Note: Every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of this document but due to the complexity of conservation areas, it would be impossible to include every facet contributing to the area’s special interest. Therefore, the omission of any feature does not necessarily convey a lack of significance. The Council will continue to assess each development proposal on its own merits. As part of this process a more detailed and up to date assessment of a particular site and its context is undertaken. This may reveal additional considerations relating to character or appearance which may be of relevance to a particular case.
## Contents

**1. INTRODUCTION**  
Summary of Character  
Location and Setting  
Historic Development Summary  

**2. TOWNSCAPE**  
Street Layout and Urban Form  
Land Uses  
Materials and Finishes  
Buildings Audit  

**3. ARCHITECTURE**  
Housing  
Cornwall Gardens  
Emperor’s Gate and Nos. 1-7 Grenville Place  
Southwell Gardens, Grenville Place (East Side) and Gloucester Road  
Cromwell Road  
Launceston Place  
Lexham Walk  
Shared Features Of Houses  
Architectural Details  
Windows and Doors  
Front Boundaries and Front Areas  
Side Elevations  
Rear Elevations  
Roofs  

**Other Building Types**  
Places of Worship  
Mews  
Other Buildings  

**4. PUBLIC REALM**  
The Garden Square  
Trees and Green Spaces  
Street Furniture  
Views  

**5. NEGATIVE ELEMENTS**  
APPENDIX 1 History  
APPENDIX 2 Heritage Identification Checklist  
APPENDIX 3 Relevant Local Plan Policies
1 Introduction

What does a conservation area designation mean?

1.1 The statutory definition of a conservation area is an "area of special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance". The power to designate conservation areas is given to councils through the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act, 1990 (Sections 69 to 78). Once designated, proposals within a conservation area become subject to local conservation policies set out in Chapter 34 of the Council’s Local Plan and national policies outlined in part 12 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). Our overarching duty which is set out in the Act is to preserve or enhance the historic or architectural character or appearance of the conservation area.

1.2 A conservation area appraisal aims to describe the special historic and architectural character of an area. A conservation area’s character is defined by a combination of elements such as architecture, uses, materials and detailing as well as the relationship between buildings and their settings. Many other elements contribute to character and appearance such as the placement of buildings within their plots; views and vistas; the relationship between the street and the buildings and the presence of trees and green space.

1.3 This document has been produced using the guidance set out by English Heritage in their document, Understanding Place: Conservation Area Designation, Appraisal and Management (2011). This appraisal will be a material consideration when assessing planning applications.

Purpose of this document

1.4 The aims of this appraisal are to:

- describe the historic and architectural character and appearance of the area which will assist applicants in making successful planning applications and decision makers in assessing planning applications
- raise public interest and awareness of the special character of their area
- identify the positive features which should be conserved, as well as negative features which indicate scope for future enhancements
Summary of Character

1.5 Cornwall Gardens Conservation Area was designated in 1969 and was one of the earliest conservation areas. It was extended to include Emperor’s Gate in 1982, Osten Mews and Cornwall Gardens Walk were added in 1983 and St Stephen’s Church in 1985. The conservation area has an overarching character of good quality, high Victorian speculative terraced houses.

1.6 Cornwall Gardens is a magnificent set-piece built around a very long central private garden designed by surveyor Thomas Cundy III and built by Welchman & Gale, and John Wilkins between 1863-79. The houses in this area are some of the tallest Victorian houses in the borough at five storeys plus half-basements, some having a further mansard storey. The Cornwall Gardens houses have fully stuccoed frontages with moulded stucco dressings in the Italianate style so strongly associated with the early-mid Victorian period. Other houses in Grenville Place, Southwell Gardens and Gloucester Road follow this style in pale gault brick with stuccoed lower storeys.

1.7 The 1870s saw developers experiment with French inspired styles that were fashionable for just a short period before giving way to the Queen Anne style. Cornwall House and Garden House (architect: James Trant Smith, 1877-79), nos. 5-7 Grenville Place (builder: Joseph Clark, 1874-5), nos. 104-112 Cromwell Road (architect: J. T. Wimperis, 1875-6) have a distinctly French flavour particularly brought about by their tall pointed pavilion roofs and decorative dormer windows and adventurous detailing.

1.8 No attempts appear to have been made to provide these estates with their own pubs and shops, although they were amply provided with mews despite the simultaneous arrival of the underground railway.
Location and Setting

1.9 The conservation area is in the Queen’s Gate ward and covered by postcode areas W8 and SW7 in Kensington. Kensington Palace and the busy commercial centre along Kensington High Street are located to the north of the area, with the pleasant residential early-mid Victorian De Vere Gardens Conservation Area in between. Cromwell Road forms the southern boundary of the conservation area and for a short stretch the setting of the conservation area is formed by tall buildings, such as Gloucester Park Apartments and the Holiday Inn. The area’s development was closely linked with the building of the underground railway and today a short stretch of the Metropolitan line runs above ground behind Emperor’s Gate and McLeod’s Mews. Further east is the museum district of South Kensington and to the west and south are further garden squares including Lexham Gardens and Courtfield Gardens.

Fig 1.1 Conservation Area Context Map
Historic Development Summary

- 1851 Great Exhibition in Hyde Park followed by the gradual development of the museums to the east in what was then called Albertopolis
- 1863-79 Cornwall Gardens built to the designs of Thomas Cundy III
- 1864-69 Metropolitan and District Railway built
- 1866-67 St Stephen’s Church built to designs of architect, Joseph Peacock
- 1868 Gloucester Road Station opened
- 1868-69 South Kensington Baptist Chapel built to designs of architects, C.G. Searle & Son
- 1871-75 Southwell Gardens and Grenville Place built
- 1874-75 Nos. 1-10 Emperor’s Gate and 5-7 Grenville Place built by Joseph Clark, builder
- 1875-76 Nos. 104-112 Cromwell Road built
- 1875-89 No. 6 Grenville Place occupied by Charles Booth, philanthropist and social researcher
- 1876-78 Nos. 26-47 Emperor’s Gate built
- 1877-79 The Garden House and Cornwall House built, designed by architect James Trant Smith
- 1877-79 Cornwall Gardens Walk built by William Willett
- c.1887 Lexham Walk created
- 1909-10 Nos. 1 and 3 Lexham Walk built to designs of architects, Stanley-Barrett and Driver
- 1913-14 No. 23a Launceston Place designed by surveyor, Charles Saunders
- 1921 Cornwall Gardens Walk converted to housing by Stanley-Barrett and Driver
- 1932 Stanford House built to designs of architect, F. F. Doyle
2.1 The mid-Victorian street pattern was influenced by the line of the Metropolitan and District Railway. Cornwall Gardens was not designed to connect to streets other than Grenville Place or Gloucester Road and following its construction pedestrian paths were created to Stanford Road and to Lexham Gardens.

