

CONSERVATION AREA STATEMENT

Forestfield and Shrublands Conservation Area



October 1998

SHRUBLANDS AND FORESTFIELD CONSERVATION AREA STATEMENT

Introduction

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The designation of Conservation Areas is based on a number of factors and does not solely relate to the age of buildings. Architectural interest is also an important factor. It is now being recognised that post war and new town buildings have distinctive features in terms of architectural style and layout.

Crawley Borough Council has reviewed its Conservation Areas and considered the designation of additional areas. This included the assessment of new town areas.

Shrublands and Forestfield were designated as a Conservation Area on 15th October 1996. Although the two estates have a different appearance they were built at the same time by the architects Phippen Randall Parkes. The two estates therefore form part of the same Conservation Area.

This statement outlines the background to the Conservation Area and gives additional guidance on the Planning Policies in the Crawley Borough Local Plan Deposit Draft 1995.



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GENERAL HISTORY OF THE CONSERATION AREA

Shrublands and Forestfield are two adjoining housing estates in Furnace Green. They were built by the Crawley Co-Partnership Housing Association. The Association was formed in 1962 on the initiative of John Pennel, a local resident as a private, non-profit making company, raising its own money to develop its sites. This was part of a Government sponsored venture, whereby public finance was to be advanced for houses built on a co-operative group basis. (Housing Act 1961)

Shrublands

The design brief for the development of the area now known as Shrublands was produced with the assistance of a questionnaire devised with the help of a sociologist. The response to this showed that all members of the Association wished to become home-owners, to have above average space and privacy, and to live in a controlled environment with landscaped areas.

The Shrublands Estate, was designed as a community by architect Peter Phippen with the assistance of his two partners. Construction was started in 1965 and completed two years later. Purchasers bought houses on 99 year leases and paid ground rent towards the upkeep of the estate.

Forestfield

After the completion of the Shrublands Estate in 1968, the Crawley Co-Partnership Housing Association began to develop the Forestfield Estate, on land rented on a 99 year lease from the CNT. The estate was built in 1970-71. Purchasers again bought their houses on long leases, paying ground rent towards the upkeep of the estates.

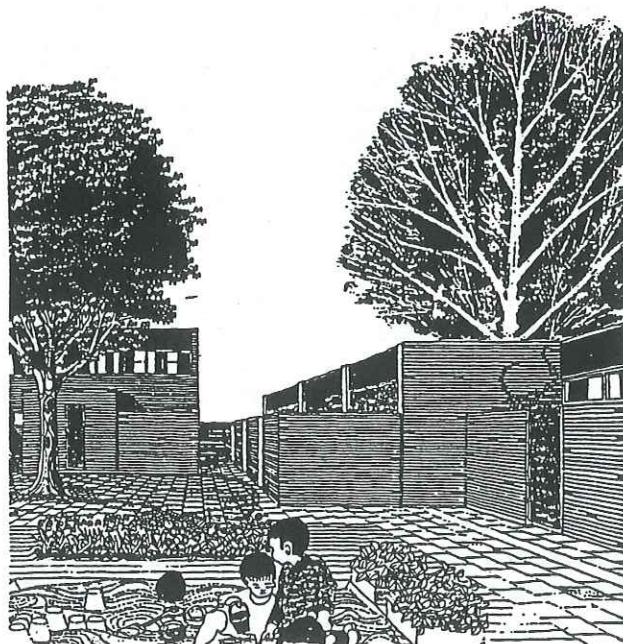
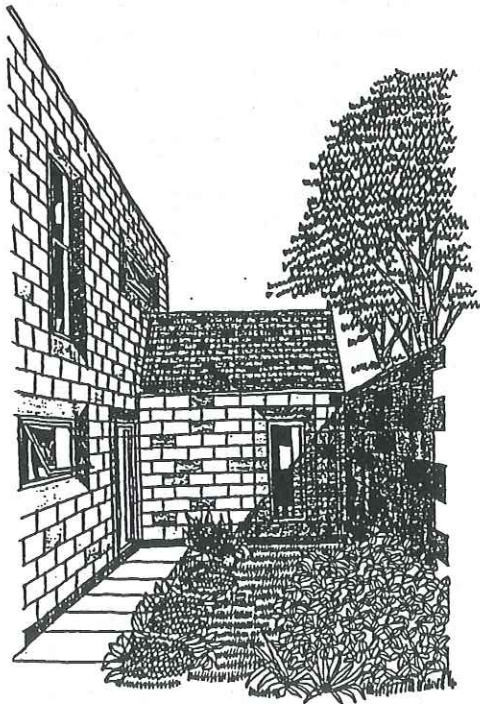
In 1980 the head leases of the two estates was bought from John Pennel and the freehold from the Borough Council by the Laurel Management Company and Forestfield Management Company. These took over the management of the landscaping and public fabric of each estate. They also sold freeholds of individual properties to the lease holders. Nearly all residents have purchased the freeholds. Residents now pay an annual management levy, used for the upkeep and maintenance of the estate.

OBJECTIVES OF THE CONSERVATION AREA

The aim of the Conservation Area is to preserve and enhance the distinctive character of the estates of Shrublands and Forestfield; to maintain the quality of the buildings and common areas to the original design as award winning developments, and to preserve and enhance the environment in which they are set.

The general objectives for policy and proposals for the Conservation Area are: -

1. To ensure the proper upkeep of the estates and maintenance of buildings and common areas in their original style and appearance.
2. To protect the areas distinctive layout and appearance.
3. To protect the woodland environment in which the estates are situated.
4. To promote environmental improvements within the Conservation Area consistent with its character.
5. To ensure that all alterations respect the character of the Conservation Area.



