



NOS. 24, 22 AND 20 LEOPOLD ROAD. Below: Historic features which have been retained.

No.	shop front	stall riser	fascia	door to shop	door to flat	pilasters	corbels	blind	windows to flat
24	no	no	no	no	no	yes	yes	no	yes
22	no	no	yes	no	no	yes	yes	no	no
20	no	no	no	no	no	yes	yes	no	no

No.24: Used as a coin operated Launderette since 1963, with a modern utilitarian front. **Shop Front:** Picture windows exposing washing machines etc. to public view. Centrally placed modern shop door. **Fascia:** The original fascia has been left bare, and the shop fascia has been built into the shop front immediately above door head height; simple white lettering on a blue background. **Blind:** Remains of blind hanging from top of fascia. **Side access:** Retained; leads to dental practice. The upper floors are used as offices. **Level of maintenance:** Minimal. **Apparent level of prosperity:** Moderate. **Contribution to CA:** Negative.

No.22: A dry cleaners with a smart, modern utilitarian front. **Shop front:** large picture window revealing clothes hanging on racks. In contrast to the washing machines next door, their exposure is not detrimental to the street scene. **Blind:** Smart dark blue Dutch blind with white lettering immediately below original fascia. **Side access:** retained. **Upper floors:** Original windows replaced with modern plastic replicas. **Level of maintenance:** high. **Apparent level of prosperity:** high. **Contribution to CA:** positive.

No. 20: Used as an Indian restaurant since 1972, with an attractive modern front installed in 1990 which attempts at period character in the detailing; painted white throughout. **Shop front:** A 5-bay design, with the restaurant entrance at one end, the side entrance at the other and three windows in the centre. Ornamental 'lintels' over the doors and windows. **Fascia:** deepened to accommodate elegant raised lettering on raised panel, spot lit. **Blind:** retained. **Side access:** retained and arranged to form part of composition. **Upper floors:** Original windows replaced with modern plastic replicas. 6-light to upper half of 2nd. floor. **Level of maintenance:** high. **Apparent level of prosperity:** high. **Contribution to CA:** positive.



NOS. 18, 16 AND 14 LEOPOLD ROAD. Below: Historic features which have been retained.

No.	shop front	stall riser	fascia	door to shop	door to flat	pilasters	corbels	blind	windows to flat
18	no	no	yes	no	no	yes	yes	yes	no
16	no	no	no	no	yes	yes	yes	no	no
14	no	no	no	no	no	yes	no	no	no

No. 18: A hair and beauty salon extended at the rear in 1988, with an elegantly designed, modern front, painted throughout in discrete café latté. **Shop front:** Four-light front with asymmetrically placed entrance; windows separated with thin ornamental mullions; panelled stall riser. **Fascia:** hidden by blind. **Blind:** retained; coloured to match shop front, with elegant white lettering. **Side entrance:** retained, designed and coloured to match the shop front. **Upper floors:** Original windows replaced by modern top hung replicas. **Level of maintenance:** high. **Apparent level of prosperity:** high. **Contribution to CA:** positive.

No. 16: Used as a grocers since at least 1964, now a speciality food supplies store and off-licence with a modern, utilitarian, garish front installed in 1986. **Shopfront:** Picture windows in bright red frames, used as advertising hoardings; covered in notices and 'special offers'; centrally placed doorway. **Fascia:** Modern, large harsh red lettering on white background. **Blind:** modern Dutch blind, bright red with white lettering. **Side entrance:** modern, red painted frame. **Upper floors:** brickwork painted dark pink with string courses and lintels picked out in white; original windows replaced with modern top hung casements. **Level of maintenance:** Moderate. **Apparent level of prosperity:** moderate. **Contribution to CA:** Strongly negative, mainly because of treatment to brickwork of upper floors.

No. 14: (with No. 12): Used as a licensed Mexican cantina and coffee bar since 1982 which apparently attempts to create a Mexican 'Wide West' impression, which is a totally unsuitable treatment to a sensitively designed period property. **Shop front:** replaced with two round-arched windows and a doorway in bright blue frames surrounded by multi-coloured yellow brickwork. Menus and other notices in panels between the windows. Pilasters painted yellow and corbels removed. **Fascia:** replaced with rough-hewn horizontal boarding soiled to look weather-beaten. Lettering which may be intended to look as though it is made out of cacti; with a sketch of a cactus at one end. **Blind:** removed. Bright yellow 'Dutch' blind over doorway. **Side entrance:** removed. **Upper floors:** Original windows replaced by modern top-hung casements. A hanging sign has been installed at first floor level. **Level of maintenance:** moderate. **Apparent level of prosperity:** moderate. **Contribution to CA:** Seriously detrimental.