2.2 Cornwall Gardens is a long private garden with two minor roads cutting through it. To the north, south and west the terrace houses front the garden, but at the eastern end, houses back onto it. Emperor’s Gate and its tiny green space form a triangular cul-de-sac bound by Cornwall Gardens to the north and the railway to the south-west.

2.3 Apart from these green areas, there is little spaciousness in the townscape. Tall terraced housing is the most common building type and there are very few lower buildings and semi detached or detached buildings in the area. There is a semi detached pair on Southwell Gardens and a detached house on Gloucester Road (now a bank). The two detached churches sit on tight plots, and even the majestic detached Cornwall House and Garden House are very tightly spaced.

2.4 A feature of this very urban type of Victorian development is the lack of street trees and individual outside space. The houses have narrow front areas and tiny yards to the rear with no space for planting. Houses are built up against mews or other houses with no space in between. The mews are the only lower buildings that break the pattern of tall housing allowing views to their rear elevations.
Land Uses

2.5 The area is almost completely residential. Mews were built for stabling and carriages behind the houses (such as Osten Mews behind Emperor’s Gate, Cornwall Mews South and Cornwall Gardens Walk) but these have since been converted to residential use. Kynance Mews was built to serve Cornwall Gardens but today forms part of the De Vere Conservation Area.

2.6 Private gardens hardly exist but the houses on Cornwall Gardens are located around a long private garden from which they are separated by a road. Emperor’s Gate has a very small treed area at its centre.

2.7 Two churches were built in the conservation area, one of which (the South Kensington Baptist Chapel on Emperor’s Gate) has become a health centre.

2.8 Nos. 94-106 and nos. 108-112 Cromwell Road were built as houses but converted to hotels, a pattern that was taking place more fervently on the south of Cromwell Road where houses were unpopular around the 1900s and has since resulted in much redevelopment.

2.9 No. 114 Gloucester Road was built as a detached house and has been converted to a high street bank.
Fig 2.5 Current Land Use Map

- Residential
- Retail at ground floor
- Office / Business
- Public houses/restaurant
- Places of worship
- Medical use
- Hotel
- Light industrial
Materials

2.10 Houses in the conservation area were mainly built from locally manufactured materials such as brick, timber, iron, glass and stucco. Only slate for the roofs came from further afield (Wales). The buildings in the conservation area derive much of their historic character from the way the materials have weathered and worn over time (their patina of age) as well as their historic manufacturing processes that result in creases and natural variation in brick or ripples in crown or cylinder glass.

2.11 The terraces are characterised by one principal material such as painted stucco or gault brick. Cornwall Gardens was designed so that all the houses were stucco fronted and this gives a palatial effect which has largely remained to this day.

2.12 Houses in Southwell Gardens, Grenville Place and Cromwell Road were built with channelled stucco to the lower storeys and gault brick to the upper storeys which gives the appearance of a solid base and complements the decorative stucco dressings.

2.13 The only houses built in red brick in this conservation area are nos. 26-34 Emperor’s Gate. This is an early example of a developer trying to break away from the ubiquitous stucco and stock brick terraces of the Victorian period thus far.

2.14 St Stephen’s Church is built in stone whilst the non-conformist Baptist chapel on Emperor’s Gate was built in stock brick with Portland stone dressings.

2.15 Most of the terraces are well maintained so that their effect as a single piece of architecture can be enjoyed. However this grand effect has been harmed in places, particularly one house in Emperor’s Gate and several in Cornwall Gardens. No. 83 Cornwall Gardens has remained unpainted unlike the rest of the terrace but this is closer to the original finish of the stuccoed houses which were only painted in later years. The French style group of houses at nos. 5-7 Grenville Place has been entirely painted so that the contrast between the stock brick and red moulded brick window surrounds has been entirely lost to the detriment of the building and the character of this part of the conservation area.

2.16 The mews were mostly built in stock brick, probably with the exception of the frontage of Cornwall Gardens Walk which seems to have been rendered from the outset in deference to Cornwall Gardens. Today, only a few mews contain unpainted buildings.
Buildings Audit

2.17 The Buildings Audit Map shows the contribution made by buildings to the historic and architectural character of the area. For all buildings identified here as positive buildings, change must be managed to conserve and, where appropriate, enhance their significance in accordance with national and local planning policies. Where particular sites, buildings or additions to buildings are harmful or out of keeping with the broader character of the conservation area as outlined in this appraisal, the Council will support proposals and where possible, take opportunities to make improvements and enhancements in line with Policies CL1, CL2 and CL3 of the Local Plan.

Listed Buildings

2.18 A listed building is a building designated by the Government on the advice of English Heritage as a building of special architectural or historic interest, which local authorities have a statutory duty to preserve or enhance.

Positive Buildings

2.19 These buildings make a positive contribution to the historic and architectural character and appearance of the conservation area. They are a key reason for the designation and significance of the conservation area.

Neutral Buildings

2.20 These buildings may blend into the townscape by virtue of their form, scale or materials, but due to their level of design quality, fail to make a positive contribution.

Negative Buildings

2.21 Negative buildings are those which are out of keeping with the prevailing character of the conservation area.
3 Architecture

Housing

Cornwall Gardens

3.1 Cornwall Gardens is a magnificent mid Victorian set-piece of urban design, built between 1863-79, in which a long central private garden with verdant planting and mature trees is surrounded by grand Italianate stucco fronted terraces with mews located behind them. The terraces were built by two main building firms: Welchman and Gale and later, John Wilkins with the design being attributed to surveyor, Thomas Cundy III who set out clear specifications for the development including decorative details (Survey of London, volume 42).

3.2 The first terrace was nos. 6-16 which was begun by Welchman and Gale in 1863 who proceeded to build up to nos. 43 by 1871. The south side followed with nos. 75-94 being built by John Wilkins between 1866-70 and; nos. 58-74 being built by Welchman and Gale between 1871-76.

