



Historic England

# Domestic 2: Town Houses

Listing Selection Guide



# Summary

Historic England's twenty listing selection guides help to define which historic buildings are likely to meet the relevant tests for national designation and be included on the National Heritage List for England. Listing has been in place since 1947 and operates under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. If a building is felt to meet the necessary standards, it is added to the List. This decision is taken by the Government's Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS). These selection guides were originally produced by English Heritage in 2011: slightly revised versions are now being published by its successor body, Historic England.

The DCMS' *Principles of Selection for Listing Buildings* set out the over-arching criteria of special architectural or historic interest required for listing and the guides provide more detail of relevant considerations for determining such interest for particular building types. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/principles-of-selection-for-listing-buildings>.

Each guide falls into two halves. The first defines the types of structures included in it, before going on to give a brisk overview of their characteristics and how these developed through time, with notice of the main architects and representative examples of buildings. The second half of the guide sets out the particular tests in terms of its architectural or historic interest a building has to meet if it is to be listed. A select bibliography gives suggestions for further reading.

This guide, one of four on different types of Domestic Buildings, covers town houses of all types including grand aristocratic residences, terraces, mews and workers' housing. The other three Domestic Buildings selection guides cover Vernacular houses, Suburban and country houses, and Modern houses and housing.

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## Front cover

Pelham Crescent, in the London Borough of Kensington and Chelsea, mid-1820s by George Basevi. Listed Grade II\*.

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# Introduction

English towns of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries have left behind a wealth of town and terraced houses. The grandest are outwardly imposing and inwardly sumptuous; the more ordinary may still be of special interest for their planning and construction, and all will be of historical interest for the light they shed on past ways of living. Losses have been many and grievous, but the survivors play a major part in defining the character of our historic towns. In scale they range from grand aristocratic residences to modest terraces of the working classes, while the very humblest dwellings of the poor have virtually disappeared. One particularly important urban form was the terraced house, and a substantial proportion of listed domestic buildings (and hence of our older building stock) falls into this category. It is this sort of house that will be principally considered here.

With the notable exception of Dublin, almost all European cities that experienced significant growth in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries housed the greater part of their population in tenements, where a number of families occupied apartments in multi-storeyed buildings typically of six to eight storeys. English architecture – following continental precedents, it is true – took a different, less dense, path. Groups of individual houses (sometimes in multiple occupancy) were constructed on a smaller scale, but were sometimes conceived as unified architectural compositions of some sophistication. Large-scale compositions were evolved, which injected spatial drama into towns and represented a major contribution to town planning. Squares, crescents, terraces and planned streets form high-points in the history of English urbanism. Continental visitors have long admired the novelty and subtlety of the Georgian terrace as England's great contribution to the urban form, and the planning interest of urban domestic developments can be very considerable.

In London, Bath and Brighton whole districts of terraces exist that have defined our perception of these cities, yet examples are distributed across the country: from Liverpool and Plymouth; to towns in rural Lincolnshire; and in resort towns like Sidmouth (Devon) and Tunbridge Wells (Kent). Northern developers continued to commission grand examples in Headingley (Leeds) and Sunderland into the 1870s, showing the enduring vitality of this urban form. Terraces have proved themselves to be adaptable. Where speculations failed or a district lost its cachet, dwellings would fall quickly into multi-occupation. In the largest cities, terraces were preserved in the 1940s-1960s when they were acquired for social housing by local authorities. Town houses and terraces built in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries have also proved exceptionally adaptable for other uses, as shops or workshops for example.

A great number of town houses and terraces have gone: many were demolished to make way for higher density re-development and others were lost in wartime raids on cities like London and Exeter. But, during the 1930s in particular, eighteenth-century urban architecture stimulated the interest of

architects, planners and historians and this growing respect was reflected in the first lists of historic buildings produced after 1947. Town houses and terraces built before 1850 have thus long been an important part of our protected heritage.

The term 'town house' is an imprecise one. It traditionally implied a one-off design of considerable grandeur, but is now often used to encompass town dwellings at the 'polite' end of the spectrum, whether individual houses or terraces. In some cases, surviving odd houses may represent the remnants of a larger development or terrace. Others, and this applies to terraced houses too, are not historically 'town houses' at all but were built in villages, early suburbs, or as 'ribbon development' along main routes into the city, that have been absorbed by the spread of the nearby city. A terrace may be a formal, coherent composition in which emphasis is frequently given to the ends and sometimes the middle, but it can also be an informal row of houses erected piecemeal over several decades.

The great majority of the houses discussed below are listed, many at a high grade. However, with rows, terraces, crescents and the like, the List grading often varies from house to house, reflecting varying levels of special interest. Accordingly, List grades are generally not given below, and instead the reader is directed to the National Heritage List for England <https://HistoricEngland.org.uk/listing/the-list/>. This selection guide focuses on town houses and terraces from the seventeenth to the end of the nineteenth centuries. For earlier town houses, and for urban terraces of workers' houses of around 1800, see the **Domestic** selection guide [Vernacular Houses](#); for late Victorian and twentieth-century coverage, see the selection guide [The Modern House and Housing](#).

