

PLANNING CONTROL

Document Title: Four Oaks Estate Sutton
Coldfield

Development Guidelines



*“Securing a **Better** environment for all the people of **Birmingham**”*

FOUR OAKS ESTATE DEVELOPMENT GUIDELINES

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Four Oaks Estate consists of an area of private residential housing of high environmental quality and architectural interest, laid out around the turn of the century. The major part of the Estate lies within the Four Oaks Conservation Area which was designated in 1986. The Estate was designed under the influence of the Arts and Crafts Movement and consists of large detached houses set in generously landscaped wooded grounds based on a framework of tree-lined private avenues. A number of the early houses are listed buildings and many others are also considered to be of considerable architectural or historic interest. Prior to the onset of modern development after the Second World War, there was a consistency of development with the plots continuing to be defined by the established road framework and with the houses being of an appropriate scale and setting. As a result the area comprises a large collection of outstanding houses designed for their woodland setting, and is of national significance in respect of the development of domestic house design and layout under the influence of the Arts and Crafts Movement.
- 1.2 However, over the last 30 years there has been pressure for development of a different kind, often of an infill nature and at variance with the prevailing character. As the momentum for such development has increased, there is concern that the unique character of the Estate is being threatened. Planning Committee has therefore withdrawn previous Supplementary Guidance and has approved these revised Guidelines for development proposals.
- 1.3 These guidelines have the status of Supplementary Planning Guidance and were subject to public consultation held during September 1992 to January 1993. The guidelines were approved by the Planning Committee on the 13 May 1993.

2. Prevailing Character

- 2.1 The prevailing character of the Estate may be summarised as follows:-
- 2.2 The road framework defines large broadly rectangular blocks of land which have enabled substantial two and three storey houses to be built in extensive and spacious grounds, with good spatial separation from neighbouring dwellings.
- 2.3 The houses are set in extensive grounds with relatively formal landscaping features around the buildings, comprising lawns, paths and terraces and within an enclosing woodland setting of mature forest trees and shrubs.

- 2.4 Despite the large size of the plots and depth and extent of the enclosing landscape, the dwellings generally have clear and direct visual relationships with the highway, being set facing the road on relatively deep building lines.
- 2.5 A large number of the houses are of considerable architectural merit, many being designed by noted Arts and Crafts architects. Although individual styles vary, there is a consistency of scale and massing, with asymmetrical and picturesque compositions, emphasis on steeply-pitching roofs and skyline features such as gables and chimneys and with a regular planned footprint with vigorous recession and projection of elements.
- 2.6 The tree-lined avenues impose formality on this woodland development and provides a sense of scale and presence, but individual dwelling frontages are characterised by hedges, shrubberies and enclosing timber fences which largely screen dwellings and give an atmosphere of carefully calculated rustic seclusion.
- 2.7 Dwellings are marked by individual access points onto the avenues, but these continue the informality of the layout, being unobtrusive with narrow widths, widening alignments and minimum interruption of frontage landscaping.
- 2.8 These characteristics are to be found fairly uniformly across almost all of the original parts of the Four Oaks Estate which are within the Conservation Area. In a few locations however modern development has been carried out in ways completely at variance with the historic character. Even under the previous guidelines, infill and backland development has occurred which has failed to respect the outstanding features of the area and has contributed to the progressive erosion of the unique features of the area.
- 2.9 If the special quality of the area is to be conserved, the primary planning objective must be to ensure that any further new development is in harmony with the original design philosophy of the Estate, and that the remaining building and landscaped fabric, designed as an integral whole, is retained.

3. Development Control Criteria

- 3.1 The statutory duty of the Council in respect of buildings and land within a Conservation Area is to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of that area. In addition, in respect of the listed buildings in the area, the Council must have special regard to the desirability of preserving the buildings, their setting and any features of special architectural or historic interest which they possess.
- 3.2 Development proposals within that part of the Four Oaks Estate within the Conservation Area as defined on the attached plan, will therefore be assessed in the light of the above duty and with regard to the prevailing characteristics of the area as set out above. The following criteria are based on these characteristics -

3.3 Building Plots

- a) Building plots should be of a sufficient size and shape to provide an extensive and spacious setting to a dwelling both to front, rear and side and large enough to provide appropriate separation from neighbouring dwellings and gardens.
- b) Plots formed should not prejudice the integrity of the existing spaces around the buildings, their setting and associated landscaping.
- c) Building plots should be of a sufficient size and shape to permit the provision of an appropriate enclosing landscaped setting with space to accommodate forest trees and shrubberies well clear of buildings, together with other landscaped features.