3.3 The tall five storey terraces are designed in groups with slightly projecting end sections defined by quoins and pediments to the windows. Each individual house is three windows wide, all of which are sashes, even those at first floor which are arched, and most have a single glazing bar that emphasises the verticality of the houses. Porches are paired, with Ionic columns (after no. 16) and four panelled doors with top and side lights.

3.4 The stucco to the ground floor is channelled and the original attic storey is underlined by a projecting modillioned cornice and topped by a simple cornice to the parapet. Many houses have had mansard roof extensions added which leaves a gap-toothed effect where these have not been built.

3.5 A double-bellied stucco balustrade runs under the first floor windows and over the porches to all the houses which is either continuous or broken at each pair. The stucco frontages are mostly painted pale cream or off-white. Some are painted pastels colours and many have their detailing picked out in white which would not have been an original finish. The use of a unified pale cream colour scheme...
to all the houses would enhance this fine square.

3.6 The houses are very close to the pavement leaving narrow front areas that are devoid of planting, but have distinctive sturdy cast iron railings with a Gothic feel, painted black.

3.7 At the west end there is an unusual layout of two large houses with six houses behind them. The two large houses (the Garden House (no. 1) and Cornwall House (no. 2)) are detached and face the full length of the garden with decoration on all four elevations. These were designed by James Trant Smith and built by Willett between 1877-79 in white Burnham brick with Portland stone dressings in contrast to the rest of the stuccoed square. These are the most opulent as well as being some of the best conserved houses in the area which the Survey of London evocatively describes as ‘Two Second Empire mansions forcibly squeezed until they burst with excrescences – crestings, mansards and chimneys on top, bays and bows at the sides’.

3.8 Nos. 2-4 at the other end of the square front Gloucester Road and their rear elevations front the garden although these are suitably stuccoed and detailed in accordance with their highly visible location.

3.9 The houses began to be broken up into flats as early as 1905.

Lexham Walk

3.10 Lexham Walk was laid out c.1887 to create a pedestrian access between Cornwall Gardens and Lexham Gardens. Nos. 1 and 3 were not built until 1909-10 and are in a completely different style to the surrounding developments. They were designed as The Tiled House and The Studio by Stanley-Barrett and Driver who also converted the mews in Cornwall Gardens Walk. They are both small, detached houses with casement windows, roughcast walls and prominent battered chimneys which define this Voyseyesque style. No. 3 has a flat roof, having been substantially extended, whereas no. 1 has the most Arts and Crafts charm with its hipped and gabled roofs covered in clay tiles.
Emperor’s Gate and Nos. 1-7 Grenville Place

3.11 Emperor’s Gate is an attractive triangular cul-de-sac which has two entrances from Grenville Place and then tapers towards a pair of houses at the western end with a small island of trees near the centre. The former South Kensington Baptist Chapel (now a health centre) was built some years before the terraces and today projects into the street creating a corner that helps to enclose the space and create a tranquil enclave. The French style triangular block fronting Grenville Place is an unusual design.

Nos. 1-10 Emperor’s Gate and 1-4 and 5-7 Grenville Place

3.12 These houses were built between 1874-5 by Joseph Clark builder/developer in what the Survey of London calls ‘a raw variant of the French townhouse style briefly in vogue at this time’. These houses are lower than other houses in the area, being only four storeys over basement with mansards.

3.13 The triangular block forming nos. 1-10 Emperor’s Gate and 5-7 Grenville Place has slightly different architectural detailing on each elevation. The most imposing frontage on Grenville Place was originally finished in gault brick with polished red granite columns to the porches and decorative cast iron balconies to the upper windows. Nos. 7-10 (south side) have individual stucco balustrades to their upper windows but nos. 1-6 (north) only have stucco balustrades to the first floor windows. The roofline has a very French character with tall pavilion roofs containing double rows of arched dormers to the corner houses and tall projecting chimneys.

3.14 The brick elevation to nos. 5-7 Grenville Place has been regrettably overpainted which has obliterated its contrasting and unusual detailing but no. 1 Emperor’s Gate has retained its red moulded brick window surrounds.

3.15 Nos. 1-4 Grenville Place is in a similar style and has not been painted, but the group on the north side of Emperor’s Gate is marred by the porch to no. 2 which has been enclosed with...
solid walls and has red tiled steps winding down from a new side entrance. This is an overtly solid structure in a street scene where all other porches are open.

Nos. 26-34 (south side)

3.16 Nos. 26-36 were almost certainly designed by architect, E. Habershon and Brock and built in 1876-8. This is an extremely fine tall terrace of five storey red brick houses with arched open single porches, bay windows to ground floor and a bracketed parapet with original dormers above. The terrace is built very close to the pavement allowing for a narrow front area protected by decorative pointed railings. Steps are built with nosings in Portland stone. Stucco detailing is elaborate and includes a hatched flat band, pointed and arched surrounds to the windows and a continuous lozenge-work balustrade running under the first floor windows and over the porches. Part of this idiosyncratic design includes stylised capitals half way up the bays and stylised flowers and leaves over the upper windows. The stucco decoration, ground floors and porches are painted a pleasant off-white to all houses except one which has been painted blue with white railings thus interrupting the unity and integrity of the group.

3.17 The terrace continues to nos. 35-36 which are two houses that turn the corner and terminate the end of this square as a pair of semi detached villas. To the right of the pair is the red brick arched entrance to Osten Mews.

Nos. 37-47 (north side)

3.18 These houses were probably designed by architect George Edwards and built in the same period as the south side. This terrace is the more common Classical design, three windows wide, built of stock brick with stucco dressings to plain sash windows and bottle balustrades to the first floor French windows (the piano nobile) and parapet. The proportions of the houses are similar to those on the south side, having narrow front areas and paired open Doric porches with triglyphs to the friezes and gradually decreasing windows above. The first and second floor windows have curved and arched pediments and the whole terrace is crowned by a perfectly intact bottle balustrade.
Southwell Gardens, Grenville Place (East Side) and Gloucester Road

3.19 Nos. 1-11 Southwell Gardens and 104-110 Gloucester Road were built between 1871-73; and nos. 15 and 16 Southwell Gardens in 1873-74. Grenville Place and the corner house numbered 114 Cromwell Road were built slightly later between 1874-75. All were built in an Italianate style by developer John Wilkins although the houses were probably designed by Thomas Cundy III.

