This design guide covers the area shown on the plan. It is advisory only, with no legal status. Nevertheless, this is an attractive area and Merton Council hopes that residents will take into account recommendations made in this brochure when considering alterations and improvements to their properties.

Its distinctive character arises from the tightly developed street pattern, and the short period of time - between 1905 and 1909 - during which the larger part of the area was developed. As a result there are a limited number of elevational treatments, and this helps to create a homogeneous and uniform character, setting it apart from neighbouring areas.

The area lacks any listed buildings, and does not possess any central feature or interesting urban spaces, although some of the shopping parades in Arthur Road are worthy of note.

In February 1990, the possible designation of this area as a Conservation Area was considered by Merton Council.

It was decided that because the character of the area had already been extensively damaged by insensitive alterations, its designation as a Conservation Area could not be justified. Nevertheless, as it possesses considerable charm, Merton Council decided that in order to encourage residents to retain and, if possible, restore the original detailing, a brochure should be prepared highlighting the main architectural characteristics.
Most of the area is of two storey housing, in terrace form, with small front gardens. These are usually about 12 houses long, with a narrow footpath between terrace blocks, leading to a general footpath giving rear access to back gardens.

The characteristic two storey front bay windows, usually with gable ended roofs, give great interest and modelling to the street facades. Variety is added by subtle changes of detail from one street to the next.

The rigid street pattern, small front areas and largely continuous terraces all mitigate against major changes in the area. There are few, if any, possibilities of extensions which could affect the street scene, except for roof rooms or windows, or the closing in of open porches.

Rear gardens are relatively short, thus there are no real possibilities for redevelopment of blocks. This is advantageous in that the area is settled, and where the detailed character has been eroded by insensitive alterations, it is possible to put it right.
DESCRIPTION OF THE AREA

Each house type has a number of features that contribute to its character; these include:

- Red facing brick facade, with upper storey partly rendered in some cases.
- Bay windows with elaborate brick or stone arches or lintels over the windows.
- Projecting roofs, usually gable ended, over the bay windows.
- Party walls rising through main tiled or slated roofs, finished with terracotta copings.
- Patterned brick chimney stacks.
- Front porch design, with stone columns and carved capitals, supporting lean to roofs, or with balconies over linking the bay windows.
- Decorative barge boards, finials, and ridge tiles.
- Tiled front path and bay window surrounds.
- Distinctive original front doors, with fanlights and side panels, often with coloured glazing.
- Quite complex glazing bars to the sash windows, also sometimes with areas of coloured glazing.
- Moulded plaster details around doors and windows, also sometimes to bay window elevations.
- Brick walls and piers enclosing the front gardens.

Retention, and where necessary, replacement of these features, combined with regular maintenance will help to preserve the character of the area and enhance the value of the properties.
The retention of original architectural features is clearly desirable, and where they have been removed or altered, consideration should be given to restoration whenever the opportunity arises.

The original brickwork is attractive, and is best left unpainted and unrendered. As well as being out of character with the area, painted or rendered brickwork increases the amount of maintenance necessary, as the application of paint layers or any other colouring does not normally allow the brick wall to ‘breathe’.

Where the front facade has already been painted, consideration can be given to cleaning the brickwork using high pressure water, or possibly a weak acid cleaner. Sand blasting is not recommended as it is likely to result in the faces of the brick being damaged, leading to long term problems. If the brickwork has been rendered there is no real possibility of restoring the finish. The aim in these cases should be to render the facade
THE FACADES

with a smooth finish, and to paint it a colour that matches the original brickwork.

The roofline of the houses is important, particularly the different roof forms of the bay windows. Most houses have characteristic gable ends over bay windows on the front elevation, emphasized by wooden barge boards and decorative finials. These should be restored where necessary and preferably painted white. Where these details are missing or damaged, consideration should be given to their reinstatement or repair.

If replacement of the roof is necessary, the use of clay plain tiles with granular finish is preferred, or natural slates where appropriate.

