Conservation Area Statement

BECKENHAM TOWN CENTRE CONSERVATION AREA





1.0 INTRODUCTION:

- 1.1 The Beckenham Town Centre Conservation Area is the historic core of Beckenham and contains a mix of commercial uses on the High Street with some residential streets in the immediate vicinity. The Conservation Area contains a mix of building styles, mainly dating from the 19th and 20th centuries. A number of statutory listed, locally listed buildings exist within the area. The boundary can be seen in Fig 1 and stretches from the War Memorial roundabout at the southern end of the High Street as far as Beckenham Junction Station in the North.
- 1.2 This document provides a statement of character and appearance for the conservation area along with a management plan for its conservation. This management plan is relevant to development proposals and enhancement works by the Council.
- 1.3 Following a public consultation exercise, the Conservation Area was adopted by the Council's Development Control Committee on 24th March 2015 and formally designated by the Council's Executive Committee on 10th June 2015.
- 1.4 This document was adopted in?

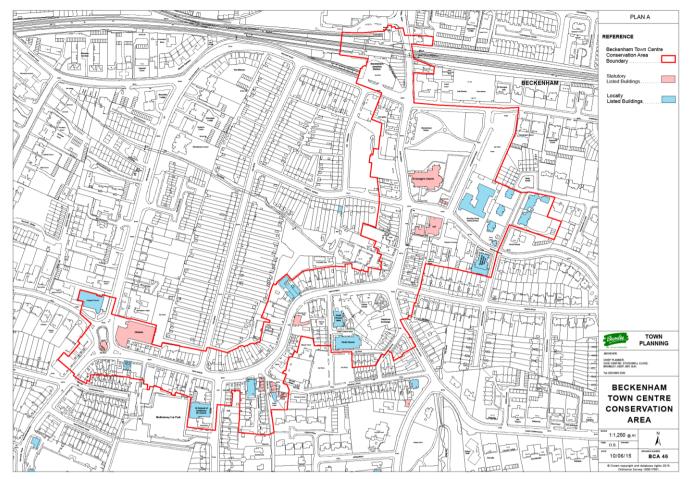


Fig 1. Map of the Beckenham Town Centre Conservation Area. This map can also be viewed on the Council website at www.bromley.gov.uk/planning.

2.0 HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT

2.1 Early History

From the 9th to 17th Centuries the area now called Beckenham was referred to by various other names including Biohha Hema, Beohha Hamme and Becheham. People settled from the continent in this area prior to the Roman invasion and left evidence of their presence at Tootswood near Shortlands. The Domesday book mentions the manor of Beckenham as being owned by Ansgot of Rochester. The population at that time is said to have included just 22 villagers and 8 smallholders. Little visible evidence of this era still survives although the meandering street pattern of the High Street has medieval origins and predates the buildings that stand today.

2.2 19th Century

At the beginning of the 19th century, the population of the parish was approximately 1000. At that time it had little local autonomy: it was a parish within the county of Kent. Local affairs were overseen by the parish Vestry, as was common in many villages at that time. The population remained steady until the 1840's, after which it doubled or even tripled over each succeeding decade. Autonomous local government began to develop. In 1878, a Beckenham Local Board was formed, which rapidly evolved into an Urban District. By 1901, 26,000 people lived in the parish. In 1935, the council became a Borough, electing its own Mayor, by which time the population was approximately 45,000.

- 2.3 The period of greatest growth and change, from 1860 to 1890, swept away most of the timber framed and clapboard houses that had characterised the village (with the obvious exception of the listed Old George public house that remains in the High Street), and replaced them with the solid architecture of prosperous Victorian urban life.
- 2.4 Beckenham St. George's is the historic core of the village and then town of Beckenham. As such, it has been occupied by built development for many centuries. Temporal and spiritual power in the form of the Old Manor, the Rectory and the Church were located there. Appropriately, it still contains the focus of the modern town: the banks, the Church, the Public Hall and the primary school. It is largely this collection of institutional, civic and community buildings that establish the character of the conservation area.
- 2.5 The area is a product of the rapid urban changes of the 1880's, during which its finest buildings were constructed on the site of the Old Manor and its grounds. The Old Manor was Beckenham's stepping stone to greater things. The direct pre cursor of Beckenham Place, the Old Manor and the Lordship of Beckenham were purchased by John Cator in 1773. Although a grand old house, it was not of the style which a newly wealthy country gentleman would find sufficient, and Cator constructed Beckenham Place to replace it shortly thereafter. By 1788 it had passed to the Hoare family, who aggrandised it with land purchased from Lord Gwydir of