DESIGN AND ENVIRONMENTAL FEATURES

Both the estates have distinctive characters as they demonstrate a number of architectural and design features which are particularly characteristic of the time they were constructed. They won design awards for the planning of the whole estates and the design of the individual houses.

Although the two estates are different, they both contain a number of distinctive features both in terms of design and layout. It is these features which give the area its special appearance and which warranted the designation of the two estates as a Conservation Area. These include :-

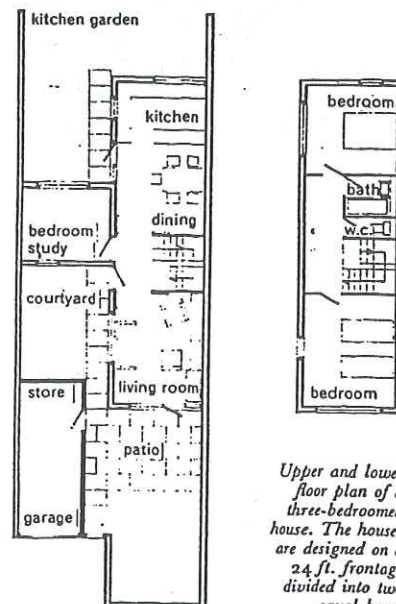
- Architectural style
- Materials
- Layout of buildings
- Relationship of buildings to landscaping and open space
- Vehicular and pedestrian segregation
- Environmental design features (e.g. orientation)

Shrublands

Shrublands was planned as a total environment of houses and open spaces. A residents club is also provided. It occupies an area of 6.75 acres on the edge of the town. It is bounded on two sides by roads, from which it is divided by walls in the same light beige concrete blocks as the houses. To the south, part of the estate abuts Forestfield and the woodland owned by Crawley Borough Council. As its name implies, Shrublands is a garden estate, and the three closes are named after shrubs - Laurel Close, Linden Close and Sharon Close. There are three points of access, one for each close. Laurel and Linden Close end at a central green, which is also overlooked by town houses on the south side of Sharon Close.

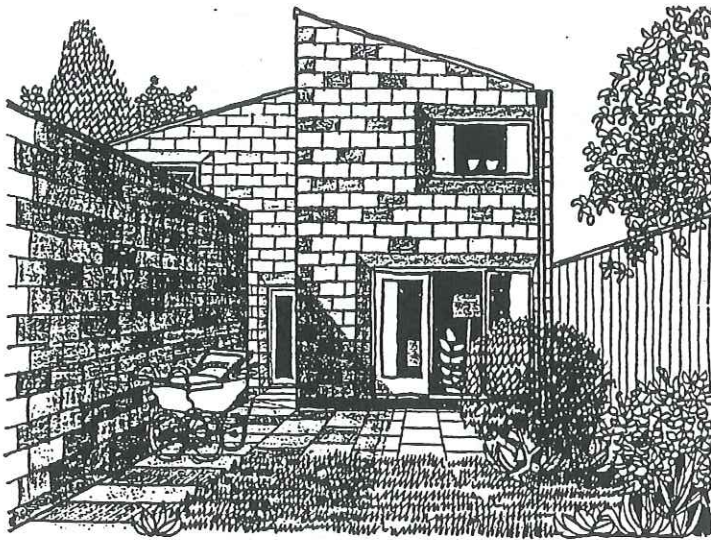
The 71 properties on the estate are based on the same distinctive design. All the houses have mono-pitched roofs and are constructed of concrete blocks. There is a dormer window in each roof above the bathroom and stair well. The garages and retaining walls are also built in the same light beige blocks. Garage roofs are pitched at the same angle as the house roofs. The distinctive colour and shape of the buildings has led to them being known as cheese houses.

The majority of the houses are of two storeys with a 24 foot frontage which is divided into two bays, one longer than the other. There are also five town houses on Sharon Close. The bays provide attractive setbacks to the front and rear which increase the apparent size of the dwelling. The setbacks, together with the separate garage at the front in most cases, also create small-scale private areas immediately adjoining the house for entering and leaving the house.



Upper and lower floor plan of a three-bedroom house. The houses are designed on a 24 ft. frontage divided into two equal bays.

The houses are also an example of environmental design. The houses were built south-south-east so as to obtain maximum light. Living rooms in all houses face south. The sense of light and airiness is also enhanced by the use of large windows and French doors. The stairwells run across the long bays, and receive natural light from the dormer windows in the roof. The setbacks also help to increase the amount of daylight and enables part of the house to be seen from within, thus increasing the apparent size of the dwelling.