3.20 These terraces are built in gault brick, three windows wide with slight accentuation given to some houses in the form of stucco quoins and pediment to first floor window. The ground floors have paired Doric porches and canted channelled bays topped with the typical continuous double-bellied balustrade at first floor level. The houses on Southwell Gardens are five storeys over basement whereas those in Grenville Place are four storeys, but have had mansard roofs added; many of the latter also have black and white tiled paths. All have narrow front areas with plain pointed cast iron railings.

3.21 Nos. 17a, 17 and 18 Grenville Place flank the entrance arch to Cornwall Mews South and have all been changed from their original, probably blank, appearance with those to the south remaining at two storeys, but with no. 18 having had an eccentric third storey added. No. 17a was the rear of 11 Southwell Gardens and was remodelled in 1957.

3.22 No. 114 Gloucester Road was built as a detached villa in 1870-72 to the design of architect, H. E. Harwood in a rather odd slightly asymmetrical design that looks like it was meant to be a pair. The building has an entirely stuccoed frontage with small architraves to the plain sash windows with its main decorative features being its Doric porch complete with triglyphs to the frieze, two string courses and a fine dentilled cornice to its parapet. The house has been converted to a bank whose mansard and various additions detract from the simple elegance of this unusual detached building.
Cromwell Road

3.23 The terrace on Cromwell Road divides into two styles. Nos. 92-100 are narrow gault brick and stucco houses (now a hotel) with channelled stucco up to ground floor level with canted bays rising to second floor level. The cornice is finished with an uninterrupted bottle balustrade and decoration is confined to stucco quoins, cornices, Doric porches and plain railings with the most elaborate feature being the narrow pediments to the first floor windows and the wrought iron panels over the porches.

3.24 Nos. 104-112 were likely to have been designed by architect, J. T. Wimperis and built between 1875-6 in a more adventurous style. The ground floor elevation is embellished with a chunky stucco and brick arcade that is also echoed in the projecting open porches. These would have originally created a contrasting effect between the brick and stucco, but now all is regrettably painted. Above this at first floor level the French windows are set in wide canted bays topped with a curved modillioned pediment and guarded by a continuous wrought iron balustrade. The cornice above the third floor is supported on pairs of brackets and the parapet at roof level is interrupted at every other house with a broken pediment on oversized brackets. Nos. 108 and 112 are crowned with pointed pavilion roofs. One of the particularly pleasing aspects of this group is that all the cast iron plant pot guards remain to the upper window cills.

3.25 Nos. 94-106 and nos. 108-112 Cromwell Road were converted to hotels, perhaps at an early date, and this has resulted in doors being blocked and the addition of a certain level of modern paraphernalia such as signage, modern handrails and external blinds.

3.26 No. 114 was designed by H. E. Harwood in 1870-2. On Cromwell Road it has the appearance of an asymmetrical detached house with a central projecting porch and a canted bay to one side only, but in fact it completes the terrace in Grenville Place. Due to this design its chimney stacks are unusually located on the Cromwell Road roofline.
**Shared Features of Houses**

**Architectural Details**

3.27 Extravagant architectural detailing is a key feature of mid-late Victorian architecture and can be seen on all houses in this conservation area.

3.28 Stucco decoration ties the terraces together visually and is used in parapets, balcony balustrades, window surrounds, porches and string courses. The type of balustrade used across most of the area has a double-bellied design which is seen in balconies and parapets.

3.29 Porches are a key feature of the area and can be either single or paired, but are always open. They project away from the house and over the front area to link the main entrance door with the street via a short flight of steps. The porches are formed by columns which have Doric, Ionic or composite leafy capitals supporting a frieze that is either plain or with triglyphs.

3.30 Windows were often given elaborate surrounds according to floor level (see *Windows and Doors*). The houses in the area are three windows wide making them ideal for grouping together under shared cornices with pediments as in Cornwall Gardens with the most elaborate treatments being seen at the Garden House and Cornwall House.

3.31 The red brick houses in Emperor’s Gate defy classification and have mouldings in which fern leaves make up the form of shells and flowers with birds and faces in spandrels and capitals. The decoration is contained within a geometric format with window surrounds being square, the balustrade having a diamond pattern, the porch having a square section and a continuous flat-band having a crosshatched design. Another unusual detail is the decoratively moulded brick used in the window surrounds at nos. 5-7 Grenville Place.

3.32 The most extravagant decoration was given to the large houses at the west end of Cornwall Gardens which display a riot of stucco decoration at every floor level and have feature window surrounds at the second and third floor levels as well as the usual lower ones.

3.33 Steps leading to the front doors are a mixture of stone treads (with or without bull nosings) and mosaic tiles. Some modern finishes such as black or red tiling have intruded but some terraces such as those in Emperor’s Gate and Grenville Place have retained a sympathetic uniform treatment which is a positive feature.

3.34 Cast ironwork is widely used for area railings but examples of its use on balconies can also be found, for example, in Cromwell Road and to particularly good effect at nos. 1-7 Emperor’s Gate. Cast iron can also be seen as railings to the entrance landings (usually a different design to the boundary railings, for which, see *Front Boundaries*), foot scrapers and the many plant pot guards which remain to window cills.
3.35 Original windows and doors make a vital contribution to the area’s appearance, integrity and historic character. The most widespread type of window in the conservation area is the sliding timber framed sash window which was an important British invention that allowed air to enter a room by the top and/or bottom sash without breaking the carefully designed building line. Their frames, glazing bars and horns were fine and elegant.

3.36 Victorian terraced houses were designed to have a hierarchy of windows reflecting the importance of the rooms behind them. The most elaborate and largest windows were reserved for the piano nobile (the main floor) which was usually the first floor. From this level the windows get smaller and with less detailed surrounds as they rise to the top floor of the house. The ground floor also had important windows which were usually set off centre to allow for the entrance at the side.

3.37 There is a mixture of French windows (long casements) and long sash windows at first floor level in this conservation area, all of which match in each separate terrace. In Cornwall Gardens the first floor windows are arched plain sashes. Nos. 104-112 Cromwell Road have canted bays at first floor with French windows. Most first floor windows are grouped together under a shared decorative stucco surround such as a pediment and have a balustrade to the narrow balcony in front of them.

