

Oakmount Triangle Conservation Area



Design Guide

Oakmount Triangle
DESIGN GUIDE (DRAFT 2.18 22/9/25)

New in 2.16: p 17,18, added p21 pointing. Moved conservation logo to end.
New in 2.17 added more to Streets chapter (kerbstones p52).

New in 2.1.8: Revised window chapter slightly re: flush casements. Reduce text re: driveway hogging.

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The aim of this design guide is to provide information and advice for residents, landlords, architects, tradespeople and planning officers. This information and advice are based on:

- What we, along with various various conservation specialists, have determined about the character and architecture of the Triangle
- The regulations specific to the Triangle, which are laid out within the Article 4(2) direction.

We hope that this guide will help residents gain an understanding of the special fabric of these fine old houses and a sensitivity to the conservation area and the special street scene we enjoy. We like to think that this not only is a guide for maintaining the condition and appearance of their properties but can also sustain or increase their value.

We'd especially like to thank Jon Willetts, SCC Historic Environment Officer, for his advice and enthusiasm in helping us understand how sensitive and pragmatic conservation can help manage this valuable conservation area during rapidly changing times.

For more information see our web pages: [OTRA Conservation](#)

Pete Thomas and Dave White 2025

With thanks to the pioneers of the conservation area and originators of the management plan:

Malcolm Wagstaff | John Bradshaw | Mandy Smith | Roger Brown |
Graham Linecar | Kevin White (SCC)

PREFACE



**Oakmount Triangle
Residents' Association**

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What is Special About the Oakmount Triangle?

The Oakmount Triangle retains a uniquely "Southampton" suburban streetscape: the houses themselves, the spaciousness, the community "village-like" feel, the greenery, the wildlife, the low volume of traffic, the quietness and much more.



Location and Architecture

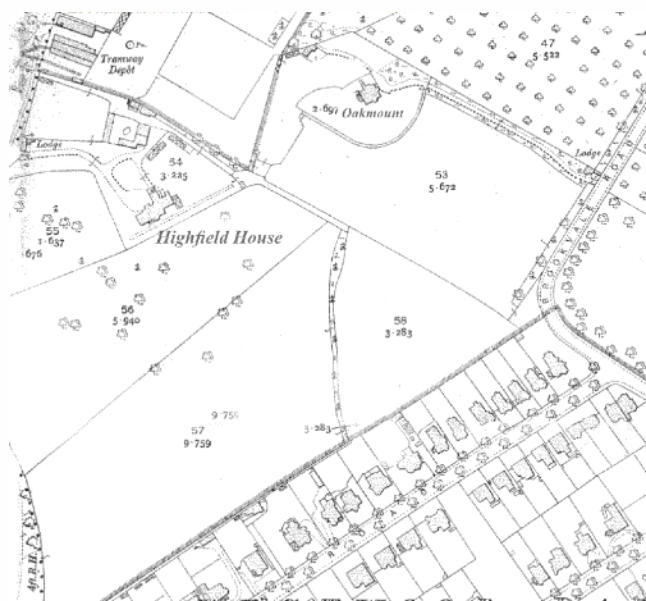
The Oakmount Triangle was developed by John Smith from 1911 through to the late 1930s and drew on a new era of architecture which was lighter and often less uniform than the Victorian period. However the houses in the Triangle paradoxically seem to share both uniformity and individuality. At first glance the "John Smith style" houses might all look the same, but anyone would be hard pressed to find two identical houses in the way you might with a Victorian terrace or a modern housing estate.

John Smith himself was known to be a somewhat quirky and unconventional character who measured out plots with his umbrella and once sued the Council Environmental Health Officer for trespass on his building site.

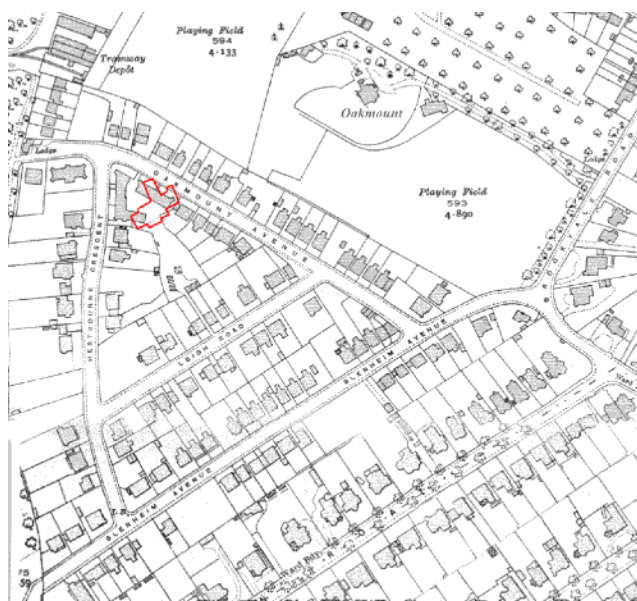
Some of his character may have lived on in the houses, each of which has its own quirks, whether it's the number or size of the bays, the width of the veranda, decorative features - even the front walls come in various styles. At the same time, certain features such as the exposed rafters, casement windows, and the front-facing gables give it some uniformity. But those are just the John Smith houses; others contemporary to the original development are yet more varied, but all exist in perfect harmony. Add to that the more modern buildings (most of which also fit in) and you will find a real blend of styles.

The closeness to Southampton Common, along with the protected green corridor along the north boundary, means that we are quite blessed with wildlife - with one of the highest densities of hedgehog population this side of Totton. Many residents have installed "hedgehog highways" to allow them to roam and flourish. There are also many properties with swift boxes.

There is some intriguing history including the sixteenth-century Common boundary banks and ditch, Highfield House, its (still existing) lodge at the top of Oakmount Avenue, John Smith's acquisition of the estate in 1910, and the subsequent development of what we now call the Oakmount Triangle.



1910



1933

The structure of the street pattern may well be unique in Southampton. There is access at all three corners of the triangle, but only is one open to cars (from Brookvale Road). The other two entrances at the west of Blenheim Avenue and Oakmount Avenue allow only pedestrian and cycle access from the Common. So although traffic is quiet (with no rat-running possible) it never really feels deserted. People wander through to access the Common at the Triangle's western boundary, and students and commuters walk and cycle through the Triangle to lectures and work. More on the history of the Triangle: <https://otra.org.uk/history>

Gardens and Greenery

Well kept gardens, with trees and mature shrubs overhanging low walls, along with the tranquility give the Triangle an almost park-like feel as you wander around. There are plenty of trees, not only in the gardens, but also around the perimeter, especially as you look up towards the Common where the mature oaks and beeches appear to form an almost rural backdrop.

The Community

On any day you may find a mix of both residents and passers-by, and it's totally normal for people to say "hello" and give a friendly nod or smile whoever they are. The three roads that form the Triangle are intersected by another to form an A shape, so although this is effectively a cul-de-sac, it's not one long street. There is something about the triangular structure that draws you in and lends itself to community engagement.

The residents are from all walks of life and social groups. We have terraces, detached houses, apartments, and bedsits.

