

# RAYNERS LANE

Draft

CONSERVATION AREA APPRAISAL

AREA 28



**R**ayner's Lane is an area of classic Metroland that developed around a Tube Station. The conservation area is of interest as it forms the centrepiece of a large 1930s residential development with fine groups of buildings in the Modernist and Art Deco style surrounded by a distinctive group of shops and flats in the house style of the developer.

Rayners Lane Conservation Area was designated in October 2002 and this is the first area appraisal and management strategy for the conservation area. It is situated in the centre of the Rayners Lane suburb, to the south of the underground station.



455-463  
Alexandra  
Avenue

*Narrow gauge  
railway used in  
the construction of  
the Nash estate*



The purpose of this appraisal is to provide a clear analysis of the architectural importance and character and appearance of the area, which will help form the basis for making sustainable decisions about the future of the area. The appraisal is linked to the Management Strategy for the conservation area, which identifies opportunities for enhancement along with policies to protect the character of the area.

### Planning Policy Context

This appraisal and management strategy are set within the broader context of conservation

area policy guidance for Harrow contained within the HUDP, the emerging LDF and the forthcoming Harrow Conservation Areas Supplementary Planning Document. It is also set within national policy guidance provided by PPG15 and the 1990 Town and Country Planning Act.

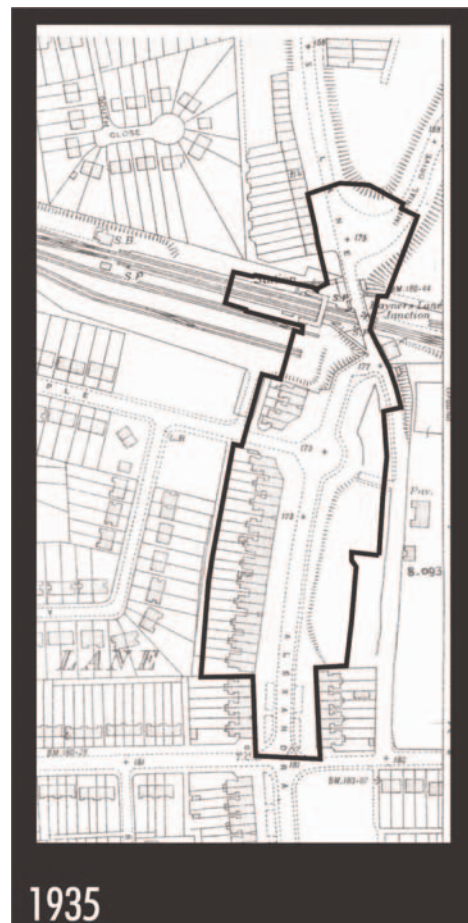
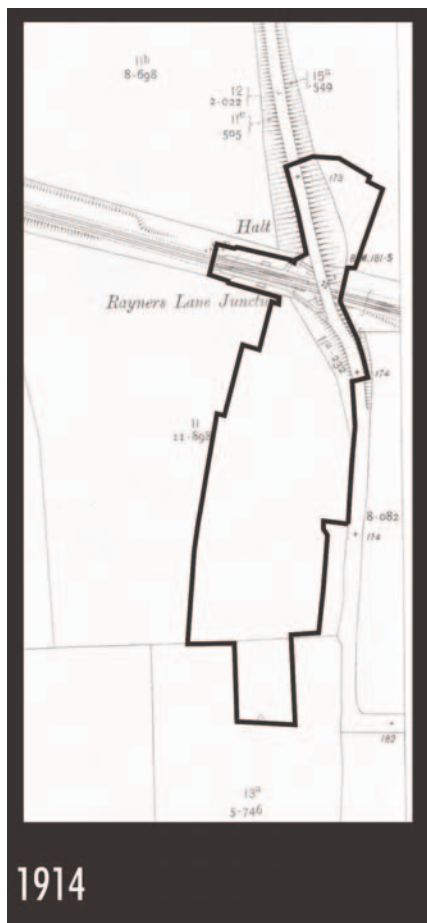
It is important to note that no appraisal can be completely comprehensive and that the omission of a particular building, feature or open space should not be taken to imply that it is of no interest.

### History and Development of Rayners Lane

The Rayners Lane conservation area forms the centrepiece of a much larger residential suburb with which its development is inextricably linked. Until the building of the Metropolitan Railway Station in 1906 this was a rural area with a single farmstead, Rayners Lane Farm, to the north of the station at the junction of Rayners Lane and Farm Avenue. Rayners Lane itself is an ancient roadway which may have medieval origins.

