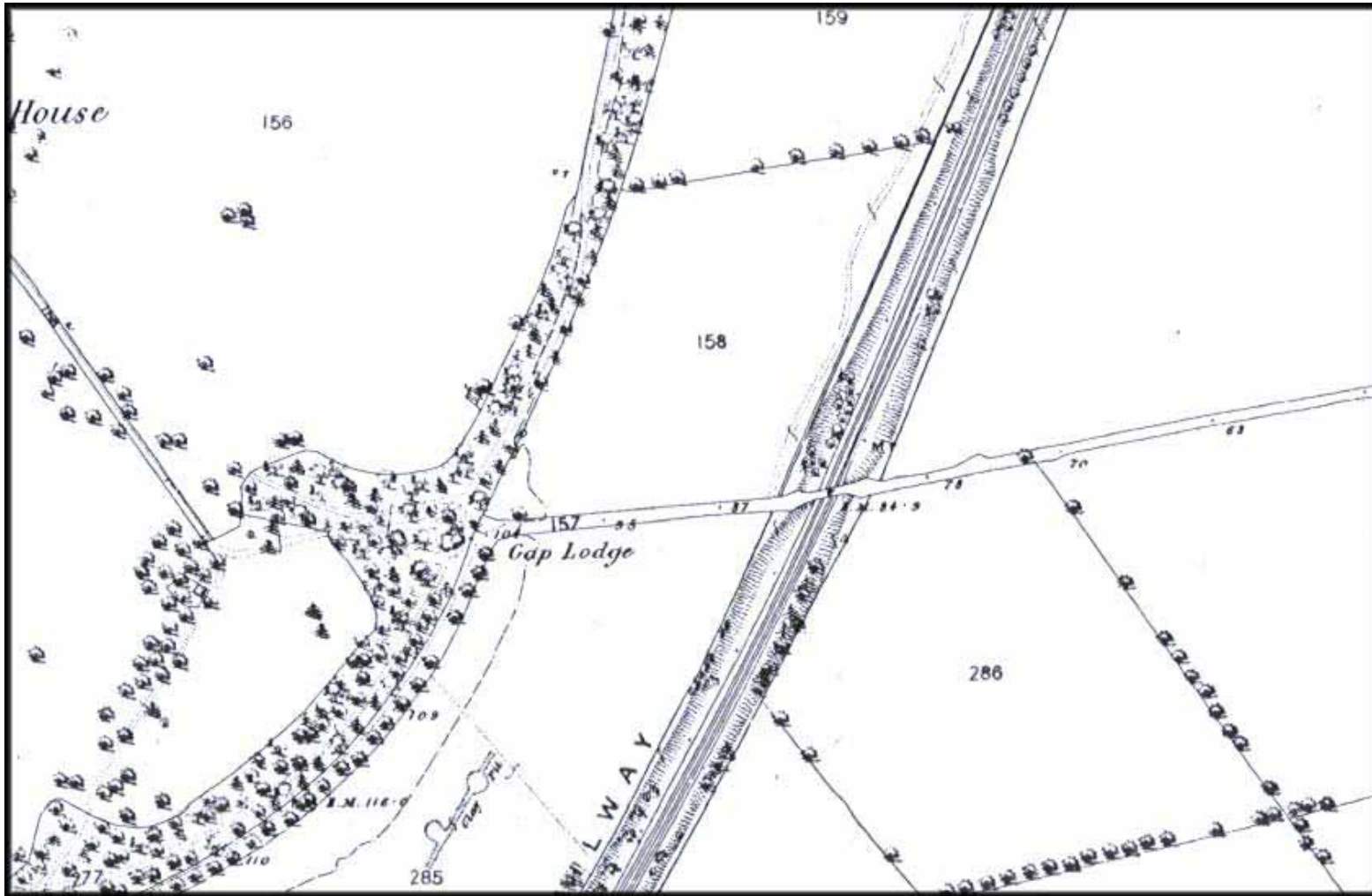


Leopold Road Character Assessment

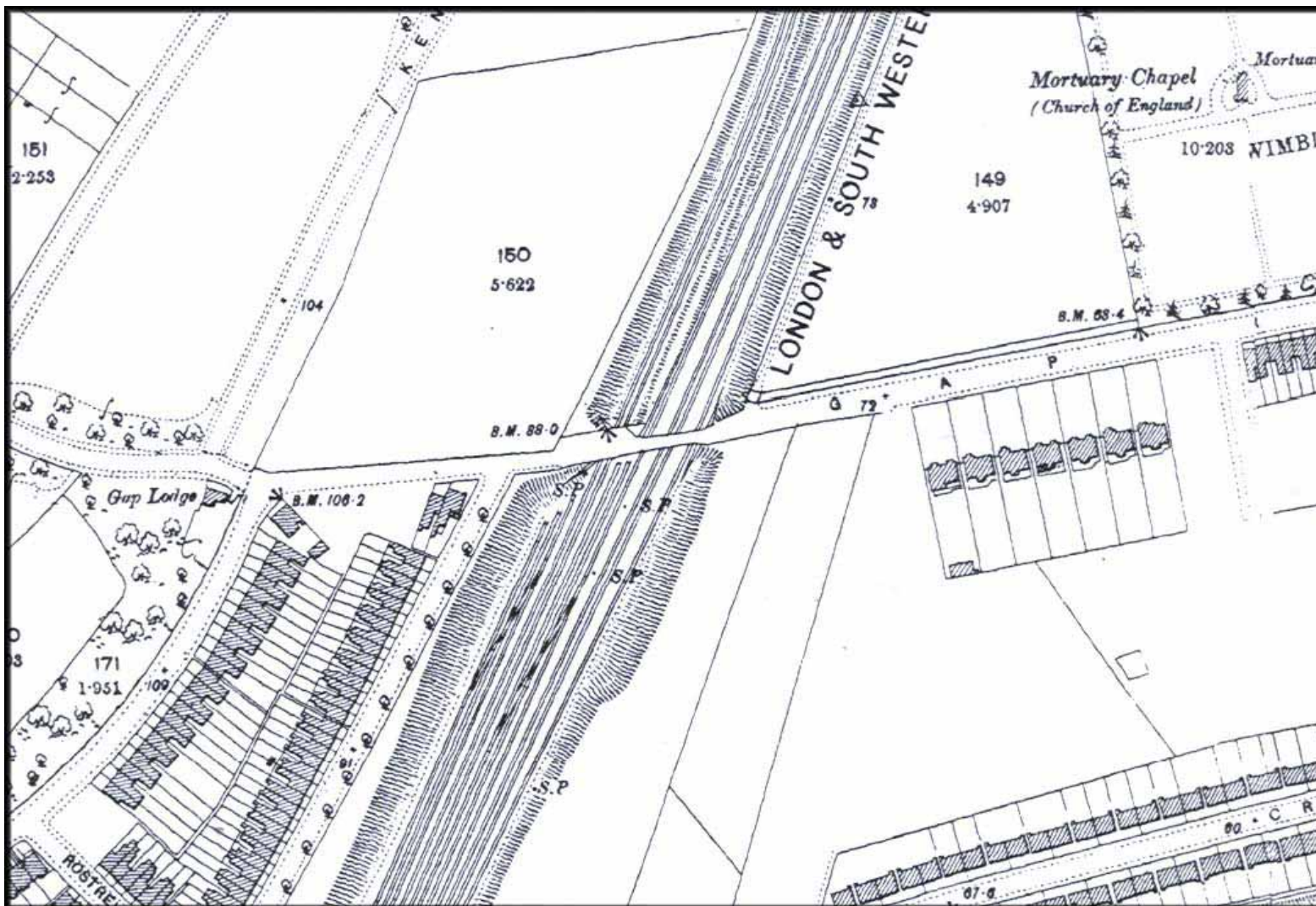
LEOPOLD ROAD
CONSERVATION AREA

Character Assessment

London Borough of Merton
2005



Maps of the Leopold Road area in 1870 and 1890, showing the growth of the London and South Western Railway, the development of Gap Road, and the creation of Alexandra Road and Woodside to the south of the eastern end of Leopold Road.



