

# Meadway Conservation Area Character Appraisal

Approved June 2015



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prepared by

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## **MEADWAY CONSERVATION AREA CHARACTER APPRAISAL SUMMARY OF 2014 REVIEW**

Meadway Conservation Area is a very well-established collection of roads having in common their dense landscape setting – gardens, street trees and verges. Although extension and modernisation of the houses has accelerated over the 6 years since the original appraisal was undertaken, the general impression of a mature green setting is maintained. The considerable asset of footway verge planting with shrubs – once common in interwar streets, but often removed later because of the cost of maintenance – has to some extent compensated for the visual effect of more paved front gardens for car parking and the loss of traditional boundary walls, so that, from the road at least, the effect is broadly satisfactory.

There are many examples where the whole of a front garden has been uniformly paved in block or brick, giving a drab appearance; fortunately, there are still a good many houses which have retained a good balance of paving and planted garden.

Another characteristic of the Conservation Area is the varied modelling of the roofs of the houses, especially when seen collectively on curves and in groups. The original roofs of the ‘cottage’ house types generally avoid continuous ridges, so dormers, which extend the original ridge, adversely affect the architectural character.

In an area with a limited range of traditional house-types and a small palette of materials and features, careful design of detail and a high standard of materials and building that are vital in new work. There are some instances where detailing and workmanship are crude. In terms of the design principles of extensions, the gaps between houses usually occupied by older single storey garages (important both for separating the distinctive house types and giving glimpses of the green setting beyond) are being filled in; this can be acceptable at a single storey, and extensions are generally limited in this way. Refusal of two storey side extensions has been upheld at appeal.

The use of uPVC windows, an inappropriate material in this conservation area windows, has continued; particularly for extensions to the original houses. Houses which retain both their original form and a substantial proportion of their original features are rare, and not all of these will survive in their present form, since planning consent for extension and alteration has already been granted in some cases that will change the appearance of the houses.

# 1 INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Conservation areas

1.1.1 Conservation areas are areas of ‘special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance’<sup>1</sup> and were introduced by the Civic Amenities Act 1967. Designation imposes a duty on the Council, in exercising its planning powers, to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of the area<sup>2</sup>. In fulfilling this duty, the Council does not seek to stop all development, but to manage change in a sensitive way, to ensure that those qualities which warranted designation are sustained and reinforced rather than eroded.

1.1.2 Conservation area designation introduces a general control over the demolition of unlisted buildings and the lopping or felling of trees above a certain size. However, it does not control all forms of development. Some changes to family houses (known as “permitted development”) do not normally require planning permission. These include minor alterations such as the replacement of windows and doors, or the alteration of boundary walls. Where such changes would harm local amenity or the proper planning of the area (for example, by damaging the historic environment), the Council can introduce special controls, known as Article 4 directions, that withdraw particular permitted development rights<sup>3</sup>. The result is that planning permission is required for such works.

## 1.2 The purpose of a conservation area appraisal

1.2.1 A conservation area character appraisal aims to define the qualities that make an area special. This involves understanding the history and development of the place and analysing its current appearance and character - including describing significant features in the landscape and identifying important buildings and spaces. It also involves recording, where appropriate, intangible qualities such as the sights, sounds and smells that contribute to making the area distinctive, as well as its historic associations with people and events.

1.2.2 An appraisal is not a complete audit of every building or feature, but rather aims to give an overall flavour of the area. It provides a benchmark of understanding against which the effects of proposals for change can be assessed, and the future of the area managed. It also identifies problems

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<sup>1</sup> Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas Act) 1990 s.69

<sup>2</sup> *ibid*, Section 72

<sup>3</sup> Replacement Appendix D to Department of Environment Circular 9/95 (November 2010), DCLG

that detract from the character of the area and potential threats to this character.

