



**Executive**  
17 June 2013

**Report from the Director of  
Regeneration and Major Projects**

Wards affected:  
Barn Hill & Queens Park

**Adoption of Revised Planning Design Guides for Barn Hill  
Conservation Area and Queen's Park Conservation Area**

**1.0 Summary**

- 1.1 A review of Brent's Conservation Area Design Guides is being undertaken with the overall aim of producing up to date documents to give clear guidance primarily to residents on acceptable types of development. These documents have an important role in ensuring the special character of our conservation areas is preserved and where possible enhanced. Revised Planning Design Guides for Barn Hill Conservation Area and Queen's Park Conservation Area have been produced.
- 1.2 Following endorsement by the Planning Committee on 16 January 2013, public consultation commenced on 28 January 2013 (for 28 days) inviting local residents and Ward Councillors to comment on the revised Barn Hill Conservation Area and Queen's Park Conservation Area Design Guides. General support for the revised Design Guide is an important factor in how effective they are and in both areas there was discussion with the Residents Association on the content of the Guides before local consultation with all local residents was undertaken.
- 1.3 The Planning Committee on 17<sup>th</sup> April 2013 considered the consultation responses and the recommendations made to revise the documents where appropriate. The Committee endorsed these further changes and recommended that the final documents incorporating the recommended revisions be reported to Executive for adoption.

**2.0 Recommendations**

- 2.1 That the Executive agrees the adoption of the revised Planning Design Guides for the Barn Hill Conservation Area and the Queen's Park Conservation Area for development management purposes to guide the consideration of future planning applications in these areas.

### 3.0 Discussion

#### **Barn Hill Conservation Area Design Guide**

- 3.1 The current Barn Hill Conservation Area Design Guide was adopted in September 2002. Whilst the general approach to development remains unchanged, the updated document is intended to be more 'user friendly' and provide clearer advice on interpretation of the guidance as a whole.
- 3.2 The following are the key changes to the Design Guide:
- More detailed guidance on designing extensions which take into account the changes in ground levels characteristic of the Barn Hill Conservation Area;
  - More detailed guidance on terraces and raised patios to ensure they protect the privacy of neighbouring properties but also provide an acceptable design solution;
  - Guidance on basements which was not covered in the previous Design Guide;
  - Further detail regarding replacement windows including examples of the plans and level of detail required as part of a planning application to assist applicants and ensure acceptable replacement windows are provided.
- 3.3 On 16 January 2013, the Planning Committee gave their endorsement to consult publically on the draft Barn Hill Design Guide.
- 3.4 Letters were sent owner/occupiers in the Barn Hill Conservation Area on 28 January 2013 giving 28 days to comment on the draft Design Guide. A 'drop-in session' for residents was held at Brent Town Hall on 12 February 2013 to give residents an opportunity to discuss the proposals with Officers.
- 3.5 A total of 7 comments were received from residents in addition to the comments received from the Barn Hill Residents Association. Consideration was given to the responses with the following changes recommended:
- *Side extensions* – The existing Design Guide does not specifically refer to the erection of side extensions to properties where their side boundary adjoins the rear garden boundary of the neighbouring house. The draft Design Guide sought to provide clarification on this matter, setting out that a proposed side extension should be set in 2 metres from the adjacent boundary to preserve the character of the area. However, in view of the comments received, it was acknowledged that this would preclude many properties from building a side extension. As such, it was recommended to revise this guidance on the set in required to 1 metre;

- *Basement Extensions* – The existing Design Guide does not provide guidance on basement extensions. However, it is becoming more common that householders are looking to extend their property in this way and a new section in the draft Design Guide on basement extensions was introduced in order to demonstrate a consistent and uniform approach. Following consultation, it was recommended that the guide be revised to include the types of use for basement considered acceptable – i.e. not for habitable accommodation given that it is below ground level and likely to have reduced light and outlook;
- *Window & Door Replacement* – The illustration of a front door in the draft Design Guide did not reflect the design which would have been original to these properties. As such, it was recommended that drawing of door be updated to reflect the a door characteristic of the Barn Hill Conservation Area;
- *Burglar Alarms* – The draft Design Guide suggested a dark colour would be most appropriate for a burglar alarm box. However, it is acknowledged that they also need to be visible to act as a deterrent therefore this reference is to be removed;
- General corrections/ clarification/ typographical errors changed where considered appropriate.

3.6 On 17 April 2013, the Planning Committee gave their endorsement to incorporate the recommended revisions in the Barn Hill Design Guide and present the final document to the Executive Committee for adoption.

### **Queen's Park Conservation Area Design Guide**

3.5 Whilst there is a Queen's Park Conservation Area Design Guide, this has not been updated for many years and does not provide clear guidance for existing residents and those proposing to move into the area about all types of works that are generally accepted in planning terms.

3.7 The following are the key elements included in the Design Guide:

- Detailed guidance on extensions, in particular side infill extensions, to provide clarity of the design and scale that will be accepted;
- Guidance on basements which was not covered in the previous Design Guide and is an important issue in the area;
- Detailed guidance on replacement windows including examples of the plans and level of detail required as part of a planning application to assist applicants and ensure acceptable replacement windows are provided.

