



**Main Avenue**

**MOOR PARK CONSERVATION AREA  
APPRAISAL  
(October 2006)**

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## **1.0 Introduction**

It is the duty of the Local Authorities, under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, to determine areas of special architectural or historic interest, the character of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance, and designate them as conservation areas.

Once designated, Councils are further obliged to formulate and publish proposals for the preservation and enhancement of the conservation area.

The Moor Park Conservation Area was designated on the 18<sup>th</sup> May 1995. (See Map 1: Conservation Area Existing Boundary). In 2004, in recognition of threats to the character of the area, an Article 4 Direction withdrawing permitted development rights in respect of means of enclosure, hardstanding and rooflights, was made by the Council and approved by the Secretary of State in January 2005.

### **1.1 Planning Policy Context**

Policies which seek the preservation and enhancement of listed buildings, locally listed buildings, conservation areas and archaeology are set out in the Three Rivers Local Plan 1996 – 2011.

This document should be read in conjunction with national planning policy guidance, particularly Planning Policy Guidance Note 15 (PPG15) – Planning and the Historic Environment. The content also reflects guidance produced by English Heritage.

### **1.2 The Status of this Document**

This document was approved by the Executive Committee of the Council on 27 November 2006, as a material consideration in the determination of planning applications and as a basis for developing initiatives to preserve and/or enhance the Moor Park Conservation Area. This document is an updated version of the draft Moor Park Supplementary Planning Guidance document which was approved by the Executive Committee for consultation in 2003, which was a revised version of the original SPG which was approved in 1995.

The Moor Park Conservation Area Appraisal has been subject to public consultation between July and October 2006. All residential and business occupiers of the conservation area were consulted. Amendments were made in response to representations received and through discussions and correspondence with Moor Park (1958) Ltd, the estate company for Moor Park.

The Council therefore considers that it has due weight for the purpose of planning appeals against the refusal of permission for planning applications.

The document should be read in conjunction with policies contained in the Three Rivers Local Plan 1996 – 2011.

It is intended that the document will, in due course, be adopted as a Supplementary Planning Document in conjunction with the emerging Local Development Framework.

## **2.0 Moor Park Conservation Area Assessment**

### **2.1 History of the Conservation Area**

The land upon which the Moor Park residential estate stands was historically part of the grounds attached to Moor Park Mansion.

Lord Leverhulme, who purchased the mansion and estate in 1919, converted the main house and grounds to a golf and country club. The original Estate Company, Moor Park Ltd, started the development of 288 acres in 1922 and the development spread south and west from Sandy Lodge Halt (now Moor Park Station) until the outbreak of war in 1939.



Moor Park Mansion

Once the war time restrictions on building materials were removed in 1954, development along the original lines continued. The Estate Company was wound up in 1958, and superseded by the current management company, Moor Park (1958) Ltd.

Moor Park (1958) Ltd is operated by residents to maintain the private roads, verges and open spaces within the conservation area. The management company is also responsible for enforcing certain restrictive covenants.

Restrictive covenants may be included in the deeds of properties within the conservation area and may limit and/or restrict some uses of the property. These restrictions are not planning issues that can be enforced by the Council. All applicants for development should consult Moor Park (1958) Ltd to ascertain which covenants, if any, apply to their property.

### **2.2 Location and Setting**

The Moor Park Conservation Area (See Map 1: Conservation Area – Existing Boundary) is located south-east of Rickmansworth town centre and is



surrounded on three sides by countryside which is designated Green Belt. It is almost wholly residential in character, comprising mainly detached houses. Adjacent to the railway station and fronting Main Avenue, there is a small shopping parade and some flats.

Adjoining, but outside, the conservation area, are the old Roman remains around Bathend Clump.

The site occupied by Northwood Preparatory School, also adjoining but outside the conservation area, was originally the site of the Manor of the More with many historical and royal connections going back to the 11<sup>th</sup> century. From the 17<sup>th</sup> Century it was rebuilt as a farm before being occupied as a school in 1980. Many of the former barns and outbuildings now used as classrooms are Grade II listed.

Merchant Taylors School, Sandy Lodge and Moor Park Golf courses form part of the open land bounding the conservation area.

