



Norland Neighbourhood Plan

For Examination

June 2013



Norland Conservation Society
Protecting and Enhancing the Norland Conservation Area

Foreword

The Norland Neighbourhood Plan is a culmination of many years work by the Norland Conservation Society. The Society approached the Council in 2007 with the wish to update the Conservation Area Proposals Statement for Norland, and over the last five years, has been preparing and developing a neighbourhood development plan for the area.

The Norland Conservation Society has a vital role to play in guiding best practice and promoting quality, as well as developing the policies and guidance set out in this Neighbourhood Plan. It has 43 years experience of working to preserve and enhance the area, representing residents' interests to Council Members, Officers and other bodies in the face of increasing development pressure.

The plan demonstrates our shared vision by which decisions on planning applications will be determined so as to shape and direct high quality sustainable development in our area.

Norland Neighbourhood Forum

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Introduction

The Norland Conservation Area was designated in 1969 under the recently introduced Civic Amenities Act 1967. The estate itself was laid out and built in the mid-nineteenth century over a remarkably short period starting in the 1840s: just fifteen years separated green fields from a suburban estate.

Its magnificent set pieces of Royal Crescent, Norland Square and St James's Gardens led to the confirmation of the area as an outstanding conservation area by the Department of the Environment.

The development was prompted by advantageous draining works for a new railway. But the estate was premature and too near to the notorious potteries. The freehold owner of the estate was bankrupted by the scheme. He was nevertheless instrumental in creating an estate of grand compositions which, although not designed by great architects of the day, resulted in a townscape of innate quality.

It comprises many types of urban streetscape: grand compositions of linked terraces, coupled with more modest, but nonetheless unified smaller-scale houses and mews, creating different airs of urbanity and spacious style. It retains homogeneity due to the dates of building being so close. The varied style east of Pottery Lane is partly due to the historical age difference, and partly to the influence of the neighbouring Ladbrooke estate.

A few feature buildings at significant locations create foci of attention in the formal layout whilst a wide variety of detail and changing styles create progressive interest throughout the area. Modern imaginative design does not detract much from the area, although some eyesores identify themselves for remedial action.

The north-south route down St. Ann's Villas and round Royal Crescent creates some traffic problems. The solution requires striking a careful balance between the need to protect and enhance Grade II* listed buildings and important parts of the conservation area, and the communication needs of areas immediately to the north.

Despite the inevitable problems in the area, the overwhelming impression is of remarkable preservation requiring only a helping hand to remedy the minor eyesores that detract from the delicate classicism of the architecture in the area.

Since the publication of the Norland Conservation Area Proposals Statement in 1982 much has been done by individual owners as well as the Royal Borough and the Norland Conservation Society, to preserve and enhance the area:

- The gardens of Royal Crescent and Norland Square (as well as St James's Gardens) now boast fine new cast-iron railings, and the gardens have been beautifully landscaped and, to a considerable extent re-planted
- Article 4 directions (see Appendix E) have been implemented to protect the street scene in most streets in the area
- The agreed painting scheme in Royal Crescent and Norland Square has done much to enhance the unity of the Crescent and the terraces of the Square
- The increasing affluence of individual owners has enabled a lot of improvements to individual properties, including reinstatement of all-important architectural details of façades
- Much of the paving has been replaced with York stone, to change the feel of the area very much for the good

At the same time, as any highly desirable inner London conservation area, Norland has been subject to many new development pressures. This neighbourhood plan seeks to promote positive growth and development in the area.

Aims of this Neighbourhood Plan

The Council has a statutory duty to preserve and enhance the character and appearance of conservation areas as areas of special architectural and historic interest.

This has been the principal aim of the Norland Conservation Society since its founding in 1969. This does not mean that no change should take place, for conservation is as much concerned with ensuring that changes are compatible with their neighbours and surroundings as with retaining the exact appearance of the area and its buildings.

The aims of this Neighbourhood Plan, just as earlier Conservation Area Proposals Statements within Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea are:

1. To set out agreed aims, policies and guidelines for development and conservation in the area, including planning control, traffic, tree planting, neighbourhood and streetscape, by which decisions on planning applications will be determined so as to shape and direct sustainable development in our area.

2. To provide a useful guide for residents, owners, developers and their architects as well as for the Council's officers.

