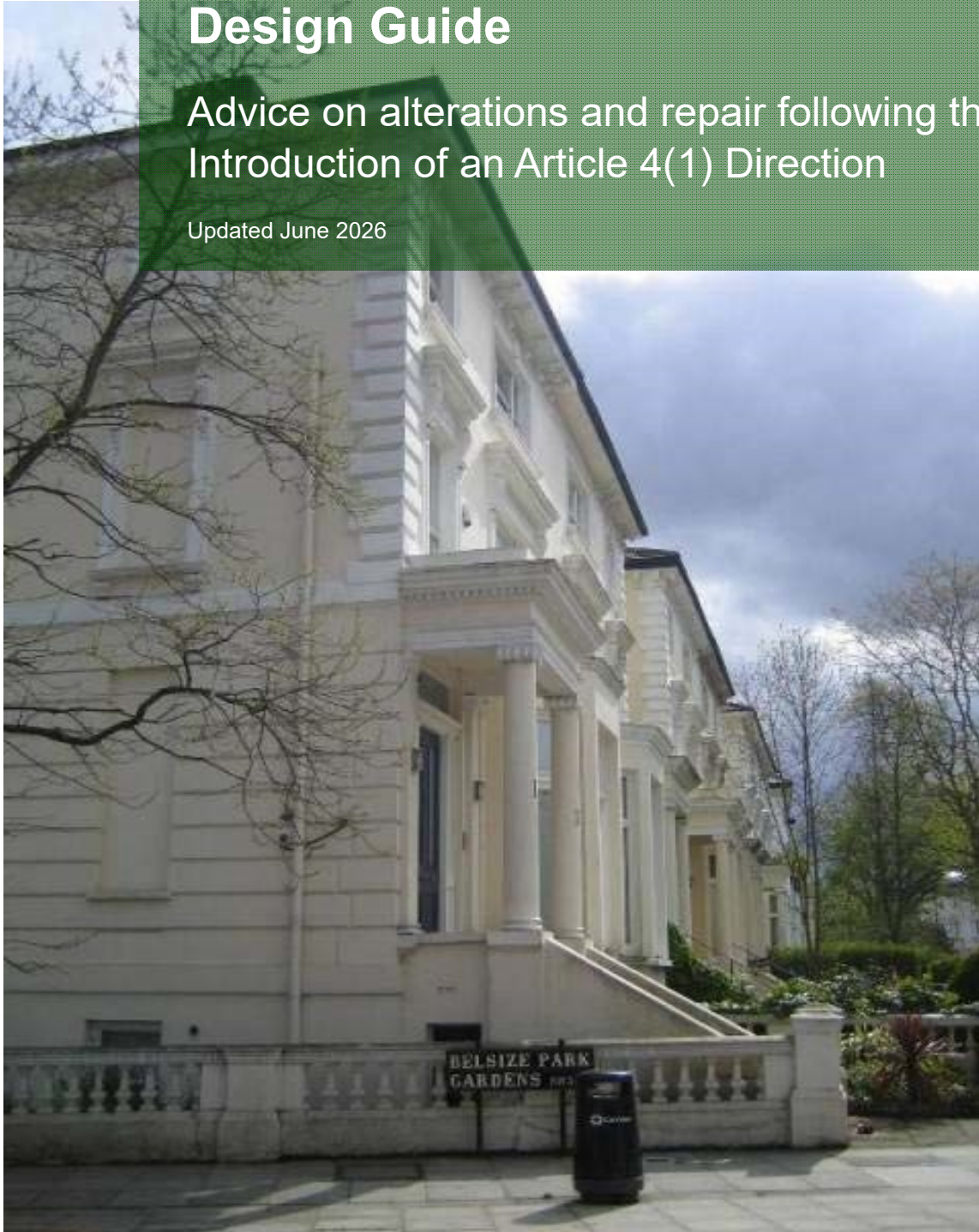


# Belsize Conservation Area Design Guide

Advice on alterations and repair following the  
Introduction of an Article 4(1) Direction

