ASSESSMENT OF THE APPROPRIATENESS OF THE BOUNDARIES OF THE JOHN INNES (MERTON PARK) CONSERVATION AREA.
(including Addendum)

At designation in 1968, the Conservation Area included the following properties:
- 148 – 200 (evens) Kingston Rd
- 1 – 45 (odds) Dorset Rd
- 2 – 28 (evens) Dorset Rd
- all properties in Langley Rd
- all properties in Sheridan Rd
- all properties in Melrose Rd
- all properties in Church Lane
- All properties in Church Path
- 2a and 2b Poplar Rd
- Merton Park Primary School Erridge Rd
- All properties in Stratton Close
- 1 – 37 (odds) Mostyn Rd
- 2 – 62 (evens) Mostyn Rd
- all properties in Watery Lane

In November 1990 the Conservation Area was extended to include the Recreation Ground adjacent to Cannon Hill Lane and Manor Rd.

No further boundary changes were made to the Conservation Area between that date and the start of work on the Character Appraisal for the Conservation Area.

Assessment of properties within the existing Conservation Area boundary

In considering the case for retaining properties in the Conservation Area the assessment is made on a street-by-street basis.

Kingston Rd
The buildings which lie inside the Conservation Area boundary in Kingston Rd are of an almost uniformly high standard from an architectural point of view. The character of these buildings is entirely in keeping with the broader “garden suburb” character of the Conservation Area. The generous planting of garden frontages along Kingston Rd further strengthens the case for inclusion of these properties within the Conservation Area, reinforcing the “garden suburb” character.

Kingston Rd itself is a very heavily trafficked arterial road, whose ambience is adversely affected by traffic noise and fumes. It is however a very old road, originally
a country lane, and the spine of the rather strung out mediaeval village of Merton. Other vestiges of the mediaeval village lie to the south, within the Merton Park Conservation Area. The character of the original country lane can (with some imagination) still be discerned in today’s traffic choked artery.

Kingston Rd has a rather charming informal alignment, meandering like a stream, at one point widening out, and then narrowing noticeably. Many mature trees line the road within the adjacent front garden areas. The traffic engineer has not had the opportunity to straighten the alignment, or to form perfect radii for the curves of the road. This very informal character provides a further basis for keeping the area within the Conservation Area.

Finally there are 2 Statutorily Listed buildings within the Merton Park Conservation Area boundary (Dorset Hall and a “K6” type telephone box). Both are listed Grade II, and both benefit from the protection that the Conservation Area affords.

Taking all of these considerations into account the case for retaining Kingston Rd within the Conservation Area is overwhelming, and therefore no reduction in the Conservation Area is proposed in this area.

**Dorset Rd**

As with Kingston Rd, in Dorset Rd buildings which lie inside the Conservation Area boundary are of a generally high standard from an architectural point of view. The character of these buildings is entirely in keeping with the broader “garden suburb” character of the Conservation Area. Again generous planting of garden frontages and very impressive mature street trees, further strengthen the case for inclusion of these properties within the Conservation Area, reinforcing the “garden suburb” character.

In the southern part of Dorset Rd the Conservation Area boundary runs along the centre line of the road, with houses on the west side being within the Conservation Area. This boundary position subdivides the enclosed public space (the street), which is not an ideal arrangement from the point of view of protection of the special character of the area. However this consideration provides no basis for exclusion of any properties at the southern end of Dorset Rd from the Conservation Area.

The merits of including properties on the eastern side of the road are considered in the section dealing with properties outwith the Conservation Area.

It is therefore concluded that no Dorset Rd properties currently within the Conservation Area should be excluded from the area.

**Langley Rd**

Langley Rd lies wholly within the central part of the Conservation Area. Therefore to delete any part of it from the Conservation Area would be to introduce an “island” surrounded by designated Conservation Area. This in itself would be undesirable.

It is true that the great majority of the buildings in Langley Rd do not have the very high architectural qualities that are seen throughout most of the Conservation Area, but the general landscape character of Langley Rd is in accordance with the character of the wider area.

It is concluded that no properties in Langley Rd should be excluded from the Conservation Area.
**Sheridan Rd**
The case for retaining properties in Sheridan Rd within the Conservation Area boundary is much the same as that for the properties in Dorset Rd. Many buildings are of a high standard from an architectural point of view. The character of these buildings is entirely in keeping with the broader “garden suburb” character of the Conservation Area. Sheridan Rd is particularly notable for the very generous planting of garden frontages, and for its magnificent street trees. These features further strengthen the case for inclusion of these properties within the Conservation Area, reinforcing the “garden suburb” character.

