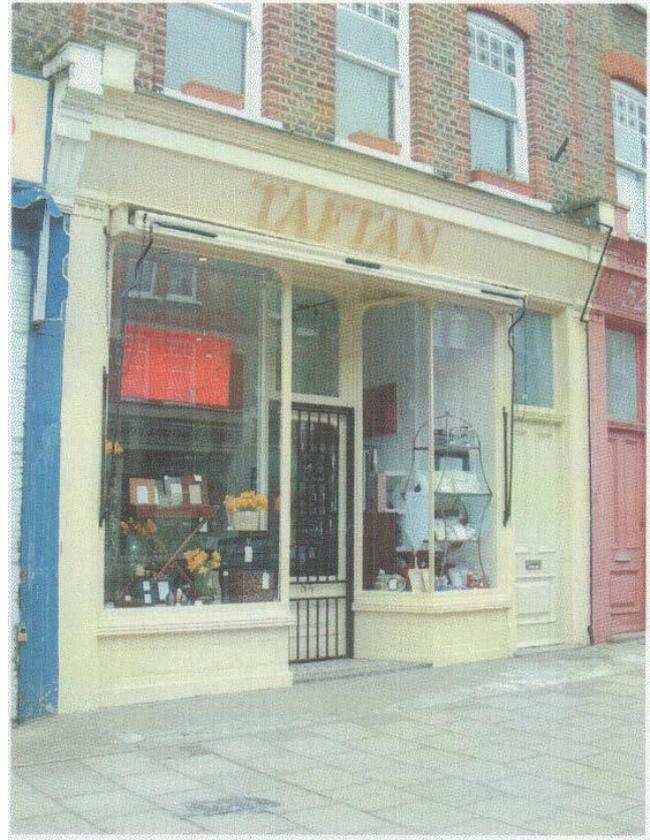


Abbeville Road Conservation Area (Ca 30) Character Statement



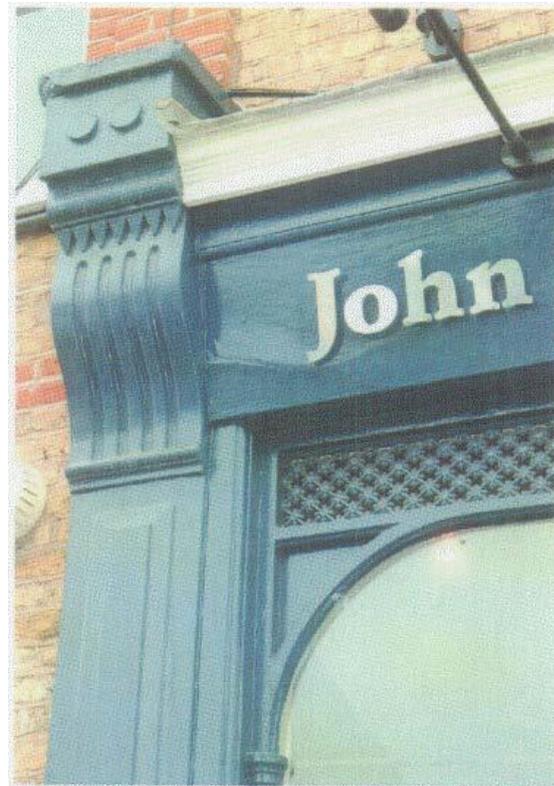
55 Abbeville Road



52 Abbeville Road



73 Abbeville Road



42 Abbeville Road

Report summary

The buildings which line Abbeville Road are well preserved examples of speculatively developed Victorian shopping parades and display a pleasant visual diversity whilst still exhibiting a sense of coherency and harmony. It is also a thriving and attractive local shopping area with distinctive character. Its geographical location, situated away from main arterial routes and shopping centres has ensured that it retains significant period character, particularly where unaltered buildings are combined with original or historic shopfronts. Consequently it is deemed worthy of conservation area status.

1. Context

A detailed assessment of the proposed Abbeville Road Conservation Area has been completed, derived from the different elements that contribute to its special character, and based on the following criteria:

- (i) the origins and development of the topographical framework;
- (ii) the architectural and historic quality, character and coherence of historic buildings and their style and materials, and the contribution they make to the special interest of the area;
- (iii) the contribution made by green spaces, trees, hedges and other natural elements to the character of the proposed conservation area;
- (iv) the relationship of the built environment to the landscape including significant landmarks, vistas and panoramas;
- (v) the extent of loss, intrusion or damage i.e. the negative factors which have exerted a detrimental impact upon the character and/or appearance of the historic area;
- (vi) the existence of neutral areas.