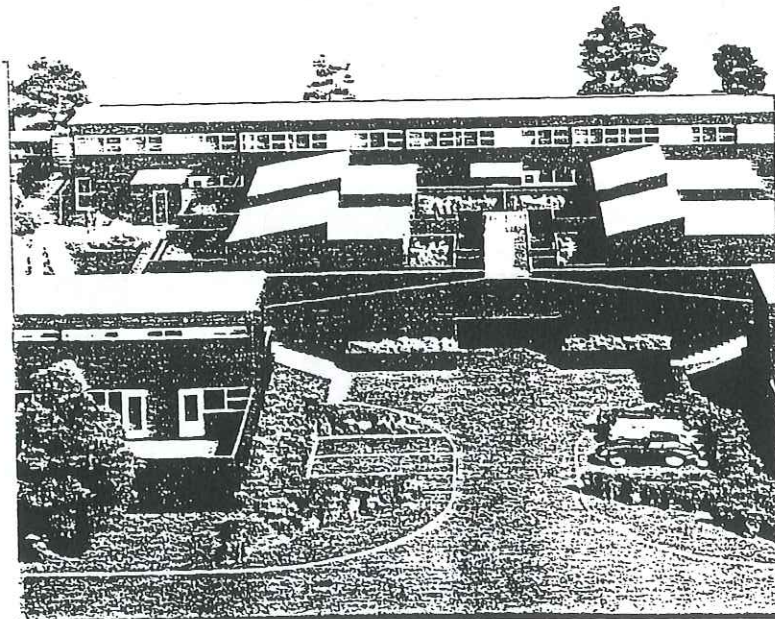
The layout of the estate also contains a number of particular design features. All gardens have access onto pathways which lead directly to the green or onto roads and pathways which ultimately give access to the green. The green is surrounded by shrubs and trees, and in each case there are smaller areas of planting, designed to break up the lines of buildings and walls. On one side of the green is a clubhouse open to the residents of Shrublands and Forestfield.

A triangle of land in the north east of the estate was planted with broad-leaved trees in the early 1990's, with the intention that it should develop into a copse for the recreation of residents, and would also screen houses on that side of the estate.

Forestfield

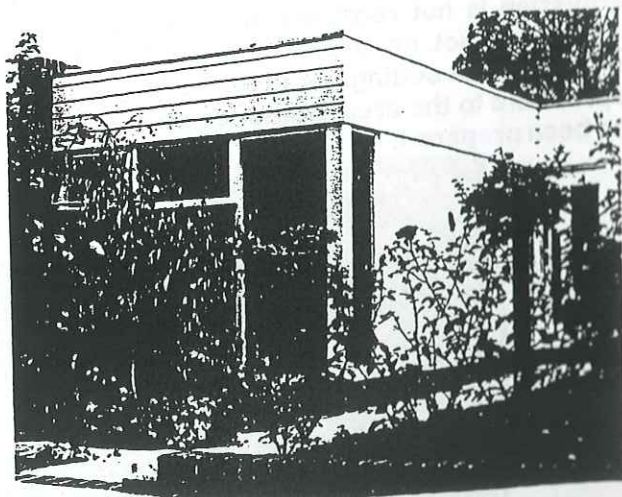
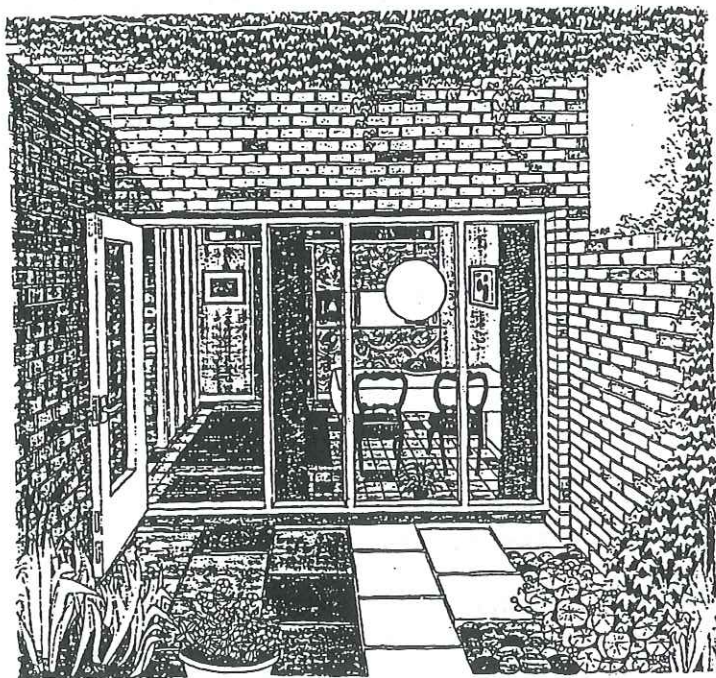
Forestfield is a separate estate which was again planned as a total environment creating a community of 125 related dwellings. All dwellings and gardens offer personal privacy but there is also plenty of communal space for interaction with neighbours. It is a garden estate with landscaping forming an important part of the character and creating a strong relationship with the layout of the buildings. The courts are named after the famous gardens of Sussex - Charleston, Leonardslee, Highdown, Nymans and Batemans.

The layout of the estate is particularly distinctive as it is divided into 25-house clusters, centred in paved and planted areas. All properties are accessed from a network of pathways. Garage courts for each block are kept out of sight by being positioned semi-underground, below the one bed-roomed bungalows. Provision of off-street car parking was lavish for its time, and still copes reasonably well with the increase in car ownership.



The properties throughout the estate are based on the same design. To create a balanced community of varied ages and social groups, single storey patio houses and two-storey section houses with one to four bedrooms were designed. The houses are built of dark brick which contrasts well with the white doors and windows, white fencing and white bargeboards. The buildings were designed to very high specifications, especially for the roofs, still regarded as one of the best of their kind. Good quality face brick was used throughout, to make the buildings largely maintenance free.

The design of the houses also takes into account environmental factors. The houses are positioned for maximum light intake with large clear windows or French patio doors, and roof lights or high clerestory lights where necessary. A feeling of space is created as rooms overlook internal courts or gardens. Use of floor space is maximised with built in storage cupboards and wardrobes. Attention to detail is very noticeable e.g. the floor to ceiling doors in the bungalows which make it easy to move furniture in and out of the rooms. For privacy, bedrooms face into courtyards and gardens are screened by walls and fences. A tennis court is provided which is available to all residents as is the Shrublands Clubhouse.



