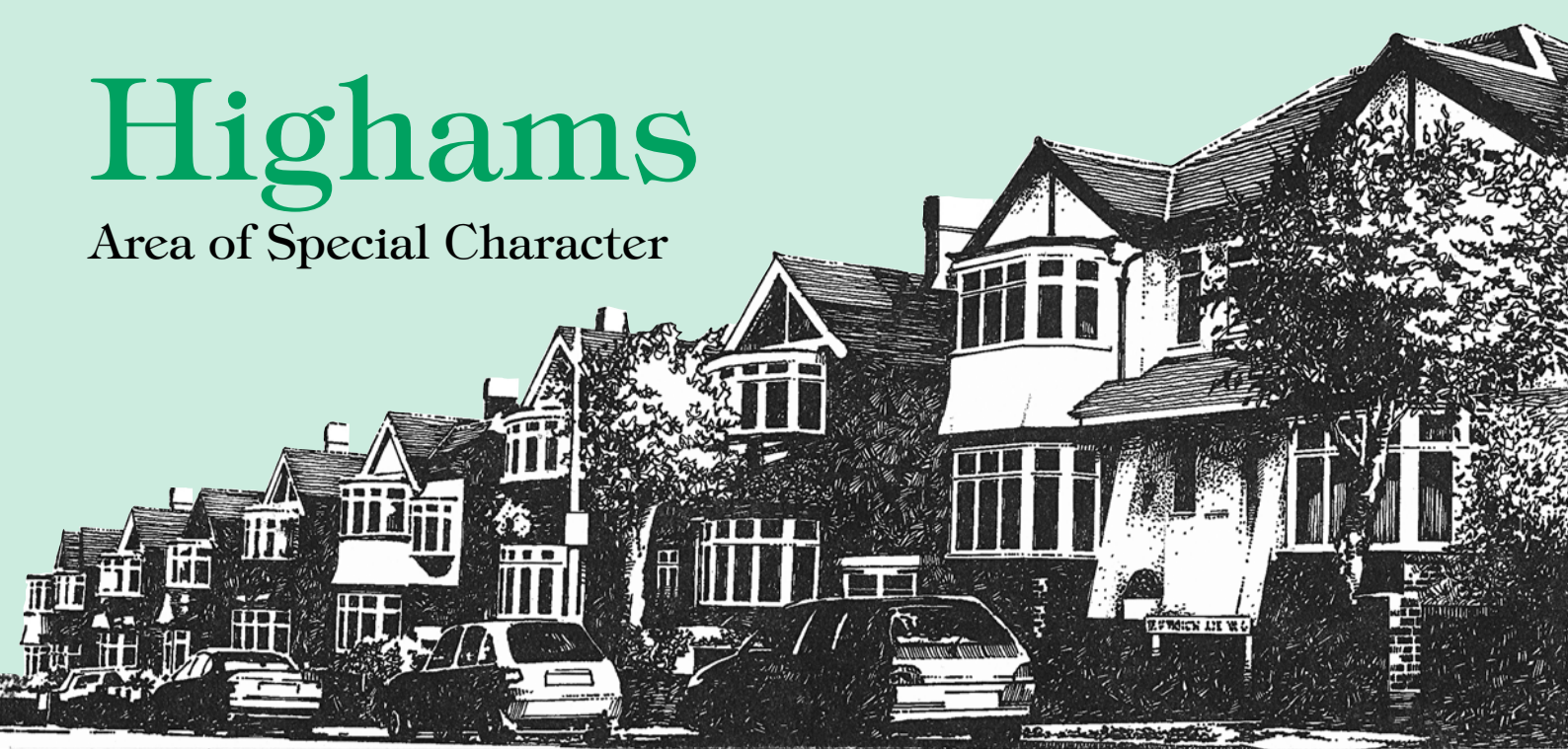


# Highams

## Area of Special Character



The Highams Estate was designated an Area of Special Character by the Council in 1988. Whilst such areas do not have the same status as Conservation Areas, they nevertheless have a recognised special character that merits protection wherever possible.