Kelsey Manor, a property which the Hoares themselves would later own. They sold it in 1881, when it was purchased for the construction of the civic buildings required by the growing town.

20th Century Beckenham

2.6 The early 20th Century expansion happened towards the southern end of the High Street and many fine buildings from that period survive. These include the modernist former Post Office, the Art Deco Odeon Cinema and St Edmund's modern gothic style church.



Fig 2. 1930 BSOA Dance Poster

HISTORIC MAP REGRESSION

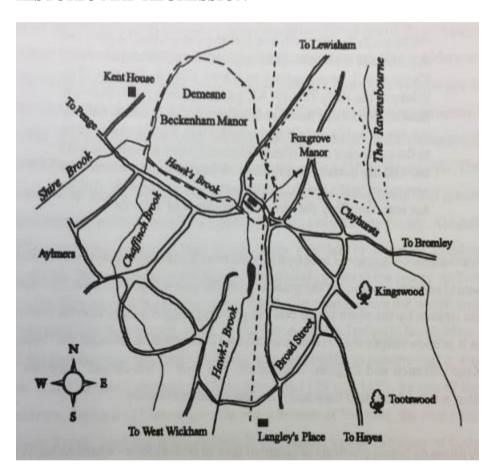


Fig 3. Sketch map of Early Medieval Beckenham





Figure 5. 1838 Tithe Map



Figure 6. 1883 OS MAP

3.0 Spatial Form

High Street

3.1 The study area is centred around the High Street which is the historic core of Beckenham. The High Street stretches from Beckenham Junction station westwards to the Beckenham war memorial. Historic land ownership patterns and topography have led to an unusual meandering layout including a 90 degree turn at the Junction with Manor Road. This area is characterised by narrow urban plots at right angles to the streets mostly with no front sites and predominately terraced development.

Surrounding Streets

3.2 Immediately behind the High Street are some terrace Victorian cottages such as those on Stanmore Terrace which have a very urban character and are likely to be coeval with much of the High Street development

Listed Buildings

Statutory Listed Buildings 3 Southend Road (CA) 3A Southend Road (CA) 24 Southend Road (CA) Foxgrove Lodge Beckenham Place Park (CA) St Georges Church (CA) Alms Houses 1-3 Bromley Road (CA) Beckenham Public Hall (CA) George Inn High Street Coach and Horses Burnhill Road 1-7 Kelsey Square (CA) Odeon Cinema High Street Beckenham War Memorial Jct Croydon Road and High Street Former Technical College 28 Beckenham Road (CA) 4 Manor Way St George's Church (CA) The George Inn Odeon Cinema and War Memorial Beckenham Public Hall (CA)

Locally Listed Buildings

Bromley Road Infant School, Bromley Road (CA) 1-6 The Knoll (CA) Knoll Lodge The Knoll (CA) Beckenham Methodist Church Bromley Road (CA) Oakhill Lodge The Knoll (CA) Oakhill House (CA) 50 Manor Road Nos. 6-42, 9-13, 29-43 Chancery Lane (CA) 13 Wickham Road (CA) 1-7 Limes Road (CA) 24-32 Manor Way (CA) Nos. 2, 21, 38, 39, 50, 52 Manor Way (CA) Christ Church Fairfield Road Christ Church Halls Fairfield Road 162-166 High Street 157 High Street (CA) Kelsey Lodge Kelsey Square (CA) St. Edmunds Church Village Way Post Office Office 22 Rectory Road 5-27 Cedars Road (CA)