2. Historical background to the development of the area

The earliest settlement of Clapham was centred around present day North Street, Turret Grove and Rectory Grove. However, the land surrounding Clapham Common remained undeveloped and covered with farmland until the late 17th Century, at which point the village began to expand towards the Common. Abbeville Road itself runs parallel to Clapham Common Southside, lying close to the line of Stane Street, the Roman military road from London to Chichester.

Throughout the 18th and 19th centuries, large individual villas and houses lined Clapham Common Southside, set within extensive grounds. For example, The Clock House and Eagle House which can be seen on Stanford's map of 1860. This land remained virtually undeveloped until 1875 when the Clock House Farm was sold and the most southerly portion of Abbeville Road, close to the junction with Cavendish Road, was laid out. Development along Abbeville Road and on its surrounding streets gathered pace during the last decades of the 19th Century as more of the large mansions along Clapham Common Southside were demolished and their land sold off. For example, Hambalt Road, Narbonne A venue and Shandon Road were laid out and lined with terraced housing during the 1880s.



The site of Abberville Road was covered with fields until the late 19th century as shown on the Ordnance Survey map of 1875.

This area of Clapham was developed as part of the general speculative housing boom which was taking place throughout London. Demand for suburban housing was fuelled by a general population increase between 1840 and 1914, with new housing development offering the burgeoning aspiring middle classes the opportunity to escape the built up squalor of inner London and establish themselves in new houses designed for single family occupation.

Encouraging these changes was the expansion of the public transport network, facilitating the development of housing in parts of South London which were relatively untouched.

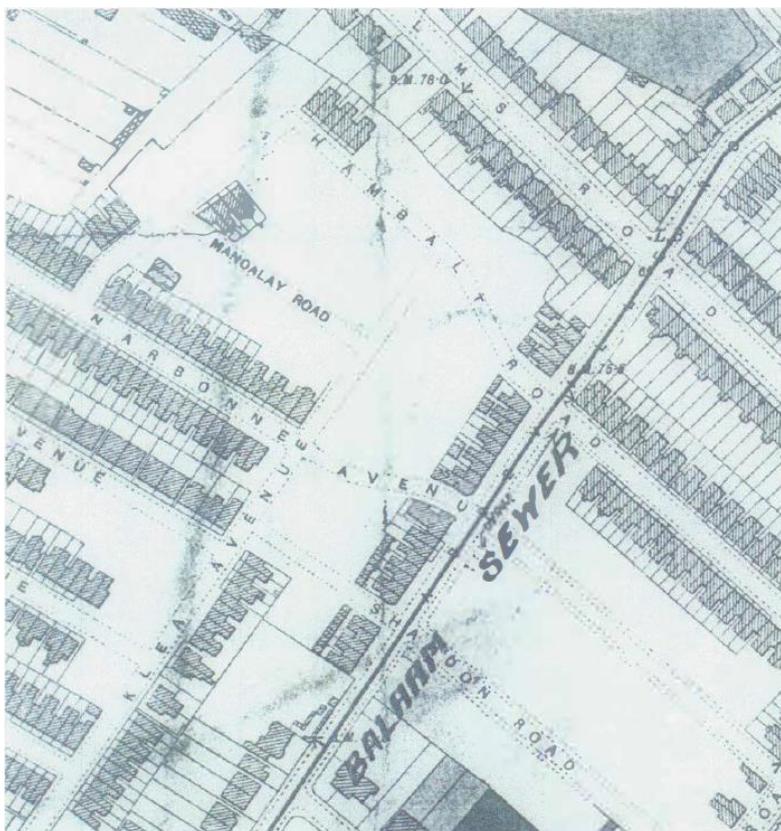


This photo of Narbonne Avenue was taken around 1908. This view is typical of the residential streets which run off Abberville Road, developed speculatively with tightly packed middle class terraced housing.

Whilst the introduction of bus services and the arrival of the railway in 1863 enhanced links between Clapham and central London, it was the widespread availability of horse drawn trams from the early 1870s onwards that facilitated a daily commute and sparked the speculative building boom in this area.