We have a well subscribed website with neighbourly discussion and neighbourhood watch. There is a virtual noticeboard, so people can sell, buy, and swap unused items, look for and offer tools to borrow, recommend tradespeople, or just have a friendly chat online.



Why Conservation?

Before the Triangle was granted conservation status, a number of developers proposed to build blocks of flats, on single or double plots, up to four storeys.

Residents were quick to realise that the Triangle could suffer from similar development to Winn Road and Westwood Road. This would be unattractive to our environment, would destroy many fine houses and reduce the community feel of the Triangle. So we worked with Southampton City Council to secure conservation status, which was granted in 2005. That status continues to protect the environment that we live in.



Winn Road

As well as preserving the architecture of the buildings, the conservation area status also protects the leafy street scene of the Triangle by preserving the front gardens and attractive boundary walls.



Planning Permission and Conservation

1. Permitted Development

There are national regulations that set out what building work can be carried out without needing planning consent. These works are known as [Permitted Development \(PD\)](#). You can find these national regulations at: <https://www.planningportal.co.uk/permission/home-improvement>.

2. Conservation Area Regulations

Properties in conservation areas have restrictions imposed on what would otherwise fall under PD. A common mistake is to think that if something is labelled as *not Permitted Development* then it is development that is not permitted. However, it just means planning consent is required. Included are:

- demolishing a wall more than one metre tall.
- demolishing a building with a volume of more than 115 cubic metres.
- mounting solar panels on a front wall.

These may be permitted but only if a planning application is successful.

3. Additional Requirements of the Article 4(2)

Many of the houses in the Triangle are further covered by extra regulations under an Article 4(2) direction. This means that in some cases what would otherwise be Permitted Development may now need planning permission either because:

- the property is in a conservation area. This applies to all houses in the Triangle and includes only the exceptions to PD that apply to conservation areas; or
- the property is one of those covered by the Article 4 Direction. This applies mostly to the older properties.

Planning Permission

You can apply for planning permission online by following the link at <https://www.southampton.gov.uk/planning/planning-permission/apply-planning-permission/>. Note that OTRA do not approve or refuse applications, we only offer advice, although we will be informed about applications and may make comments as a consultee.

The map on the next page shows you which properties are and are not covered by the extra Article 4 regulations.

Map of properties covered by the Article 4.

Colour key:

Yellow = John Smith build, subject to Article 4 (approximately 64%)

Orange = other, also subject to Article 4 (approximately 10%)

Blue = other, not covered by Article 4 (approximately 25%)

White = blocks of flats, not covered by Article 4



When do I Need Planning Permission?

The following table is a rough guide to whether or not you need planning permission for alterations you might make to your property. The table below is based on the latest Article 4 direction (2008) and applies to only those properties that it covers (see map above).

With the exception of chimneys, these regulations only apply to the front- or street-facing side of the house. If a house is on a corner then both street-facing sides are covered.

All properties in the Triangle that are not covered by the Article 4 are subject only to UK national Permitted Development regulations along with general [Conservation Area regulations](#).

Even where no restrictions have been imposed by the Article 4, there may still be certain national Permitted Development regulations so, if in doubt, please contact OTRA or Southampton City Council to discuss.

Like-for-Like Repairs

Any work that is considered like-for-like repairs does not require planning permission.

Examples of like-for-like:

- Repairing a door, fence, window frame or gate with the same traditional materials (e.g. timber repairs)
- Repairing cracked or fallen rendering/stucco/pebbledash
- Repairing a roof with the same colour and type of original tiles. Ideally, these should be reclaimed or recycled.
- Repairing a wall using reclaimed bricks, along with similar mortar and pointing to the original.

Note that in all cases *like-for-like* refers to traditional or original designs and where possible, traditional or original materials.

You can seek advice in regard to specific heritage materials from the Historic Environment officer (aka the Conservation Officer):

Conservation.Officer@southampton.gov.uk

For general planning advice from SCC:

planning@southampton.gov.uk

What you can do without planning permission

(Unless stated otherwise, the following is in regard to front- or street-facing elevations)

✓ = Yes - you can go ahead and do this.

✗ = No - you need permission first.

PD = Maybe (but subject to national Permitted Development regulations)

General Maintenance & Decoration	
Changing wall facing material - rendering, pebbledash, hanging tiles	✗
Repainting doors, windows, other joinery & walls.	✓
Painting of unpainted walls	✗
Replacement front windows and doors	✗
Replacement or fitting of side/back windows	✓
Internal secondary glazing	✓
Replacement of gutters/rainwater goods	✗
Repointing (like-for-like style and mortar)	✓
Paths, drives & hard-standing	
Provision of new front path or driveway hardstanding.	✗
Change of surfacing to existing front path	PD*
Paving/paths in back garden	✓
Front garden walls, fences, gates & gateposts	
Removal, alteration or replacement	✗
Installation/erection of new	✗

* The Article 4 does not mention replacement of a drive surface, so technically this may fall under PD, however it is possible that the planning department could have a different interpretation.

Garages	
Replacement door/s	×
Erection/alteration/demolition	×
Roofs & chimneys	
Alterations to roof and eaves.	×
Installation of dormers / roof lights	×
Addition/alteration/removal of chimney (any roof slope, not just the front)	×
Solar panels on front-facing roof	See below
Solar panels on side or rear roofslope/wall	✓
Solar panel on front wall	×
Front porches & verandas	
Erection/alteration/removal	×
Glazing to enclose a porch	×
Satellite dishes and EV charging	
Installation/alteration/replacement of satellite dishes	×
Electric vehicle charging points	PD
Gardens, shrubs & trees	
Planting of trees or shrubs	✓
Removing/lopping of trees with trunk larger than 150mm diameter	×
Pruning or removal of shrubs	✓
Landscaping without adding paved area	✓
Erection/alteration/removal of sheds or conservatories in rear garden.	PD

A few relevant Permitted Development regulations

These apply to any property.

Solar panels

Panels should not be installed above the highest part of the roof (excluding the chimney) and should project no more than 200mm from the roof slope or wall surface.

Electric chargers

For installation to be classed as Permitted Development, the electrical outlet (and its casing) must not:

Exceed 0.2 cubic metres

Face onto and be within two metres of a highway

Driveways (Hardstanding)

Impermeable driveways over 5m² (paving and tarmac) with no rainwater runoff to a permeable area air or soakaway require planning permission which shows a drainage plan. *[maybe not needed as in later chapter???*]

Rear conservatories & Extensions

The Permitted Development regulations are quite complex, for full information see here:

<https://www.planningportal.co.uk/permission/common-projects/conservatories/planning-permission>

For more information on Permitted Development see:

<https://www.planningportal.co.uk/permission/common-projects>

A note about solar panels (updated January 2025)

Can I have solar panels in a conservation area?

Properties in the area **not covered** by the Article 4 direction (see above: p.6) do not need planning permission unless the panels are to be mounted on a front wall. This means they can be mounted on a front or street facing roof slope without planning permission.

If your house is covered by the Article 4 direction it may be a different matter. The wording of the direction specifically mentions various parts of a roof, but not solar panels. This may be interpreted as meaning that they are not excluded from Permitted Development by the Article 4 hence do not need planning permission.