NOS. 12, 10 AND 8. LEOPOLD ROAD. Below: historic features which have been retained.

No.	shop front	stall riser	fascia	door to shop	door to flat	pilasters	corbels	blind	windows to flat
12	no	no	no	no	no	yes	no	no	no
10	no	no	no	no	no	yes	no	no	no
8	no	no	no	no	no	yes	yes	no	no

No. 12 (with No. 14): A continuation of No. 14, with the same character. The only difference is that the **side access** has been retained, there is yellow bunting hanging from the bottom of the fascia, and there is another hanging sign at first floor level. The overall treatment continues to be seriously detrimental to the character of the Conservation Area.

No. 10: A supermarket, off-licence and post office with a modern with a utilitarian front installed in 1984. **Shop front:** Modern metal framed picture windows with white painted stall risers, the entrance being placed centrally. The windows are used as advertisement hoardings, cluttered with adverts and notices. **Fascia:** replaced with deeper modern fascia in green with large yellow lettering. Hanging sign at fascia level. **Blind:** Traditional blind under fascia, in dark green with white lettering. **Side access:** retained, modern metal framed door. **Upper floors:** Brickwork painted white, much of which has peeled off. The original windows have been replaced with modern top hung replicas. **Level of maintenance:** poor, particularly upper floors. **Apparent level of prosperity:** poor. **Contribution to CA:** negative.

No. 8: A decorous candy-coloured gift shop designed to appeal to the feminine shopper. **Shop front:** A pair of symmetrically arranged picture windows with low black stall risers, each side of curved glazing and a central recessed door, the narrow frames, pilasters and corbels painted pale pink. **Fascia:** Painted pale pink to match, with red script lettering. **Blind:** Traditional blind below fascia in white with pink script lettering. **Side entry:** Down alleyway. **Upper floors:** Original sashes retained, except for top left window, which is modern top hung casement. **Level of maintenance:** high. **Apparent level of prosperity:** high. **Contribution to CA:** positive.



The north side of Leopold Road and the south end of Strathearn Road from the east.

NOS. 6 , 4 AND 2 LEOPOLD ROAD. Below: historic features which have been retained.

No.	shop front	stall riser	fascia	door to shop	door to flat	pilasters	corbels	blind	windows to flat
6	no	no	no	no	no	yes	no	no (?)	no
4	no	no	no	no	yes	yes	no	no	no
2	no	no	no	no	no	yes	yes	no	no

No. 6: An anonymous, utilitarian front; the ground floor may be used as offices. **Shop front:** modern white painted frames, centrally placed black painted panelled door, picture windows with horizontal blinds to maintain privacy, **Fascia:** blank, painted white. **Blind:** None. **Side access:** In alleyway. **Upper floors:** Original windows have been replaced by modern replicas. **Level of maintenance:** high. **Apparent level of prosperity:** high. **Contribution to CA:** Negative because lack of street presence.

Nos. 4 and 2: An art gallery with a modern high-tech minimalist front. **Shop front:** Picture windows and low stall riser painted block. The entrance is at No. 2 and No. 4 extends round the corner into Strathearn Road, with another entrance on the corner. **Fascia:** Black, no lettering. **Blind:** Below fascia, square section, black with white sans serif lettering. **Side access:** retained, modern door. **Upper floors:** Original windows retained. **Level of maintenance:** high. **Apparent level of prosperity:** high. **Contribution to CA:** positive.

No.1a Strathearn Road: No. 1a is a detached two-storey building separated from No. 2 Leopold Road by a rear service access way. It continues many of the features of Nos. 2 to 6 Leopold Road, and the façade is topped by a scrolled parapet with '1909' in the centre. The ground floor is occupied by a turf accountant, the shop front being modern and utilitarian, with a central door, red panelled stall risers, and window posters.

Facades to Nos. 6, 4 and 2 Leopold Road:

The facades are more elaborate than the rest of those in the Conservation Area and are locally listed. They were built in 1908 and because of their position facing on to the busy road junction at the eastern end of the Conservation Area, they form a visual stop to the view northwards along Alexander Road.