The west side of Abbeville Road was developed during the early 1890s, with the terraces on its eastern side following in 1894/95. These commercial terraces were built speculatively as a local shopping parade to service the adjacent residential streets, with development undertaken on a piecemeal basis.

Individual builders developed a small number of plots at any one time accounting for the varied appearance of the terraces.



The Ordnance Survey map of 1897 shows the beginnings of speculative housing development on the streets running off Abbeville Road. The shopping parades on the western side of Abbeville Road had been built by this point.

A view of 55 to 71 Abbeville Road taken around 1914. The Hovis sign to W. Norris Bakery is still in place today. Original angled fascia boards, timber shopfronts and roller blind boxes can still be found on a number of shopfronts in this Parade.



However, some builders were also responsible for more than one terrace, resulting in the repetition of some stylistic and design features. For example, Broadway (nos. 37-45) built in 1891 and the adjacent Collonade Buildings (numbers. 27 to 35) dating from 1893, were both built by Bailey S Linfott.

3. Architectural qualities and special character of the Abbeville Road Conservation Area

The proposed Conservation Area boundary is drawn tightly around the commercial properties along Abbeville Road and reflects the special and distinctive character of this attractive local shopping centre. Although no.25 Abbeville Road has residential accommodation to the rear, it is included as a commercial frontage which contributes to the streetscape. Abbeville Road consists almost entirely of commercial units with residential accommodation above, except for a few exceptions where the ground floor units are used for offices. A fine urban grain is generated by the wide range of retail and leisure uses in evidence. The proliferation of independent businesses, despite the presence of some larger chains, adds to the distinctiveness of the area and differentiates it from shopping parades dominated by more familiar high street businesses.

44 to 58 Abbeville Road.

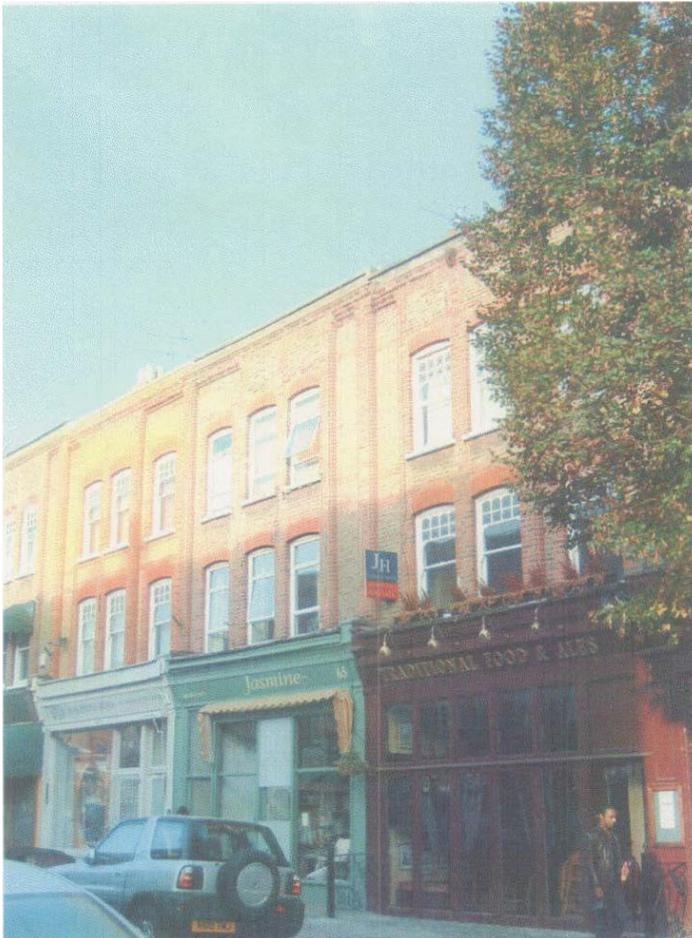
This parade contains a number of independent business and demonstrates the fine visual grain of the area.



A fine visual grain is also evident, with each business largely restricted to an individual shop unit – the exceptions being a small number of restaurant premises. Where businesses have extended into two or more units, the integrity of the individual plots has been retained through the retention of pilasters and console brackets, and the incorporation of individual fascias to each shop unit.