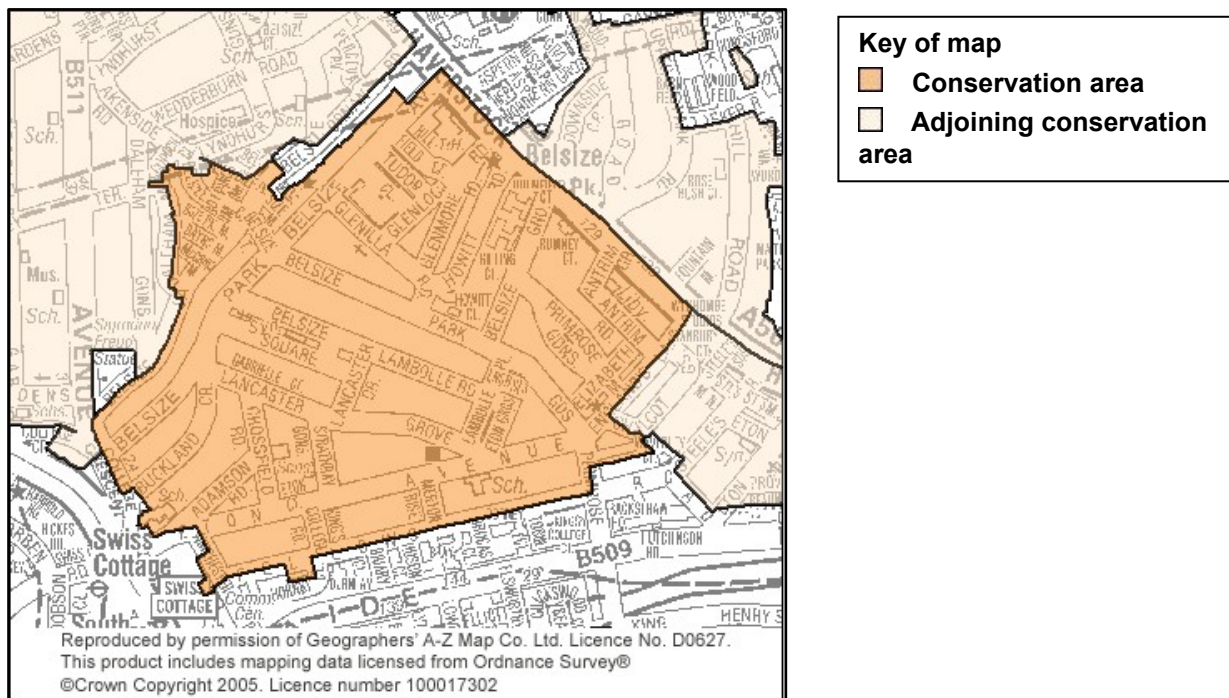
Updated June 2026



## Introduction

An Article 4(1) Direction was introduced on 1<sup>st</sup> September 2010 on most of the properties in the Belsize Conservation Area (see Map 1). This means that additional planning controls have been introduced and some types of work which previously did not need planning permission now do.

The Article 4(1) Direction applies only to the fronts of houses, and the sides of houses which face the street, and includes single family dwelling houses converted to flats. It seeks to prevent harmful works taking place and to ensure that Belsize Conservation Area keeps its historic character and appearance and remains an attractive and desirable place to live into the future.



This Guide explains why the Belsize Conservation Area is special and gives advice on what works are suitable and what will require planning permission. It encourages owners and occupiers to undertake sensitive repairs and to reinstate historic features where they have been lost. Even minor changes to the appearance of houses can destroy the character and appearance of the area, and potentially lower the value of the house, so the basic principle underlying all this advice is to:

- Keep your historic property in good repair
- Retain and repair historic features rather than replace them.

This guide is intended to help householders, architects, developers, surveyors and others concerned with giving advice to or working on properties within the area covered by the Article 4(1) Direction.

## THERE IS CURRENTLY NO FEE FOR APPLICATIONS MADE AS A RESULT OF THE ARTICLE 4(1) DIRECTION.

### **You should show this Guide to your builder.**

Alterations which are not carried out in accordance with this Guide may be subject to enforcement action by the Council.

### **Why is Belsize special?**

The Belsize Conservation Area was designated in March 1973 and is an important example of mid 19<sup>th</sup> century speculative development on a grand scale. Large Italianate villas 'in the fashionable Kensington style' are planned in pairs of three or four storeys plus basement with ornate Classical details including grand porticos and ornate balustraded boundary walls and railings. Surrounding streets are equally attractive and very typically late 19<sup>th</sup> century in red brick with Arts & Crafts detailing including intricate and low sweeping roofs, render details and multi-paned windows. Mature trees, green front and rear gardens and glimpses of gardens through the gaps between houses are important in providing a setting for the built form.

