ABINGTON PARK
CONSERVATION AREA
CONSERVATION AREA ASSESSMENT
Introduction

Abington Park is one of Northampton’s main public parks and although it ostensibly dates from the turn of the 20th century, it overlies remnants of a much earlier 18th century parkland landscape. The residential properties surrounding the park are equally significant; the majority were developed in the first quarter of the 20th century and whilst individual buildings vary greatly in design, their complementary styles and materials have produced a range of buildings whose quality and consistency are unique in Northampton for that date.

Quite apart from their amenity value, Victorian and Edwardian urban parks are increasingly being seen in the same light as other historic designed landscapes, and Abington Park is important as a link between the two traditions. Although the park itself is protected by virtue of its public ownership, its environs are exposed to the constant development pressures common to all towns, and the conservation area is one means of managing change in a sensitive and consistent manner.

Conservation areas were first introduced by the Civic Amenities Act in 1967. Section 69 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 places a duty on local authorities to designate as conservation areas ‘areas of special architectural or historic interest the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance’. Section 71 places a duty on local authorities to formulate and publish proposals for the preservation and enhancement of their conservation areas. Local authorities also have a duty to review the conservation areas from time to time.

The primary objectives of conservation area designation are:

- to preserve worthy buildings and prevent their demolition unless this is shown to be the only suitable action;
- to ensure that redevelopment, renovation or the extension of existing buildings will harmonise with other buildings in the area;
- to preserve or enhance the setting of the area;
- to encourage positive schemes for the restoration of buildings within the area.

Purpose of Assessment

The purpose of this assessment is to provide guidance for owners, occupiers and developers on how the preservation and enhancement of the character and appearance of the area can be achieved. It will also provide a sound basis for the assessment of planning applications and will help identify proposals for preserving and enhancing the character and appearance of the area.

Government Advice

The primary Government advice relating to conservation areas is contained in PPG 15: Planning and the Historic Environment. This document offers clear advice on the designation of conservation areas and the importance of assessing the area’s special interest appropriately.

English Heritage offers advice on undertaking conservation area appraisals and this statement has been prepared in accordance with this advice.

Local Plan Policy

The Northampton Local Plan was adopted in June 1997. The plan sets out the Council’s aspirations for protecting and enhancing the Borough’s historic assets and states how applications affecting conservation areas will be assessed. These policies will be strengthened by this character appraisal, which will offer greater detail regarding those elements which give the area its distinctiveness.

Listed Building Consent

Listed Building Consent is required for the demolition of, or any works of alteration or extension which would affect the character or appearance of a listed building. The regulations apply to both external and internal alterations. For the purposes of listed building control any object or structure which is fixed to the building or has formed part of the land since before 1st July 1948 are also treated as part of the listed building.
Repair works do not normally require listed building consent. However, it is always advisable to consult the Council’s Conservation Officers before commencing work to a listed building.

The Council has published a list of buildings considered to be of local importance (Local List) and will endeavour to secure the long term future of these buildings.

**Demolition in Conservation Areas**

Conservation Area Consent is required for certain demolition work within a conservation area.

- The demolition of a building with a volume of more than 115 m³.
- The demolition of wall, fences or gates above 1m in height and abutting the highway (2m elsewhere)
- Buildings subject to a statutory order or notice.

In the case of a listed building a separate Listed Building Consent is also required.

**Trees**

The Town and Country Planning Act 1990 makes provision for the protection of trees in the interests of amenity and the Act makes special provision for trees within conservation areas. Well-established trees make an important and positive contribution to the local environment and therefore it is essential to safeguard these features for the benefit of the community. Trees over 76mm (3") in diameter within the conservation area are automatically protected from damage or felling. Six weeks prior written notice must be given to the Council for any works likely to affect a tree within a conservation area (this includes work which may affect the roots). Within that time the Council may decide to make a Tree Preservation Order. Once a tree is protected by a Tree Preservation Order it is an offence to cut down, uproot, prune, damage or destroy a tree without the written consent of the Council.

**History and Development**

Abington Park conservation area lies 3km east of the centre of Northampton, and covers an area of 67ha. It encompasses the whole of Abington Park, east and west of Park Avenue South, and includes much of the distinctive late 19th and early 20th century residential development fronting the park, particularly to the north, south and west.

The oldest surviving building in the area is the church of St Peter & St Paul, which was recorded in the Domesday Book, although the earliest part of the present fabric dates from the late 12th century. Although it now stands in isolation next to Abington Abbey, the church originally served the village of Abington, which was cleared when the area was ‘emparked’ in the 18th century. A 1671 map of Abington (right) shows the village as centred on the church, in front of which was an open square and crossroads. The route north to Wellingborough Road is still identifiable as a hollow-way although no trace survives of the road which led westwards from the square roughly parallel to, and north of, Christchurch Road. The roads and square are shown flanked by buildings, but these survive only as earthworks to the east of Park Avenue South.

Abington Abbey incorporates elements of the original 16th century manor house but was extensively re-modelled in the 18th century, when the south and east elevations were re-fronted. Other significant buildings within the park associated with the Abbey include the 1678 Water Tower, which was a combined well house and dovecote, the early 19th century hunting gate and Archway Cottages on
Wellingborough Road. The pair of 17th century thatched cottages at Abington Park Farm south-west of the Abbey were used as the rectory until 1846.