# 1 Historical Summary

## 1.1 Town houses

From the medieval period onwards, grandees have often had imposing houses, conveniently situated close to centres of power and commerce. These combined impressive public areas, private quarters, and ancillary accommodation for retainers: because of the value of their inner city sites, few of these early modern English equivalents of the Italian *palazzo* or the French *hotel particulier* have come down to us today. While this development is most readily seen in the London context, other provincial towns and cities such as York or Newcastle, King's Lynn or Salisbury, all could boast of large houses which impressed through their opulence and scale, and reflected social and economic hierarchies. With the continuing ascent of the merchant classes during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and the emergence of a specifically urban identity, these houses grew in number but were increasingly located in suburban locations, where there were greater opportunities for display, comfort and expansion (see the selection guide [Suburban and Country Houses](#)). Town houses of the grander variety were designed as places of entertainment, with large rooms for receptions and prominently designed staircases: actual numbers of rooms could be quite small, as is the case with the Adam brothers' Chandos House of 1769-71 (listed Grade I) in London's West End. Accommodation was placed on upper floors. Outward restraint can sometimes conceal interior display of remarkable effect. Always a tiny minority of urban residences, such houses could attain great heights of architectural accomplishment, and survivors tend to be listed in the higher grades. They continued to be built during the Victorian period, but changing lifestyles and rising ground values caused many to be demolished.

Smaller town houses have always been built too: detached residences on various scales, taking advantage of whatever building opportunities presented themselves within the crowded urban context. Meaningful generalisation is difficult in this area, given the range of house types encountered within this category. Always exceptional, such houses reflect the aspirations of the aristocracy and of the professional and merchant classes and retain crucial evidence of long-vanished life-styles and attitudes. They are often endowed with good internal decoration, and overall reflect changes in polite taste.



**Figure 1**  
Schomberg House, Pall Mall, London. The need for aristocrats and the socially aspirant to be close to the world of the Court prompted some of the finest town houses in London. Here, Schomberg House (1698), for the Duke of Schomberg, is comfortably close to St. James's Palace. Listed Grade II\*.



**Figure 2**  
Another grand town house, based on the work of Palladio, John Vardy's Spencer House (1752-4)

exploits its position to create a sophisticated façade overlooking London's Green Park. Listed Grade I.

## 1.2 The first terraces

Medieval precedents, such as the rows of Chester or the Vicars' Close at Wells, can be identified, but the arrival of the regular terrace dates from the seventeenth century. Some of the largest houses were the work of individual owners and architects, but by far the greatest impact on the growth of our towns and cities has been the work of the speculative estate developer, creating housing for leasing or rent. Although the initial inspiration for the regular terrace was probably Inigo Jones's Covent Garden begun in 1630, itself inspired by continental models such as the Place des Vosges in Paris of 1605, most early rows were erected by local builders on standard-sized plots with a broadly unified front. Gabled fronts with exuberant decoration, generally in timber, were the norm for houses of stature.

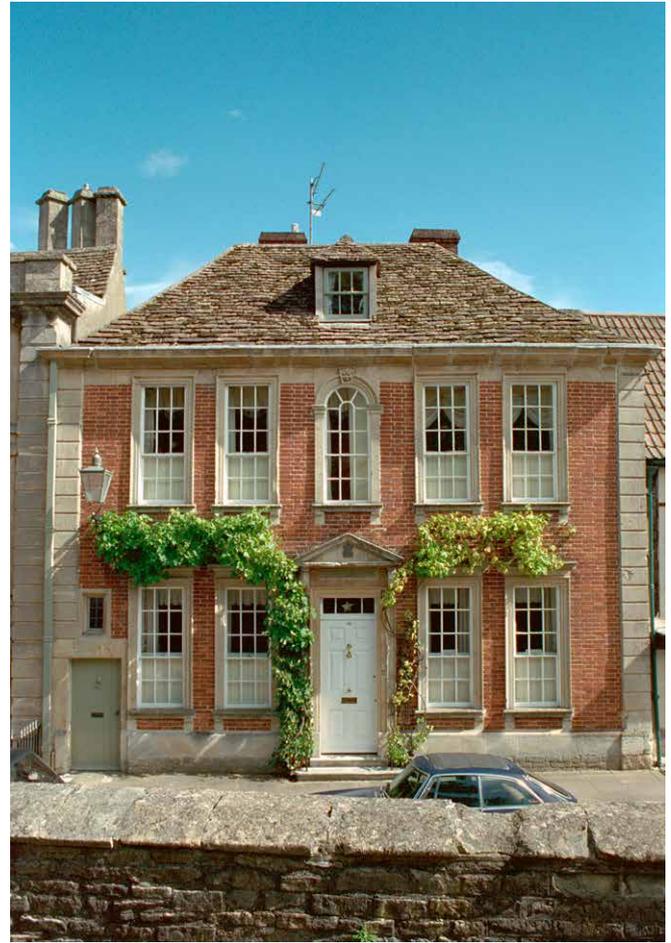
The first regular, classically-inspired streets in London (like Great Queen Street) were being laid out from the late 1630s, but the earliest survivors are now a row of four on Newington

Green (Islington; listed Grade I) dated 1658. Although a few great terraces were the work of prominent architects, most were built by craftsmen, with a carpenter or bricklayer usually acting as principal contractor. The late seventeenth century also saw the rise of large-scale speculative builders, led in London by Nicholas Barbon, and the economies of standardisation employed by early entrepreneurs established the regular terrace as the basis of urban design. Several builders could be involved in erecting the houses once an estate plan was approved. This lends to variety in both the treatment of elevations and house plans, as well as in decorative finishes to interiors such as chimneypieces and joinery.