In this case the estate was largely developed as a whole by the Warner family, and has a low density suburban quality, with a recognisable and largely uniform architectural style and layout. Council policy in the area is set out in the Unitary Development Plan 2006: Whilst not a statutory designation, the Council recognises that this area has special character in terms of its cohesive design, similarity of plot sizes and scale of buildings. These factors will be taken into consideration in the application of Unitary Development Plan Policy BHE1 (Urban Design) to this area.

The Council will use their planning powers wherever possible to control or avoid harmful changes within the area, and will take into account any guidelines contained in this leaflet when considering planning applications.

The successful preservation of the special character of the area however depends in practice just as much on the support and

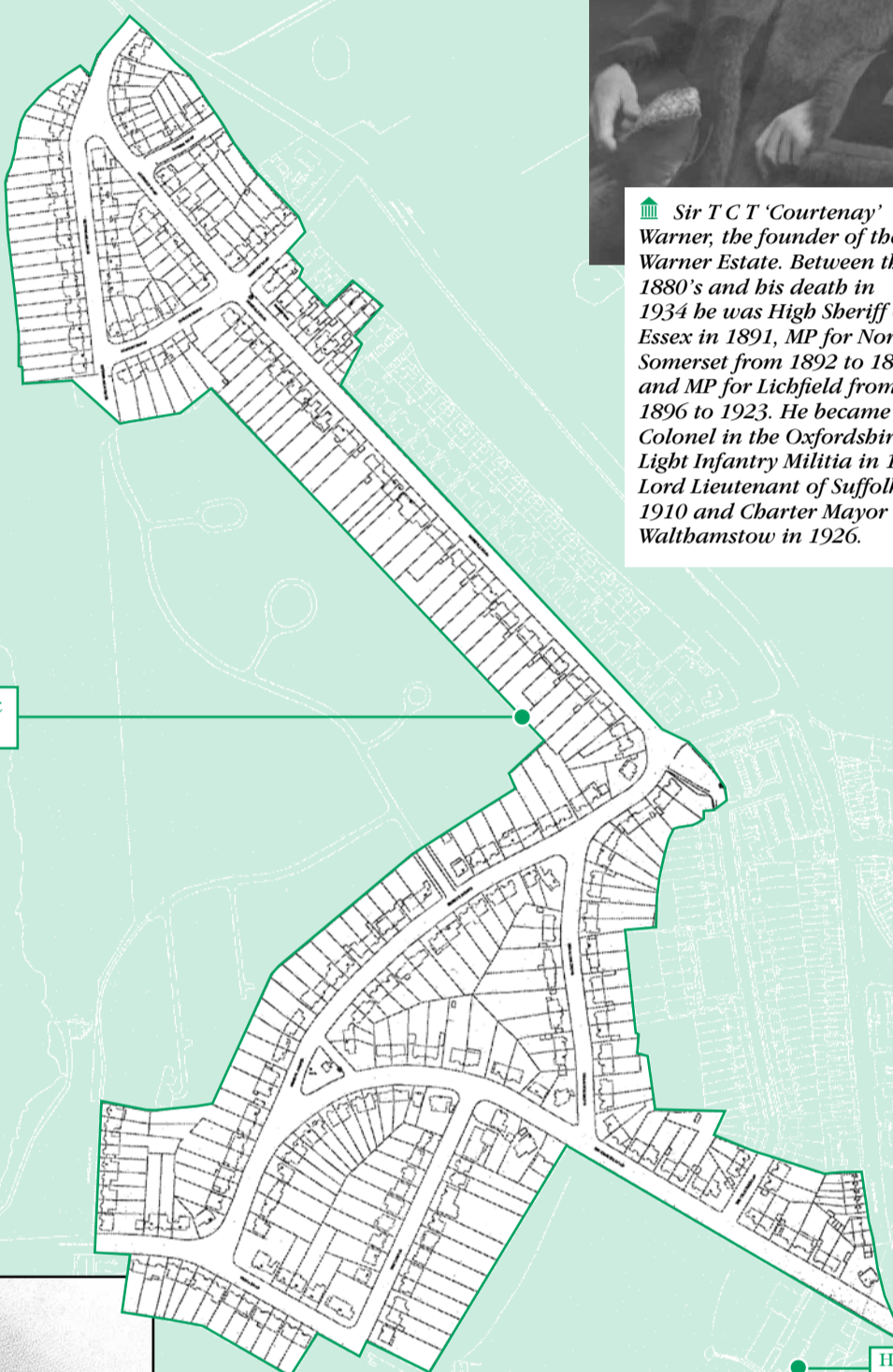
co-operation of local residents. Without that co-operation, the special character of the area could slowly but surely be lost through unsympathetic changes which can be carried out without the need for planning permission.