Abington Abbey itself passed through several hands and eventually was leased for use as a private asylum between 1845 and 1892. Deciding that its future was more secure in public ownership, in 1892 the owners, Lord & Lady Wantage, gave the Abbey and 8ha of surrounding parkland to the Borough of Northampton for use as a ‘people’s park’. The Corporation purchased a further 18ha the following year and after extensive improvement works, this area was opened as a public park in 1897 in commemoration of Queen Victoria’s Diamond Jubilee. The Abbey was converted to a museum, and further land acquisitions and improvements followed, so that by 1904 Abington Park had reached its present extent.

Abington Park was originally surrounded by agricultural land but by the turn of the 20th century the town’s eastwards expansion had reached its north-western edge, and work had started on the construction of Park Avenue South, extending from Wellingborough Road as far as St Peter & St Paul’s church. The land to the south and west of the park remained wholly undeveloped; the only building in the area was the replacement rectory of 1846, which now lies to the rear of the houses along Abington Park Crescent.

Concurrent with the construction of Park Avenue South, the grid pattern of streets to the north and west of Wellingborough Road was laid out, and this area was developed between about 1905 and 1925. The premium plots overlooking the park were reserved for more substantial individual houses, and the first phase, along Christchurch Road and the return into Sandringham Road, was developed from 1905 onwards. This was originally known as the Alexandra Park Estate, and includes several highly idiosyncratic houses designed by the important local architect Alexander Anderson.

The slightly later development to the south and east of Abington Park is characterised by more generous plots and hence much larger buildings. This trend culminated in the sequence of villas along Wellingborough Road, in the far north-eastern corner of the park. These are substantial, individually-designed dwellings set within their own grounds.

Architectural and Townscape Character

The extent of the conservation area encompasses the whole of Abington Park and includes those residential properties fronting the park along parts of Christchurch Road, Park Avenue South, Abington Park Crescent and Wellingborough Road which are of particular merit in architectural or townscape terms. The line of the conservation area boundary has been designed to be geographically coherent and follows property boundaries, or other readily identifiable topographic features, wherever practicable.

Park Avenue South

Park Avenue South bisects the conservation area in a roughly north-south direction, linking Billing Road with Wellingborough Road. Although it is one of the main traffic arteries across the eastern side of Northampton, it is very much a positive feature of the conservation area. The road was laid out to generous standards and has broad footpaths, together with double avenues of mature horse chestnut trees on both sides. Only a handful of the houses on Park Avenue South which fall within the conservation area predate the First World War, but those built in the interwar years are of comparable styles and demonstrate the enduring influence of crafts-based building traditions.

All are of two storeys and are a mixture of detached and terraced forms, but most were designed and built separately and make extensive use of features such as boldly projecting bay windows, gables and porches to assert their individuality. Nevertheless the use of common materials such as brick and tiles and, particularly, smooth or ‘pebbledash’ render, helps to unify the group. This applies even to a building as unconventional as No 55, designed by Alexander Anderson in 1908, and the only real exception to the general unity is No 47A, a 1970s building whose horizontal emphasis and materials mark it out.
Abington Park Crescent

Abington Park Crescent is on a similar generous scale to Park Avenue South and sweeps round in a single curve to form the southern and eastern boundaries of Abington Park. It broadly follows the line of former field boundaries, and the road was laid out after the final land purchases which established the park in its present extent.

Although the development on this section of Abington Park Crescent is generally contemporary with Park Avenue South and Christchurch Road, there are significant differences, especially in terms of form and scale. For example, when the land between Park Avenue South and what became Landcross Drive was sold in 1903, several covenants were attached restricting any development to private houses, setting a minimum rateable value for the properties and specifying a minimum distance for the properties to be set back from the highway. This established a pattern for large detached or semi-detached houses set in generous gardens, unlike the smaller continuous terraces elsewhere.

The style of the houses is broadly similar to those mentioned above but is commensurately grander, and several display obvious Arts & Crafts references. Particularly noteworthy are Nos 5-6 and 11-12, large ‘semis’ which both have informally composed elevations with dominant gables, bay windows and ‘pebble-dashed’ upper storeys. The slightly later Nos 22A-23 of 1923 are in a similar vein and are attributed to R. Barry Parker, the pioneer garden city architect. Nos 26-28 are of an almost identical design and may be by the same architect.

There are a number of later houses on this side of Abington Park Crescent which although in radically different styles, are of equally accomplished design, and their successful integration into the townscape shows that good design rather than style is the key to contextualism. For example No 22 is a classic 1930s ‘Modeme’ villa, complete with horizontal Crittall’s windows, balconies overlooking the park and elaborate gates based on an abstract geometric motif. By contrast No 27 is a 1970s house whose forms and materials show the influence of the more subtle strands of Modernism which flourished in Scandinavia.

The series of post-war houses on the west side of Abington Park Crescent, from south of Bridgewater Avenue north towards Weston Way, are not of special interest and are not included in the conservation area.

However Nos 57-59, on the corner of Weston Way and Abington Park Crescent, are the first of another sequence of high quality, predominantly interwar era villas which are included within the conservation area. No 61 in particular is a very accomplished design which stands comparison with buildings from the heyday of the Arts & Crafts movement. It is notable for its complex interplay of roof forms, including a truncated spire over the porch, and high quality brick detailing, culminating in the imposing chimney which bisects the front elevation. The other interwar houses are less elaborate but continue the themes of informal massing, with dominant roofs and gables, and all have the same white rendered elevations. No 65 (Hycilla) is the only exception to this trend; it dates from 1960 and its subtle juxtaposition of strong horizontals and projecting and receding elements is of unusual architectural sophistication.
Nos 72-80, the handful of mainly post-war houses on the western side of Abington Park Crescent, are of less architectural interest but have been included within the conservation area because, as villas set within attractive gardens, they conform to the prevailing grain of development. The area of Abington Park immediately south of No 72 is also of historical significance: this is the site of 14 barracks which were re-erected to provide ‘temporary’ houses during the post-First World War housing crisis, as shown on the 1925-6 OS map (below).

