

Northwick Circle Conservation Area Boundary Review

Consultation draft



REV 1

01.2024

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1 INTRODUCTION

Introduction

Purpose of this document

- 1.1 The London Borough of Brent is currently undertaking a review of its conservation area boundaries.
- 1.2 A statutory requirement under Section 69(2) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 directs local planning authorities to review their conservation areas from time to time. A review was also recommended by Brent's Historic Environment Place-making Strategy, May 2019.
- 1.3 The conservation of the historic environment is the process of managing the changes that will take place in an area in a way which best sustains its historic value for the present and future generations as well as for regeneration and place-making.
- 1.4 Without an understanding of what are sometimes subtle qualities of an area, its local distinctiveness and character may be easily lost. The assessment and identification of Brent's heritage for conservation areas is undertaken by the use of character appraisals.
- 1.5 Historic England's good practice guidance, Advice Note 1, Conservation Area Appraisal, Designation and Management (2019) recommends that, as part of any appraisal, conservation areas are re-assessed to establish whether their boundaries are still appropriate. If the conservation area no longer reflects the special historic and architectural interest of the area as a whole, it is recommended that it be removed.
- 1.6 This conservation area appraisal report therefore re-assesses the special historic and architectural interest of the Northwick Circle Conservation Area and considers whether its boundary is still appropriate.
- 1.7 The appraisal sets out whether the area really merited designation in the first place and whether the architectural and historic interests and their importance remains.
- 1.8 It considers individual properties in the area and evaluates whether they still merit designation as part of an overall ensemble. It also considers if the area has been so eroded by piecemeal development that parts or all the area has lost special interest.

Introduction




Why is the boundary of the conservation area being reviewed?

- 1.9 A review of the boundary to the Northwick Circle Conservation Area was recommended in Brent's Historic Environment Place-making Strategy 2019.
- 1.10 A survey was undertaken of the area as part of the Strategy. It evidenced that parts of the conservation area remain distinct and identifiable as special, particularly around the Northwick Circle. It has large and impressive detached and semi-detached houses of interesting designs based on a stylised Arts and Crafts interpretation of medieval architecture. They have a particular quality about them. Views from the Circle to the Hindu Swaminarayan Temple form a significant vista.
- 1.11 However, some of the roads stretching out from the Circle have houses which are of lesser interest and have been

altered by unsympathetic extensions. These roads were included as part of the wider setting for the central Circle and to protect views. As a result, the architectural quality of these peripheral houses are more marginal and are less intact.

- 1.12 The Strategy advised that a review of the boundary was necessary to ensure these additional properties and streets really were noteworthy and significant enough to form a cohesive whole as reinforcement to the Circle.

KEY

-  Area under consideration for de-designation
-  Current conservation area
- 

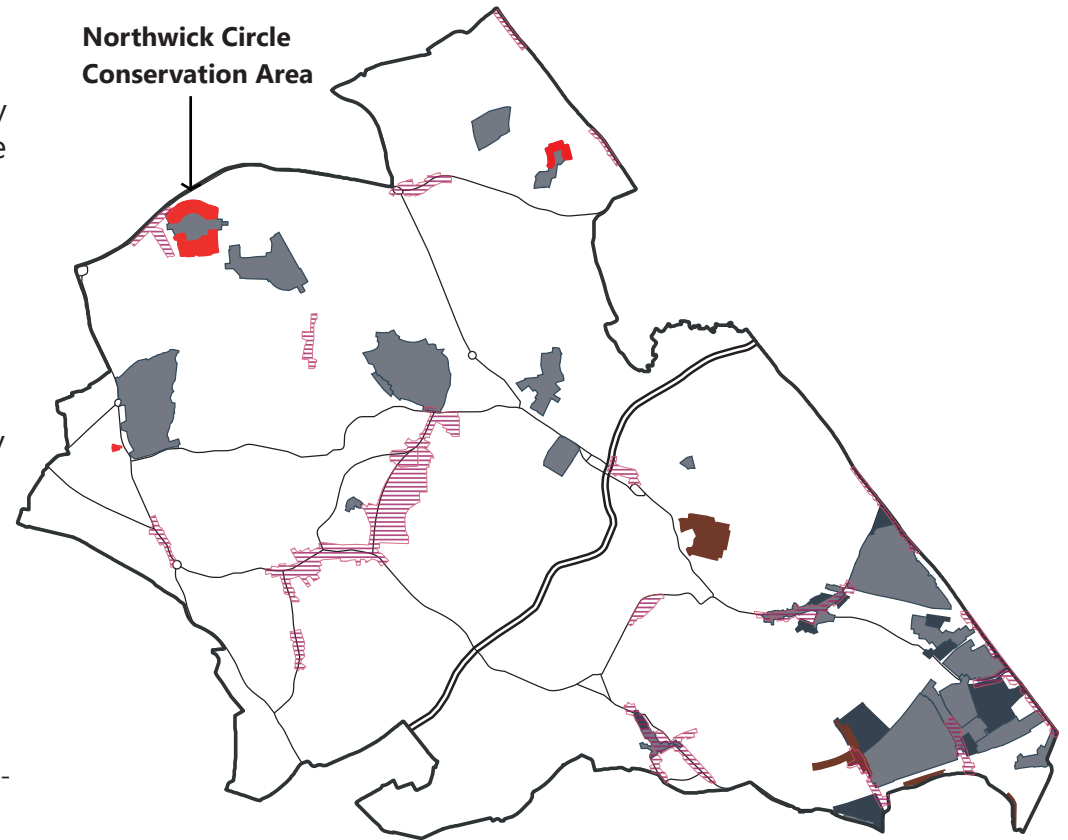


Figure 1: Conservation Area designations in borough context

Introduction

What is a conservation area?

- 1.13 Conservation Areas were first introduced into legislation under the Civic Amenities Act of 1967 to protect the wider historic environment. Section 69 Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 defines a conservation area as an: 'area of special architectural or historic interest, the character and appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance'.
- 1.14 However, paragraph 191 of the NPPF explains that when considering the designation of conservation areas, local planning authorities should ensure that an area justifies such status because of its special architectural or historic interest, and that the concept of conservation is not devalued through the designation of areas that lack special interest.
- 1.15 Conservation area designation therefore needs to be carefully considered. It is the protection of the intactness, quality and special interest of the neighbourhood or area as a whole that is intended, rather than specific buildings.
- 1.16 For example, the characteristic building design and materials of the area, the mix of different uses, and the design of shopfronts may all be taken into account when deciding whether an area has a particular special architectural or historic interest. It also includes the street layout, boundaries, vistas and viewpoints, trees and green features.

Introduction

What does it mean if your property is within a conservation area?

