

West Greenwich Conservation Area

Greenwich Town Centre Article 4 Direction Colour Guidance Note

December 2016



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1. Introduction and purpose of this guidance note

- 1.1 The aim of this note is to provide guidance on how colour can be used in a coordinated manner on the largely commercial buildings within Greenwich town centre, to ensure that the special character and appearance of this world-class historic environment is preserved and enhanced.

Acknowledgements

- 1.2 The Royal Borough of Greenwich gratefully acknowledges the assistance of historic architectural colour expert Dr Ian Bristow in the formulation of this document.

The importance of Greenwich town centre

- 1.3 Maritime Greenwich was inscribed as a World Heritage Site by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) in December 1997. As such, it ranks alongside Westminster, the Tower and Kew Gardens as one of the most important historic sites in London, and is internationally recognised as possessing outstanding universal value – both for its architecture and for its international historic significance. Greenwich town centre lies at the heart of the World Heritage Site; it also forms part of the West Greenwich Conservation Area and contains a high

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concentration of buildings statutorily listed for their special architectural and historic interest.

- 1.4 The Royal Borough has a duty to ensure that the special character, appearance and interest of the area and its buildings are preserved and enhanced for future generations.

Visual character and appearance

- 1.5 The predominant character of central Greenwich is the result of a major rebuilding campaign of the 1830s, when Greenwich Hospital – the principal landowner – instructed its Surveyor, the architect Joseph Kay, to remodel the town’s medieval core. New streets were laid out, on a rectilinear plan aligned with the major monuments (the Hospital, St Alfege’s Church), and much of the older building stock was replaced with imposing stuccoed terraces in the fashionable Regency manner.
- 1.6 The resulting consistency of proportions and materials gave the town a coherent and harmonious aspect that is still manifest today, especially at the upper levels where buildings have been least altered and the late-Georgian and Victorian palette of stucco and stock brick still prevails.

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Figure 1: The coherent and harmonious aspect of the stucco upper storeys of Nelson Road, looking west towards St Alfege

- 1.7 This harmony survives less well at street level. Traditional shop-front designs have been retained in some areas, but elsewhere the coherence of the townscape has been much diminished by the use of oversized signage, garish advertising and unsympathetic materials and colours as well as the amalgamation of shop units and the removal of subdivisions (pilasters, glazing bars etc.)

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- I.8 It is the aim of this and related guidance documents to promote a more sensitive approach to retail design, and to foster the re-emergence of a street scene that respects and enhances its exceptional architectural setting.

Why is colour control necessary?

- I.9 Colour can enliven buildings and enhance the quality of the urban environment. But it can also erode and degrade that quality, especially – in an area of highly unified historic townscape such as this – where lurid or contextually bizarre colours are used in an attempt to highlight one set of premises at the expense of its neighbours.
- I.10 Greenwich’s success as a tourist destination has encouraged the use of attention-grabbing colour schemes; but while retailers’ need to attract custom is of course recognised, there is an increasing sense that this practice tends to undermine the very characteristics that make the town attractive in the first place.
- I.11 The use of a reasonably coherent and harmonious palette, in sympathy with historical practice and with the colours of the prevailing local building materials, will help to preserve the consistency of the townscape to the ultimate benefit of residents, retailers and visitors alike.

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Figure 2: Shop-fronts on early 18th-century buildings in Greenwich Church Street, with a harmonious but differentiated colour palette

2. The planning controls & buildings affected

What is an Article 4 direction?

- 2.1 In order to bring the colour of buildings under planning control, approval has to be given by the Secretary of State for the introduction of an Article 4(1) Direction. The application of colour to the exterior of a building is normally treated as ‘permitted development’ under Part 2, Class C of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 1995, i.e. it does not normally require planning permission.

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- 2.2 Since 2002 an Article 4(1) Direction has removed this aspect of permitted development rights from specific premises within Greenwich town centre, and means that planning permission is required for the application of colour to shop-fronts (and components thereof, e.g. fascia, pilasters and stall-risers), upper storeys and principal building elements.
- 2.3 The Article 4 Direction applies to the front and flank elevations of buildings but not to front boundary treatments such as railings or gates, nor to fascia lettering or removable signs.
- 2.4 For advice on shop-front design, signage and advertisements in Greenwich, please refer to Royal Greenwich’s complementary guidance notes: “[Design Guidance for Shop-fronts in Greenwich Town Centre](#)” and “[Shop Signs, Advertisements and Illumination in Greenwich Town Centre](#)”, which are available on the Royal Borough’s website.