The Great Fire of London in 1666 was followed by the first of a significant series of Building Acts (1667). This divided London's terraces into four classes, defined by the number of storeys, ceiling heights, road widths and wall thicknesses. It required brick or stone to be used for all external and party walls: the prevalent timber fronts which characterised the Tudor and early Stuart London



**Figure 3**  
 Many town houses, such as this impressive Palladian design by Sir Robert Taylor on London's Dover Street of 1772, formed an element of a varied terrace of such houses. This example, listed Grade I, was built as the London residence of the Bishop of Ely.



**Figure 4**  
 The wealthier merchants and professional classes were the clients for most of the elegant town houses, such as Zealy's, in Chippenham (Wiltshire), that can still be found in our towns and cities. The early eighteenth-century house is named after its client, John Zealy, a surgeon, and is an early example of the use of fashionable brick in a part of the country whose architecture until then was largely in the local stone. Listed Grade II\*.

house were henceforth banned. Successive Acts further reduced the amount of exposed timber – important in limiting the spread of fire. Although this Act applied only to the City, it provided a format for London's master builders and its influence spread beyond the capital. A most important feature of the terrace, and again a peculiarly English one, is the sash window, developed about 1676. Early examples often have only one opening light, rather than two carefully balanced sashes, and thick glazing bars; over the following century they grew larger and more refined. Regular window openings became a key determinant of the

appearance of the town house, and their careful proportions, in keeping with Palladian thinking, offset the austerity of many a front.

### 1.3 Plan form

The typical double-depth, two-room, layout behind a narrow frontage could be organised in many ways. In the seventeenth century chimneys and stairs were often placed together between (and separating) the front and back rooms. As terrace building became an established house

type in late seventeenth-century London, it became more usual to place the chimneystacks in party walls, heating rooms from the sides rather than the corner. By the early eighteenth century, a 'standard' plan had developed for more fashionable houses whereby the staircase was placed to the rear along a party wall, beyond an entrance passage, allowing the stairs to be directly lit. After 1800 this plan had become ubiquitous even for artisan developments. It spread widely outside London. The basement kitchen and service area had emerged by the early eighteenth century, while the best drawing room was increasingly to be found on the first floor, the ground floor being reserved for dining and perhaps a business use. Early eighteenth-century London terraces, such as Albury Street, Deptford (London Borough of Lewisham), sometimes had a lower rear projection – or 'closet wing' – containing panelled rooms with fireplaces, probably used as private withdrawing areas. By the late eighteenth century most London terraces had a rear service wing forming an L-plan with the house; in large town houses these could be substantial, incorporating extra living rooms and a secondary stair. But there were many variants depending on the uses given the principal floors, whether there is a basement, whether the building was intended as a single house, perhaps with a shop or workshop, or whether it was planned with the option of subdivision into multi-occupation. One-room layouts are rare but were once much more widespread, so survivals are of particular interest.

## 1.4 Eighteenth-century town houses

The London experience continued to set the standard for house design elsewhere. The Building Acts of 1707, 1709 and 1774 were of great importance in changing the appearance of London's terraces, and are useful for us today in dating a house. Their impact slowly extended across the country. The 1707 Act eliminated thick timber cornices, and although it applied only to the City and Westminster the heavy modillion cornices that are such a delight in Queen Anne architecture steadily disappeared from new buildings elsewhere too. Still more influential



**Figure 5**

The nineteenth-century architecture of the 'Queen Anne' Revival consciously looked back to that of the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries to create a new style for the town house. Resembling an overgrown Dutch merchant's house, these examples in London's Cadogan Square were designed by Richard Norman Shaw in 1878. Listed Grade II\*.

was the 1709 Act, which set back window frames behind the building line. Some terraces were built to match: others (like Church Row, Hampstead) consist of similarly scaled houses of different width and detail. Greater uniformity emerged during the century. The 1774 Act consolidated various amendments over the century, and controlled decoration on facades still more rigidly. Because legislation did not affect all regions equally, and especially because building materials still varied considerably, constructional methods differed. The eighteenth century saw the publication of many pattern books and ideas spread rapidly across the country.



**Figure 6**

This block of town houses of 1908-10 by W D Caroe is a chic exercise in the Free Baroque style which would be as at home on a Paris boulevard as here on Park Street, Westminster. Increasingly in the late nineteenth/

early twentieth century individual town houses became grouped into blocks, sometimes making them indistinguishable from the then-fashionable mansion flats. Listed Grade II.

Georgian terraces built along main urban thoroughfares often incorporated ground-floor shops at the outset, or an early stage.