Nos. 4 and 6: Nos. 4 and 6 each have three Georgian proportioned sash windows on each floor with brick piers of similar width to the windows. The red brickwork is decorated by pale terracotta string courses at the heads and central sash levels of the windows. The continuous plain terracotta stringcourse and lintels to the first floor windows have curved tops protected by ornamental brick corbels, and the elaborately decorated terracotta semi-circular panels over the second floor windows are surrounded by semi-circular brick arches and terracotta keystones. The second floor windows also have elaborate terracotta cills. The coping below each of the elaborate terracotta parapets is straight and that above is curved at the centre. The party walls are picked out with terracotta pilasters topped by ornamental urns.

No. 2: The façade to No. 2 is similar to those of 4 and 6 except that it incorporates a prominent octagonal tower which acts as an elaborate corner feature at the junction of Leopold and Strathearn Roads. The features of the main façade are slightly narrower to accommodate the tower and are separated from it by an additional pilaster. The tower continues the window proportions of the rest of the façade but is clad entirely in terracotta with copings over the second floor windows and ornate panels beneath a copper cupola. A single three-storey bay continues around the corner, and adjoining the three-storey section is a two-storey wing of similar design with a pair of blue painted doors below a semi-circular terracotta arch and a pair of particularly narrow first floor windows. The change from three to two storey's features a pair of ornamental scrolls in terracotta.

Below: Left, typically inappropriate examples of modern doors providing access to the upper floors; and right, the façade to No. 1a Strathearn Road.





Typical examples of the ornamental pilasters and corbels between the shop fronts: Top left, a carefully restored example between Nos. 5 and 7; top right contrasting badly and well maintained examples between Nos 28 and 30; bottom left, an example of the ornate terracotta decoration to shop Nos. 2 to 6; and bottom right, the recently restored corbels and capitals to No.1a Strathearn Rd.



SUMMARY

Level of Maintenance, Apparent Level of Prosperity, and Contribution to the Character of the Conservation Area

The following tables summaries the description and findings set out on the previous dozen pages using shading to indicate the degree to which the level of maintenance and prosperity affect the contribution each property makes to the character of the Conservation Area.

Level of Maintenance (LM): In the following table:

- **dark** shading: those properties which appear to be very poorly maintained;
- **light** shading: those properties which been moderately poorly maintained;
- no shading: those properties which have been well maintained

Apparent Level of Prosperity (LP): In the following table:

- **dark** shading: those properties which appear to have a low level of prosperity.
- **light** shading: those properties which appear to be moderately prosperous.
- no shading: those properties which appear to enjoy a high level of prosperity.

Contribution to the Character of the Conservation Area (CA): In the following summary:

- **black** shading: those properties where the contribution is seriously detrimental;
- **dark** shading: those properties where the contribution is moderately detrimental;
- **light** shading: those properties where the contribution is neutral;
- no shading: those properties where the contribution is positive.

NUMBERS SOUTH SIDE	1	3	5	7	9	11	13	15	17	19	21	23	25	27	TOTAL NO. OF SHOPS
maintenance															1 6 7
prosperity															3 3 8
effect on CA															4 5 5

NUMBERS NORTH SIDE	2	4	6	8	10	12	14	16	18	20	22	24	26	28	30	32	34	TOTAL NUMBER OF SHOPS
maintenance																		0 3 4 10
prosperity																		0 2 5 10
effect on CA																		2 4 2 8

Level of Maintenance

- No. of properties which appear to be well maintained: 17 (55%)
- No. of properties which appear to be poorly maintained: 10 (32%)
- No. of properties which appear to be very poorly maintained: 4 (13%)

Apparent Level of Prosperity

- No. of properties which appear to be highly prosperous: 18 (58%)
- No. of properties which appear to be moderately prosperous: 8 (26%)
- No. of properties which appear to suffer from a low level pf prosperity: 5 (16%)

Contribution to the Character of the Conservation Area

- No. of properties which make a positive contribution: 12 (38%)
- No. of properties which make a neutral contribution: 8 (26%)
- No. of properties which make a negative contribution: 8 (26%)
- No. of properties which make a seriously detrimental contribution: 3 (10%)

A similar number of properties appear to be well maintained (17), are prosperous (18) and makes a positive contribution to the character of the Conservation (12).Likewise, a similar number appear to be very poorly maintained (4), suffer from a low level of prosperity (5), and make a seriously detrimental contribution (3). Nos. 12, 14 and 16 have a seriously detrimental impact and also retain few of their original features.

