

New Earswick Conservation Area

The Conservation Area

The village of New Earswick on the outskirts of York is an important early example of a model 'garden village' of the 20th century. It was originally designed by Raymond Unwin and Barry Parker for Joseph and Sebohm Rowntree as a new settlement for both workers and managers at their nearby cocoa works on Haxby Road and for others looking for good-quality affordable housing away from the city. Experimental from the outset, Joseph Rowntree's purpose at New Earswick was to demonstrate that new, well-designed, 'sanitary' housing, thoughtfully and attractively laid out in spacious surroundings, could be provided at rents affordable by the average working man while still providing a modest return on the invested capital. The house types and street layouts Parker and Unwin introduced and developed at New Earswick were transposed to the slightly later garden city and suburb of Letchworth and Hampstead respectively. In addition to housing and open spaces, a series of civic, institutional and amenity buildings were also planned, including places of worship, leisure facilities, shops and schools. The most striking of these was the village Institute, designed by Parker which was named the 'Folk Hall' and which became the social and cultural focal point of the village in spite of its detached position to the south of the school and shops which were clustered around the village green.



New Earswick Conservation area map. © City of York Council

The conservation area is characterized by attractive streetscapes and pleasant private gardens and public spaces. The authentic building designs of Parker and Unwin offer a whole village with consistency and style, yet which is natural, varied and uncontrived. There is consistent use of materials and landscaping contributing to the “garden village” character.

How has the Conservation Area Changed over Time?

The village was subsequently developed in phases during much of the 20th century, initially to designs by Parker and Unwin in partnership but after the First World War by Parker alone. It was during this phase that Parker pioneered the beneficial use of the cul-de-sac in Britain. The south-west quadrant of the village, to the immediate west of the Folk Hall, was not developed until after the Second World War and was done so under the supervision of Louis de Soissons, architect of Welwyn Garden City, who did so to a modified plan he inherited from Parker, discontinuing the use of cul-de-sac and replacing planned playing fields at the centre of the quadrant, beside the Folk Hall, with an open area of grass and planted trees for general enjoyment.



Images of New Earswick Poplar Grove 100 years apart. © Neil Redfern

New Earswick for All Ages: a scheme to deliver “good growth”?

The Joseph Rowntrees Housing Trust has been concerned that the population of New Earswick is ageing with more residents over the age of 50 than under 50. There is a high rate of under occupancy across the housing stock and an increasing need for support for elderly individuals living within the community. This is having an impact on the ability of young families to move into New Earswick, especially as the elderly are predominantly living in family houses. The Trust has calculated that there are more than 300 under occupied houses within New Earswick.

So the Trust developed a scheme, in the heart of the Conservation Area, to replace the existing care home with new extra care facilities. The 46 nursing beds, 49 one bed and 80 two bed extra care units sit across four buildings specifically designed to be dementia

friendly. The development will also include a hairdressers, laundry, guest rooms, staff accommodation and managers offices. In addition a comprehensive landscaping proposal has been developed along with the refurbishment of the Folk Hall community centre and the relocation of the village library, MUGA play area and tennis courts.

Has Conservation Area designation achieved its intended purpose of sustainable, long term growth – “good growth”?

Through ‘New Earswick for All Ages’ the Trust is planning for integration of the residents of the care scheme in the community to ensure they benefit from social interaction.

The proposals for more than three storey buildings on green space at the heart of the conservation area appeared challenging at first. Historic England carried out detailed research on the original intention for the land and considered the current use which helped to inform discussions about how this space could be developed. Through detailed discussions about the justification for the development and how it might be adapted to better reflect the character of the conservation area a new proposal emerged.

The proposal also incorporates enhanced area of public realm to be attractive to the wider community through improved access into the backland space. The architecture is considered to reflect local materials and the local vernacular, but in a modern manner. This is in order to help integrate the proposal into the conservation area. Work is planned to start on site in 2017.



Proposed ariel view of site looking from the south.

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