

Copse Hill and Ridgway is possibly a portion of an old Roman road linking the Sussex coast with Kingston and Weybridge. Alternatively it may have been part of an old Neolithic salt route which joined a farming community in Kingston to the nearest source of salt, the Thames Estuary marshes around Greenwich.

General evidence from the area suggests fairly widespread Paleolithic, Bronze Age and Iron Age activity within each of these two Archaeological Priority Zones

## ARCHITECTURAL AND HISTORIC QUALITY OF BUILDINGS IN THE CONSERVATION AREA

### Designations

The residences on all five roads could be best described as quality detached houses. Their size, density and original prices (£1,675 for a four bedroom house and £2,400 for a five bedroom house) would suggest that they were aimed at the upper middle class sector of society. As examples of inter-war speculative suburbia, they are of conservation interest but are not listed.

### Published Historical Information

Council records of the areas development indicate that much of the development is attributable to two developers/builders, Mr A. J. Styles and Mr S. Derwent who each acquired several of the building plots. Mr A. J. Styles, who built a house for him self at 15 Ernle Road, was responsible for most of the development of Ernle Road, McKay Road, Wool Road and Nos 1A to 5 on the south side of Dunstall Road. Mr S. Derwent who resided at 'The Gables' Arterberry Road was responsible for the majority of the remainder of development in Dunstall Road and also No 1 McKay Road.

Another name associated with the Estate is a Mr Alex McKay who for a time resided at Warren Farm, he occasionally acted as Mr Derwent's agent with respect to development in the Wool Road area. He was also associated with the development of other plots on the 'Estate' including No 1 Ernle Road. The small number of remaining plots were acquired by individuals who commissioned buildings independantly.

### Known Architects.

The majority of the houses were builder designed and it appears that architects were only occasionally commissioned. There are no architects of renown known to have been involved in the design of houses in the Wool Road area.

### Buildings

The houses in the area are all two-storey detached dwellings. Because of their close proximity to one another the area appears densely built-up. The vast majority are regular-plan houses, with only a handful of L-Plan houses. The apparent diversity is primarily achieved through the articulation of the front elevations.



Typical Detached Family Dwelling

All of the houses in the area may be grouped stylistically into one of two groups, namely Tudor and Georgian. The majority, however appear to display characteristics of both; typically Tudor timber strap-work and Georgian panelled windows.

The houses at the lower end of Wool Rd itself are generally larger with more garden space around and not typical of the area, in terms of size, they do however epitomise the areas character in reflecting the individuality of the area's buildings.

The fenestration of the houses appears to be an essential element in maintaining the traditional look of the area. This appears to have been most successful where leaded glass has been used.

Where timber strap-work occurs, the contrasting surfaces of the wood, plaster and brickwork creates a rich front elevation.

Despite the presence of more modern development nearby (the housing estate just beyond Lady Jane's Wood and the town houses opposite Ernle Rd), the local architecture is quite predominantly Edwardian suburban in style.

## CHARACTER AND HIERARCHY OF SPACES AND TOWNSCAPE QUALITY

### Contribution of Streetscape to Townscape Quality

#### Street Audit

On Wool Rd itself, the cast iron drain cover and street lamp at the lower end appear to be original features of the development. These along with the red pillar box (George Reign) on the corner of Wool Rd and Mc Kay Rd. contribute to the vintage character of the surroundings.

### Materials and Surfaces

Throughout the area, the maintenance of granite kerbs is in keeping with the quality of the surroundings. Grass verges complement the greenery of the area.