### **2.3 Summary of the Character and Appearance of the Conservation Area**

The special architectural and historic interest that justifies designation of the Conservation Area derives from the following features:

- Houses built in the 1920s/1930s – 1950s and set back in spacious surroundings
- Many beautiful trees set around wide avenues
- Spectacular views along tree lined roads
- Open frontages separating gardens from the estate road verges
- Grass verges and shingle paths
- Attractive roads in differing scales
- Many characteristic original features including chimneys



**Original 1930s chimney in Wolsey Road**

The existing development has a special visual quality created by large houses situated on individual plots along wide streets with high quality landscaping. The layout is characterised in some areas by open frontages, low walls or hedges separating gardens from the estate road verges, which was a feature of the original design. Existing trees make a special contribution to the character of the area.

## 2.4 Architectural and Historic Character

The conservation area has a character and appearance deriving from low density “Metroland” development planned on a comprehensive scale in the 1930s. The characteristic building form within the conservation area is of detached two – storey houses with pitched roofs.

It is recognised that there has been a change in character in Astons Road (the section closest to Batchworth Lane) as a result of recent redevelopment on particularly large plots. This is not regarded as appropriate elsewhere on the estate and indeed the more modest plots would preclude it.

## 2.5 Landscape

Trees are integral to the character of the conservation area. There are many splendid trees throughout which add positively to the special qualities of the area. Many important trees are protected by Tree Preservation Orders. (See Map 2: Conservation Area – Protected Trees).



Trees Along Main Avenue

The landscape qualities of the conservation area are of huge significance. The open and generous landscaping adds greatly to the special architectural character of the area by enhancing the architectural clean lines and enhancing the overall sense of space.





View along Wolsey Road from South Approach (South out of Conservation Area)

There are important views throughout the conservation area and particularly over the open landscape around the adjacent golf clubs. (See Map 3: Conservation Area – Important Views). Key views and vistas include:

- Looking east, west, south and north along Batchworth Lane
- Looking north and south along the railway line from South Approach and adjacent roads
- All views towards Moor Park Mansion, especially around Temple Gardens.
- Views north from Sandy Lodge Lane over Hampermill Lakes and the Colne Valley
- Views from Askew Road across the playing fields to Merchant Taylor's School





Pembroke Road/Wolsey Road Junction Looking East

## **2.6 Important Open Areas and Spaces**

These have not been identified on the accompanying appraisal map. It has not been possible to identify every important open area and lack of a specific reference does not imply that it is not of value.

## **2.7 Buildings that Make a Positive Contribution to the Conservation Area**

These buildings will be examples of relatively unaltered buildings where their style, detailing and building materials are characteristic of the conservation area. Occasionally, more "individual" buildings of particular style or materials would also be considered to make a positive contribution.

## **3.0 Criteria for Development**

### **3.1 Demolition**

Conservation Area Consent is needed for the demolition of buildings and in some cases for the demolition of parts of buildings. (Including chimneys).

The Council will give high priority to retaining buildings which make a positive contribution to the character or appearance of a Conservation Area. As a guide, the Council will seek the retention of buildings on the estate erected up to 1958 when the original estate company was wound up.

Any one of the nine criteria/characteristics listed in the Three Rivers Local Plan 1996 – 2011 (Demolition in Conservation Areas, Section 3.25, Page 50) may provide the basis for considering that a building makes a positive contribution.



Policy C.6 Demolition in Conservation Areas (Three Rivers Local Plan 1996 – 2011) states that proposals to demolish such buildings will only be permitted if the following criteria are met:

- The condition and cost of repairing the building outweigh the buildings importance and the value derived from its continued use (less weight will be given to the cost of repair where a building has been deliberately neglected).
- Adequate efforts have been made to retain the building in its present use or a compatible alternative use, including freehold sale at a realistic price on the open market.
- Exceptionally a proposed scheme benefits the community which outweighs preservation
- Any replacement building would preserve or enhance the Conservation Area.
- Consent for demolition (including demolition of a building which makes little or no contribution to a Conservation Area) will not be given unless there are detailed acceptable plans for redevelopment

If the reason for proposed demolition is the poor condition of the building, applications for Conservation Area Consent should be accompanied by a structural survey.

### **3.2 Flats**

Flatted development would normally be considered out of character with the conservation area and applications for the erection of flats and/or conversion to flats are unlikely to be acceptable.