However we are aware that local planning authorities may interpret the regulations differently. For this reason we advise that you seek advice before assuming that you do not need planning permission for panels on a front roof.

Types of Properties in the Triangle

Most of the pre-WW2 houses in the Triangle were built by the developer John Smith and have square or rectangular hipped roofs with either one or two front gables over bays, traditional Rosemary clay roof tiles, and mostly red brick walls with either painted roughcast or stucco. There are also two or three examples of unpainted pebbledash. A few have a third gable on the side. Although at first glance they appear quite uniform, there are many individual features, something which adds to the character of these houses.



A typical John Smith style house

These may best be described as a “post-Edwardian Arts and Crafts hybrid suburban style.” Some plots, notably on Westbourne Crescent (which was originally called Westbourne Grove), were sold off privately by John Smith for development by other architects. This has led to a wide variety of other styles and features in the Triangle including mock Tudor, Arts & Crafts, Queen Anne and Victorian.





The following sections cover the property features that create the character of the street scene.

Please note that unless stated otherwise, wherever we mention *A4 planning permission*, this refers only to those properties covered by the Article 4(2) direction.

All other properties within the Triangle are subject to the less strict national Permitted Development regulations and general conservation area regulations.

[Insert drone photo (TW) and captions]

1 Front Gardens and Walls

Verdant front gardens with low red-brown brick walls are important and attractive elements in the character of the area.



The survival of the front gardens is in part due to the conservation status, all trees within the conservation area are protected.

Some gardens have recently been rewilded:



We advise that it can look better if rewilding is placed strategically within, or next to, cultivated areas. Otherwise it may just look as if you forgot to mow the lawn.

The typical front walls contain recessed panels and many have decorative “dentil” brick courses below chamfered coping.



Some front walls, as well as many boundary walls, are constructed of ‘rat trap’ bond, employed widely in the nineteenth and early twentieth century.



Rat Trap with a characterful appearance due to uneven colours, moss, and lichen.

Rat trap bond was an economical style because bricks were laid on their side so fewer were needed. This type of wall is now rare and also adds value to the area.

Although there are many similar houses in Southampton (John Smith alone built around 1000), the Oakmount Triangle is one of the last remaining areas where most of these old walls and mature front gardens are still intact. We can see whole rows of houses in nearby Portswood and Shirley where the walls have been entirely demolished and front gardens covered in concrete or tarmac to create car parking areas.

Brick Wall Materials

The original brick walls were built with soft clay red-brown bricks and lime-based mortar. Many have been repointed using cement, and although this does not necessarily detract in appearance, it can cause damage over time as it is not as porous as lime and can retain moisture within the soft brick.

Frosts can then cause this retained moisture to “blow” the brick facing (called spalling). It is also likely to cause the hard cement pointing itself to crack:



We see two main types of pointing in the Triangle:

Concave aka *bucket handle*

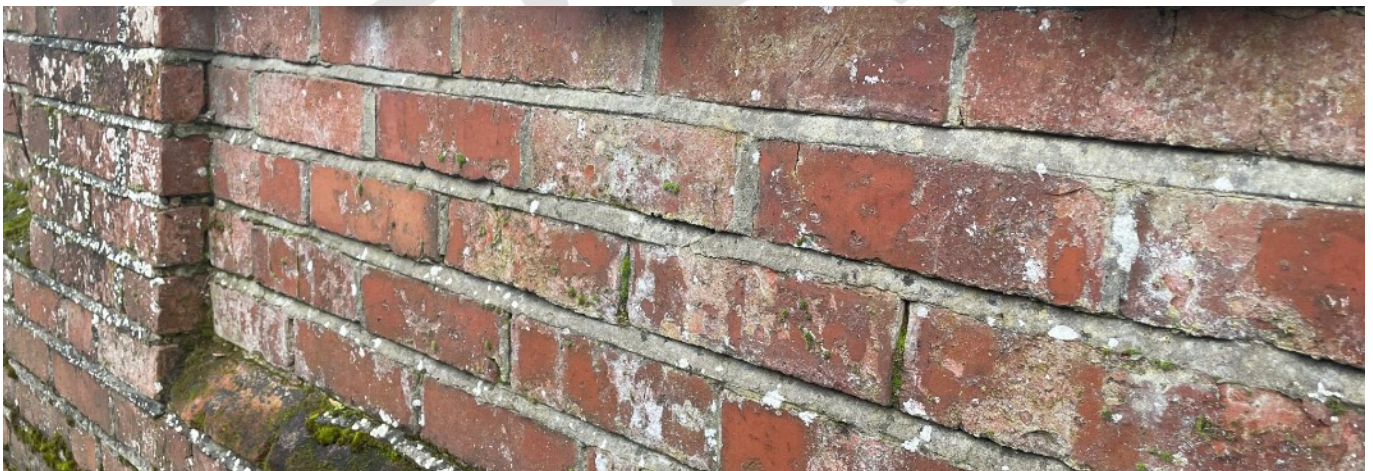
This may be the most common type of original pointing, although any brickwork that hasn't been repointed over the last 100 years or so may have weathered to such an extent that it is difficult to tell. Its name is derived from the fact that it can literally be shaped with the handle of an old metal bucket, but a dedicated tool is mostly used these days. This type of pointing is a relatively quick and easy method, but effective against the weather as the surface is quite compacted.



Bucket handle pointing

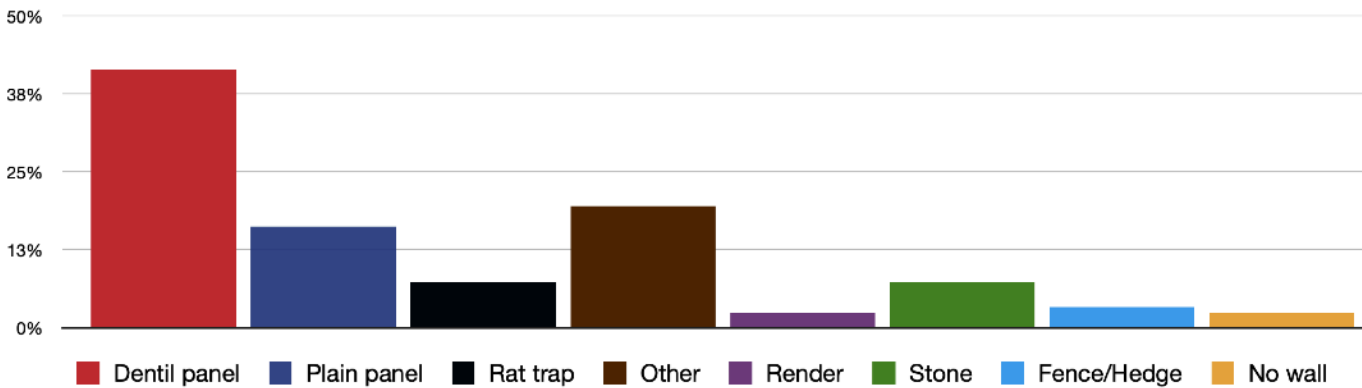
Weather Struck

We also see a lot of weather struck, as it is probably the most commonly used these days as well as when a lot of the houses and walls were repointed in the 50s. Mortar at the top of the joint is recessed and then angled outward so the bottom is slightly proud of the brick below. The slight lip at the bottom gives a nice edge for the rain water to flow down.



