

Sunnymead Conservation Area Statement April 2004



Introduction

Section 91 of the Town & Country Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 defines Conservation Areas as “areas of special architectural or historic interest the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve and enhance”.

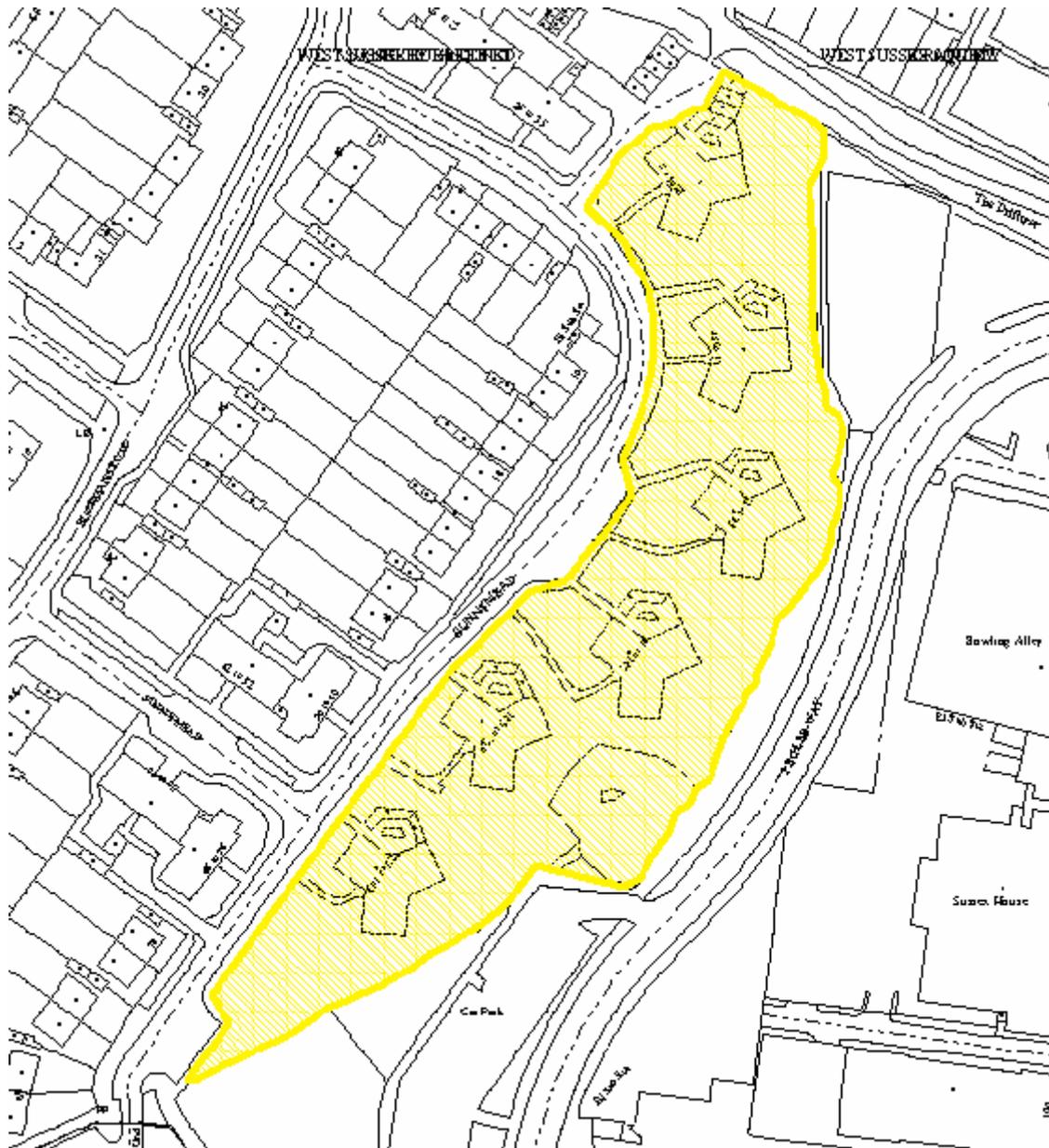
The designation of a Conservation Area is based on a number of factors and does not solely relate to the age of the buildings: architectural interest is equally important. It is recognised that post war and new town buildings have distinctive features which are worthy of protection.