### 1.5 Formal planned ensembles

Inigo Jones's Covent Garden piazza of 1630 was followed by other London squares: Bloomsbury Square was laid out at the time of Charles II's restoration in 1660. Bristol's Queen Square, laid out from 1699 to 1727, was one of the largest as well as one of the earliest outside London. Squares occupied precious land, but offered salubrious residences facing onto gardens, and monumentally conceived fronts (pioneered by John Wood at Queen Square, Bath, in the late 1720s) enabled grand architectural effects to

be created. The next stage in this exploration of how to lay out houses in a novel way also took place in Bath. Crescents and circuses introduced a sinuosity into terrace design, and were made fashionable by John Wood's Circus (1755-67) and his son's Royal Crescent (1767-75). They were emulated elsewhere in developments such as the Crescent in Buxton, Derbyshire, by John Carr (1780-90), and Joseph Kay's Pelham Crescent, Hastings, East Sussex, of the 1820s. Both of these towns were places of resort, reliant upon renting quarters to visitors. The Adam brothers' riverside Adelphi development in the heart of London of 1768-72 (demolished 1937) was the mightiest of the grander ensembles, wedding Roman inspiration to established house building practice.



**Figure 7**

The opportunities, and desire, to build grand new town houses gradually decreased during the twentieth century. Chester House (1925-8), designed by the architect Sir Giles Gilbert Scott for himself in

London's Clarendon Place, is amongst the few notable examples. Listed Grade II.

## 1.6 Later Georgian terraces

The London Building Acts were more strictly enforced after 1774. Later eighteenth-century terraces are generally more austere; their windows longer and glazing bars thinner; grey or stock brick superseded red; and projecting bands of brickwork were eliminated. What is lost in the detailing may be made up for in the syncopation of repetition, and in the emergence of finely detailed decorative ironwork and carved or moulded stonework, rusticated ground floors, Coade stone decoration, or stucco dressings applied to brickwork, which lent an extra level of interest to the later Georgian town house. In the first half of the nineteenth century, many more grand compositions of both individual houses and terraces were built, following the precedents

set by Robert Adam. Building on a major scale became less exceptional: in London, James Burton and later John Nash and Thomas Cubitt led the way in undertaking major speculations and erecting houses by volume. John Nash, in his world-renowned terraces around London's newly-created Regent's Park, started in 1812, created palatial ranges of Roman inspiration which actually comprised of individual houses. In Newcastle, Richard Grainger created a distinct enclave of fine classical domestic architecture at the very end of the Georgian period that is without peer. After the Napoleonic Wars – specifically celebrated in Kent, for instance, in terraces including Waterloo Crescent (Dover), and La Belle Alliance Square and The Plains of Waterloo (Ramsgate) – quite elaborate arrangements of terraced houses were introduced



**Figure 8**

Oliver Hill's block of four town houses of 1930-35 on Gayfer Street is listed Grade II. Two of the four

contained spectacular mirrored interiors in the so-called 'Vogue Regency' style. Listed Grade II.

more widely, for instance in other resort towns like Hastings, East Sussex (Joseph Kay's Pelham Crescent, of the 1820s) and Lewes, East Sussex (Priory Crescent) as well as to fashionable county towns such as York (St. Leonard's Place).

The drama of grand schemes, such as those of Regent's Park, Newcastle and Liverpool (1-10 Gambier Terrace, 1832-7 by John Foster Junior; listed Grade II\*), was echoed in later nineteenth-century undertakings, such as the early Victorian West Cliff Terrace in Ramsgate, Kent. Neoclassical detailing was the most common style, and the use of painted stucco over brick helped to create the aura of antiquity. Plasterwork, joinery, chimneypieces, decorative wall treatments and furnishings all combined to continue the theme within. Different floors performed different functions, creating a distinct hierarchy of spaces. To the rear of the grander terraces lay stables,

coach and mews houses. These were sometimes screened by ornamental garden structures.

Many smaller set-pieces exist too, showing the adaptability of the terrace as an urban form. Neoclassicism brought with it a high degree of decorative and ornamental conformity, in Greek and Roman styles: the dates for its introduction will depend on location, with remoter areas taking longer to adopt fashionable metropolitan tastes. Marble chimneypieces continued to provide accents of opulence: those in lesser rooms were more often of cast iron and timber. The reeded mouldings common in the Regency 1820s are a distinctive feature that can unify an interior scheme of cornice, fireplace and door surrounds. Conventional terraced houses can gain added architectural pretension by making a feature of top-lighting their staircases: these remained areas in which

it was possible to bring off an architectural effect through the clever use of space.