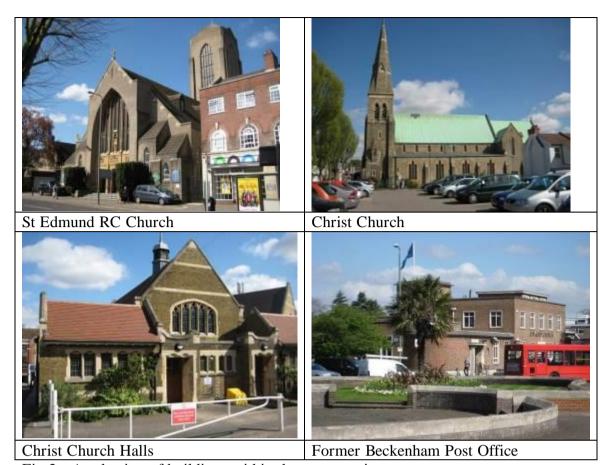


Fig 2. A selection of buildings within the conservation area.

Building styles and Landmarks

High Street Area

3.3 The most important buildings in the central High Street area are already within the St Georges and Kelsey Square conservations but there are some notable exceptions such as the Grade II listed George Inn which dates from the 18th Century, locally listed St Edmunds RC Church in a modern gothic style, the Grade II listed Art Deco Odeon and the Beckenham War Memorial. These last two in particular provide an impressive entrance to the town centre and are significant in both terms of 20th century design and their contribution to Beckenham's social history. Other 20th century buildings of note include the former Burton's shop which has a modernist façade and is currently occupied by Pizza Express at 189 High Street. However some of the interwar shopping parades are of poor quality such as those on the north side of the western extent of the High Street.

Surrounds

3.4 The conservation areas of Southend Road, Chancery Lane, Elm Road and Manor Way are the best examples of suburban and hamlet type development.

- 3.5 Between The High Street and Chancery Lane is Manor Road which also has two cul de sacs; Manor Grove and Bevington Road. These red brick semi-detached Victorian houses date from the 1880s and are of a common type in London with detailing most likely replicated from pattern books. Unfortunately many of these houses have lost their front gardens and many have uPVC windows. These changes are less pronounced on the side roads.
- 3.6 To the east of Manor Way conservation area is Kelsey Park which is a formal park laid out in what was the grounds of the former Kelsey Manor. It should be noted that the park lodge is already included in the Manor Way conservation area.
- 3.7 North of the St Georges conservation area is Beckenham Junction Railway Station which retains much of its original Victorian character on the platforms, with detailing such as the large and distinctive cast iron canopy brackets, but externally the front site is dominated by car parking and the station appears modest.

3.8 Views

3.9 There are no views of a planned nature but the organic development and historic nature of the town centre means that glimpses of the various church spires are often visible and some of the better individual buildings on the High Street contribute to some pleasant streetscapes. Views into the High Street area from the west are dominated by the Odeon, former Post Office and the War Memorial. This area provides a striking entrance into the High Street and has a high streetscape value.



High Street with no 134 in the foreground.



Southwards out of the St Georges conservation area. Old Police Station in the left foreground and the BT telecom exchange in the background.

4.0 Management Plan

Policies & Guidance

- 4.1 The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 is the primary legislation which protects the historic environment. Section 66 and 72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 impose a statutory duty upon local planning authorities to consider the impact of proposals on listed buildings and conservation areas. With regard to listed buildings, it states that the determining authority 'shall have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses.' And in respect of conservation areas, it requires that 'special attention be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of that area.'
- 4.2 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) sets out the Government's policies for decision making on development proposals. At the heart of the framework is a presumption in favour of 'sustainable development'.