The purpose of a Conservation Area Statement is to acknowledge the important character of the area, and to publish proposals for its preservation and enhancement.

The draft statement was the subject of public consultation in November and December 2003 and a public exhibition was held in March 2004. The comments received were presented to the Executive and the statement, together with the boundary alteration was agreed on the 7th April 2004.



Map of area showing Conservation Area boundary



Sunnymead Flats are located on the edge of the residential neighbourhood of West Green, immediately west of the Town Centre and the High Street Relief Road (Pegler Way). The flats are three-storey 'Y' shaped concrete buildings, rendered and coloured pink and buff. They were designed by Crawley Development Corporation in the 1950's in a Festival of Britain style and were originally built for the workers who were involved in the construction of the New Town.

The origin of these blocks, found in several contemporary New Town housing schemes, appears to have been flats in Grongal, Stockholm.

Sunnymead Flats represent an example of early New Town housing and are considered to be of

Characteristics of the Area

The design of the six buildings is very distinctive due to their unusual shape. Their contrast with the two-storey housing opposite creates a distinctive visual counterpoint, while the blocks themselves have a lightness of detailing typical of the Festival of Britain style of 1951.

Their rendered finish was originally coloured alternatively pink and buff and this colour scheme has survived, complemented by the dark grey pantiles of the roofs.

architectural significance. Consequently in 1997, they were designated as a Conservation Area.

Crawley Borough Council has undertaken extensive improvement works, which have included replacing the windows, overcladding external walls with insulation and a decorative rendered finish. This has greatly improved the appearance of the flats.

In 2001, the Borough Council installed a plaque mounted on a concrete plinth to raise awareness of the importance of the Conservation Area.

The entrance porches have tilted facing, the flats have distinctive narrow windows with narrow railings on the balconies. Distinctive vertical windows in the stairwells also contribute to define the character.

The positioning and design of the stores was also integral to the design philosophy, being single storey structures that turn the corner, responding to the main building.

The grassed communal open space within which the flats are set creates a pleasant and important setting for the flats. Although the open space is predominantly grass the flats are shielded from the busy road of Pegler Way by a wooden fence and a line of mature trees and shrubs.

General Controls and Policies for Conservation Areas

The following section provides a brief summary of the planning controls intended to protect the Conservation Area.

Local planning policy for Conservation Areas is included in the Built and Natural Heritage Chapter of the Crawley Borough Local Plan 2000. Policies BN1, BN2, BN3, BN4 BN5 and BN6 seek to protect and enhance the character and appearance of conservation areas when development takes place.

There are a number of implications resulting from the area being designated as a Conservation Area. Ordinarily, the Town and Country (General Permitted Development) Order 1995, allows for certain minor forms of development, such as small house extensions without the need to make a planning application.

However, in a Conservation Area these 'permitted development rights' are more restrictive, and planning permission is often required for certain types of development which elsewhere are classified as permitted development.

Therefore if you are planning to alter the external appearance of your flat including;

- Cladding,
- Dormer windows
- Erection of satellite dishes
- Installation of radio masts

You will need to check whether you will require planning permission.

Planning permission will only be granted where the proposed development is in keeping with the character of the area.

You are therefore advised to contact Planning Services on (01293) 438499, whatever works you are proposing and we will be pleased to advise you further.

Even in instances where planning permission is not required, the Borough Council will encourage development to be carried out with sensitivity and respect for the setting and appearance of the flats.

In addition, due to the special status Conservation Areas have, trees located within them have greater protection by law. Therefore if you wish to undertake any works to a tree from lopping branches to removing the tree, you must give the council six weeks notice in writing of what you wish to do. The Council will then assess the amenity value of the trees and whether the level of works proposed are acceptable. If you do not receive a response within six weeks then you have two years to carry out the proposed work. More information regarding trees and the regulations which protect them is contained in the Council's Supplementary Planning Guidance Note 6 on "Trees," which is available free of charge.