All but the western end of Sheridan Rd lies within the heart of the Merton Park Conservation Area, and the western part of the road adjoins another Conservation Area (Merton Hall Rd Conservation Area). If therefore, properties here were to be excluded then (as with Langley Rd), an “island” of non-Conservation Area would be introduced.

It is therefore concluded that no Sheridan Rd properties currently within the Conservation Area should be excluded from the area.

**Melrose Rd**
Melrose Rd contains a concentration of some of the finest Arts and Crafts buildings that are to be found either within the Conservation Area or in the Borough generally. Other buildings in the street maintain a high overall architectural standard. The landscape quality and general planting in this part of the Conservation Area is entirely in sympathy with the “garden suburb” character of the wider area.

At the western end of Melrose Rd there is the attractive former village school building, which serves as a reminder of the village origins of Merton Park. This provides a strong feature which reinforces the argument to retain the street within the Conservation Area.

It is therefore concluded that no Melrose Rd properties currently within the Conservation Area should be excluded from the area.

**Church Lane**
Church Lane is one of the original streets of the mediaeval village of Merton. It linked the Church to Kingston Rd. It overlays “garden suburb” characteristics on the remnants of the earlier village. From this point of view it is one of the most important streets in the Conservation Area.

The older village associations are today evident in the old church and churchyard, the 16th/17th century wall surrounding the present day playing field, the old village school building, and the twisting alignment at the northern end of the road.

The “garden suburb” buildings in Church Lane are generally of a high architectural quality, and the planting and landscape qualities are, as with most other streets in the area, a clear asset to the wider character.

At the southern end of the street there is a small cluster of smaller cottages which also relate to the development of the area as a “garden suburb”. This group of buildings are both architecturally attractive in themselves, and they have a strong group value.
It is therefore firmly concluded that no properties in Church Lane should be excluded from the Conservation Area.

**Church Path**
The eastern part of Church Path seems today to represent the heart of the old pre-suburban village of Merton. There are many present day survivals from this era, including the church, the remains of a reconstructed arch from the ancient Merton Priory, the vicarage, cottages at 15 – 25 Church Path, the 16th/17th century wall surrounding the present day playing field, the twisting alignment of the street itself, the way that parts of the Path are enclosed by high walls, and the elongated green “island” at the eastern end.

In fact the whole length of the Path (between Watery Lane and Church Lane) is one of the original streets in the mediaeval village.

In Church Path to the west of Mostyn Rd, the organic mediaeval village structure has been lost, though the area remains a quiet backwater with major planting, including planting in John Innes Park on its south side.

The character of this street as a whole is very unusual and highly distinctive. Its character contrasts clearly with that of streets in the wider area. It contains some buildings of considerable architectural value, and it has considerable appeal from the point of view of planting and landscape value.

It is therefore strongly recommended that the whole street should remain within the Conservation Area.

**Poplar Rd**
The only property in Poplar Rd that lies within the Conservation Area boundary is at 2a/2b Poplar Rd. This is a small scale 2 storey detached building of the 1960s. Its general design is wholly out of keeping with the general character of buildings in the Conservation Area as a whole. It uses a mixture of materials which are in no way typical of the Conservation Area buildings. It has a flat roofed double garage to one side. It is located on the edge of the Conservation Area, and so excluding it would not create overly contorted boundaries for the Conservation Area.

A very clear conclusion is drawn that the property should be excluded from the Conservation Area.

**Erridge Rd**
The only property in Erridge Rd that lies within the Conservation Area boundary is the Merton Park Primary School. The school building presents its principal elevation towards Erridge Rd, and a far less attractive elevation is presented towards Church Lane and the Conservation Area. The Erridge Rd elevation has some significant architectural qualities. A series of gables and hipped roofs which sit above tall windows that break through the line of the eaves of the single storey building. There is very good moulded brick used at the gables in place of bargeboards, and there are round headed arches formed over some of the windows, which are infilled by tiles where the edges of the tiles (oriented vertically) are exposed. However the architectural character of the school has been severely impaired by a badly designed single storey flat roofed extension at the NW corner of the school building, and by the replacement of original window frames with new inappropriately designed windows.