3.38 At ground floor level, window style also varies. On the south side of Emperor’s Gate as well as Southwell Gardens windows are set in canted bays and on the north side of Emperor’s Gate and in Cornwall Gardens they are flush with the channelled stucco. Some (such as in Cornwall Gardens) take the form of tripartite windows – three sash windows in a single opening.

3.39 Windows to the upper floors in this conservation area are mostly either plain sashes (such as in Emperor’s Gate and Southwell Gardens) or have single glazing bars giving the windows more vertical emphasis (such as in Cornwall Gardens).
3.40  Windows have mostly been well conserved and it is easy to see the original glazing pattern across each terrace. Much original crown or cylinder glass remains with its attractive rippled effect and most of the windows have ogee shaped horns associated with the construction of large paned Victorian sashes.

3.41  However, some windows have been changed in a way that harms the terrace, such as where ground floor windows with square frames have been inserted into arched openings in Cromwell Road. Another negative change seen in some places is the use of multiple glazing bars in terraces of plain sashes. However, some changes were done so long ago in the high quality architectural style of their time that they have become part of the positive character of the area such as the handful of Queen Anne style windows at ground floor level in Cornwall Gardens.

3.42  Many original front doors can still be seen in the conservation area. Nos. 26-34 Emperor’s Gate almost all have original six panelled doors with the top four panels containing square leaded panes of glass. In the terrace opposite each house has a pair of doors with six panels.

3.43  Some houses such as those in Southwell Gardens and nos. 1-7 Emperor’s Gate have plain fanlights and narrow sidelights either side of the doors resulting in a more generous entranceway.

3.44  Open front areas (or lightwells) with cast iron railings painted black are a strong feature of this conservation area providing a continuous boundary along the street.

3.45  There are two main railing designs in the area although even these have variations from one terrace to another. The first comprises plain cast iron posts with a pointed finial whilst the other styles are more complex.

3.46  Those in front of nos. 104-112 Cromwell Road are full of curlicues at the top and bottom and finials above whereas those in Cornwall Gardens are more geometric and Gothic in character. The railings in front of the red brick

Window surround, Emperor’s Gate (south side)

Entrances, Emperor’s Gate (north side)

Porch, Emperor’s Gate (south side)
Emperor’s Gate houses were clearly designed to coordinate with the rest of the architecture having a diamond pattern that is echoed in the stucco balustrade.

3.47 The front areas are accessed by stone steps leading down from the opposite side to the main entrance, with the basement entrance being located under the main front door. The steps down were originally made of stone and many survive with a simple D-section handrail. Most front areas are narrow with no space for any planting although the houses in Southwell Gardens have more room.

Side Elevations

3.48 The grid formation of some of the streets causes some terrace ends to be exposed. Instead of being left blank these elevations blend into the streetscape with windows and bays of their own.

3.49 This is a particular feature of Grenville Place which cuts through Southwell Gardens and Cornwall Gardens, but the pinnacle of side elevation design can be seen at the garden houses at the west end of Cornwall Gardens.

3.50 The fenestration to no. 114 Cromwell Road belies its true configuration as two houses, one of which is entered from Grenville Place. The side elevations at the west end of Southwell Gardens are handed so that they reflect each other and form an entrance into the street.

3.51 The insertion of additional windows into these carefully designed flank walls has caused the disruption to their original form and character and harmed their appearance.
**Rear Elevations**

3.52 Most rear elevations in this conservation area are built in yellow London stock brick and have timber framed sash windows which are frequently aligned at the same level along the terrace as well as reducing according to the floor level. The regularity of the pattern within each separate terrace makes a positive contribution to the character of the conservation area.

3.53 The Cornwall Gardens houses were originally built with rear additions containing substantial rooms although these structures only seem to rise to first floor level. The houses at both ends of Cornwall Gardens are exceptional in their level of design and detailing to all four frontages with the rear elevations hardly being treated differently. However, projecting original additions can still be discerned to the some of the houses, for example nos. 51-54 Cornwall Gardens and nos. 1-5 Gloucester Road.

3.54 Other terraces such as nos. 26-31 Emperor’s Gate have almost full height single closet wings built across half the width of each rear elevation leaving a projecting and recessing rhythm that is highly characteristic of Victorian terraced houses. Those on the north side have paired closet wings that are slightly wider.

3.55 The terrace on Southwell Gardens has a regular pattern of shallow paired closet wings with pairs of substantial original additions at lower and raised ground floor level. The rear elevation of the Grenville Place terrace is well designed with a cornice below the attic windows and neat pairs of narrow closet wings with matching sash windows.
Roofs

3.56 There is a variety of roof types in the conservation area which form an important part of the area’s special character. Many terraces are finished by a parapet cornice with either dentillation, brackets or balustrading as decoration and a separate cornice below the attic windows. This was the original finish to the houses in Cornwall Gardens but slated mansards have been added above the parapet line of many of the houses leaving a gap-tooth effect to those left without mansards.

3.57 The houses at both ends of Cornwall Gardens have highly distinctive French chateau style roofs with steeply pitched slate and lead roofs topped with cast iron finials and set with brick and stucco dormer windows. Nos. 5 and 7 Grenville Place also have fine tall French style roofs with small arched dormers and fish scale and diamond shaped slates. Nos. 108 and 112 Cromwell Road were built with tall mansard pavilion roofs of similar design with circular lucarne windows. Nos. 10-16 Grenville Place have had simple matching mansards added in a way that protects the uniformity of the terrace.

3.58 The houses on Southwell Gardens (and those on Cornwall Gardens without mansards) have a pitched roof running the length of the terrace which is concealed from view by a simple moulded cornice. A modillioned cornice also runs under the fourth floor windows creating a shorter attic storey at the top of the terrace with only the tall slender chimney stacks and terracotta pots being visible above.

3.59 In Emperor’s Gate there are two types of roofline. The terrace to the north has a complete bottle balustrade above the cornice with no visible roof structure behind. The red brick houses have a bracketed cornice running the length of the terrace with two pointed dormer windows per house joined by a stucco balustrade. The dormer windows are arched and contain square leaded glazing.

Emperor’s Gate (south side)

Emperor’s Gate (north side)

Cornwall House

Mansards, Grenville Place

French chateau style roofline, Emperor’s Gate

Cornwall Gardens
Other Building Types

Mews

3.60 A great part of the character of the conservation area comes from the mews, not only for their current form, but for their historical association with the age of horses and carriages.

