied houses (i.e. not flats or converted houses) in those parts of conservation areas not covered by the Article 4 generally have permitted development rights to make minor changes without planning permission.
- Houses or buildings divided into flats do not possess the above permitted development rights and external alterations to any part of the building (such as a removal of or alteration to a chimney stack, window replacement) will require planning permission
- Special controls apply to works to trees within a Conservation Area. Before carrying out pruning or felling, six weeks written notice has to be given to the Council who may then make a Tree Preservation Order. The Council's Tree Officer should be contacted for details of these requirements;
- Planning applications are judged against stricter criteria within Conservation Areas where all proposals must preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the area;
- Proposals for development on land outside but affecting the setting of the Conservation Area will be assessed for their impact on the character and appearance of the Conservation Area and may be refused if this would be judged to be detrimental;
- Conservation Area status will also affect the decisions taken when it is judged expedient to take enforcement action.

Please speak to a planning officer for further advice.

2.6 What is a Character Appraisal and Management Strategy (CAMS)?

This is a supplementary planning document (SPD) which supplements and provides guidance on the existing planning controls in the conservation area.

Once adopted the CAMS will not supersede the Article 4 Planning controls nor will the CAMS alter the Article 4 Planning controls. The Article 4 Direction planning controls restricting Permitted Development rights cannot be changed as these were set when the Direction was adopted by RBG 19 years ago in 1994 and are permanent.

The Royal Borough of Greenwich has to comply with a legal duty and government guidance concerning the appraisal and management of conservation areas. Under the terms of the Government's Best Value Performance Indicators (BVPI) the Council must produce CAMSs for all of its 20 conservation areas as soon as possible. Therefore, the Royal Borough of Greenwich is legally obliged to produce this document.

2.7 What is the difference between the Character Appraisal and Management Strategy (CAMS) and the 1996 guidance leaflet: "Shrewsbury Park Estate Conservation Area"?

The brief 1996 leaflet entitled *Shrewsbury Park Estate Conservation Area* was produced as a useful guide in the absence of any specific requirement to provide detailed guidance on conservation areas. The 1996 leaflet was produced long before English Heritage devised the requirement to produce conservation area character appraisals and management strategies (CAMS) in a prescribed format. English Heritage advise that CAMSs should define the special character of the area, identifying which elements contribute to this special quality and which don't and should formulate a strategy to manage the area's preservation and enhancement.

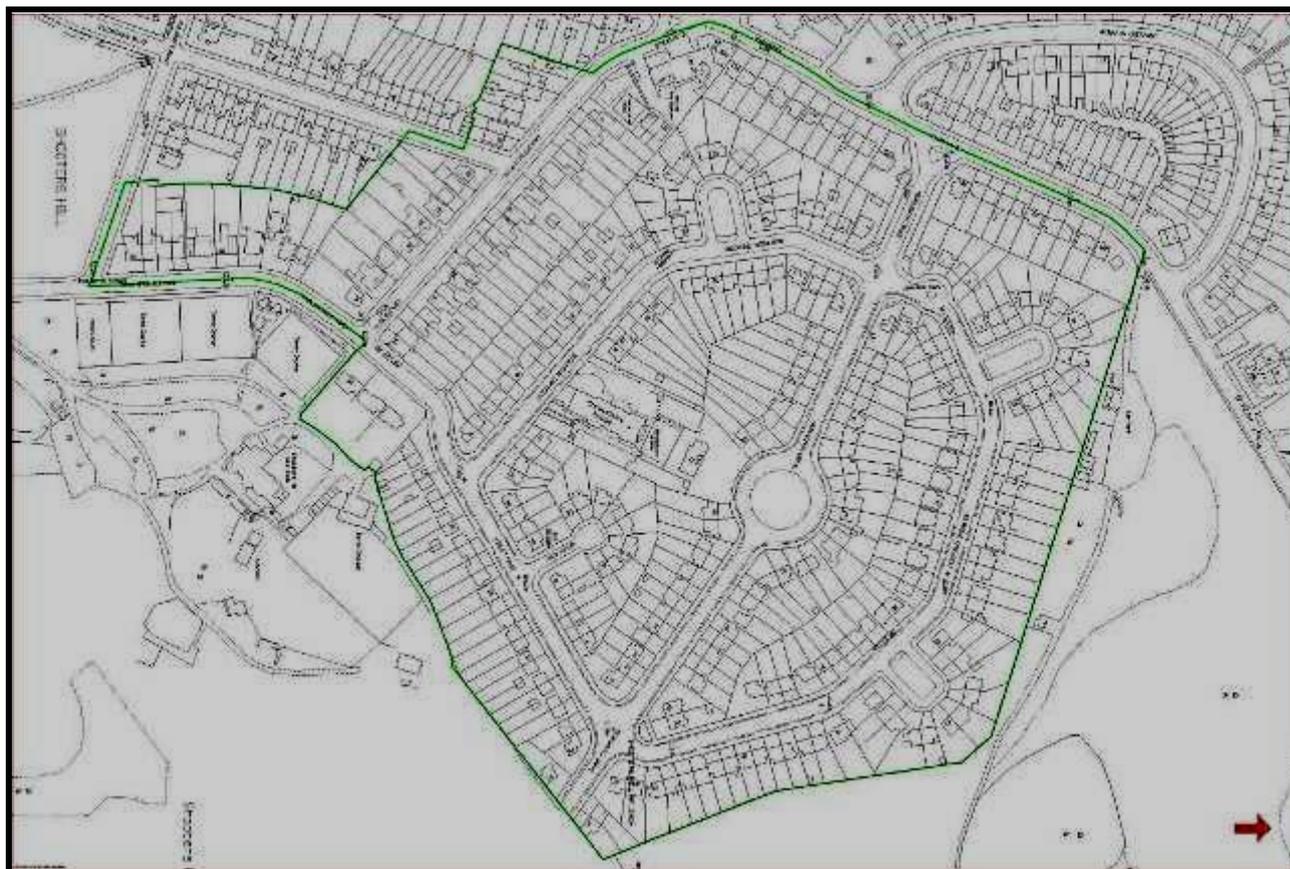
The 1996 leaflet was brief and was produced principally to explain the Article 4 Direction and its implications. The leaflet has brief guidelines clarifying the categories of development requiring planning permission and advising on what may be acceptable in a planning application.

The CAMS document also explains the Article 4 Direction and its implications and clarifies the categories of development which require planning permission. However, the guidance on what may be acceptable in a planning application is more comprehensive than in 1996. The CAMS addresses the whole conservation area in 2012/2013, after 19 years, at a time when national and local planning legislation has substantially changed to reflect the current times and needs and when guidance is required to be more detailed and comprehensive. These are therefore two very different documents.

The management strategy section is also required to set out the way in which development will be managed to ensure conservation areas retain the qualities which lead to their designation. The management strategy must show how the Article 4 Direction will be implemented to meet the objectives of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), namely how development will be managed to ensure the significance of the conservation area is sustained and enhanced.

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Map showing boundary of Conservation Area

2.8 The Planning Policy Context

Planning applications must be decided in accordance with development plan policies unless material considerations indicate otherwise. In policy terms, this Conservation Area Character Appraisal is a supporting document, relating to, and to be read with, current national and local planning policies. The key planning policy documents are:

The Mayor of London's London Plan

The Mayor undertakes to work with strategic partners to protect and enhance London's historic environment (Policy 4B. 10) and expects Boroughs to ensure that the protection and enhancement of historic assets in London are based on their special character (Policy 4B. 11). The London Plan also contains proposals for protecting and managing strategic views, including those of central London from Greenwich Park and Blackheath Point.

Greenwich Planning Policy

The Royal Borough of Greenwich has started work on a new type of statutory plan, the Local Development Framework (LDF). This will be a suite of documents that will eventually replace the current Greenwich Unitary Development Plan (UDP).

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The UDP Second Deposit Draft was published in April 2004 and the Inspectors Report, recommending certain revisions, was issued in November 2005. The Council formally adopted the Replacement UDP on 20th July 2006. The more relevant development planning policies in the Greenwich UDP are its design policies. The most relevant UDP Design Policies are: Urban Design (D1 & D2), Trees (D 8), Residential Extensions (D9 & D10), Telecommunications (D11), Satellite Antennae (D12), Street Furniture (D14), Advertisements (D15), Conservation Areas (D16 & D17); Listed Buildings (D18-21A); and Buildings on the Local List (D22). These can be found on the Council's website.

Relevant Supplementary Planning Guidance

In addition to Development Plan policies, decisions on planning applications should take into account relevant Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) and any Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD) produced under the new LDF system. The most relevant are Supplementary Planning Guidance on Residential Extensions and on Conversions.

Designation of Conservation Areas

There is a legal duty for all local authorities to keep under review and designate as Conservation Areas those parts of its area of "special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance". There are currently 20 Conservation Areas in the Royal Borough of Greenwich.

Listing

English Heritage lists buildings of special architectural or historic interest on behalf of the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport. The Secretary of State is also responsible for the scheduling of ancient monuments and the registering of historic parks and gardens.

3. Conservation Area Character Appraisal

Although the latest advice from English Heritage encourages local authorities to undertake appraisals prior to the designation of Conservation Areas, this is not possible where designations are already in place. In such instances an appraisal offers the opportunity to re-assess a designated area, like the Shrewsbury Park Estate, and to evaluate and record its special interest. The evaluation in the following appraisal closely follows the headings and format recommended in English Heritage's guidance "Understanding Place: Conservation Area Designation, Appraisal and Management" (March 2011).