INTRODUCTION

Conservation Areas

Conservation Areas were first introduced in 1967 and are defined as areas of special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance. Bertram Cottages Conservation Area is one of 28 such areas within the Borough.

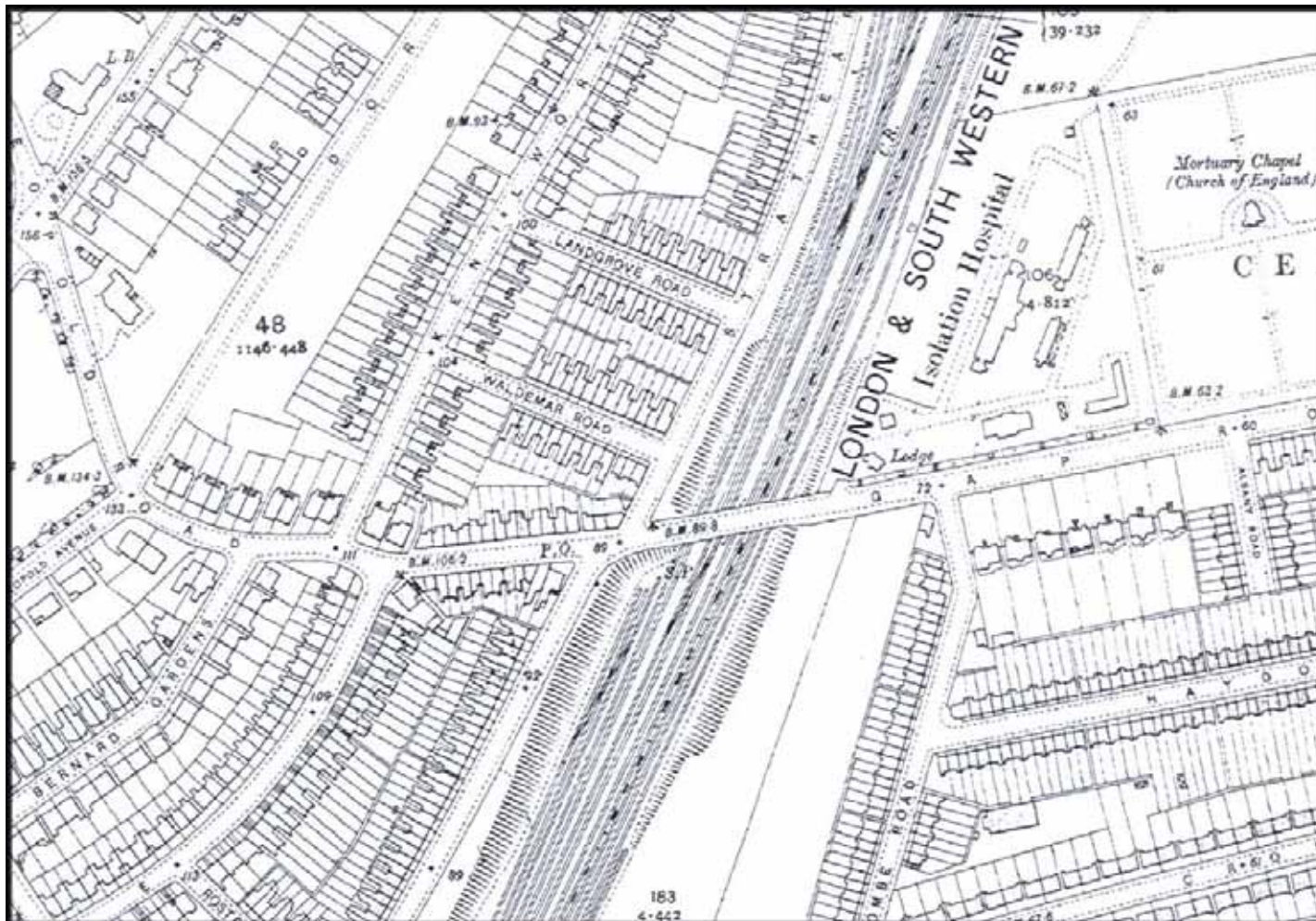
Character Assessments

The Council is required to undertake character assessments of the conservation areas it has designated. It has already produced assessments of many of the Borough's conservation areas and this Assessment forms part of that programme.

The purpose of a character assessment is to set out the specific characteristics which merited the Area's original designation and which make it worthy of protection against unsuitable alterations or development. The assessments provide a tool to help the Council assess the impact of development proposals, and a