NUMBERS SOUTH SIDE	1	3	5	7	9	11	13	15	17	19	21	23	25	27	TOTAL NO. OF SHOPS
shop front															4
stall riser															3
fascia															4/5
door to shop															2/3
door to flats															4
pilasters															12
corbel															14
blind															0
windows	na	na	na												11
TOTAL NO. OF FEATURES	2	2	3	7	3	5	3	7	3	3/4	3	6/7	4	3	

Table one, above: Historic features to shop fronts which have been retained, south side.

NUMBERS NORTH SIDE	2	4	6	8	10	12	14	16	18	20	22	24	26	28	30	32	1 a	TOTAL NO. OF SHOPS
shop front																		1
stall riser																		2
fascia																		2
door to shop																		1
door to flats																		4
pilasters																		17
corbel																		12
blind																		2/3
windows																		1/2
TOTAL NO. OF FEATURES	2	2	1/2	2	1	1	1	3	5	2	3	3	2	2	3	7/8	2	

Table two, above: historic features to shop fronts which have been retained, north side.

Table three, below: properties which have retained their upper floor windows, north side.

NUMBERS NORTH SIDE	3	3	2	2	2	2	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	8	6	4	2	1 a	TOTAL NO. OF SHOPS
second floor, 12 light, top																			0
1 light, bottom																			1
timber windows																			2
sliding sash																			2
first floor 12 light, top																			1
1 light, bottom																			2
timber windows																			2
sliding sash																			2
exp. brickwork																			15
TOTAL NO. OF FEATURES	1	1	1	1	7	1	1	1	0	1	1	0	6/8	1	1	1	1	1	

Historic Features which have been Retained

In Tables one and two opposite:

- **dark** shading indicates those features which have been lost or replaced with a modern replica or substitute;
- **light** shading indicates those features which might be original;
- unshaded panels indicate those properties where the feature has been retained
- 'TOTAL NO. OF SHOPS' indicates the total number of shops which have retained each feature.
- 'TOTAL No. OF FEATURES' indicates the total the number of features retained on each shop.

Table three, opposite, indicates where original window features appear to have been retained (in white) and where they have been replaced (in grey). No. 8 has the original 12-lights in two of the three 2nd floor windows.

Historic Features which have been Retained

The number of original features which have been retained, out of nine, is as follows:

Seven or eight:	1 property (No. 32), 3%.
Seven:	2 properties (No. 7 and 15), 6%.
Six or seven:	1 property (No.23), 3%.
Five:	2 properties (Nos. 11 and 18), 6%
Four:	1 property (No. 25), 3%.
Three or four:	1 property (No. 19), 3%.
Three:	10 properties (Nos. 5, 9, 13, 16, 17, 21, 22, 24, 27 and 30), 32%.
Two:	10 properties (Nos. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 8, 20, 26, 28 and 1a), 32%.
One or two:	1 property (No. 6), 3%.
One:	3 properties (Nos. 10, 12, and 14), 10%

Properties which retain their historic features

Eight of the properties (25%) of the properties retain between eight and four of their original features, another two-thirds retaining only two of three features, usually the pilasters and corbels between the shop fronts.

Types of historic features retained

Of the total of 279 original features, only 100 have been retained, the majority on the south side. The most commonly retained feature is the pilasters and corbels, which survive in almost all of the properties. The third is the upper floor windows, which survive in 13 of the properties, again mainly on the south side. Up to 10 of the original blinds may have been retained, but since they are retractable, it is difficult to tell. Also, although most of the means of access to the upper floors have been retained, few of them appear to have their original doors..

JUSTIFICATION FOR RETAINING THE CONSERVATION AREA

The initial purpose of designating a conservation area is to protect trees and unlisted buildings from casual demolition, and then to preserve the area's character and, if necessary to carry out of programme of enhancement. A character assessment forms part of the second and possibly the third stage. However, an assessment should also review the present boundaries of a conservation area, and make recommendations for its enlargement or reduction where the character of parts of the area have been eroded by incremental change, or where views as to the architectural or historic merits have increased since the initial designation. Occasionally, the assessment may conclude that the conservation area no longer justifies its original designation, possibly because of the wholesale erosion of its character.