### Other Features.

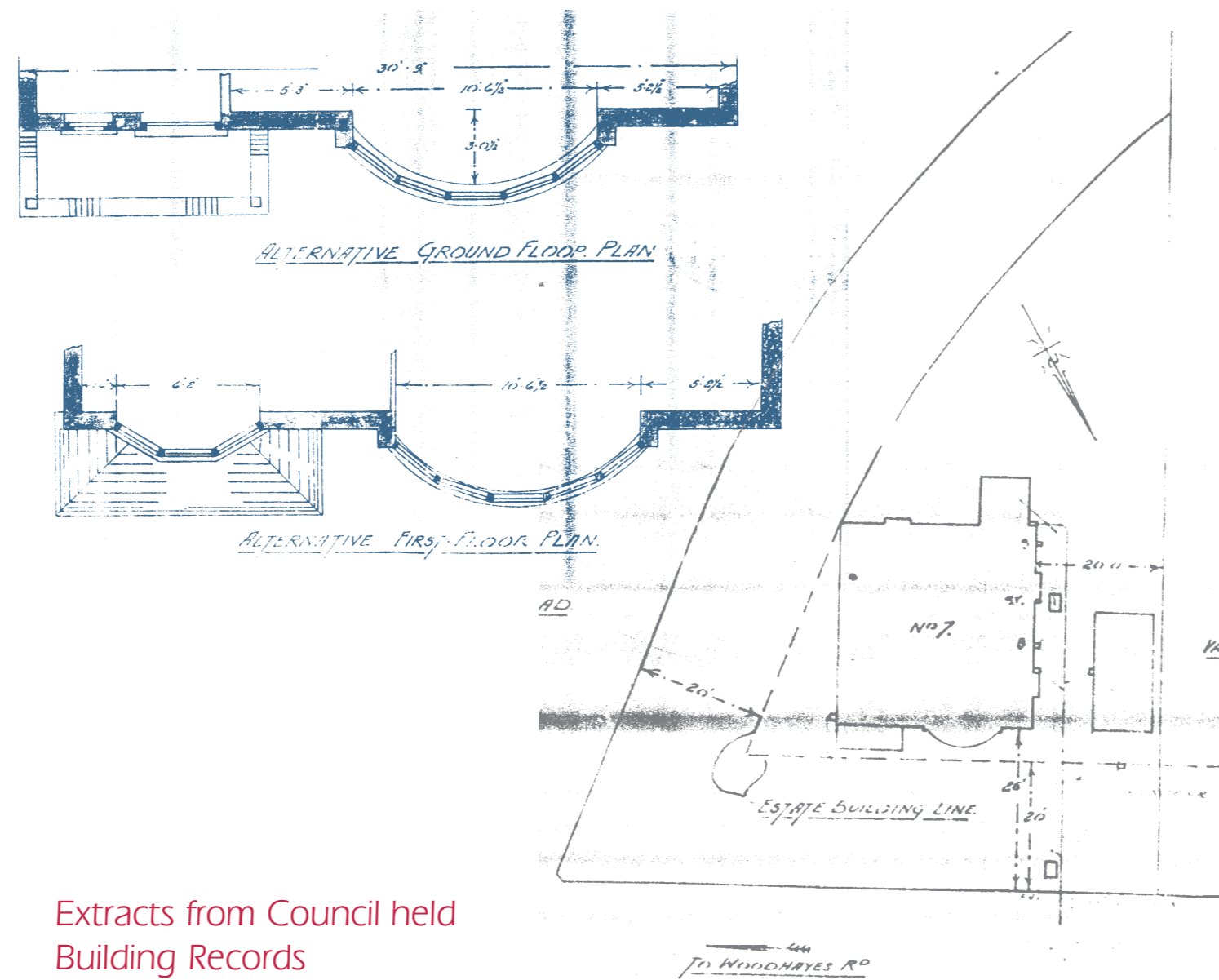
Low clay brick garden walls with either hedges or cast iron fences complement the street furniture. Wooden post fencing, especially when painted, seems to be quite successful.

### Detrimental Street Furniture

Generally wooden slat fencing has the overall effect of dulling the street elevation.

### Neutral Features

The street lights, because of their form and colour neither promote nor detract from the area.



Extracts from Council held Building Records

## Contribution Made by Trees and Green Spaces to the Conservation Area and its Surroundings

### Characteristic Landscape Features

The sense of space and openness are essential to the character of the area as is the abundance of greenery.