guide for property owners and developers when designing new development, considering alterations to buildings and work to trees in a conservation area, by explaining the context to which any proposal will need to relate.

The quality of the Leopold Road Conservation Area may have deteriorated since its designation since its viability is now somewhat borderline. This character assessment therefore includes a section which compares Leopold Road with two conservation areas of similar character, and makes recommendations for halting the deterioration of its character, and hopefully enhancing it..

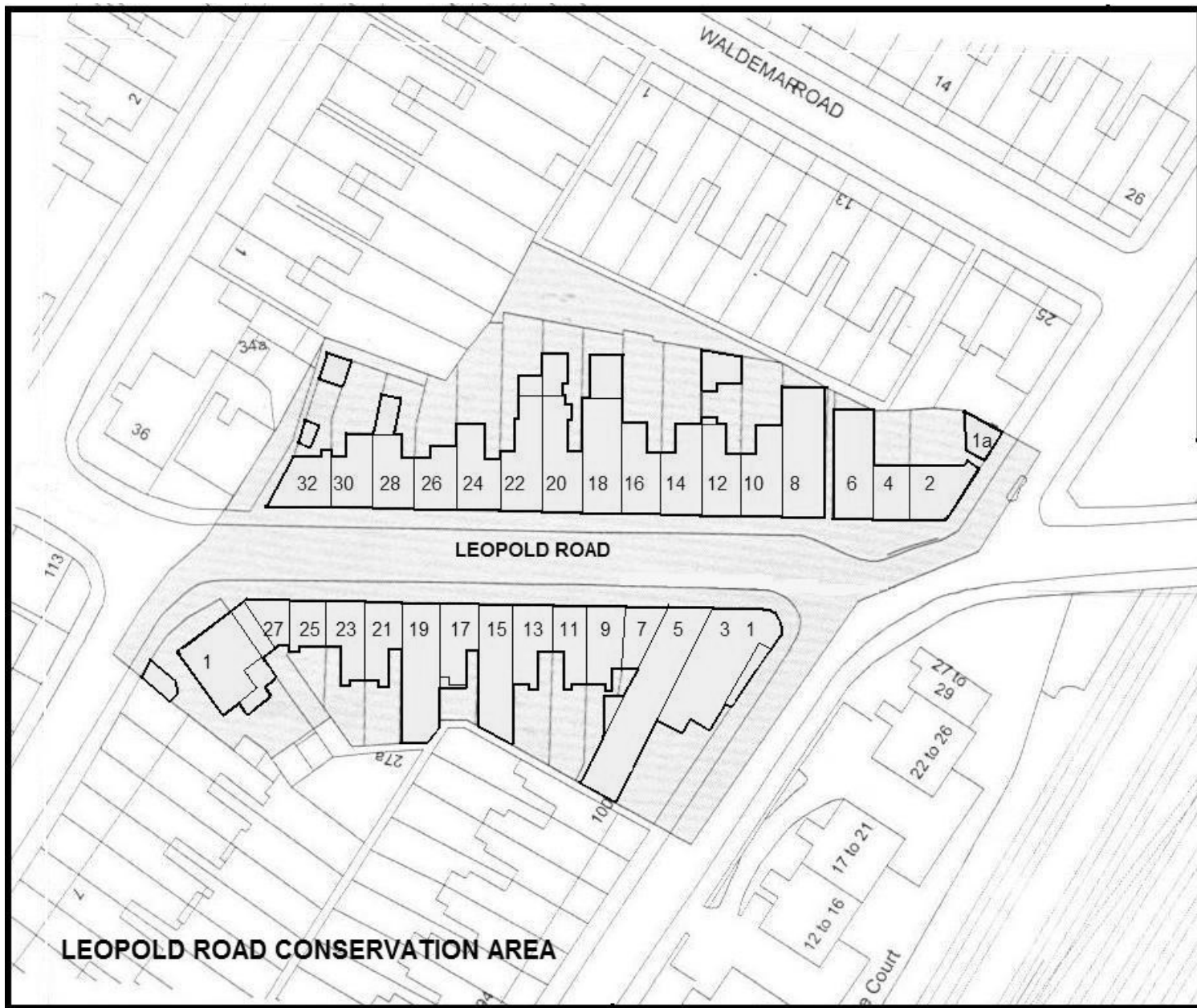
Below: Map of the Leopold Road area in 1910, showing the rapid growth of residential development over the previous 20 years. Gap Lodge has been replaced and the houses along the eastern side of Dora Road have yet to be built.