1.17 Designation results in greater control over the demolition of buildings and the size and design of extensions.

1.18 This means that the Council gains additional planning control compared with areas that are not designated which, in turn, allows for the greater retention of characteristics and features that make a place special and unique.

1.19 Therefore, the following works need planning permission in a conservation area:

- the installation of satellite dishes and antennae;
- the demolition or erection of walls, gates and fences over 1m in height adjacent to a public highway; and
- works to trees.
- cladding the exterior of a house;
- any side extensions or rear extensions of more than one storey;
- alterations to roofs, including dormers;

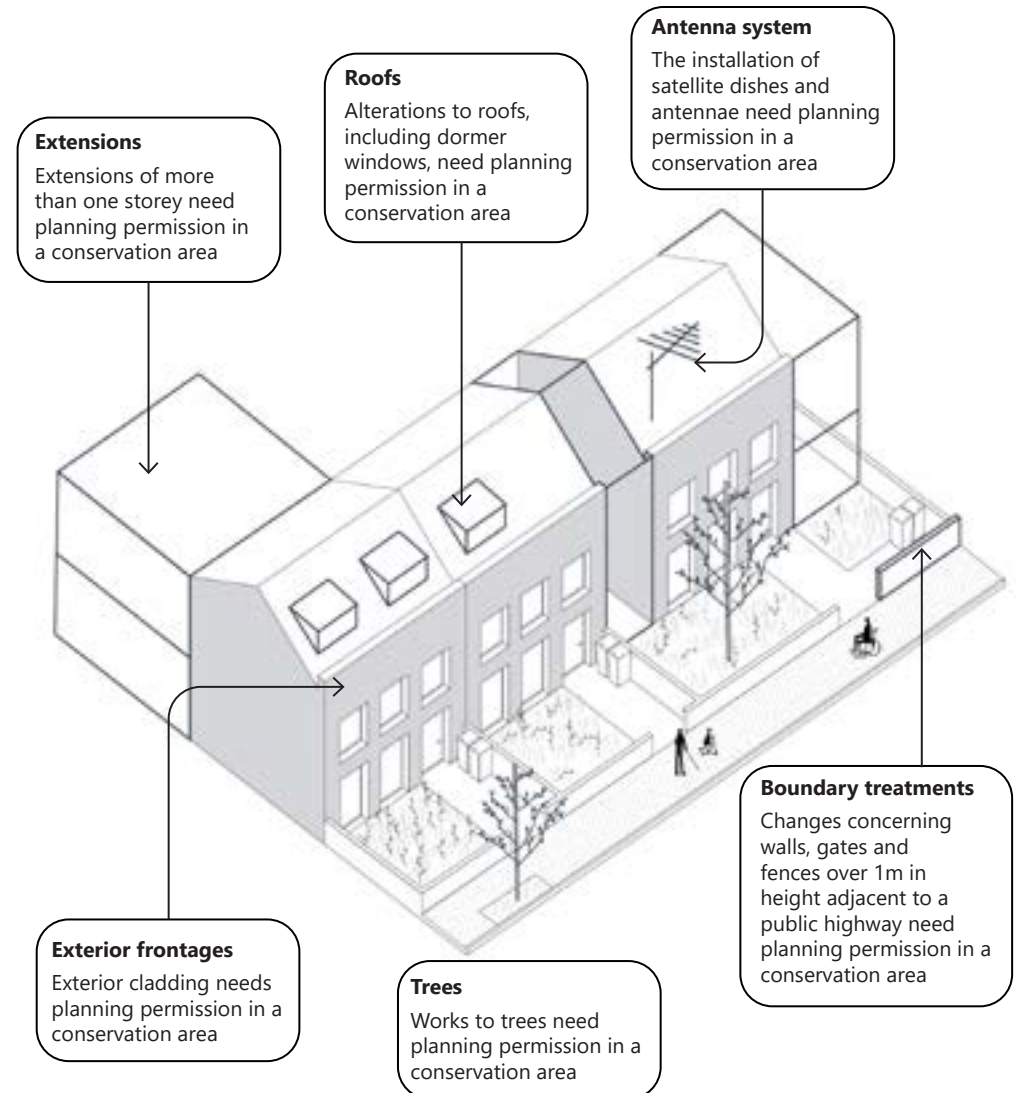


Figure 2: Conservation area designation can preserve attractive property features including the above

Introduction

Article 4 Directions

1.20 An Article 4 Direction is a special control which gives extra protection to a conservation area by removing some of the owner's permitted development rights. The Northwick Circle Conservation Area has such Directions in place. These relate to works such as:

- changing windows and doors to the front elevation;
- painting the front of the house;
- paving over the front garden;
- removing or building front garden walls;
- replacement roof tiles;
- removal of chimneys; and
- erecting sheds and outbuildings in rear gardens.

1.21 Should the conservation area boundary be altered, the article 4 Directions will remain in place for the designated area only.

