

# What does the Trust do for you?

**T**he Trust has three main activities. The first of these is its duty as a regulator. It must consider and decide on applications by residents who wish to change the appearance of their house or the land on which it stands. The Trust has also to check that agreed changes are made in conformity with the approval given.

In carrying out this role we try to establish an understanding with applicants by offering guidance about the kind of changes that are likely to be acceptable and providing technical guidance on building materials and techniques. We also provide advice on trees and changes that might affect the landscape.

Second, the Trust has a programme, in collaboration with the Residents Association, the London Borough of Barnet and English Heritage, to make environmental improvements throughout the Suburb.

Third, the Trust organises the maintenance of some of the Suburb's unadopted roads, landscaped areas and allotments. This involves a great variety of activities from current legal action to protect local residents against an aggressive vagrant, to support for the Allotments Association. This work is currently under resourced and the Trust would like to raise its standards of maintenance.

Among the damaging activities which threaten the appearance of the Suburb are small incremental changes, apparently minor in themselves, and undertaken innocently without any consciousness of their wider significance. These alterations - paving over and decking gardens, altering doors, windows and gates, removing hedges, erecting sheds - cumulatively have a degrading effect that is difficult to reverse.

It is important to see the effect of these changes in the context of the appearance of the Suburb as a whole. It is our experience that many residents, once aware of the Suburb's environment, are immediately sympathetic with the purposes of the Trust and anxious to do what they can to ensure that their changes enhance rather

than detract from their own and their neighbours' amenity. There are examples of unfortunate changes throughout the Suburb and the Trust is working to encourage residents, when opportunity presents, to put these eyesores right.

The position of the Trust as a regulatory authority is not always clear to all residents. Barnet Council is the local planning authority and the Trust's staff collaborate closely with their colleagues there. Barnet's planning responsibilities are wider than those of the Trust as, in addition to the control of development, they are also concerned with the maintenance of the Suburb's roads, pavements, street lighting and street furniture and with the management of traffic. The Conservation Area was designated by Barnet and all planning and listed building applications within it must be submitted to them as well as to the Trust. Recently local authorities have been urged by the government to encourage increased residential development in low-density areas. Contrary to widespread belief, government policy encourages the local council to apply these policies to the Suburb. As a result Barnet Council may find it difficult to resist applications for major developments on the Suburb.

The existence and primary purpose of the Trust is for the defence of the present character and amenities of the Suburb. The Trust has more intimate local knowledge, can set higher standards of design, gives greater attention to detail than Barnet is able to do and is not affected by overtly political considerations. Also, the Trust has a closer relationship with residents and can respond quickly to their concerns. Most important, the Trust is free from the changing developmental priorities and planning policies of central government.

The Trust feels that the value of its work can be demonstrated by the special environment which exists on the Suburb. This is not perfect, but it is much better than any comparable area in the country. Residents gain both from the quality of the environment they enjoy and in the enhanced value of their property. With residents' support the Trust can continue to manage the Suburb positively for the future.