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*Above: an aerial photo of the eastern end of Leopold Road.
Below, a map of the Leopold Road Conservation Area.*



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Location: Leopold Road Conservation Area is situated about 800 metres to the north of Wimbledon Town Centre. It extends from Arthur Road, about 400 metres to the north-west of the Conservation Area, as far as the junction of Alexander Road, Strathearn Road and Gap Road, immediately at the eastern end of the Conservation Area. This junction immediately adjoins a bridge over the railway line from Waterloo to Wimbledon and beyond, and is a particularly busy intersection. Leopold Road therefore forms part of a significant traffic route from Wimbledon Town Centre to the south and Tooting, to the east, through the Conservation Area, to Wimbledon Park, to the north-west.

Leopold Road Conservation Area covers only the small rows of shops on each side of the road at the eastern end of Leopold Road. In contrast to the busy junction at the eastern end, the western end of the Conservation Area lies within the houses that form the eastern edge of the Wimbledon Park residential area, and the eastern end of the Conservation Area is at the junction of Woodside and Kenilworth Road. Leopold Road is ringed by other conservation areas: to the east is South Park Gardens CA, immediately to the north is Kenilworth Road CA, further to the north-west lies the Vineyard Hill CA, and the conservation areas of North Wimbledon, Wimbledon Village, Wimbledon Hill Road and Wimbledon Broadway lie at varying distances to the west and south.

Extent: The Conservation Area is only about 70 metres from east to west, and 35 metres from north to south. It comprises 18 properties on the north side of Leopold Road and 15 on the south side. All but one, the house at No. 1 Woodside, at the south-western corner of the Conservation Area, are shops of one to three storeys. The Conservation Area therefore forms one of the Borough's thirty-five small Neighbourhood Shopping Parades, to which Unitary Development Plan policy S.4 specifically applies. The housing developments to the north and south was built hard up against the rear boundaries of the properties in Leopold Road, leaving only narrow rear pedestrian access ways.

History: Leopold Road itself is considerably older than the buildings on each side, since it follows the alignment of a roadway between the bridge over the railway line to the east to Gap Lodge, which until about 1910 stood at the corner of Woodside and Leopold Road, and whose site is now occupied by No. 113 Woodside.