3.1 Location and Setting

The Shrewsbury Park Estate Conservation Area lies in an elevated position on the northern slopes of, and just under the summit of Shooters Hill, the second highest hill in the Greater London area. The area is surrounded by parks and golf courses and from certain places there are dramatic views - to the west over London, and to the south and east over Kent. Not surprisingly, historically, this topographically privileged area became the site of substantial country houses in their own large gardens, set above Woolwich and away from the lower Thames marshes.

The principal part of the Shrewsbury Park Estate Conservation Area consists of a residential estate built in the main from 1934-1936 by John Laing and Son builders. The remainder of the Conservation Area is made up of Eaglesfield Road and a few houses in Kinlet Road - these are mainly Edwardian houses in a mixture of styles. The Conservation Area includes Shooters Fire Station and Shrewsbury House, both of which are Grade II Listed.

3.2 Origins and historical development

The Shooters Hill summit area was the home to Bronze Age burial mounds, one of which survives surrounded by railings on the corner of Plum Lane and Brinklow Crescent nearest the Fire Station. This was formerly within the grounds of Tower House.



Surviving Bronze Age burial mound

In medieval times the elevated summit of Shooters Hill was a roost for eagles and thus known as the 'eagles field'. This is the origin of the Edwardian street name 'Eaglesfield Road'.

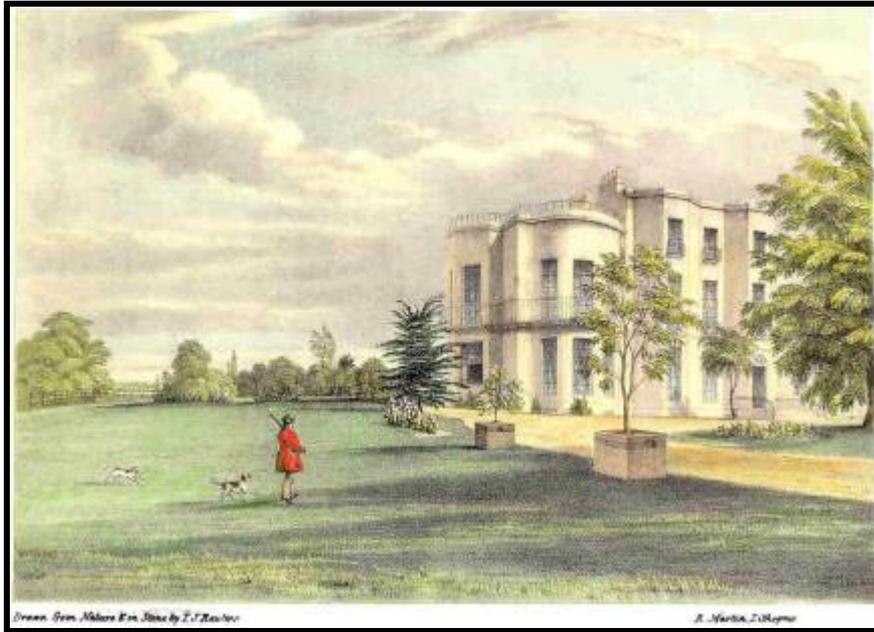
Shrewsbury House

Charles, sixteenth Earl of Shrewsbury – a descendant of Bess of Hardwick - had this fine “small but elegant” country house built on Shooters Hill in 1789. In 1799 the house and grounds fell into the ownership of the Prince Regent – later King George IV. The Earl of Shrewsbury leased the house to the Crown as a residence for the three-year-old Princess Charlotte, the only child of George IV and Princess Caroline of Brunswick. Charlotte lived there in the care of the Dowager Duchess of Elgin while her mother moved first to Charlton and then to Montague House on Blackheath to be near her. Shrewsbury House is now the centre of the Laing Estate. A long drive led from near where the fire station is now to the house.

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The house lay just to the north of the present Shrewsbury House. This substantial rendered house was built in picturesque style with a three floor irregular canted bay main elevation and a two-floor bow garden front. Shrewsbury House went through many other private ownerships in the early years of the 20th century. Other occupants of the house also included Alfred Winsor, the pioneer of coal-gas production at Becton Works & Power Station. In the late 19th Century, it was turned over for use as a convalescent home for children (see 1890 OS map extract). In 1916 Mr Fred Halse bought the house and the southern part of the very extensive grounds.



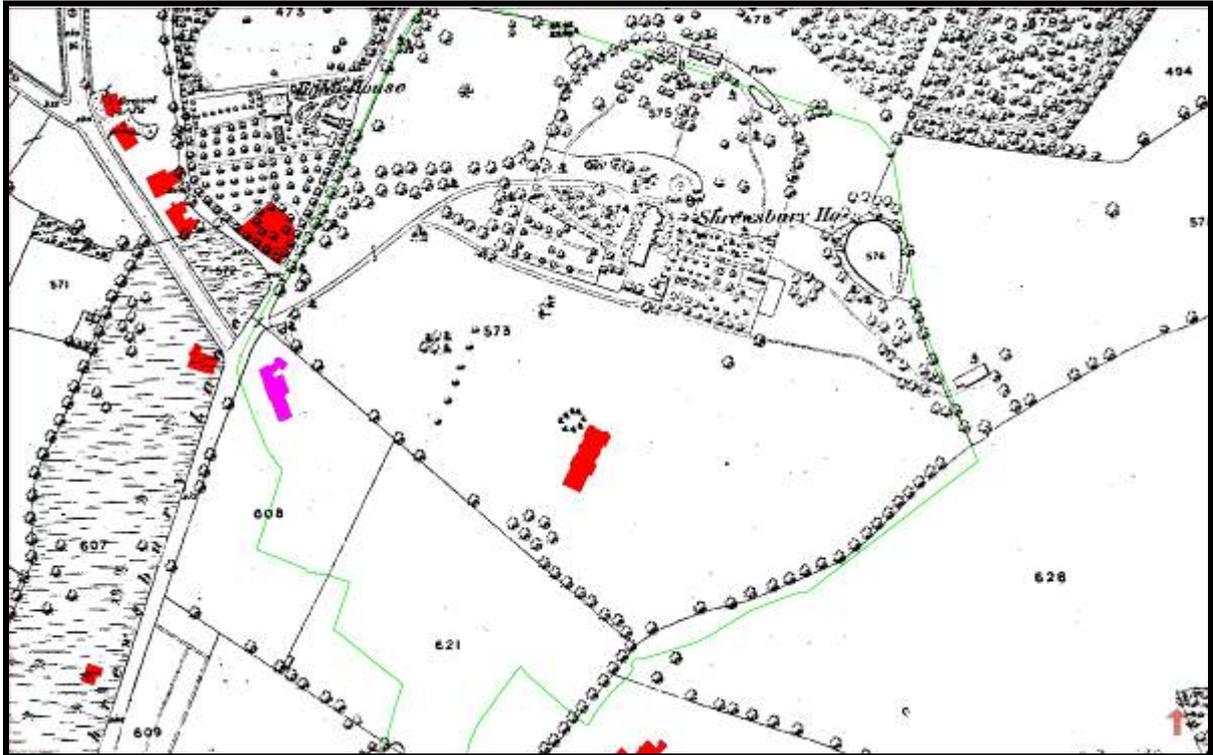
1838 engraving of Shrewsbury House



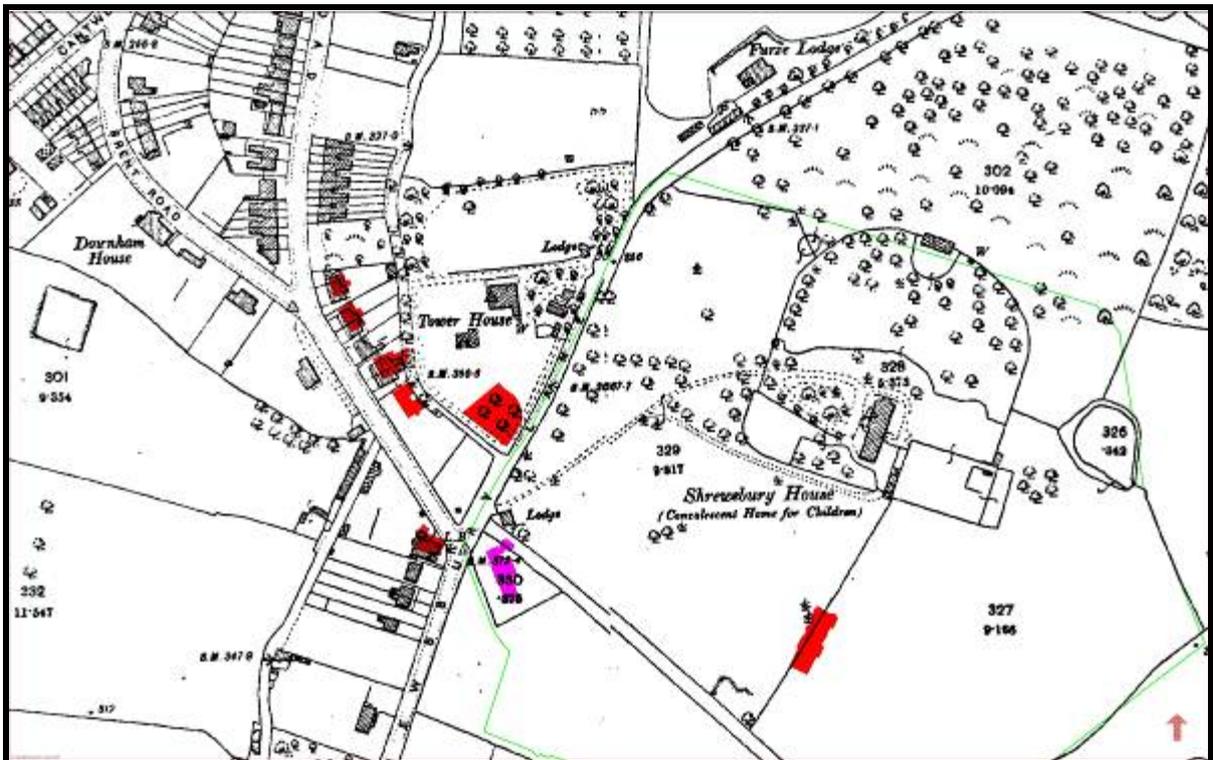
1905 Photograph of Shrewsbury House

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OS map 1870 with listed and locally listed buildings superimposed – the new (1920s) Shrewsbury House is the red rectangle south of the marked old building.