Despite the building of the station, the area initially remained completely undeveloped. However between 1929 and 1938 Rayners Lane

was transformed into a modern suburb complete with all the latest amenities. This development was principally at the instigation of two companies, Metropolitan Railway County Estates and T F Nash and Company. Metropolitan Railway County Estates, a subsidiary of the Metropolitan Railway Company established to develop the land alongside the railway lines, built the more prestigious Harrow Garden Suburb to the north of the railway line. T F Nash occupied most of the land to the south of the station and concentrated on the mass production of cheaper housing. Nash employed up to 1000





The station viewed from the south

468-472  
Alexandra Avenue



workers on the project and a temporary narrow gauge railway was laid to speed construction. The results were startlingly cheap, with prices starting at £545 in 1930. Nash excelled in publicising and marketing the estate. In 1934 a temporary triumphal arch was erected at the north end of Alexandra Avenue as part of a major promotion. A garage providing courtesy cars to enable prospective buyers to view plots was also provided. This was a clever trick that disguised quite how far these houses were from the station.

The initial phases of construction concentrated on the building of the terraced and semi-detached houses that form the bulk of the suburb and the smaller parades of shops around Village Way and the lower part of Alexandra Avenue. The majority of these properties were completed by 1935. The buildings in the conservation area belong to a

later phase of construction, between 1935 and 1938; blocks of flats lining the southern part of Alexandra Avenue were also constructed at this time.

## Character Analysis

### Topography and Views

The Underground Station is at the highest point in the conservation area, atop the railway bridge, and this higher level reinforces its role as a pivotal building in the conservation area.

The key views are identified on the map of 'Today' and comprise views up and down Alexandra Avenue and to the landmark buildings within the area.

### Activity and Uses

The conservation area's two principal uses are commercial (shops, restaurants etc) on the

ground floor and residential flats above, although the former Cinema is in community use. The character of the area is in large part derived from its role as a district shopping centre and the hustle and bustle associated with this and the station. It is key that these uses are retained. The residential flats above are also important in providing surveillance to the streets below.

### Architectural Character

The most striking buildings in the conservation area are the London Underground Station, the former ACE cinema and the shops at 468-472 Alexandra Avenue. Each building has a very individual character and represents fine examples of the 'International' and 'Art Deco' strands of inter-war modernist architecture. Despite their differing styles all are related by their use of dramatic outlines constructed by the bold massing of simple shapes, and pierced

The Nash Archway constructed in 1934



Rayners Lane before development, looking north down the hill from the station







by large windows, a technique made possible by the use of modern materials such as concrete and steel framed windows. All also employ simple yet effective brickwork details to enliven window surrounds, and white render to present a bright and modern finish. This use of similar materials enables these buildings to complement each other by creating a visual unity that overrides the differences in individual building styles.

The former ACE Cinema, designed in 1936 by F E Bromige represents the best in Art Deco design with a bold triple bowed frontage with a very wide central projection within which rise full height concave and convex steel framed windows. A stylised elephant's trunk with a curved 'head' projecting above the bowed parapet rises upwards from the entrance canopy.

The Underground Station, built in 1938 to the designs of Charles Holden and Reginald Uren in the modernist 'International Style' is less exuberant but equally bold.

Walls are of muted grey brickwork and a flat roofed double height entrance lobby lit by vast steel framed windows set on the bridge spanning the tracks flanked by single storey kiosks with curved fronts. It is also distinguished by exceptionally well preserved signage and station furniture.

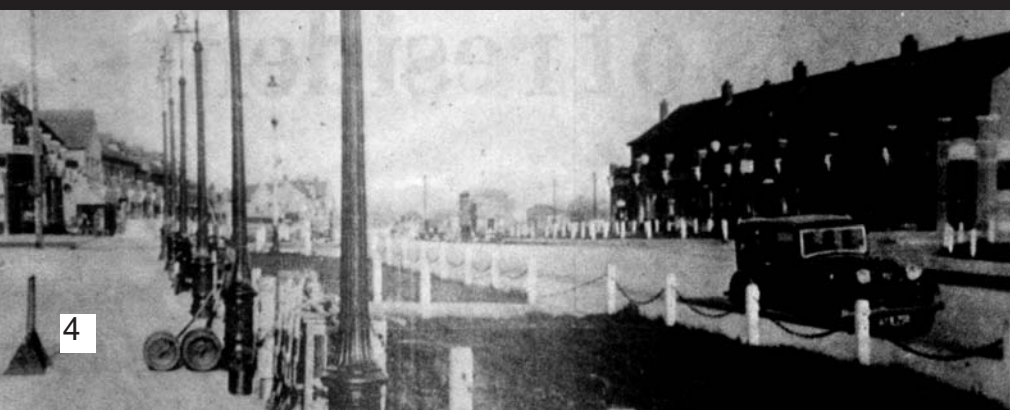
The same boldness is found on a smaller scale in 468-472 Alexandra Avenue, built by R C White-Cooper and S R Turner in 1937, also in the 'International Style'. Simple cylindrical and square masses covered in a bright white render are enlivened by continuous runs of windows that give the illusion that the top of the tower is floating in mid-air.