Which buildings are affected?

Table I: Schedule of properties covered by the Article 4(1) Direction

Creek Road	320-334 (even)
Croom's Hill	1, Greenwich Theatre

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Greenwich Church Street	2-8 (even), 5-9 (odd), 12-22 (even), 19-35 ¹ (odd), 39-43 (odd), 44, 46, 47-53 (odd), 52-60 (even)
Greenwich High Road	189-195 (odd), 217-285 (odd)
Greenwich South Street	17-27 (odd)
King William Walk	1, 15-17 (consecutive), 22
Nelson Road	13-14
Nevada Street	4, rear of Greenwich Theatre
Stockwell Street	1-3 (consecutive)
Turnpin Lane	1-3, 5-11, and 14 17 (all consecutive)

- 2.5 As well as the properties listed in Table 1, this guidance note also applies to all statutorily listed buildings (Grade I, II* or II buildings which feature on the [National Heritage List for England](#)).
- 2.6 The map on page 26 identifies the properties covered by the Article 4 Direction and statutorily listed buildings.
- 2.7 To find out which buildings are listed please see the list of [Statutory Listed Buildings in Greenwich](#) on Royal

¹ Nos. 19 & 21 were erroneously included in the Article 4 Direction in 2002; however these are already statutory listed buildings and as such listed building consent will be required for colour changes and other alterations, not planning permission.

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Greenwich's website. These are not explicitly covered by the Article 4(l) Direction, because Listed Building Consent is already required for any works (including external repainting) that will affect their architectural or historic character.

- 2.8 The guidelines below will be referred to in determining such applications, although they will be of particular relevance to some buildings (e.g. the Joseph Kay terraces of Nelson Road and College Approach) and of limited relevance to others (e.g. St Alfege's Church and the former Town Hall).

What is the status of this document?

- 2.9 This document updates the previous colour guidance note issued in 2002. The guidance supports and is supported by the policies of the adopted Royal Greenwich Core Strategy 2014 (especially policies DH1, DH3, DH4, DH(h), DH(i) and DH(j)) and the National Planning Policy Framework (section 12). The guidance has also been prepared in accordance with the objectives of the Maritime Greenwich WHS Management Plan, the West Greenwich Conservation Area Character Appraisal and Management Guidance.
- 2.10 An Article 4 guidance note is designed to aid understanding of an Article 4 Direction and is a material consideration in the determination of applications.

3. Guidance on the use of colour

- 3.1 This guidance note sets recommendations on the use of external colour – including paints and other materials – on historic buildings within Greenwich town centre. It is not the Royal Borough’s intention to impose a single canon of taste or to create a blandly conformist environment; on the contrary, the imaginative use of colour that respects the surroundings will be encouraged. However, colour schemes considered harmful to the character and civility of the townscape will be resisted.
- 3.2 Outlined in this section are general principles for the use of colour on buildings, as well as palettes of recommended colours for use on upper storeys and shop-fronts (see pages 22 and 23). The colours suggested are based on the British Standard paint charts (e.g. BS 4800, *Paint Colours for Building Purposes*, May 2011) and should be available from the major paint manufacturers. The names given are those in most common use, but may vary between suppliers.
- 3.3 The colours illustrated are recommendations rather than strict requirements. Applications that do adhere to the suggested colours are very likely to be granted; however, other proposals will be considered and assessed on their adherence to the principles and guidelines set out in this guidance note.

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Historical background

- 3.4 Evidence for the historical use of colour in the commercial environment can be derived from topographical paintings and engravings, supplemented by written sources and – in a limited number of cases – by historic paint analysis. Most of the buildings in present-day Greenwich town centre date from between c.1780 and c.1900 (with a few c.1700), and for this period the story is reasonably clear.
- 3.5 Off-white (cream or ivory) appears to have been the norm for external joinery, including shop-fronts, around the turn of the 19th century, sometimes replaced by



Figure 5: Cheapside in 1837, early 19th-century shop-front division by light-coloured pilasters/consols

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Figure 6: An early-Victorian view of Nelson Road, showing light-coloured shop-front divisions and dark painted joinery

darker grey and stone colours. Doors were normally painted brown, with stronger colours such as reds and blues used for fascia boards, and lettering picked out in brighter colours or in gold.