**Wellingborough Road**

Wellingborough Road forms the north-western and northern edges of Abington Park, and as its name suggests, is historically one of the principal routes connecting Northampton with the east. The buildings along Wellingborough Road within the conservation area developed over several decades and their character varies considerably so for the purposes of analysis, they are described moving eastwards from a start point at the junction of Wellingborough Road and Ardington Road.

The most distinctive building in this locality is Abington Park Hotel, an archetypal Victorian ‘gin palace’ in a riotous French Renaissance style dating from 1898. The hotel is listed and therefore protected already but is included within the conservation area because it is a landmark building which announces the presence of Abington Park when approaching from the town centre. Immediately north of the hotel, Nos 385-407 are a terrace of typical late 19th century town houses, of three storeys including attics, with two storey bay windows and heavy stone dressings. They are chiefly notable for the prominence of their attic dormers, which are expressed as either pitched, or in some cases Flemish, gables. Although they are ostensibly a single terrace, these houses were actually built in two phases, as only the first five (Nos 385-393) are shown on the 1900-1 OS map (below).

The adjoining Nos 411-425 Wellingborough Road are a rather more distinguished series of early 20th century houses. Although they are essentially a terrace, the ‘hanging’ of each adjacent house is reversed so that repeating elements (gables, bay windows, porches etc.) are staggered and any monotony of rhythm is avoided. The architecture refers to the so-called ‘Bedford Park style’, after the widely influential London suburb, and relies on ‘balanced asymmetry’ and the detailing of a few elements for effect. Thus a simple palette of red brick and tiles is used, with white render on the upper storeys and ‘half-timbering’ to the gables. The details are equally restrained and principally include two storey bay windows, projecting porch canopies and white-painted timber sash and casement windows. The chief exception is the end house, No 425, which occupies the plot at the junction with Wantage Road. This building demonstrates the classic Victorian and Edwardian response to an acutely angled site, and deploys a polygonal tower with a spire, which ‘turns’ the corner effectively and forms a local landmark.

North of Wantage Road, the houses fronting Wellingborough Road and Park Avenue within the conservation area continue many of the same themes but there is a marked change in scale; all of these buildings are large semi-detached villas of three storeys including attics. Nos 431-433 and 435-437 are identical designs with prominent twin gables and projecting bay windows dominating the front elevations, with the upper storeys finished in smooth cream render. Nos 439-441 were built separately and their elevations differ considerably; No 439 is ‘pebbledash’ rendered at first floor level and No 441 makes extensive use of decorative stone dressings. Nevertheless their common use of prominent ‘half-timbered’ gables, red brick and white-painted timber sash and casement windows helps unify them as a single building.

Nos 443-445 and 447-449 are identical designs and are slightly earlier than the neighbouring houses, being shown on the 1900-1 OS map. These houses are rather more...
formal, with symmetrical elevations and fairly restrained detailing, with decoration confined to the stone dressings around the windows.

The remaining houses on Park Avenue within the conservation area are actually combinations of the same design. Nos 1-3 and 5-7 are true ‘semis’ whereas Nos 9-17 are a terrace made up of two ‘handed’ pairs with No 17 as an ‘odd number’ on the end. Their design is similar to those elsewhere with prominent twin gables, ‘pebbledash’ rendered upper floors, projecting bay windows and white-painted timber sash windows. More unusual features include the decorative brick dressings to the windows, and the small ‘gablet’ roofs to the projecting porch bays.

Nos 1-4 Abington Cottages to the rear of Nos 1-17 Park Avenue are also included within the conservation area. These were built as almshouses in 1846 in a Tudor revival style and whilst they are already listed, they are significant to the conservation area in being one of only a few buildings which predate the expansion and development of Abington Park. Park Avenue Methodist Church, at the junction of Park Avenue North and Abington Avenue, is also included within the conservation area because it is of considerable importance in both townscape and architectural terms. Its red brick tower is a prominent landmark in views both north and west along Wellingborough Road and its ‘free’ Perpendicular style is an unusual anachronism for its date (1925).

The north-west corner of the conservation area follows a stretch of Abington Avenue which reverts to being Wellingborough Road beyond the island junction. The houses in this area, encompassing Nos 243-257 Abington Avenue and Nos 451-481A Wellingborough Road, were largely developed in the first quarter of the 20th century and are almost exclusively semi-detached villas. Although most are individual designs there is a remarkable degree of conformity; all are of two storeys plus attic, have prominent tiled roofs with ‘half-timbered’ gables, ‘pebbledash’ or smooth rendered upper storeys, projecting bay windows and white-painted timber casement windows. Although they are perfectly sound designs, all are typical of their era and only two buildings, both designed by Alexander Anderson, are especially distinguished. No 257 Abington Avenue dates from 1910 and although it is more conventional than some of his other work, it has a particularly notable porch with Art Nouveau detailing. Rather more characteristic is No 471 Wellingborough Road, which dates from 1927 and abuts an earlier house. It has Anderson’s typically eccentric combination of pitched and flat roofs, vertical slit windows in the flank gable and stripped geometric detailing. East of Beech Avenue the north side of Wellingborough Road is largely occupied by 1920s social housing which is not of special interest and is therefore excluded from the conservation area.