The surrounding buildings (numbers 454-462, 420-438, 455-463 and 411-453 Alexandra Avenue) are formed of four distinct blocks of shops with flats above. These are less dramatic but well designed and well detailed, resulting in fine buildings in themselves that enhance the setting of the listed buildings. All are the work of a

single architect, H J Mark and were built between 1934 and 1936. Mark was a prolific architect in the area and was also responsible for much of Eastcote town centre, which features almost identical buildings. Mark's style was distinctive, using brown brick with contrasting white render capped with steeply pitched brown tiled roofs. The buildings feature complex rooflines with gabled end wings and hipped dormers, prominent doorways leading to the upper floor flats, featuring semicircular arched openings capped with gabled roofs, and an iron balcony at first floor level above the shop with steel railings. Particular care was taken over the design details. Red brick dressings surround door and window openings, while pilasters surrounding doors and separating shops feature rusticated quoining and are capped with stone brackets or a decorative brick crocketed pinnacle. Decorative brick designs were also set into gables. The original windows were all of the steel Crittall type and doors are panelled with a single glass light. Originally this light and the adjacent windows featured leaded lights with a stained glass heart shaped design.

Numbers 454-462 Alexandra Avenue, an attractive three-storey block constructed in 1936, is of particular merit. This

Old steel street lamps that lined the road



The same location at the junction of Warden Avenue and Alexandra Avenue -then and now



The same junction from a slightly different angle



building is enlivened by an interesting façade consisting of a tiered frontage leading to a recessed central tower with arched openings. Shop fronts were originally a very important part of the design of the buildings. The shop fronts tended to be simple with a narrow painted fascia above the shop, large plate glass windows in timber frames and a canvas roller blind. The shops were usually divided by pilasters with stone brackets at the top. Some of the original shop fronts do survive although sadly the majority have now been replaced.

