



Terraced Housing in Wrexham

Many occupiers and developers make changes to property without taking into account the effect on neighbouring properties and the streetscene. This leaflet attempts to draw attention to the value of terraced houses and the quality and richness of detailing that is worth preserving. It is particularly important that this value is recognised, because the Council has only limited powers of control over changes to the external appearance of housing.

11

Available in alternative formats

Background

The terraced form of housing grew in popularity during the last 19th century as a way of accommodating, at low cost, the influx of people from the countryside and outlying villages into the town. In the late 19th century in particular there was a flourishing of richness and ornamentation in terraced housing that has not been subsequently matched. A large number of these terraces have survived in the town to give the area a unique character.

However, in the town centre, virtually none of these 19th century terraces survive in residential use. The arrival of the railways, public health acts and expansion of commercial floorspace were all factors in the demise of town centre terraces and a resident population.

However, the terrace has remained popular amongst home-owners, and modern examples can be seen on infill sites and as part of the housing mix in new developments on the edge of the town. Unfortunately, it is only relatively recently that developers have recognised the value of decorative and ornate features to enhance the external appearance.

Richness and Variety

The richness and variety of detailing and special features combine with the diversity of the basic terraced form to give the area its distinctive character. Generally, this detailing derives from locally available skills and materials.

These features are often taken for granted, but their removal or unsympathetic alteration can dramatically effect the appearance of the building, usually to the detriment of the terrace and the streetscene. The following is a checklist of key features, with guidance notes if alterations are being considered:-

- **Brickwork** is a key local feature which is usually a product of the brickworks which were sited to the south of the town. They invariably have a distinctive red colour with a lustrous finish. Much use is also made of terra-cotta ornamentation, usually either in banding courses or in the form of crests and finials.



If there is a problem with the brickwork, every option should be explored before cladding or painting the bricks. Repointing can often solve many penetrative damp problems. Introducing a break into banding courses will usually give an unsatisfactory disjointed appearance.

- **Roofs and Chimneys**

On older properties roofs are inevitably covered in slate. This material is usually effective for at least 100 years, but if replacement is necessary it will always benefit the appearance of the house and the terrace to use natural slate.

Chimneys are often a redundant feature but they can make a significant contribution to the appearance because of decorative detailing and the punctuation effect on the roof line.



- **Front walls and gates** should be retained wherever possible. Besides being attractive features in their own right, they help



to give unity to a terrace and afford separation between public and private space. If walls support ironwork, this can be an added bonus.

Planting behind the wall can help soften and personalise individual houses, as can painting gates and railings in the colour to match the house.

- **Window styles** and their arrangement on the building (fenestration) can be critical to the overall appearance of a terrace. Sliding sashes usually have a vertical emphasise with lintel (top) and sill (bottom) giving detailed framing.



open wherever possible to be part of the building's appearance. It is nearly always preferable to try and repair an original door rather than replace it with a modern one.

Large panes of glass suit the form well. In older terraces windows were set deeper in the opening that is now the practice. This gives a pleasant appearance of depth and solidity to the frontage by creating a shadow effect. Changing the style nearly always gives a less pleasing result. Sashes can be repaired and overhauled, with secondary double glazing being added if necessary. A painted finish, for example, with white for the sashes and a darker coloured frame, provides a good complement to red brick. Sill and lintel detailing must be retained to frame the window opening.

- **Doors and porches** often act as a focal point on a building's facade. It is, therefore, most unfortunate if this feature is spoiled by inappropriate changes. The effect can be multiplied if unsympathetic changes are made to each house in the terrace. Key features to be aware of are the style of door, painted finish, door furniture, stained glass and any surround features such as canopies and consoles. Tiled entrances should be kept



Conclusion

There is a natural desire amongst occupiers to personalise their home, but it should be remembered that the outward appearance is in a sense public property, and care should be taken not to unbalance the terrace by insensitive alterations. It should also be borne in mind that inappropriate 'improvements' involving the loss of original detailing and richness may not raise the value of the house and can make it harder to sell.



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