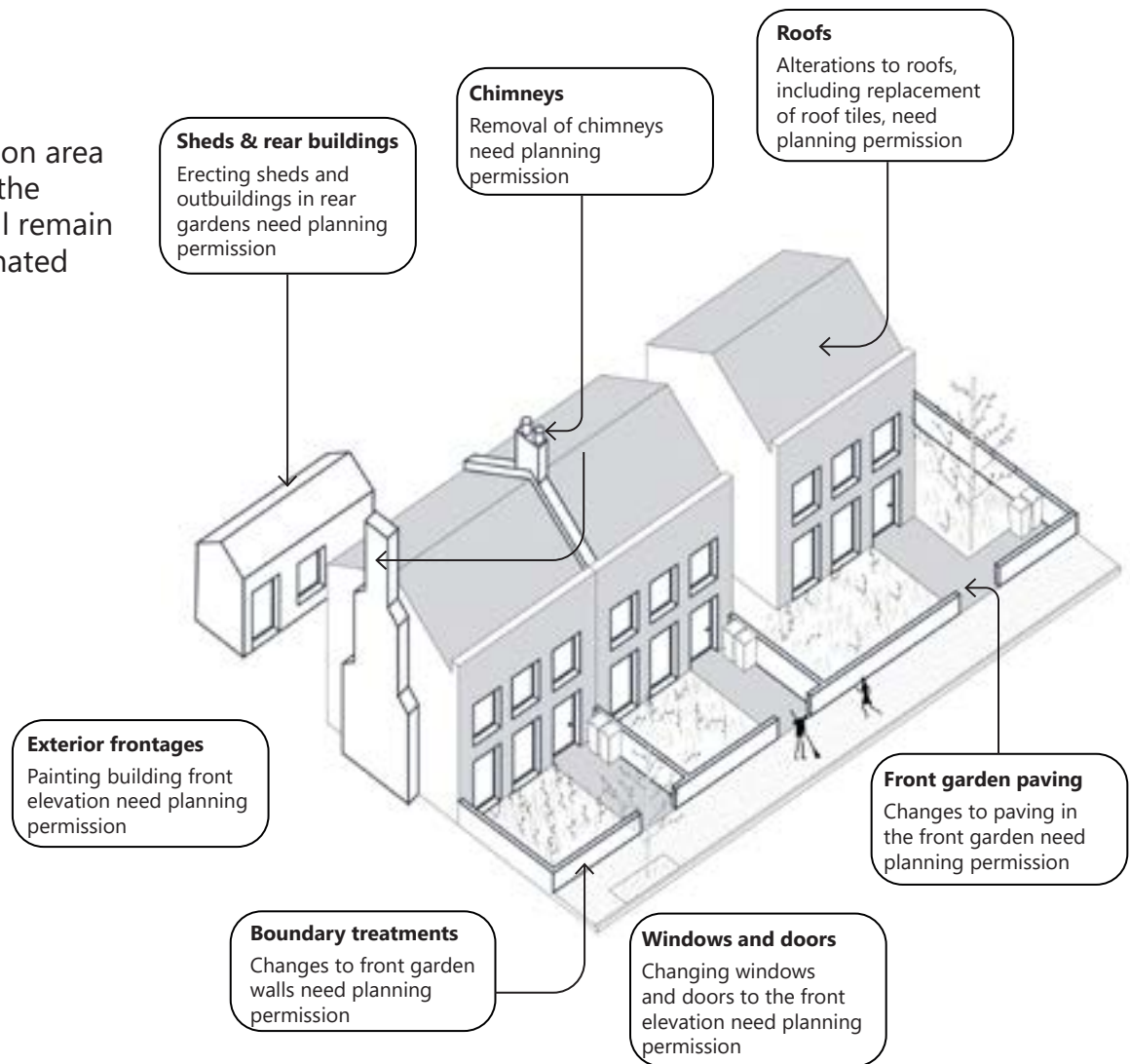


Figure 3: Property features that are included by the Article 4 Directions

2

NORTHWICK CIRCLE CONSERVATION AREA

Northwick Circle Conservation Area

Location and context

1.22 The Northwick Circle Conservation Area sits within the large suburban dormitory of northwest London and is surrounded by many similar developments from the late 1920s through to the end of the 1930s.

1.23 The estate was developed on agricultural land and the layout was not influenced by any existing roads or geographical features. The conservation area falls gently from the northwest to southeast with a relatively flat area within the Northwick Circle. This relatively flat topographical character means that perambulations around the roads and avenues reveal views down roads.

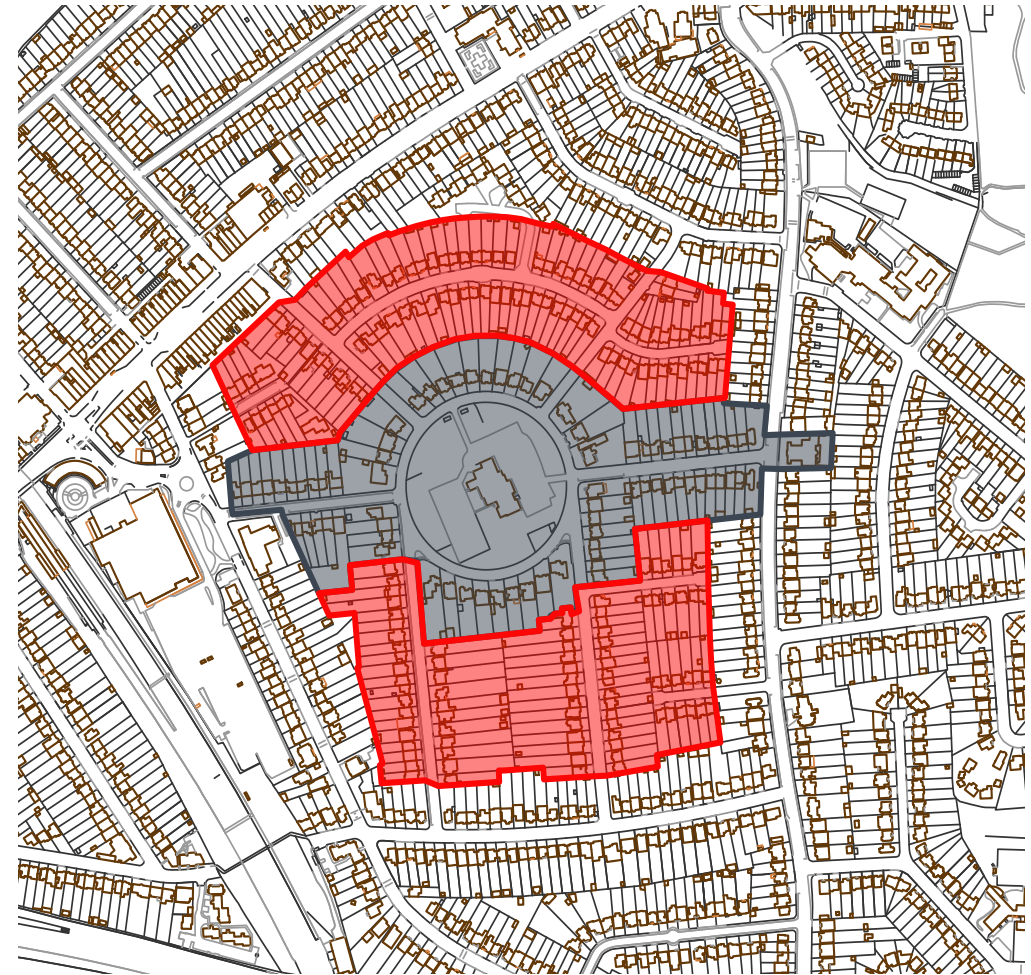
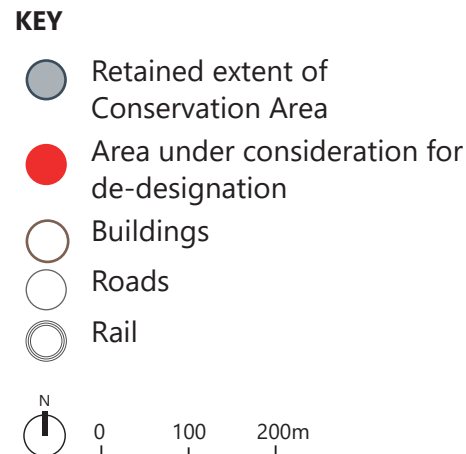


Figure 4: Location plan of Northwick Circle Conservation Area




Northwick Circle Conservation Area

What is significant about the Northwick Circle Conservation Area?