- 1.2.3 This appraisal of the Meadway Conservation Area (hereafter referred to as the Conservation Area) supports Enfield Council's commitment in The Enfield Plan Core Strategy adopted 2010) and its duty under section 71 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 to prepare proposals for the preservation and enhancement of conservation areas and to consult the public about the proposals. The assessment in the appraisal of the contribution made by unlisted buildings and other elements to the character of the Conservation Area is based on the criteria suggested in English Heritage's guidance *Understanding Place: Conservation Area Designation, Appraisal and Management* (2011), reproduced in Appendix 6.2 to this document.

### **1.3 Conservation in Enfield**

- 1.3.1 Since the 1870s, Enfield has developed from a modest market town surrounded by open country and small villages to a pattern of suburbs on the edge of London. This transformation was triggered by the advent of suburban railways and took place in a piecemeal manner, with former villages being developed into local shopping centres and industries being developed along the Lea Valley. Conservation areas in Enfield reflect this pattern of development, including old town and village centres, rural areas centred on the remains of former country estates, examples of the best suburban estates and distinctive industrial sites. Some of the smaller designated areas are concentrated on particular groups of buildings of local importance.
- 1.3.2 Meadway Conservation Area was designated in November 2008. The boundary has remained unchanged and no boundary alterations are currently proposed.

### **1.4 Planning policy framework**

- 1.4.1 The legal basis for conservation areas is the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. National policy guidance is provided by the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) published in March 2012, which *inter alia* requires local planning authorities to set out a positive strategy for the conservation and enjoyment of the historic environment. The Enfield Plan sets out a basic framework of conservation policies (Core Strategy: *Core Policy 31*; Development Management Document: *DMD 44*) for all areas. This Conservation Area appraisal will be used to support the conservation policies that form part of the Core Strategy.