A strong cohesive identity to the proposed Conservation Area is created by the relatively consistent size and scale of the buildings, the use of a select palette of materials and a range of unifying decorative features. Generally the terraces stand three storeys tall, with a ground floor commercial unit and two floors of residential accommodation above, the only exception to this prevailing pattern being the short terrace at nos. 47-53. The consistent building line, roof height and plot widths adds visual harmony to the area whilst still allowing for a pleasant degree of visual diversity.

All of the buildings are constructed of yellow stock brick, with the widespread use of brickwork decoration and embellishment adding to the sense of visual coherency. Dentilation at eaves level is found at 37 to 45 and 55 to 71, diaper work is set within the arches above windows at 27-35 and red brick dressings appear to the windows at 47 to 53 and as banding at 27 to 35.



61 to 65 Abbeville Road

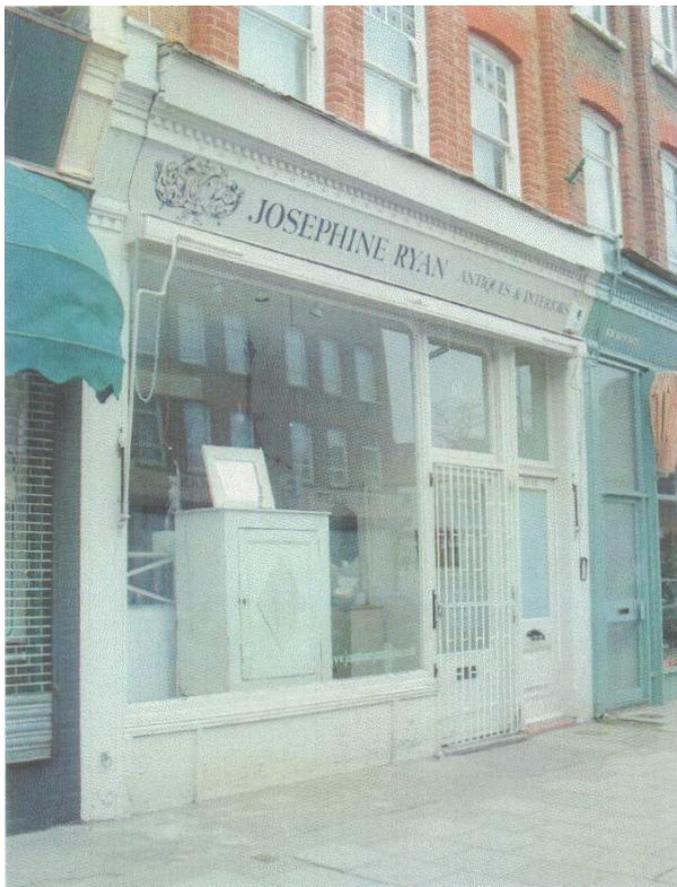


Decorative brickwork at eaves level and red brick dressings to the windows. Characteristic stained glass adds visual interest to the windows.

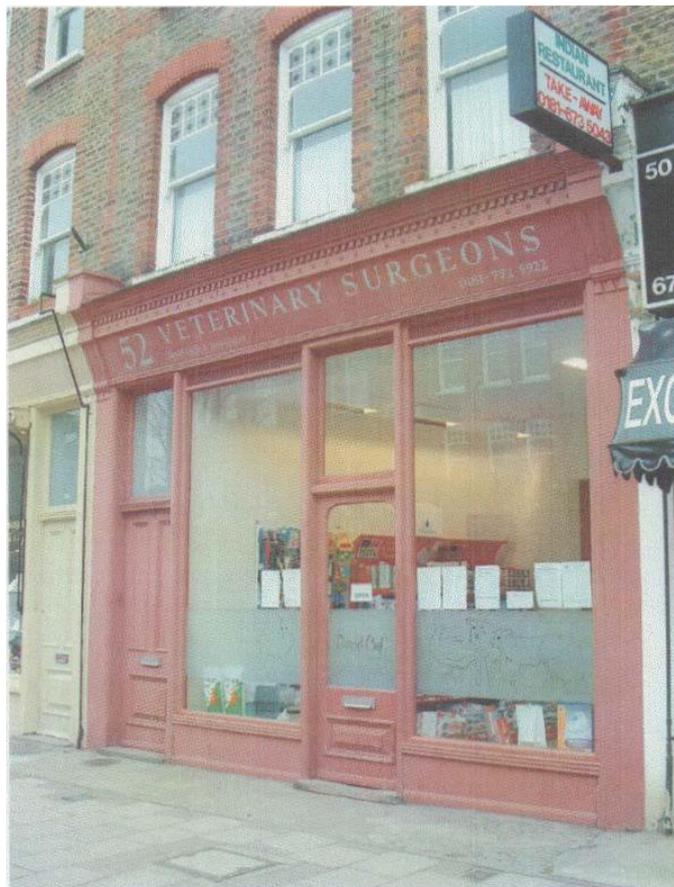
Original windows are painted timber double hung sliding sashes, many of which have distinctive upper panes divided into small lights. Stained glass panes with a bullseye motif appear on the terraces developed by W Peacock at 47 to 53, 55 to 71 and 73 to 79, adding visual interest to the facades. The roofscape within the proposed designation is diverse, with parapets and concealed roofs at 55-71, hipped roofs at 73-79 and 28-42 and steeply pitched roofs to the more diminutive terrace at 47-53. A succession of small gables topping the terraces at 27-35 and 37-45 adds a pleasant sense of rhythm to the streetscene whilst the corner turret features facing Shandon Road add visual interest at roof level.