Weather struck pointing

There also are several low Purbeck stone walls, which may or may not be original.



Different types of walls in the Triangle

Gates and Gateposts

While gates and gateposts are attractive features, they are found on surprisingly few properties in the Triangle and may always have been absent or may have been requisitioned for the war effort.



Early gate post style in Blenheim Avenue

We recommend that new or replacement gates or gateposts should pay attention to designs already found in the area, or that are appropriate to the era and style of the property.

Most are wrought iron, although some recent planning applications have suggested traditional timber gates in styles that are not already existing but which can still enhance the street scene.

This is a good example of appropriate design that does not need to be a replica or pastiche. It was included in a successful planning application as a good example of appropriate design not necessarily original to the area.



You need A4 planning permission for:

- New walls or fences.
- Any repairs to front walls that are not like-for-like, e.g. different style bricks, rock, render etc.
- New or replacement gates or gateposts.
- Swimming pools or buildings in front gardens.
- Demolition or removal of walls, fences, gates etc.

Wall maintenance

Reclaimed bricks are ideal for repairs, as significant patches of new brick can look out of place and take a very long time to weather in. Bricks should be imperial size as opposed to the smaller more modern metric-sized bricks. Lime-based mortar is recommended, especially for pointing.

Pointing is a grey area in regard to like-for-like as a lot of inappropriate repointing with cement was carried out in the last century which is now in need of repair. In this case replacing cement with cement is not a good idea. We would most likely consider the use of lime to replace cement as suitable like-for-like, provided the colour is a good match.

A lot of lime mortar you buy off the shelf is a light bright or yellowish colour. The Lime Centre in Morestead can do custom colour matching but in many cases their Wareham 4mm is a reasonable match.

On older walls where the handmade bricks are worn and broken in places, pointing becomes more and more of a skilled job as the less regular edge of the bricks can be harder to follow exactly and keep the lime from smearing onto the face of the brick.

Widening drive entrances

It's understandable that residents often want to alter walls in order to provide for, or widen, a driveway for the larger vehicles we have these days. More and more people are wanting to charge electric cars in driveways.

We are sympathetic to changing times and peoples' needs and would advise that applications to widen a driveway entrance will stand the best chance of approval if the plans can show that any reduction of a wall is made good at the entrance, e.g. pillars are rebuilt appropriately.

Please be aware that an application to remove an entire wall or any significant part of a wall, e.g. to create a double driveway, is quite likely to receive some objections. Whether or not you get permission can depend on the immediate street scene rather than any precedents.

Trees

Trees in a conservation area are protected. A planning application is required before felling or pruning a tree with a trunk diameter greater than 75 mm at 1.5 above the ground. At the time of writing, tree works applications do not involve a fee.

2 Garages and Driveways

Garages

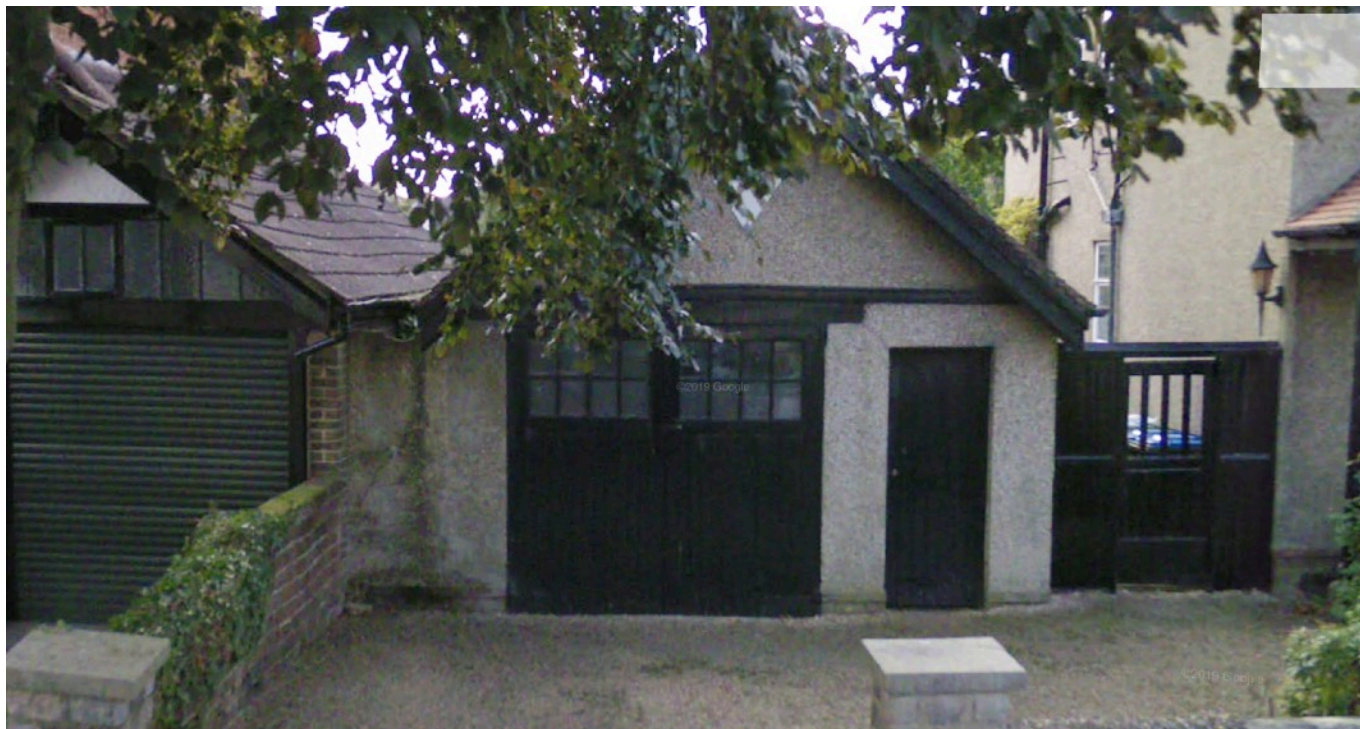
The early provision of garages adjacent to some houses and the provision of central, communal garages are important features of the Triangle. A few garages have been built into existing houses.

Some of the original garages (pre-first world war - known at this time as “motor houses”) were built away from the house for safety reasons, when it was necessary to store fuel due to the scarcity of petrol stations. These often have inspection pits as many owners did their own maintenance (this was before Kwik Fit and Mr Clutch).

Many of the garages we see were later additions as the motor car became more popular as the twentieth century progressed.

