

# Suburb Character Appraisal



The Trust is currently undertaking a Character Appraisal of the Suburb, which is being carried out with the help of volunteer residents.

The aim of the Appraisal is to examine in detail the essential features – natural and man-made – that make up the character of different areas of the Suburb. Although it has been extensively studied, there is no readily accessible document which outlines exactly what is special about the place – what features need to be retained and protected, what could be changed without detriment and what needs to be changed to enhance the area.

For the Appraisal, the Suburb has been divided into 16 character zones, which can be differentiated by their varying styles of architecture, housing density, garden size, landscape features and planned layout. Working in collaboration with English Heritage

and Barnet Council, the Trust has begun to collect detailed information about the main characteristics of each of these areas, including maps and photographs.

The original architects and planners used various design devices to give each area a distinct appearance, such as different building materials, architectural style, open spaces and spaces between buildings, landscape features and grouping of houses. Identifying the primary characteristics of the 16 zones will help to ensure that future development is carefully controlled and the original features retained as fully as possible.

When completed, the Appraisal will be an invaluable resource for the Trust and Barnet, and will be used to help make planning and estate management decisions affecting the area, enabling speedy and consistent decisions on applications to alter or extend properties. Consulting the Character Appraisal will become the first step in the consideration of planning applications, and will provide valuable information for all those who are concerned to conserve and protect the unique historical and architectural environment of the Suburb.

The Character Appraisal will proceed in several stages:

1. Looking at historical and architectural information in published sources.
2. Gaining an overall impression of buildings, roads and spaces by carrying out street surveys.
3. Identifying those elements which build up the overall character and illustrating them with maps and photographs.

4. Pulling together the material produced by individual volunteers to identify key features and to suggest ideas for action to enhance the appearance of the area.

5. Editing the material collected into a succinct Appraisal document for the area that will include maps, notes and photographs.

A key element of the process is that it depends on the participation of residents, who walk around their areas, recording characteristics and special architectural features (such as window designs, housing layouts, species of tree and gate designs), take photographs and fill in questionnaires with the information they collect.

The involvement of enthusiastic residents ensures that the information collected reflects what is important about their environment to the people who know and value it the most. However, even residents who have lived here for many years have been surprised to discover building details or planning concepts they had not noticed before and which, should they be changed or lost, would spoil the special quality of their part of the Suburb.

