

Granville Park Conservation Area



Design Guide

This design guide has been produced by West Lancashire Borough Council and provides advice for residents in relation to alterations and extensions to properties as well as works which may take place within the wider site.

This guidance must be considered in the light of the wider planning policy context including the National Planning Policy Framework, the West Lancashire Local Plan (2012 – 2027) and the Council's Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document (2008). It should also be read in conjunction with the Granville Park Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Proposals to provide a comprehensive summary of the Council's approach to development in the area.

What makes Granville Park special?

Granville Park is a good example of a residential park initially laid out and developed in the late Victorian era but developed incrementally well

into the 20th Century. Changing architectural taste and fashion is evident in Granville Park as the older Gothic architectural style can be seen side by side with classic Edwardian features and Arts and Crafts 'Arcadian'¹ layouts and architecture of the second and third decades of the 20th Century and more modern infill development.

The arrangement of the roads and layout of the individual plots and the size and form of its buildings contribute towards the feeling of spaciousness and openness and maintains a connection to Granville Park's wider setting and semi-rural surroundings. This is supplemented by the presence of many mature trees, as well as landscape features such as the Quarry. Together these aspects combine to make an important contribution to the character of the Conservation Area.

Overall, the historic context, quality of the buildings, relationship between the layout of the roads and the positioning of the houses sets the Conservation Area apart from the surrounding residential suburbs of Aughton.

Managing change in the Conservation Area

The Character Appraisal for the area recognises that Granville Park in its current form has been developed in a number of phases; therefore change of some degree has been taking place in the area almost continuously over the past 100 years. The broad phases of development and their key features are described in more detail in the Conservation Area Appraisal.

Change within historic areas is inevitable and this is also true within Conservation Areas which cannot be left to stagnate or be frozen in time. There are many reasons why people want to make changes to their home - repairs and alterations may be necessary due to natural decay and weathering, or families may feel they need more space. Living in a Conservation Area does not mean that alterations cannot be made,

¹ A rural, rustic, or pastoral feel, with the appearance of parkland.

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but it does mean extra care must be taken when considering what changes can be made.

The Council has a duty under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 to assess proposals for change and whether these would meet the requirement to preserve or enhance the character and appearance of the Conservation Area.

The guidance below provides further detail on how new development in Granville Park can be designed to make a positive contribution and complement the area's character.

1. *New development*

Layout of buildings within the plot

Overall, new buildings should respect the existing pattern and grain² of surrounding development. There are some specific aspects in this regard which will be important. These include:

- **Building line** – this is how far the building or property is 'set back' from the site frontage or roadside. In Granville Park, many of the original properties have a building line typically over 10 metres from the front boundary. This provides a substantial front garden area, allowing a landscaped setting for the properties which contributes positively to the area's character.
- **Orientation** – buildings should ideally be orientated so their main elevation(s) face onto the street. Buildings on corner plots should pay particular attention to 'turning the corner' through providing focal points or architectural interest and the careful design of these elevations.
- **Plot ratio / Building footprint** - (measured by the proportion of the plot which is occupied by the building). This varies - generally with the properties from the earliest phases occupying a smaller footprint in relation to the size of the plot than those developed later. In order to

² The way that buildings are sited is called the 'grain'. In effect it is the pattern or the arrangement and size of buildings and their plots in an area and to what extent it is densely developed or more open in character.

retain the open and spacious character of Granville Park, new and extended buildings should not occupy a substantially larger proportion of the plot than that of the existing property. Plot subdivision is unlikely to respect existing plot ratios or the area's character and appearance and will therefore be resisted.

- **Preserving gaps between buildings** – these are essential to the maintenance of a sense of openness and informal character. The establishment or preservation of sections of landscaping and trees between properties will help in achieving this. New development should retain the spaces between common boundaries and between adjoining properties.

Form

The scale or height of buildings is vitally important to the area's character and appearance. Particularly tall buildings can have a visual impact over an extensive area and can overly dominate the space around them. Whilst this was the intention of the architects of the original Victorian houses in the north of Granville Park and is effective in creating the sense of a grand and exclusive residential area, many of the later phase properties are built on sub-divided plots and are smaller in scale – including some bungalows. Clearly it would be inappropriate if all new properties were built to replicate the scale of the original Victorian houses as this would have a negative impact upon the sense of space and openness. Therefore when considering the appropriate scale of a new or replacement property it will be important to consider:

- The height, scale and mass of the existing building
- The proportion and design of the different building elements such as walls, roof and windows
- Its proximity to neighbouring buildings and their comparative scale
- The size and context of the site and whether it has been previously sub-divided.