However Nos 502-516, the sequence of houses on the south side of Wellingborough Road, is of particular importance. These buildings are anomalous in that they ‘encroach’ on the Abington Park side of the road but there is no evidence to suggest that this land was ever earmarked for inclusion within the park; their plots do not correspond to any historic field boundaries and most of the houses had been built by 1925.

These buildings are all large, ostentatious houses set within their own grounds, and represent styles fashionable in the first quarter of the 20th century. As a result there is no unifying theme, although most show traces of Arts & Crafts influence in their use of informal massing, dominant roofs, rendered upper storeys etc. The freedom afforded by generous plots allowed scope for more unusual plan forms and Nos 510 and 512 are notable for being largely square, as signified by their high pyramidal roofs. These buildings, along with No 514, show a
Abington Park Conservation Area Assessment

Particular concern for silhouette, and their vertical emphasis is reinforced by chimneys of exaggerated height.

There are two exceptions to this characterisation. The most striking is No 508, New Ways, designed for W. J. Bassett-Lowke in 1925-6 by the German architect Peter Behrens. Although a small, self-effacing building in comparison with its neighbours, New Ways is significant as one of the earliest Modern Movement buildings in the UK, and is listed on that basis. Its street elevation displays Expressionist touches but the rear has more obvious pointers towards the International Style of the 1930s. No 516 is not as immediately distinctive but is a notable example of the interwar Georgian Revival. It is a large, sober brick building of two storeys plus attic, with a gambrel roof and prominent chimneys and apart from Abington Abbey, it is the only classical building in the conservation area.

Ardington Road

Turning east from Abington Park Hotel, the conservation area includes Ardington House between Ardington Road and Wellingborough Road, and No 2A Ardington Road immediately to the south. Ardington House is a detached 1930s villa with a symmetrical elevation and distinctive roof with tilted eaves, occupying spacious grounds in the angle of the junction. No 2A is a 1970s house in dark brick with a steeply pitched concrete tiled roof incorporating prominent dormers. Although it makes few concessions to context it is nevertheless of interest as a late 20th century response to the same criteria as earlier houses in the area. The remaining interwar houses on the west side of Ardington Road are not of special interest and are therefore excluded from the conservation area.

Christchurch Road

Christchurch Road was one of the first streets to be laid out around the newly opened Abington Park and its development, originally rather grandly titled the ‘Alexandra Park Estate’, started in 1905 and continued into the 1930s. Christchurch Road, along with neighbouring Sandringham Road, is particularly notable for its concentration of houses designed by the Scots architect Alexander Anderson, and Anderson himself lived here from 1905 until the 1920s. The 1925-6 OS map shows that only rather piecemeal development occurred within the first 20 years, and the time span involved gives the street a rather disparate character. This is compounded by the fact that although the narrow plots produced contiguous terraces, all the houses were designed individually and vary in scale between one and three storeys.

Starting from the intersection of Christchurch Road with Ardington Road, Nos 8-20 Christchurch Road are typical of this mixture: only Nos 10 and 20 predate 1925, and Nos 12-14 are post-war infill. Apart from No 10, all the houses are of two storeys, with projecting bay windows, white-painted timber casements and red brick and ‘pebbledash’ render providing a measure of uniformity. However only the earliest buildings are particularly distinguished: No 10, which is of three storeys, is dominated by a full-height polygonal bay window, projecting above the eaves and capped by a tiled hipped roof. The timber casements of the bay window have stained glass upper lights and the cream rendered spandrels make an attractive contrast with its red brick. No 20 is atypical in that it occupies a double plot on the corner with Albany Road, and has a gabled cross wing and a prominent stair window on the front elevation.

The next sequence, Nos 22-36 Christchurch Road, postdates 1925 and this block displays a particularly marked contrast in scale and form: Nos 22-26 and 36 are of three storeys including attics whereas Nos 28-34 are a two storey terrace with flat roofs. No 22 (which is of the same design as No 62) is an imposing building which displays a large expanse of flank wall, finished in ‘pebbledash’ and terminating in a half-hipped gable. Its Christchurch Road elevation is dominated by a full gable with a projecting bay window. No 24 and 26 continue the
same architectural themes, with No 24 being distinguished by its unusually deep eaves and pair of hipped attic dormers.

Nos 28-34 are of a single build and are notable mainly for their flat roofed design. The street elevation was originally ‘pebble-dashed’ (Nos 30, 32 and 34 have subsequently been painted white) and the language of arched doorways and projecting bay windows would not be out of place on any interwar ‘semi’. Indeed the building’s rather awkward compromise between tradition and modernity is best exemplified by the non-functional triangular ‘pediments’ which interrupt the parapet. No 36, a three storey house on the corner with Sandringham Road, is perhaps the most distinguished of the group. Its polygonal bay window, although lower, is reminiscent of No 10 and the flank elevation to Sandringham Road is particularly notable. The design is extremely well-composed, with white render complementing both the red brick ground floor and the close-studded ‘half-timbering’ of the gable, setting off the elegant Art Nouveau door case.