OS map 1890 with listed and locally listed buildings superimposed – the new (1920s) Shrewsbury House is the red rectangle south of the marked old building. The faint green line is the line of today's Conservation Area boundary. The magenta building is the location of the later (1912) Fire Station. The 1890 map compared to the 1870 reveals intervening development around Plum Lane – then called Shrewsbury Lane.

The 1923 new Shrewsbury House

In 1923 Fred Halse demolished the old Shrewsbury House and built himself a new house, which now stands on the site.

The rock garden north of the present house is believed to incorporate masonry material from the old house, and at least one fireplace seems to have been reused. The grounds of Shrewsbury House incorporate a number of locally significant outbuildings including an Air Raid Precautions (ARP) Bungalow and a Cold War bunker. These are recommended for local listing within the Management Strategy on p. 33.

In 1934 Shrewsbury House and an acre of gardens was bought by Woolwich Council for £9000 for a library and museum – and although the latter was never instituted – the building survives as a successful community centre.

The House along with the boundary walls and gates, pergola, terrace walling, steps and gazebo was Listed Grade II by English Heritage on 28 September 2012.

Shrewsbury Park

At the beginning of the 20th Century pressure to build led the recently formed LCC to purchase for a public park the nine acres at the highest point of Shooters Hill. This was 50% funded by Woolwich Council and laid out in 1908 by the important LCC garden designer and engineer Lt Col Sexby. Also in 1908 an ‘open air school’ was founded in Shrewsbury Park - at first in summer and then, from 1913, all year round.

The remainder of Shrewsbury Park was acquired by the LCC in 1929 – after which the school moved to Charlton Park. The preservation of the landscape continued in the 1920s with the LCC’s acquisition of Castle Wood (1921), and the 22 acres of Jackwood in 1923. Fred Halse was a former Mayor and Deputy Lieutenant of the County of Kent from 1926 – 1934. He used these roles to promote the preservation of the Southern slopes of Shooters Hill, which culminated in 240 acres of Crown land north of the Bexleyheath railway transferring to the LCC in 1934.

Although not part of the Conservation Area, Shrewsbury Park is closely associated with it, both topographically and historically. The character of Shrewsbury Park was a factor in the selection of the site by John Laing – it influenced their layout and design, and they used the Park setting to promote sales. As such the Park continues to make a strong contribution to the setting of the Laing Estate.

The John Laing and Son Shrewsbury Park Estate

In 1933 at the time of the sale of Shrewsbury House to the Council, those parts of Shrewsbury Park not sold to the LCC for laying out as a park were sold to the John Laing Company. They commenced building immediately and there is a photograph dated 20th February 1934 showing houses constructed on the west corner of Mereworth Drive and Bushmoor Crescent. Laings constructed their estate under the slogan “Laing’s Estates are well planned on Garden City principles”. Their brochure “Laing’s 10 Estates” says of the Shrewsbury Park Estate “we believe that this estate is unsurpassed for Healthiness and Beauty of position”.

3.3 Archaeological significance

The whole of the Conservation Area falls within an Area of Archaeological Importance as defined within the Unitary Development Plan for the Royal Borough of Greenwich.

Such areas indicate a level of archaeological awareness that there would be the potential for archaeology to be affected if significant ground disturbance was to occur. Any permission involving such works disturbing the ground should therefore acknowledge archaeological importance by a condition requiring an archaeological assessment.

The Laing Estate to the north of Shooters Hill Road, the former Roman period road Watling Street, is built on the grounds of Shrewsbury House that had also contained six or seven possible Bronze Age burial mounds of which just one survived the demolition of Shrewsbury House in 1923. This is the Bronze Age tumulus or burial mound in the park area surrounded by railings on the junction of Plum Lane and Brinklow Crescent – which is close to but not in the Conservation Area.

It is possible that other burial mounds were located within the area and had been removed either for the needs of agriculture or in advance of development. The location of the prehistoric burials is on a small plateau of gravel within an area of London Clay, on high ground that meant the burial mounds would have been visible on the sky-line from the lower ground towards the River Thames.

Such burial grounds often became the focus for later burials, particularly in the Roman and Saxon periods. Even though there is no evidence for such occurrences at this site, the possibility cannot however be ruled out.

3.4 Character and relationship of spaces

The relationship of public and private spaces on the Laing Shrewsbury Park Estate is one of its special features. The well-developed verges originally laid out with posts and chains throughout, enlarged at the entrances, complement the spacious front gardens to create a verdant and sylvan setting, which softens and warms the houses. These are subject to a maintenance programme from the Council. If spaces and urban design are important on all Laing estates, this was given particular attention at Shrewsbury Park – both in design and in sales promotion. Quality of layout and setting was marketed and promoted in Laing's sales leaflets which advertise:

- The elevated parkland setting “adjoining large golf course and beautiful public park” – “glorious views over London Essex and Kent”, “at the front is Plum Lane with its wonderful trees and open view over the Thames”; “height is health”
- “Special attention to planning” with “wide curved avenues with shrubs planted thereon” – this treatment has survived as an impressive series of green planted verges at either side of the pavement which the Council maintains to a good standard on the roadside and residents, on the property side
- “retention of as many original trees as possible”

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Well maintained verges



Verge with post box



2005 aerial photo showing layout of Estate and tree and park cover

3.5 Townscape features and setting

The distinctive townscape character of Laing Estate planning is significantly enhanced by its circular planning. An outer ring is formed by Bushmoor Crescent and Ashridge Crescent. This discourages through traffic, and creates an enclosed inward looking character. Together with the extensive use of street planting, this gives the Estate a secluded special character – and a welcome peaceful feeling of separation from the urban bustle.

The creation of a large roundabout at the centre of Mereworth Drive increases this circular character, accentuating the inward looking focus, and the green informality. The road alignment design for Ashridge Crescent was modified, widening the road to enable retention of what was even in 1936 a fine large old sweet chestnut tree. This tree survives, and as an historic survivor should be retained as long as feasible for its contribution to local history and townscape character. In particular when it eventually dies it is recommended that the tree be replaced with another native tree species.



Old sweet chestnut in Ashridge Crescent

This enclosed secluded character gives a feeling of separateness and isolation from the city which is further supported by the hilltop setting, and the parks and green landscape on all sides, and the extensive panoramas and views out. The character of hill-top and other glimpse-views out of the Estate makes a valuable contribution to the Conservation Area.

3.6 Prevailing and former uses

Prior to the 20th Century the entire area formed parkland around the former 18th Century Shrewsbury House. The Grade II Listed Shrewsbury House was built in 1923 as a country house and is now a community centre. The rest of the land in the Conservation Area is entirely residential. The Laing Estate is composed of privately owned semi-detached and detached houses. There is a mix of detached, semi detached and terraced house types on Eaglesfield Road. The Fire Station was built as firemen's flats over the fire station but is now converted into privately owned flats.

3.7 Architectural and historic qualities of buildings



Semi detached pair – Eaglesfield Road. Both houses have lost their front gardens to off street parking. The house on the left has inserted roof lights, but retains the original upper windows. That on the right retains its porch.



1912 LCC Listed Fire Station

The Edwardian first phase of development

This comprises the 1912 Listed **Fire Station** and Eaglesfield Road. The Fire Station was constructed in 1912 under a row of five gables reminiscent of Philip Webb and his successor William Lethaby, founder and first principal (1893–1911) of the London County Council Central School of Arts and Crafts – both contemporary exponents of traditional building and the arts and crafts.

The gables now appear to sit uneasily on the main part of the building. The original plans show these gables sitting on a symmetrical lower façade of four bays, comprising a central bay, a flanking left wing and a double flanking right wing. This is deliberate designed irregularity in the original design and planning – imitating the organic evolution of vernacular buildings. For example, the original plans show the front gable windows were drawn to vary in their detail design – creating an organic effect. All the windows were originally composed of small vertically rectangular lights, arranged in groups six-lights high and two, three or four wide; all set carefully under round arches in stout wooden casements. The original façade had a strong interesting first and second floor central bay with the small light windows grouped in the following pattern: 3, 2-2, 4, 3-3-3, 4, 2-2,3. This however was offset below gables 2 and 3. Given some knowledge of architectural history, all this could have been ‘read’ as a designed irregular effect.

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The fire-engine garage doors with their tiled canopy were originally symmetrically centred on the building's triple arched central bay and were narrower. They were later extended in keeping on the right side. It is the subsequent alterations to the windows and engine doors, which have created the present-day confusion. Nonetheless the building remains a good product of LCC Architects Department, Fire Brigade Branch and is Listed Grade 2. The List Description suggests that Owen Fleming, CC Winmill and WE Brooks were involved in the design.