This leaflet has therefore been produced in association with the Highams Residents' Association for everyone who lives in the area, and for prospective new residents. It draws attention to the history and special character of the Highams Estate, and outlines some basic do's and don'ts necessary to protect that special character.



🏡 *Sir T C T 'Courtenay' Warner, the founder of the Warner Estate. Between the 1880's and his death in 1934 he was High Sheriff of Essex in 1891, MP for North Somerset from 1892 to 1895, and MP for Lichfield from 1896 to 1923. He became a Colonel in the Oxfordshire Light Infantry Militia in 1906, Lord Lieutenant of Suffolk in 1910 and Charter Mayor of Walthamstow in 1926.*

### Area Map

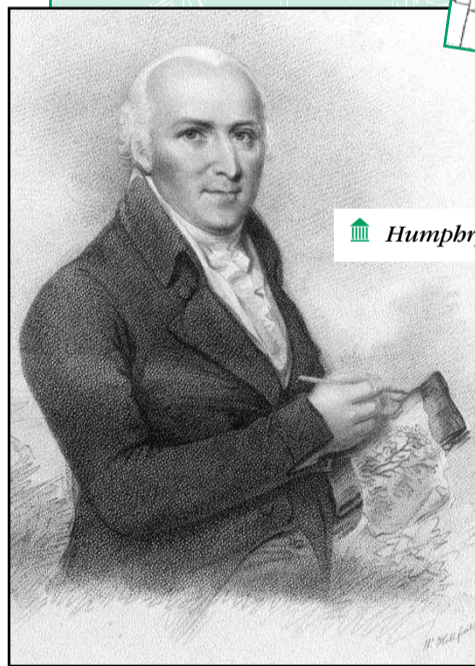


The Highams Estate  
Area of Special Character

The Lake

Higham Hall or  
'Highams'

🏡 *Humphry Repton 1752 - 1818*



## Historical Background

The Highams Estate was developed by Sir Thomas Courtenay Warner (commonly known as Courtenay Warner), the eldest surviving son of Edward Warner. In 1849 Edward Warner purchased the extensive Walthamstow Manor of Higham Bensted, some 132 hectares, which included Higham Hall and the landscape park laid out in the 1790's by Humphry Repton, the famous landscape designer. The estate extended from the High Road at Woodford Green to the river Ching, and included Repton's ornamental 'fish pond', now Highams Park Lake.

Courtenay Warner succeeded to his father's estate in 1875 and soon started developing his considerable Walthamstow landholdings, a process that continued up to the 1930's. There was some early residential development of the Highams Estate in 1897, with the erection of the Lodges in Montalt Road and the more modest terraced housing in Chingford Lane. In 1902 the family seat was moved to Brettenham Park in Suffolk, and the Manor house itself, used as a military hospital during the first World War, was first let then sold off to Essex County Council in 1922 to become the Woodford County High School for Girls.

The main housing development however did not occur until the 1930's, when plans were drawn up by the architects William and Edward Hunt for some 532 houses over 36 hectares of the estate. Various standard designs were offered with up to 5 bedrooms, identified as house types A-H, mainly semi-detached but with detached houses on most corners, some with independent garages 16ft x 10ft or 23ft x 10ft for an additional £75 or £100 respectively.