Forestfield was also designed to exploit its situation on what was once the edge of Tilgate Forest. Houses over the garages have views over the roofs of surrounding ground level houses which in turn look out at first floor level across the roofs of single storey houses around the site perimeter. Forestfield still adjoins the forested area owned by National Grid (which contains several old charcoal burning pits) as well as the wooded and grassed golf course, with footpath access to the woodland, the golf course and Tilgate Park.

CONTROLS, POLICES AND PROPOSALS

Section 71 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 states that in exercising planning functions special attention should be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of the conservation area.

There are a number of implications resulting from designation as a Conservation Area. The 1988 Town and Country Planning General Development Order provides for permitted development. This means that planning permission is expressly granted for certain minor forms of development such as small house extensions without the need to make a planning application. However, in a Conservation Area permitted development rights are more restrictive and planning permission is required for certain types of development which elsewhere are classified as permitted development.

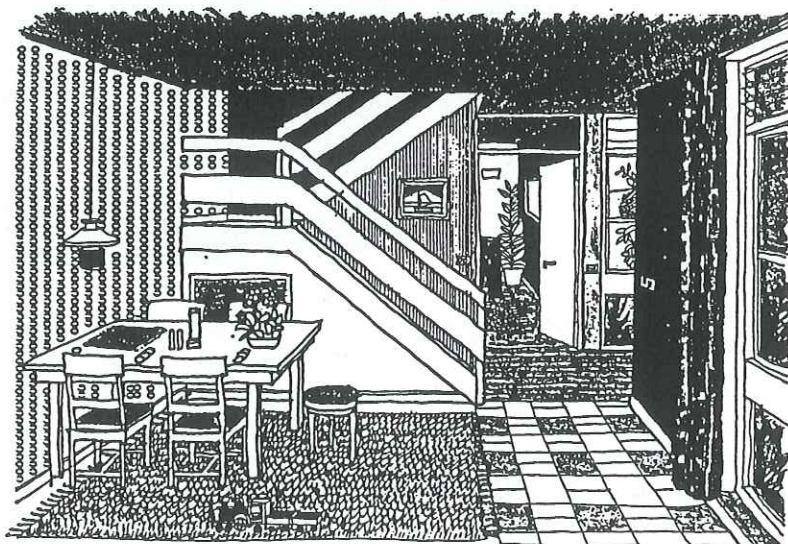
Examples include :-

- cladding
- dormer windows in roof slopes
- erection of satellite dishes
- installation of radio masts
- Extensions exceeding 50 cubic metres or 10 percent of cubic capacity.

Other implications of Conservation Area designation include :-

- Six weeks notice needs to be given of work to trees.
- Demolition of all buildings needs planning permission.

It is recommended that residents should check with the planning office who will always be willing to give advice, whether or not permission will be needed. Where planning permission is necessary, approval will depend on whether the development respects the character or appearance of the area. Even if planning permission is not required, the Borough Council will expect that development which does not need planning permission is carried out with sensitivity and respect for the setting. In order to help ensure that all changes to buildings are appropriate to the area, guidance on the design of extensions and other features has been prepared.



Local Plan Policies

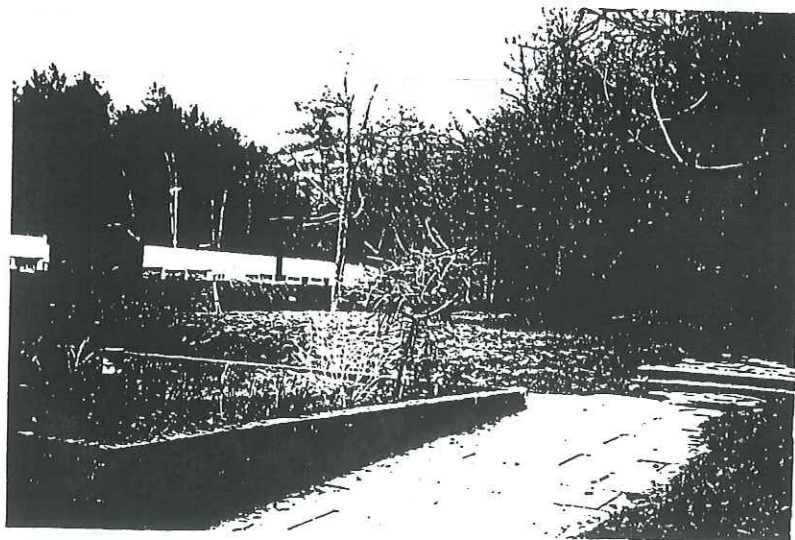
Local planning policy for Conservation Areas is currently stated in the Crawley Borough Local Plan Deposit Draft 1995. Policy BN2 is concerned with development in Conservation Areas. Proposals for new development will only be permitted if it respects the character of the locality and of existing buildings in scale, grouping and materials. The acceptability of a proposal in a conservation area often depends upon the details of its siting, design, appearance and landscaping.

The woodland that lies within the Conservation Area is outside the built up area boundary and is therefore subject to the countryside policies in the Local Plan. Policy C1 states that planning permission will not normally be granted for development beyond the built up area boundary.