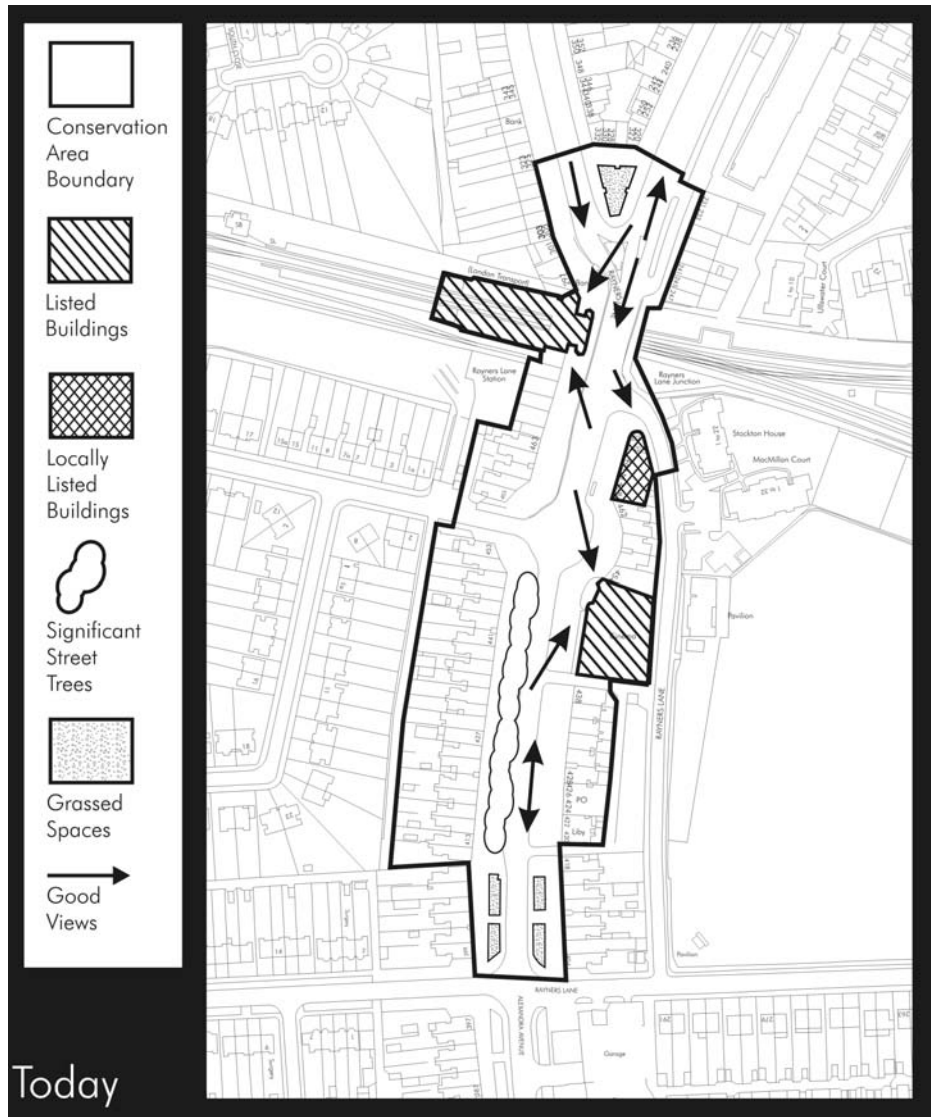
**Streetscape Character**

As originally planned, the streetscape in the centre of Rayners Lane gave the area a spacious and modern feel that complemented the surrounding buildings. Alexandra Avenue was conceived as an impressive boulevard lined with wide concrete pavements edged with granite kerbs and enhanced by ornamental trees planted along the western side. At the junctions of Alexandra Avenue with Warden Avenue and Village Way grass verges surrounded by concrete posts and post and chain fencing provided a welcome splash of greenery and an important streetscape feature. Street furniture was simple and included rather fine lampposts with a large circular globe sitting directly on top of the post. These were replaced in the 1960s by a

futuristic concrete design with a curved top and a circular suspended shade. Other notable features include the fine signage around the Underground Station and a set of railings on the east side of the bridge over the tube line.

Despite many changes, the original street layout survives, including the site of the verges, which have now been converted into raised beds, and the posts of the original post and chain fences. The use of zebra

crossings rather than pelican crossings, contributes positively to the character of the area by reducing the number of traffic lights. The retention of the Belisha Beacons is also to be encouraged. These items, which are now becoming rare in Harrow, were first introduced shortly after the area was developed and are characteristic of historic 'Metroland' streetscapes. More recent streetscape clutter is beginning to detract from the area's intended simplicity.





Former Ace  
Cinema Alexandra  
Avenue



# PROBLEMS AND

## Problems, pressures, negative features

## Location



Shop fronts

Throughout the Conservation Area



Inappropriate small scale alterations to residential flats

Throughout the Conservation Area



Poor repair of former cinema

440 Alexandria Avenue - Zoroastrian Centre



Patchy pavement surfaces

Throughout the Conservation Area



Too much street clutter

Throughout the Conservation Area



Black bollards

Eastern side of Alexandria Avenue

Pressure for more non-shop uses (takeaways /restaurants

Throughout the Conservation Area

## Neutral Features



Post war buildings (1959)

465-475 Alexandria Avenue





Spoilt facades



Good railings by  
tube line

## ND PRESSURES

### Description

With the exception of number 472 Alexandra Avenue, all the original shop fronts in the conservation area have been replaced with modern examples. Many of these are of an unsympathetic design with large fascias, overly large signage - much of which is illuminated - that does not respect the scale or detailing of the building that it forms part of. Some buildings have had their shop fronts completely rebuilt, enlarged and clad in tiles, much to the detriment of the structure behind. Numbers 453 and 424-426 Alexandra Avenue have suffered particularly badly in this respect.

In recent years many of the original doors and windows have been replaced in uPVC, much to the detriment of the buildings. Clay tile roofs have also been replaced with concrete tiles which lack the interest, colour, texture and profile of the original clay tiles.

This building is on English Heritage's Buildings at Risk list. Although it has a new use and works are underway, the building is still in need of substantial repair.

The fitting of different coloured concrete pavers, asphalt patching and the introduction of the green cycle lane, has broken up the uniformity of pavements.

Guard rails, unnecessary road signage, numerous telephone kiosks and standard steel lampposts create a cluttered and chaotic appearance at odds with the original intended simplicity of the street and the form of the buildings

Black bollards detract from the wide sweeping lines of the pavement

The vibrancy of the conservation area relies on keeping a proportion of shop uses although there is always pressure for these uses to change.