- 1.24 The Northwick Circle Conservation Area was originally designated in January 1989.
- 1.25 The conservation area is a planned residential estate, which is part of suburban Kenton. What sets it apart and makes it 'special' and significant is the distinctive and singular character of inter-relationship of buildings and open space. The circle is the defining feature of the Conservation area and remains to this day the principle contributor to the open and expansive rural character not found in other contemporary suburban developments within the Borough.

- 1.26 The area was largely developed in the period 1924-1937 and planned on a geometric street layout which was focused on the large open recreation space that is now the Circle. The estate as a whole constitutes an attractive suburban area characterised by various compositions of stylised medieval houses within large garden plots that maintain and define the separate nature of individual homes.

KEY

-  Area under consideration for de-designation
-  Retained extent of Northwick Circle Conservation Area
-  Ward boundary

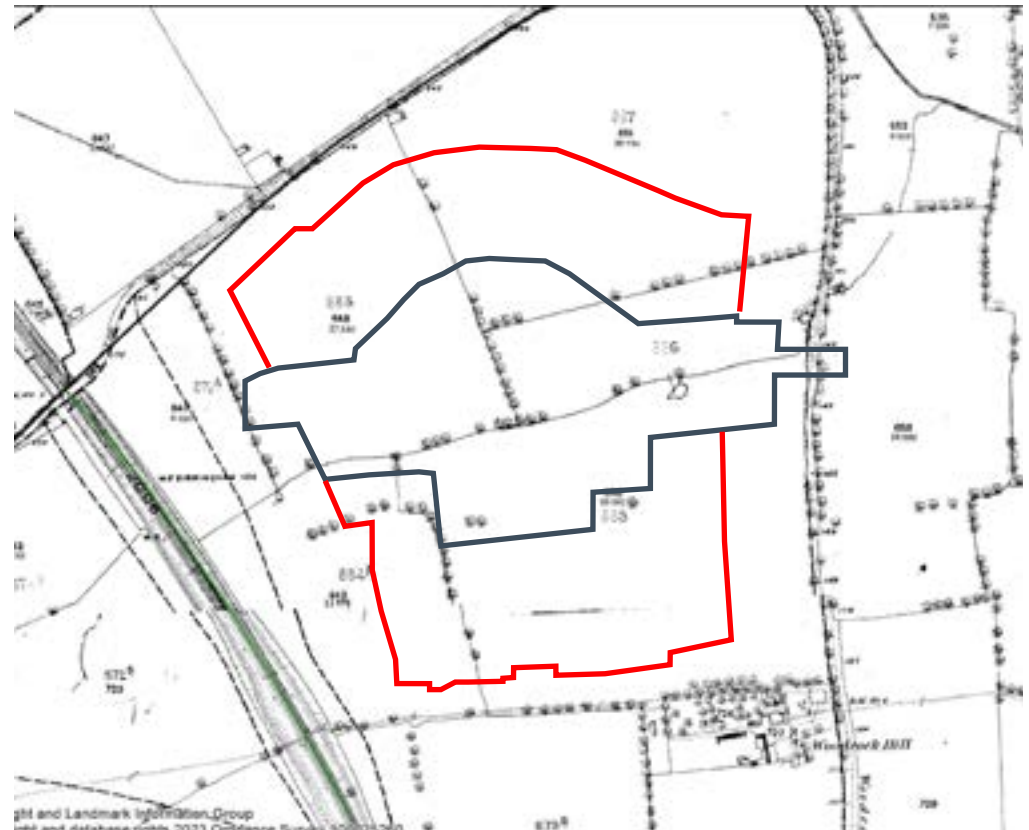


Figure 5: OS Map (1864)




Northwick Circle Conservation Area

Historical development

1.27 Kenton and its immediate surroundings lay in the Manor of Harrow held for many years by the Lords Northwick until the death of the 3rd Lord in 1887. His widow survived until 1912 and her son-in-law, the fifth son of the sixth Duke of Marlborough died in 1911. It was her grandson, Captain Edward George Spencer-Churchill (1876-1964), a first cousin of Sir Winston Churchill, who became Lord of Harrow Manor in 1912. Unfortunately, at the time of his investiture he was left with two sets of death duties to pay.

1.28 Perhaps with this financial commitment in mind and the 1912 opening of Kenton railway Station, Spencer-Churchill proposed a development of substantial exclusive houses around the established Northwick Park Tennis and Social Club. The club had been established in five-acres of grounds and operated as a sports and social centre until 1953 when the Harrow District Masonic Council occupied the substantial clubhouse.

KEY

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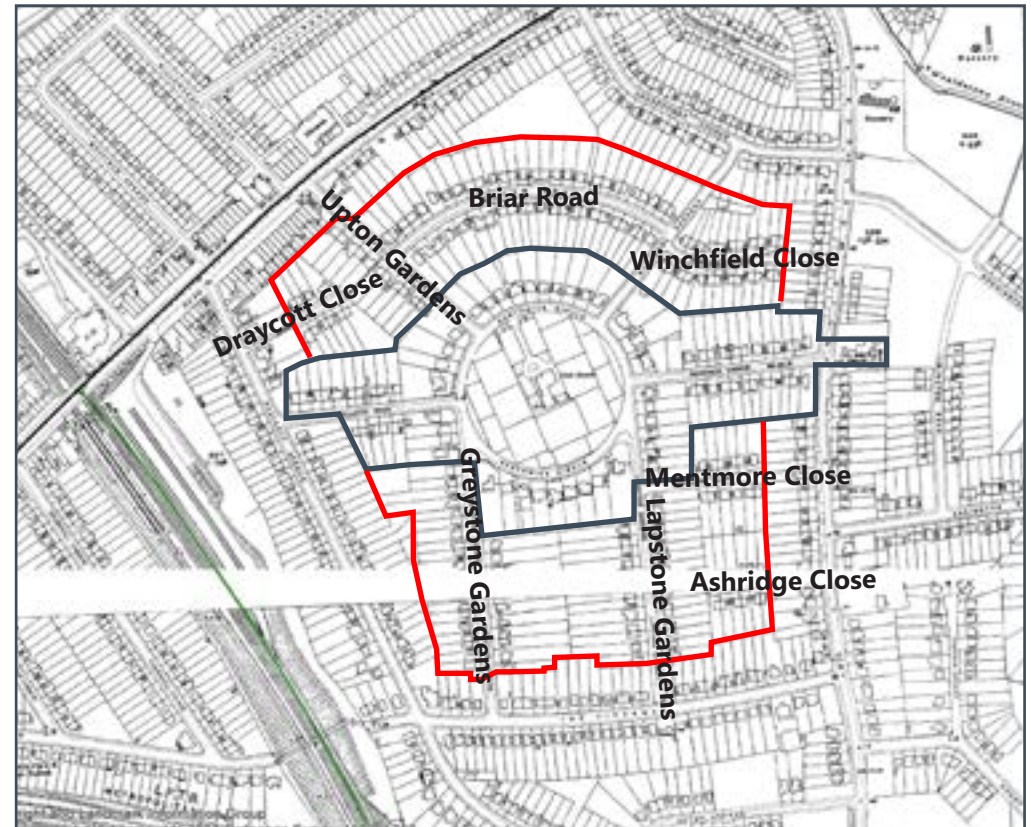