- Conserving heritage assets in a manner appropriate to their significance forms one of the 12 core principles that define sustainable development.
- 4.3 NPPF policy advises that for new development to be sustainable it needs to encompass an economic, social and environmental role, with the latter including the protection and enhancement of the built and historic environment. Paragraph 8 notes that these roles are mutually dependent and should not be taken in isolation; and that to achieve sustainable development, economic, social and environmental gains should be sought jointly and simultaneously through the planning system. Paragraph 8(c) of the NPPF states that the environmental role of a development includes protection and enhancement of the historic environment.
- 4.4 Section 16 of the NPPF sets out how the historic environment should be conserved and enhanced. Paragraph 193 states that when considering the impact of a proposed development on a heritage asset, 'great weight' should be given to preserving its significance.
- 4.5 Paragraph 194 states that 'any harm or loss should require clear and convincing justification' and paragraph 195 sets out the tests which must be met when considering applications which cause substantial harm including public benefits and securing reasonable use. Paragraph 196 states that proposals that would lead to less than substantial harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal including securing its optimum viable use. Where a proposal would result in harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this must be assessed by the criteria set out in paragraphs 195 or 196, depending on the degree of harm caused.
- 4.6 The 2016 London Plan provides a strategic framework for development in London. This includes key policies related to the safeguarding of London's heritage assets and their settings. Specific policies related to this proposal which should be addressed include policy 7.8 (heritage assets) part C and D (planning decisions) of the London Plan. Part D states that 'development affecting heritage assets should conserve their significance by being sympathetic to their form, scale, materials and architectural detail."
- 4.7 The 2019 Bromley Local Plan has several policies directly relating to the historic environment in Chapter 5. These include Policy 41 Conservation Areas.

Demolition

4.8 Proposals for the demolition of structures within the conservation area will normally be assessed against the contribution of the structure in question. This contribution could be on an individual basis or as part of a group of buildings. This will normally be assessed on a case by case basis in the context of specific circumstances.

- 4.9 Some buildings and structures are individually designated through statutory or local listing and these are strong contributors to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area. However, non-listing by no means implies that a building is non-contributory, and there should be no presumption of this. The character and appearance of a Conservation Area is frequently embodied in buildings, which are not in themselves exceptional, but are contributors to the Area's noteworthiness. A Heritage Statement should be provided with any application for demolition in the conservation area. The Heritage Statement should outline the contribution that a building or buildings makes to the Conservation Area.
- 4.10 To avoid vacant or derelict sites and consequent uncertainty about the future of a site, demolition will not normally be permitted prior to secure commitment to a specific form of redevelopment. Where appropriate the use of legal or financial securities will be considered to ensure fulfilment of such commitments.

Siting of New Development

- 4.11 New buildings in a conservation area will normally only be considered:
 - on a site created through demolition of an existing building;
 - on a currently vacant plot; or
 - as an additional building on a plot presently accommodating a building (where appropriate opportunities can be identified).
- 4.12 The characteristics of the relevant character area as described in the Appraisal section of this document should be a starting point for the conception of design concepts for any new development in the Conservation Area.
- 4.13 The established density and layout in the area will provide a guide to the appropriate scale and positioning of any new development. Insertion of new structures within already developed plots will generally require constraint in scale and careful positioning to ensure that they do not detract from the established character and appearance.

Layout

- 4.14 The siting and layout of new structures must be respectful of the character and appearance of the Conservation Area. This requires recognising and responding to the predominant scale, form and detailing of contributory buildings, and reflecting the bulk and spatial composition of structures and intervening spaces.
- 4.15 Spaces around and between buildings are often an important part of the

character and appearance of an area, and the setting of principal contributory buildings. In particular in the town centre, the composition and relationships between buildings and open spaces (both public and private) is an important element of character and appearance. The conservation area contains numerous alleys, yards and slips. These are often representative of historic plot patterns and thoroughfares and it is expected that they are maintained to a reasonable standard. These alleys, yards and slips should not be closed off by new development that would obstruct permeability or negatively affect important views.