- 3.6 Cast-iron elements were increasingly used, often painted green to suggest a bronze patina. Stucco, painted or colour-washed in various shades of stone, was in widespread use for upper storeys and shop-front divisions. Brick, if left exposed, was unpainted.

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Figure 6: Fleet Street in 1886, illustrating colours in use at the time

- 3.7 Later 19th-century paint schemes were influenced by contemporary colour theory, which emphasised the use of muted 'tertiary' tones such as olive green, a dark reddish brown, or more subdued shades of dull yellow-green as a background to 'primary' blues, reds and yellows.
- 3.8 Victorian commercial practice favoured dark and muted reds, greens, browns and greys for shop-fronts, with brighter colours restricted to fascia and lettering.

General principles

- 3.9 The colours of both upper storeys and shop-fronts should be chosen to reflect and complement the colour of traditional building materials found in the locality. The characteristic building materials in Greenwich town centre are buff and brown London stock bricks, Portland stone, stucco or render, natural slate and timber (painted and unpainted).
- 3.10 The majority of the building stock is of later Georgian, Regency and Victorian date, and paint choice should be influenced by the range of colours commonly employed during this period. Brickwork was almost invariably left unpainted. Stucco was either, self-coloured, or else painted or colour-washed to resemble natural stone.
- 3.11 The painting of external joinery was subject to changing fashions (see above), but the historic palette was generally quite muted by modern standards, with today's brilliant hues – including 'pure brilliant white' – made possible only by 20th-century developments in paint technology.
- 3.12 Therefore, the use of brilliant white and other brilliant hues, luminescent or Day-Glo paints is considered unacceptable in principle. Such colours are strongly out of character with prevailing styles and materials, and – by violently drawing attention to one building at the

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expense of its neighbours – disrupt the balance of the historic streetscape.

- 3.13 Traditional building materials mostly have matte and non-reflective surfaces. Although historically there was much use of polished brass, and varnish on graining, the use of high-gloss modern materials such as acrylic sheeting, Perspex or aluminium is considered inappropriate.
- 3.14 Examples of good and bad practice are illustrated below, on pages 18 and 19.

Upper storeys

- 3.15 Painting over stone or brickwork is generally considered unacceptable in principle. The over-painting of materials meant to be left exposed negates their intrinsic visual qualities, and can also – especially in the case of stone – lead to permanent physical damage.
- 3.16 Upper storeys finished in render or stucco should be painted in a light neutral colour that resembles stone. The use of dark or brilliant colours is apt to appear overbearing and will not normally be accepted.
- 3.17 Although paint colour is a relatively transitory phenomenon, attention should be paid to how the colour chosen for one building will complement those of its neighbours. In the case of upper storeys, any variation should be harmonious.



Figure 7: 1830s stucco terraces on College Approach where a unified colour scheme is required

3.18 Where a series of buildings forms a single architectural composition, as with the formal terraces of Nelson Street, a unified colour scheme should be used throughout.

Shop-fronts and joinery

3.19 Shop-fronts are supposed to stand out; and yet if they do so too aggressively, the civility of the public realm is compromised. It is normal and desirable for the colour of a shop-front to contrast with that of the storeys above, as well as with those of neighbouring shops, but

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very strident contrasts and violent colour clashes should be avoided.

- 3.20 Choice of shop-front colours should have regard to the palettes and colour systems in use when most of the present town centre was built – i.e. during the approximate period 1780-1900. These are described in the *Historical Background* section above.
- 3.21 The recommended shop-front colours (see pages 22 and 23) have been chosen on grounds of historical precedent, and also because they provide an effective yet reasonably harmonious contrast with the prevailing building materials and the recommended upper-storey colours.
- 3.22 A number of buildings have shop windows set within stucco surrounds or between stucco pilasters. In such instances, the recommended upper-storey colours should normally be employed on ground-floor stucco surfaces.
- 3.23 The imposition of corporate colour schemes often erodes the character of individual buildings and areas. Flexibility is expected where such schemes are at odds with the principles contained in this guidance note.
- 3.24 It has become the convention that upper-storey window joinery be painted white, off-white or cream; this is now standard practice and should normally be followed.