## 2 APPRAISAL OF SPECIAL INTEREST

### 2.1 Location and setting

#### *Location and context*

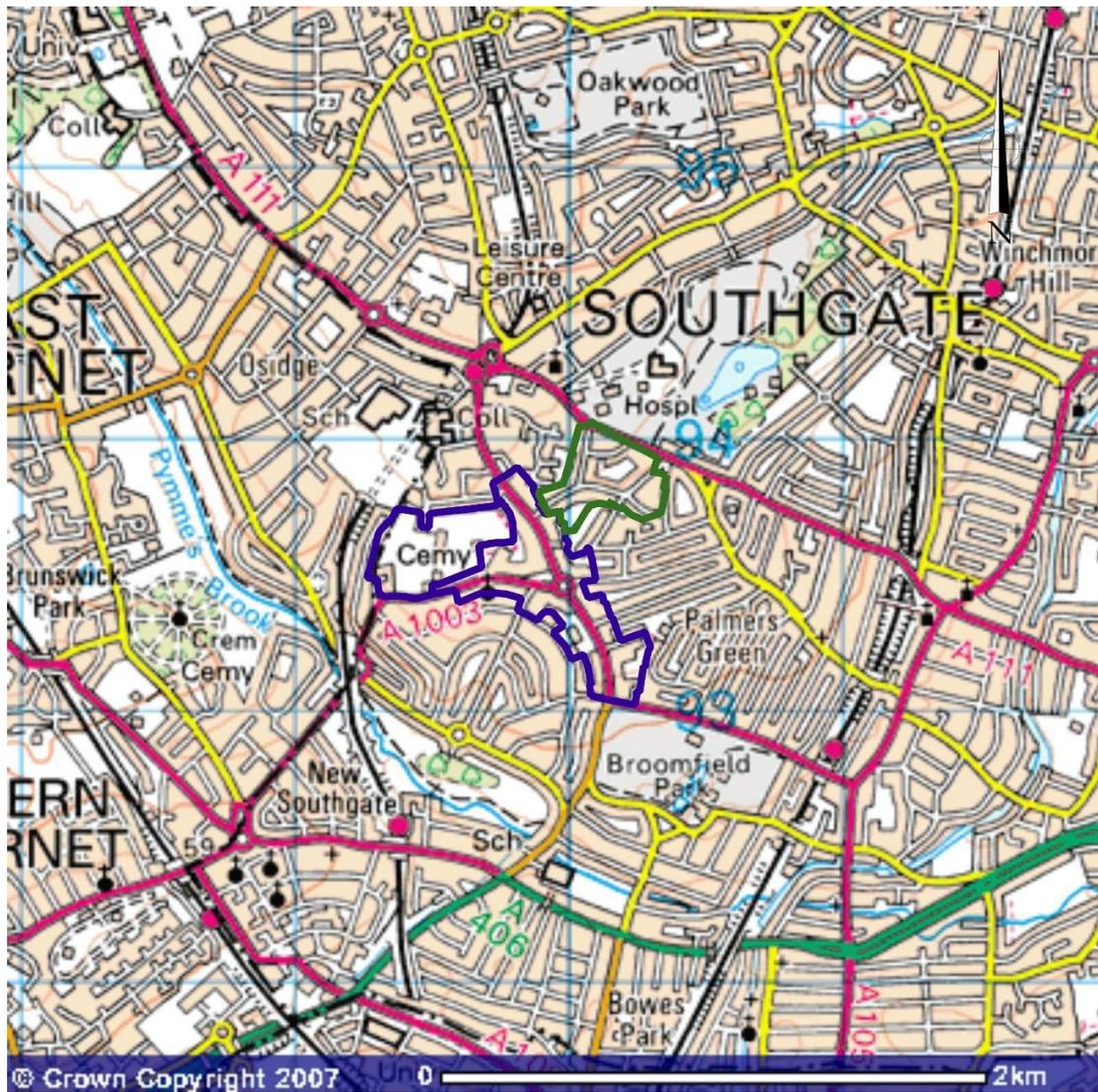
- 2.1.1 The Conservation Area is a short distance south east of Southgate Circus, with Meadway and its continuations as Greenway and Bourne Avenue linking Southgate High Street and Bourne Hill. On the north eastern side of Bourne Hill, Grovelands Park is the area's immediate neighbour, with Southgate Cemetery providing another open space to the south west. Southgate Green Conservation Area immediately abuts the Meadway Conservation Area at its western end.

#### *General character and plan form*

- 2.1.2 The area forms a quiet residential enclave of linked roads, announced on Southgate High Street by twin curved terraces of single storey shops acting as a gateway to the area (these are within the Southgate Green Conservation Area). There is a limited range of detached and semi-detached house-types, set in streets with planted verges. The planning, layout and architectural style of the Conservation Area are clearly influenced by the Arts and Crafts and Garden Suburbs movements. Few house designs are repeated exactly, but there is a wide range of architectural features and materials which, used in varying combinations, give many of the houses a family resemblance to one another.

#### *Landscape setting and topography*

- 2.1.3 When it was built, the development was set in relatively open countryside apart from sporadic development along Southgate High Street. The site was between the parkland of Grovelands (formerly owned by the Walker family) to the north east, and open land immediately on the fringes of Southgate village. This still shows as playing fields on the 1935 OS map, but is now housing and Southgate College's sports ground. The former use accounts for the mature trees in the area's western setting. Meadway and Bourne Avenue's northern section dip with a natural fall in the land around the north-west corner of the central triangular green, so their role in the townscape is emphasised. A considerable number of rear garden trees on the west side of the area, many visible from the roads, have Tree Preservation Orders. There are views towards the open land and trees of Grovelands Park from Bourne Avenue, Parkway and Greenway.
- 2.1.4 There are good views along Bourne Hill as it falls westwards, and views into the area where Greenway, Parkway and Bourne Avenue join Bourne Hill. Conversely, from these roads the treescape of Grovelands Park terminates the views north or north-east.