Policies for existing buildings

Although there are no listed buildings in the area, all buildings in the Conservation Area contribute to its appearance and character. There is little possibility of major new development in the Conservation Area due to the layout of the residential area. However, any new development would only be permitted if it respected the character and appearance of the Conservation Area in terms of scale and design.

The greatest potential for change is through house extensions and other minor changes. The Borough Council is not seeking to prevent the construction of all house extensions but considers that the design of new extensions should retain the character and appearance of the Conservation Area. Guidance for householders in order to help achieve this objective is included in the next section of this statement.



GUIDANCE FOR HOUSEHOLDERS

This statement seeks to give advice and encourage householders to undertake extensions which respect the character and appearance of the Conservation Area. It is important that extensions and minor changes are done in the same style as existing buildings, respecting the original design proportions and using similar materials. Generally new materials should match the original colour but modern materials are acceptable where appropriate. The guidance in the following section suggests ways in which changes to buildings could be carried which are considered to be in keeping with the character and appearance of the Conservation Area.

Shrublands

Windows

- Windows should follow the same pattern in terms of number and size as existing windows
- Window frames should be of a flush design
- White UPVC is an acceptable material

Doors

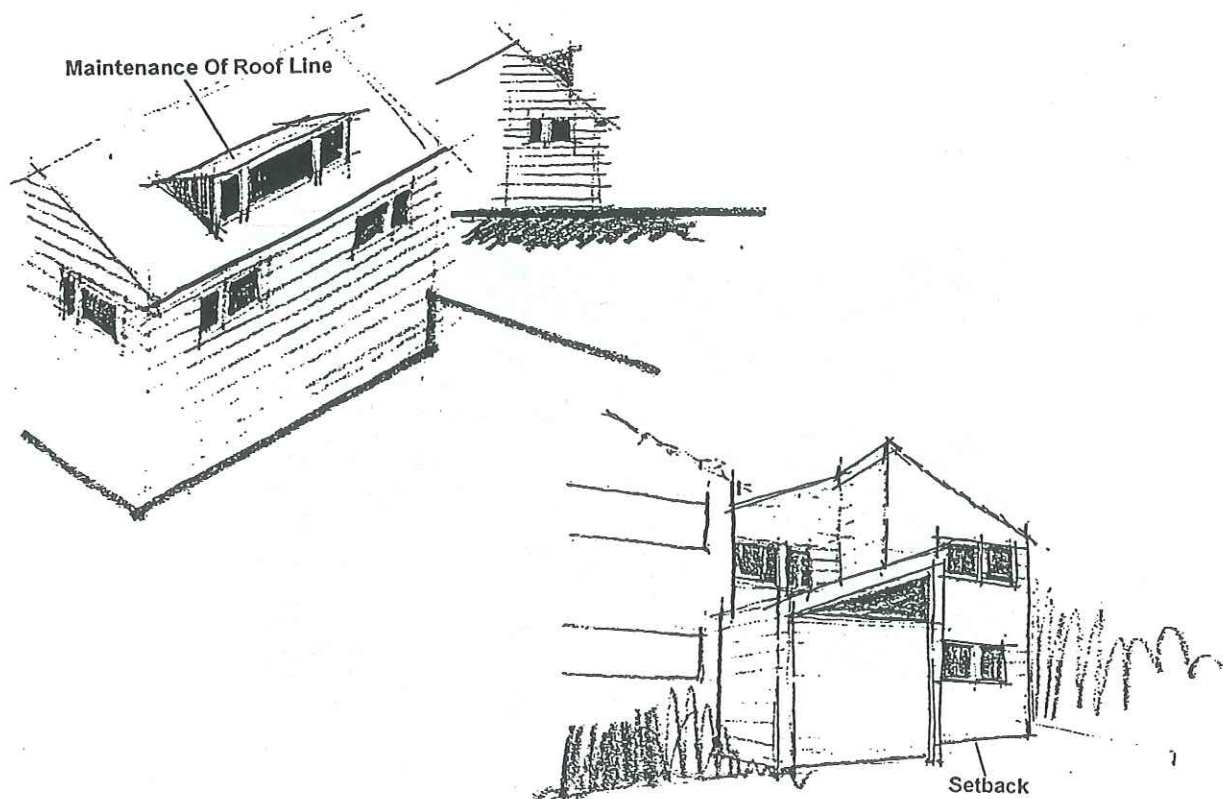
- Over elaborate door furniture should be avoided

Garage doors

- Panels of garage doors should be horizontal slats
- The triangular glass window above the garage door should be retained
- Doors should be of a white colour
- UPVC, stained or painted seasoned timber, powder coated metal are acceptable materials

Dormer windows

- The line of dormer windows should follow the same line as the main roof.