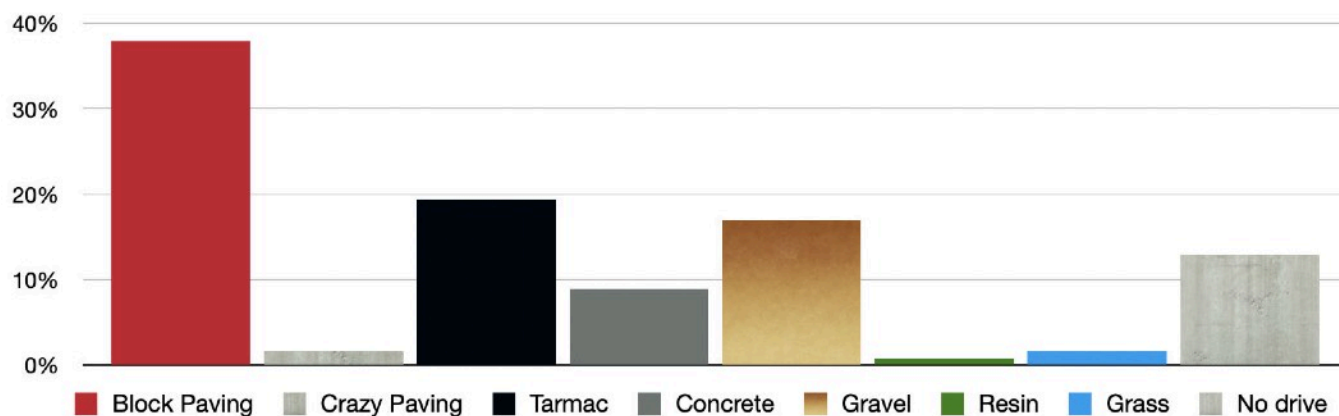


1913 “motor house” in back garden



Driveways

As with garages that were added later, we can assume many of the driveways we see were also later additions throughout the twentieth century. In some cases it is possible to tell which drives are older, as the entrances are narrower for smaller cars.



TYPES OF DRIVEWAYS IN THE TRIANGLE

Original drives were probably either gravel or hoggin (- see below). It is possible some were concrete or tarmac as both materials were available, however, as many roads were not hard surfaced at the time, this seems unlikely.



Gravel driveways



Resin-bound

The few remaining concrete drives we see in the Triangle were probably laid with the garages that were later additions.

Hoggin and Gravel

Original drives may have just consisted of ground cleared to expose the stony clay subsoil the Triangle was built on. This is traditionally known as hoggin. However, we also know that in some cases drives were excavated and filled with gravel, then topped with rolled binding gravel which may have been natural hoggin or a man-made equivalent. The lower layer of gravel helped with drainage because hoggin by itself is likely to get very muddy in wet weather (see below).

Landscapers often use self-binding gravel or hoggin for country paths, golf courses etc. but it is less common these days for domestic driveway surfaces as it can become muddy and/or prone to puddling. It is maintained by adding gravel or larger stones (scalpings), often to fill the potholes, but due to vehicle and foot traffic the potholes will probably come back sooner rather than later.

Gravel can be a more practical surface. It retains the traditional look, while not having the disadvantages of hoggin if laid well over appropriate aggregates and membranes.

There are some newly installed gravel driveways in the area. These are sensitive to the conservation area and are attractive alternatives to block paving although care should be taken to stop any spill on to the pavement. This is can be prevented by

1. using land-based rather than sea-based (rounded) stones
2. making sure the drive is excavated to a reasonable depth
3. adding a slightly raised single course of bricks or cobbles along the front of the drive
4. using plastic or metal grids to help confine the gravel.

Resin-Bound Gravel

This is a modern material that consists of natural gravel bound with resin and is becoming more and more popular. It retains much of the traditional look of gravel but is less “rustic.” It is usually laid on a porous substrate so that the finished driveway can be classed as permeable and therefore not require additional drainage. Some manufacturers use recycled water bottles as part of the resin. It may be seen as more appropriate to the conservation area than the modern concrete paver (see below).

Resin-bound has some advantages over loose gravel:

- It is easier to maintain and keep weed free.
- It is much easier for wheelchair users.

A slightly different product is *resin-bonded* gravel, however this is not permeable (see below re: planning permission).

Block Paving

Although these may be viewed as “alien” to the original development, we now see a proliferation of modern concrete block pavers which became popular in the 1980s. These are typically 100 x 200cm so can easily be laid in a variety patterns including the ubiquitous “herringbone.” Although a traditional conservationist may resist their use, pavers have not been objected to these days, provided adequate drainage is installed.

More traditional materials such as clay pavers would be more appropriate to the character of the area.



CLAY PAVERS

Tarmac

About 20% of drives are tarmac, which does not age well and many are now looking dilapidated. In some cases they have been installed badly with a very thin surface and little or no substrate.

You need A4 planning permission for:

- Provision of a driveway. This may appear to only mean installation or extension of of a *new* driveway or front garden path, however the planning department may consider resurfacing a driveway or footpath to require permission.
- Any alteration to garages, including doors and roofs, that is not deemed to be like-for-like repair.

Note that driveways should be permeable, or provide for drainage to a soakaway or soft landscaping.

If you intend to install or increase the size of a driveway we advise consulting the planning department, the conservation officer, or OTRA, who can advise on the most appropriate plan that is likely to be granted permission. This is especially important if you plan to remove part of an original wall.

Resin-bound gravel has been viewed by the planning officers as a like-for-like replacement for loose gravel, although this may only apply if it is similar in colour to the loose gravel it replaces.

Maintenance

All driveways need maintenance to a certain extent, mainly due to weeds (especially in shaded areas where moss can proliferate). We discourage the use of strong herbicides due to the high population of suburban wildlife, especially hedgehogs, in the area. Ideally moss and weeds can be dug or brushed out from between pavers.

Tarmac and concrete may be considered “alien materials” in regard to the original development, and so any replacement with more traditional surface such as gravel or clay pavers is encouraged.

3 Windows and Doors

Windows

All the original John Smith houses had timber windows. There are a few examples of sash windows but most are casement windows with small-paned top lights, which sometimes feature leaded panes (square or diamond), or stained glass.



A few of the later houses feature Crittall steel-framed windows. Original Crittall windows were manufactured by *Crittall Windows Limited*, although similar design windows made by other manufacturers are often referred to as *Crittall*, but there are more correctly called *Crittall style*. Authentic Crittall casements are distinguishable by the external protruding hinges.



Windows in the Triangle tend to be painted white, cream, or muted colours whereas doors are often brightly painted. It is quite possible that originally windows may also have been painted with various colours and there are no restrictions on repainting woodwork any colour.

Replacement with double-glazing requires planning permission. However when considering replacements we advise that they should be as close as possible to the original designs, notably if replacing timber casements they should be flush to the frame rather than overlapping. All dimensions should be as close as possible to the original designs.

Doorways are often quite large and fitted with panelled wooden doors. Door windows often have stained glass and many have retained brass door furniture.



An interesting variation:



"Mashallah" is an Arabic phrase that means "What God has willed."

Porches and Verandas

Verandas are common throughout the Triangle, often with terracotta glazed tiles on the floor. They are mostly roofed with handmade clay tiles and, as with the roofs, often feature exposed rafter feet.

Some have decorative woodwork railings, which replicate the designs internally, e.g. on banisters.