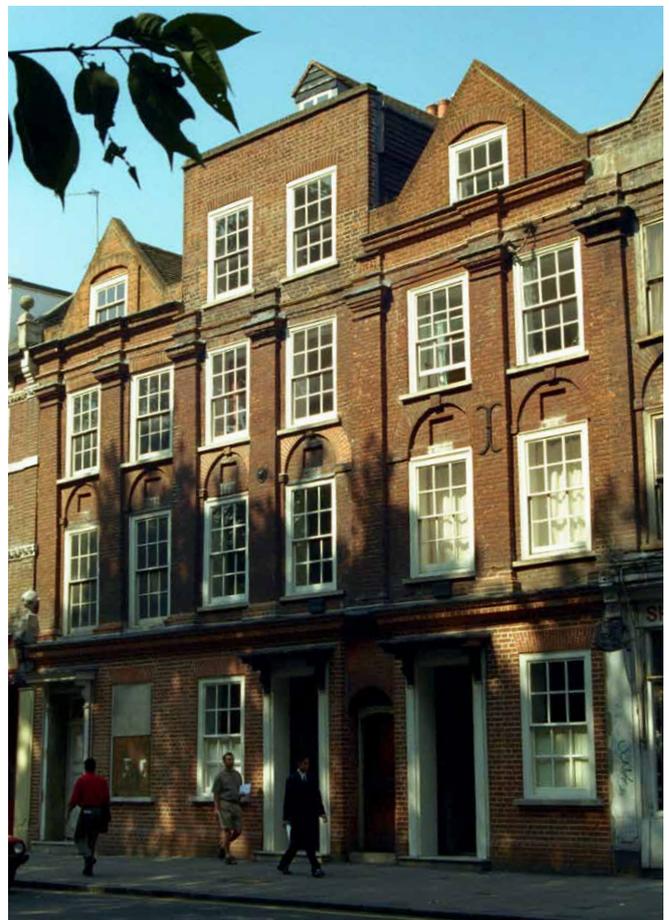
At the very bottom of the social scale were the terraces built in large numbers by speculative developers from the late eighteenth century in expanding industrial towns such as Liverpool and Manchester. They were often built back-to-back in narrow 'courts' or yards squeezed behind street frontages, features considered by the 1850s to be hazardous to health and subsequently prohibited in many areas under bye-laws.

## 1.7 Houses after 1850

There is a significant growth in the number of houses both built and surviving after 1850. The increased availability of building materials delivered by train, and greater mechanisation in the building trades, combined to create even greater standardisation across the country; allied to these developments was the professionalisation of the building trade and the emergence of the local architect. The arrival of plate glass windows led to the loss of delicate glazing bars and small panes of glass. Moulded lintels began to replace carefully gauged brick heads over windows, and high quality facing brickwork, one of the most appealing aspects of Georgian building, was on the wane. The use of traditional approaches petered out for good in the 1850s and 60s, but interesting new trends emerged. The Gothic Revival of the 1840s encouraged a rekindling of interest in traditional building forms, and led to the application of greater decoration to houses of modest size. Industrial processes led to the creation of affordable cast stone and terracotta, cast iron, ceramic tiles, and other materials. Features becoming more common after 1850 included fitted bathrooms and lavatories, kitchen ranges, and attached conservatories.

The most distinctive terraces of the early Victorian period are the vast stuccoed compositions characteristic of Pimlico (City of Westminster) or the 'palace facades' such as Victoria Square, Bristol (1845-53). These developed the approach

of John Nash's monumental Regent's Park terraces, and attained considerable status, particularly in the emerging coastal resort towns. Instances are many: examples include Queen's Terrace, the first development by Decimus Burton for the new port of Fleetwood, Lancashire (1836-41) – or those of a fashionable resort, such as the Italianate Powderham and Barn Park Terraces of the 1850s in Teignmouth, Devon (1846). The Italianate style, popularised by Osborne House, was widely adopted for both town and suburban houses and remained popular for several decades. The grandly composed terraces built in Sunderland in the 1850s and Leeds in the 1860s, set off the road in their own communal grounds and internally embellished with fine



**Figure 9** Amongst some of the earliest terraced housing in the country, these examples of 1658 at 52-5, Newington Green (straddling the border between Islington and Hackney), are extremely rare survivals from the mid-17<sup>th</sup> century. Listed Grade I.



**Figure 10**

Examples of good quality early eighteenth-century terraced housing are rare. Bridgwater, Somerset, is fortunate to still have many fine terraces such as

this one on Castle Street developed by the Duke of Chandos. Listed Grade I.

internal joinery and plasterwork, show how the terrace could sometimes rival the detached villa as a form of opulent middle class housing. The seaside terrace continued well into Victoria's reign, for example, Pier Terrace at West Bay, Bridport, Dorset of 1885 by the distinguished architect E S Prior. A town such as Cromer, Norfolk, shows very clearly the development of the town house from Regency classicism to Victorian eclecticism and revivalism.

Overall, however, except in select developments (or where land value determined a denser approach to development), the terrace became the preserve of the lower middle classes, and great numbers were built in the fast-rising suburbs. Working class housing increasingly took the form of 'by-law housing', so-called for the building regulations introduced by the Public

Health Act of 1875, which stipulated that each house should have its own sanitation and water supply. Rows of standardised dwellings were erected cheaply by builders close to a factory or where discounted workmen's trains made commuting viable. Too often these terraces were poorly built, on cramped sites, and with deep plans containing long back extensions that allowed little light to penetrate.

Despite the social decline of the terrace, individually-designed town-houses for the upper middle classes continued to be built in fashionable parts of central London in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, usually opportunistically as the leases on older terraced properties expired, or as smaller back-land developments on the ends of mews. Particular concentrations may be found in Marylebone, in

central Westminster and in Chelsea and South Kensington. Many, like F M Elgood's various houses on the Howard de Walden estate, are exercises in the homely Queen Anne Revival style much used at the time for suburban housing. Others, such as Ernest George and Harold Peto's Dutch-inspired sequence on Harrington Gardens (1881-4) belong to the more exuberant Free Renaissance manner, while later examples, including Lutyens' 36 Smith Square (1911) and Belcher and Joass' 31 Weymouth Street (1912-13), adhere to the more formal conventions of the neo-Georgian or Beaux-Arts styles. Among the few non-metropolitan examples is John Bevan's 9-10 Berkeley Square in Bristol (1912).