3.61 There are five mews in Cornwall Gardens Conservation Area. Kynance Mews and Kingsley Mews were built as part of Cornwall Gardens, but are located in neighbouring De Vere Conservation Area.

3.62 Most mews have been converted to housing, which began after the First World War when more housing was needed and train and car use became widespread making the mews redundant. A car repair garage remains in Cornwall Mews West, a reminder of other typical uses before housing took over.

3.63 Some of the back land mews have regrettably been rebuilt or had out of character features added such as oversized mansards, bay windows, metal garage doors, recessed entrances and grandiose ornamentation. However, even in their altered form, mews still make a significant contribution to the special character of the conservation area. Positive features of mews include their charm, their patina of age, their small scale (usually two storeys and single plot width), the wide carriage openings and bressumer, small sash windows to the first floor with cambered brick lintels, chimney stacks, plain pitched slate roofs and cobbled streets to give a few examples.

3.64 Each mews has an arch at the entrance with the exception of McLeod’s Mews. Mews arches are a particularly special feature of this conservation area. They were built to dignify these working areas, drawing the eye away from the mews and creating a sophisticated juncture in the streetscape. Today they create an attractive frame to the small buildings beyond and are often left unpainted as originally intended.

3.65 Where the mews buildings meet the street, the end walls were sometimes given a more decorative finish such as nos. 50f and 50g Cornwall Gardens which lead to Lexham Walk. Other end elevations were probably originally blank, but have since been gentrified and given windows and front doors such as those to Cornwall Mews South on Grenville Place.
3.66 Cornwall Gardens Walk was built by William Willett in 1877-79. Originally this unusual two and a half storey mews presented a largely blank wall to the adjacent mansions, but were converted to maisonettes in 1921 by architects, Stanley-Barrett and Driver in what they called the ‘Tudor Manor’ style. The elevations to the cobbled mews have been altered out of all recognition with only the corner unit (no. 50b Cornwall Gardens) retaining some original features.

3.67 The mews at the south end of Cornwall Gardens Walk have been better preserved in terms of their historic features which include chevron banding below the parapet and moulded brick lintels over the sash windows.

3.68 The other mews are formed of more typical two storey terraces with camber headed sash windows to the first floor and wide openings for the horse and carriage to the ground floor. Osten Mews (c. 1876-8) has a pleasant formation with buildings on three sides set around a central block. Most buildings have been rendered and painted but most retain timber two-over-two sash windows. This is the only mews to contain a commercial use with a car repairs garage situated at the south end.

3.69 The east side of Cornwall Mews South was built 1866-70 by John Wilkins behind his houses on Cornwall Gardens and whose rear elevations form the north side of the mews. The mews buildings have undergone alteration and rebuilding although some features remain such as reinstated bressumers, parapet cornices and sash windows but the mews particularly suffers from inconsistent painting, metal garage doors and intrusions into the parapet line. The west section of mews was built by William Willett soon after and is better preserved.

3.70 McLeod’s Mews was built at the same time as Emperor’s Gate (c. 1876-8) and although it retains its small scale, the buildings have been rendered and have suffered from ‘improvements’ whereby all carriage entrances have disappeared and modern doors and windows are creeping in creating a cottage effect whilst destroying the mews character.
St Stephen’s Church, Gloucester Road

3.71 ‘One of the best remaining churches by the ‘rogue’ Victorian architect, Joseph Peacock’ (Goodhart-Rendel in the Survey of London) Designed in 1866-7 and extended in 1887 by H. R. Gough, this church is grade II* listed. It was built in coursed Bargate stone with Bath stone dressings in a thirteenth century French (but eclectic) Gothic style with many idiosyncratic features. The east rose window has zig zag tracery around its perimeter which is echoed in the cusped tracery to the parapets of the octagonal side chapels. One of these is topped with a painted timber lantern and the church is surrounded by its original stone wall with thick piers and cast iron railings.

Former South Kensington Baptist Chapel, Emperor’s Gate

3.72 This Gothic chapel was built in 1868-9 as the South Kensington Baptist Chapel to the designs of C.G. Searle & Son, noted non-conformist architects. Several other denominations have occupied the building with the last religious congregation being the Russian Orthodox Church. It is now a health centre.

3.73 The church is built in stock brick with a fine window of Decorated Gothic stone tracery to the front elevation and an entrance porch with three pointed arches which has unfortunately been painted white. A short tower is located on the corner and its flank wall is relatively plain with simple leaded light windows and brick buttresses.

Other Buildings

Stanford Court

3.74 The only later building that intrudes into the otherwise complete Victorian architecture of Cornwall Gardens is Stanford Court on the corner with Stanford Road. This block of flats was built in 1932 to the designs of F. F. Doyle with rendered elevations, shallow bays and a clay tiled mansard roof. Although the building has a low impact on the street scene, particularly due to its out of the way location, a copy of the Victorian houses would have completed the square more sympathetically in this instance.
4 Public Realm

The Garden Square

4.1 The central garden must be one of the longest in the Royal Borough, if not London overall, and would have been longer had the garden houses not been built on its intended land at the west end. It is a magnificent piece of green space which, although only accessible to those who live in the surrounding houses, has an impact on the environment for all, both visually and ecologically.

4.2 The garden is divided into three sections. The west section has retained its original round section cast iron railings on a cast iron coping and original gates whereas the other two sections have modern railings, but have retained original gates. The central and eastern sections are surrounded by a neatly clipped privet hedge, but the western section is more open. Inside are lawns and shrub planting in an informal style. The majestic mature Plane trees were part of the original planting.

4.3 Due to the expanse of shared garden the houses were not built with back gardens and similarly, the streets did not need to be planted with trees due to the quantity provided in the central garden. The garden is therefore an inextricable part of the significance of the whole set piece of architecture and nature that combine to create a brilliant piece of Victorian urban design.

Trees and Green Space

4.4 The three garden sections of Cornwall Gardens contain some of the finest London Plane *Platanus x hispanica* trees found in the whole of the Royal Borough and possibly also the capital. Ten of these trees measure close to or above 40m in height making them some of the largest too.

4.5 Other notable trees in these communal areas include good specimens of Lime *Tilia*, Holly *Ilex*, Chestnut *Aesculus* and Hawthorn *Crataegus*.

4.6 The communal area in Emperor’s Gate has similar species, with mature specimens of Plane, Chestnut and Lime trees.

4.7 The few street trees in the conservation area are species not commonly found elsewhere in the borough’s streets. These include a good quality Indian Bean tree *Catalpa bignonioides* and a Persian Silk tree *Albizia julibrissin*.