Above: the western end of the northern parade adjoining the junction of Leopold, Strathearn and Alexandra Roads, seen from Gap Road. Below: a view of the pavement on the northern side of Leopold Road, showing the typical clutter of street furniture.



It can be seen from the description of the Leopold Road Conservation Area, and particularly from the Summary Table and Analysis above, that there is room for doubt as to the Area's continuing designation. In view of the low percentage of original features which survive, this assessment considers whether or not the Conservation Area continues to merit designation, including the extent to which the Area's other characteristics are of sufficient architectural and historic interest to offset the loss of architectural features. Because of the lack of background material, it is not possible to compare the quality of the Conservation Area at the time of its designation 15 years ago with its present condition. It is however possible to compare its present state with both the reasons given for its original designation and the extent to which it measures up to the criteria for designating conservation areas listed in the current version of the Borough's Unitary Development Plan.

The Conservation Area's Original Designation:

Appendix A of the report of the Conservation Area Advisory Committee for 30 August 1990 and the Planning Services Committee for 20 September 1990 described Leopold Road CA as 'a short shopping street consisting mainly of 3 storey terraces, which feature some stone and some terracotta detailing', and explained that the Council's proposal to designate the area had received a favourable view from English Heritage. The report concluded that areas Kenilworth Road, Waldmar Road, Landeck Road and Leopold Road were considered of sufficient special character to merit designation.

The description of proposed conservation area No. 23, Leopold Road, was as follows:

General description: The street is impressive on account of the proportions of the height of buildings in relation to the space between. Architectural detailing of the late Victorian buildings is simple, but with good use of materials. The corner building at the south-eastern end of the street provides a local landmark.

'Uniformity/Diversity: Strong cohesiveness resulting from architecture of buildings and clearly defined public space.

'Age of Buildings: Late 19th century/early 20th century.

'Uses: Shopping street with dwellings above.

Scale of Buildings: Dominating buildings, three storeys high on each side of a narrow street.

Building Forms/Gaps: Terraces of buildings.

Vegetation: None.

Front Gardens: None.

Public Spaces: Clearly defined public space enclosed by buildings.

Listed Buildings: Not applicable.

Distant Views: Views along street to the south-east towards Crystal Palace.

Parking Problems: Problems are evident, there is a need for parking for local shopping, carriageway is fairly narrow and produces encroachment of parked cars onto pavements and conflicts with through traffic and pedestrian movement.

Through Traffic: Fairly busy road, produces vitality and trade for shopping parades.

Skyline: Corner feature notable at the south-eastern end of the street visible from Gap Road and Alexandra Road.

Architectural Details: Fairly austere Victorian terraces, use of coloured brickwork, stonework on front elevations, lintels, original detailing of shop fronts is important.

The following section considers the above description in relation to the Area's special architectural and historic interest and that of other relevant conservation areas in the Borough.

General Description and Use: The heights of the buildings are about the same as the width of the road, although this in itself is not necessarily justification for designation. Part 7.7 of the Council's PPG Note, 'Design' states:

'The widths of space between buildings can vary considerably, without necessarily adversely affecting the sense of enclosure, but wider street spaces will work best with taller buildings. If an urban feel to an area is desirable, then a ratio between the height of buildings and the width of space of 1:2 or 1:2.5 may be appropriate. If a less intensive character is appropriate then the ratio may be 1:3.5 or more.'



The facades of three of the 'ethnic' restaurants: above, the idiosyncratic façade to the Thai restaurant at No. 21; below left, the elegant façade to the Indian restaurant at No. 20; and below right, the considerably less elegant façade to the Mexican 'cantina' at Nos. 12 and 14.



In the case of the Leopold Road Conservation Area, the ratio is about 1:1, providing a highly urban environment which tends to be oppressive without the intimacy which a greater density might generate.

Merton Council has not produced a document which sets out the standards against which the designation of potential conservation areas can be judged, each designated area being considered on its individual merits compared with others within the Borough and outside it. However, since the information above casts doubt on the viability of continued designation, this assessment compares Leopold Road CA with those other conservation areas which are most nearly comparable, ie, those predominantly containing shopping areas. It is appreciated, however, that even if the Leopold Road CA does not measure up to the quality of these other Areas, this does not necessarily condemn it, since they may be of a higher than minimum standard of architectural and historic interest.