### **Additional planning controls that have been introduced**

The following works to the fronts of houses and flats, and the sides of houses and flats which face the road now need planning permission:

1. Any works to enlarge, alter or improve your property including replacing part or all of any window or door, and any works which alter the appearance of decorative features, including their removal.
2. Alterations to porches or porticos – this includes enclosing the porch or altering the way it looks.
3. Painting the front of a house or flat if it will differ from the traditional surface treatment. You do not need to apply for planning permission to repaint your property if it is already painted or covered in 'stucco' or a traditional render finish, provided it remains the same colour.
4. Additions or alterations to the roof or chimney, including the installation of a roof-light.
5. Installation of a flue or soil and vent pipe at the front of a house or flat.
6. Erecting, altering or demolishing a gate, wall or fence at the front of a house or flat.
7. Making, enlarging, improving or altering a hard surface at the front of a house or flat.

The following sections give more information on each of these categories.

## **Like-for-like replacement and repair does not need planning permission.**

### **What does 'like-for-like' mean?**

If existing features are beyond cost-effective repair you may wish to replace them with like-for-like replacements. Like-for-like replacement and repair does not need planning permission.

Like-for-like approaches are those that:

- match in materials, colour and surface finish (e.g. bricks and mortar)
- have the same dimensions and
- have the same pattern and detailed profile
- replicate original details such as window catches, handles, pulleys, etc (these can sometimes be transferred from the old feature to the new).

For example if you are rebuilding sections of boundary wall to match the existing, using matching bricks, matching mortar and matching the profile of the mortar pointing, this will not need planning permission.

Replacement windows should match the glazing bar / frame / window cill dimensions and way of openings - for example vertically sliding sash windows or side- or top-hinged casements can be replaced like-for-like without planning permission.

## **1. Enlargement, alteration or improvement**

### **1.1 Windows and doors**

Historic windows and doors can last indefinitely if they are properly maintained by the homeowner with the occasional assistance of a joiner. It is also cheaper in the long run to repair timber features than to replace them because the replacements will have a shorter life span than well maintained historic joinery. Untraditional replacement windows and doors are the biggest threat to property values in conservation areas (source: English Heritage).

*Replacing original windows on the front elevation (or side elevations where these front the street) now needs planning permission.*



## 1.2 Reducing heat loss through historic windows and doors

Simple measures such as heavy curtains and blinds will retain heat, while mending cracks and eliminating gaps in your windows and doors and fitting draught-strips and brushes (available from any DIY store), can reduce air loss by as much as 86%. Secondary glazing used with well-fitting shutters can cut heat loss by 60%. When fitting secondary glazing you should ensure that the meeting rails on the secondary glazing units match the position of the glazing bar / meeting rail of the existing windows. *None of these works need planning permission.* Other measures to reduce energy use such as roof insulation, and turning the central heating down by one degree, will also help make savings, as will the installation of a high-efficiency condensing boiler with individual thermostatic controls on each radiator.

## 1.3 Double Glazing

The replacement of historic Victorian or Edwardian windows with untraditional modern alternatives is likely to detract from the appearance and reduce the value of your home so you should think carefully before replacing your original windows. Some traditional glazing patterns (see left) are impossible to replicate with thicker double glazed units, so repair, rather than replacement, should always be the first choice. Large pane sash or casement windows may be possible to double glaze, either in the existing frame, or in new joinery, in a way that replicates the appearance of the original 'like for like'. *This now needs planning permission.* There are a number of specialist companies who can undertake this work (see: Key Contacts).

## 1.4 Decorative glass

Decorative glass has an important ornamental role in addition to letting light into the building; it may be stained, etched held together with lead 'comes' or a combination of all three. It should always be retained and repaired and specialist advice should be sought (see: Key Contacts).

*Its removal and replacement on front elevations (or side elevations where these front the street) needs planning permission and will be resisted.*



### **Like-for-like replacement**

If your existing features such as windows and doors are beyond cost-effective repair you may wish to replace them with like-for-like replacements.