Figure 6: OS Map (1935)

Northwick Circle Conservation Area

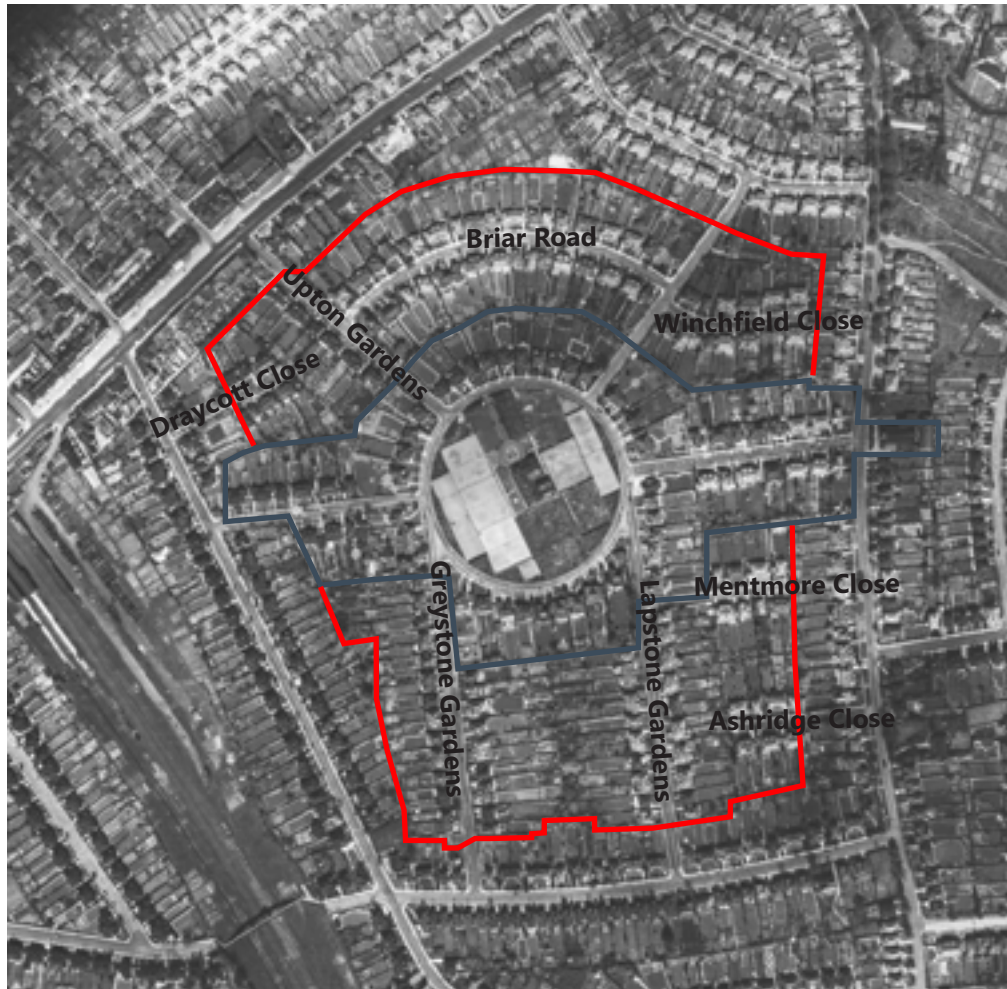


Figure 7: Areal view of the area, (1947)



Figure 8: Areal view of the area now (2015)

Northwick Circle Conservation Area

Historical development

- 1.29 The First World War not only delayed construction work, but also changed the expected clientele. The early 1920s saw the rise of middle-class families seeking homes of their own in attractive semi-rural surroundings. Captain Spencer Churchill saw the opportunity to satisfy the aspirations of the rising middle class and saw this part of Kenton as a chance to pay some of his crippling bills.
- 1.30 The contractor R.H. Powis laid out the streets in 1923, the same year that the Northwick Park Station was opened on the Metropolitan Railway. Initially the construction of the estate was divided between a number of builders including Messrs Cramb Bros. of Finchley. The Cramb brothers started by laying out building the houses on what is now Wellacre Road between 1923-25. At the same time construction started on Northwick Circle and by the end of 1925 work to Briar, Greystone and Lapstone Roads was well advanced.

- 1.31 However, because of their superior designs and workmanship F & C Costin became the sole developers of the Northwick Park Estate. Using various versions of a basic plan form and elevational theme Costins began to fill Spencer-Churchill's estate layout. The road names of the relatively broad leafy streets – Lapstone, Upton, Wellacre etc. – were taken from villages close to Spencer Churchill's country seats at Northwick Park, Blockley and Gloucester.
- 1.32 A second set of designs approved by Wembley Urban District Council in 1927 enabled Costins building programme to extend on from 1928 into 1930 and were still completing houses up until 1932. In Costins brochures for the estate, they refer to the construction of detached 'mock-Tudor houses generously treated with garden space'.