Of the 30 or so shopping areas of various sizes within the Borough, three others are located within conservation areas: The Broadway, Wimbledon Hill Road and Wimbledon Village. (There are also two small shopping parades at the junction of Quentin Avenue/Richmond Avenue and John Innes Merton Park Conservation Areas, on each side of Kingston Road but, not being opposite each other, they do not form a single unified parade.) No character assessments have yet been produced for these three CAs, although brief references to their overall character are included in relevant Conservation Area Design Guides, as follows:

Wimbledon Broadway and Wimbledon Village CAs: *'The particular characteristics that merit the area's designation as conservation area include: the historical background, the number of listed buildings, the charm, character and uniqueness of the detailing of the buildings, and the quality of the streetscape and open spaces.'*

Wimbledon Hill Road CA: *'The area...has a range of very different characters, from the essentially commercial southern end of Wimbledon Hill Road, the leafy tree-lined 'avenue' as one progresses up the hill towards the Village, and the essentially suburban character of the residential areas on either side.'*

All three Conservation Areas are more extensive and spatially complex than Leopold Road CA and have a greater variety of buildings, including both statutorily and locally listed buildings (Wimbledon Village has over 40 buildings which are locally listed). No comparison with a Design Guide for Leopold is possible since none has yet been produced.

Architectural Detailing: The detailing on the buildings in the Leopold Road CA is described as 'simple' and 'austere', presumably with the exception of Nos. 2 to 6, at the south-eastern end, which are locally listed.

The three other conservation areas give descriptions of each individual or group of similar buildings in greater detail than would be appropriate to repeat here, but it is apparent that the variety of features and detailing is far greater than in Leopold Road. The Design Guides for Wimbledon Broadway and Wimbledon Village both state:

Small-scale features of decoration have a major effect on the buildings individual character. Such features include ornate tiling, curved glazing, patterned coloured glazing especially at clearstorey levels, ornate glazing bar patterns, detailing on pilasters and corbels, and the use of special materials, such as terracotta, stone and ironwork.

Except for Nos. 2 to 6, the only ornate features in evidence in the Leopold Road CA are the pilasters and corbels.

Uniformity and Cohesiveness: The uniformity and cohesiveness of the Conservation Area is its strongest asset. The design of the facades above the shops are highly consistent, with the locally listed buildings at the eastern end providing an interesting elaboration of the standard design.



The rear of the properties on the south side of Leopold Road: above, the rear extensions; below left, the rear yard at the western end from the entrance passageway with 'The Mews' to the right; and below right, looking back to the passageway and the rear No. 1 Woodside.



Age of Buildings: The age of the buildings in Leopold Road do not justify their protection purely in terms of historic importance, since they are similar in age to a high proportion of the buildings in the Borough, many of which are not situated within conservation areas.

Scale, Buildings Forms, Gaps and Public Spaces: The fact that the buildings form two terraces which dominate the narrow street in between, creating a clearly defined public space, does not of itself enhance the Areas validity for designation.

Distant Views and Skyline: The views to the east and west do not provide significant vistas with any important culminating features, and the skyline of all the buildings except for those at the southeastern end is a slightly stepped straight parapet.

Parking Problems and Through Traffic: As with the other three Conservation Areas mentioned above, traffic and parking tends to be negative feature which needs to be investigated as part of any enhancement proposals for the Area.

It is evident from the above analysis that the reasons for the designation of Leopold Road as a conservation area are not particularly convincing:

- except for its uniformity and cohesiveness, the Area does not compare well with other conservation areas containing similar uses;
- except perhaps for Nos. 2 to 6, the buildings have no great architectural or historic importance;
- the vistas from the conservation area are not significant;
- and the area suffers from congestion and through-traffic.