Roofs

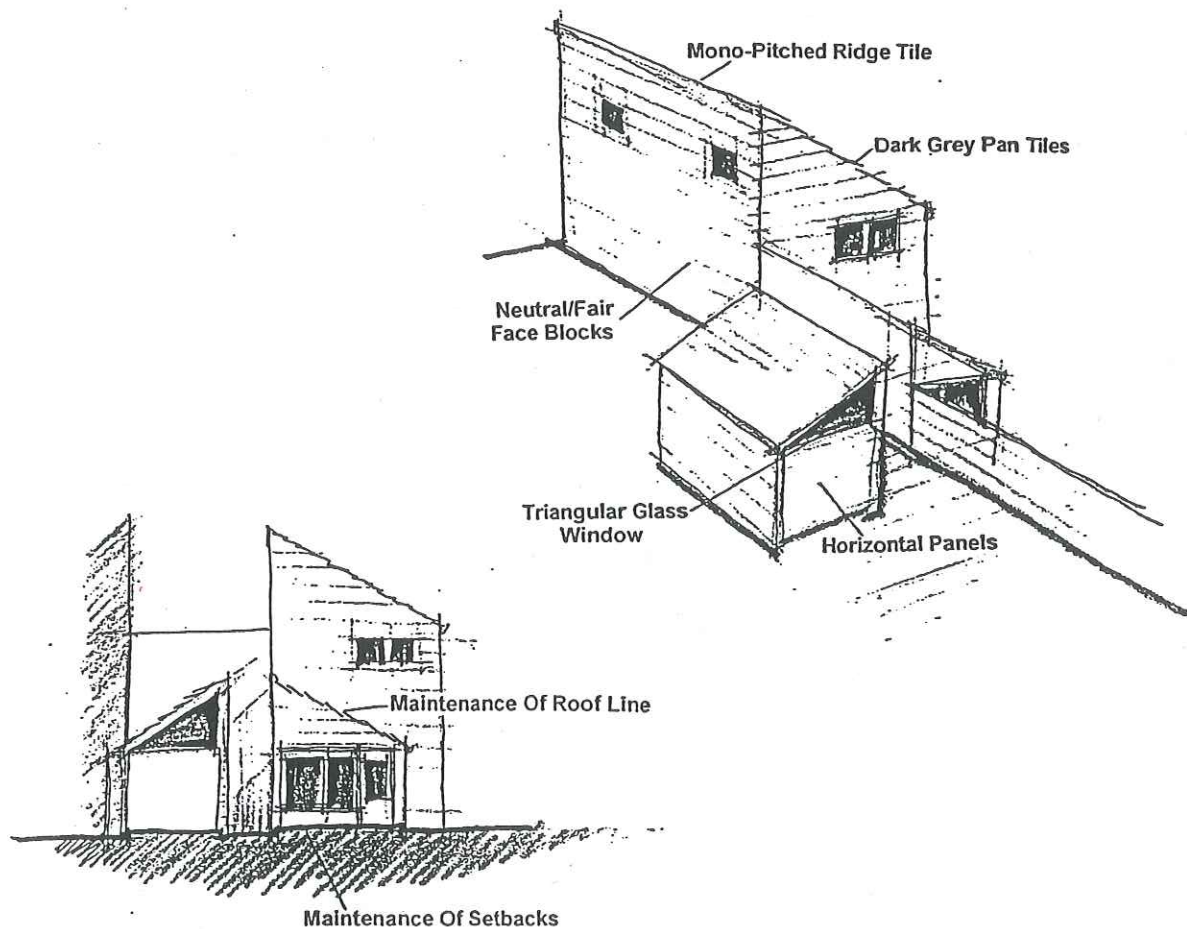
- Dark grey pan tiles should be used
- Mono-pitched ridge tiles should be used

Blockwork

- Blocks should be of a fair face/neutral colour

Extensions

- Extensions should preserve the setbacks of the original building by not creating a straight frontage to the property
- Roof lines of extensions should match the pitch of the original roof
- Flat roofed extensions are not considered to be in keeping with the original
- Extensions should be of a different height to garages
- Extensions should use the same materials



Conservatories

- Conservatories should have mono-pitched roofs
- Supports and frames of conservatories should be white

Materials

The materials used in Shrublands are described as decorative concrete blockwork with a smooth finish set in a neutral mortar rubbed joint.

Forestfield

Windows

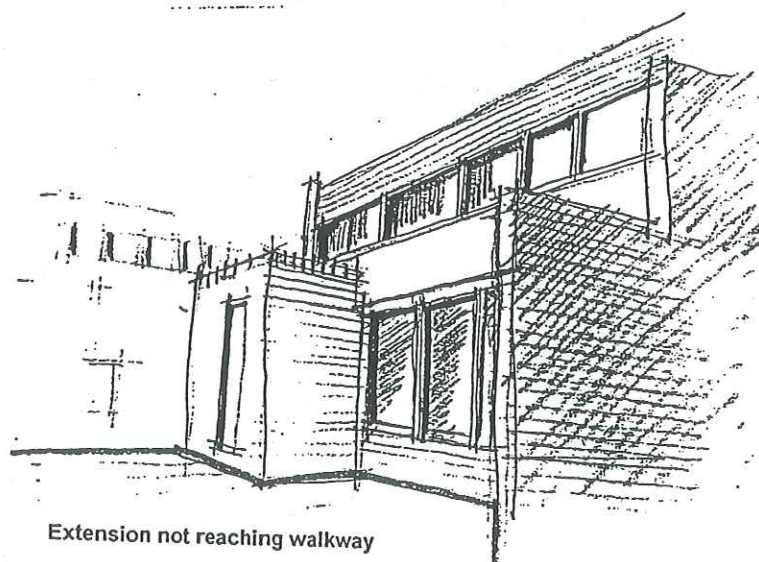
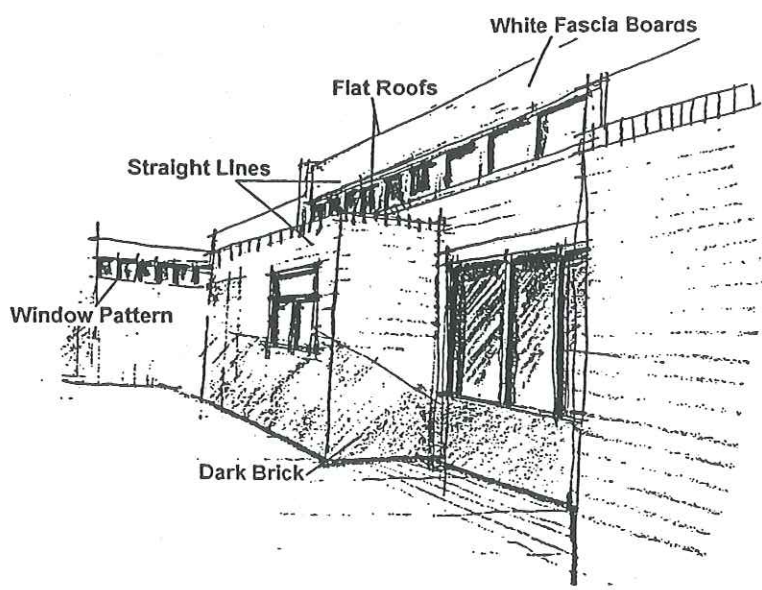
- Windows should follow the same pattern in terms of number and size as existing windows
- Window frames should be of a flush design
- White UPVC is an acceptable material