Eaglesfield Road contains a variety of interesting, mainly Edwardian early 20th Century houses. The street was in much of its original condition when the Conservation Area was designated in 1992. Unfortunately a number of the houses have since been altered in their external details, and eroded in character – a process which has been able to take place outside planning control because of the owners' use of the Permitted Development Rights which exist in this street – outside the Laing Estate. There are also a few post war infill houses in Eaglesfield Road.

Eaglesfield Road appears to have been developed roughly in numerical order going up the hill, starting from the Fire Station, where the oldest houses are located. On the odd numbered side, the older houses (Nos. 7,9,11,13, 19-25, 27-29, 31-33, 35-37, 39-41 & 43-45) were built in semi detached pairs and often carry brick based full height square bays into a roughcast first floor, but these houses vary in style and some are altered. On the even numbers side, there are a number of gaps in the sequence, seemingly where a detached house was developed on a double plot. Here there are more detached houses, interwar houses. Although not exciting, some may in detail have interest. Nos. 2-8 are 30's style semis similar to the Laing Estate houses, but with render on the upper storey. Some have swept roofs; one has a keyhole shaped porch (no 26). No 42 has a major extension which has been softened by having been designed and carried through in some style.

The following houses are post war and of neutral interest: Nos.: 2A, 5, 10, 12, 22 and 24. Although some may be appreciated, none of these has enough style to be worthy of detailed conservation. In consequence, this is a mixed story. Some houses retain much of their original appearance, but this is dependant on their owner's aspirations, and they cannot be protected from unfortunate change. Most of the older properties have suffered through alteration even though they retain some character.

Shrewsbury House, Bushmoor crescent: Grade II Listed Shrewsbury House is a substantial country mansion built for its owner Fred Halse in 1923.

Shrewsbury House is a symmetrical house of two storeys and attics mainly constructed of red brick. The house has a hipped roof with a projecting timber modillion cornice and three tall moulded brick chimneystacks with round-headed panels. Both the entrance front and garden front consist of eleven-bays, the central five-bays recessed with large projecting stone porticoes with balustraded parapets above. Stylistically the House follows the florid pre-first world war 17th century 'Wrenaissance' style (often used in the early 1900's for public buildings such as town halls). It incorporates expensive Ionic stone columns and extensive stone dressings. The windows are timber casement opening set flush without reveals - a learned touch referring to a practice outlawed in the 18th century London Building Acts - introduced after the Great Fire to reduce fire risk.

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Shrewsbury House was listed at Grade II in 2012 along with substantial survivals from the original landscaped garden layout including the boundary walls and gates, pergola, terrace walling, steps and gazebo.

The interiors have survived remarkably intact. The main garden reception room has a fine Adam style plaster ceiling – and what appears to be an original late 18th century fireplace – quite possibly taken from the original Shrewsbury House. The former library has 17th Century style box panelling, a very fine Jacobean 17th Century-style plaster ceiling, and a fireplace to match.



Florid 'Wrenaissance' styling



Fireplace - original from 1798 house?



Fine gauged brick with lime pointing



Ionic column



Jacobean style ceiling in Library

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18th Century style ceiling in garden front room

Shrewsbury House is listed at Grade II as a building of special architectural or historic interest for the following principal reasons:

- **Architectural interest:** a handsome and substantial early C20 country house with varied and well-articulated external elevations and interiors in a Jacobean, early C18 and Adam style;
- **Materials:** constructed of good quality brick and stone;
- **Craftsmanship:** fine plastered ceilings, good quality joinery including staircase, panelling, doors and wooden or marble fireplaces. Two bathrooms retain decorative ceramic tiles;
- **Intactness:** an unaltered exterior and the interior is intact except for one plastered ceiling;
- **Subsidiary features:** the attached pergola, terrace walling, gazebo and boundary walls with cast iron gates and railings survive intact and contribute to the building's interest;
- **Historical interest:** this house is a link to the demolished C18 house of the same name associated with the Prince Regent and Princess Charlotte and also had a significant local wartime and cold war role as a civil defence control centre.

The John Laing and Son Shrewsbury Park Estate. The John Laing and Son Company was one of the best high quality volume house builders of the 1930s and paid special attention to all aspects of both building quality and estate development. Their general approach is described in *“Dunroamin; the suburban semi and its enemies”* (Paul Oliver et al., Barrie and Jenkins 1981). Laing’s were the most comprehensive developers of their time – looking at layout, planting, and eventually including shops and industrial areas on some of their estates. *“They laid out the roads, in some cases naming them as well as landscaping the grass verges”*; *“each garden was provided with its own fruit tree out of Laing’s nurseries”*(p101). *“The particular characteristics of Laing Estates were variety, extensive planting and sensitive road layouts, designed to preserve landmarks or trees. He wanted moderation, simplicity no falseness, so there was a particular aversion to the use of half timbering on his homes”* (p 102).

In Shrewsbury Park, the houses were laid out in generous plots and the vegetation has matured over the years to provide a very attractive setting. If the subject matter of architectural history is confined to advances in architecture, it is possible to argue that the architectural quality of the houses is unremarkable. But this would overlook some stylish innovation here – in particular,

Laing's first use of the "Jubilee" style front – their *moderne* style suntrap houses with cantilevered first floor bays and porch canopies. All Laing houses were of cavity wall construction.

A rounder understanding and appreciation of the architectural character of the Estate begins with Laing's belief that *'the public exhibit judgement and taste in that they desire simplicity of design and warmth of colour ... they dislike meaningless ornamentation'* (quoted in Oliver op cit p 102).

Laing *"like all successful contractors, possessed very detailed knowledge of what sort of estate would or would not sell. The convergence of Laing's taste and that of thousands of buyers is hardly surprising, since Laing (unlike planners and architects) had never been educated away from popular attitudes and values"* (ibid).

House types: On close acquaintance it becomes apparent the Estate's immediate atmosphere of uniformity hides a subtle and interesting variety.

Laing's Estate marketing brochures show a number of standard house types – the most common being Rona, Aberdeen, Belford, Newnham, Eskdale and Olympia, all of which are well represented on the Estate.

Other house types - the Yeovil, Chalet and Anglesey were built in small numbers to give variety on corners. From the street, the visual appearance of the Ronas', Aberdeens' and Belfords' are rather similar. To make analysis more complex, these could be but were not always built in various sub-types – semi-detached or detached, with or without garage, standard and de luxe, etc.

Visually the most striking houses are those built with the suntrap and "Jubilee" curved bay with curved glass steel windows and a strong horizontal emphasis accentuated by white pointing and the use of tuck pointing techniques. The Rona de luxe, Aberdeen, Newnham and Belford types all came with either Jubilee or traditional "vernacular" style fronts.

We can therefore classify the houses into three distinct stylistic types:

- the various *moderne* suntrap houses with "Jubilee" fronts, stylish slim concrete canopies set on pilasters flanking the front doors, and curved glass steel windows (Olympia, Newnham, Rona, Aberdeen, Belford);
- the individually different traditional houses with canted bays and tile-hanging between the upper and lower bay windows (Rona, Aberdeen, Newnham, Belford, Anglesey, Eskdale),
- the 'specials' - more individual houses used to add emphasis and character on corners and on prominent locations. There are four specials. The semi detached pair of "Chalet" vernacular cottages with swept roofs on the west corner of Mereworth Drive and Ashridge Crescent. The pair of Yeovil detached houses with smooth rendered gables in a key position at the entrance to the Estate on the corners of Mereworth Drive and Plum Lane, third, the Anglesey, a radical angled house designed for corner sites – and used on the south corner Mereworth Drive next to the entrance to Ashridge Crescent, and fourth, the last house in Ashridge Crescent on the even house numbers side of the road.

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*Newnham with Jubilee front.
The hallmark of the Newnham is the recessed side addition with entrance*



Olympia detached – for construction reasons this could only be built with Jubilee front



*Eskdale semi – note Oriel bays, gables, and clay tiled roofs,
the windows have been replaced with good replicas*

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Aberdeen semi with gables



Rona detached



*Belford Jubilee detached – notice depth of house,
the expressed external chimney was only built on detached units*

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Anglesey



“Chalet” type of house



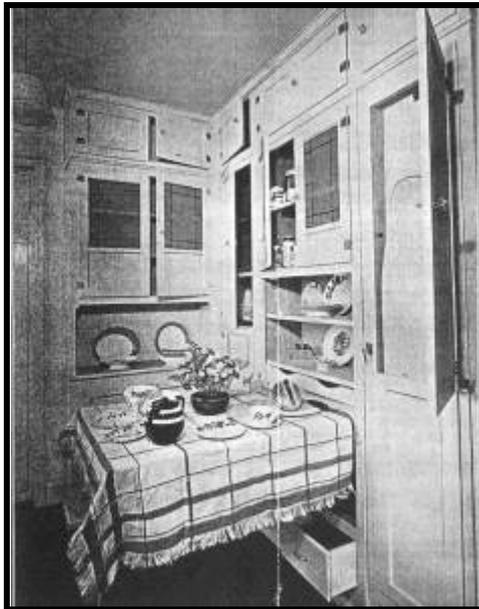
“Yeovil” type house on corner of Plum Lane and Mereworth Drive

Most of these types come in various models – detached or semi-detached, with or without a side garage designed as an integral part of the layout and with garage doors designed in keeping. There are around 18 different models of house on the Estate, often built in semi-detached and detached versions. Several versions of original marketing brochures survive. An earlier one identifies 11 different types of house from £755 for the Rona semi to £1,155 for the “Newnham detached”. Additional styles to those listed in the brochures were constructed, for example the Belford De Luxe.