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Shop-front colours - examples of bad practice



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Shop-front colours - examples of good practice



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Highlights and lettering

3.25 The highlighting of building components by means of a contrasting paint colour is a popular practice. If done in a fussy and over-elaborate fashion, however, it can detract from the building's architectural legibility and disrupt the visual order of the street. Care should be taken to ensure that the colours employed are appropriate to the feature in question, and that they harmonise with the colours employed elsewhere.



Figure 10: Insensitive and distracting highlighting of shop front details

3.26 The use of more than a limited range of colours on a single building should be avoided. If any highlights are to be used, these should also be noted in the planning and/or listed building consent application along with the BS paint reference and colour swatch.

3.27 Colour contrasts should be used sparingly, usually only on shop-fronts in small surface areas such as fascia lettering and mouldings. Large-scale stucco elements such as cornices,

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string-courses and window architraves should not normally be treated in this fashion, but should be painted in stone colours as described above.



Figure 11: Misuse of a highlight colour to create strong contrasts over large areas of the shop-front

3.28 Fascia lettering is not covered under the Article 4 (although Advertisement Consent may be required – please see box on page 25). Black and off-white, as well as gold, silver and other metallic colours, are suggested for fascia lettering.

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4. Suggested colour palettes

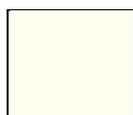
Colours for upper storeys



04 B 15
(Pastel pink)



10 B 17
(Oatmeal/Greystone)



08 B 15
(Magnolia)



10 C 31
(Ivory)



08 B 17
(Honey Beige)



08 C 31 (Honey-
suckle Cream)



10 B 15
(Creamy White)

Colours for shop-fronts



381 220
(Olive Green)



16 D 45
(Dark Jade)



381 280
(Verdigris Green)



14 C 39
(Holly Green)

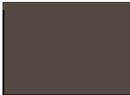
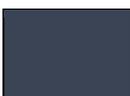
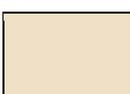


381 216
(Eau de Nil Green)



14 C 40
(Moss Green)

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 448 (RAL 8015) (Chestnut Brown)	 08 B 29 (Bitter Chocolate)
 04 C 39 (Brick Red)	 06 C 39 (Saddle Brown)
 04 D 45/381 538 (Cherry Red)	 381 310 (Primrose Yellow)
 02 C 39 (Plum /Aubergine)	 18 C 39 (Fathom Blue)
 12 B 21 (Mineral Green/French Grey)	 20 C 40 (Duchess Blue)
 00 A 05 (Goose Grey)	 381 112 (Arctic Blue)
 10 A 11 (Charcoal Grey)	 10 B 17 (Oatmeal /Greystone)
 18 B 29 (Raven Grey)	 08 C 31 (Stone /Honeysuckle)
 00 E 53 (Black)	 10 B 15 (Ivory/ Creamy White)

5. Making a planning application

Planning and listed building consent applications can be made online via the Planning Portal website (<http://www.planningportal.gov.uk/>). Alternatively, you can print out the form and post it, with accompanying documents, to the address below.

Royal Borough of Greenwich Planning Department
The Woolwich Centre
35 Wellington Street
Woolwich
London SE18 6HQ

E-mail: planningapps@royalgreenwich.gov.uk

Tel.: 020 8921 5019

Fax: 020 8921 5442

- 5.1 No fee is payable for applications relating to the Article 4(l) Direction or for listed building consent applications, although fees will normally be required for advertisement consent applications involving new signage.
- 5.2 All applications should be accompanied by a scale drawing and/or a photograph indicating the area(s) affected. For repainting works, you should include the BS number, manufacturer's name and a colour swatch of the paint colour(s) to be applied.

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When is permission required?

Planning Permission is required for any painting or application of colour or coloured materials to the front, flank or back elevations of properties covered by the Article 4(1) Direction, where this would result in a change to their external appearance. This includes all components of shop-fronts such as fascias, but does not apply to shop-front lettering, removable signs or boundary treatments, such as railings.