Where the original sash window frames have decayed these should be repaired where possible and any replacement should be made of wood to match the existing style.

Unfortunately, a significant proportion of the houses have had their open front porches closed in. The design of these porches is such that it is not really possible to do this without seriously damaging the character of the building.

Some of the houses have coloured leaded light sections in the upper half of the sash windows and /or in fan lights and front doors, These details should be retained and repaired where required.

The moulded plaster details above and around doors and windows, or used as a feature of some elevations, are important characteristics of the area. They should be repaired where necessary and should preferably be painted white or light cream.

Many of the houses in the area still retain their original front doors. These doors should be repaired where required and consideration should be given to having new doors made to the original design where they are missing.

The installation of additional plumbing on the front elevation is to be avoided.
THE FRONT GARDEN AREA

The front gardens of the houses are important in contributing to the character of the area.

The small size of the front gardens - typically 2 to 3 metres deep - has prevented their use for car parking, thus playing a major role in preserving the areas pleasant character.

The brick walls and gate piers with coping stones make an important contribution to the street scene. They define the boundary between public and private space and provide the privacy and protection associated with Victorian and Edwardian residential areas.

Many of the walls and gate piers have been removed and replaced with boundaries of an alternative design. Where the original walls and piers remain they should be repaired and retained. Where the original brick walls and piers are missing consideration should be given to rebuilding to match the original designs. If taller enclosure is required then a simple railing on top of the wall, or a hedge planted behind it, would be suitable.

A landscape setting complements and contributes to the character of the houses. Where possible the planted hedges in the front garden area should be retained.

Some of the houses still retain the front paths and bay windows surrounds of small black and white tiles. These add an interesting feature which is complimentary to the style of the houses. Where these paths
remain they should be maintained and where they have been removed consideration should be given to repaving in the paths in tiles or other small element paving material when the need arises.

Currently only a very small number of houses retain all, or nearly all, of their original features. After painting or rendering of the brick facades, the enclosure of porches is perhaps the most damaging development in terms of loss of original character. Unsatisfactory forms of enclosure to the front gardens can also be very damaging. When these major elements have been restored, details such as glazing bars, front doors, and paved tiles become more evident, and more visually important.
Generally there is no scope for side extensions in this area.

Rear extensions may be acceptable as long as they are sensitively designed, small in size, and have no adverse effects on the amenities of the adjoining properties.

Any rear extensions should be subordinate to the main house. All new additions to the houses should respect the original design in terms of windows, proportions, building materials and details.

Any rear extensions which are permitted development should be sympathetically designed and should not rise significantly above first floor level. Flat roofed extensions should be avoided. Pitched roofs are more visually suitable, and are less likely to give long term maintenance problems. Extensions beyond permitted development will be assessed in terms of whether they enhance or preserve the character of the area. If you are considering extending your property you should consult Merton Council’s published guidelines on residential extensions.

Loft conversions should not alter the shape of the roof line as seen from the street. Small dormer windows may be acceptable on the rear elevation providing they are sensitive in design. Any dormer should be set back from the line of the rear elevation with the window sill forming the base of the projection from the roof. Flat roof dormers should be avoided and rooflights should be restricted to rear roof slopes.

A greater appreciation of the distinctive visual qualities by all residents would result in gradual improvement of houses where they have been insensitively treated in the past, and the maintenance of those that have survived largely in their original form.
The trees make a very important contribution to the street scene. Their presence provides the street with greenery and shade. Providing there is sufficient room, trees will normally be planted in line with party walls. The type of tree planted will be of a compact variety.

CONCLUSION

This brochure is an advisory guide as Merton Council have no control over many of the minor changes to the appearance of buildings. However, it is felt to be an attractive residential area, retaining much of the original architectural detailing, and it is hoped that residents will do all they can to protect and enhance its character.

Further advice can be obtained from the Development Department of Merton Council on 081-545 3055.