Crucial to this sense of space is the scarcity of trees lining the roads (although several properties have quite large trees in their front gardens).

The grass verges (some of which have been tarred over along Ernle Rd. and the beginning of Wool Rd.) are a constant reminder of the elements of the Garden City the area aspires to.

## Green Space Designations

There are no green space designations within the conservation area itself however the woodland to the north and west is included within the Royal Wimbledon Golf Course Site of Importance for Nature Conservation, Borough Grade I. Cannizaro Park, also to the north of the conservation area is included on English Heritage's Register of Historic Parks and Gardens listed as Grade II\*

## Open Spaces

### Quality of open spaces

The bulk of open space, apart from the tennis courts on the corner of Copse Hill and Woodhayes Road, is enclosed by the dwellings. Front lawns and garden spaces, whilst embellishing the individual properties soften, on a larger scale, the transition from road to front door. These extensive front gardens are a direct result of the restrictions placed by the Estate owners on the areas developers. These restrictions included a strictly imposed building line set back 20 feet from the street boundaries. These front garden areas contain the bulk of the greenery and trees which give the area much of its character.

### Hierarchy of spaces

Of the identifiable open spaces, the most significant are: front gardens, streets and pedestrian areas, gaps between buildings, rear gardens and recreational (tennis courts) areas; in that order.

### Key views

The best views are afforded by Mc Kay Rd and the higher end of Wool Rd, from where the area itself as well as the woods and fields to the north and northwest can be seen.

## IMPORTANT PERSONALITIES ASSOCIATED WITH THE CONSERVATION AREA AND ITS SURROUNDINGS

### Henry Dundas

Henry Dundas moved into Warren House, as the Duke of Cannizaro's house was then called, in 1785. Mr Dundas or Viscount Melville as he later became, planted Lady Jane's Wood to celebrate his marriage to Lady Jane Hope in 1793.

### Captain Frederic Marryat (1792-1848)

Captain Frederic Marryat, a novelist and naval Captain who served under Admiral Horatio Nelson leased Gothic Lodge (previously known as Gothic House) for his family whilst he was at sea.

### Sir William Preece

Sir William Preece was the longest inhabitant of Gothic Lodge. He was the Chief Post Office Engineer and also a good friend of Guglielmo Marconi who was known to have been a frequent guest at the house. He was responsible for the installation of street lighting in the Wimbledon area. Not surprisingly Gothic Lodge also gained fame as the first house in London to have electricity.

### Francis Cranmer-Penrose (1817-1903)

Francis Cranmer-Penrose was a distinguished architect and Surveyor of the fabric of St Paul's Cathedral. He designed Colbyfield at No 11 Copse Hill which was completed in 1862 where he lived until his death in 1903.

### William Browne -1748

William Browne a wealthy London merchant purchased the area of land north of Copse Hill between Beverley Brook to the west and Westside Common to the east, which was originally known as the Old Deer Park in 1705.

### Thomas Walker MP -1748

Thomas Walker MP a wealthy landowner, Surveyor General of His Majesty's Land Revenue and close friend of Sir Robert Walpole, the Prime Minister acquired the Old Deer Park, now called The Warren, from William Browne's son in 1738.

### The Drax family

The Drax family acquired the land in the 1820's.



Aspects of Conservation Area Character - Traditional Street Lamp and broad grass verges

## NEGATIVE FACTORS

The main negative features in the conservation area are the timber fencing where it extends to ground level which with time begin to look shabby. Some houses have had their original small paned and/or leaded light windows reglazed with plain glazing, as a result the elevations can look rather plain.

## AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT

For the most part properties in the area are very well maintained. The maintenance of the character of the area can be preserved by simply avoiding external changes which are unsympathetic to the areas special character.

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George Reign Pillar Box



Cast Iron Drain Cover



Materials: Granite Kerbs, Quadrants and Setts

## STREET FURNITURE AND DETAILING