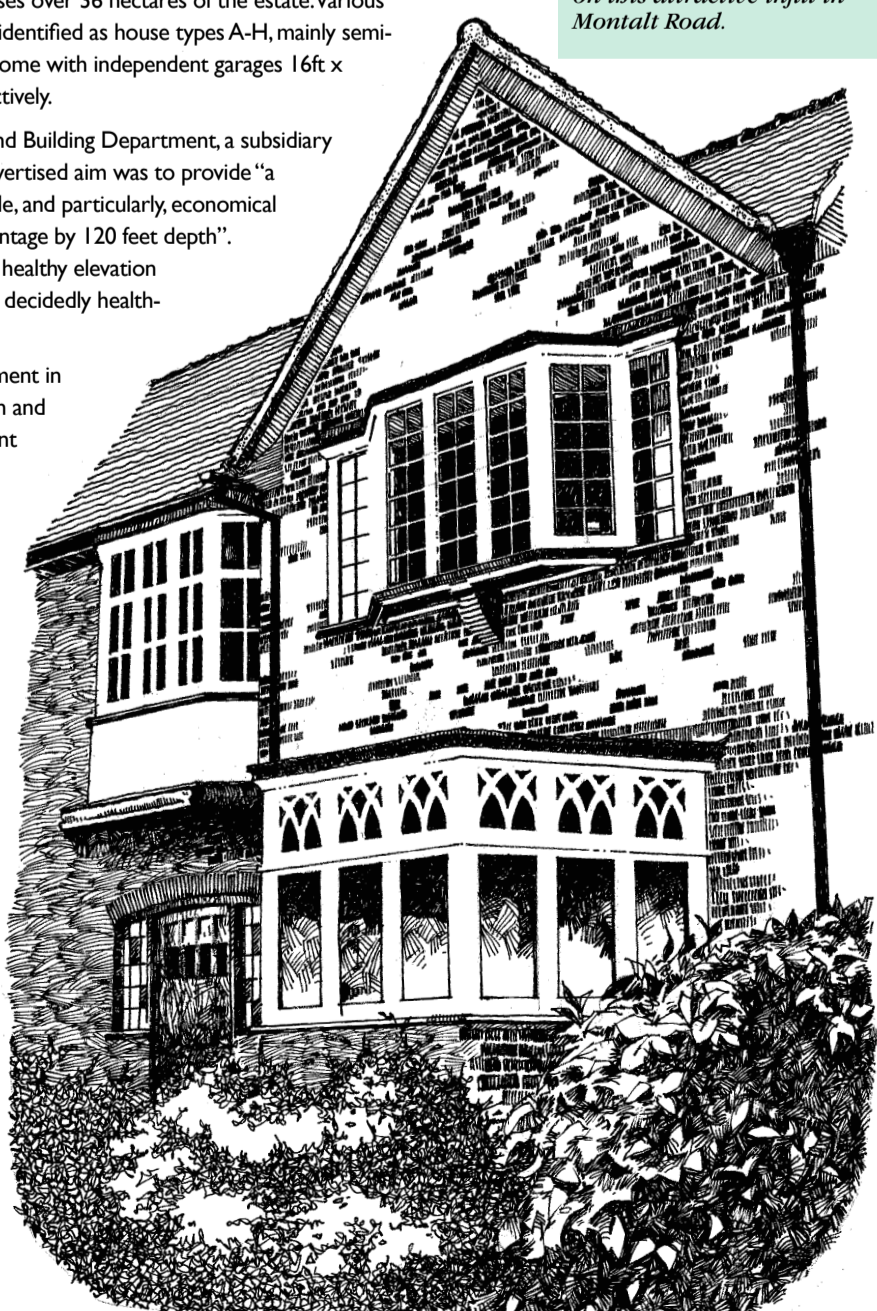
The construction work was undertaken by the Law Land Building Department, a subsidiary of Warner Estate and the Law Land Company. Their advertised aim was to provide "a home which shall be well planned, well built, comfortable, and particularly, economical both in running and in upkeep. Plots average 40 feet frontage by 120 feet depth".