All the houses avoid rough cast render, all use good quality reddish-brown bricks and brown concrete or clay tiled roofs. With the exception of the Jubilee fronted houses, which have elegant art deco front doors, the front doors of many of the more traditional styles feature a semi-circular head with a stained glass window.

The building quality of the Estate was marketed and promoted in Laing's sales leaflets on the following principles:

- “No rough cast”; instead “rustic bricks” which will “mellow ... as the years pass”, “nicely spaced houses”,
- Structural and technical quality standards include cavity walls, concrete foundations, full concrete over site, full gauged lead cladding, and copper plumbing throughout, steel joists over bay windows, double depth concrete foundations, and metal angles.
- A fitted de-luxe kitchen is included in the best “De Luxe” £820 houses and on the standard houses as an option for £45 extra. This included a larder unit with open air ventilation grille, an integral ironing board that folded out, and a fold down work table. A few survive.



*Laing's De luxe kitchen – taken from sales leaflet.
The “table” is a fold out from the cupboard. The ventilated
larder can just be seen above it to the right of the corner.
The fold down ironing board can be seen in the cupboard
pointing upwards at top right.*

- Other features promoted by Laings' include well primed window timber, painted cast iron gutters, brush grained painted doors (many of which survive), Cited finishes include “leaded lights”, “English roofing tiles”, “oak parquet hall floor”, “lovely red tile floor to kitchen”

Boundary treatment comprised privet hedges, oak lattice fences in front gardens between properties (now completely enclosed within the hedge) and oak gates and gate posts in period style, with some survivors. Oak posts with ornate hanging chains between marked the front boundary.

Privet hedges survive and have now matured into an important continuous front boundary feature. The verges to either side of the pavement add significantly to the area's special qualities.

3.8 Contribution made by key unlisted buildings

The unlisted buildings that contribute to the character of the Conservation area divide naturally into the following groups. The significance of these buildings is considered above.

- The entire Laing Estate
- Period houses in Eaglesfield Road, if they remain externally unaltered or retain character
- The Air Raid Precautions (ARP) Bungalow 'Greengarth' at No. 28 Mereworth Drive and the civil defence nuclear bunker known as the Shrewsbury House Annexe, both recommended for local listing on p. XX of the Management Strategy.

3.9 Local details

The following local details demonstrate how Laing's consistency in local detailing contributes to the character of the Laing Estate part of the Conservation Area. This list merely covers some of the characteristic details which it is desirable to preserve.

- The Laing Estate is unified by its original consistency in **front garden and front boundary treatment**. Perhaps the most immediately striking special feature of the Estate is the continuous double green boundary this forms to the footway. Characteristic details included consistent use of privet hedges, wooden garden gates with stylish art deco oak gate posts, concrete front paths and garage drives with irregular "crazy paving" style patterning.
- Different house types are used to create visual interest – for example, Aberdeen Jubilees', Angleseys', and Yeovils' were used for emphasis on corners
- There are common **housing details**: for example, the brick textures, (although the brick and pointing colours vary between houses and house types), the front doors with single, double, or even triple arched doorcases, the occasional dentilled castellation for an upper doorcase termination, the one-type traditional garage door design, the standard porch design – only for the traditional vernacular cottage style Aberdeen and Rona de-luxe house types with single-arch doorcase – with open front, stained glass glazed flanks to a standard design, and granny bonnet hipped tiled roofs, supported by oak posts,
- The consistent use of the three **standard window designs** – Jubilee suntrap, traditional, and moderne in a canted bay (see black and white photo in part 2) ;
- There is a further consistency in **street scene details**: including extensive planted verges, wooden street name plates, red pillar boxes, old cast iron vent pipes, green cast iron junction boxes, a few surviving original concrete bollards, wooden telegraph poles,
- **Estate planning details** including gaps between houses, large front and rear gardens. Some corner plots also have side gardens.
- The consistent **architectural detailing of the Laing houses** adds to the Estate's definite identifiable stylistic character. These features include materials, chimneys, tile hanging, *moderne* suntrap houses, windows, doors, door surrounds, canopies, and pitched roofs.

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Triple arched doorcase



Surviving original gate, post & 'crazy paving' style concrete drive; notice "noughts and crosses" gate design.



Leaded coloured side window for some traditional houses



Leaded coloured side window for Suntrap houses

The earlier buildings (Fire Station, and the houses in Eaglesfield Road) are generally built in the English cottage vernacular style. Although their varied details support the basic character established by Laing – there is a marked change of character at the Estate boundary. The gates to the front of Shrewsbury House and the railings to Greengarth at the rear (28 Mereworth Drive) are of definite quality and a locally distinctive characterful feature.

3.10 Prevalent building materials features textures and colours

A few materials are common throughout the Conservation Area – for example the use of red bricks, tiled roofs and (originally) cast iron rainwater goods. On the **Laing Estate** the predominant building materials feature textures and colours include:

- The distinctive texture and varying colour of Laing’s quality hand-made “rustic” facingbricks and dark red/brown roof tiles;
- On many of the Jubilee houses special horizontal brick pointing is coloured white to emphasise horizontality, and the vertical pointing is coloured to match the bricks;
- The hanging tiles on the traditional houses;
- The slim concrete porch canopies with moderne concrete pilasters;
- The use of complementary textures and colour for the brickwork throughout the Estate;
- All the houses were originally built with steel windows – set into wooden subframes. On the Jubilee houses, there were curved steel windows and tiled cills. The window frames were originally being painted brush grain, cream, black and cream or dark green and cream;
- Leaded clerestory lights above transoms on the traditional houses and leaded side windows on the stairs; and
- The cultivated green verges

The **Edwardian Fire Station** is built in red brick, the windows may originally have been wooden casements but at some stage appear to have been replaced by steel windows. These in turn have now been replaced by metal windows with artificially applied transom canes.

Shrewsbury House

- Red bricks some carved and gauged, to walls, garden walls and chimneys;
- Flush 18th Century style wooden casement windows;
- Extensive use of fine Portland type stone dressings; and
- Sturdy cast iron square section railings

Eaglesfield Road. There is an interesting variety to the houses in this street, some have cottage style swept roofs, and textured roughcast render to walls, with tiling to roofs. Others have brick ground floors, with render above, some are semi-detached, others individually different detached houses. The more recent houses are mainly built plain in red brick with less interesting brick colours, ornament or textures.

3.11 The contribution made by natural features – green spaces, trees and hedges

The most obvious special feature of the Laing Estate is its vibrant green setting – with buildings set within a planted landscape formed by boundary privet hedges, street trees, street shrubs, and garden trees. Every house originally had a fruiting tree in the front garden. This creates a “semi-Arcadian” enclosure to the street scene. The idea was promoted in by Laing in his sales leaflets under the slogan “*Laing estates are well planned on Garden City principles*”.

The character of the Conservation Area is also strongly influenced by its setting – surrounded by parks, golf courses and with the tremendous open views to the south and west green countryside from Shooters Hill.

The Shrewsbury Park Residents’ Association, which has existed since the Estate was built, has collected money, some of which it has arranged with the Council to be spent on succession tree planting.

3.12 Extent of loss, intrusion or damage

Laing Estate: Although the main character forming features of the Estate remain intact, it has been subject to the pressures for change found in many early 20th Century residential areas. The most common being:

The loss of most of the **original windows**. However, there are good quality replicas much in evidence made in materials such as PVCu and aluminium. In the case of the curved Jubilee steel windows, there remain perhaps a dozen houses with original ‘suntrap’ curved windows. The retention (rather than replacement) of these surviving period examples is a preferred objective, but not a requirement;

- The enclosure of original and recessed **porches** with doors;
- **Hardstandings** over front gardens;
- The loss of aspects of the **traditional front garden boundary treatment** – with an insubstantial number of original Laing gates and square pattern trellis fences surviving;
- The **loss of original garage doors** – again, there are some very good reinstatements;
- Loss of original character of **concrete drives** – a good number survive; and
- A few inappropriately located **satellite dishes**.

On **Eaglesfield Road** changes have included:

- Cladding;
- Extensions;
- New build;
- Front garden changes and parking; and
- Satellite dishes

Fire station – although now no longer in use as a fire station, only relatively minor changes have taken place. For example, when the windows were replaced, the new glazing bars were matched to a similar width, retaining character, but with artificially applied external transom bars.

Parking in front gardens: very largely avoided on the Laing Estate since garages and drives were provided and hardstandings have in the main been successfully controlled.

Large or ugly extensions are significantly absent on Laing Estate. It is easier to design an extension on Eaglesfield Road where the plots are varied and some are large enough. There is a good example of a large 'in-keeping' extension by the post box on the corner of Eaglesfield Road. **Poorly designed or out of keeping new development:** As regards new building, the **Laing Estate** is effectively finished and complete. All the buildings contribute to the Conservation Area. Subdivision of plots would not be considered appropriate, however there are no plots that appear capable of being subdivided. Thus there appears to be no scope for new development here. On **Eaglesfield Road**, there are some bland new houses which do not contribute. Provided the scale of development is not increased such that it is inappropriate to context, there may be the odd opportunities to improve townscape by redevelopment of a non-contributing building.

3.13 Neutral parts of the Conservation Area

There are no neutral buildings in the Laing Estate, this is because the entire original Estate was built and survives as a single entity. The architectural style character and standard is consistent, all the houses having complementary group value.

There are some neutral buildings in Eaglesfield Road, for example the bland architectural style of some of the smaller more recent infill houses, which neither complement nor detract from the overall character of the area. The street scene on the Laing Estate is of similar consistent standard. The quality that the street frontages bring to the Estate can be seen by comparing the twenty Laing houses in the Conservation Area within Plum Lane with the less impressive rest non-Estate frontages in Plum Lane, and also with the privately and publically maintained verges of the Estate.

