



**THE BEDFORD PARK  
SOCIETY**

For the protection of the amenities of the earliest Garden Suburb

# Technical notes

# Introduction to technical notes

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The purpose of these notes is to help anyone involved in works to houses in Bedford Park. The notes look in detail at the features which give these properties their special character and architectural value. The Society's aim is to assist sensitive analysis and decision-making, not to prescribe a single solution. There is often a case for more than one design detail to be appropriate in a particular circumstance.

At first sight, the design and construction of Bedford Park houses appears to follow a consistent pattern. This is misleading; the subtleties of individual properties 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. Originally there were differences even between houses of the same type.

That said, the design and construction of houses in the Bedford Park conservation area as a whole consists of a specific range of materials, forms and details against which the appropriateness of a repair, replacement or new construction can be evaluated.

Some appreciation of how the houses were designed and built over a period of several years will be helpful in understanding the variations in detail. With few exceptions, the architects involved in the development of Bedford Park were not engaged to supervise the construction of the houses. Edward W Godwin, Richard Norman Shaw and their successors determined overall design intentions and the nature of details; but as there was 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. This log book's notes on your house should be helpful in tracing the architectural history of the building.

The repair and alteration of historic buildings is a delicate and skilled business. Selecting the right details, the correct specification, and the proper method needs considered judgement.

Generalisations are dangerous as each case presents its own issues, problems and challenges. It is important to take professional advice and employ skilled craftsmen before taking action that may

permanently affect the appearance and fabric of a historic building.

The technical notes which follow include highly detailed chapters on different aspects of repair and restoration, the most commonly successful techniques, appropriate detailing and sourcing of materials. These introductory guidelines explain the main issues to be considered.

## Overall principles

While each Bedford Park house has individual characteristics, it must also be looked at in relation to neighbouring buildings, gardens, the whole streetscape and open spaces.

Certain aspects of the design of the houses are crucial to the architectural integrity of Bedford Park, notably chimneys and their pots, brick and tile colour and texture, roof pitch and edge detailing, window shape size and detailing, fence and balustrade design and brick bond, jointing and detailing around openings.

It should be appreciated that while Bedford Park was influenced by the Aesthetic Movement, the constructional detailing of internal joinery and fixed decoration on the estate largely followed the typical pattern of late 19th century houses, albeit with an unusual degree of restraint, resulting in a simpler, less ornate interior than in contemporary urban middle-class houses.

As a result, there is a considerable, if subtle, difference between some houses – even between houses of the same overall design. Some details appear consistently throughout the estate, others vary from house to house, from street to street or between groups of houses. All details are important to the character of the house, and all replacements should be carefully matched to originals.

When replacing components and lost features or constructing new ones, care must be taken to research details from an appropriate example house. If there is no surviving precedent in the house in question, look at adjoining houses, taking care to establish that the "source" building generally shares design details with the house being worked on. It can be safely assumed that houses built together (semis or terraces) will share details, although there may be some external variances such as gables or bays.