## 1.8 Mews

Urban mews are predominantly a London building type, although they were built in other cities, including Bath and Brighton. Mews were typically built along a narrow street, mirroring the terraced houses they serviced and linked to them by a yard or garden. This arrangement was the most practical means of providing stabling in a dense urban setting, and was used by Inigo Jones in his designs for Covent Garden, becoming widespread from the late seventeenth century as the terraced house became the norm for upper-class town dwelling. Early mews do not survive; most examples date from the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Each house comprised a stable and coach house at ground floor with coachmen's living quarters above. Elevations were usually plain and uniform, typically two storeys high, with large carriage doors to the ground floor. Mews to grand town houses were sometimes given decorative treatment on the inner elevation, for instance 5 and 6 Mansfield Mews, Westminster (Adam brothers, about 1773, listed Grade II). Some Victorian mews, for instance in Holland Park and Belgravia, displayed architectural ambition as part of planned estates with monumental carriage arches to either end, while later nineteenth-century mews displayed Queen Anne and Arts and Crafts influences as seen in Balfour Mews, Paddington (Balfour and Turner, 1888-9, listed Grade II). As areas declined in social status and carriages were



**Figure 11**  
The palatial stuccoed terraces designed by John Nash around London's Regent's Park represent one of the highpoints of English domestic architecture. Sussex Place, of 1822-3, is listed Grade I.

superseded by the motor car, mews were adapted as workshops or garages, becoming increasingly fashionable in the twentieth century as *pieds à terre* or artists' studios.

## 1.9 Industrial housing

Housing associated with early industrial development is highly significant. Rural terraces are a distinctive feature of the Pennines handloom weaving industry from the early to mid-nineteenth century, as found in Lancashire, Greater Manchester, West Yorkshire and Derbyshire. In Holmfirth and Hebden Bridge (both West Yorkshire) a second row of 'underwellings' can be found beneath the principal terrace, a canny use of the steep terrain. In Nottinghamshire and Leicestershire, long upper windows on the upper floors of houses denote workshops for framework knitters, and in Coventry for ribbon weavers.

Enlightened industrialists (and some improving country landowners) provided model housing, often together with social facilities such as a school, a hall and a church. Pioneer developments include Ralph Allen Cottages, a row of small houses for his stone-workers in Bath, designed by John Wood in 1737, and Richard Arkwright's terrace of houses and attic workshops at Cromford, Derbyshire (1776-7). Model housing became more common after 1850, especially in London, but some of the most famous examples are the work of West Yorkshire mill owners: for example, Edward Akroyden's model villages at Copley (1847-53) and Akroyden (from 1859), both near Halifax, and Sir Titus Salt's Saltaire (1849-1876). Many are much later, such as the Bolsover Colliery Company's enlightened settlement at

New Bolsover, Derbyshire (1888-93). The north-east also has its own distinctive forms of terrace. Around Newcastle can be found Tyneside flats – long two-storey terraces of what in London are called cottage flats, indistinguishable from conventional houses save that each unit has two front doors, one leading to a separate upstairs dwelling. Sunderland has a still more unusual terrace type, the Sunderland cottage, lines of deep bungalows perhaps influenced by Scottish precedents. Of interest, too, are early surviving examples of back-to-back terraces (where houses share a rear wall), once a common feature of northern towns and cities, particularly in West Yorkshire. Leeds had 33,000 back-to-backs in the 1930s, many newly built, and numbers still survive in its Headingley suburb.



**Figure 12**  
Easily, from afar, mistaken for a grand country house, this terrace of eight houses of about 1830, The Mount, designed by William Flockton on Sheffield's Glossop

Road, ably demonstrates the quality high-status domestic architecture could reach in a northern manufacturing town. Listed Grade II\*.

# 2 Specific Considerations

## 2.1 Considerations by date range

**Pre-1700** Houses, even when substantially altered, whether individual houses or a group, are likely to be listable.

**1700 to about 1850** Houses surviving in anything like their original form should be listed. The earliest, most complete and elaborate terraces may be listable in a high grade. Individual houses should have special intrinsic merit such as good composition, detailing or distinctive plan form. Later Georgian terraces survive in considerable numbers, and discretion is required when assessing the more standard or more compromised examples, but there still are unlisted examples awaiting recognition which warrant designation.

Few intact rows of Georgian mews survive, but many do so in vestigial form; in such cases, while their *ad hoc* character may have acquired a charm of its own, this may be better reflected in conservation area designation. Intact runs of Victorian mews too are rare, and should be given serious consideration for listing. In assessing individual mews houses, date, degree of survival of the façade – including survival of the carriage entrance – and group value will be key considerations.

**About 1850 to 1900** Because of the increase in the number of houses both built and surviving, greater selection is required. Housing did become more standardised with the growth of the railways and the industrialisation of construction and materials; the professionalisation of architecture



**Figure 13**

No. 10, Downing Street, London, here shown in the 1870s – together with Manchester’s fictional Coronation Street – the country’s most famous terraced housing. Originally designed in 1682, the present house is largely a remodelling of 1723-35 by the Office of Works in order to become the official residence of the Prime Minister. Listed Grade I.

and building compounded this development further. Nonetheless, housing of flair, innovation, character and degree of survival will warrant identification. Model housing has special sociological as well as architectural interest.