The streetscape has a strong horizontal emphasis engendered by the relatively consistent building line of the terraces and the straight routing of Abbeville Road. Stucco banding, brick cornices and the proliferation of closely aligned windows on each floor, for example at 28 to 42 and 55 to 71, reinforces this impression. The relatively tall buildings, combined with narrow plot widths, also gives some individual terraces a strong vertical rhythm, especially when combined with decorative features such as strong brick pilasters at 55 to 71. Other distinctive features are the canted comers to the terraces which address the junction of Abbeville Road and Shandon Road and to the terrace at 28 to 42, adding

townscape interest. An historic Hovis sign is attached to the upper floors on 37 Abbeville Road, with a similar sign appearing in archive photographs from as early as 1914.



63 Abbeville Road



52 Abbeville Road

A number of original or historic shopfronts remain, for example at 42, 52 to 54 and 63 Abbeville Road, as well as on the small commercial unit on Hambalt Road. These are characterised by their timber construction, traditional proportions and detailing, and features such as angled fascias and fabric roller blinds. A number of high quality new shopfronts have also been installed. These traditional timber shopfronts add a sense of quality and character to the ground floor elevations of the buildings and are carefully integrated and sympathetic to the upper floors of the buildings.



In many cases, even where the original or historic shopfronts have been removed, the shopfront framework of pilasters, console brackets and cornice have been retained. These are particularly decorative at 28-42 with their heavy consoles, dentil cornice surround and raised and fielded panelled doors with bolection moulding.

Decorative cornices, angled fascias and traditional blind boxes.

Decorative motifs such as an angled fascia topped with a dentil cornice and stud pattern appears on a number of terraces, adding visual continuity to the shopfronts, with particularly good examples at 52, 53 and 63 to 65.

4. Townscape features and the relationship between the landscape and the built environment

This stretch of Abbeville Road is entirely straight with the land sloping down gently towards Clapham Park Road. Soft landscaping does feature within the proposed conservation area despite its built up nature. A large lime tree sits to the front of number 71, whilst mature trees and greenery immediately outside the proposed boundary close the view when looking both northwards and southwards along Abbeville Road.

Many of the buildings sit hard up against the pavement with access from the shop units directly onto the street. However, where the building line is set back from the pavement a number of shop forecourts have been enclosed and used for outside seating for restaurants and cafes. This lends the street a somewhat continental air, with active and bustling businesses giving the impression of vitality and prosperity.

5. The extent of loss, intrusion and damage to special character

At present, the majority of buildings within the proposed conservation area are well maintained and retain many of their original or historic features.

(a) Pockets of loss do appear however, where important features have been removed. For example, numbers 47 to 49 and numbers 56 and 58 have had either PVCu or aluminium replacement windows inserted. Some of the attractive and original entrance doors to the upper residential floors of buildings have also been replaced with inappropriate modern off the peg designs. The original doors are important, featuring as part of the overall shopfront framework. Similarly, the unsympathetic replacement of original timber sash windows, especially where these have decorative small panes or stained glass, detracts from the original design of the buildings and the coherency of the wider terrace.