Some of the “non-John Smith” style houses have interesting porch variations:



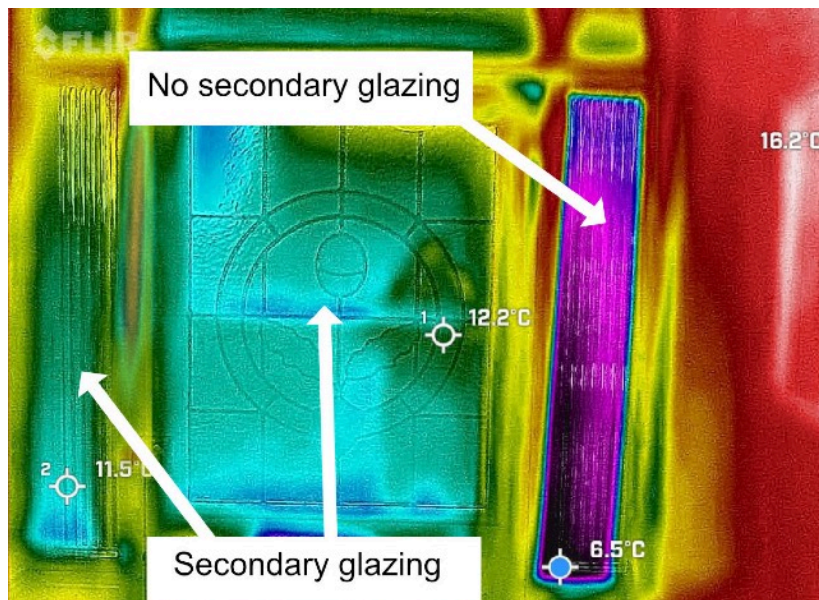


Post war build (1949) with 1930s style circular porch entrance

Internal Secondary Glazing

Internal secondary glazing can be used to retain original features such as stained glass while being almost as energy efficient as double-glazed units. And you don't need planning permission.

This front door in Oakmount Avenue was fitted with polycarbonate secondary glazing to the main window and the smaller windows on each side.



The secondary glazing was removed from the right-hand window and photographed with a thermal imaging camera.

You can see a difference of nearly 6°C with and without the polycarbonate. This compares favourably with only 7.5°C improvement with double-glazed units elsewhere in the house.

- Ambient (external) temperature: 3°C
- Secondary glazing on main window: 12.2°C
- Secondary glazing on left side window: 11.5°C
- Single glazed right side window: 6.5°C
- Double Glazed unit nearby 13.4°C



Replace or Repair Windows?

With regard to bay windows especially, any kind of replacement should be considered very carefully from a structural point of view. The main timber frames of the bay windows combined with a timber plate above formed a significant part of the load bearing structure and play the same role as a single steel lintel that you would find in a modern bay construction.

There are various reasons to consider repairing rather than replacement.

Window installers are generally covered by FENSA, which means they can self-certificate and bypass building control. Although this may not be a problem for a new build, they may be ignorant of some of the issues present in older houses.

Modern replacement bay window units may rely on structural baypoles placed only at the angles of the bay. If the main timber frame is replaced by a uPVC frame, it would usually be necessary on an older building to install a steel lintel above to make up for the weakened structure of the frame and to help spread the load across more than just the corner baypoles.

Similarly at the bottom. As baypoles are often fitted with very small spreader plates, they exert downwards pressure to only a small area of brickwork, as opposed to spreading the load like the old timber frames, it is crucial that the brickwork beneath is sound. It is very likely with a 100-year-old house that the old soft clay bricks and decaying lime mortar are not up to the job. This is why you might see a lot of cracked bay corner bricks (squints) around the Triangle.



Squints are cracked due to baypole pressure

When the squints are cracked like this, repair is difficult because the bricks should not be removed without adequate support for the window above, upon which the entire weight of the bay and gable are resting.

Such damage will raise a big red flag to any property surveyor.

If Building Control or a qualified structural engineer is involved (highly recommended) they will consider the age of the house and usually recommend that a strong lintel is fitted above and that wide spreader plates are fitted beneath the baypoles.

The final consideration is that for any replacement bay window, the entire bay needs to be propped while the old unit is removed and the new one is installed. This by itself may cause trauma to an old house, and again we would recommend seeking thorough advice from structural engineers.

For all of the above reasons we recommend that unless the main frame itself is rotted and beyond repair, you consider repairing the window and only replacing the necessary parts. Individual casements can be fitted to existing frames. Rotted sills can be removed and replaced successfully.

More information:

[Replacement Windows \(OTRA\)](#)

[Traditional Windows \(Historic England\)](#)

[Energy Efficiency and Historic Buildings](#)

You need A4 planning permission for:

- Replacement of windows on the front of your house. Note that replacing single glazing with double glazing requires planning permission, even if the frames may be considered “like-for-like.”
- Adding a porch or door on the front.

Permission is not required for repainting of windows or doors, whether the same colour or different.

Double Glazing

Understandably there is a demand for double glazing. Hardwood timber-frame double-glazed windows are now readily available. OTRA has recently supported several planning applications involving replacement windows and can help not only with design elements but also finding good quality reasonably priced installers.

For the best chance of approval, planning applications should include drawings and indication of dimensions - frames, casements, mullions, transoms etc. to show that original proportions and style are retained. Casement windows on John Smith houses were flush as opposed to lipped. This means the casements sit flush with the frames, not overlapping.

Conservation-style double glazing units are recommended and are more likely to be approved by the planning department.

When replacing windows that have leaded panels (aka fretted), we recommend to avoid “fake” frets inside the glazing unit. Real lead glazing frets on the outside (“astragal”) are now readily available and are a very convincing replacement for the original.

Small timber-framed panes in top lights are often difficult (or impossible) to replicate in regard to dimensions due to modern building regulations. In this case replacing with leaded panes (as above) may be the best solution as they are already a feature of the Triangle.

There are numerous examples of uPVC installed before conservation status. Apart from the material, many detract from the appearance of the property as they have overlapping rather than flush casements. They may also have a disproportionately thicker look to the mullions and framework.

If in doubt, please speak to OTRA and/or the conservation officer before applying for any infilling of porches as the design can make an enormous difference to the look and character of the property and will have a large impact on the likelihood of planning approval.

4 Front Elevation

Rendering

Houses are generally rendered (painted roughcast) from the eaves down to just above or just below the ground floor windows. Hanging (vertical) tiles bridge between the upper and ground floor bay windows.



There are also examples of decorative (stucco) render designs:



and unpainted pebbledash:



NB: *Pebbledash* is stones embedded in rendering, *roughcast* is stones or aggregates added to the render at the point of mixing.

Brickwork

Some houses have unrendered brickwork. Bricks are generally Bursledon Red clay, clamp-fired, or a combination of both.



The (locally listed) Highfield House Lodge on Oakmount Avenue is now painted light blue, but the walls are still original and are built with yellow brick:





Pebbledash 1st floor and brick quoins in Blenheim Avenue

As with the garden walls, many houses were repointed with sand and cement. Although this may not appear to detract from the look, it may cause structural issues (see above - *garden walls* and our web page [Bricks and Mortar](#)).

Most houses appear to be built using Flemish Bond brickwork, although as many of these appear to have cavity walls we can assume half bricks instead of full headers were used to emulate Flemish bond.