Design of New Buildings

- 4.16 Where new buildings are deemed to be appropriate, attention is required to ensure their compatibility with the Conservation Area, which should result in a positive contribution to the area both in its own right, and as an element in the urban form. As well as buildings, this relates to the spaces and relationships between buildings, and the treatment of the site and surroundings.
- 4.17 In particular, new buildings should not become dominant elements or overwhelm existing structures and spaces. For example, it is good practice for new buildings to keep within the typical height of existing buildings, ideally remaining slightly lower than adjacent buildings. Building frontages and bulk should be addressed similarly. Attention should also be paid to the articulation, fenestration and break up of existing buildings, and the scale at which this occurs, avoiding visual massing out of scale with established and contributory elements.
- 4.18 The adoption of scale, forms and materials characteristic of the Conservation Area is appropriate. (the underlying principles are similar to those relevant to alterations and additions, which are detailed below). However design which attempts "mock historic" replication of buildings from earlier eras is discouraged, as this lacks authenticity, dilutes the Area's significance, and can confuse interpretation of the Area's historical development. An exception may be justified where reinstatement of an important missing element of the built form will repair a jarring gap and can be based on detailed historical records. In these cases, clues to the building's more recent origins may be provided by restrained detailing and a date stone where appropriate.
- 4.19 It requires considerable design skill to introduce a building, which is recognisably and unashamedly new, yet respectful of and complementary to the character and appearance of the Area. Such a design challenge deserves the involvement of specialist, experienced professionals.
- 4.20 The Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE) have produced guidance entitled "Building in Context: New Development in Historic Areas" and it is available at http://www.building-in-context.org . Full use should be made of such resources and reference should be made any the

Design and Access or Heritage Statement that accompanies an application.

Alterations and Extensions

- 4.21 The Conservation area is a living part of the urban area, particularly the central retailing and business functions. Changing business and administrative needs, lifestyles and expectations will result in pressure for adjustments to existing buildings to respond to this. Such modifications can frequently be achieved without diminishing the character and appearance of the Area, but care is required.
- 4.22 The Historic Environment Planning Practice Guide (July 2019) provides guidance on the alteration of Heritage Assets. As Conservation Areas are considered to be Heritage Assets, the principles and guidance detailed in this document are also applicable to any building that within a Conservation area.

Location and Form of Extensions

4.23 Extensions and additions should reflect the forms, materials, textures and finishes of the host building, along with the design philosophies underlying its style. These vary between individual buildings in this Conservation area, and will need to respond to the specific building. The proportions, positioning and integration of an extension to the host building should be designed to safeguard not only the building's contribution to the public realm, but its enduring value to the owner. It should not be so large as to dominate or compete in visual terms with the host building.

Materials and Methods

4.24 Materials utilised in additions and alterations should match those of the host building. Care should be taken with details such as the matching of brick bonds and continuation of stringcourses or lintels.

Shopfronts

- 4.25 Original shopfronts are very important to the character of commercial areas. Retention and reinstatement of original frontages and/or details will be strongly encouraged. Where introduction of new shop fascias is appropriate, the Council encourages these to be designed in a manner to enhance the street scene and to be no larger than those of neighbouring shops. Many retail chains have a corporate or house style. However, this approach will only be acceptable where it is in accordance with the design standards expected in the conservation area.
- 4.26 The installation of permanently fixed, or external steel roller shutters, deadens

the streetscene and attracts graffiti. Where it is considered that security shutters are appropriate, Council strongly encourages the use of toughened glass. This minimises visual impact and maintains an active and interesting street scene, important to ensuring active pedestrian usage out of trading hours, with consequent security benefits.

- 4.27 Where security shutters are to be used, conservation policy requires that open mesh or lattice shutters are preferred as they allow a clear view into the shop and maintain a visible window display, and are considered to provide adequate protection to most shop fronts
- 4.28 As shopfronts are replaced, particularly in 19th century buildings, the Council will encourage enhancement through the reinstatement of traditional design elements, such as stall risers and pilasters of painted timber construction that are more appropriate to the age and form of the host building.
- 4.29 All replacement shopfront proposals should be well-related context whether this is the host building, parade or wider street scene as a whole; of a high quality of design and use appropriate materials. Period design shopfronts and existing or original features are retained or reintroduced where appropriate. It also requires that deep or uninterrupted fascias, or those which extend above first floor level should be avoided and that stallrisers should be provided, and are well-related in scale and height to the host and, where appropriate, neighbouring properties;
- 4.30 In addition, in Conservation Areas, the retention of shopfronts that contribute to the street scene even when the commercial use has ceased is required.

