

HAMPSTEAD GARDEN SUBURB TRUST

Guidelines for Demolition/Rebuilding

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Under its Memorandum of Association the Trust was set up to “do all things possible in order to maintain and preserve the present character and amenities” of Hampstead Garden Suburb. The Scheme of Management, which the Trust administers, enables it to control alterations to buildings and gardens which would affect the character and amenities of the area. Building owners must apply to the Trust for consent for alterations and the Trust must not unreasonably withhold such consent.
- 1.2 These guidelines have been developed for those exceptional cases where the Trust is asked to consider the total demolition of a building and its replacement with another. They are intended to set out clear criteria for assessing such proposals and ensure that applicants do not waste time and money pursuing plans that are likely to be unacceptable to the Trust. The guidelines will also be applied to applications for the substantial demolition and remodelling of existing houses.
- 1.3 Given the generally high architectural quality of the Suburb environment, and the carefully planned spatial relationships between houses, there are likely to be few opportunities for replacement building. It must be made clear that there will always be a **presumption against** proposals to demolish and rebuild. These guidelines relate to the few cases where applicants believe, after reading this document, that there is a compelling argument for total demolition and redevelopment.

2.0 Assessing the Contribution of a Building on the Character and Appearance of the Area

- 2.1 The first step in establishing whether a house may be demolished is to assess its contribution to the present character of the area – whether that contribution is **positive** or **detrimental**. Only those houses that are **detrimental** to the area could be considered appropriate for demolition.
- 2.2 In an area such as Hampstead Garden Suburb, where controls over development have historically been very strict, the vast majority of houses are considered to make a **positive** contribution to the general streetscape. They are part of the planned development and historical growth of the Suburb and, as such, are of intrinsic value. Many individual houses are by

architects who contributed a great deal to the character and architectural appearance of the Suburb.

2.3 Some buildings are protected by listing. In 1995 the Department of Culture Media and Sport reviewed the Statutory List for the Suburb and as a result some 500 buildings were added. Although these buildings are of national interest, the character of the Suburb is largely defined by the unlisted ones which make up the bulk of the buildings in the area.

2.4 In order to guide development proposals, the Trust has developed a checklist* of questions to assess whether a building makes a positive contribution to the character of the Suburb. The checklist will be used to determine if a particular building can be redeveloped. The questions are set out below:-

- ◆ Is the building the work of a particular architect of local or national importance?
- ◆ Has it qualities of age, style, materials or any other characteristics which reflect the architectural character of the Suburb?
- ◆ Does it, individually or as part of a group, serve as a reminder of the development of the Suburb or the immediate area?
- ◆ Does the building have a landmark quality or contribute positively to the quality of recognisable spaces?
- ◆ Is the building well designed and visually compatible with its neighbours or part of an attractive group?
- ◆ Does it have a significant historic or architectural association with established features such as the road layout, park, heath, landscape feature or planned group?
- ◆ Does it relate by age, materials, style or in any other significant way to adjacent buildings and contribute positively to their setting?
- ◆ If a structure associated with a designed landscape within the area, such as walls, terracing or a garden building, is it of identifiable importance to the historic design?
- ◆ Does it contribute positively to the character or appearance of the area?

*The Trust checklist was developed from that set out by English Heritage in their publication "Conservation Area Practice", to assess whether an unlisted building makes a positive contribution to the special architectural or historic interest of a conservation area.

- 2.5 In the Trust's view, any **one** of these characteristics could provide the basis for determining that a building makes a **positive** contribution to the special interest of the Suburb and would not be considered to be a candidate for redevelopment.
- 2.6 If a house is assessed as not making a positive contribution using the checklist set out above, it might be said to be **detrimental**. For example, the building may be poorly designed or visually incompatible with its neighbours so that it spoils an otherwise attractive group. The building may also have suffered major insensitive and irreversible alterations which affect its original design significantly.
- 2.7 The existence of unsympathetic alterations will be taken into account when considering the value of a building to the character of the area but will not necessarily lead to a case for demolition. Many such alterations can easily be remedied
- 2.8 When considering the demolition of a building, its **context** will be critical. A modest house in a street of unexceptional houses may not meet the criteria for demolition whereas the same house in a group of very fine houses may.
- 2.9 In conclusion, if a house is judged by the Trust to be detrimental to the character of the street, immediate area or the Suburb as a whole to such an extent that its replacement could enhance that character significantly, it may be considered a candidate for demolition.

Structurally unsound buildings

- 3.1 In one or two exceptional cases, demolition may be considered where **the existing building has become structurally unsound** to such an extent that its repair is not economically viable. In such a case it must be demonstrated to the satisfaction of the Trust Council that demolition is the only practicable course of action.

4.0 The Design of Replacement Houses

- 4.1 Where the demolition of a building is, in principle, acceptable the Trust will expect any replacement building to adhere to the following principles/guidelines:
- ◆ The Trust must be satisfied that the new building is architecturally superior to that which it replaces and will make a positive contribution to the character of the area.

- ◆ The new building must complement existing buildings, fit into existing streetscape and retain any existing views. It should not compete for attention or be visually more complex than its neighbours.
- ◆ The new building should not normally be significantly larger than that which it replaces for all of its footprint, scale and width in plot. A new building should be respectful to the scale of neighbouring properties. Where the existing building has already been extended significantly, no increase in size would normally be expected.
- ◆ The Trust will normally insist that any building in residential use is replaced by a building with the same use. Changing the number of residential units on the plot is unlikely to be acceptable.
- ◆ Off-street parking provision must be adequate and certainly no worse than the existing provision.
- ◆ Existing trees, hedges and other significant landscape features should be retained and new planting added to enhance the setting of the house and its neighbours.
- ◆ The amenities of neighbours – light and overlooking etc. should not be unduly affected by the proposal.

4.2 In addition, if consent is granted, the following conditions may apply:-

- Demolition without binding undertakings to rebuild will not be acceptable. In most cases this would involve a contract being in place for the new building before demolition starts.
- Further extensions to rebuilt houses are unlikely to be granted.
- Conditions to ensure the high quality of the replacement building will be included in the consent.

5.0 Consent from London Borough of Barnet

5.1 All buildings in the Suburb lie within the Hampstead Garden Suburb Conservation Area. Under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Area) Act 1990, consent is required from the Local Planning Authority for the demolition of any such building. This consent is in addition to Trust Consent.

The conservation area is covered by an Article 4 Direction which withdraws or limits permitted development rights. Ask before carrying out any work - it may require planning permission.

- 5.2 The Government has published Planning Policy Guidance Note 15, which sets out the criteria which must be considered by the Local Planning Authority for applications within conservation areas before consent can be given. For further guidance, speak to the Conservation & Design Team at the London Borough of Barnet on 020 8359 4661.

6.0 Consent from the Trust

- 6.1 For **preliminary discussions** about your proposal, ring David Davidson, Architectural Adviser to Hampstead Garden Suburb Trust, on 020 8455 1066 or 8458 8085.

David Davidson
Architectural Adviser to the Hampstead Garden Suburb Trust

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Note.

It should be remembered that, in administering the Scheme of Management, the Hampstead Garden Suburb Trust is not bound to reach the same decision as the local authority. The Trust's objects include doing "all things possible in order to maintain and preserve the present character and amenities" of the Suburb. The local planning authority must follow central government legislation and guidance, as interpreted by case law. This may cause it to come to a different decision to the Trust on a particular planning, listed building consent or conservation area consent application. The criteria differ. The Trust reserves its powers to make decisions based on its own criteria.