On this basis it is recommended that the school be excluded from the Conservation Area.
**Stratton Close**

Stratton Close is a small cul-de-sac of six detached houses. They date from 1955. The group is a later infill development on the Glebe Field. Buildings are informally laid out, and architecturally the development is quite varied, but is very much of its time. From Erridge Rd the Close has a narrow carriageway with no footways. The verges to each side are rather unkempt and overgrown, though there are some trees, including some hollies. The first houses present a rather stark appearance, with much dull grey pebbledash. Building materials elsewhere include some red brick, for example on the chimneys, unattractive yellow brick, stained timber cladding, and applied timber which gives a (superficial) appearance of timber frame construction infilled with pebbledash. The first house on the left has been greatly extended. Several of the chimneys have canted sides. The general character of the composition as a whole is not particularly attractive, and in terms of architecture and layout, is certainly greatly at variance compared to the general “garden suburb” character of the majority of the Conservation Area.

On this basis it is concluded that this area should be excluded from the Conservation Area.

**Mostyn Rd**

Mostyn Rd is a long straight road, only the northern end lies within the Conservation Area. The buildings within the Conservation Area are mainly large houses of the “garden suburb” era, together with a few smaller cottages of the same era. The great majority of these buildings display a character which is entirely in keeping with the broader “garden suburb” character of the Conservation Area. Number 35 Mostyn Rd (the Flint Barn) is included on the Statutory List of buildings.

The generous planting of garden frontages along the street, together with the street trees further reinforces the “garden suburb” character.

In the southern part of the Conservation Area there are two pairs of pastiche “Georgian” blocks (numbers 37/39 and 41/43 Mostyn Rd). At present only one of these blocks lies within the Conservation Area (37/39). In their own terms neither building accords well with the general “garden suburb” character of the Conservation Area, however the northern block (37/39) is in very close proximity to the Listed Flint Barn (35 Mostyn Rd). For this sole reason it seems sensible to retain 37/39 within the Conservation Area, as it is part of the Listed building’s setting. This will perpetuate what otherwise seems to be an illogical situation of having 2 buildings of identical design, next door to one another, but where one building lies within the Conservation Area and the other is outside it.

On the opposite side of Mostyn Rd, lying just inside the Conservation Area boundary there is a very substantial building at 62a Mostyn Rd. Originally this would have been very much in keeping with the wider “garden suburb” character of the Conservation Area. The design is reminiscent of the architect JS Brocklesby, who did a lot of work within the Conservation Area. However the building has not been treated well, and a badly designed side extension has been added to the north-west corner. Despite this however, and on balance, it is felt that sufficient remains to warrant keeping the property within the Conservation Area. To the south of this at no 62 Mostyn Rd is a very small scale bungalow, which dates from 1963. It is set well back away from the road. A double garage is located closer top the road. The character of the property has little connection with the wider “garden suburb” character that prevails in most of the Conservation Area.
It is therefore recommended that all properties in Mostyn Rd, which currently lie within the Conservation Area, should remain within it, except for 62 Mostyn Rd, which should be excluded.

**Watery Lane**
Watery Lane is a narrow twisting lane, whose character is strongly reminiscent of the village character and the pre-suburban phase of development. It generally lacks separate footpaths, and it has nothing of the harder geometry of straight lines and inscribed radii of the typical urban or suburban street. Historic maps confirm its origins as part of the mediaeval village.

The buildings along the street are however more typical of the “garden suburb” phase of development, and they include several excellent examples of Arts and crafts design which is seen elsewhere in the Conservation Area. Mature trees and the landscape quality confirm the distinctive character of this street.

Despite the location of this area on the western edges of the Conservation Area it is concluded decisively that no properties in Watery Lane should be excluded from the Conservation Area.

**Recreation Ground**
The Recreation Ground lies at the western extremity of the Conservation Area. It is the one area which has been added to the initially designated area.

The recreation ground itself is flat and featureless, however its edges adjacent to Manor Rd and Cannon Hill Lane are resonant of original field boundaries, serving as a reminder that these two roads (themselves outside the Conservation Area) have ancient origins. There are a few attractive mature trees along or close to the northern and southern edges of the open space. There are also some less well-suited evergreen trees here as well.

At the south western corner of the site there is a sports pavilion, which presents a very sorry appearance. It is vandalised and covered in graffiti, even on the roof. It is constructed of very rustic vertical timber, which suggests an association with the “garden suburb” character of the Conservation Area. The appearance of the pavilion as viewed from the west is better, and there is less evidence of vandalism from this viewpoint.

The relationship of the recreation ground to the original country lanes on the northern and western edges, and its relationship to old field boundaries, serve as a reminder of the old Merton village layout, prior to suburban development. On this basis it is suggested that it might be appropriate for this area to remain within the Conservation Area.