These structures are unremarkable architecturally and currently have a neutral impact on the character of the area. However, their prominent position in terms of townscape, situated close to the listed buildings in the conservation area, means that alterations and development on this site must be sensitively handled.

# RAYNERS LANE

## Consultation

The first draft of this document was sent to each owner and occupier in the conservation area, along with local and national amenity societies. At the time of its release, press announcements were made in the local papers as well as the London Gazette. It was available on the Council's website for a number of months and an exhibition was held in Rayners Lane Library. The document was revised to meet new English Heritage guidelines in 2005 and subsequently a further round of public consultation, in line with the first, was undertaken.

Please call the number below for a large print version of this document, or a summary of this document in your language.

<b>Albanian</b>	<b>Nëqoftëse gjuha Angleze nuk është gjuha juaj e parë, dhe keni nevojë për përkthimin e informatave të përmbajtura në këtë dokumentë, ju lutemi kontaktoni numërin dhënë.</b>
<b>Arabic</b>	إذا كانت الانجليزية ليست لغتك الأولى وتحتاج لترجمة معلومات هذه الوثيقة، الرجاء الاتصال على رقم
<b>Bengali</b>	যদি ইংরেজি আপনার মাতৃভাষা না হয় এবং আপনি যদি এই প্রচারপত্রের তথ্যগুলোর অনুবাদ পেতে চান তাহলে যে টেলিফোন নম্বর দেওয়া আছে সেখানে দয়া করে যোগাযোগ করুন।
<b>Chinese</b>	如果你主要說用的語言不是英語而需要將這份文件的內容翻譯成中文，請打註明的電話號碼提出這個要求。
<b>Farsi</b>	اگر انگلیسی زبان اول شما نیست و شما نیاز به ترجمه اطلاعات موجود در این مدرک را دارید، لطفاً با شماره داده شده تماس بگیرید.
<b>Gujarati</b>	જો ઈંગ્લિશ તમારી પ્રથમ ભાષા ન હોય અને આ દસ્તાવેજમાં રહેલ માહિતીનો તરજૂમો (ટ્રાન્સલેશન) તમને જોઈતો હોય તો કૃપા કરી જણાવેલ નંબર ઉપર ફોન કરો
<b>Hindi</b>	यदि आपको अंग्रेजी समझ नहीं आती और आपको इस दस्तावेज़ में दी गई जानकारी का अनुवाद हिन्दी में चाहिए तो कृपया दिए गए नंबर पर फोन करें।
<b>Panjabi</b>	ਜੇ ਤੁਹਾਨੂੰ ਅੰਗਰੇਜ਼ੀ ਸਮਝ ਨਹੀਂ ਆਉਂਦੀ ਤੇ ਤੁਹਾਨੂੰ ਇਸ ਦਸਤਾਵੇਜ਼ ਵਿਚ ਦਿੱਤੀ ਗਈ ਜਾਣਕਾਰੀ ਦਾ ਤਰਜਮਾ ਪੰਜਾਬੀ ਵਿਚ ਚਾਹੀਦਾ ਹੈ ਤਾਂ ਕਿਰਪਾ ਕਰਕੇ ਦਿੱਤੇ ਗਏ ਨੰਬਰ ਤੇ ਫੋਨ ਕਰੋ।
<b>Somali</b>	Haddii Ingiriisku uusan ahayn afkaaga koowaad aadna u baahan tahay turjumidda xog ku jirta dokumentigan fadlan la xiriiir lambarka lagu siiyey.
<b>Tamil</b>	ஆங்கிலம் உங்கள் தாய்மொழியாக இல்லாதிருந்து இப்பத்திரத்திலிருக்கும் தகவலின் மொழிபெயர்ப்பு உங்களுக்கு தேவைப்பட்டால் தயவுசெய்து தரப்பட்ட தொலைபேசி எண்ணில் தொடர்பு கொள்ளவும்.
<b>Urdu</b>	اگر انگریزی آپ کی مادری زبان نہیں ہے اور آپ کو اس دستاویز میں دی گئی معلومات کا اردو ترجمہ درکار ہے، تو براہ کرم دئے گئے نمبر پر رابطہ کریں۔

020 8736 6180



## Other Publications

The Council produce the following supplementary Guidance leaflets that are relevant to the Rayners Lane Conservation Area

Conservation Areas: Residential Planning Guidelines  
Listed Buildings: Planning Guidelines  
London Borough of Harrow Conservation Areas  
Shopfront Design Guide

Further information regarding the Statutory Background and general Council policies relating to conservation areas can be found in the Harrow Unitary Development Plan

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