## 2.2 Architectural interest

Most of the grander town houses and terraces will have been listed already on account of their architectural and historic interest. This can reside in their design; decoration; planning; construction; the survival of early or unusual features. Decorative elements and qualities of material and construction will also be important aspects to consider. Polite architecture is not the only ground of interest, however, and the adaptation of design approaches for more modest contexts may be of interest too.

Assessment should always be appropriate to the status of the dwelling; it would be wrong to judge a terrace of working-class dwellings, for example, against the standards for middle-class town houses.

## 2.3 Status and survival

The Georgian town houses that survive today will tend, through natural selection, to be the grander examples. Few humble working-class dwellings survive, and any modest houses and terraces prior to the mid-nineteenth century are worthy of careful consideration: their rarity and interest are only now becoming clear. Early terraces of workers' housing are particularly worthy of attention, especially if they form a coherent group that retains internal timber partitions and simple staircases. In all cases, the things to look for are the same: the survival of exterior and



**Figure 14**  
An attractive but seemingly unremarkable terrace of about 1860 in Alnwick, Northumberland, viewed across the river. However, appearances can be

deceptive as Lovaine Terrace was built for the Duke of Northumberland using an innovative method of early concrete block construction. Listed Grade II.

interior features, and of plan form, but rarity may outweigh these considerations: a sole survivor of a form once typical of the working-class housing of a town should be taken seriously, even if altered.

## 2.4 Interiors

Many houses have never been inspected internally, and features of interest may survive which have never been considered: new discoveries and new designations thus remain to be made. Some houses will be listable on their exteriors alone, but internal survival will add to the strength of a case. The principal spaces – hall, staircase, reception rooms – will be of particular interest, although survivals in service quarters and bedrooms may be of interest too. According to the date, and status, of the house, fittings and decorative features may include fanlights, door

surrounds or porches, panelled doors and door furniture, original windows with glazing bars (look out for old glass), and sometimes margin light glazing (perhaps with coloured glass); gauged-brick arches; moulded stone, stucco or Coade stone detail; ironwork to windows, railings and gates; decorative use of terracotta, tiles or moulded brick; stained glass. Internally they include staircases; fireplaces; decorative plasterwork; joinery: doors, architraves, panelling, shutters and so forth; built-in cupboards or shelved niches. Rare survivals such as early wallpaper, stencilled or painted wall decoration, should be given due weight. ‘Below stairs’ features are increasingly rare, such as ranges, built-in dressers, ‘coppers’, strong rooms and pantries, flag floors, stone slabs for cold storage, wine and ale cellars. All are features that can contribute to special interest.



**Figure 15**  
Magnificent unified terraces and crescents, such as here at Royal York Crescent, Clifton, did not always have as even a building history as their design suggests. Begun as a speculative development in this

newly fashionable part of Bristol in 1791, work had to stop in 1801, was resumed in 1809, and only completed in 1820. Listed Grade II\*.



**Figure 16**

The application of the Gothic Revival to terraced housing could produce examples of considerable architectural ingenuity. This mid-Victorian example

on Park Street, Taunton, Somerset, forms part of a larger development which includes the local church and a hotel. Listed Grade II\*.

## 2.5 Alteration

Houses are for living in, and inevitably change over time. Because many were built to last no more than the length of their original leases – usually 61 or (later on) 99 years – partial (or even total) rebuilding was often necessary. Sometimes, however, they were refaced, stuccoed or embellished as fashion dictated, and Georgian interiors often survive behind nineteenth-century façades. Alterations can add to special interest – many early-Georgian houses were remodelled in the late eighteenth-century neoclassical taste, for example. Common nineteenth- or twentieth-century alterations include subdivision into flats or offices, roof extensions, or extension over the rear yard or garden. The key issue is whether alterations have seriously undermined the building's overall interest: a good interior may outweigh a compromised façade, and vice versa: discretion will be required on a case-by-case basis.

Generally, the rebuilding or remodelling of the principal façade, including changes to the proportions of door and window openings, will undermine the case for listing. Other alterations, such as obtrusive roof extensions, rendering, the loss of architectural elements (for instance, capitals, door surrounds) may also detract from architectural interest. Discretion is required where the ground floor has been converted into a shop, sometimes extending over the former front garden, and considerations will be the degree of survival of the upper floors, and group value (see below). Some shop fronts or interiors however may be original, or early additions – pre-1850 examples are rare; a good later shopfront too may contribute to special interest. Regard should be paid to the selection guide for [Commerce and Exchange Buildings](#).

Internally, the loss of major elements such as the staircase, or the room plan of the principal floors, or the stripping out of internal features, will undermine the case for listing. Alterations



**Figure 17**

As the nineteenth century progressed, the unified architectural compositions which characterised so many Georgian terraces gave way to more varied

and picturesque compositions such as this terrace of eight town houses of 1872 by John Douglas on Grosvenor Park Road, Chester. Listed Grade II.

to the less prominent parts of a house, such as bedrooms and service areas, may have less of an impact than alterations to the principal spaces.

## 2.6 Group value

This is an important consideration in assessing terraces. A cohesive terrace may be listable even where individual components would otherwise fall below the standard (for instance, due to internal alterations).