Design

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High quality and carefully considered design of new development in Conservation Areas is crucial. This does not mean that it should simply copy surrounding properties, but it should always be sensitive to its context. Some principles are that:

- On the whole new development should be 'of its time' rather than resorting to simply mimicking the design of the original houses in the Conservation Area. This can involve re-interpreting architectural styles and detailing in a contemporary manner. It is important that scope be given to the inclusion of architectural invention and innovation as this can provide distinctive buildings that enrich the area.
- New buildings should always utilise high quality and robust materials and workmanship throughout. There should be a strong logic in the choice of materials made, especially where changes in material are proposed.

More detailed guidance on design principles are provided in the Council's Design Guide SPD.

2. House extensions

An extension will permanently alter the character and appearance of a property. There will be cases where carefully designed minor extensions can be added without harm to the individual house or its setting, however in some cases it may not be possible to extend at all.

In all cases, proposals for new additions must demonstrate an understanding of the site and its context. This means it is important to consider:

- The original building itself - extensions should be subordinate to and be inspired by the original form and character of the house, rather than dominating or obscuring it and its original design. In most cases roof forms, building materials and architectural details such as windows should reflect those of the original building, but it is also important that a new extension can be clearly read as a new addition. Achieving this is a careful balance.

- Neighbouring buildings – as raised in the Appraisal, maintaining the space between houses is important in Granville Park. Side extensions (even single-storey ones) which close up the gaps between properties or between common boundaries, or result in a loss or reduction of mature landscaping, that would detract from the character and appearance of the street scene, should be avoided.
- The impact of the extension on the wider plot and landscaping. The landscaped areas (particularly at the front and side) of individual plots on the whole make a recognised contribution to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area. Any development in these areas must be carefully designed and be of an appropriate size in order to preserve the setting of the building and its relationship with others.

3. Roof alterations and windows

Many of the larger Phase 1 and 2 houses in Granville Park were built with some degree of attic accommodation, often incorporating small dormer windows as a method of providing light into these spaces. Proposals to extend or alter roof spaces should consider the following general principles:

- Dormer windows should not be over-sized but in proportion to the size of the roof and be of a design which harmonises with the architectural style and appearance of the property.
- Rooflights should be placed in discreet locations (preferably on rear roof slopes, away from the road side), be modest in size and of a slim-framed, traditional design (i.e. conservation type), fitting flush with the slope of the roof.
- Solar panels should similarly be placed in discrete locations – again preferably on the rear roof slope of the property and should sit as flush as possible with the roof slope.

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4. *Garages and other outbuildings*

When considering either a new garage or other outbuilding within the plot of an original property, or a more recent development, there are a number of issues which should be considered in relation to location and detail:

- It should be positioned to minimise its visual impact and set well back from the front of the house.
- Materials and design of details such as the doors to the garage or outbuilding should be carefully considered and appropriate to the context.
- Care is needed to ensure that garage locations do not reduce the gaps between buildings.

5. *Basements*

Some of the larger Victorian properties along Middlewood Road and Granville Park were constructed with basements. When considering the installation of a basement in properties elsewhere, residents should be aware that skylights, light wells and other visible manifestations of basements can be harmful to the setting and character of a house and garden and is also potentially damaging to trees and hedges.

6. *Windows*

With regards to any original windows - which make a significant contribution to the character of a building - the following principles should be followed:

- Windows should be repaired rather than replaced where possible.
- If the original frames, casements and glass are beyond repair then any replacements should be of the same material, replicate the original subdivision, profile and style of the window. On the whole this will involve the use of appropriate timber replacements.
- Care is needed if considering the use of double glazing as this can greatly alter the appearance of windows.

- Any important historical or architectural detailing to windows (e.g. leaded lights) should be retained. The encapsulation of leading within double glazing can never replicate the authenticity of the original and should be avoided.