3.14 Potential for works of enhancement, problems, pressures and capacity for change

On the Laing Estate there has generally been investment in repair and maintenance, although not all the original features have been well preserved. The general process of change has resulted in some unwelcome changes. However, conservation is generally popular and, in spite of cost, numerous residents have carried out thoughtful well designed reinstatements, for example to garage doors and windows.

When restoration works are being considered, the following enhancements are recommended as beneficial in principle:

- Reinstatement of original window designs in UPVc or aluminium, where out of keeping replacements have been installed prior to the Article 4 Direction
- Reinstating traditional garage doors or a traditional garage door design
- Reinstatement of stained glass to front doors and landing windows – all achievable in double glazing
- Removal of front walls to front gardens and privet hedge reinstatement
- Tree planting
- Hardstandings – conservation or reinstatement of original style of pattern-imprinted finish, or where needed upgrading of non-original surfaces

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- Reinstating front gardens, oak post and wooden gate front boundaries; removing or reducing hardstandings insensitively laid out for car parking space prior to the Article 4 Direction,
- Streetscape enhancement works of the public highway – repair and reinstatement of privet, metal chain and posts
- Removal of paint from external brickwork, for instance, where porches have been removed. In a few instances where paint has been applied between the concrete pilasters and the front door of Jubilee-fronted Aberdeen and Ronas it would be desirable to remove this paint to restore the impact of the pilasters.

Eaglesfield and Kinlet Roads

- Reinstatement of original window styles, using modern materials such as aluminium or UPVc
- Where possible, the removal of pebble dash or other added cladding

4. Conservation Area Management Strategy

The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act, 1990, places a general duty on local planning authorities to formulate and publish Conservation Area Management Strategies to provide guidance on how the preservation or enhancement of conservation areas will be managed. Specifically, they set out the way in which development pressure and neglect will be managed to ensure conservation areas retain the qualities which led to their designation. Management strategies can include

- recommendations for boundary changes
- recommendations for an Article 4 Direction or amendments to an existing Direction
- recommendations for additions to the national and local list of buildings.

On the Laing Estate an Article 4 Direction was introduced in 1994 which enables the Royal Borough to ensure alterations to buildings and other features such as privet hedges are consistent with the character of the area. Without these planning controls, insensitive development could gradually damage the elements which collectively define the Estate's character. The aim of the Conservation Area Management Strategy policies for this area should be the **protection of the period character of the houses and the street scene.**

This management strategy document will not supercede the 1996 Article 4 Direction but is designed to provide more detailed supplementary guidance to the existing planning controls.

4.1 **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- **No changes to the existing boundary of the conservation area**
- **No changes to the existing article 4 direction**
- **No proposals for additions to the National Heritage List of Buildings of Special Architectural or Historic interest**
- **Two additions to the Royal Borough's List of Buildings of Local Architectural or Historic interest**
- **Using planning control to ensure careful design of alterations and extensions, so that they are only permitted where they sustain and enhance local character and are in keeping with the distinctive character and style of the building and/or area.**
- Maintaining and enhancing the tree cover of the area by **protecting street and other trees** and by encouraging new and replacement planting; and
- Preservation and enhancement of the character of the street scene by **encouraging highways works to be sensitive** to and prioritise the conservation and repair of features contributing to local character – hedge reinstatement and reinstatement of the posts to the road side shrub beds.

4.2 Additions to the List of Buildings of Local Architectural or Historic Interest

The following two buildings are recommended for addition to the Royal Borough's List of Buildings of Local Architectural or Historic Interest:

- 'Greengarth', No. 28 Mereworth Drive, a former World War II Air Raid Precautions (ARP) Control centre
- Shrewsbury House Annexe, a former civil defence nuclear bunker

Both were considered by English Heritage in 2012 for inclusion on the National Heritage List, but neither met the required criteria to qualify for designation in a national context, although both were considered to be of local interest.

'Greengarth', No. 28 Mereworth Drive

Air Raid Precaution Control Centres were built during World War II to co-ordinate local government response to air raids and served as a local control centres. This Air Raid Precaution Control Centre was converted into a bungalow in 1950. The control room and boiler room were converted into habitable rooms and consequently no original features survive internally. The building is of historic interest locally for its survival and conversion into a residential building, since it demonstrates an attempt to deal with the post-war housing shortage by converting an obsolete civil defence building into a bungalow.

Shrewsbury House Annexe

The Annexe was built in 1954-5 as a civil defence nuclear bunker. In terms of plan form and design the structure is a typical cold war bunker built of shuttered concrete which was not technologically innovative at this date. The structure has also been altered by a later 20th century extension for housing fire engines. Although no longer of architectural interest, the former bunker is of local historic interest.

4.3 Conservation Repair Principles

The houses in the Shrewsbury Park Estate Conservation Area have period traditional character, which should be retained or reinstated in keeping where changes are proposed. For residents this will be money well spent, as, in addition to helping retain the special character of the area, sympathetic maintenance or replacement of period features and finishes enhances property values.

The following principles are recommended when carrying out repairs or alterations to the historic fabric of a property:

- regular maintenance and small scale repairs prevent decay;
- take special care to conserve original features which have been largely lost through past changes;
- carefully match repairs and replacements to the original;
- where possible reinstate missing architectural features;
- where possible reinstate poorly carried out repairs and unsympathetic alterations;
- carefully consider the impact of changes to both the individual house and Estate as a whole; and

- details such as window and door patterns, roofing materials and decorative elements make a considerable contribution to the special character of the Conservation Area. Minor changes can detract from the character, and value of a building and the Estate as a whole.

Conservation of a period building. The process of ageing both produces character and inevitably results in decay. Conservation is therefore about preserving the original building materials as long as practicable and only after this is no longer an option of making like for like replacement. It is essentially a matter of slowing down the natural process of ageing and decay.

Maintenance: It is important that essential structural work and steps to make a property 'wind and weather tight' are a priority before any other structural adaptations or the repair of architectural features is considered. Water ingress is the source of many maintenance problems such as timber rot, spalling masonry, dampness and condensation. Roofing, guttering, downpipes and flashing should be inspected regularly and repaired as a priority in order to avoid large scale problems and intervention into the fabric of the building in the future. The repair of seriously damaged pointing, decayed and cracked brickwork, broken cills and the gaps around window and door openings should also be viewed as priority works.

Structural movement in a building is often quite normal, particularly in London where many houses are built upon shrinkable clay or other soils, which are susceptible to minimal movement. The Laing Estate was built on a gravel subsoil and the build quality of the houses reduces the likelihood of subsidence. Any sudden evidence of movement in a building, which has been stable for many years in the past, may be covered by insurance and should be investigated and monitored by specialist contractors (preferably insurance company appointed) to ascertain the nature, direction and rate of movement.

Guidance may be obtained from the Royal Borough of Greenwich Conservation Team on repairs, alterations and maintenance issues. However the Council cannot recommend individual commercial builders.

In sourcing reliable and reputable firms it is advisable to seek recommendations from neighbours or friends. It is advisable to ask to see previous examples of a contractor's work, or speak to previous clients, before commissioning work.

Is planning permission needed for repairs?

Repairs that are well executed and retain original materials as far as possible and introduce closely matching replacement finishes are considered as not making material changes and do not normally require planning permission. For example, re-pointing to the original specification or repairs of windows (as opposed to their replacement) should not require planning permission, unless the work is part of a broader development scheme. External alterations and other more significant changes such as extensions will generally require planning permission. See section 2 above for information on when planning permission is required.

4.4 Conservation and Repair Guidance for the Article 4 Direction Area

These guidelines apply to the John Laing and Son Estate and explain the best way to carry out works, and also what the planning standards for the area are. In some cases the guidance

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recommends a way of repairing which is advisory rather than subject to planning control. For example, although paint colour is not subject to control, a poor choice of colour will be detrimental to the house and the area. A distinction is therefore occasionally made in this guidance between what should be done, and what may be acceptable in a planning application.

Roofs

The original Redland roof tiles were mainly of concrete although some clay tiles were also used. Where a roof is to be recovered the materials chosen should be of the same size, shape and colour as those, which are to be replaced. The ridge tiles should be re-used if possible, or otherwise replaced to match the type removed, i.e. half-round, or granny bonnet on the hips and finished with a hip iron. If roof vents are required, these should be positioned at the ridge or beneath the eaves and not on the main roof slope, as this can be unsightly.

Chimney stacks and pots make a contribution to the street scene and should not be reduced in height and pots should be retained. Even where chimneys are redundant they perform an important task of ventilating the dwelling structure.

External Walls

Facing bricks on front and other walls of the houses are constructed from a good quality hand made textured reddish-brown clay brick correctly described in a 1930's Laing's brochure as *rustic*.

Some of the larger detached houses have nonstandard size bricks. At the side and rear, use was made of facing bricks for example on the corners and of wire cut and engineering bricks as appropriate. The original materials and mortar courses should be carefully matched when repairs are made, or extensions considered.



Rustic brickwork with chimney supported by relieving arch, which is all constructed in engineering bricks

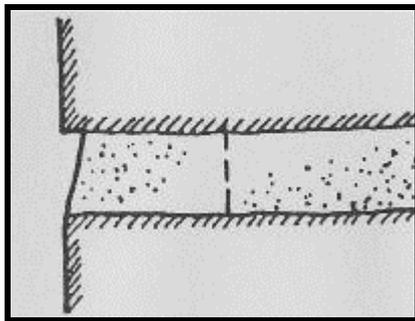
The use of stone, artificial stone, pebble dashing, cement rendering, timber, plastic or tiles etc., to clad any part of the exterior of a property is not considered acceptable. Re-covering of the bays with tile hanging to match the original tiles is acceptable but does need permission.