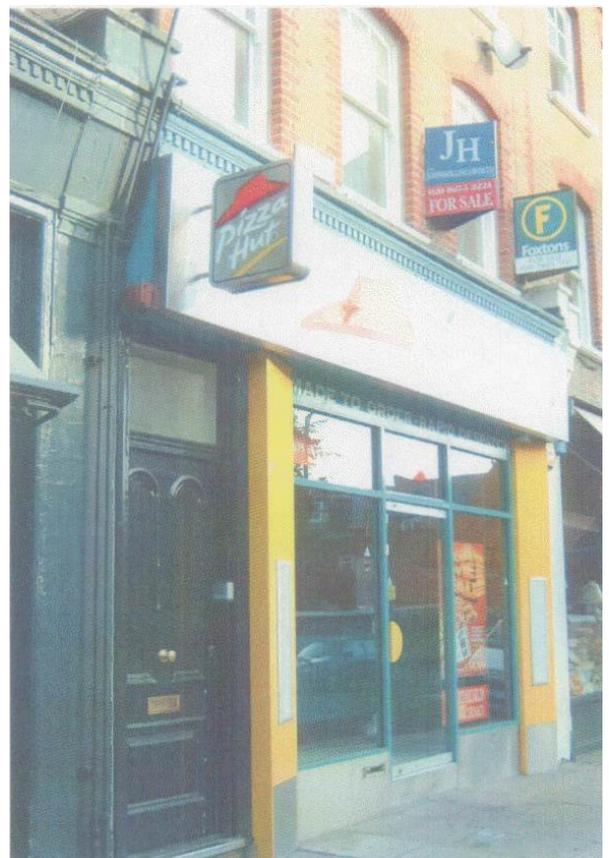
Unsympathetic modern windows which do not match the materials, design or opening mechanism of the traditional windows along the terrace.

(b) A number of poor quality shop fronts have been introduced along Abbeville Road characterised by the use of bare aluminium frames and oversized and inappropriate signage and fascias. In some cases the traditional shopfront surround has also been lost, for example, console brackets, pilasters and cornices. However, equally, features such as traditional fascia boards can still be seen hidden beneath inappropriate modern signage.

Projecting sign located inappropriately on a decorative console bracket.



The overly large and internally illuminated fascia sign, fixed dutch blind and unsympathetically sited projecting sign contrast with the proportions, design and detailing of the adjacent shopfront.



This unsympathetic design and use of materials is not appropriate within a conservation area.

(c) Many properties retain their original slate or clay tile roofs, or have had these sympathetically replaced with matching materials. However, concrete roof tiles have been substituted in some cases, adding a bulky and uneven profile to the houses and detracting from their original historic appearance.

6. Enhancement and improvement opportunities

The survival of attractive historic shopfronts and more recently, the insertion of high quality new shopfronts are a key part of the special character of the area. The replacement of unsightly and poorly designed shopfronts is encouraged and would significantly upgrade the appearance of the commercial premises and enhance the visual quality of the public realm. Proposals for new shopfronts offer the

opportunity to enhance the appearance of the shopping parades and will be required to respect the period quality and character of the buildings. Where it has survived, the traditional shop surround of pilasters, console brackets, fascia and cornice should be retained. The reinstatement of these elements to an appropriate design, as well as timber shopfronts which follow traditional proportions, design and detailing will be encouraged.



Fabric roller blinds are a traditional feature within the streetscene and will be encouraged as part of new shopfront proposals.

Wide pavements add to the area's sense of spaciousness, allowing a 'cafe culture' to flourish through the provision of outdoor seating areas. The use of high quality paving materials as part of future street enhancement works would complement and reinforce the Victorian character of the area. The rationalisation of street clutter, particularly poles and bollards relating to traffic and parking controls, would also benefit the streetscene and contribute towards an uncluttered and attractive public realm.

7. Background Documents

The Buildings of Clapham, The Clapham Society (2000)

Clapham Past, Gillian Clegg

The Old Photographs Series: Battersea and Clapham, Patrick Loobey

Old Ordnance Survey Maps - Clapham Common 1870

Old Ordnance Survey Maps - Clapham Common 1894

Planning (Listed Buildings & Conservation Areas) Act 1990

Planning Policy Guidance (PPG15): Planning & the Historic Environment, Department of the Environment & Department of National Heritage (September 1994)

Conservation Area Practice, English Heritage (October 1995)

Conservation Appraisals, English Heritage (March 1997)