The aims of the Neighbourhood Plan are:

1. To define the essential character and features which make it “outstanding” as a conservation area, in terms of:

- townscape – buildings and garden squares
- landscape – gardens, trees and planting
- streetscape – street furniture, movement and traffic
- neighbourhood – uses, facilities and amenities

2. To define the aspects that should be protected, preserved or enhanced.

3. To identify the important aspects of quality of life in the area, and to define those aspects which should be protected, preserved or enhanced, such as:

- tranquility
- overall security
- ease and security of movement
- access to public facilities and amenities

4. To provide guidance for:

- control of development
- streetscape design and management, landscaping
- detailed design in the area

5. To identify areas where improvements should be made

Conservation is a Partnership

Everyone living and working in Norland, as well as the Norland Conservation Society and the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea, share a responsibility to preserve and enhance the area; everyone being sensitive to what will enhance and what will detract, what is authentic and in keeping with the original design ideas for the area, and active in upholding them.

The policies and guidance set out in this plan are not all subject to planning control; they are aspirational, but also exemplify best practice. Where appropriate, through Article 4 directions, the planning authority maintains control of development and alterations to ensure the most important architectural heritage is preserved.

Individual owners also have a responsibility to take care of the very special part of London in which they live - in relation to their own properties and gardens, by raising the awareness of their neighbours, and being alert to alterations and changes that would be detrimental to the area.

Owners and their professional advisers are encouraged to consult the Norland Conservation Society at pre-application stage for informal advice on the policies and guidelines in this Neighbourhood Plan.

Status of this Neighbourhood Plan

By reason of National Planning Policy Framework (2012) paragraph 2, this plan is a material consideration in the determination of an application for planning permission. This plan is in general conformity with the Local Plan, becomes part of the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea's statutory development plan, reflecting its policies for housing and economic development.

This, together with The London Plan, determines how the planning system helps to shape Norland – the London Plan provides Londonwide policies to help achieve the Mayor's vision for London, whilst the Local Plan provides more focused and localised policies to shape development within the borough to achieve the Council's vision.

Evidence Base for this Neighbourhood Plan

There is a detailed street survey that has informed the guidance in the plan. This survey work is based on the principles set out in the Oxford Character Assessment Toolkit, with reference to the features it uses. The descriptions of Norland's streets, squares and open spaces summarise the conclusions of this survey work.

The buildings in each street, square and crescent are described in detail in the Norland Street Surveys document supporting this plan, with recommended actions to enhance the character and quality of neighbourhood and individual buildings, as well as the overall ambience and the street scene. The individual street reports are supported by photographs illustrating all the buildings, problems to be resolved, and required improvement actions.

The description of the Neighbourhood Area takes a graduated approach, proposing actions to preserve and enhance, proportionate to their significance.

The National Planning Policy Framework defines "historic assets" to include listed buildings and conservation areas. Paragraph 128 adopts a new approach to consideration of historic assets in that local planning authorities should identify and assess the particular significance of any heritage asset that may be affected by a proposal taking account of the available evidence and any necessary expertise; paragraph 138 notes that not all elements of a conservation area will necessarily contribute to its significance. In this Neighbourhood Plan, we have reflected such a graduated approach to the degree of "significance" of the Norland Conservation Area by our use of adjectival descriptions; we have re-considered the pre-existing conservation assessment in that context. Our approach underpins the sustainable development of our neighbourhood.

Thus the grand compositions and their immediate surroundings, mostly listed buildings, require the greatest control. Other terraces, mews and minor streets require protection, according to their significance, by Article 4 directions. The aim is to ensure that the integrity of individual buildings and the overall street scene are protected and enhanced in terms of structural design and paint colour.

This does not overlook the importance of protecting the private open spaces behind and between the streets, which are so important to the character of the neighbourhood; a proportionate approach is also taken to these open spaces, according to their significance. Norland is, first and foremost a historic conservation area, with a well-defined layout and fine buildings, but emphasis in this plan is also placed on its role as a neighbourhood for families.

Consultation

This Neighbourhood Plan has been prepared, and consulted on, by the Norland Neighbourhood Forum, following guidelines set out in the Localism Act (2012).

As part of the preparation of the plan, consultation was carried out with the local community in Norland. Full details of the process and results are given in Appendix F.

