

Joinery and other details

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Introduction and design history

The purpose of this technical note is to help those involved in works to the houses of Bedford Park to understand the features that give them their special character and architectural value. The overall conservation intent of these guidance notes is to assist sensitive analysis and decision, not to prescribe a single solution. There is often a case for more than one design detail to be appropriate in each circumstance.

At first sight, the design and construction of Bedford Park houses appears to follow a consistent pattern. This is misleading, and the subtleties of each situation need to be appreciated if the architectural integrity of the houses is not to be eroded by incorrect repair, replacement or new construction using inappropriate materials and details. There were original differences even between houses of the same type. That said, the design and construction of the houses in the Bedford Park conservation area as a whole consists of a restricted range of materials, forms and details against which the appropriateness of repair, replacement or new construction can be evaluated.

A very substantial body of relevant knowledge has been amassed in Bedford Park and it is the intent of this work to make it accessible to all of those involved in the maintenance and modernisation of the individual houses. In this way intelligent and sympathetic interventions can be made that preserve and enhance rather than damage our shared heritage.

Some appreciation of how the houses were designed and built over a period of several years will be helpful in understanding the variation in detail. With few exceptions, the architects involved in the development of Bedford Park were not engaged to supervise the construction of the houses. The architects – Norman Shaw et al – determined

overall design intentions and nature of details but as there were a number of builders involved over a period of years, the implementation of designs, and (to a large extent) the detailed constructional decisions were left in the hands of the building contractors. Consequently, when replacing lost features or constructing new ones, care must be taken to research details from an appropriate example.

The following notes will give some pointers to the main issues to be considered, the most commonly successful techniques, appropriate detailing and sourcing of materials. It is recommended that the appropriateness of details proposed should be discussed with the local authority Conservation Officer and ideally one of the local expert architects prior to finalising an application for listed building consent or planning permission, and prior to placing orders for any work.

Details and moulding profiles

All details and mouldings are important to the character of the house, and all replacements should be carefully matched to originals. Some details appear consistently throughout the estate, others vary from house to house, from street to street or between groups of houses. It is important to find the correct source for identifying authentic joinery details. If precedent for a detail does not survive in the house in question, it should be sought from adjoining houses, taking care to establish that the “source” house generally shares design details with the house being worked on. It can be safely assumed that houses clearly built together (pairs of semi’s, terraces) would have originally shared internal details, but over time many individual changes have been made.

Modern standard timber mouldings (architraves, skirtings, etc.) are almost invariably incorrect and inappropriate for Bedford Park houses. Modern