Doors

- Use straight lines/glazing
- White UPVC is an acceptable material
- Bigger glass panes are more acceptable
- Georgian/Victorian style doors are not in keeping with the character of the area
- Pattern of the panelling of the long strip doors should be retained

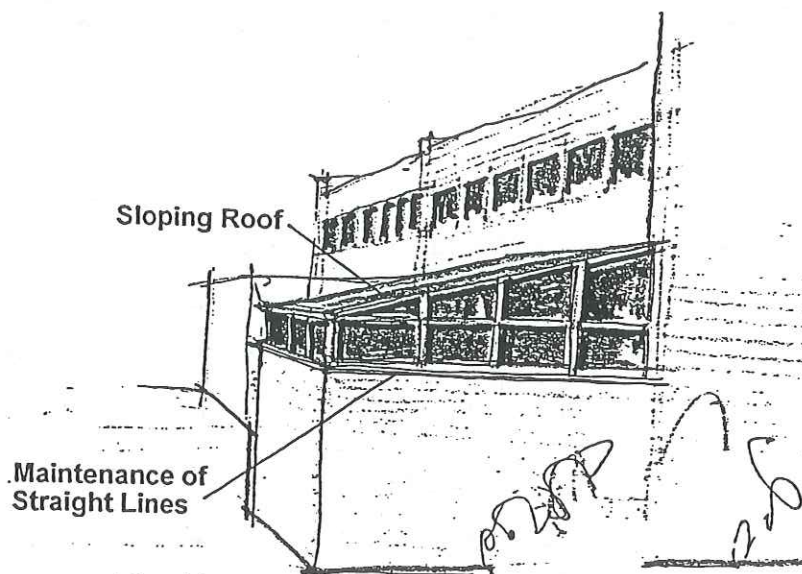
Extensions

- Extensions should have flat roofs
- Extensions should not fill in the small garden spaces
- Extensions should use the same materials as the originals



Conservatories

- Conservatories should have sloping roofs
- Conservatories should maintain the straight lines of buildings
- Conservatories should have white UPVC supports



Fascia boards

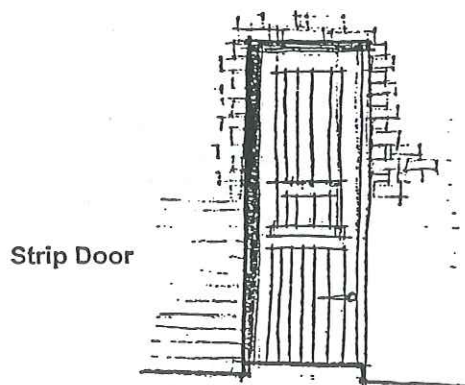
- Fascia boards should be of tongue grooved timber, white stained or painted
- UPVC or powder coated metal is acceptable

Fencing

- Fences should be of vertical white panels
- White UPVC can be used

External Furniture

- Over elaborate door and window furniture should be avoided



Paving

- Pattern and colour of paving slabs should be maintained

Satellite Dishes

- In both areas black open mesh satellite dishes are recommended.

Materials

The bricks used in Forestfield are a mixture of buff, orange red and dark fired blues set in a neutral soil mortar with recessed joints. The parapets are in a brick soldier course.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPROVEMENTS

Both the Laurel Management Company and the Forestfield Management Company are committed to maintaining and improving the character of the two estates. The Borough Council will work with the management companies and subject to the availability of resources seek to implement the proposals highlighted below.

Shrublands

Improvements so far

A number of improvements have already been made to the estate by the management company.

- perimeter walls to the north and west have been rebuilt and capped with coping stones to prevent water seepage.
- a copse has been planted on a triangle of land in the north east corner of the estate on previous waste land.
- fencing has been provided on the central green to prevent grass being used as a shortcut for cyclists.
- gates have been provided at the ends of some of the paths behind the houses to help maintain the privacy of residents.
- A grille has been installed in the stream where it goes underground to help prevent flooding.

Further improvements

A number of further improvements have been identified :-

- The green is unlit at night. Low level lighting at corners in the path running through the green would make it safer, improve its appearance and deter noisy people passing through late at night.
- The green could be improved by seating. It would encourage people to use the green for quiet recreation and discourage football playing.
- Some of the public parking bays are in a poor condition due to the deterioration of the asphalt. These could be relaid. The shortbays at the end of Sharon Close impede access to the drives of 9 and 10. The bay could be extended back to the footpaths.
- Improved management of the woodland area which lies between the two estates.