*The Meadway proposed conservation area character appraisal map 1: Location map*

- Conservation area boundary
- Boundary of the Southgate Green conservation area

*Figure 1: Location Map*



Figure 2: Meadway Conservation Area aerial photo – the area is the Y shape between Grovelands Park to the north east and Southgate High Street to the south west.

## 2.2 Historical development

2.2.1 Until the late 19th century, Southgate was thinly populated. Much of the land formed part of large private estates, Grovelands and Arnos being the largest, and the owners preferred to keep the area rural rather than selling land for housing. Early railways did not serve Southgate because its hilly terrain would have made construction expensive, until the Great Northern extension in 1871 brought a station to nearby Palmers Green. Suburban development first began west of Southgate Circus, as mostly smaller houses and cottages with a few larger houses in Chase Side.



Figure 3: OS maps showing the Conservation Area location in 1866 (left) and 1934 (right)

2.2.2 In 1914, the district was still mainly rural until Fox Lane began to be developed, but it was not until after the First World War that the major estates began to be sold off and more widespread development began. Southgate Council secured land for public parks at the sale of Grovelands Park in 1913, and in the 1920s at Arnos Park and Oakwood Park: the Southgate House Estate was sold in 1924. However, it was the arrival of the Piccadilly line extension from Finsbury Park to Cockfosters in 1932 and 1933 that really accelerated speculative development, spurred by the purchasers of the Grovelands and Arnos estates who, unlike the original Taylor and Walker families, had no reservations about selling their land for development.

2.2.3 The area around Meadway was the first of the developments on the Southgate House estate, 64 acres between Southgate High Street and the Bourne, which was sold after the death in 1922 of the last of the Walkers. The house and grounds were bought for a school, and the rest of the land by Edmondson's, a Muswell Hill firm that had already built extensively in Winchmore Hill.

### 2.3 Archaeology

2.3.1 There are no known features of archaeological interest within the Conservation Area. Given that the area has only been intensively occupied relatively recently, its archaeological potential is considered to be very limited.

### 2.4 Character analysis



Figure 4: 'Cottage' house type at Bourne Avenue (left), and the street's landscape setting

#### *Spatial analysis*

2.4.1 The Conservation Area is distinguished from its setting by its consistent density, its pattern of development and its verge planting. To the east and south, the grain of development is smaller and the streets are on a regular grid; and to the west there is an informal more modern *cul de sac* layout. The layout avoids a grid pattern, with many of the roads meeting at acute angles. Development within the Conservation Area is characterised by

relatively long narrow plots, so that houses are built close together but are set in a generous hinterland of gardens. The back gardens of the area, bounded by Meadway (east), Greenway, Bourne Avenue, Parkway and Bourne Hill, converge on an area of enclosed allotments, now only visible from an entry off Bourne Hill since the former parking area was replaced by housing. Street widths are generous, and junctions particularly so, with three locations where grassed and planted islands have been formed. These islands and the significant verge-planting with shrubs throughout the area provide a green and spacious setting for the built streetscape, modifying the impact of roads and traffic and terminating views along the roads. The private rear gardens provide a treed backdrop; this and the rise and fall of the land create an intimate streetscape and sense of enclosure within the Conservation Area, and provide separation from the main roads which form its north-eastern and south-western boundaries.



Figure 5: (Left) abundant road verge planting; (right) green island at road junction

2.4.2 There are good long views from Meadway’s western end towards Bourne Hill. Bourne Avenue dips up and down which increases the sense of enclosure generated by the closely spaced houses, their modest scale and the garden foliage. The symmetrical crescent of shops at the entrance to Meadway from the High Street frames the long view north-eastwards, terminated by the eastern arm of Meadway.

2.4.3 On Bourne Hill, the north-western boundary of the Conservation Area, sweeping views downhill take in the gates of Grovelands Park and the entrances to the Conservation Area at Greenway, Parkway and Bourne Avenue. A group of new houses has replaced the former car park and its ugly barrier, fronting the allotments and facing the park entrance.