**Assessment of properties outwith the existing Conservation Area boundary**
On the north and north-western sides of the Conservation Area, the boundary coincides with the boundary of adjacent Conservation Areas (the John Innes – Wilton Crescent Conservation Area and the Merton Hall Rd Conservation Area). These common boundaries stretch from the tram line in the north, to the Nelson Hospital site in the west. Both of these neighbouring Conservation Areas have recently been the subject of Character Assessment work, including assessment of their boundaries.
The assessment of the boundaries of those neighbouring areas has lead to a recommendation that small extensions to both Conservation Areas should be agreed. These extensions involve adding one small adjacent area to each Conservation Area, and completing the Conservation Area coverage on the north side of Kingston Rd, opposite the Merton Park area.

While the areas on both sides of Kingston Rd have elements in common, such as the common heritage of the development by the Merton Park Estate, and the work of the same architects, there are felt to be sufficient differences to keep them as two separate Conservation Area. The Merton Park area (to the south of Kingston Rd) has a looser structure, with generally greater spaces between buildings. The area to the north of Kingston Rd is rather more intensively developed, with a stronger relationship between one building and the next.

On the basis of keeping distinct and separate Conservation Areas, further enlargement of the Merton Park Conservation Area towards the north or north west is not possible.

To the north-east of the existing Conservation Area boundary there is the Tram line, and beyond that, an area of predominantly Victorian bye law residential terraces (Merton Park East). There is clear physical separation between this area and the designated Conservation Area, and although it has a coherent and attractive character, it is markedly different to the more loosely structured and greener areas of the Conservation Area. Architecturally the areas are also quite different.

For these reasons it is considered that the existing north eastern Conservation Area boundary should remain unchanged along the tram line.

To the east and south-east of the Conservation Area there is an extensive areas of largely inter-war suburban housing in roads such as Erridge Rd, Poplar Rd, Stratton Rd and Keswick Avenue, as well as the residual area of Dorset Rd.

This area has a quite different character to the general character of the Conservation Area. It is far less distinctive both in terms of architecture, landscape structure than is the case with the Conservation Area. Building designs are more formulaic, a characteristic of the speculative building of the inter-war period. Its general character is therefore more typically “inter-war suburban”, and comprises semis and short terraces. This style of development is repeated across very wide areas of London. It is a later development than the majority of the Conservation Area, and it displays no evidence of historical associations with the mediaeval village.

While it is unfortunate that for a short distance the existing Conservation Area boundary runs along the centre line of part of Dorset Rd, the character of the buildings on each side of the road here are sufficiently different to justify this distinction.

Towards the south-east, at numbers 47 – 53 Dorset Rd, (built in 1915) there are two pairs of semi detached houses which display the distinctive architecture of JS Brocklesby, which is highly characteristic of the Conservation Area. A further pair of semi-detached houses, with possibly similar architectural associations, are seen at 58/60 Erridge Rd (built in 1925). Also there are is pair of detached houses at 13 and 15 Poplar Rd which may also be by Brocklesby.
Of these houses, the Dorset Rd houses are at least contiguous with the Conservation Area boundary. The others referred to above are more scattered and remote from the Conservation Area. Generally however these houses have suffered to a considerable extent from unfortunate alterations, including new window frames, in one case alteration of a hipped roof to a gabled roof, and in another the crude alteration of a ground floor canted bay to a square bay.

On this basis it is recommended that there should be no enlargement of the Conservation Area in an easterly or south-easterly direction.

In Mostyn Rd, to the south of the Conservation Area boundary, the architecture of the houses, and the general character of the area echoes the general style of areas in Erridge Rd, Poplar Rd and Stratton Rd (referred to above).

The same reasons therefore apply, indicating that no extension of the Conservation Area boundary in this direction should be recommended.

To the west and south-west of the Conservation Area there are open grounds of the Rutlish School, as well as some substantial modern school buildings of one and two storeys. Neither the layout or the area, nor the building architecture, nor the landscape character of this area is considered to be exceptional in any way. There is no echo of any residual features of the historic Merton Village nor of the later “garden suburb” character.

To the west of the school grounds there is an unexceptional small residential development at Hadleigh Close, which dates from 1994, and whose character draws nothing from its surroundings.

Further west again Aylward Rd the general character is typical of the inter war suburbia, with mainly semis and short terraces. This area is essentially similar to Erridge Rd, Poplar Rd and Stratton Rd, and for the same reasons it is not considered to be appropriate for inclusion into the Conservation Area.

At the western end of the Conservation Area there is Cannon Hill Lane and Manor Rd. These two roads are interesting from the point of view that they are survivals of the network of country lanes and paths associated with the mediaeval village of Merton. The less geometrical highway configuration is resonant of these origins. Manor Rd is very narrow, it has a natural vegetated verge with trees on one side of the carriageway and a footway and grass verge, which are elevated relative to the carriageway, on the other.