### **3.3 Construction in Front of the Building Line**

To prevent the erosion of open street vistas, residential amenity and the appearance of a street, construction in front of the existing building line or existing building façade is unacceptable. This includes the construction of replacement garages and the erection of porches exceeding specified dimensions.

### **3.4 Building Frontage Width and Plot Coverage**

In order to maintain the spacious open character of the estate, avoid over development of plots, and prevent overshadowing and overlooking of nearby properties:

A minimum of 20% of the site frontage at existing building lines must be kept clear of all development along the entire flank elevations, subject to a distance of not less than 1.5m being kept clear between flank walls and plot

boundaries. Where a corner plot is involved the flank building line should generally be in excess of this figure, dependent on the particular site considerations and relationship with adjacent properties.

In cases where the width of existing buildings covers 80% or more of the plot width at the building line, further extension towards the boundaries (or upwards) will not be permitted.

Buildings, including all out buildings (garages, car ports etc), should not cover more than 15% of the plot area. The building cover includes any areas at first floor level which over hang the ground floor or any built areas at basement level where these extend beyond the ground floor.

The bulk and massing of large extensions or replacement houses will also be considered in terms of consistency with the characteristic building form of the Conservation Area.

Deep floor plans that entail substantial rearward projection at flank walls, tend to block oblique views of tree and garden back drops from the street past houses on the street frontage. Where this affects the spacious character of the conservation area and gives the impression of space between houses being reduced or gaps being closed up, deep floor plans are unlikely to be acceptable.

### **3.5 Permitted Development**

Certain small extensions (including small porches) may be “permitted development”, not requiring planning permission. This is only likely to apply to houses that have not previously been extended. Advice should be sought from the Planning Department on the need to obtain planning permission. Planning permission is required for any free standing building (eg garden shed, greenhouse, etc) in the curtilage of a dwelling if it exceeds a volume of 10 cubic metres. Acceptable extensions will need to be well designed and of a shape and form that is compatible with their setting.

### **3.6 Roofs**

Roof forms should be duo pitched as found throughout the conservation area. Deep floor plans are likely to make this difficult to achieve. Eaves and ridge heights of any new development should reflect the scale of neighbouring properties and the street scene. Proposals with a ridge materially taller than those of neighbouring houses are unlikely to be acceptable.

Flat roofs or flat sections to a pitched roof (eg truncating a roof with an artificial ridge surrounding an area of roof) reflect a form not in keeping with the traditional design of houses in Moor Park, and are therefore unacceptable.

Schemes for replacement houses or large extensions with deep floor plans or additional floors entailing large overall bulk, height or more complex roof



forms, are unlikely to be sympathetic with the character and appearance of the conservation area and are therefore unacceptable.

### **3.7 Dormer Windows**

Front dormer windows are only acceptable where they are a common/predominant feature of the street scene. Rear dormer windows are only allowed where they do not impair the privacy of neighbours.

Where acceptable, dormer windows, for good proportions and balance, should appear subservient to the roof, placed well down from the main ridge and should have smaller windows than the main fenestration (as a guide, not more than two thirds the latter's height and width).

### **3.8 Basements**

Applications for basement levels which are evident on street elevations are considered uncharacteristic of the conservation area and as such are unacceptable. Any application including a basement should be submitted with a Flood Risk Assessment which details the effect of the proposals on any existing underground water courses.

### **3.9 Restrictions Under Article 4 Direction**

The Moor Park Conservation Area Article 4 Direction was approved by the Secretary of State in January 2005. It removed the permitted development rights of all the properties in the conservation area in respect of rooflights, hardstanding, walls, gates, fences and any other means of enclosure.

Whilst all the properties in the conservation area are affected by the Article 4 Direction, some properties are excluded from one or more of the development categories. For example, the houses which already had rooflights installed to the front/side of the roof when the Direction was made have been excluded as the permitted development had already been exercised. Although excluded from the rooflight section, these properties would still need planning permission for hardstanding or walls/gates under the same Article 4 Direction.

A copy of the Moor Park Conservation Area Article 4 Direction with its appendix listing excluded properties can be found in Appendix 1.

### **3.10 Rooflights**

Planning permission is required for any proposal to construct a rooflight on the front or side elevation of main roofs. Rooflights are considered an incongruous feature of the conservation area and any proposed rooflight visible from the street are unlikely to be acceptable. Where used elsewhere, small, low profile rooflights are recommended.