#### *Qualities of buildings*

2.4.4 Although many of the houses have features and forms typical of speculative interwar development – half-timbering, bay windows, front gables - this development of the mid 1920s still retains an influence from the Arts and Crafts movement, which had its principal effect on builders’ speculative development in the first decade of the 20th century. Only one of the house types - the ‘cottage’ type shown in the photos below - is

sufficiently consistent in its use of vernacular features such as exposed front chimney breasts to be distinctive in an inter-war suburban setting, but these have a disproportionate influence because their location at the centre and lower-lying part of the conservation area enables better views of the hipped roofs and tall chimneys, and enhances their effect in a group.



Figure 6: Two styles of the 'cottage house' with front chimney stack - gabled (left) and half-hipped

2.4.5 In the north eastern part of Meadway, and in Ridgeway and Parkway, there are more houses of this type (including a version designed as two semi-detached houses), but they retain fewer of their original features and setting. In the better survivals, a recessed ground floor area under the corbelled first floor gives the frontages a very well-modelled aspect, reinforced by the exposed chimney breasts with a small-tiled roof (again with tiled corbels) and the bay window within the recess.

2.4.6 Another interesting variation on an inter-war building type occurring in Bourne Avenue, The Ridgeway and Parkway is shown in the photo below, left: it is semi-detached with wide angled wings and hipped roofs, and very deep eaves over its bays. The exposed chimney breasts are similar to the cottage type, but, apart from this and the splaying of the bays, the design is less unusual and the scale much less intimate. A variation on this (below, right) is designed to give the impression of being one house rather than two, by the use of an asymmetrical frontage and different front door positions.



Figure 7: Larger semi-detached house types

2.4.7 There are other house types, which show different variations on the semi-detached theme, featuring large oriel windows or asymmetrical gabled frontages. Although some of these do not achieve the balance and harmony of elements of the types described above, they have a degree of originality, which distinguishes them from later more formulaic styles using only gables and bay-windows as their motifs.

#### *Details and materials*

2.4.8 The variants on the basic house types combine a range of features in differing permutations. Architectural features that contribute to the character of the area and deserve retention include brick arches with decorative brick infill, large and small oriel windows, hipped dormers, exposed chimney stacks, and tiled porches. There is a limited range of materials, all of which are characteristic of inter-war speculative development: principally red brick, white render, and plain clay tile for roofs, bays or gables. The original form of the front boundary walls appears to be a low wall combining brick and either burrs from brick kilns (over-fired bricks) or in some cases curved clay crucibles from steel manufacture, re-used at gateways. Original walls have a curved profile and brick coping; a good number of these survive.



Figure 8: Original boundary walls and traditional oak gate; and (right) tile detail to a tall stack

#### *The public realm*

2.4.9 The planted verges with their variety of mature shrubs make a highly important contribution to the character of the Conservation Area, but otherwise the public realm has no distinctive features save the pink concrete paving on the footways around the central triangle (also used for repair in other locations). Intrusive traffic and parking signs are also a feature of this area – for example the speed sign (which now has a digital display) on the triangular green at Meadway, and the no-entry signs at one of the junctions on Bourne Hill.

#### *Green spaces*

2.4.10 The grassed islands at junctions and the shrub-planted verges are important factors which help to establish a distinct identity for the