Figure 9: F & C Costin Metroland building typologies

Northwick Circle Conservation Area

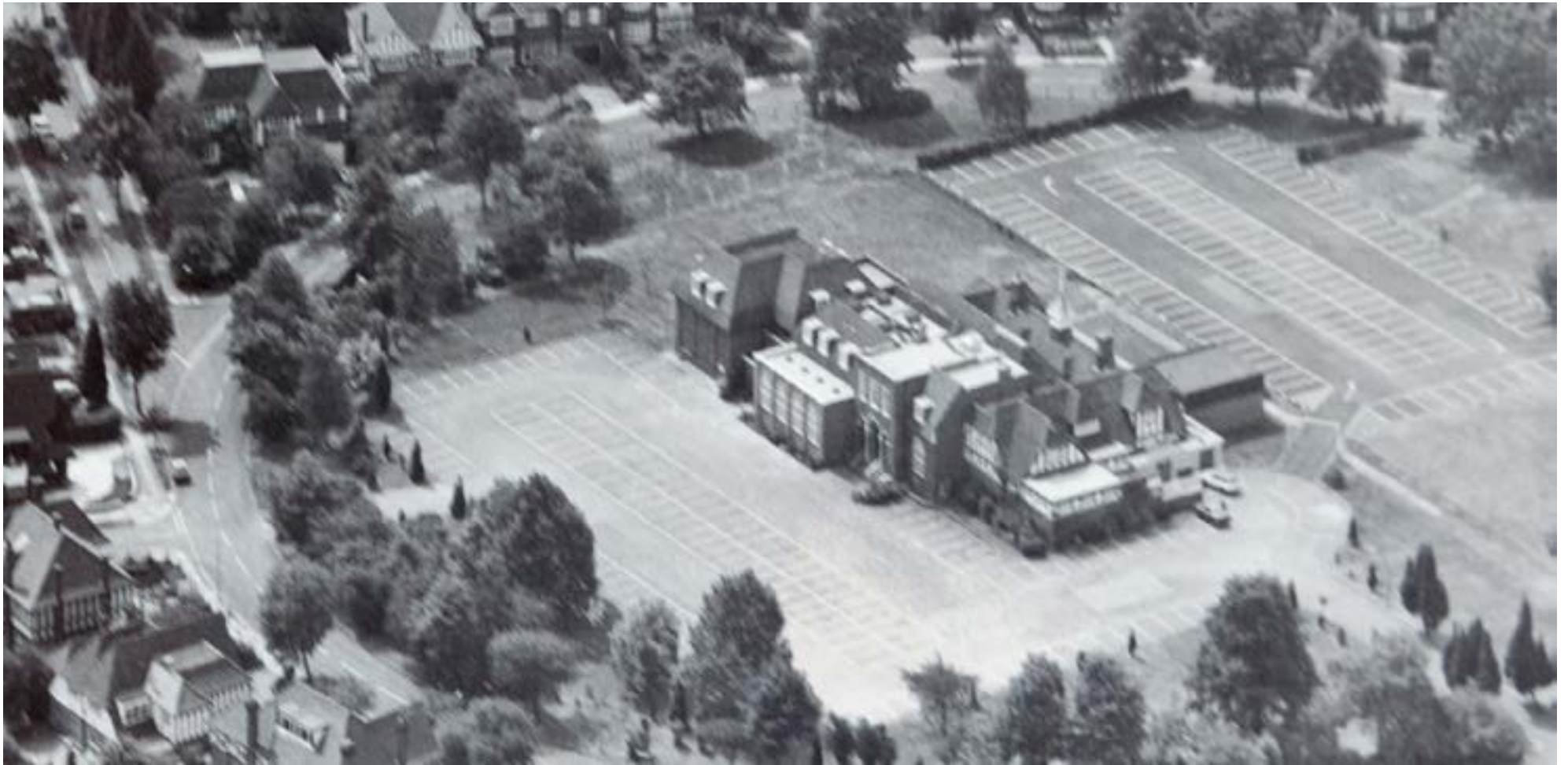


Figure 10: Northwick Circle Clubhouse (1950s)

3

REVIEWING THE BOUNDARY OF THE NORTHWICK CIRCLE CONSERVATION AREA

Reviewing the boundary of the Northwick Circle Conservation Area

Current boundary

- 1.33 The conservation area boundary [Figure 4] has not changed since the Northwick Circle Conservation Area was originally designated in 1989 and slightly amended in 1993.
- 1.34 When the original Northwick Circle Conservation Area was envisaged (owing to pressure of redevelopment in the area) it was only the properties around the Circle that were to be designated. The designation would have also included a few roads off including Dovedale Avenue and the Hindu Swaminarayan Temple on Woodcock Hill.
- 1.35 However, following consultation with residents, the original boundary area around Northwick Circle was subsequently revised and extended to include the radial streets such as Greystone, Lapstone, Norcombe and Upton Gardens. This was because the roads were

considered to provide a wider setting for the central 'Circle'. It was felt that the extended boundary area provided a broader context and directed and protected views into and out of the area whilst forming a coherent boundary to a readily definable area.

Areas for review

- 1.36 The Northwick Circle Conservation Area was designated over 30 years ago. It is acknowledged that the substantial houses on the Circle as well as the Masonic Centre and the Hindu Swaminarayan Temple are of special architectural significance. The area still represents the most impressive part of Captain Edward George Spencer-Churchill's town-planned estate developed into a residential suburb employing mock-Tudor designs.
 - roads were only included as a buffer to the Circle and is therefore appropriate to consider whether they should remain designated.
- 1.37 However, some of the roads off the Circle have properties that have limited special architectural or historic interest and do not contribute to the character and appearance and thus to its significance. Many have also been altered with inappropriate windows and doors and their front gardens paved over for parking. These
- 1.38 A more concise boundary was recommended in the Historic Environment Place-making Strategy 2019.

Approach

- 1.39 An initial site visit was undertaken in July 2021 and a further visit in January 2023. Previous visits were undertaken to assess the area throughout 2018 and 2019 in preparation for the Historic Environment Place-making Strategy.
- 1.40 A review was undertaken using the methodology in Historic England's advice note on Conservation Area Appraisal, Designation and Management (2019). The Heritage Officer looked at the merits of the roads on the boundary and assessed them for their special architectural and historic significance. This determined that
- 1.41 The de-designation of any conservation area/or part must be read in conjunction with section 69 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. Section 69 requires areas to be designated as conservation areas if they are assessed, as

Northwick Circle has been, as having special architectural and historic interest. Section 70 of the Act allows a designation to be varied or cancelled. It follows, therefore, that in order for an area to no longer be compliant with Section 69 there would either have to be something that has occurred that would lead to that area no longer having special interest and/or that it did not possess special interest when originally designated.

Reviewing the boundary of the Northwick Circle Conservation Area



Figure 11: Northwick Circle (1950s)

4 ASSESSMENT OF SPECIAL INTEREST AND SIGNIFICANCE

Northwick Circle Conservation Area: assessment of special interest and significance

Summary of special interest when designated

1.42 The area represents the most impressive part of Captain Edward George Spencer-Churchill's town-planned estate developed into a residential suburb employing mock-Tudor designs.

1.43 Spencer-Churchill, Lord of Harrow Manor, projected a town of expensive houses in 1910 with the Northwick Park Tennis and Social Club as a very exclusive social centre for his estate. The First World War changed his clientele and seeing that his proposed expensive houses would not be sold, the estate was split up amongst various builders. At Northwick Circle, where development was held back until the early 1930s, F & C Costin constructed detached mock-Tudor houses generously treated in large garden plots.