## 2.7 Regional variations

Research into town houses and, particularly, terraces has focused on London. However, because fashions established in the metropolis were widely and quickly disseminated and because the Acts of Parliament governing London influenced decisions made elsewhere, this focus does throw considerable light on the regional

experience. Nonetheless, there are important regional variations - not all London features were adopted elsewhere and local conditions often led to local solutions – and assessment for designation should take full account of these. Buildings a distance away from major cities should not be expected to be in the vanguard of architectural fashion either. Respect should be accorded to important examples of regional approaches to house building, as reflected in design, planning and materials.

## 2.8 The 1850 threshold

There are sound reasons for progressively greater selection after this date: survivals become more numerous; designs, construction, and fittings become more standardised, and thus architectural and decorative achievement is not always evident. However, this threshold needs to be treated thoughtfully – post-1850 buildings, particularly outside the great cities, may well



**Figure 18**  
An attractive terrace of houses on Archery Square, Walmer, Kent, of the early twentieth century. Listed Grade II.

warrant inclusion, while pre-1850 examples can sometimes lack sufficient interest. The intrinsic qualities of a building may be more important than the exact date of construction. A well-composed terrace of the 1850s, with coherent runs of decorative ironwork, fanlights, door cases, gauged brick heads over sash windows or margin-light glazing, for example, may be as listable as one of the 1830s.

## 2.9 Victorian houses

Generally speaking, from the middle years of the century onwards, only the more architecturally ambitious terraces are listable. Careful selection is required, especially in the vast stuccoed London suburbs and seaside resorts. The formally composed terraces, squares and crescents have generally been listed, but the journeyman rows generally have not. While conservation area designation may provide the best vehicle for management of these wider environments, more modest buildings may be listable if they were designed to enhance the setting of the

set pieces. This is more likely to be the case if the latter are highly graded. Victorian housing which demonstrates new approaches to planning and design, or which brings interesting variations on the established themes of terrace and square, should be carefully considered too.

## 2.10 Grading

The earliest, most complete and elaborate terraces may be listable at a high grade. High grades take account of exteriors with decorative brickwork and fine details such as door cases, and interiors with an elaborate staircase, moulded panelling, ornate plasterwork and chimneypieces and possibly distinctive plan forms. The most skilfully composed set pieces from the mid to late eighteenth and early nineteenth century are likely to be listed in high grades for their architectural importance and picturesque use of their site – as with the earliest, most complete and elaborate terraces such as examples in Bath and Bristol. Even when individual houses have undergone

some alteration, the overall importance of an ensemble may well justify listing at a high grade. Only the grandest Victorian terraces forming a set piece to a new development are likely to be listable in a high grade. High grades may also be given for historic interest to terraces that, for example, denote the first speculative development in a town, as with Fortfield Terrace at Sidmouth (Devon) which marked the start of the town's growth as a fashionable resort in the 1790s. High grades may be appropriate for houses with important historic association where the levels of survival of original fabric are high, and where the houses possess intrinsic architectural interest.

## 2.11 Historic interest

Well-documented historic associations of national importance may strengthen the case for listing. The occupancy of a distinguished person may be a consideration – and can be the determinant one in exceptional cases, as can securely documented events of national significance.

Normally, however, a building should be of some architectural merit in itself or it should be preserved in a form that directly illustrates and confirms its historic associations. If this is not the case, a plaque (rather than listing), or a local designation, may be the most appropriate way of recognising the association.

## 2.12 Subsidiary features

Urban terraced houses are usually enclosed at the front by railings on a low wall enclosing a basement well or 'area', while those built in what were originally suburban areas, where land was more abundant, would often have a front garden. Original walls, stone steps, ironwork such as railings, gates, overthrows, lamp holders and bootscrapers; and storage vaults beneath the pavement, can contribute to special interest. Further guidance on boundary walls and railings is provided in the selection guides for [Suburban and Country Houses](#) and [Street Furniture](#).



**Figure 19**

In the twentieth century the terrace was re-branded by Modernists as the row house. This row of seven open-plan houses of 1938 on Mayflower Green, Stratford

upon Avon, was designed for workers at the nearby Flower's Brewery by F W B and F R S Yorke. The houses have rear gardens, and allotments adjoin. Listed Grade II.



**Figure 20**

As the world's first industrial nation, Britain also was the first to witness the resulting poor housing conditions. Philanthropic, if also paternalistic, responses included model towns such as Saltaire on

the outskirts of Bradford. Nos. 1-10 Titus Street, seen here, are not only listed Grade II but form part of a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

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## 2.13 Extent of listing

Amendment to the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 provides two potential ways to be more precise about what is listed.

The empowerments, found in section 1 (5A) (a) and (b) of the 1990 Act, allow the List entry to say definitively whether attached or curtilage structures are protected; and/or to exclude from the listing specified objects fixed to the building, features or parts of the structure. These changes do not apply retrospectively, but New listings and substantial amendments from 2013 will provide this clarification when appropriate.

Clarification on the extent of listing for older lists may be obtained through the Local Planning Authority or through the Historic England's Enhanced Advisory Service, see [www.HistoricEngland.org.uk/EAS](http://www.HistoricEngland.org.uk/EAS).

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