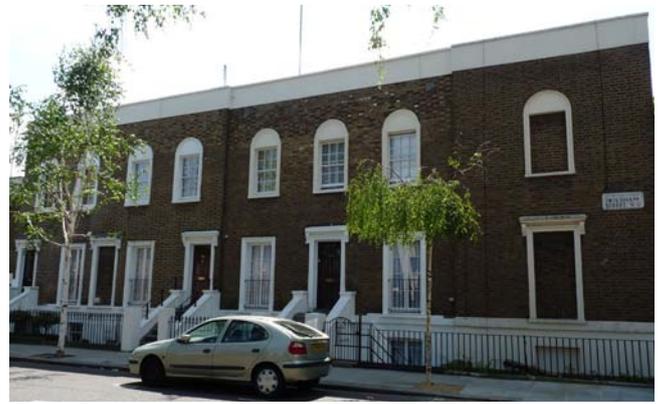
Boundaries of the Neighbourhood Area

In accordance with the Localism Act 2012, after due consultation, the Council designated the Norland Neighbourhood Area, and the Norland Conservation Society as the Neighbourhood Forum for this Neighbourhood Area.

The Neighbourhood Area was designated on 22nd May 2012. It comprises the Norland Conservation Area and includes 2-32 St Ann's Road and 65-117 Wilsham Street. These properties have been included as they belong stylistically to Darnley Terrace, and historically to the development of the Norland estate.

The Norland Conservation Area was designated on 29th January 1969. It included the original Norland estate as built up to 1852 and the completed north side of St. James's Gardens which dates from 1864-79. Portland Road was not included, as it did not constitute part of the original Norland Estate.

The boundaries of the conservation area were extended to include all the wedge of land between Norland and Ladbroke (mainly the north end of Portland Road), plus an area around Clarendon Cross, the shops fronting Holland Park Avenue to the south of the extended area and the Royal Crescent Mews/Norland Road area. These extended boundaries were adopted by the Council on 26th April, 1978. The complete list was published in the London Gazette on 2nd June, 1978. On 25th June, 1979 the Secretary of State of the Department of Environment accepted that the extended Norland Conservation Area is of "outstanding historic and architectural interest".



111-117 Wilsham Street



14 St. Ann's Road

1.1 Quality of life in Norland

Spaciousness and tranquility

Norland is distinguished by its relative tranquility and spaciousness. With its square and crescent gardens, interesting open spaces and private gardens behind the houses, it enjoys lots of trees and greenery. Holland Park, Kensington Gardens and Avondale Park are among the public open spaces that make the area particularly attractive.

Fine buildings and streets

Since its description as an “outstanding conservation area”, much has been done to restore both the listed and the unlisted buildings. With increasing general prosperity, and the influx of extremely wealthy families and individuals, prepared and able to invest considerable resources in their properties, the street scene has thankfully been relatively protected, and in some cases, even improved. The battle to protect this heritage will always be on-going. The application of Article 4 Directions to a wide range of unlisted buildings will be important in achieving this aim.

Families - a place to stay, with excellent communications

It is a place for families, a place where people come to live, and stay. People know each other, greet each other and pass the time of day in the street. Excellent connections to the City (via the Central Line) and the West End, make Norland an extremely attractive, accessible, almost rural, place to live.

A sense of belonging

The support of a substantial and loyal membership of the Norland Conservation Society (370 as at February 2013) is an indication of the strength of sense of belonging and involvement in the area. This is an important aspect and should be maintained as a highest priority.

Neighbourhood shopping

Though, unfortunately, most of the small neighbourhood shops have disappeared, it retains a “villagey” feel. Holland Park Avenue still provides some neighbourhood shopping (Lidgates, Holland Park Pharmacy, Daunts, the florist, the fruit and veg place, the gift shop in the side streets). Kensington High Street is not far away. Parking is easy for most, though since the development of Westfield (in Hammersmith, and outside the conservation area), it has become extremely difficult to park in Royal Crescent and neighbouring streets.

An eclectic range of religious activity

Norland is unusual in the extraordinary range of religious denominations it serves - not that the residents themselves are unusually religious.

The whole estate was designed round the church of St James Norlands, whose religious services attract worshippers from outside the conservation area – particularly from the council and housing association residents to the north. It is also a popular place for weddings, christenings and funerals, and for extra-curricular activities, such as music rehearsals and concerts; and it was the birth-place of the W11 Children’s Opera. It also houses a nursery school.

The Roman Catholic Church is represented by the Church of St Francis of Assisi on Pottery Lane; 8 St James’s Gardens is home to the Spanish and Portuguese Synagogue; the Sikhs’ Central Gurdwara is at 62 Queensdale Road; and 20 Penzance Street, a former Baptist Chapel, is home to the Islamic Universal Association, an Iranian Shia Mosque.