1.44 A social club was established in five acre grounds in the centre of the estate. Since 1953, the substantial club house has been occupied by the Harrow District Masonic Hall. The moderne brick tower of the former St John's Church (now Harisumiran - Hindu Swaminarayan Temple) dominates the view down Dovedale Avenue and is a historic landmark in the area.

1.45 The character of the area is derived from large attractive detached two storey mock-Tudor properties set around an extensive treelined and grassed roundabout with the mock-Tudor club building at its centre. The buildings are of brick and pebbledash, featuring a wealth of traditional Tudor detailing such as pegged timber beams. Frontages are verdant and attractively landscaped with

matching boundary walls and hedges. The properties are also spaced apart emphasising the open character.

1.46 The extent of the conservation area includes a wider area around the Circle including the approach roads to the Circle and views of it, forming a sensible setting and definable area.

Northwick Circle Conservation Area: assessment of special interest and significance

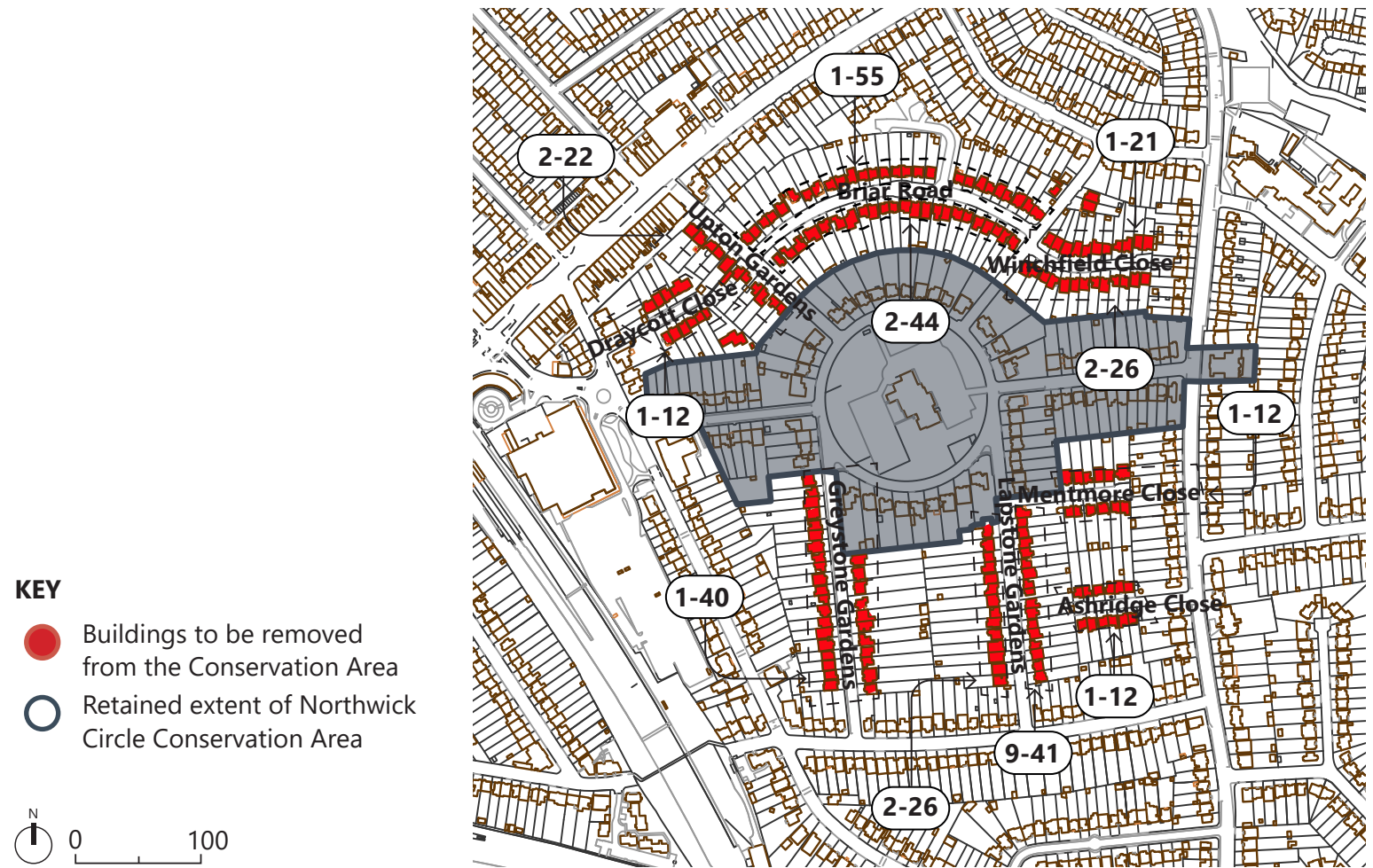


Figure 12: Roads and properties that are the subject of this report

Northwick Circle Conservation Area: assessment of special interest and significance

Appraisal

1.47 The following assessment of the boundary only considers the roads identified in the Historic Environment Place-making Strategy as it has already been established that Northwick Circle, Dovedale Road (including the Hindu Swaminarayan Temple) and Wellarce Road are architecturally and historically significant, have important views and are/or well-preserved.

1.48 Roads under consideration include Ashridge Close, Briar Road, Draycott Avenue, Draycott Close, Greystone Gardens, Lapstone Gardens, Mentmore Close, Norcombe Gardens, Upton Gardens and Winchfield Close. It specifically looks and considers their significance in terms of architectural and historic interest.

1.49 It also considers if the historic layout of roads, paths and boundaries, landscaping and tree cover are of importance. In this way a decision can be made on whether it should remain designated and if it is desirable to preserve or enhance the area.



Figure 13: House on Lapstone Gardens

Northwick Circle Conservation Area: assessment of special interest and significance

Briar Road

1.50 1-25, 39-55 (odd) and 2-44 (even) Briar Road and 2 & 4 Norcombe Gardens contains mostly substantial detached and semi-detached properties. Although some retain some of their original architectural features, virtually all have been altered to their disadvantage with additional porches, inappropriate replacement windows and doors and concrete roof tiles. Such alterations are particularly noticeable on the semi-detached houses where one half of a pair has undergone an alteration as it unbalances the symmetrical design.

1.51 Many of the front gardens have been lost and are now fully paved for car parking. Some have had significant extensions to the side and roof that mostly pre-date the conservation designation. It does not remain substantially treelined and most perceptible

are the extensive crossovers that have diminished the grass verges as well as the loss of the verdant front gardens.

1.52 It is true that this road does still retain sizeable houses, but the designs are not unique and are better preserved in the remaining conservation area. There are no views to the Circle.