The commercial properties in Leopold Road were built between 1892 and 1908 to cater for the rapidly developing residential estates to the north, south and west. The south side, originally known as Woodside Parade, was developed first, between 1892 and 1894, followed by the north side, named Wimbledon Park Parade, between 1899 and 1908. This section of Leopold Road was designated as a conservation area in 1990 as part of a borough-wide survey to assess the potential of further areas for designation. It was regarded as appropriate because of the cohesiveness of the height of the buildings in relation to the width of the street, resulting in a clearly defined public space, and the good use of materials, particularly on the prominent locally listed corner feature at the eastern end,

A hundred years or so ago the road, which is about ten metres wide, including the pavements on each side, was no doubt regarded as wide enough for the traffic using it, was presumably regarded as quite adequate for through traffic, delivering and the occasional parked vehicle. and no attempt appears to have been made to widen it when the commercial properties were constructed on each side. Now it has become a busy through route, and this section of Leopold Road has become something of a bottleneck, with traffic from opposite directions having difficulty in to passing each other when vehicles are parked on both sides of the road. Parking restrictions have therefore been imposed, with no parking permitted on the southern side, and ten metered parking bays, a dedicated space for motorcycles, and one loading bay at the western end for deliveries. But from a casual inspection they do not appear to be very effective, and the single loading bay is hardly convenient for the shops at the eastern end.



Above: Leopold Road Conservation Area from the eastern end, showing the over-elaborate paving and landscaping. Below: The extensive areas of undergrowth and semi-mature trees to the rear of the buildings on the north side of Leopold Road.



FORM AND LAYOUT OF DEVELOPMENT:

Character: The buildings on each side of the eastern end of Leopold Road are fairly typical of the kind of local shops built at the beginning of the last century, with terraces of single shop units on the ground floor and residential accommodation above. There are 32 properties, 17 of them on the northern side of Leopold Road and 15 on the south side. All but six of them are three storey, On the southern side, Nos. 7, 25 and 27 are two storey, and Nos. 5 Leopold Road and the shop element to No. 13 Alexander Road are single storey, while No. 1a Strathearn Road, on the north-east corner of the Conservation Area, is two-storey.

Front Space: The primary justification for designation was the clearly defined public space resulting from the relative proportions of the height of the buildings and the width of the street, and the cohesiveness of the facades, particularly above ground floor level. The most elaborate facades are those to Nos. 2, 4 and 6 Leopold Road, particularly No. 2, which has an octagonal tower at the junction with Strathearn Road. The flat front facades of the three storey buildings on each side of Leopold Road are about 10 metres high, similar to the road width. The impression from either end of the Conservation Area is therefore of a square-sided canyon, with the ground covered in moving and stationary vehicles, street furniture and a wide variety of treatments to the shop fronts, blinds and fascias, while above the ground floor, the repetitive facades provide a scene of comparative harmony. The contrasting visual chaos at ground level can be invigorating, but on balance the plethora of street signs and discordant shop fronts provide an unattractive spectacle, and some measures need to be taken to improve the appearance.

Rear Spaces: In contrast to the unified form of the space at the front of the properties, the areas to the rear lack spatial cohesion. Much of the original consistency to the rear facades has been lost through the addition of rear extensions, many of which fill the small rear courtyards. To the south a pedestrian way separates these yards from the rear gardens and the ends of the terrace houses in Woodside and Alexandra Roads, which abut and enclose this untidy and unattractive area. To the north, the rear space is bordered by the fences and walls to the rear gardens of the houses in Waldemar and Kenilworth Roads, which are included in the adjoining Kenilworth Road Conservation Area. The focal point of this part of the Conservation Area is a small overgrown triangular plot accessible from Leopold and Waldemar Roads, but whose landscape potential has not been exploited.

Access: Each property has a frontage of five to six metres and is built hard up against the back of the pavement. There is therefore no spare space between the pavement and the shop front in which to unload or temporarily store goods being delivered or removed, nor any access to basement level. None of the properties appear to have basements accessible from the street into which merchandise could be delivered. The only properties with rear access directly from the street are Nos. 2 Leopold Road and 1a Strathearn Road. Everywhere else, delivery vehicles are obliged to park on the street and access storage areas through the front of the shop, thereby adding to the traffic congestion.