- 3.8 On 16 January 2013, the Planning Committee gave their endorsement to consult publically on the draft Queen's Park Design Guide.
- 3.9 Letters were sent owner/occupiers in the Queen's Park Conservation Area on 28 January 2013 giving 28 days to comment on the draft Design Guide. A 'drop-in session' for residents was held at Kilburn Library on 18 February 2013 to give residents an opportunity to discuss the proposals with Officers
- 3.10 A total of 20 comments were received from residents in addition to the comments received from the Queen's Park Residents Association (QPARA). Consideration was given to the responses with the following changes recommended:
- *Dormers, roof-lights and alterations to the roof* - The character of many roads in Queens Park comprise wider rear dormer windows than those generally permitted elsewhere in the borough, given that the original Design Guide allowed them at 2/3 width of the original roof slope. The draft Design Guide proposed to amend this guidance to restrict dormer windows to half of the width of the rear roof slope to reflect the guidance followed elsewhere in the borough. However, following public consultation, it was recommended to retain the guidance to allow 2/3 width rear dormer windows in Queen's Park Conservation Areas given that many properties already have wider dormer windows. This guidance is applicable apart from on wider properties where the half width guidance would still apply;
  - *Rear extensions* - The Council in the past has sought to restrict side infill extensions on character grounds, but more recently the established practice has been to allow them subject to certain criteria. One of these criteria relates to a reduction in height of the addition on the joint boundary to minimise impact on neighbouring amenity. Following public consultation, it was recommended that further clarification be provided to confirm that this limitation would not be relevant in the event of a joint application with the neighbouring property being submitted as the amenity impacts would not be apparent;
  - *Basement Extensions* - The guidance set out in the draft Design Guide has been developed to in accordance with the design approach adopted on recent planning applications for basements in the area. As far as front light wells are concerned, the issue relates to their impact on the character and appearance of the area. Following public consultation, it was recommended that reference to an "unavoidable" light well should be changed to indicate that any changes to the front of the building must be minimised. In addition, given concern regarding impacts on neighbouring properties during/post construction, it was recommended that the Design Guide be revised to include reference to

the Party Wall Act 1996 as well as setting out the requirement to sign up to the Considerate Contractors Scheme. Separately, work is being carried out on basements to propose additional planning application validation requirements which will be implemented borough wide, comprising submission of proposed construction and build methodology at application stage;

- *Window Repair and Replacement* - It is agreed that the examples in the draft Design Guide are not consistent with what can be found in Queens Park Conservation Area. As such, following consultation, it was recommended to delete graphics and also make it clear that for some properties critchall windows are still available;
- *Front gardens, walls & boundaries* - The responses received during public consultation illustrate the range of views that exist on certain aspects of the guidance. The adopted guidance seeks to encourage residents to think about the way that the space to the front of their houses are treated, but it would be unlikely that the Council would wish to become involved in pursuing any party for example a hedge that might have grown too high as these are private law rights that would need to be enforced against the relevant parties. As such, it was recommended to revise the text to make it clear that the height of the hedge is not an absolute restriction but guidance. It was also recommended to include reference to defensive planting.
- *Trees* - Street trees are not mentioned in the draft Design Guide. They are an important element of Queen's Park Conservation Area. The Council is now better at planting species that are less damaging to roads and pavements and residents should therefore not cause damage or seek to remove street trees. It was recommended to revise the guidance to include reference to the importance of street trees;
- *Roofs and Chimneys* - The approach adopted in the past has been to allow the change to either the top section of the front gable or the bottom section (but not all of it) to preserve the original character. It was recommended to update the guidance to provide clarification on the established approach;
- *Burglar Alarms* – This matter is not covered in the original Design Guide. It is considered that guidance on this issue should be included;
- *Security grills* – The installation of security grills would not be allowed on the front of any building. It was recommended that this should be set out in the Design Guide.
- *Drop Kerbs* - Where any kerbs are no longer needed they should be made good and removed to the satisfaction of the Council as Highway Authority. It was recommended that this should be set out in the Design Guide.

- General corrections/ clarification/ typographical errors changed where considered appropriate.

3.4 On 17 April 2013, the Planning Committee gave their endorsement to incorporate the recommended revisions in the Queen's Park Design Guide and present the final document to the Executive Committee for adoption.

#### **4.0 Financial Implications**

4.1 The guides are intended to provide more detailed guidance for residents, giving a greater level of certainty as to whether works are likely to be acceptable. This may help reduce the expense for residents of submitting multiple applications in order to gain an approval.

#### **5.0 Legal Implications**

5.1 If formally adopted by the Executive Committee, the documents will replace the existing Design Guides and carry significant weight when determining planning applications on a case by case basis.

#### **6.0 Diversity Implications**

6.1 It is not the intention to prevent people carrying out improvement works to their homes but to ensure that the works are appropriate in the context of the conservation area designation.

#### **7.0 Staffing/Accommodation Implications**

7.1 The updated documents are intended to be more 'user friendly' and may reduce the level of input required from officers both at pre-application stage and during the course of the application though seeking revisions.

#### **8.0 Environmental Implications**

8.1 The aim of these documents is to ensure development preserves and where possible enhances the character of the area.

#### **9.0 Background Papers**

##### *Existing Design Guides*

Barn Hill Conservation Area Design Guide (2002):

<http://www.brent.gov.uk/media/194871/Barn%20Hill%20conservation%20area%20design%20guide.pdf>

Queen's Park Conservation Area Design Guide:

<http://www.brent.gov.uk/media/2690322/Queens%20Park%20CA%20Design%20Guide.pdf>

*16 January 2013 Planning Committee Agenda, Decisions & Minutes:*

<http://democracy.brent.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=115&MId=1895&Ver=4>

*17 April 2013 Planning Committee Agenda, Decisions & Minutes:*

<http://democracy.brent.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=115&MId=1824&Ver=4>

## **10.0 Appendices**

Appendix 1: Revised Planning Design Guide for Barn Hill Conservation Area

Appendix 2: Revised Planning Design Guide for Queen's Park Conservation Area

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