### **3.11 Hardstanding**

Planning permission is required (apart from the excluded properties) for any proposal to increase hardstanding facing a road frontage (with the exception of those houses that have been excluded from this section of the Article 4 Direction, see Appendix 1).

Extensive hard surfacing will not be considered to be sympathetic to the open character of the frontages in the conservation area. Areas of hard standing between the front and side of a house and the road should be no more extensive than is reasonably necessary to park and turn vehicles. A "clover leaf layout" or similar will allow planting between the hardstanding and the road. In particular, single access drives rather than "in & out" drives should be employed. All applications for crossovers must be made to Hertfordshire Highways. Where a crossover would affect a private road, an additional application must be made to Moor Park (1958) Ltd.

### **3.12 Gates, Fences, Walls and other Enclosures**

Planning permission is required for the erection, construction, maintenance, improvement or alteration of a gate, fence, wall or any other means of enclosure (which exceeds one metre from ground level) to the front of properties in the conservation area (with the exception of the properties excluded from this section of the Article 4 Direction, see Appendix 1).

The open character of the frontages in the conservation area is one of its most pleasant features. The existing grass verges are of high landscape quality and have a positive visual influence. New crossovers or other breaks to these verges will generally not be encouraged. Planting and soft landscaping is characteristic and will be encouraged. Walls, metal gates and railings will not be considered to be sympathetic as these are likely to alter the area's appearance.

### **3.13 Trees**

Many trees on the estate are covered by Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs). In addition to these TPOs permission is needed to lop, top, or fell all the remaining substantial trees (defined as having a trunk diameter of 75mm or more at 1.5m above ground level) in the Conservation Area. The Council must be informed in writing of proposals to lop, top, or fell trees. No such work shall be undertaken until six weeks notice has been given to the Council which provides an opportunity for the making of a TPO should it be considered appropriate. If a tree is dead, dying or dangerous, emergency work may be carried out. As the onus is on the landowner to prove that the work was necessary, the owner is advised to consult the District Council in advance in such cases. (See Map 2: Conservation Area – Protected Trees).

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



### **3.14 Television Satellite Dishes**

Planning permission for the installation of satellite dishes will not be required provided that:

There will be no more than one dish on the building or in the garden

The dish does not exceed 90cm measured across any dimension of the antenna (excluding any projecting feed element, the reinforcing rim and supporting brackets).

If the dish is installed on a roof, it does not protrude above the highest part of the roof

The installation is not on a chimney stack, nor on the wall or roof slope fronting the road or public footpath.

### **4.0 The Extent of Intrusion or Damage to the Conservation Area**

Some modern large houses of dubious quality;

Some older houses of no quality (these could be identified individually in a later study);

New crossovers which have broken up verges

Extensive hardstanding, electronic gates/tall walls and front rooflights.

### **5.0 Opportunities for Enhancement.**

There is potential for further tree planting and soft landscaping as the existing deteriorates.

There are some good examples of houses with Townscape Merit within the Conservation Area. A future audit of the houses will identify properties which would be suitable for inclusion on the Council's Locally Important Buildings List.

Applications for Historic Building Grants can be made to Three Rivers District Council. This grant scheme is intended to promote the repair and restoration of privately owned properties. Work eligible for this grant includes repair to the structure of a building, for example brickwork, timber frame, roofs or windows and restoration of any historical feature. This grant is suitable for householders who are considering replacing any original windows. It should be noted that householders risk seriously devaluing their properties by removing the original features and that thermal efficiency and maintenance issues can be easily overcome.

## **6.0 Potential for New Development.**

There are no vacant sites in this area potential for large-scale development.

Schemes will be expected to preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the conservation area in line with Government advice and policies within the current Local Plan.

## **7.0 Applications for Development**

All future proposals for development shall be judged for their effect on the character, appearance and special interest of the conservation area as defined in this appraisal.

Design and Access Statements are also required for all applications within a Conservation Area.

Applications should be accompanied by an O.S. extract, a 1:500 scale plan of the plot, drawings showing both existing and proposed elevations, plans, and sections. Where appropriate, datum levels and roof heights should be indicated for both the proposed development and neighbouring properties. Materials should be specified. Plans of the building as existing as well as plans of what is proposed are required.

Any application for a basement must be accompanied by a Flood Risk Assessment. (See paragraph on Basements).

All applications should comply with the Council's policies on sustainability and environmental sustainability.