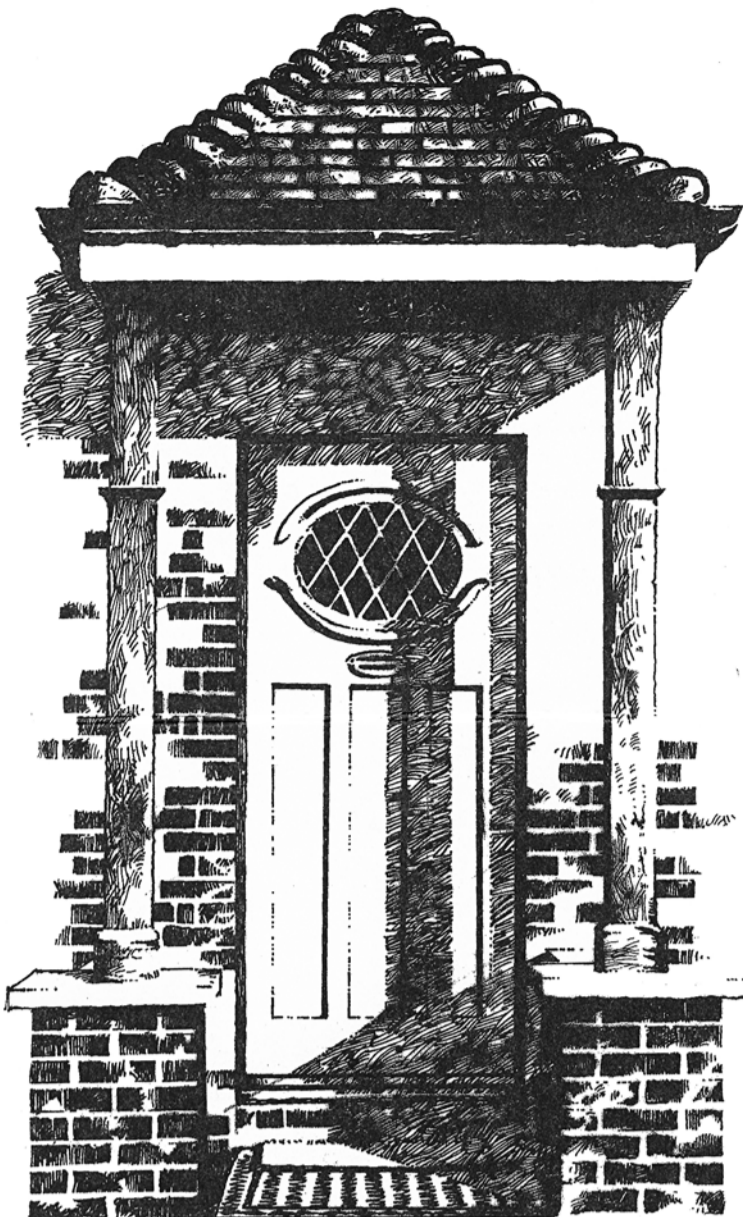
The publicity for the estate promised "an exceptionally healthy elevation - 230 feet above sea level, and a bracing atmosphere of decidedly health-giving quality".

The Highams Estate was not the only housing development in the area, being in competition with the nearby Knighton and Monkams estates, and the market was not as consistent as the developers would have wished. The lowest price for a property on the estate in the early 1930's was £1000, when it was still possible to purchase a house locally for £650. In recognition of this a range of 3 bedroomed houses was developed at a more modest price as a second phase, in the northwest corner of the estate. This part of the estate was known as the Montalt Estate.