Schools

There is a range of nursery, primary and preparatory schools, some of which use the square garden in St James’s Gardens for recreation, with the permission of the Square Garden Committee.

Theatres, concerts, opera, cinemas, museums

All London’s cultural attractions are easy to reach. There are cinemas and a theatre in Notting Hill. Other attractions include Leighton House, Linley Sambourne House, and Holland Park Opera is only a short walk away.

Safety and security

Though there are frequent cases of vandalism against cars, graffiti, troublesome bicycling on pavements, and despite Norland’s proximity to less prosperous areas to the north, it is a relatively safe place to live and bring up children. The activities of the Safer Neighbourhoods Team, and close co-operation with local police, can be expected to help enhance this security.

1.2 Vision for the future

Our aims are to:

- Protect and enhance the character and historic features that define Norland's sense of place in terms of townscape, streetscape, landscape and neighbourhood
- Protect our listed buildings, as well as those whose architectural features are important to the character of Norland
- Protect and enhance our open spaces, gardens and trees, both private and public
- Protect and enhance the aspects that add to the quality of life such as tranquility and security, whilst discouraging and reducing traffic noise and disturbance through residential areas
- Strive for retention of local heritage characteristics, including architecture and local and social amenities such as shops, pubs and post offices
- Make it easy for pedestrians and children to move freely and safely in Norland
- Manage new development in such a way as to conserve local character
- Maintain a mix of uses and try to retain small businesses
- Maintain social diversity
- Encourage civic pride and local involvement of individuals and organisations

Since the early 1980s the Norland Conservation Area has been subjected to immense development pressure, as its desirability as a place for a family home, with plenty of open space, fine houses, easy access to the City, and to parks and playgrounds, has been increasingly appreciated. In the most recent years, the demographic profile has changed and provided opportunity for redevelopment of some of the larger houses.

But the contemporary demands of family living today have also resulted in the creation of large, open-plan living rooms. These changes to internal layouts caused the loss of the original historic plan forms. Often the fine original internal plasterwork was also destroyed, even in the listed buildings, which is much to be regretted.

However, in both Royal Crescent and Norland Square for example, a considerable number of houses previously converted to flats, have been returned to their original use as single family dwellings. These houses have benefitted from the reinstatement and/or restorations of original architectural features, the use of agreed paint colours on exterior façades to enhance the uniformity and coherence of the facades as well as the reinstatement of fine cast iron railings around these communal gardens.

2.1 Use Class Changes

With the increasing value of residential property in the area, and competitive pressures on small shops and pubs, there has been constant pressure for changes of use from commercial to residential. In the case of public houses in particular, this pressure has been hard to resist, as property value for domestic use now far exceeds the property value that would be justified by the profit achievable from use as a pub.

In Norland, there are a small number of sites which could be regarded as “soft”, and where a change of use to residential (or substantial redevelopment to increase value and income) could be anticipated: these are listed in Section 3.1.5.

In line with our aim of conserving a mix of uses, a mixed social profile, and trying to retain small businesses, particularly shops, this Neighbourhood Plan sets out principles to be followed in the case of further such requests for change of use to residential, supporting Core Strategy policies:

- CH2 – relates to housing (chapter 35)
- CF1 – relates to retail (chapter 31)

- CF5 – business uses (chapter 31)
- CF6 – creative and cultural businesses (chapter 31)
- CF7 – arts and cultural uses (chapter 31)
- CE5/6 – air quality and noise and vibration – relates to restaurants (chapter 36)

By the same token, it is less easy to identify possible sites for change of use from residential to commercial or business; but such a possibility demands a policy within this Neighbourhood Plan.

2.2 Permitted Development

New legislation in 2008 has extended the scope of permitted development in conservation areas, and thereby poses new threats to their historic townscapes.

New guidelines and policies outlined in this Neighbourhood Plan support a tougher approach to inappropriate development and overdevelopment.

The latest proposals for Article 4 Directions in the conservation area intend to bring the most obtrusive kinds of permitted development back within planning control, and thus prevent repetitions of some unfortunate erosion of architectural features of merit in the recent past.

Together, the guidelines and policies in this Neighbourhood Plan, and intended Article 4 Directions, aim to achieve tighter control, providing advice and guidelines for improvements where planning control, as such, is not possible, and to prevent further inappropriate development.