Repainting or touching-up within an existing colour scheme, which will not result in a change to external appearance, will not require planning permission or listed building consent.

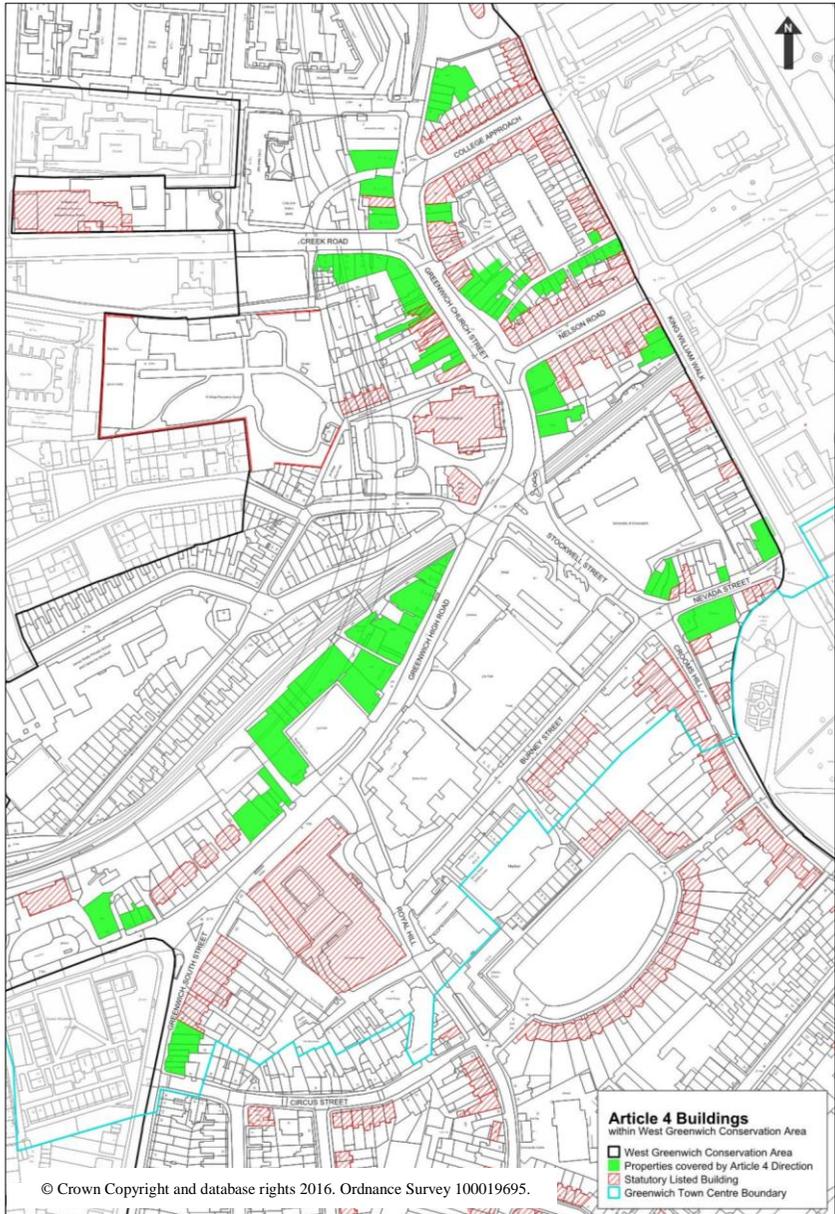
New shop-fronts require *Planning Permission* and normal application fees apply in such instances.

Listed Building Consent is required for any works likely to affect the character and special interest of a statutory listed building (Grades I, II* or II). This is deemed to include any external repainting or application of materials that would result in a change to external appearance.

Alterations to signage, including fascia lettering, may require *Advertisement Consent* under the Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisements) Regulations 2007. Please contact the planning department for further information.

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6. Map of affected properties



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Notes

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Please note that planning permission or listed building consent is required for a shop-front colour change and permission should be granted before painting works are carried out. The Royal Borough of Greenwich will consider enforcement action against unauthorised colour changes contrary to this guidance.