The buildings in these two roads are not typical of the “garden suburb” character seen in most of the Conservation Area. The houses on the north side of Manor Rd are not without interest, being a staggered terrace of tall and narrow houses, each with a square bay, topped by a gabled roof. Above these gables each house has a tall dormer window, again with a gabled roof. This gives a pronounced verticality to the composition of the elevation. The porches are interesting for the elaborate timber fretwork at the eaves of their lean-to roofs. Unfortunately many window frames have been replaced, which has diminished the value of this group of buildings. An adjacent terrace to the east is set further back, and is of less architectural interest.

At present the Conservation Area boundary runs along the edges of the recreation ground, excluding both the streets and the buildings in Cannon Hill Lane and Manor Rd. There are various conflicting arguments referred to above as to whether any
change should be made to the boundary in this area. On balance however it is felt that the boundary should remain unchanged.

Manor Gardens is a short, quiet residential cul-de-sac running off Watery Lane. A pedestrian connection leads into Blakesley Walk at its western end. Blakesley Walk is shown on historic maps, and is another of the old village lanes and paths, which link Manor Rd to Kingston Rd.

Manor Gardens itself is a very attractive residential street with large semi detached and terraced houses. The design of the buildings is however not typical of the “garden suburb” development in the Conservation Area generally. It is also true that there have been a number of unfortunate window alterations on some of these houses, which has to some extent undermined their original character. Nevertheless despite these arguments, it is felt that the street still retains enough of interest to warrant Conservation Area status.

The planting and landscape quality in Manor Gardens is also very attractive, with very well kept front gardens and very attractive street trees. The three terraces of houses each have a symmetry which is unusual, in that the houses at each end have a wing which projects forward towards the road. The buildings, which were constructed between 1908 and 1911, are well detailed, and employ a rich mix of traditional materials, including red brick at the ground floor, pebbledash at first floor, ornate hanging tiles on the bays, and well detailed timber work on the porches. Where original windows survive they have leaded glass in the upper lights.

The overall character of this street is rather different to the informal “garden suburb” ambience seen in most of the Conservation Area. Here there is more geometrical regularity, rhythm, symmetry and a rather more intensively built up character.

In its own right Manor Gardens stands quite favourable comparison with many of the existing Conservation Areas in the Borough. Properties are generally well cared for, as are most of the front gardens. The option of either designating these houses as a separate Conservation Area, or adding them to the Merton park Conservation Area needs to be considered.

If a separate Conservation Area were to be designated then it would be one of the smallest Conservation Areas in the Borough. Other very small Conservation Areas (such as the Wimbledon Windmill and Bertram Cottages) are freestanding areas, remote from other Conservation Areas. This would not be the case with Manor Gardens

It should be noted that even within the existing Conservation Area itself there are significant variations in character, including the “garden suburb”, as well as the historic village. Dwellings vary from large mansions to small cottages. Clearly the character of the area is not wholly uniform, and therefore adding an area which has a slightly different character, may be acceptable.

In conclusion Manor Gardens is considered to be quite small to be a separate Conservation Area in its own right, but instead it might reasonably be incorporated into an expanded Merton Park Conservation Area, albeit as a distinct entity within the wider area.

It is therefore concluded that the boundary of the Merton Park Conservation Area should be extended to include all the properties in Manor Gardens, and the adjacent area of Blakesley Walk.
Overall Conclusion on Conservation Area boundaries

The proposed boundary changes are illustrated on plan no. DLU/2202 a/b. The only places where any changes from the existing Conservation Area boundary are recommended are:

- addition of 1 – 27 (odds) Manor Gardens
- addition of 2 – 28 (evens) Manor Gardens
- deletion of 62 Mostyn Rd
- deletion of 1 – 6 (consec) Stratton Close
- deletion of Merton Park Primary School, Erridge Rd
- deletion of 2a/2b Poplar Rd

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Addendum

Following public consultations carried out in May – June 2006 it is suggested that the Merton Park Primary School should not be deleted from the Conservation Area. The representations argued that the school is an important focus for the local community. It is also noted that the School building marks one of the entrances to the Conservation Area as one approaches from the south, so it acts as something of an entrance feature.

The Character Appraisal is written on the basis of the boundary alterations recommended above.

July 2006
Nese deshironi me shume informacion ne gjuhen tuaj, ju lutemi te na kontaktoni ne adresen e dhene ne kutine me poshtë.

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