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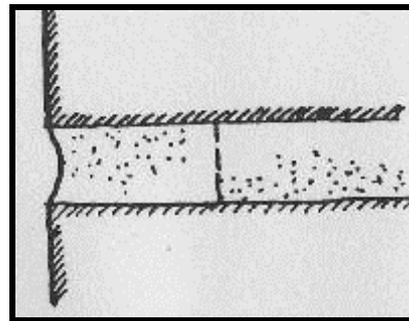
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The re-pointing of brickwork should only be carried out if it becomes essential, having badly deteriorated. As a general rule, on the Laing Estate where facing bricks were used, on the front, a weather struck point was used (see drawing) in a white cement and white sand mix. Care must be taken to match the composition, the strength and the original colour of the mortar, which varied from house to house. Generally, white cement and sand was used for the facing brick elevations. The original mortar on the Estate was lime rich, which is beneficial. Some houses on the Estate have special pointing where vertical joints are darkened to give a horizontal emphasis. This is an important feature which should be retained.

On the Jubilee houses the original horizontal stripes effect was created by weatherstruck pointing on facing bricks. Elsewhere, especially on wire cut brick, pointing should be hollow key. See illustration below.



Weather-struck pointing on facing bricks



Hollow key pointing on wire-cut bricks

The painting of exterior brickwork is not acceptable from a conservation perspective as this detracts from the 'red-brick' original character of the Estate and individual houses and will make the brickwork impervious to moisture transfer, i.e. could cause dampness problems.

Front Doors

When looking at a house, the eye is first drawn to the style and detail of the front door of a building as its entrance. Doors are, in consequence, often a carefully designed feature of the original house. The character and variety of the Conservation Area's front and other doors is a significant element of the area's special character.

There are four original designs of timber front door on the Estate, each specific to a house type. The most common has a semi-circular head with leaded, stained glass. The other three designs are squareheaded, one has four glazed lights, one has 12 lights and the last is in oak with two lights and was used only on the Newnham. These are illustrated below.

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*A quality replacement door, set with triple arched and dentilled surround
There is also a good double-arched dentilled surround at 31 Ashridge*



Moderne style 12 light original door – used on Belfords and Angleseys



*Jubilee art deco 4 light front door –
notice original side garage and unequal lights on front door
to align the glazing bars with those of the original bay windows (now replaced)*



Original oak door on “Newnham” house

Replacement of original doors with modern ‘off the shelf’ designs always detracts from the character of the individual property and its contribution to the street scene as a whole. This also results in the loss of distinctive door furniture such as letterboxes and door knockers. Mock-Georgian type doors and similar “off-the shelf” varieties are not considered acceptable.

Door replacement should replicate the original design and be appropriate to the house type.

Repair guidance: Wherever feasible it is preferred for original doors to be retained and repaired, for example, where the leaded stained glass sections have loosened. This can prove more cost effective than replacement.

Where replacement is unavoidable it is important that the new door carefully matches the design and detailing of the original design for the house type, paying particular attention to the glazing and reusing original ironmongery such as door knockers and letter boxes.

Windows

There were originally just three types of window designs although both the moderne designs came in two widths:

- the characterful suntrap curved glass windows used on Jubilee fronts which give a cool elegant 1930s look, used with wider width openers on Olympia and Newnham Jubilee fronts
- A similar *moderne* window used on canted bays – none of these survive – but we have reproduced an old black and white photograph. This type of window is easy to reproduce in modern materials, again, two widths were used. For this window design, additional width is achieved through a wider central panel found in the main on the Newnham and Shrewsbury house types and in standard width in the Chalet and Yeovil houses.
- The third and originally most common style is a steel window set in a wooden sub-frame – and has, on the ground floor, three rows of leaded clerestorey lights set above a wooden transom. The first floor uses the same design with two rows of leaded lights. This gives a quality traditional appearance.

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Original curved glass windows to Jubilee-fronted house at 58 Mereworth Drive



An old photograph of canted bay with steel windows at 26 Ashridge Crescent



Original steel windows set into timber subframes

Character: Windows are a sometimes unappreciated but important element of the unified character of the Conservation Area and their design and detailing are a very significant element in the original design of the buildings and original layout of the Laing Estate. The groupings of the various types of house and their associated window designs were carefully laid out to accentuate specific parts of the Estate. For example, 12-30 Ashridge Crescent, 183-203 Plum Lane and 35-59 Mereworth Drive all featured moderne windows to create an extended row of horizontally accentuated house types, with houses carefully constructed to achieve the alignment of glazing bars from house to house. Originally, there were three basic window designs on the Laing Estate all constructed with steel glazing bars set in timber sub-frames. Two window types had two width options. Houses feature square or rounded bay windows, which are sub-divided by mullions.

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There were four designs of landing windows to light the staircase. One design for the Newnham, another for the Shrewsbury. The two other predominant designs were either moderne for the Jubilee-fronted house types, or traditional for the English vernacular cottage style house types. The Chalet house type used a concealed roof light.

Double-glazing: All the Laing Estate window design types may be reproduced satisfactorily in double glazing using modern materials such as aluminium or UPVc. Where window replacement is being considered, these should accurately replicate the original designs and be appropriate to the house type. The use of modern materials is considered acceptable.

Painting: Although the choice of paint colour for external joinery is not subject to planning control, it is recommended that suitable heritage-type colours be used for garage and front doors etc., or be brush grained, in keeping with original colours used. Suitable examples of the original colour scheme exist and may be copied. White is not traditional although now common.

It is possible to retain and repair **original glass** particularly for the front door stained glass panel, and it may have a different visual quality and appearance to modern glass. Specialist contractors can salvage original glass using a laser to soften putty and reuse traditional glass panes.

External joinery: this generally used good quality, heavier, slow-growing first growth seasoned Canadian or Baltic timber. It is preferred that if this has rotted it be repaired rather than replaced – this will give a more durable result.

Porches

Open frontages express a welcoming human face to the street and these are a feature of the style of this warm and friendly Estate. A few of the English vernacular style (as opposed to *moderne*) houses on the estate were built with **open** porches under a hipped tiled roof with granny bonnet ridges. Porches were used on the *Rona* and *Aberdeen* type houses (see section 7 in part 1) and only where a single-arch doorcase was constructed. They were not provided and are not appropriate on the *Jubilee Rona* or *Jubilee Aberdeen* types). Good examples survive at 13 Ashridge Crescent and at 209 Plum Lane. It is preferred that these be conserved as they are, and not enclosed at the front. The latter not only creates a closed appearance but also loses the original character. Where an ill-considered design has been introduced in the past, reinstatement of the original design of porch is desirable.



Original open porch design, in Plum Lane



Original side porch with out of keeping replacement door

Any new porches should be small in scale and must not project beyond the building line of the existing bay, or infill space between garages and bays.

Fences, gates and hedges

The boundaries between the front gardens and the public footpaths were originally privet hedges fronted by oak posts linked by metal chains, with wooden gates to match. A few of the old posts and chains may survive engulfed in hedge. A number of oak post gates survive. Survivors are of real historic value and should be retained wherever possible. Good quality replica front gates, gate posts and side gate exist at 15 Ashridge Crescent. Good quality originals exist at 17 Ashridge Crescent. Where the originals are lost, accurate reinstatement of oak posts and chains and of oak posts and gates is desirable where replacement or reinstatement is proposed. The oak posts and gates should match the originals.

Front garden walls were never a feature on the Estate, except in Plum Lane where a continuous concrete retaining wall was constructed, contoured to follow the topology of the hill, with privet planted behind. Brick walls, railings and metal gates or other forms of boundary treatment are out of character with the Estate – and are not considered acceptable. The demolition of a brick wall and its replacement with the appropriate original type treatment would be welcomed. However, the demolition of a brick wall followed by its rebuilding would not be considered acceptable.

Mature privet hedges are a characteristic feature, which help to soften the setting of the houses. They should be retained in all instances, or replaced with fresh stock. The removal of boundary planting is not considered acceptable. The introduction of new privet hedges, where they have been removed in the past, is encouraged. Privet hedges are the original item and are preferred to laurels and conifers, which grow vigorously and become too large and are not drought tolerant.

Privet hedges, unlike conifers, can be pruned back hard into old wood to regenerate them. Hedges also move imperceptibly with tree and shrub growth and when changes to soil moisture levels occur. Hedges have an added advantage that they can't readily be graffiti-daubed.



Original boundary treatment & imitation crazy paving drive using incised concrete

Garages

A number of the houses on the Estate have original side garages, usually with a pitched roof.

Some Eskdale house types had flat garage roofs for design reasons. Flat roofs behind a parapet wall were generally used if a pitched roof would not clear the landing window. They are constructed from the same type of brick used on the houses, and feature side-hinged timber doors with six square panes of Arctic glass in each door. Proposed new garages, including those that are re-built should always be set back from the front building line of the house. Garage doors are an original designed and characterful feature. If possible, surviving original garage doors should be retained and repaired. Replacement doors require consent and it is preferred that they be in timber and match the original pattern. Some garages have replacement doors, which are inconsistent with the original design. These should not be copied. “Up-and-over” doors are generally more expensive and may be acceptable if they match, but are not preferred.

To be acceptable they should match the design of the original wooden doors, feature vertical rather than horizontal members and have a painted or powder coated finish, usually to match the colour of the house, but otherwise in white. Mock Tudor/Georgian type garage doors are not considered appropriate.