4.8 There are three other private garden areas that are important to the character of the conservation area. These are: the garden to no. 3 Lexham Walk; the garden between Stanford Court and no. 47 Cornwall Gardens; and the verdant garden between no. 54 and 55 Cornwall Gardens.
Street Furniture

Coal Hole Covers
4.9 Original cast iron coal hole covers remain in many streets and their variety and design contributes to the authenticity of the area.

Letter Boxes
4.10 Traditional red letter boxes form part of the country’s postal history and are attractive landmarks and pieces of street furniture which make an important contribution to the character of the conservation area.

4.11 There are two in Cornwall Gardens Conservation Area. The Penfold pillar box (1860s) at the north-west corner of Cornwall Gardens is one of the earlier pillar box designs and is grade II listed. These are rare but recognisable from their distinctive hexagonal form. The other pillar box sits at the junction of Emperor’s Gate and Grenville Place and is the more common round design. This one has a GR cipher (George V 1910-1936).

Street Lamps
4.12 The ‘Chelsea Coronet’, a tall but unobtrusive modern interpretation of a Victorian style lamp is used across the conservation area which has a neutral impact on the historic character of the area but an important function in lighting the streets at night. Cromwell Road is managed by Transport for London and therefore has tall lighting installed by them with curved necks and hanging lanterns marketed as ‘heritage style columns’, a more sympathetic solution than other possibilities.

Bollards
4.13 There are four decorative cast iron posts at the south entrance to Lexham Walk that date from c.1887 when the path was laid out.

Paving
4.14 The surfacing used for pavements helps to provide an appropriate setting for the historic buildings in any conservation area. Originally pavements would have been surfaced with riven York stone and where this survives, such as in Lexham Walk, it is of the highest heritage value. However, most of the streets are either paved in pre-cast concrete slabs or new sawn York stone, both of which are of appropriate size, but with the York stone being more appropriate in the conservation area.

4.15 Granite cobbled surfaces, worn smooth over time, are an essential part of the character of the mews. These surfaces have gullies located to the sides or the centre and were laid right up to the mews buildings with no pavements.
4.16 Cornwall Gardens Conservation Area is small and inward looking in its disposition. Views are restricted to those along streets or to houses opposite such as those experienced around Cornwall Gardens and through trees in the central garden. A particularly pleasing view is that into Emperor’s Gate past the trees towards the pair of houses forming the end of the street.

4.17 The mews arches frame the views or glimpses into these small and charming areas. Rear elevations can be seen from within the mews as well as across the low buildings to both sides of the mews arches into Cornwall Mews South.

4.18 As the area is so tightly built with terraces, the only gaps between buildings that allow views of trees and sky and give a sense of spaciousness are those gaps either side of nos. 15-16 Southwell Gardens, in between nos. 112-114 Cromwell Road and around St Stephen’s Church. The two paths leading from Stanford Road and Lexham Walk are intimate in character and add a human scale to the imposing houses on Cornwall Gardens.

4.19 To the south of the conservation area there are several taller modern buildings that can be seen from the conservation area. They appear in views out of the area and create a negative setting to the Victorian houses. In particular Gloucester Park Apartments can be seen framed in the view south from Grenville Road and several buildings stand intrusively above the historic roofscapes on the south side of Emperor’s Gate.
5 Negative Elements

5.1 Some parts of the conservation area are better preserved than others. Southwell Gardens, Grenville Place and the west ends of Emperor’s Gate and Cornwall Gardens are particularly well looked after, but the eastern section of Emperor’s Gate; various houses in Cornwall Gardens; and most mews have received a certain level of unsympathetic alteration.

5.2 The list below itemises some of the alterations that cause harm to the historic and architectural character of the conservation area. The National Planning Policy Framework and the Council’s policies require opportunities to be taken to enhance the character of conservation areas and listed buildings when opportunities arise and this includes the removal of the negative elements given in this section.

- Painting either fair faced brick or stucco in a colour that contrasts with the rest of the terrace. This can be seen in places in Cornwall Gardens and is particularly harmful in Emperor’s Gate where terracotta detailing and brickwork has been painted.
- Masonry cleaning harms the uniformity and patina of a terrace in the same way as out of character painting.
- Roof extensions that harm the uniform design of a terrace or group of houses. Cornwall Gardens has so many mansard additions that infilling the gaps would now consititute an enhancement.
- Out of character replacement windows. Terraced houses were built with matching windows at each floor level but where some have been changed, the pattern is disrupted and the design and uniformity of the terrace is impacted. Some houses in Cornwall Gardens have had Queen Anne style windows added to the ground floor around the turn of the twentieth century and where these are indeed historic examples, they are not negative.
- Non original style front doors and doors in front areas.
- The enclosure of original projecting columned porches in any material.
- Steps in non original materials and profiles unless they are reproduction elements that are part of a uniform scheme.
- Clutter or structures in front areas (lightwells).
- The hotels on Cromwell Road have blocked front doors to a number of houses when they were converted to hotel use and this leads to an artificial and dead appearance in the streetscape.
- The bank on Gloucester Road has added uPVC doors and cash machines with balcony access which detract from the Classical elevation.
- Weatherstruck pointing that projects proud of the brick is a modern finish and one that draws the eye towards the mortar, rather than the beauty of the brick.
- Pipework and wires on front elevations.
The Manor of Kensington existed in Saxon time and by 1260 St Mary Abbot’s Church in the heart of the parish had been founded. Kensington Square was being laid out by 1685 with other noble houses being built along Kensington Road. In 1689 William III commissioned St Christopher Wren to transform Nottingham House into Kensington Palace and development continued southwards from then onwards with the Great Exhibition of 1851 in Hyde Park hastening the pace.

The first buildings built in Cornwall Gardens Conservation Area were the two churches. St Stephen’s Church on Gloucester Road was built 1866-7 to the designs of Joseph Peacock, using much rough-hewn stone and an attractive polychromatic brick interior. The former South Kensington Baptist Chapel on Emperor’s Gate was built in 1868-9 to the designs of C.G Searle & Son, noted nonconformist architects but it was not a success and the English Presbyterians took over in 1837. They in turn left to join the Scottish Presbyterians in 1929 at the church in Allen Street. Following this, the chapel was acquired by the Russian Orthodox Church in Exile and today is used as a health centre having been threatened with redevelopment in the 1980s.