We also see several houses with brickwork quoins.

Rainwater Goods

The materials, colour and profile of gutters and down pipes are important to the overall character of the area, as well as to individual buildings.

Wherever possible original cast-iron gutters and hoppers should be retained, together with the wooden plates which support the downpipe brackets. Where replacements are needed, black-painted aluminium of an appropriate profile is preferable to plastic alternatives, although “cast-iron effect” uPVC is also available.

You need A4 planning permission for:

- Rendering over or painting bare brickwork on the front of a house.
- Replacement of rainwater goods (except like-for-like) on the front of a house.
- Installation of a satellite dish or aerial on the front of a house.

Notes

Permission is not required for repainting already painted masonry, whether the same colour or not.

Nor is it required for painting or repainting of woodwork.

When repairing brickwork to the front, if you are unable to find a good match using reclaimed bricks, it can be a good idea to use bricks from a less visible part of the building (side or back) in order to get the best colour match and avoid patches of new or different colour bricks on the front.

Pointing of original clay brickwork should be done with lime mortar.

DRAFT

Roofscape

Styles and Tiles

The typical John Smith-style house has hipped roofs with either one or two front facing gables, with handmade clay tiles (Rosemary, Fontley or Blanchard & Co).

Notable features include exposed rafter feet, tall decorative chimneys and Tudor style gable front timbers.



Oakmount Avenue

There are several variations however:



Mansard Roof on Westbourne Crescent

A few houses in Blenheim Avenue feature octagonal towers with tile-hung pointed roofs. These two on opposing sides of Westbourne Crescent create a kind of gateway into the Triangle.



Dormers and Rooflights

Some properties feature dormers (both original and added later). Velux-style sloping rooflights are later additions.

The original dormers were quite large “shed-style.” This means they have a gently sloping roof from back to front as opposed to gable-style pitched roofs on either side.



Shed-style dormer - Blenheim Avenue

You need A4 planning permission for:

- Any alteration or removal of chimneys on any part of the roof (unlike other features which require planning permission only for front-facing elevations.)
- Alteration of roof (including tiles and slates, ridge tiles, finials, rooflights, leadwork and eaves).
- Addition of dormers. These should be in similar materials to existing original dormers with windows matching the rest of the property. (See Dormer FAQs)
- Sloping (velux-style) roof lights. “Conservation style” are the most appropriate and most likely to receive permission; however if you need lighting in a roofspace, dormers (being an original feature) may stand a better chance of planning approval.
- Solar thermal and photovoltaic panels on a front wall. This applies to all properties in the conservation area, not just those covered by the Article 4(2). Note that although they do not need planning permission on side elevations, they must still satisfy general planning regulations. See [Planning Portal](#)

For solar panels on front roof slope see page[*]

The most common need for re-roofing is degradation of the battens holding the tiles or of the nails which hold the tiles to the battens. Either can cause the telltale sign of an obvious uneven appearance to the horizontal tile line.

Generally it is possible to remove and replace most of the original tiles. Unless you specifically want all new tiles, any new tiles that are needed can either be distributed randomly so they do not create an odd looking new patch, or can be used in a less visible area such as the back. Alternatively reclaimed Rosemary tiles are quite easy to source.

Although rear or side dormers and roof lights fall outside the Article 4, they may still require permission under general planning regulations.

Chimneys

There are some notes on 1920s chimney maintenance and repair on the OTRA website:

<https://otra.org.uk/chimneys>

FAQ 1 Dormers & roof lights

I've seen a lot of properties with dormers added, but my planning permission was refused. Why?

The Conservation officer will look at all applications on their own merit. There is no blanket guideline saying all dormers will be approved. In many cases dormers were added before the Triangle became a conservation area and so cannot be used any kind of a precedent.

A dormer is more likely to be approved if:

- The design is either similar to the original dormers in the Triangle (see above - “shed-style”), or else is of a design that matches other features of a property, e.g. gable style, possibly with other elements such as Tudor timber work where appropriate.
- Materials are consistent with other materials on the property and neighbouring properties if appropriate, e.g. clay Rosemary tiles and timber frame windows. Ideally use reclaimed tiles so that a dormer with new tiles does not stand out against a weathered roof.
- The proportions are taken into account. This may be subjective but we would advise the design is done by an architect that understands conservation principles rather than a builder or “architectural services” provider whose priority may be not be the aesthetic.
- Consideration is given to symmetry and alignment with existing window lines of the entire property, as well as visibility from the street due to natural topography of the street scene or position of the property in relation to the street view.

Velux-style roof lights.

Although inline roof lights add less bulk, they are also less in keeping with the style of the older properties. Conservation grade roof lights will stand the best chance of approval. Again pay attention to good architectural design in regard to position and dimensions.

The Streets

Pillar box

The Triangle boasts a Victorian pillar-box on the Corner of Blenheim Avenue and Westbourne Crescent. This is an unusual feature to find in an area which post-dates Queen Victoria's reign (1837 - 1901) by eight years. Victorian pillar boxes are protected under a joint policy between Royal Mail and Historic England to preserve and conserve the character and diversity of post boxes.



Kerb stones

Although stones in Oakmount Avenue and half of Blenheim Avenue have been replaced by concrete, original Portland, Purbeck and granite stones remain in Leigh Road, Westbourne Crescent and the North side of Blenheim Avenue.

Much of the Purbeck is broken by heavy vehicles, as they were installed with the bedding planes placed vertically. This will eventually cause them to fracture.



Purbeck kerb and white limestone gutter stones in Leigh Road



Leigh Road concrete replacement



Fired clay gutter stones in Westbourne Crescent

Some of the kerb stones are now the worse for wear, and although OTRA has asked SCC to replace them with natural stone, unsympathetic replacements have been carried out in places.

Streets are gradually being spoiled by more and more overhead cables and street cabinets which can be fitted by the telecoms companies without planning permission, along with digging up of pavements to lay cables.



Dropped kerbs

Residents applying for a dropped kerb along with an application for a driveway installation and opening, will stand a better chance of approval for the driveway application if they ask for natural stone to be used for the kerbs and gutters.

Appendix

Conservation Principles

In a conservation area such as the Oakmount Triangle, it is not possible to apply such rigorous principles of preservation as we see with historic monuments and listed buildings. We understand that these are houses in which people live. Times change and so do peoples' needs and expectations, along with advances in technology - both in regard to lifestyle and building. Conservation principles are now more about *managing change* rather than preserving in aspic^{1,2}. Nonetheless if we are to enjoy the benefits of conservation, there are responsibilities for householders.

OTRA will always strive to marry conservation principles with the understanding of the needs of the residents. We would prefer to see this as a realistic and pragmatic strategy, rather than a compromise.

When repairing/maintaining houses in the original development, authenticity may be the best starting point. Inevitably some replacements entail modern materials and methods, much of which can blend with the traditional fabric of a century-old house. However, some may appear unsympathetic to the area. Although that can at times appear to be subjective, we can draw on various resources to help make judgments as objective as possible. We can also view previous planning applications and understand the views of the planning department and Conservation Officer, to help us formulate what may be acceptable, and so avoid residents wasting time and money on applications that are not likely to succeed.