The conservation area also makes a short salient into Sandringham Road to include Nos 1 and 2, The Bungalow and The Cottage respectively, two distinctive houses designed in 1905 by Alexander Anderson. Notwithstanding its name, No 1 is actually a two storey building of a similar type to other Anderson designs in Christchurch Road and Park Avenue South. It has a flat roof concealed, not altogether convincingly, behind a false tiled Mansard at first floor level, and the two storey bay windows flank a continuous window with a half-cylindrical oriel in the centre. The building is finished in a lime green roughcast render with the name ‘The Bungalow’ picked out in typical Arts & Crafts lettering, and the front entrance is distinguished by a panel of green glazed tiles. No 2 is ostensibly a more conventional building in that it has a pitched tiled roof, albeit one of asymmetrical profile. It is somewhat larger than No 1 but shares the same two storey bay windows, which in this case are infilled by a jetty with the house name picked out as before. The front elevation has a very deep tilted eaves which serves to roof the bay windows and jetty, and the building is finished in cream roughcast render.

Nos 38-48 Christchurch Road are all variations on the flat roofed designs noted above. Nos 44, 46 and 48 were designed by Alexander Anderson in 1905 and No 38 is a later Anderson work from 1920. Nos 40-42 are probably by another designer but wisely defer to their immediate neighbours. No 38 Christchurch Road is effectively half of the design for No 1 Sandringham Road, truncated to fit the narrow site, and with some additional embellishments, notably the crenellated projecting bay on the Sandringham Road elevation. No 44 (The Nook) in mid-terrace is a similar ‘half unit’, distinguished by an arched opening at ground floor level which incorporates both the recessed entrance and the hall window, and with the name picked out in mannered Arts & Crafts lettering. Nos 46-48 are of a single build and although contemporary, differ subtlety from No 44; they share the same arched entrance but the two storey projecting bay windows are slightly larger. The tower-like polygonal bay window on the corner is an unusual feature, and its facets carry the name ‘Hillcrest’ and two Tudor roses in plaster pargetting. Anderson originally designed it for himself and lived there until the early 1920s.

The remaining buildings in Christchurch Road, Nos 50-62, contain extreme contrasts of scale and style. Given its suburban context, No 50 is one of Alexander Anderson’s most eccentric designs. It is a linear single storey house dating from 1920, whose style defies easy categorisation. The roughcast render and battered chimneys allude to Scottish vernacular motifs but the verandah (with reinforced concrete piers) recalls tropical forms and the steep hipped roof owes nothing to either of these.

Dating from 1924, No 52 is the last Alexander Anderson building on Christchurch Road. It was originally a flat roofed design of two storeys...
but a second floor penthouse was added in the 1990s, recessed behind a section of balcony to reduce its apparent bulk. The white rendered front elevation retains a two storey bay window, but it is executed conventionally in timber, with tile-hung spandrels. Nevertheless the red brick entrance bay terminated by a ‘crowstepped’ pediment, and Anderson’s characteristic half-cylindrical oriel window are typical idiosyncrasies. Of the remaining buildings, Nos 54-56 and 58-60 are pre-First World War villas, Nos 54-56 having slight Arts & Crafts overtones in its rendered elevation and deep eaves over two storey bay windows. No 60A is a post 1925 infill building and No 62, on the corner with Garrick Road, is identical to No 22 Christchurch Road described above.

**Abington Park**

Abington Park is significant as it comprises the remnants of an 18th century designed landscape overlaid by elements of a classic late 19th - early 20th century municipal park. It was the magnet which attracted high quality residential development to the area in the first decades of the 20th century, and is, by definition, the principal space within the conservation area.

The 1900-1 OS map suggests that the original park was centred on Abington Abbey and St Peter & St Paul’s church, and its character became more diffuse as it merged into the surrounding agricultural landscape. As might be expected of this period, the planting was very informal and features such as the existing Water Tower and the Hunting Gate were treated as incidental ‘events’ rather than deliberate focal points. The only walks were laid out to the east of the Abbey, where planting was concentrated to screen a more private lawn area.

The original park, to the west of Park Avenue South, formed the nucleus of the 1897 public park, whose extent is still defined by a low stone boundary wall. This area, with its meandering paths and leisure amenities such as the bandstand and bowling green, retains numerous features characteristic of the era, and is quite densely planted with specimen trees. However Abington Park’s early 20th century expansion to the east of Park Avenue South is markedly different in character, and is essentially a re-creation of elements of the 18th century landscape tradition. It is characterised by extensive open spaces, divided by a radial network of paths which form tree lined avenues, and the entire perimeter is strongly defined by a double avenue of trees, to contrast with the buildings facing the park. The scope of the improvements was also considerably more ambitious than in the earlier phase; for instance, two artificial lakes were formed and an existing spinney was remodelled around them, but despite the level of intervention, the whole effect was intended to be one of ‘nature improved’, in the 18th century manner.
1925-6 Ordnance Survey 25" County Series map extract
Design Guidance

The Northampton Local Plan sets out the Council’s policies for works relating to listed buildings and proposed development within conservation areas. In particular the following factors should be taken into account:

♦ New buildings should be designed to complement the scale, proportions and rhythm of the surrounding buildings.
♦ New infill buildings should respect the common building line created by existing buildings and not detract from their setting.
♦ Extensions should be designed to be subservient to the original building.
♦ Materials should be in accordance with those traditionally used in the conservation area.
♦ Boundary walls and railings should be incorporated in a similar way to those already in existence.

In conservation areas detailed examination of the design, siting and layout of development proposals is necessary to achieve a high standard of development and to preserve the character of the area.

When proposals for refurbishment are considered the opportunity to replace lost features should also be considered e.g., replaced windows and doors, replacement railings. Again, careful attention will need to be given to the detail of each feature before work is proposed.

Street Furniture

Street furniture, particularly highway signage, can and does have a significant impact of the character of a conservation area.