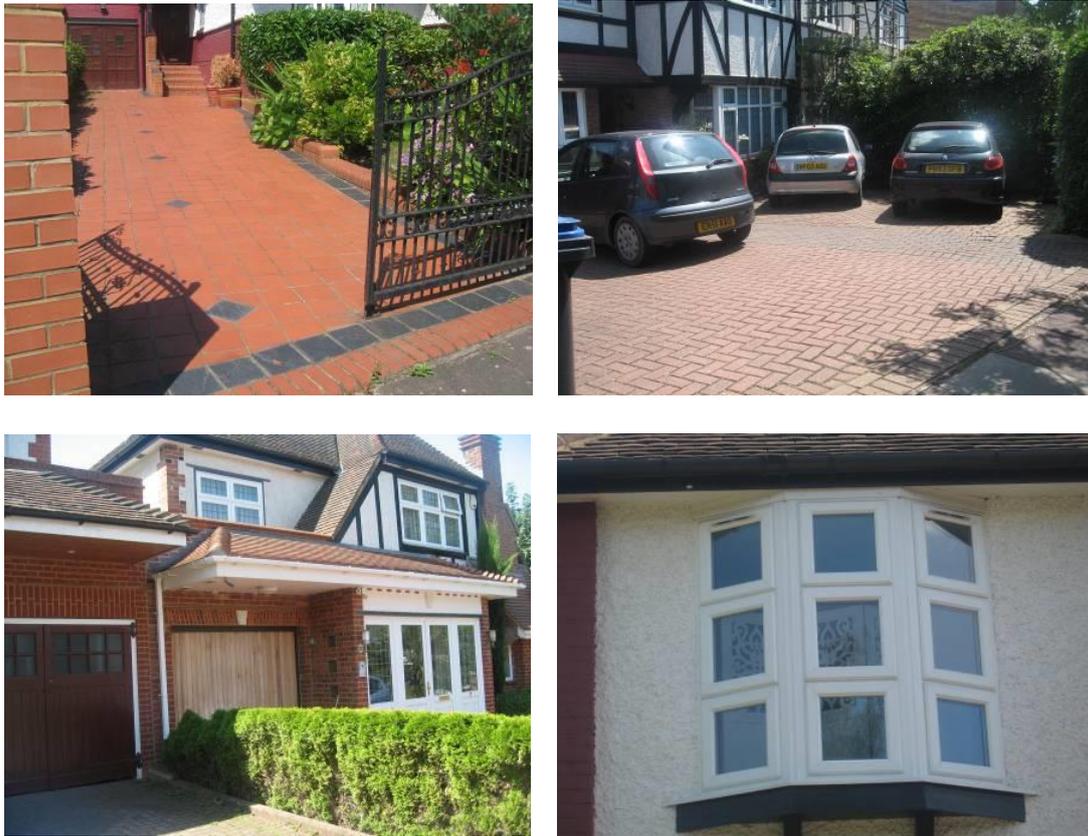
Conservation Area and soften views of roads and junctions. Where there are mature trees on the islands, they are very important elements in the townscape, providing terminal features and a focus for views along roads. Private rear gardens with their mature trees, and the better-planted front gardens, provide a substantial green setting; gardens are mostly large in proportion to the house sizes, with those on the north side of the eastern section of Meadway being particularly extensive. To the rear of the houses on the south side of Parkway and the north side of Greenway, there is a long band of allotments which is just visible from Bourne Hill. However, with the adjoining generous private gardens, the allotments form a very extensive area for biodiversity. Houses are closely built, and where there are single storey garages – for example adjoining the cottage type houses – these often provide important views through the gaps to mature planting in rear gardens. Grovelands Park provides a major green setting for the whole conservation area.



Figure 9: Planted verges (left) are a very distinctive element in the conservation area; the older single storey garage (right) allows views through between houses

#### *Intrusion and damage*

2.4.11 The changes which have damaged the area's character over many years are those common in inter-war housing areas: the replacement of front garden planting with large areas of harsh modern paving, and the consequent intrusion of multiple vehicles on frontages; loss of traditional boundaries such as low brick walls with a curved profile and distinctive local materials; replacement of painted softwood windows with uPVC or hardwood; loss of traditional single storey garages with timber doors; and loss of original roof profiles as a result of side- or roof-dormer extensions which form a continuous ridge line. In some cases, alcoves at the ground floor of the 'cottage' type appear to have been filled in, reducing the strong modelling of the elevation.

