



## Swiss Cottage Conservation Area Design Guide

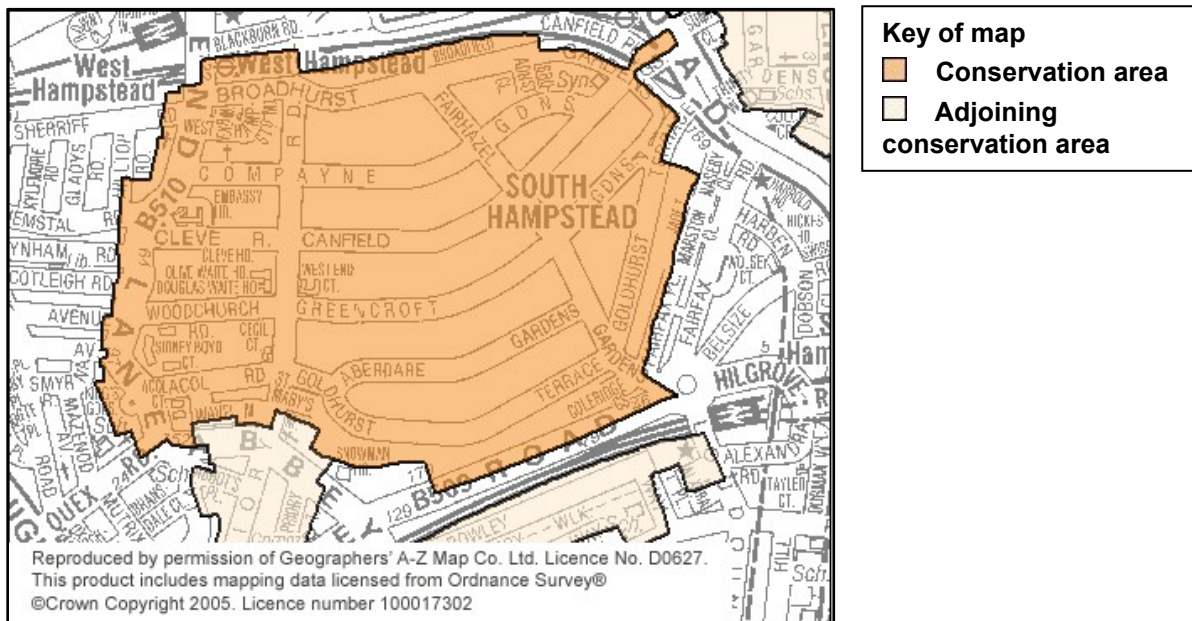
Advice on alterations and repair following the  
introduction of an Article 4(1) Direction

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 properties, and the sides of properties 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 Swiss Cottage 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 properties can destroy the character and appearance of the area, and potentially lower the value of the property, 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.

**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 Swiss Cottage special?**

Swiss Cottage Conservation Area is an important example of mid 19<sup>th</sup> century speculative development on a grand scale, in red brick with finely detailed Arts and Crafts inspired decoration. Properties often have grand entrance porches and are decorated with terracotta panels and ornate brickwork, patterned timber doors and windows, colourful tiled footpaths and delicate ironwork. Turrets, cupolas and the recession and projection of front gables make the roofscape very distinctive. One of the most prominent features of the area is lush green front gardens, with ornate garden walls topped with hedges or railings which give the area an attractive and serene quality. The gaps between properties and views into mature gardens contribute significantly to the area's particular character. Swiss Cottage was designated a Conservation Area in November 1988.



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

The following works to the fronts of properties, and the sides of properties 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 – this includes enclosing the porch or altering the way it looks.
3. Painting the front of a property 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 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 property.

6. Erecting, altering or demolishing a gate, wall or fence at the front of a property
7. Making, enlarging, improving or altering a hard surface at the front of a property

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 such as windows, doors and boundary walls 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 door knobs, window catches, handles, pulleys, etc (these can sometimes be transferred from the old feature to the new). This replication of original details also applies to walls, roofs and boundary walls.