The construction of middle-class, mainly semi-detached houses, continued up to World War II. By the time that Sir Edward Warner succeeded to the estate in 1934 only 28 acres of the original Repton Park remained, referred to as "a triangular slope rising from the lake towards the new Montalt Road and Henry's Avenue". The surviving part of the Sale wood together with the Lake itself had already been sold in 1891 to the Corporation of London, to form part of Epping Forest. In 1937 Sir Edward agreed to sell 20 acres of the remaining land to Walthamstow Council for £8000, and the remaining 8 acres he dedicated to the Council subject to the whole being used as public open space. This is the area now known as the Highams Park, a name now somewhat erroneously adopted for the wider adjoining residential area, originally called Hale End.

🏡 *Decorative oriel and bay windows featuring an eclectic mix of timber casements, leaded-lights and Gothic tracery are all evidence of the lingering influence of the Arts & Crafts movement on this attractive infill in Montalt Road.*





■ Porches were a popular feature of 1930's housing and they are common throughout the estate. The panelled front door, usually in Swedish redwood or Oak, featuring an oval leaded window shows the lingering influence of the Arts & Crafts movement.

## Design Guidance

The original houses on the Highams Estate have a distinctive architectural style and a common use of many components. The style and quality of building was in fact very traditional and a bit old fashioned for the period; external brickwork being 9" solid construction rather than the 11" cavity work which was becoming popular at the time. The traditional building materials were brick and clay tiles, with roughcast rendered walls at first floor level. All facing bricks and roof tiles were hand made, and most of the timber joinery was carried out on site. These common external features contribute significantly to the special character of the estate.

Insensitive and inappropriate alterations or additions, both large and small, can however gradually erode this special character and should be avoided. Inappropriate new doors, windows and porches, prominently-sited satellite dishes, insensitive colour schemes, overly large extensions, and the creation of excessive hard standing for cars are just a few of the more obvious changes which can adversely affect both the character and appearance of individual buildings, and the special character of the area as a whole.

Wherever possible original features should be retained as features of interest, and regular maintenance is obviously essential if deterioration is to be prevented. Where such features have been altered or removed over the years it is nearly always possible to restore them, which need not be prohibitively expensive, and which will add to the character and value of the property. Advice on specialist manufacturers and suppliers, sources of architectural salvage etc can always be obtained from the Council's Conservation Officer. In certain cases the Council may even be able to offer financial assistance towards the cost of external restoration works by means of Historic Buildings Grants. Whilst funds are limited, each application is looked at on its individual merits.

## Windows

The houses on the Highams Estate were designed exclusively with timber casement windows, and these always had a painted finish. Any replacement windows should try to match these originals in style, proportion, material and choice of colour. The now widespread use of brilliant white in fact has no historic basis, the original windows being finished in off-white or cream, often with a contrasting colour such as green, brown, or maroon.

Throughout the estate leaded lights and decorative stained glass was used, although sadly relatively few original examples survive today. Where these windows have survived however, in hallways, landings, or in fanlights, they are of particular interest and should be retained wherever possible. Stained glass and leaded lights windows are still manufactured and repaired locally today, so your valuable original window glass can always be restored to its original splendour rather than be replaced with often unconvincing reproductions.



■ Leaded lights and stained glass were popular decorative features in suburban housing of the 1920's and 30's, and the Highams estate was no exception. This delightful and original bulls-eye window in The Charter Road features a stylized plant motif in stained glass.

## Gardens & Curtilages

The front garden was an essential part of the suburban semi-detached life-style, and a well maintained, spacious front garden was a typical and desirable feature. Attractively planted gardens are characteristic of the Highams Estate, and their retention or reinstatement is a desirable and relatively inexpensive way of preserving that original quality of the area. The retention of mature trees is particularly important in this respect.

The front gardens are generally large enough to afford a degree of additional space for off-street parking. However a careful balance should be maintained between the convenience of off-street parking and the need to preserve the established greenery of the estate's front gardens. Hardstandings should therefore be kept to a minimum, both in number and size, and should be less in area than the space available for planting.

Sympathetic surfacing treatments that blend in with the existing range of materials within the estate should also be used, avoiding such unsightly finishes as bare concrete or gaudy multicoloured blockwork.