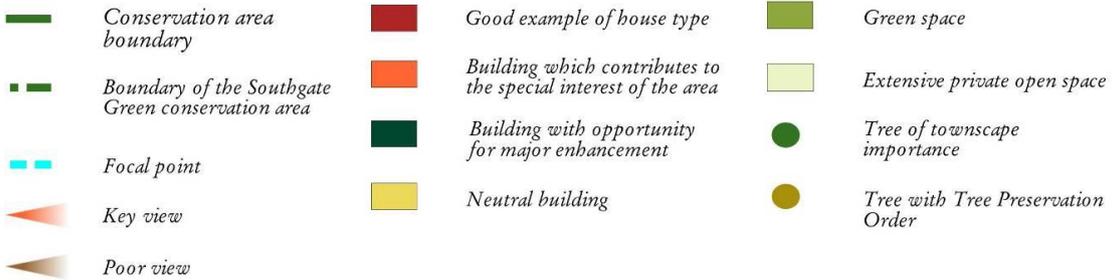


*Figure 10: Unsympathetic changes to settings and replacement of original features*

2.4.12 The greenery of verges, gardens and backlands has flourished in recent years. Planting has limited the visual impact of changes to the setting of the houses and increases in their size, but such screening does not provide a justification for inappropriately large extensions or the loss of other original features. In this context the Article 4 direction confirmed in 2008 restricts permitted development rights in relation to extensions and alterations fronting a highway.



*The Meadway proposed conservation area character appraisal map 2: character analysis*



*Figure 11: Character analysis map*

### *Problems and pressures*

2.4.13 This is a well-maintained residential area with most buildings in good condition. There is only one instance (in The Ridgeway) where a property has apparently been demolished to give access to new development on a backland site, but the risk is always present where garden plots are large. The main current threats to character are from poor detailing, which is gradually eroding traditional details and materials, and the pressure to extend houses and create hard-standings in ways which are unsympathetic to the original character in design, detail and materials. The principal issues are:

- Paving of front gardens for parking, which seriously affects the streetscape and is likely to continue; because of this, the retention of the remaining original boundary walls and planting density is under threat.
- Use of inappropriate modern materials such as uPVC for windows and metal for garage doors, and the addition of large porches and roof extensions, has eroded the original character of the area and reduced the design distinctions between the different house types.
- In the public realm, the presence of a major road, Bourne Hill, at the edge of the Conservation Area makes traffic management measures and signage inevitable, but their intrusion needs to be minimised.
- As the majority of houses have their own parking spaces, there is little street parking. The combination of this and the substantial verge planting, separating the footway from the road, tends to encourage traffic to speed; there is now a digital display 30mph enforcement sign, which seems to be much ignored. Other measures to limit speed (such as change in road surface) could be considered.



*Figure 12: Bleak expanse of hardstanding, and wide metal garage doors; both inconsistent with the area's character*

### **3 SUMMARY OF SPECIAL INTEREST OF THE CONSERVATION AREA**

3.1.1 The key factors that give the Meadway Conservation Area its special interest can be summarised as follows:

- A network of streets containing a range of different and distinctive house types from the early days of inter-war speculative development, when the influence of the Arts and Crafts movement first produced mock-vernacular styles in the mass market. Some of the houses have features rare in later

inter-war development such as exposed chimney stacks, asymmetrical frontages to semi-detached pairs, angled wings, and large oriel windows.