*You do not need planning permission to do this if the new window or door:*

- *matches in materials*
- *has the same pattern and profile of glazing bars / frame*
- *has the same glazing bar / frame / window cill dimensions and opens in the same way (for example vertically sliding sash windows or side- or top-hinged casements).*
- *any details should be replicated and original catches, handles, pulleys, etc, should where possible be transferred to the new window or door.*

## **1.5 Decorative Details**

Decorative Details often occur around the windows and doors of stucco-fronted properties (see right) and may include columns and mouldings to porticos, projecting console brackets (nestling under the eaves) and quoins (the alternating square decoration on the corners of walls). The later brick-fronted properties have equally fine decoration, including tile-hanging, incised render panels and brick and terracotta features. Decorative details are very important to the character of Belsize and should be preserved and reinstated where lost or damaged.

*Their removal now needs planning permission and will be resisted.*



## **2. Alterations to porches and porticos**

The distinctive porches and porticos in Belsize are an architectural feature integral to the Classically-inspired design of the stuccofronted houses. They emphasize the area's high-status and are often supported on Ionic columns, with a deep entablature or horizontal decoration above. Finely detailed brick, timber and ironwork porches, often with tiled roofs, are also used to great effect in the conservation area.

*Adding a new porch or altering existing porches or porticos on front elevations (or side elevations where this fronts the street) now needs planning permission and will be resisted.*

### **3. Painting the front of a house**

#### **3.1 Brick-fronted Properties**

Belsize has many attractive properties fronted in red or yellow London stock brick, which give a warm and cheerful character to individual streets when combined with traditional details such as multipaned windows and prominent roofs. Unpainted brickwork should never be painted over (even in a matching colour).

*The painting over of unpainted brickwork on the front elevation (or side elevation where this fronts the street) now needs planning permission and will be resisted.*

Where unpainted brickwork is combined with small sections of render on the frontage, the render should always be repaired in matching materials.

#### **3.2 Stucco-fronted Properties**

The earliest houses in Belsize are finished in stucco - a type of render used to give brickwork the appearance of dressed stonework. Stucco was in vogue in the 1850s, and gave Belsize Park a grand appearance to compete with respectable West London suburbs like Belgravia and Kensington.

Stucco needs regular painting with traditional permeable paints such as Farrow & Ball or Naturepaint, unless it has never been painted in the past, in which case it should be left unpainted. Paint colours should match the other buildings in the block and should ideally conform to a traditional palette.

*Repainting stucco in a matching colour does not need planning permission.*



### **4. Additions and alterations to the roof**

Unaltered roofs and chimneys play an important role in defining the character of Belsize. While the earliest stucco-fronted villas are distinguished by very shallow-pitched slated roofs with projecting eaves, the later brickfronted houses have more prominent and

decorative roofs – often low and sweeping, covering projecting bay windows and porches or creating turrets. These are covered in clay roof tiles as opposed to slate. It is important to preserve these roof forms, materials and details as they contribute significantly to the character and quality of the area.

*The following works now need planning permission on a roof slope or a side roof slope where it faces the street:*

- *re-roofing in a material which differs from the original or existing material*
- *the removal without re-instatement of any decorative details such as decorative ridge or hip tiles*
- *the installation of a rooflight (even if it is a flush “conservation” style roof light)*
- *the alteration, demolition or partial demolition of a chimney.*



## **5. Installation of a flue, chimney or soil and vent pipe**

Services such as flues (including for biomass boilers), soil and vent pipes and new chimneys should always be located on the side or rear elevation, so that the smart, public face of the building remains untouched. *These now need planning permission on the front elevation (and sides where these front the street) and will be resisted.*

## **6. Walls, Railings, Fences, and Hedges**

Unbroken runs of boundary walls to green front gardens are one of the most noticeable aspects of Belsize’s historic character. The traditional treatment of the boundary varies according to the date and style of house. In some areas, stucco walls, decorated as balustrades with traditional darkpainted iron railings predominate, elsewhere there are imposing elaborate brick and stone gate piers and low walls of lava brick, which create a more rustic character. Boundary walls and hedges help give the area its serene and respectable charm, and by restoring them where they are lost residents can restore the attractive qualities of the streetscape for residents and passers by.