The Current Unitary Development Plan

The most relevant UDP policies regarding small groups of shops in conservation areas are Policies S.4, Neighbourhood Parades, and Be.1 to BE.3, relating to conservation areas. Policy S.4 sets out the type of shops most appropriate to neighbourhood parades, the conditions under which permission outside Class A1 (shops) will be permitted, and the proportion of such uses. But these do not relate directly to the appropriateness of such parades as conservation areas. Paragraph 4.48 explains that the Council will review and monitor the boundaries of existing conservation areas, and consider designating new ones, with reference to the following criteria:

- The origins and development of the area: The origins and development of the Leopold Road Conservation Area do not appear to be of great significance.
- The archaeological significance of the area, including any scheduled monuments: The area has no obvious archaeological interest, and does not contain any scheduled monuments;
- The historic street patterns and layout of property boundaries: These are closely related to the adjoining parts of the Borough; the area immediately to the north forms the Kenilworth Road Conservation Area, and that to the south is not included in any conservation area.
- The prevailing uses or mix of uses: The mix is typical of a neighbourhood parade. The 32 premises are divided into ordinary shops (15), eating-places (6), laundrette/dry cleaners (2), art galleries (2), offices (2), estate agent (1), hairdressers (1), turf accountant (1) veterinary clinic (1) and unoccupied (1).
- The age of the buildings of historic interest and whether there are Statutory Listed or Locally Listed buildings: Nos. 2, 4 and 6 Leopold Road are Locally Listed, there are no Statutorily Listed buildings, and the other buildings are not sufficiently old to have any great historic interest or rarity value.
- The potential threat to the existing character from inappropriate forms of development: There appears to be no such potential threat.
- The quality of architecture and the prevalence of building materials which reinforce the identity of the area, and distinguish it from other areas: The only distinctive architecture is the three locally listed buildings and their extensive use of terracotta.



Three typical examples of features which detract from the character of the Conservation Area and which would need to be considered in any enhancement scheme: top left, a typical clutter of discordant signage and shop fittings; top right, the less than inviting access the space at the rear of the north parade; and bottom, unattractive streetscape.



- The quality of trees or other vegetation: The small triangle of vegetation to the north of the parade contains several mature trees which might form the focal point of a small area of landscaping.
- The character and hierarchy of spaces and townscape quality: The only space is the 'canyon'-like character of this section of Leopold Road itself, which is of marginal townscape quality.

Again, Leopold Conservation Area does not measure up particularly well to the current criteria for designating conservation areas:

- the origins and development of the area, the street pattern, and the townscape quality do not appear to be particularly significant;
- the age, materials and architectural quality of the buildings are not significant, except for the decorative use of terracotta on Nos. 2 to 6;
- the Area has no archaeological significance and very little potential landscape value;
- there does not appear to be a threat so much from redevelopment as from the continuing erosion of the area's character from removal of historic features, inappropriate shop fronts and lack of amenity through vehicular intrusion.
- however, in view of its close proximity to Wimbledon Town Centre, there is a danger that retail premises may be replaced by food outlets, public houses and estate agents.

ENHANCEMENT

It is evident from the above that, if the character of this part of Leopold Road is not to continue to decline to the point where its suitability as a conservation area is no longer valid (if it has not reached that point already), an energetic and all-encompassing programme of enhancement is urgently needed. The programme will need to include the following:

- It is important that, as time progresses, the further removal of those few historic features that remain, such as pilasters and corbels between the shops and some of the upper floor windows, should be prevented by means of an Article 4 Direction.
- Owners should be encouraged to replace such lost historic features as fascias, blinds, entrances to upper floors and first and second floor windows. The owners of Nos. 10 and 16 should be encouraged to remove the paintwork from brick facades, and no further painting or other defacing of the upper floors should be permitted. A scheme of grant aid, possibly funded from S.106 Agreements, should be considered to ensure that any repairs are sympathetic with the original character and materials.
- Only suitably designed shop fronts should be approved which either reflect the period character of the buildings or are of high quality modern design, are appropriate and consisted in scale and proportion along the length of the parade, and result in greater harmony. The production of a shop front design guide would assist shopkeepers to apply for suitable replacements.
- The rear extensions should also be inspected to check for any potential improvement of the character of the rear yards. The design guide could include advice on future rear extensions.
- The quality of the areas of paving should be inspected, and the possibility of improving the paving materials of the pavements and pedestrian access ways should be considered.
- A Street Audit should be undertaken to assess the extent and quality of street furniture, and an enhancement scheme, based on the Council's emerging Street Design Guide, be produced to rationalise street furniture and minimise clutter.
- The triangular area of vegetation behind the northern parade should be landscaped and the access ways to it should be improved, to provide an amenity area for the shops and flats which back on to it.
- Means of reducing congestion should be investigated, including a review of loading, unloading and parking facilities, and the possible diversion of through traffic.