These churches were witness to a new scale of development that gathered pace after the Great Exhibition of 1851. The difference between the two storey Vallotton Estate villas to the north of the conservation area and the mighty five storey cliffs of stucco in Cornwall Gardens serve as an eloquent comparison. By this time, greater returns were expected from building development than in the more relaxed period thirty years earlier.

The site of Cornwall Gardens came into the ownership of the Broadwood family in 1803 as a market garden. Thomas and John Broadwood, no doubt prompted by the Vallotton Estate’s success, commissioned Thomas Cundy III to lay out a scheme for two great terraces looking into a central green, flanked by two access roads. The development was named in honour of the Prince of Wales’ coming of age by naming it after his Duchy of Cornwall. The terraces were designed in richly Italianate stucco with work starting in the north east corner in 1863 and the last group being the garden houses at the western end being complete by 1876. By this date, however, stucco design of this type was becoming rather old fashioned. Thomas Cundy’s father was building Grosvenor Gardens near Victoria at the same time in a design showing the new French influence. Nevertheless, the development was successful,
with all the houses being taken by suitably respectable people. Perhaps the slightly staid appearance of Cornwall Gardens was attractive to the mixture of lawyers, senior civil servants and Empire administrators who took up residence here. The final proof of success was when Thomas Cundy III took no. 82 for his own home.

For the western end of Cornwall Gardens, Cundy's scheme had allowed for a church with houses on three sides to complete the development. However, this part of the plan was frustrated by the building of the Metropolitan and District Railway between 1864-9, which used the "cut and cover" principle of construction to cut an arc through this end of Cornwall Gardens on a north west/south east axis. The railway works were completed and the land returned to the estate for development by 1875.

It seems Cundy had lost interest in further development and the estate agreed with the builder, William Willett, that he should complete the building of Cornwall Gardens. To compensate for losing the ground under which the railway ran, Willett was allowed to build two enormous palaces on the central gardens: The Garden House and Cornwall House. Showing a strong fashionable French influence these great edifices were as elaborate inside as they were outside. The specification included parquet floors and marble floors, oak dados, pilasters and columns to the hall and stair, and Adam plasterwork throughout the main rooms. A full system of 'speaking tubes' and electric bells was provided. The strict division between family and staff was maintained by the provision of a main stair, family stair and back stair. The architect for these huge houses was James Trant-Smith.

The remaining houses at this western end were also developed by Willett, but now with high canted bay windows which were becoming fashionable.

At the same time John Wilkins was developing in Southwell Gardens and Cromwell Road. The massive and austere grey brick and stucco houses north of St. Stephen's Church were built from 1871. Wilkens assigned leases on 1-2 Southwell Gardens to Thomas Cundy III and the road was occupied by the 1880s, largely by legal people.

H.E Harwood designed the large stucco terrace in 1872 fronting Cromwell Road which took its place in a once complete stucco boulevard.

The Metropolitan & District Railway carved a route through Lord Kensington's Edwardes Estate, but never made its shareholders
millionaires. With a dividend of 5%, the company was partly too busy arguing with its opponents and potential competitors and in fact, much of their profit came from selling surplus land for development. After buying the land from the Edwardes Estate for this section of the railway, the company then sold off the triangle of land not needed for the works. This unpromising site was bought by Joseph Clark in 1869 for residential development. The name Emperor’s Gate commemorates the compact of 1873 between Austria-Hungary, Germany and Russia.

Work started in 1874 on nos. 1 and 4-10 Emperor’s Gate, a powerful design with high French pavilion roofs, a fashionable feature lacking in Cornwall Gardens. From 1875, nos. 11-25 was built in simple brick and stucco but has since been demolished. Nos. 37-47 have five storeys and were probably designed by George Edwardes. In the same period, 1876-8, nos. 26-36 were built perhaps to the designs of Edward Habershon & Brock.

One of these houses, 6 Grenville Place, was occupied by Charles Booth between 1875-89. Booth was a philanthropist and social researcher, most famous for his opus, ‘Life and Labour of the People of London’, a pioneering survey of the working classes in London accompanied by maps showing areas of poverty and its extent.

From an early date the large houses on Cornwall Gardens and elsewhere were gradually divided into flats and shared accommodation, or hotels and boarding houses, as on Cromwell Road. In this new guise however, the old houses found a new success and between the wars, Ivy Compton-Burnett, the novelist, and Margaret Jourdain, the decorative arts writer, shared a large flat in Braemar Mansions, Cornwall Gardens.

**Famous Residents**
- Terence Rattigan, playwright, was born and largely brought up at no. 3 Cornwall Gardens in 1911.
- T.S Eliot, poet, lodged with the vicar of St. Stephens, Gloucester Road at 9 Grenville Place and 11 Emperors Gate between 1933-40.
- Ivy Compton-Burnett, novelist, and Margaret Jourdain, decorative arts writer, shared a flat in Braemar Mansions, Cornwall Gardens from 1934.
Appendix 2: Heritage Identification Checklist

This checklist has been taken from English Heritage’s publication, Understanding Place: Conservation Area Designation, Appraisal and Management (2011). The checklist has helped to identify the buildings that make a positive contribution to the historic and architectural character of the conservation area.

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

Additional criteria set by the Council:

- Does the building have architectural, historical, archaeological, evidential, artistic or communal significance that contributes to the character or appearance of the conservation area?
- Has the building retained its original design, materials, features and setting or ones that are appropriate to its style and period?
- Does it contribute to the evolution and diversity of the conservation area?
- Was it built by an important local builder or one who also built other significant buildings in the area?
Appendix 4: Relevant Local Plan Policies

The table opposite indicates those policies in the Royal Borough’s Local Plan, which have particular relevance to the preservation and enhancement of the conservation area.

These policies are the primary means through which the Council ensures that proposed development within designated conservation areas preserve or enhance the area’s character and appearance.

This list is not comprehensive and any development proposals will have to take account of the whole suite of policies contained within the Council’s Local Plan. Please consult the Council’s website.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter 33: An Engaging Public Realm</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Policy CR4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Policy CR5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Policy CR6</td>
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<th>Chapter 34: Renewing the Legacy</th>
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<tr>
<td>Policy CL1</td>
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<td>Policy CL2</td>
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