The Borough Council adopted ten design principles in January 2000 to guide the provision of highway signage in a manner which was sympathetic to the local environment whilst safeguarding highway safety. The Northamptonshire County Council is the highway authority and consults the Borough Council on various highway schemes - when able the Borough Council will apply the design principles to minimise ‘street clutter’ in conservation areas.

The Borough Council will apply the same principles with regard to the provision of benches, litter bins and other forms of street furniture.

New Development

It is essential that new developments harmonise with the existing character of the surrounding area and is carefully designed in terms of scale, massing and attention to detail. The conservation area status should not be viewed as a method of preventing development but a tool to ensure that new development is both appropriate to the area and of the highest standard in terms of design and use of materials.

Preservation and Enhancement

The Council remains committed to protecting the character and appearance of the Abington Park conservation area and believe that where appropriate the area should be enhanced. This will be achieved by encouraging sympathetic repair and maintenance of buildings and by carefully controlling the design of new development, controlling demolition, protecting existing trees and implementing enhancement schemes.

The Council operates a Historic Buildings Grant scheme, through which we hope to encourage owners to preserve the original features of their buildings using authentic or matching designs and materials. The grant is mainly intended for external repairs necessary to maintain or restore the essential character of the building. For further information on this grant scheme you should contact the Council’s Conservation Officers.

Maintenance and Repair

Regular maintenance and repair is the key to the preservation of historic buildings. For modest expenditure a building can be kept weather-tight and routine maintenance can prevent more extensive and expensive repairs becoming necessary. The repair and maintenance of a building is part of the day-to-day responsibility of the property owner. Despite routine maintenance, all buildings will, from time to time, require more substantial repair.
The primary purpose of repair is to restrain the process of decay without damaging the character of the building or destroying its historic fabric. It is essential that repairs to a historic building are kept to a minimum and that they are undertaken in a sympathetic manner which respects the age and character of the building.

Before carrying out repair the cause of decay should be established and the appropriate remedial work undertaken to rectify it. Without rectifying the cause there will be a repetition of the problems.

**Methods of Repair**

**Roof repairs** - repairs to roof coverings should be undertaken using materials to match the existing in size, type and thickness. As many as possible of the existing sound slates or tiles should be retained and re-used. Roof detailing should generally be reinstated to the original form, particularly at eaves, ridges and verges. Where metal fixings are used to secure slates or tiles, copper or stainless steel nails should be used in preference to galvanised or plain steel nails. If it is proposed to re-roof a building which has previously had the primary roof material changed, the opportunity should be taken to reinstate the original roofing material subject to obtaining any necessary consent.

Repairs to structural timbers should, where possible, be made in-situ by splicing in sound replacement timber which matches the original in type, size and profile. Second hand materials should not be used.

**Chimneys** - chimneys requiring repair should be reinstated or rebuilt accurately to the original height and profile using the original materials where possible or matching materials.

Proposals for removing chimney stacks will not normally be acceptable, except where it is agreed that they are intrusive later additions. If a chimney is to be made redundant, it is important to keep the air circulating within the flue by means of air vents.

**Rainwater Goods** - cracked or broken cast-iron gutters and down-pipes should be replaced in matching materials and sections; for example half-round or ogee gutters and round or rectangular section down-pipes. Substitute materials such as uPVC are not acceptable, although cast aluminium may be considered appropriate in certain circumstances.

Down-pipes should be fitted on spacer bars far enough away from the wall so that if a leak occurs the water runs down the back of the pipe and not the wall.

**Stone and Brickwork Repairs** - stone and brickwork should only be replaced where they have lost their structural integrity because of deep erosion, serious fractures or where the weatherings are no longer performing the function of throwing water away from the building. If erosion or spalling is only superficial it should be accepted and loose water-holding material carefully brushed off. The redressing of surfaces for cosmetic reasons is not acceptable in most cases.

Repairs to stone and brickwork should be carried out using materials to match the existing in size, colour, qualities of durability and texture. Replacement stones and bricks should normally be set to the original face-line.

The cleaning of stone and brick is generally best avoided because of the potential damage that can be caused to the building fabric. Cleaning should always be undertaken by a specialist firm of contractors and the Conservation Officer consulted prior to the commencement of works.

**Re-pointing** - re-pointing should only be undertaken where mortar has weathered out leaving open or deep recessed joints vulnerable to water penetration or where the mortar is very soft. Re-pointing should generally be kept to an absolute minimum and should not be undertaken solely for cosmetic reasons.

The joints should be raked out manually to a depth of at least 20mm and up to 40mm, depending on the width of the joints. Disc grinders should not be used to cut out existing mortar joints as they are likely to cause damage to the stone/brick and could therefore increase the width of the finished joint.

The joints should be finished to match the original or existing joints. Where exiting stone or brick is generally ended the face of the mortar should be kept back to the point at which the joint remains the original width; re-pointing should not increase the width of the joint.
Repairs to Render – re-rendering and render repairs should generally match the strength of the original render or stucco. New rendering should be applied in three coats and no metal bead or straps should be used externally; arisés and angles should be formed in the traditional manner. Cracks in the existing render should be cut back to the masonry face and surrounding render undercut to provide a key. Textured or impermeable paint finishes are not acceptable.

Windows and Doors – where traditional windows and doors remain these should be retained and carefully repaired wherever possible. Only those sections of joinery which have decayed sufficiently seriously should be replaced. The wholesale renewal of windows for the sake of convenience should be avoided. Where the replacement of a window or door is unavoidable, the existing design should be reproduced exactly. The complete renewal of windows and doors is rarely necessary and careful repair is a less expensive option. New and/or external joinery should be painted with a gloss paint and should not be stained.