Original garage doors with surviving side garden gate

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Original detached garage with original doors

Dormer windows and roof lights:

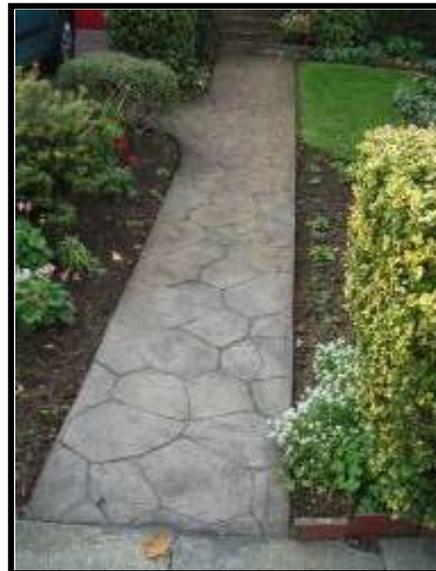
The roofscape is an important visual characteristic and on the Laing Estate is fortunately largely unaltered by replacement tiling, dormers or roof-lights. Dormer windows and roof lights are not considered acceptable on front or side elevations.

On rear elevations dormer windows may be acceptable if they are in proportion to the size of the roof, are not overly prominent and are appropriate in terms of design and materials. Extent of visibility within the conservation area will also be an important consideration. Roof lights are usually less obtrusive if they are of the “conservation rooflight” style, lying flush to the roof. They provide light into the roof space, but are not considered acceptable for front, side or garage roof slopes.

Drives (hard surfaces) in front gardens:



Original front drive



*Attractive reproduction front path and drive
at 34 Ashridge Crescent*

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On the Laing Estate, under the Article 4 Direction, planning permission is needed for the introduction of a drive (or any hard surface) and also any alteration to a boundary hedge, fence or other means of enclosure. In addition Conservation Area Consent is needed for the substantial or complete demolition of a boundary hedge, fence or other means of enclosure. In the Conservation Areas including the Article 4 Area, planning permission is always required for the creation of a footway crossover (this is an alteration to the footway ramping it to enable a vehicle to cross over to the front garden). The highway rules for the crossover require that it cannot be installed unless it is safe (for example there are no problems with sightlines) and has a width of at least 3.9 metres and no more than 5.4 metres.

The introduction of an expanse of concrete or paving on front gardens which exceeds 50% of the front garden area damages the character of the Laing Estate and is not considered acceptable. The replacement of an existing expanse of hard surface which currently exceeds 50% of the front garden area would not be considered acceptable. It should be reverted to garden or reduced in size so that at least 50% of the front garden is reverted to soft landscaping. Normally, the drive should be large enough to accommodate only one car. The drive should also include pedestrian access to the front door, in line with the original predominant design and should not be in addition to it. Second driveways or hard surface are not acceptable, especially on corner properties where side access drives were provided originally.

Design and materials

Where a gap needs to be made in the hedge/fence for a vehicle to enter, a wooden gate and wooden posts matching the original style should be introduced to make the boundary hedge continuous. The aim should be to retain as much of the boundary hedge, gates and gate posts as possible, allowing for a gap wide enough to accommodate one vehicle only as stated above.

The original finish to the front drives was a combined surface of concrete with a central grass strip. The concrete was incised by hand with an attractive simulated crazy-paving pattern. A large number of examples survive. If the original finish has been lost, reinstatement of this material and pattern would be welcome. Modern, pattern-imprinted concrete is now widely available in simulated crazy-paving patterns and colours to match the original natural concrete finish. Bricks are not considered acceptable. Concrete should not be finished in bright colours such as red, as this clashes with the colour of the facing bricks and competes visually with the house.

Streetscape character and works:

The Laing Estate retains a number of characterful interesting traditional street scene features on the public highway. Their preservation is recommended and this is in line with the criteria set out in government policy for Conservation Areas (PPG 15 section 4). Every effort should be made to preserve these in situ by repair and reuse – they should be retained in all instances to protect the character of the street scene:

- Kerb-side of footway shrub planting;
- The Estate originally had posts linked by diamond chain fences alongside the shrub bed and between road and the footway;
- street trees
- granite setts to cross over ramps, granite kerbs
- paving slabs not tarmac

- telegraph poles;
- pillar boxes; and
- cast iron street vent pipes

Lamp columns should be in steel supporting swan necked lamps in keeping with the originals.

4.5 Design and other Planning guidance for the whole of the Conservation Area.

Satellite dishes, external clutter and television aerials

Satellite dishes, if installed visibly on facing walls, roof slopes or chimneys, are visually intrusive. Dishes always need planning permission and should be sited so they are out of sight and so they have no effect on the appearance of the building. Locations, which hide the dish from view, such as in rear gardens or on the rear part of garage roofs, are more acceptable. Because Cable TV is available in this area, satellite dishes are not the only choice for extra TV channels. Terrestrial TV aerials should be positioned within the roof space and not on chimney stacks where they can detract from the appearance of the house.

The siting of additional services should be discreet and is at the discretion of the house owner, not the supplier or contractor. External meter boxes should be on a concealed part of a flank wall to avoid detracting from the house's special character. Although important, these minor works are not subject to planning control.

Rear Extensions and Conservatories

The rear elevations of many of the houses within the Conservation Area have character and on the Laing Estate, many rear elevations are visible by virtue of the layout of the Estate.

On the Laing Estate, to ensure a sufficient degree of subordination relative to the scale and proportions of the host building, extensions should be appropriate in terms of height, scale, bulk, design and materials and should not over-dominate the property. All rear extensions should not enclose or result in the loss of the rear bay feature. In all cases a tiled, pitched roof is needed. All habitable rooms of Laing houses were covered by a pitched roof originally.

Outside the Article 4 area within the Conservation Area, the scope for rear extensions will be judged on a case-by-case basis, taking account of neighbour amenity considerations and also the impact on the appearance of the rear elevation, the amount of original fabric covered, the available plot size and amenity space and the level of uniformity to the rear of the building and its neighbours.

Proposals should follow the planning policies in Greenwich's Unitary Development Plan 2006 and Greenwich's Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) on Residential Extensions.

In general however, the form and appearance of rear extensions should take account of the characteristics of the original house and maintain an architectural unity with both the individual house and the terrace as a whole.

Roofing materials should match the original roofing materials of the house. New windows should usually follow the style and detailing of the original house. Detailing of joinery should follow the original on the host building.

Conservatories: Whilst a traditional design approach is usually the most appropriate, a lightweight, glazed, contrasting conservatory style structure may be possible, if sensitive and well detailed and using timber, aluminium or PVCu. Where conservatories are constructed, it is preferred that the enclosed brickwork not be painted as this increases the impact of the conservatory structure.

Conservatories are not considered appropriate if they abut to the bay.

New Development and Redevelopment

As the development of the Laing Estate is complete, and there are no gaps, in this part of the Conservation Area redevelopment of houses would be damaging to the character of the area and so not supported. However, in Eaglesfield Road, an exception may be possible if the demolition would remove a non-Edwardian and non-contributing building. It is emphasised that any new building here should be sensitive to its context, and in particular:

- in scale with its neighbours,
- not be cramped into its plot,
- retain any trees of value,
- be a significant enhancement to the area,
- acknowledge the materials and locally distinctive style of the area, without necessarily copying past styles;
- a pastiche approach should be stylish, learned and convincing. The visual appearance should not be compromised by contemporary technical or regulatory requirements.

4.6 Trees within the Conservation Area

The Conservation Area Management Strategy proposes maintaining and enhancing the tree cover of the area by protecting street and other trees and by encouraging new and replacement planting. If you wish to prune, lop or cut down a tree within the Conservation Area you must notify the Council of your intentions at least six weeks before the work is carried out stating the location, species, size of tree and work proposed.

There are a good number of street trees in the area. The planting and management of Street Trees is carried out by the Council, to whom any queries should be addressed. The aim is to maintain a healthy tree stock for future generations, achieved by succession planting.

The Council policy is that trees should not be removed unless they are:

- causing structural damage to a house and pruning is unlikely to halt the damage
- causing a hazard to highway users.

The interpretation of this policy should take into account Conservation Area designation and the contribution the existing tree makes to the character of the area. For example, there are several cases where the original layout of the Laing estate was modified by the original designers, to

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enable the preservation of an old tree and its incorporation into the street scene. In such a case, a tree should not be removed unless necessary because of its health. In an appropriate case the trunk of a dead tree may be preserved, in other circumstances the tree may be replaced with a similar species mature or semi-mature tree.

4.7 Protection of the street scene

The Laing Estate retains a number of characterful interesting traditional street scene features. Although mainly not subject to planning control, these are nevertheless an important part of the character of this particular Conservation Area. Their preservation is recommended and this is in line with the criteria set out in government policy for Conservation Areas (PPG 15 section 4). Every effort should be made to preserve these in situ by repair and reuse – they should be retained to protect the character of the street even when no longer required.

The street scene features worthy of conservation include:

- telegraph poles;
- pillar boxes;
- cast iron vent pipes; and
- posts
- road name boards
- electricity junction boxes

5. Contacts and further advice

For conservation and design advice please contact:

The Planning Policy Team
Royal Borough of Greenwich
The Woolwich Centre
Wellington Street
London SE18 6HQ
Tel: 020 8854 5355/5034

For advice on planning issues such as planning permission please contact:

Development Planning Team (East)
Royal Borough of Greenwich
The Woolwich Centre
Wellington Street
London SE18 6HQ
Tel: 020 8921 5019/5782

29 May 2013