Winchfield Close

1.53 1-21 (odd) and 20-26 (even) Winchfield Close mostly contains substantial semi-detached properties. Like, Briar Road, although some retain some of their original architectural features, virtually all have been altered to their disadvantage with additional porches, inappropriate replacement windows and doors and concrete roof tiles. Such alterations are particularly noticeable on



Figure 14: House on Briar Road



Figure 15: House on Winchfield Close

Northwick Circle Conservation Area:
assessment of special interest and significance



Figure 16: House on Briar Road

Northwick Circle Conservation Area: assessment of special interest and significance

the semi-detached houses where one half of a pair has undergone an alteration as it unbalances the symmetrical design.

- 1.54 Most of the front gardens have been lost and are now fully paved for car parking. Some have had significant extensions to the side and roof that mostly pre-date the conservation designation. It does not remain substantially treelined and most perceptible are the extensive crossovers that have diminished the grass verges as well as the loss of the verdant front gardens. There are no views to the Circle.

Lapstone Gardens and Greystone Gardens

- 1.55 9-41 (odd), 2a, 2-26 (even) Lapstone Gardens and Greystone Gardens 1-21 (odd) and 10-40 (even) are roads that extend down from the Circle. They contain a mixture

of substantially sized houses alongside more modest properties. Some of the modest properties are quite plainly detailed and there are better examples of these in other conservation areas in the borough.

- 1.56 Although some houses retain some of their original architectural features, virtually all have been altered to their disadvantage in one way or another with additional porches, inappropriate replacement windows and doors and concrete roof tiles. Such alterations are particularly noticeable on the semi-detached houses where one half of a pair has undergone an alteration as it unbalances the symmetrical design.

- 1.57 Many of the front gardens have been lost and are now fully paved for car parking. Some have had significant extensions to the side and

roof that mostly pre-date the conservation designation. Lapstone Gardens does not remain substantially treelined. Most perceptible are the extensive crossovers that have diminished the grass verges as well as the loss of the verdant front gardens in both roads with cars parked on garden hardstandings. There are no long views to the Circle as described in the original designation.

Mentmore Close

- 1.58 Mentmore Close has modestly properties, some of which are quite plainly detailed and there are better examples of these in other conservation areas in the borough.
- 1.59 Although some houses retain some of their original architectural features, all have been altered to their disadvantage in one way or another with additional porches, inappropriate

replacement windows and doors and concrete roof tiles. Such alterations are particularly noticeable on the semi-detached houses where one half of a pair has undergone an alteration as it unbalances the symmetrical design.

- 1.60 Many of the front gardens have been lost and are now fully paved for car parking. Some have had significant extensions to the side that mostly pre-date the conservation designation. It does not remain substantially treelined.
- 1.61 Most perceptible are the extensive crossovers that have diminished the grass verges as well as the loss of the verdant front gardens and boundary walls with cars parked on garden hardstandings. There are no long views to the Circle.

Ashridge Close, Draycott Close and Upton Gardens

Northwick Circle Conservation Area: assessment of special interest and significance

1.62 Ashridge Close, Draycott Close and 1 and 2-22 (even) Upton Gardens have relatively modestly designed properties, some of which are quite plainly detailed and there are better examples of these in other conservation areas in the borough.

1.63 Although some houses retain some of their original architectural features, all have been altered to their disadvantage in one way or another with additional porches, inappropriate replacement windows and doors and concrete roof tiles. Such alterations are particularly noticeable on the semi-detached houses where one half of a pair has undergone an alteration as it unbalances the symmetrical design.

1.64 Many of the front gardens have been lost and are now fully paved for car parking. Some have had significant extensions to the side that mostly pre-date the conservation designation. None remain substantially treelined. Most perceptible are the extensive crossovers that have diminished the grass verges as well as the loss of the verdant front gardens and boundary walls with cars parked on garden hardstandings. There are no long views to the Circle.



Figure 17: 3 Draycott Close

Northwick Circle Conservation Area:
assessment of special interest and significance



Figure 18: Briar Road north street elevation (1-35)



Figure 19: Briar Road north street elevation (1-35)

Northwick Circle Conservation Area: assessment of special interest and significance



Northwick Circle Conservation Area:
assessment of special interest and significance



/-----/ 2-26

Figure 20: Winchfield Close south side (2-26)



/-----/ 2a-26 /

Figure 21: Lapstone Gardens west side (2a-26)

Northwick Circle Conservation Area:
assessment of special interest and significance



Northwick Circle Conservation Area:
assessment of special interest and significance



Figure 22: Greystone Gardens east (1-21)

Northwick Circle Conservation Area:
assessment of special interest and significance



5

CONCLUSION

Conclusion

1.65 A statutory requirement under Section 69(2) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 directs local planning authorities to review their conservation areas from time to time. Alterations and a reduction to the current boundary was recommended in Brent's Historic Environment Placemaking Strategy (2019).

1.66 A survey was undertaken of the area as part of the Strategy. It evidenced that parts of the conservation area remain distinct and identifiable as special, particularly around the Northwick Circle. It has large and impressive detached and semi-detached houses of interesting designs based on a stylised Arts and Crafts interpretation of medieval architecture. They have a particular quality about them. Views from the Circle to the Hindu Swaminarayan Temple form a significant vista.

1.67 However, some of the roads stretching out from the Circle have houses which are of lesser interest and have been altered by unsympathetic extensions. These roads were included as part of the wider setting for the central Circle and to protect views. As a result, the architectural quality of these peripheral houses are more marginal and are less intact.

1.68 Roads under consideration for removal include Ashridge Close, Briar Road, Draycott Avenue, Draycott Close, Greystone Gardens, Lapstone Gardens, Mentmore Close, Norcombe Gardens, Upton Gardens and Winchfield Close.

1.69 It was found that although some retain their original architecture, virtually all have been altered to their disadvantage with additional porches, inappropriate replacement windows and doors and concrete roof tiles. Such alterations are

particularly noticeable on the semi-detached houses where one half of a pair has undergone an alteration as it unbalances the symmetrical design. Many of the front gardens have been lost and are now fully paved for car parking. Some have had significant extensions to the side and roof.

1.70 It is therefore recommended that these roads be removed from the Northwick Circle Conservation Area.

Recommendations

1.71 It is recommended that consultation be undertaken on the proposed boundary changes to the Northwick Circle Conservation Area as set out and recommended in this report.

1.72 The consultation responses will be given the fullest consideration, and amendments made to the boundary of the Northwick Circle Conservation Area as deemed reasonable and necessary.

1.73 If the new boundary is approved, this report will form a character appraisal for the area.

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