Exterior Details

4.31 Details characteristic of the building type and era should be retained wherever possible. Alterations to the exterior form and detailing of a contributory building should respond sensitively to the significant elements of the building. In particular attention should be paid to protecting and reflecting element of the original design detailing, such as chimneystacks, ridge tiles, lintels, and stringcourses. Every effort should be made to retain and repair such original details. Regular and timely maintenance is preferable to the difficulty and expense incurred by belated repair or, ultimately, replacement.

Windows and Doors

- 4.32 Original window and door proportions, materials and detailing should be retained. As Historic England advise in their guidance on historic windows, repair of original joinery is desirable where practical, with any necessary new work matching in materials and detailing. Insensitive replacement doors and windows can seriously detract from the character of a building and, in turn, the conservation area.
- 4.33 Mass produced standard components (particularly those made in UPVC) can rarely reflect the carefully considered proportions and detailed mouldings of original doors and windows, and their use is discouraged. Whilst their installation may be cheaper, they are visibly inappropriate to a period building, and can seriously detract from the value of a property.

Dormers and Roof Lights

- 4.34 The desire to increase useable areas in a dwelling often leads to the conversion of attic and roof spaces into rooms. This results in the requirement for natural lighting where none, or insufficient, is available at present. The most common responses are to insert dormer windows into the roofline, or to install roof lights. The appropriateness of either approach will depend upon the individual circumstances of each building, and should not begin with a presumption that either approach will necessarily be compatible to a particular case.
- 4.35 Dormer windows are a component part of some architectural styles. However, in other cases the introduction of dormers will be inappropriate, particularly on prominent front or side rooflines. Close attention to the style of the host building can indicate whether appropriate opportunities exist. Where an opportunity is identified, the scale of a dormer should respond to traditional styles, usually requiring some restraint of the urge to maximise internal spaces to avoid adversely impacting upon the appearance of the building and Conservation area. If installation of dormers is appropriate, they should be set below the ridgeline of the host building.
- 4.44 Roof lights must be sited sensitively to avoid detracting from important views of the building. Where roof lights can be demonstrated to be compatible, they should be mounted flush with the roofline rather than in a raised box, which emphasises their presence. Normally, placement in rear elevations is preferable to the front elevation.

Satellite Dishes, Domestic Microgeneration Equipment and other Plant

4.45 The location and appearance of plant, extractors and other equipment such as satellite dishes on properties, should be carefully considered. All plant

- should generally be placed out of view from the public realm.
- 4.46 Satellite dishes must not be placed on a chimney, roof or wall that is visible from a highway. As such, any satellite dishes should be located in rear gardens or another service should be used.
- 4.47 Solar panels and solar thermal equipment are not permitted in a Conservation Area if they are to be installed on a wall forming the principal or side elevation of the dwelling house and would be visible from a highway or on a wall of a building within the curtilage of the dwelling house and would be visible from a highway.
- 4.48 More information about adapting to climate change and increasing energy efficiency can be found at www.climatechangeandyourhome.org.uk.

Hardstandings and Driveways

- 4.49 Frequently, proposals for hardstandings and driveways are generated by the desire to accommodate motor vehicles on the plot, or to increase the capacity for this use. This mainly occurs in the more residential areas on the fringe of the Conservation Area.
- 4.50 Recent changes to the General Permitted Development Order have restricted the amount of hard surfacing allowed within the curtilage of a dwelling house. Where that hard surfacing would exceed 5 square meters planning permission is now required unless that surfacing is made of porous materials which will allow for a better thought out landscaping scheme in front gardens incorporating hard standing and porous materials without diminishing the setting of the building or adversely affecting the character and appearance of the conservation area.
- 4.51 Where opportunities do exist, minimising the width of the opening in a front wall will reduce the impact upon the streetscene whilst retaining some screening of the front garden. Paving may be addressed as a component part of a comprehensive design treatment, so visually remains part of the garden, rather than appearing as an area deducted from it. Retention of border planting can avoid starkness caused by paving to wall or building edges.