*The demolition of boundary walls and railings facing the street now needs planning permission and will be resisted.*

Where boundary walls or railings have been lost or replaced in non-original materials or to a different design we encourage residents to restore them to their original form. Weather-struck or bucket-handle pointing is unlikely to be original and is rarely appropriate. Cement mortar for pointing is also likely to be a later addition and can harm historic brickwork so we would encourage a lime based mortar for pointing. Hedges should be retained and replanted where they are a feature of the streetscape.



## 7. Front Gardens

Green front gardens are vital not only in preserving the attractive, tranquil qualities of the conservation area, but also in providing wildlife corridors, enhancing biodiversity and reducing flood risk. Planting more soft landscaping – grass, flowers, shrubs and small trees – in front gardens, and reinstating it where lost, helps to ensure that Belsize remains a healthy, natural and beautiful place to live.

*The creation of a hard surface at the front of a house, or the side of a house which faces the road, now needs planning permission and will be resisted.*

Vegetation in front gardens should be retained and replanted where lost. Original tiled paths and landscaping materials such as York stone should be retained and repaired.



## Frequently Asked Questions

### **What about minor alterations?**

Minor changes which do not detract from the character or appearance of your building such as painting your doors or windows and other periodic repairs such as the installation of a single light to the porch, or a burglar alarm box do not need planning permission.

### **Unsure if you need planning permission?**

This guide only covers those works which now need planning permission due to the introduction of Article 4(1). To check for other works which might require planning permission such as rear extensions, lightwells, dormer windows and garden sheds please check the Camden website: <https://www.camden.gov.uk/planning-building-development>

If your property is a listed building you may require listed building consent for undertaking certain works to your property. More information can be found on the Camden website: [www.camden.gov.uk/conservation-and-listed-buildings](http://www.camden.gov.uk/conservation-and-listed-buildings)

### **Are there any fees for applications made as a result of Article 4(1) Directions?**

No. There is no additional fee for an application made as a result of the Article 4(1) Directions.

### **Are listed buildings covered by these measures?**

There are nearly 500 listed buildings in Hampstead Conservation Area. Listed building consent is required for any works which affects the historic or architectural character of a listed building. Regular maintenance and 'like for like' repairs which match the original work in every way do not need listed building consent. But if repairs use materials or methods that differ from the original then consent will be needed.

Alterations that involve the removal of original parts of the building, that change windows or external brickwork, or that change internal layouts of buildings will require listed building consent.

Internal decoration and the replacement of kitchen and bathroom fittings would not normally require consent, but if new fixings to the building are needed, or new service pipes, flues or vents are being added then consent will be needed.

In addition, under the Town & Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 1995 (as amended), the alteration, enlargement or demolition of a boundary wall is not permitted development on a listed building, and planning permission is required for this work.

## Key Contacts and Further Reading

### Planning:

Belsize Conservation Area Advisory Committee

<https://belsizeconservation.org.uk/>

London Borough of Camden Planning and Conservation advice

[www.camden.gov.uk/conservation-and-listed-buildings](http://www.camden.gov.uk/conservation-and-listed-buildings)

Planning Portal

<https://www.planningportal.co.uk/>

<https://www.gov.uk/planning-permission-england-wales>

### Specialist Conservation Advice:

A list of contractors with experience in historic building conservation and based both in and outside Camden are available from the Conservation and Urban Design team. In addition, the RIBA holds a list of accredited architects with experience of working with historic buildings.

Alternatively you can search for companies and read articles about repair in:

- Directory of Building Conservation  
<http://www.buildingconservation.com>
- Green & Low Carbon Construction Directory  
<http://www.climatechangeandyourhome.org.uk>
- Institute of Historic Building Conservation  
<https://ihbconline.co.uk/toolbox/>
- Historic England  
<https://historicengland.org.uk/>
- Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings  
<http://www.spab.org.uk>, Tel: 020 7377 1644
- Heritage Gateway  
<http://www.heritagegateway.org.uk/>
- The Victorian Society  
[www.victorian-society.org.uk](http://www.victorian-society.org.uk)

## Publications

Belsize Conservation Area Committee (2000) *Belsize 2000* (available from Belsize Conservation Area Committee)

London Borough of Camden, [\*Belsize Conservation Area Statement\*](#)

Rock, Ian: *The Victorian House Manual*, RICS Books

Wedd, Kitt: *The Victorian Society Book of the Victorian House*, published by The Victorian Society