Existing front garden walls and fences should be retained with planting behind to reinforce the enclosure and privacy of the original designs. Timber fencing and gates was in fact the predominant original boundary treatment on the Highams Estate, so where a wall or fence has been removed, an appropriate original treatment can be reinstated relatively inexpensively.

■ A pair of Type F three-bed semi detached houses in Henry's Avenue. Pebble dashing, timber casement windows and mock timberwork are all typical features of the 1930's suburban ideal characterized by houses on the Highams estate.

## Front Doors

As the first thing any visitor would see, front doors have traditionally been accorded considerable status, and those within the Highams Estate were no exception. Where original doors have survived they are of particular interest, and their preservation contributes greatly to the character and originality of the property. Many properties originally had oak framed and panelled front doors installed, and properly maintained these valuable features last for many years. They should never be painted however, simply waxed, or treated with a proprietary preservative.

The original softwood doors by contrast were always intended to be painted, and regular maintenance is even more important. Where they have decayed, repair and restoration is always the preferred option, and it is rare if such a door is beyond economic salvage.

If a door does need replacement however, avoid ready-made substitutes whether of UPVC or tropical hardwoods, the design of which usually bears little if any resemblance to any known original. Companies still exist that can reproduce doors to the original designs, or that can rebuild the original. Salvage yards also keep a stock of re-useable doors so there is really no need to resort to poor imitations.

## Roofs

All original roofs within the Highams Estate are pitched and tiled. Clay tiles had become almost universal for housing developments by the 1920's, with red and brown the most commonplace colours, replacing the grey slates of the Victorian era. With very few exceptions 'plain' clay tiles are found on all buildings in the area. These tiles are still available, both new and second hand, and should always be used if your roof requires repair or replacement, or wherever extensions are built. Slates (natural or artificial), concrete tiles, tiles of different colour, size or profile should all be avoided as they would be out of character, and detract from the attractive uniformity of the roofscape.

Chimney stacks are also characteristic features of the roofscape of the Highams Estate, and should be retained in good condition even if no longer in use.

## Alterations & Additions

Alterations and additions to properties within the estate impact not only on the individual building concerned but also on the overall streetscene. Over the years unfortunately some infill and many misguided alterations have taken place, which if continued unchecked could destroy the special character of the area.

It is important therefore to ensure that any external changes are designed with care to harmonise with their surroundings and to preserve the special character of the area. Ideally when completed any such work should blend in with neighbouring properties and appear as if it could have been part of the original building design.

Matching materials and finishes are a fundamental prerequisite when considering any changes, but of equal importance are the design conventions and characteristics of the original buildings, such as the size and proportion of window openings, the depth of reveals, the pitch of roofs etc.

Additions should always be of modest size, and architecturally subordinate to the original form of the properties. Roof extensions and dormer windows are particularly difficult features to integrate sympathetically with the distinctive roofscape of the estate, and overly large dormers should be avoided as they can be particularly harmful visually.

The Council's supplementary Planning Guidance Note 4 gives general advice in these matters.



*This leaflet can only serve as a general guide to those elements which make up the special character of the Highams Estate and what is required to preserve and enhance it.*

*We hope that you find it both interesting and useful, and support the basic principles outlined to ensure the successful preservation of this special area.*

*Numerous specialist books, leaflets and magazines are also available from newsagents, bookshops, and specialist bodies such as the Georgian Group, the Victorian Society, and the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings.*

*These will provide further interesting and useful reading on the care and repair of older buildings.*

More detailed information on local history is available at:

**Vestry House Museum, Vestry Road, Walthamstow Village, E17 9NH Tel: 020 8509 1917**

Further information and assistance on any of the issues raised in this leaflet can be obtained by contacting:

**The Conservation Officer, Environment and Regeneration,  
Sycamore House, Town Hall Complex, Forest Road,  
Walthamstow, London E17 4JF.  
Tel: 020 8496 6737**



**Waltham Forest**

A large print version of this leaflet is available if required