3.4 Siting of Dwellings

Dwellings should be sited in direct visual relationship with the existing highway, generally facing the road and respecting any established building line, subject to other criteria.

3.5 Building Design

- a) Proposals should be for the erection of dwellinghouses of at least two storeys, reflecting the character of the existing dwellings in the area. This will also maintain the established relationship of buildings to woodland settings and the scale of forest trees. Single storey dwellings and chalet bungalow development will not be permitted.
- b) Building design should reflect the picturesque and informal character of the existing buildings and materials must be sympathetic to the prevailing character.
- c) Proposals for extensions must be architecturally sympathetic and must respect the scale and design of the existing dwelling. Extensions must not prejudice the setting of the spaces around the existing dwelling.
- d) Proposals for the conversion of coach houses and similar freestanding outbuildings will be considered on their merits and subject to their effects on the amenities of adjacent residents. Only minor extensions to permit their use for residential purposes will normally be permitted.

3.6 Landscape and Boundary Treatment

- a) Proposals submitted for building development must include the principles of site landscaping as an integral part of any submission and in particular must indicate a frontage tree and shrub planting zone to maintain the discreet character which prevails across the estate. Open plan frontages will not be permitted and the continued provision of frontage landscaping will be secured by way of condition.
- b) With respect to means of enclosure, existing fences, walls and hedges should be retained and new boundary treatment should reflect the established character. Long runs of substantial fencing and walling are not appropriate and proposals should relate to the reticent and rustic character prevailing and should rely predominantly on planting. Railings are alien to the original character of the conservation area as is the extensive coverage of front garden by brick or concrete paviers or tarmac.
- c) All trees, with a few minor exceptions, in the Conservation Area are protected whether they are covered by a Tree Preservation Order or not. It is an offence to cut, lop, uproot, wilfully damage or fell any tree, without authority from the Council to do so.

3.7 Access

Wherever possible, existing access points should be used to serve new dwellings. New access points, where acceptable to serve individual dwellings, should respect existing landscaping features, should be unobtrusive and of informal design and construction and should avoid the creation of open views into the rear part of the site.

4. Additional Policies

- 4.1 The above criteria are specific to the special character of the Four Oaks Estate. They need to be considered in association with the following general policies of the Planning Committee in respect of development within Conservation Areas -
- 4.2 Development involving the demolition or removal of buildings, trees or other landscape features which make a positive contribution to the character or appearance of the Conservation Area will normally be resisted.
- 4.3 Outline planning permission will not normally be granted for development within the Conservation Area, unless supported by detailed proposals showing siting, design, external appearance and means of access. These details will normally be required with each application.

4.4 Consent to demolish a building within the Conservation Area will normally be granted only where it can be shown that it is wholly beyond repair, incapable of a reasonably beneficial use, or whether its removal or replacement would not be detrimental to the appearance or character of the area. Demolition except in minor cases will only be permitted where there are approved detailed plans and a signed contract for the redevelopment.

4.5 The Estate is residential in character and changes of use will not normally be permitted. The use of part of a dwelling for business or professional purposes may only be acceptable if it is ancillary to the principal use of the dwelling for residential purposes.

5. The Four Oaks Estate Company

5.1 All roads and footpaths within the area of the Estate are owned and administered by the Four Oaks Estate Company.

5.2 There are covenants operative on the Estate which relate to the size of new plots; they also prohibit business use and multi-occupation. Any proposals for new development or alterations of existing dwellings must be approved by the Four Oaks Estate.

6. Status

6.1 This document should be read in conjunction with the approved Supplementary Planning Guidance included within the document "New Residential Development - Design Guidelines".

6.2 However, in view of the special characteristics and circumstances of proposals within the Estate, the present guidelines comprise the primary planning guidance and in particular matters of density, spatial separation and amenity space provision will be judged on the merits and in relation to the requirement to preserve and enhance the character or appearance of the area.

6.3 Supplementary Planning Guidance "Development Control Guidance - Infill Development in Residential Areas" will not apply within that part of Four Oaks Estate covered by these guidelines.