Garages

4.52 In residential sections of the Conservation Area, the introduction of garages needs to be sensitive to the building forms of the area. In some situations, a single level wing at the side of a larger dwelling may fit the general form of development, whilst in others it may detrimentally alter the built form, such as by blocking openings between buildings, which may be characteristic of the area. Traditional garages may be too small to accommodate modem

vehicles. If enlargement or replacement can be sensitively achieved, it may be possible to borrow design elements from the original to retain compatibility. Rarely will enclosed parking forward of the primarily frontage of the main building be appropriate or supported.

Trees, Gardens, Hedges

4.53 Established trees and gardens play an important contributory role to the character of most Conservation Areas. Within the Bromley Town Centre Conservation area the pockets of parkland and incidental trees and gardens are a vitally important relief to the intensive urban character of the town centre.

Changes of Use

- 4.56 The commercial centre of the Conservation Area is, by its nature, at the forefront of evolving demands and pressures for change. The challenge is to absorb change whilst retaining the essential character which links the centre with the richness of its past and sustains the spirit and identity of place.
- 4.57 The viability of a significant building's retention can sometimes be assisted through finding a new use which might return it to an economic function which can support maintenance, repair and conservation works. This must be balanced with other considerations, including the potentially reduced significance of a building, which no longer performs the role for which it was established.
- 4.58 Consideration also needs to be given to consequential pressures, which may flow from a change of use which may include the potential of increased demand for car parking, either on site or in the locality. On site parking can often impact adversely upon open spaces which are contributory to the character and appearance of the Area, such as through the loss of garden settings. Where parking is on street, the presence of many cars for much of the time can detract seriously from the appearance of an area.

Advertising and Signage

- 4.59 The Council wishes to ensure that businesses in the commercial sections of conservation areas are able to effectively advertise their goods and services. However, it also wishes to reduce the visual clutter that poorly designed, located or oversized advertisements can cause. Advertisements which are seen to detract from the character of the area will be resisted or made subject to discontinuance action where necessary.
- 4.60 Retail units will often be able to make use of front window space and window fascias to advertise goods or services. A carefully designed and painted fascia, combined with a good window display is an excellent advertisement

for a shop and will contribute to the character of the conservation area. Where this opportunity is available, the Council will normally resist the placing of advertisements on other parts of a building. The practice of painting out of shop windows as a form of display or advertising is also discouraged, stifling the contribution which the display or goods and visibility of inside activity contribute to the overall sense of vitality and interest.

- 4.61 New and replacement signs should be designed in a way that minimises their impact: they should not be displayed at first floor level or above, especially on exposed flank walls. External illumination is preferred over internal illumination on traditional shopfronts. However, light fittings should be small and low key. New fascia signs should not exceed the depth of the fascia.
- 4.62 Within residential areas, every attempt should be made to keep advertising material to the smallest possible scale. Illuminated advertisements will not be acceptable in residential locations.

5.0 Advisory Panel for Conservation Areas

5.1 The Council will ensure that development control in conservation areas is undertaken with care and sensitivity to the character and appearance of the area. This is achieved by referring applications to the Council's Conservation Officer, Tree Officers as appropriate and the Advisory Panel for Conservation Areas (APCA). The Advisory Panel for Conservation Areas consists of independent representatives of relevant professions (such as architecture & town planning) and interest groups such as Local Civic Societies and Residents' Associations. Each conservation area is entitled to an APCA representative, usually nominated by the local residents' association.

SOURCES

The Early History of Beckenham: Hevey, Len The Village of Old Beckenham: Copeland, Robert

Beckenham: Inman, Eric

Bromley Local Studies Library Map Collection