Repair or Replace

The historic environment officer has advised that repair (as opposed to replace) is very often the best solution. It often means keeping original materials and can mitigate the need for planning approval. Original materials may also be the better option in regard to the integrity of the building (as with replacement windows, see page[*])

Before replacing features with more modern materials or methods, it is recommended that residents first and foremost consider repair using traditional materials. We understand that this may not always be feasible so if modern materials and techniques are necessary, then they should look for those that fit in with the conservation principles of preserving or enhancing.

¹ Historic England Conservation Bulletin 62

² Historic England Conservation Bulletin 74

Some traditional materials used in the original development

- Drives: Gravel/hoggin. Possibly clay paving.
- General brickwork: Bursledon Red clay imperial brick and (grey/drab) lime mortar. Some clamp fired brick. Ideally bricks should be recycled or reclaimed. In many cases planning approval may impose conditions that require these.
- Garden walls: as above, some Purbeck stone.
- Doorsteps: Concrete and terracotta tiles. Some Purbeck stone doorsteps
- Timber (red fir): for carpentry, joinery, porch pillars and breastsummers.
- Windows: Timber framed (flush casement). Some with lead detailing. Puttied single glazed (see appendix x Sustainability).
- Lime mortar for brickwork. Haired lime mortar for tile pointing. Lime plaster*
- Cement for piers, oversails, drainage jointing, structural concrete
- Render: Roughcast or stucco, Lime (possibly “gauged” with Portland cement).
- Rainwater goods: iron (round profile) attached via brackets to timber plates
- Roof tiles: Hand made sand-faced red clay tiles (e.g. Rosemary, Fontley, Blanchard & Co). 3 inch lap. Again recycled are best for replacement especially for repairs of patches of a roof when brand new tiles would not blend in well.
- Exposed timber rafter feet.
- Timber gable fascia moulding.
- Slate damp proof course.
- Lead chimney flashing.

* Lime was used for internal plasterwork as well as for mortar. These days it is often replaced or skimmed over with the more modern and easier to use gypsum. This can be problematical on external walls where it can cause damp issues as it stops the “breathability” of the walls. See <https://otra.org.uk/breathability>

More modern materials or materials not used in the original development of the Triangle

- Cement mortar for clay brickwork.
- Engineered (metric) bricks.
- Tarmac, laid concrete (?), concrete pavers.
- Double glazed windows.
- uPVC window frames.
- uPVC rainwater goods. Replacement iron may not be practical so factory finished aluminium may be more suitable.

- Concrete pantiles.

Tips on making a good planning application

What is a Heritage Statement?

Sometimes called a design statement, this is a useful but often overlooked document that (in a conservation area) must be submitted as part of the planning process. An architect would normally do this if they are submitting an application for you, but for smaller domestic projects it can be a quite informal statement or letter that you can write yourself.

What you can include:

- Reference to the Design Guidance and/or Character Appraisal & Management Plan (C.A.M.P.) along with any of the information we provide online.
- Sketches, or illustrations or photographic mockups, manufacturers' brochures
- Description of how the development:
 - Preserves or enhances the appearance or character of the property and especially in the context of the street scene.
 - Alternatively (but maybe not as useful) point out any ways in which it does not harm the character of the property or area.
- Context: e.g. photographs and/or elevations of the surrounding buildings if relevant.
- Details of similar designs in the area. See below: precedents.
- Discuss any impact there may be on the area as a whole, e.g. parking.
- Mention any benefit there is to the environment and sustainability. This applies to any applications that involve micro (energy) generation, energy saving and energy efficiency.

Tips:

- Try to imagine what objections there may be, either from neighbours or the planning department, and make an argument that addresses any such concerns.
- Look at previous successful applications to understand further how such a statement may have helped approval. Architects' plans may be a necessary part of the application, but by their very nature are technical and so cannot always fully convey how it will look in real life.
- It is a good idea to think about the statement as part of the whole vision, and at an early stage rather than as an afterthought that is merely an attempt to justify something.
- For smaller projects that do not have an architect (such as replacement windows) this is something that you can do yourself. For smaller applications

there is no need for a formal document such as an architect might submit. A few paragraphs are fine as long as they convey what you want or need to say. We may be able to give you advice if given enough notice.

Be informed

You can see all the planning applications within the Triangle on the SCC website.

- Go to [Public Access planning search](#)
- Click on *Advanced* tab
- Under *Application Details > Conservation Area* enter *Oakmount Triangle*
- (You can also choose *Application type > Full Application* to filter out tree works applications)

You can see which applications were successful and why, likewise which ones weren't and why.

Precedents: “They have it, why can’t I?”

You might think that because a certain feature exists on other buildings in the area then this will serve as a useful precedent. This may or may not be the case.

The planning authority is not bound to follow a precedent, and they have stated that they will consider each application on its own merit. This can mean that the type of property and its bearing on the appropriateness of the proposed works and the immediate street scene can have more relevance than the mere fact that it has been done before in the Triangle. However the planning department may still take certain precedents into account, especially in the interests of consistency when there may be more than one example. We can offer a rough guide on how useful a precedent may be.

Useful precedents may include:

- Features that were included in the original development of the Triangle, that are appropriate to the scale, design and era of your property.
- Developments carried out (and approved) since the conservation status was granted in 2005.
- Precedents where the circumstances are very similar.

Less useful precedents may include:

- Features that have significant differences to, or are not appropriate to, the scale, design and era of your specific property.
- Situations where the immediate street scene is very different. As well as taking general advice from the management plan, the visual impact of any proposed changes may be viewed in a closer context of the actual property and its immediate surroundings.
- Developments, alterations or demolitions that were carried out before the Triangle achieved conservation status. This is particularly true of later (post war) developments that use materials that are not sympathetic to the era. It is something we see a lot of – especially regarding replacement UPVC rainwater goods or windows installed in the 1990s that would now probably not be granted permission.

What can go wrong?

Hopefully if you have a competent conservation architect, builders who are familiar with heritage materials, and a well thought out application then it stands a good chance. But nothing is certain.

One of the most common errors is not supplying enough information. For example with replacement (double glazed) windows it is not useful to merely describe the material, e.g. “timber,” or “aluminium.” Include details of

- The type (flush casement/sash etc.)
- Design (including dimensions of casement, mullions, transoms, glazing bars etc.) and thickness of glazed unit.

If all windows are matching it may only be necessary to include the dimension of one as an example.

Last but not least

We hope that you have found this design guide useful and that it helps you make a successful planning application. Many people think that conservation status means you will automatically be denied the ability to change your property. In reality it means some of the things you want to do will need planning permission and will be carefully considered by the planning department, along with specialist advice from the Historic Environment (Conservation) Officer. If it is deemed harmful to the conservation area, then it will probably be refused.

Although OTRA may be consulted by the Council, we also see our role as doing our best to help residents rather than hinder them. We may be able to suggest alternative approaches to achieve what you want for your property, or suggest ways that mitigate what might otherwise appear harmful to the street scene. We would prefer to see a successful planning application than a refusal.

A further important consideration for owners and landlords is that by keeping the area a pleasant place to live in and walk around, it can only help maintain the value of your property.