7. Preparation of Proposals

7.1 The Department of Planning and Architecture considers that the development process would be aided by applicants and/or their agents discussing proposals on an informal basis with the relevant officers of the Council before submission of an application. Details can also be provided of the listed buildings within the area and of Tree Preservation Orders. Appropriate contact officers are -

Planning proposals and general enquiries - Mr R Thomas, Constituency Planning Officer - 235 4778

Architectural advice - Mark Smith, Conservation Group - 235 4506

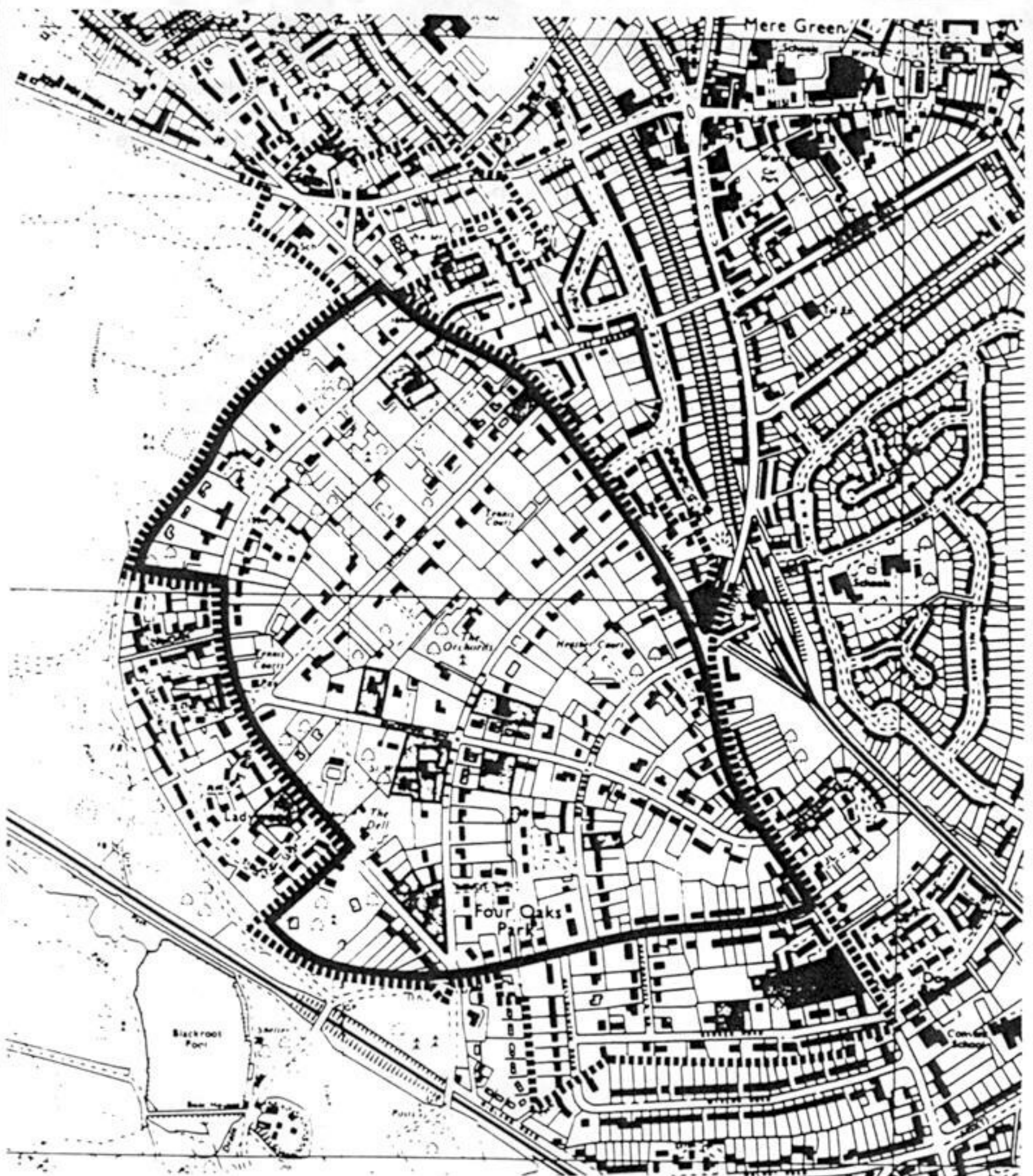
Landscape advice - Mr T Lyons, Environmental Planning Group - 235 3154

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PC/GM1/MAW

Birmingham City Council



BASED UPON THE SURVEY MAP WITH THE PERMISSION OF THE CONTROLLER OF HER MAJESTY'S STATIONERY OFFICE.

FOUR OAKS ESTATE: DEVELOPMENT GUIDELINES.

-  FOUR OAKS ESTATE DEVELOPMENT GUIDELINES AREA
-  FOUR OAKS CONSERVATION AREA
-  LISTED BUILDINGS



SCALE 1:10,000
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