- The prevalence of long, relatively narrow plots means that houses are built close together on the street frontage, but are set in an extensive hinterland of back gardens which combine to form green areas of importance both visually – as backdrop – and as wildlife habitat. The allotments between the houses on Greenway and Parkway, and several very large private gardens, intensify this characteristic.
- The footways have verges planted with shrubs, which form an extra layer of landscape setting enclosing the footway, separating it from the highway, and complementing front garden planting. These verges define the Conservation Area as distinct from neighbouring streets.
- Grassed and planted islands at road junctions provide a visual focus and complement the planted verges.
- There are backdrops of rear garden trees seen through gaps between houses and from higher vantage points; some of these have Tree Preservation Orders.
- Modelling of the streetscapes is varied because views change with the topography and landscaping, and the proximity of houses to each other means that there are complex and interesting roofscapes in many views.
- The Conservation Area benefits from the gradual rise of Bourne Hill and from the dip in the landscape at the Meadway/Bourne Avenue junction, which give a sense of enclosure to the houses in this part of the Conservation Area.
- Grovelands Park, long private gardens, and the allotments between Parkway and Greenway provide a rich variety of landscape and habitat, both within and adjoining the conservation area.



Figure 13: Inappropriate detailing to new work

## 4 SUMMARY OF ISSUES

4.1.1 Issues facing the Conservation Area at present can be summarised as follows:

- *The houses and landscaping are well kept, but are let down by the poor treatment of many front gardens with inappropriate paving and boundaries, and by uPVC and stained hardwood windows replacing traditional painted joinery.*
- *Extensions, additions and changes of material are reducing the distinctions between different house types and the clarity of the original designs. Guidance for owners is needed, which could include a photographic record of original forms and features for reference and discussion in the planning process.*
- *The public realm has standard lighting and road and footway finishes. More sympathetic street furniture and better quality finishes should be considered, particularly finding a better match for the original characteristic pink paving for future repairs and replacement.*
- *There are extensive green open areas behind some of the houses, including the allotments and a small number of large private gardens, which contribute greatly to views from and between the houses and are important for wildlife: their loss would have an adverse effect on the character of the area.*



Figure 14: Large extensions and changes to fenestration which overpower the original house design

## 5 BIBLIOGRAPHY AND CONTACT DETAILS

### 5.1 Bibliography

The following reference works were used in the preparation of this appraisal:

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Pevsner N and Cherry B *The Buildings of England, London 4: North*, (Penguin, London 1998)

Whitaker, CW *Account of the Urban District of Enfield* (London, George Bell, 1911)

Reference is also made to the following legislation and national and local policy guidance:

Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990

Planning Policy Guidance Note 15: Planning and the Historic Environment Department of the Environment, Department of National Heritage 1994

Planning Policy Guidance Note 16: Archaeology and Planning and the Historic Environment, Department of the Environment, Department of National Heritage 1990

Enfield Unitary Development Plan 1994

Enfield Development Management Document 2014

English Heritage: *Guidance on conservation area appraisals* (February 2006)

## **5.2 Contact details:**

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## **6 APPENDICES**

### **6.1 Criteria for assessing unlisted elements**

(From English Heritage's guidance *Understanding Place: Conservation Area Designation, Appraisal and Management* (2011))

'Check list to identify elements in a conservation area which may contribute to the special interest.

A positive response to one or more of the following may indicate that a particular element within a conservation area makes a positive contribution provided that its historic form and values have not been eroded.

- Is it the work of a particular architect or designer of regional or local note?
- Does it have landmark quality?
- Does it reflect a substantial number of other elements in the conservation area in age, style, materials, form or other characteristics?
- Does it relate to adjacent designated heritage assets in age, materials or in any other historically significant way?
- Does it contribute positively to the setting of adjacent designated heritage assets?
- Does it contribute to the quality of recognisable spaces including exteriors or open spaces with a complex of public buildings?
- Is it associated with a designed landscape eg a significant wall, terracing or a garden building?
- Does it individually, or as part of a group, illustrate the development of the settlement in which it stands?
- Does it have significant historic association with features such as the historic road layout, burgage plots, a town park or a landscape feature?
- Does it have historic associations with local people or past events?
- Does it reflect the traditional functional character or former uses in the area?
- Does its use contribute to the character or appearance of the area?

*Appraisal review undertaken by Jenny Pearce; maps prepared by Richard Peats; photographs by DMP unless otherwise stated*

October 2014

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