7. *Building materials and details*

Retaining original decorative features and using traditional materials preserves a building's character. Removal of building detail can spoil the appearance of individual buildings as it is often the quality and combination of the decorative features of the individual houses that contribute to their character. To ensure that this is preserved, the following principles should be followed:

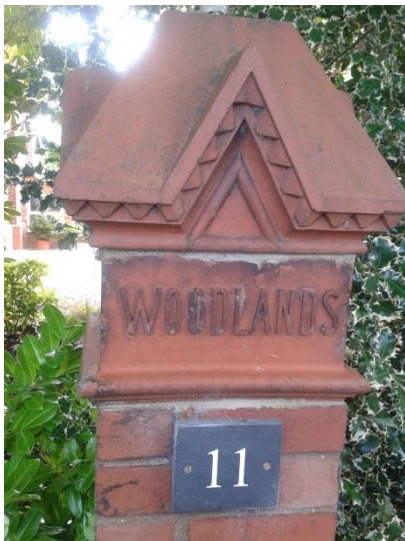
- Good quality, matching materials should be used, with close attention paid to detailing.
- Any new walls or repairs should be built in matching brick or rendering.
- With regards to roofs - often it is the fixings rather than the tiles themselves that need replacing. However, if replacement is necessary, care must be taken to match the colour, texture, size and materials of the original slates or clay tiles as they can come in a variety of shapes and sizes.
- Original chimney stacks and pots are considered important architectural features and should be retained.
- Any replacement rainwater goods should replicate historical profiles, materials and designs.

8. *Boundary treatments*

The Victorian properties in the northern section of Granville Park and the Edwardian properties around the Quarry generally are fronted by a low brick wall, some with original gate piers and stone or half round brick copings. Additional privacy is provided by a hedge (usually privet or holly) located behind this low wall. The effect of

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this is a formal boundary, but one which is softened through the inclusion of greenery and through which glimpses of the property behind can still be seen. Other properties are bounded by a simple hedge.



Decorative gate pier in Delph Lane

In the case of the original properties which retain boundary walls or hedges, their removal would have a detrimental effect upon the character of the historic building and they should be retained where possible.

When providing new boundary treatments high, solid boundary treatments should be avoided since they obscure the glimpsed views of the properties which contribute to the streetscene. Effective security should be provided through more subtle means which respect the area's semi-rural and 'open' character. For example, simple 'estate' style railings can be softened by hedge planting.



Example of 'Estate' railings

Species such as Privet should be considered as they are traditional favourites in Granville Park. As well as being a hardy species, it is suitable for most garden soils and lends itself well to pruning. Other species such as Beech or Holly are also typical in Granville Park. Further advice can be sought from the Council's Tree Officers.

Gates should follow the same principles, allowing glimpses through from the street frontage to the property beyond. Taller gates of a solid construction which obscure these glimpsed views should be avoided. Decorative wrought iron style gates would have been typically found at the front of many of the Victorian houses in Granville Park, and can offer security and still provide views through to the properties beyond.

9. Trees

The contribution of mature trees and established planting both along the roadside and in the gardens of many properties to the character of Granville Park is identified within the Key Characteristics of the Conservation Area and should be retained.

Anyone wishing to remove or prune a tree within a Conservation Area must notify the Local Authority which has 6 weeks to consider the proposal and respond. Work cannot proceed until the Council has responded or the 6 week period has expired. The purpose of this requirement is also to give the Local Planning Authority an opportunity to consider whether a Tree Preservation Order should be made in respect of the tree.

It is important that where major tree works are to be undertaken these are carried out by a qualified tree surgeon. West Lancashire Borough Council has a list of Approved Arboricultural Contractors that have been assessed for their standard of work and checked for the correct insurance documents. Further advice can be obtained from the Council's Tree Officers.

10. Landscaping

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The majority of front gardens feature hedges and other planting which soften the impact of the houses in their setting.

The depth and extent of landscaping needs to be preserved when considering changes such as:

- extending a property (especially in the case of corner plots)
- providing or extending a parking area or area of hard standing

Further advice and guidance

We strongly recommend that homeowners or developers take advantage of the Council's Planning Pre-application advice service at an early stage when considering alterations to their properties or new development in Granville Park Conservation Area.

The advantages of going through the Pre-application process are clear. If development is acceptable in principle, it enables changes to be made and potential problems to be overcome before an application is submitted, saving time during the application process and minimising the risk of planning permission being refused. The response will also inform the applicant of any information they would be required to submit with an application for Full Planning Permission.

Forms to apply for Pre-application advice are available through the Planning pages of the Council's website:

www.westlancs.gov.uk/planning

Further guidance about applying for this advice is available from Planning Support on 01695 585239. General Conservation advice can be sought from the Council's Conservation Officers on 01695 5855167 or 01695 585068.

Advice concerning trees, hedging or landscaping can be obtained from the Council's Tree Officers – Dave Thornber on 01695 585114 or Roland Jones on 01695 585168.

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The sketch below provides an example of a typical Granville Park frontage and illustrates some of the aspects discussed throughout the Design Guide. Labels refer to the relevant sections of the Design Guide where further information can be found.