The use of uPVC, aluminium and other non-traditional materials is normally unacceptable. Standard modern joinery may not follow the pattern or proportions of the existing windows and doors and therefore replacements may need to be specially made.

Old glass, window furniture and internal shutters should be retained and reused wherever possible.

Ironwork – decorative ironwork, such as balconies or railings, should generally be carefully repaired. If replacement is absolutely necessary the new work should match the original in design and materials. New or repaired ironwork should be finished in a gloss paint system, to the original colour scheme.

Boundary Walls and Railings – these form an intrinsic part of the property and should therefore be retained and repaired to match the existing or reinstated to the original design subject to obtaining any necessary consent.

Article 4 Direction

Conservation area status in itself does not prevent property owners from making alterations to windows, porches, roofs or walls without the need to apply for planning permission (what is known as ‘permitted development’), and if they are not handled sympathetically, it is precisely these types of small-scale alterations which may undermine the character of the area. In sensitive locations local planning authorities can remove specified permitted development rights by introducing Article 4 Directions, but they must demonstrate that there is public support for such measures. Accordingly, a survey of residents was undertaken in 2005 during the designation process and the results revealed that over 80% of respondents were in favour of Article 4 Direction controls within the Abington Park conservation area.

Planning permission must be obtained for the following works to the front of houses (and side elevations visible from the front) within the Abington Park conservation area:

- Alterations to windows and external doors
- Construction of new porches, or alterations to existing ones
- Removal of fences, railings or boundary walls
- Changes in roof coverings (e.g. from slates to concrete tiles)
- Alterations to the appearance of external walls (e.g. artificial stone cladding or the painting of unpainted walls)
- Alterations to chimney stacks
- Provision of off-road parking visible from the street
- Installation of satellite dishes

As it is a restriction on permitted development, there is no fee for planning applications made under Article 4 Directions.
This management plan complements the Conservation Area Appraisal, which highlights the area’s architectural and historical importance, aspects of which define the character of the area, making it worthy of designation. The management plan is essential to protect and actively manage the area, and should therefore be viewed alongside this assessment.

**Conservation Area Boundary.**

Abington Park is one of the more recent Conservation Areas within the Borough, having been designated in January 2006.

There are currently no amendments or extensions to the boundary.

**Preservation of Existing Character.**

Under Section 71 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, Local Authorities have a duty to formulate and publish proposals for the preservation and enhancement of the appearance or character of Conservation Areas.

**Building Styles and Materials.**

Although the Conservation Area is predominantly the park, its peripheral development is equally significant in forming the identity of the area. The buildings consist of residential units, which vary in size, from terraces to large detached dwellings in spacious plots. Many vary in design, but there is a fairly common trend in Arts and Crafts influences, such as rendered upper storeys, asymmetrical designs, dominant roofs and gables.

There are also modern 1920s and 1970s developments, interspersed with inter- and post-war housing, with many displaying crafts-based influences. Only two buildings in the Conservation Area, Abington Abbey and No.516 Wellingborough Road, are ‘Classical’ in style.

The use of common materials is a key element in unifying the varying designs of houses.

The handling of all materials will have an impact on the overall aesthetic impact of a building, and it is vital that all work carried out is done so sympathetically and be quality work done to a high standard. This applies to any new work as well as repairs.

The use of pebbledash is a common render material, particularly on the upper storeys, which achieves a positive unifying effect.

**Alterations and Extensions.**

Even though asymmetric plans are a feature of many buildings within the Conservation Area, any extensions or alterations to dwellings will have to be of a high standard of design, not compromising the overall character of the area. They should form an overall positive contribution not solely to the site and building to which they belong, but also to that of the street scene and area as a whole. Applications which are considered to be detrimental to the Conservation Area’s character will not be permitted.

**New Development.**

Any new development should make a positive contribution to the area, which respects and harmonises with the existing buildings and surroundings. Any proposals should be sympathetic to existing building lines and streetscapes.

Emphasis is on design and materials of high quality, being sympathetic in their design and detailing.

The use of arts and crafts influences would provide complementing features, encouraging the harmonisation of any new buildings in the area with existing ones.

New development proposals which are considered to be detrimental to the character of the Conservation Area will not be permitted. This will be particularly so if any proposals involve the sub-division of plots. Large plots are a positive feature of the area and these should be retained to respect the character and appearance of the Conservation Area.
Demolition.

Any demolition proposals will be controlled, and where it would be beneficial to the visual character of the area, they may be considered favourably. Buildings which make a positive contribution to the area’s character should be retained. Demolition of buildings within a Conservation Area will be assessed against the criteria used for the demolition of Listed Buildings (PPG 15: 3.16-3.19), and in accordance with policy E26 of the Northampton Local Plan.

Removal of Permitted Development Rights - Article 4 Directions.

Where an area of local heritage value exists, the restriction of permitted development rights may be enforced to preserve and enhance the character of the Conservation Area. Two types of Article 4 Directions are used – 4(1) being those approved by the Secretary of State, and 4(2) which do not require the Secretary of State’s approval. Article 4(2) directions are commonly used by councils if a Conservation Area is deemed to require a higher level of protection than can be offered purely by the Conservation Area designation.

All minor works and alterations within the Conservation Area are currently controlled by an Article 4(2) Direction covering the following works:

- Alterations to windows and external doors
- Construction of new porches, or alterations to existing ones
- Removal of fences, railings or boundary walls
- Changes in roof coverings (eg from slates to concrete tiles)
- Alterations to the appearance of external walls (eg artificial stone cladding)
- Alterations to chimney stacks
- Provision of off-road parking visible from the street
- Installation of satellite dishes.