Forestfield

Improvements so far

A number of improvements have already been made to the estate.

- The estate has been fenced with stiles and disabled access gates provided to retain access to the woodlands for residents and to discourage through traffic by motorcycles and horses.
- The raised flower beds along the walls of the two garage blocks, have been relined and refurbished to counter flooding in the garages.
- Residents have been circulated with information by the Management Company about the covenants regarding the appearance and upkeep of their properties and reminded of their obligations to observe these in order to preserve the character of the area.
- The Forestfield Management Company is currently drawing up a five year plan to bring the common areas of the estate to the highest possible standard.
- WSCC have re-laid the public footpath running through part of the estate, and laid drains to prevent flooding to the path and adjacent garage block.
- CBC have installed new lighting throughout the estate which has improved visibility and reduce vandalism.

Further improvements

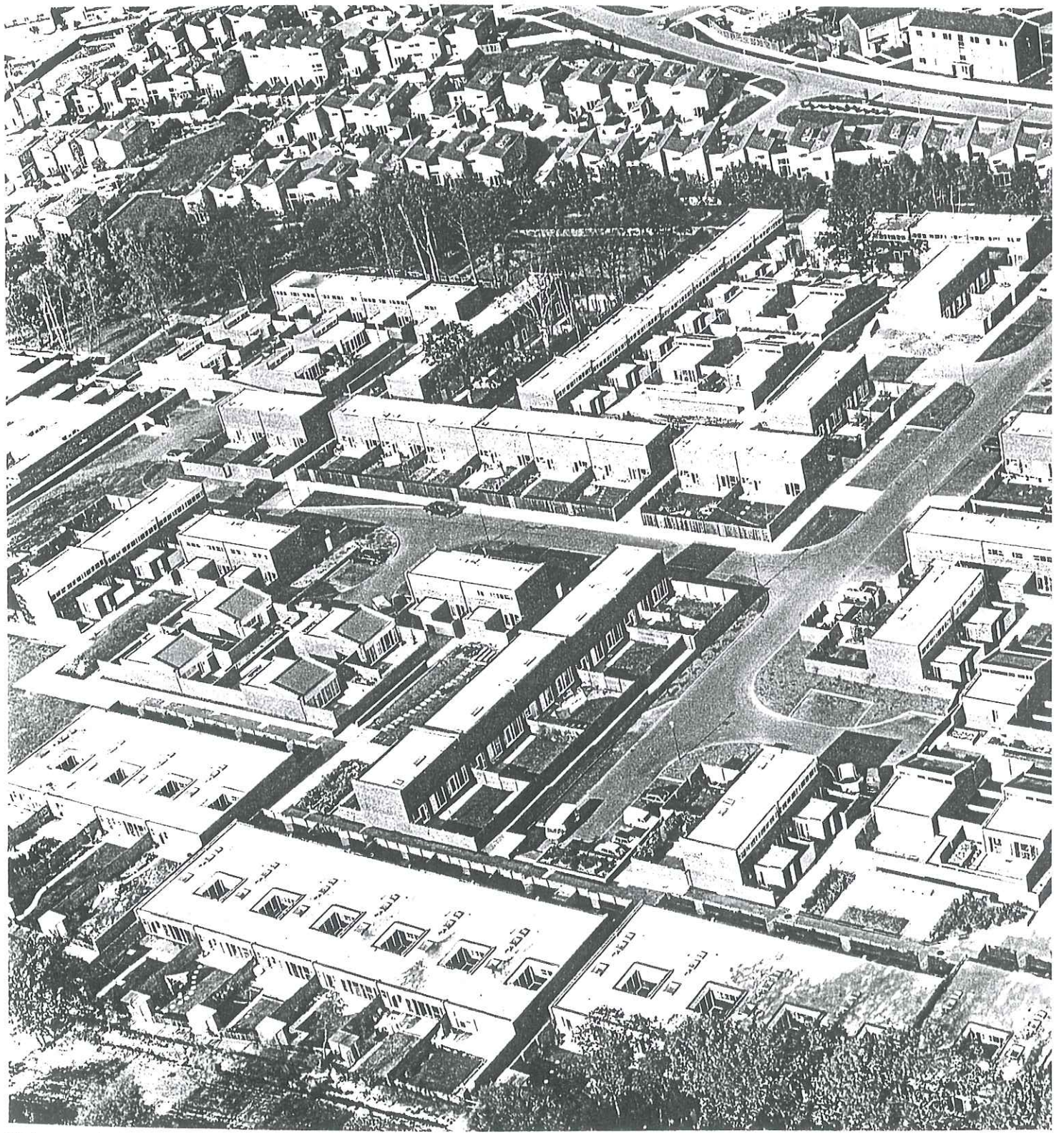
A number of further improvements have been identified :-

- The deterioration of the roads and the parking bays is a problem.
- The condition of the footpaths is in urgent need of improvement.
- The planting of the shrub and flower borders needs to be improved due to overgrown roots threatening the brick wall surrounds. There needs to be a programme of refurbishing these.
- A large mound remains which was to be the site of the centralised boiler. The site should be planted.
- The provision of a barrier or disabled access gate across the path running between Tilgate Golf Course and the back of the Forestfield Estate would prevent entrance by motorcycles.
- The appearance of the estate could be enhanced by an entrance feature.
- Improved management of the woodland area which lies between the two estates.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION PLEASE
CONTACT**

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