Objectives for the Conservation Area

The aim of the Conservation Area is to preserve and enhance the distinctive character of Sunnymead Flats; to maintain the quality of the flats and communal areas to the original design and to enhance the environment in which the flats are set.

The general objectives for policy and proposals for the Conservation Area are:-

- To ensure the proper upkeep and maintenance of the flats and common areas in their original style and appearance.
- To protect the areas distinctive layout and appearance.
- To promote environmental improvements within the Conservation Area consistent with its character.
- To ensure that all alterations respect the character of the Conservation Area.



Guidance for Residents

This section provides guidance to householders to ensure that any proposed alterations respect the quality of the Conservation Area. It is important that minor changes are carried out in the same style as the original flats, respecting the original design principles and using similar materials. Generally, new materials should match the original, though there may be instances when modern alternatives are acceptable.

Sunnymead Flats has a number of distinctive features, both in terms of design and layout, which are particularly characteristic of the time they were built. The important features include;

- Architectural Style.
- Materials.
- Layout of the Flats and the relationship to the landscaping and open space.
- Relationship with surrounding housing areas.



Windows

Replacement windows should be of the same size and arrangement as existing windows. Clear glass should be used and effects such as leading should be avoided.

Window frames should be recessed maintaining the window sill.

White UPVC is an acceptable modern alternative to the original window materials.

Doors

Over elaborate door furniture should be avoided and they should be coloured to match the existing colour scheme.

Vertical wooden panelled doors are an acceptable material for the outbuildings.

Roofs

Dark grey pantiles should be used to match the existing roofs of the flats.

Satellite Dishes

Satellite dishes will normally require planning permission and residents are encouraged to share such installations as a proliferation of dishes would detract greatly from the flats.

Residents are also encouraged to use the supplied ducting rather than running separate cables on the outside of the flats, as this also detracts from the appearance of the buildings.

Balconies

Narrow vertical protective railing on the balconies should be painted to match the existing colour scheme. Where balconies are replaced they should match in terms of style and colour those already existing.

Bin Stores

The bin stores should be painted to match the Flats they are located next to, in order to maintain a unified theme. Vertical wooden panelled doors are an acceptable material for the outbuildings.

Dark felt should be used to match the existing roofs of the outbuildings.

Communal Open Space

The area around the flats should remain predominantly grass and kept open to enable residents to enjoy the communal open space.



The Borough Council owns the land in which the flats are set and is committed to improving the area subject to the availability of resources.

Improvements undertaken to date:

- Overcladding of the external wall surfaces with insulation and decorative rendered finish.
- Replacement of windows and balcony doors.
- Erection of plaque on a plinth to raise the profile of the Conservation Area.

Possible future improvements

Subject to the availability of resources a number of future improvements will be considered.

- Reinstate the paving running to and around the flats which is in a poor state of repair and has become overgrown.
- If these works are undertaken, the Borough Council will seek to re-use the original paving materials will be re-used where possible, and where new paving is required, it should match the existing. Replacing paving with tarmac will not be considered appropriate.
- Enhance the setting of the Flats with a general landscaping scheme, which respects the open grass setting and established boundary hedges.
- Erect street signs at prominent locations for 'Sunnymead Flats Conservation Area' to complement the plaque and raise the profile of the conservation area. Such signs would be in a similar style to those identifying the street numbers.
- Erect a low level fence along Sunnymead to prevent cars parking on the grass.
- Enhance the entrance to the Conservation Area via The Driftway. This may involve supplementing the existing landscaping and introducing signage to inform people that they are entering a Conservation Area.
- Resiting of the plaque in a more prominent and accessible location.



Enlargement of the Conservation Area

There are three blocks of flats which while a different shape to the other flats currently within the Conservation Area are of a similar style in terms of design detailing, proportions and materials (and are also coloured pink and buff) to match those already part of the Conservation Area. These flats are important to the character of the area and are therefore worthy of protection.

Following a positive response from the public consultation for the suggested inclusion of these flats in the draft version of the document, the Conservation Boundary has now been extended to include these flats. The map opposite indicates the area now

included in the extended Conservation Area boundary.

The enlarged Conservation Area boundary