The application of the Article 4 Direction will enable proposed changes to be managed in a manner, which maintains the architectural and historic character of the area. Changes which individually or cumulatively undermine the character of the area will be resisted.

Those properties covered by Article 4(2) Directions are highlighted on the Conservation Area plan. Regular monitoring will take place to assess whether the Article 4 Direction is having a positive impact on the locality and if the Direction requires reviewing.

Streetscape.

The streetscape is an important part of an area, as it gives the area its overall character and impressions are formed from the quality, condition and appearance of it. It can be affected by many factors, in either positive or negative ways, from general appearance and tidiness to shop signs, advertisements, trees and road signage.

Carefully designed and well-managed streets are essential if the public realm is to be a successful interaction space between pedestrians and cyclists along with the safe management of traffic. The retention and enhancement of local qualities such as streets, public spaces and their related cultural signals, will help to sustain an area’s prosperity and quality of life.

The local Highway Authority will be approached to establish an agreement as to how sensitive sites will be dealt with, to include the treatment of items such as highways signs and street surfaces.

Control of Advertisements.

Although the area is mainly parkland and the surrounding properties are residential, any outdoor advertisements will be controlled, as they affect the appearance of buildings and neighbourhoods. Although advertisements are generally permitted, outdoor advertisements will affect the character and appearance of a conservation area. As PPG 15:4.31 highlights, it is desired that any advertisements will either preserve or enhance the character or appearance of a conservation area, and this will be taken into account when considering granting consent for proposed advertisements in such an area.
Advertisements which are considered to have a detrimental effect on the character and appearance of the Conservation Area will not be permitted.

**Listed Buildings.**

There are currently 9 listed entries in the Conservation Area. Their appearance and preservation is controlled through the application for Listed Building Consent when proposals come through for their alteration (inside and out) or extension. The majority of buildings in the Conservation Area are not listed. They are, however, protected from uncharacteristic development by the Article 4 Direction.

Any alterations, extensions or demolitions to a Listed Building will require Listed Building Consent. Again, permitted development rights have been removed by an Article 4 Direction. Listed Buildings will need Conservation Area Consent as well as Listed Building Consent.

**Locally Listed Buildings.**

Buildings which are statutory listed are those which are of national importance. However, there are many buildings which are of local architectural and/or historic importance. The Council has produced a separate Local List of those buildings which are deemed locally significant for the town centre. A list for those out of the town centre is currently underway.

In the Abington Park Conservation Area, 10 dwellings are currently proposed for inclusion on the Local List. As they contribute to the overall area, it is important to carefully monitor any proposed changes.

These buildings will not enjoy the full range of protection of those which are statutory listed, but they will be given due thought and concern when applications are submitted.

**Conservation Area Consent.**

Conservation Areas benefit from additional protection over demolition, and it applies to walls and buildings within the designated area. A ‘Conservation Area Consent’ must be obtained from the Local Authority if any demolition is proposed.

This, however, does not apply to the following:

- Buildings smaller than 115 cubic metres in volume, or to walls or fences before 1948 and below 1m in height abutting the highway (2m high elsewhere)
- Some agricultural buildings
- Industrial buildings where demolition does not exceed 1/10th of the volume of the original building, or 500sq.m (which ever is the greater)
- Buildings subject to some statutory notices and orders
- Some redundant churches.

Listed Buildings will need to apply for Listed Building Consent as well as Conservation Area Consent.

**The Park and Green Spaces.**

The Conservation Area largely consists of the park which benefits from routine maintenance. A wide variety of activities take place in the park, including various sports and leisure activities. This range of uses by all age groups means that the park is a vibrant place in active use by members of the public.

A separate management plan for the maintenance of the park and its associated trees and green spaces may be necessary, and the Street Care and Environment Department will be approached to determine whether this is necessary.

**Monitoring Change.**

Any changes will initially be managed via any planning applications, including Listed Building and Conservation Area consents.

Visual surveys of the area at regular intervals will also provide a mechanism for monitoring change within the area. A photographic record of the area will be made and kept up to date, along with the Character Appraisal. A photographic database will log images of areas of specific interest, concern or uncertain future, which will then be reviewed and updated at regular intervals within the management plan review period.
It is proposed to set up a database to record any significant changes permitted through planning applications to provide an overview of accepted changes within the area. This will provide a quick reference tool for queries about future proposals within the area.

An annual inspection will take place to monitor the Conservation Area, and in the first instance, this will take the form of a visual survey.

**Protection of Trees.**

Trees are features which positively contribute to the character of the local environment. Many trees within the Conservation Area are protected by Tree Preservation Orders (hereafter TPO). Trees, which are not protected by a TPO, are still protected by the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Area) Act 1990. Although there are some exceptions, including small trees and ones which are dead, dying or dangerous, anyone proposing work to a tree in the Conservation Area is required to give six weeks notice to the Local Authority before any works are carried out.

**Enforcement.**

National and local policy will be enforced, and in cases where this is necessary, it will be carried out in a fair, clear and consistent manner. Information and advice will be available before any formal enforcement is taken, to discuss the circumstances of the case, to provide an opportunity to resolve any problems before any formal action is taken.

Where immediate action is deemed necessary, an explanation to why action is to be taken will be given and confirmed in writing.

Any enforcement action does not remove any rights to appeal.