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 exactly match the size and type of glazing bar, frame, window cill dimensions and method of opening (e.g. vertically sliding sash windows or side-hinged or top-hinged casements). If all details match like-for-like the window may be replaced 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 wellfitting 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 location 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 above and right) are difficult to replicate with thicker double glazed units, so repair, rather than replacement, should always be the first choice. Large paned 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 in doors and windows has an important ornamental role in addition to letting light into the building; it may be stained, etched and 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*

### **1.5 Decorative Details**

Decorative details often occur around the windows and doors of historic properties and became more flamboyant in the latter half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. They may include columns, mouldings and rubbed brickwork and terracotta decoration particularly to porches, tile-hanging, render panels and other ornate brick and terracotta features applied to walls, around windows, and to roofs. Decorative details are very important to the character of Swiss Cottage and should be preserved and reinstated where lost or damaged.

*The whole or partial removal of decorative details now needs planning permission and will be resisted.*

### **2. Alterations to porches**

Porches are an often overlooked but integral feature in the architectural design and historic appeal of your property. Finely detailed brick, timber and ironwork porches or porch hoods, sometimes with tiled roofs, are also used to great effect in the conservation area and add significantly to the character of individual buildings. Where decorative details or even whole original porches have been lost we encourage their reinstatement and restoration.

*Adding a new porch or altering existing porches 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 property**

Swiss Cottage has many attractive properties fronted in red, yellow 'London Stock' or occasionally gault (pale 'white') brick, which give a warm and cheerful character to individual streets when combined with traditional details such as multi-paned 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 (as in the example of the porch on the page above, with a stripy brickwork and render detail to the arch) the render should always be repaired in matching materials.

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

Unaltered roofs and chimneys play a very important role in defining the character of Swiss Cottage.

Some brick-fronted properties have very prominent and decorative roofs, sometimes covering projecting bay windows and porches or even designed as turrets and cupolas – attractively punctuating the end of the street.

Roofs were often originally 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:*

- *reroofing 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.

*New flues, chimneys or soil vent pipes now need planning permission on the front elevation (and sides where these front the street) and will be resisted.*

Minor alterations such as the replacement of a cowl with one the same size or smaller does not need planning permission.

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

Unbroken runs of boundary walls to green front gardens are one of the most noticeable aspects of Swiss Cottage's historic character. The traditional treatment of the boundary varies according to the date and style of property, but most properties have low brick walls, in red, blue 'engineering', yellow 'London Stock' or blackened 'lava' brick with gate piers and occasional details picked out in stone or render. The example on the left has an attractive pronounced 'batter' or deliberate lean, and is formed of panels of red and blue engineering brick, with stout vertical piers.

Sometimes the simple, low boundary walls would originally have had dark painted railings to cap them, so where historic railings survive they are very rare indeed and should never be removed but sensitively repaired and reinstated where lost (see Key Contacts for repair specialists). Boundary walls, hedges and railings all help give the area its serene and respectable charm, and by restoring them where they have been removed 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.*



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. Unfortunately the over-zealous pointing on the left draws more attention to the mortar than the lava brick itself. This type of non-matching work is no longer permitted development, and repairs should be undertaken like-for-like, to match the *original* pattern or the mortar and brick. 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.

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. Hedges should be retained and replanted where they are a feature of the streetscape.

*The like-for-like maintenance and repair of all existing boundaries does not require planning permission.*

## **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 Swiss Cottage remains a healthy, natural and beautiful place to live.

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

Vegetation in front gardens should be retained and replanted where lost. Original geometric 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:

Combined Residents of South Hampstead (CRASH)

<https://www.southhampstead.info/>

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:

London Borough of Camden, *Swiss Cottage Conservation Area Statement*  
(available from Camden Planning reception)

Hunt, Roger & Suhr, Marianne: *The Old House Handbook - A Practical Guide to Care and Repair* published in association with The Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings (Frances Lincoln Limited 2008)

Powys, A.R: *Repair of Ancient Building*; Third Edition - A reprint of the 1920s classic read for any owner of an old (and non-necessarily ancient) house.

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

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