Also, except for the backs of Nos. 23 to 27, there is no vehicular access to the rear. The passageway along the rear of the properties on the south side of Leopold Road widens out at the western end into a yard large enough to take a vehicle, although no turning space is provided. It is reached through an arch about three metres high under a first floor extension to No. 27. The yard is therefore inaccessible to tall vehicles, and of very limited value for most other types of deliveries. There is a small modern house, 'The Mews', adjoins this space, which is used for 'car valeting'. The passageway is locked at the eastern end and appears to be little used as a pedestrian way. Similar pedestrian ways skirt part of the rear boundaries of the properties on the north side of Leopold Road. At the western end, a short passage off Leopold Road gives access to the backs of Nos. 26 to 32, and another, off Waldemar Road, to the north, leads first to the rear of Nos. 4 to 8 Leopold Road, and the small triangular open space adjoining the rear fences of Nos. 10 to 24 Leopold Road.



Above: Typical streetscape showing the somewhat chaotic nature of the street furniture, car parking and shop deliveries. Below: Examples of an elegant period shop front (No.32) which retains most of the original features, and a modern utilitarian one (No. 10) in aluminium.



FACADES

The facades to the upper floors are classically early Edwardian in style, and consist of Georgian proportioned vertical sliding sash windows, two to each property on the south side, and three on the north. Although each row of facades are similar in height and width, they differ in the type and degree of detail. Those on the north side are significantly more elaborate and slightly wider than on the south side. This may result from the residential accommodation on the north side, with views south from the front windows, being regarded as more prestigious than the views south from the rear windows of the properties opposite.

South Side

The upper floors of the buildings on the south side of Leopold Road are of stock bricks, with red brick string courses at the cill, head and lintel height, as well as immediately under the parapets, which step up with the slight change in level of each property. The window jambs to the two windows on each floor are also of red brick, with white rendered capitals and lintels. All the original plain sliding sash windows appear to have been retained, although those to No. 11 have been painted blue to match the shop fascia.

North Side

The facades to Nos. 32 to 8 consist of three Georgian proportioned sash windows on each floor separated by brick piers of about the same width as the windows. The red brickwork is decorated by string courses in pale yellow terracotta at the cills, heads and central transom levels of the windows, these bands stepping up to form the lintels to second floor. The pattern of the terracotta and brickwork above the windows is quite elaborate, the first floor brick arches consisting of almost flat red rubbers framed by the stepped terracotta stringcourse and topped by an ornamental terracotta coping, and the second floor stone lintels are topped by semi-circular brick relieving arches with central key stones. The cills to the second floor windows are supported on brackets.

The windows appear to have originally been designed as vertical sliding sashes with small 12-light glazing to the upper half, and a single pane below. Some windows retain their 12-light sashes with their original horns, some windows are now top hung, and some timber windows have been replaced by plastic. Details are given under 'Analysis'. The brickwork to No. 16 has been painted in pink and No.10 in white, which is flaking badly.

Shop Fronts

The shop fronts described on the following dozen pages include tables indicating where original features have been retained or have been replaced with ones of similar character. The shop fronts have a wide variety of treatments which can be classified under six headings:

- 1: 'Modern utilitarian' is by far the largest group, with 14 properties, Nos. 5, 9, 13, 15, 17, 23, and 27 on the south side, 6, 10, 16, 24, 26 and 30 on the side, and 1a in Strathearn Road. These properties tend to use non-traditional materials, such as aluminium.
- 2: 'Modern elegant', with carefully detailed minimalist facades: 5 properties, Nos. 19 and 25 (despite its garish fascia) on the south side, and 2, 4, and 22 on the north.
- 3: 'Modern ethnic', restaurants of the Indian Taiwanese and Mexican varieties, of varying degrees of success: 4 properties, Nos. 21 on the south side, and 12, 14 and 20 on the north.
- 4: 'Modern eclectic', an attempt to stand out from the crowd: 1 property, No. 11, south side.
- 5: 'Period utilitarian', where original features have been retained without obvious concern for their historic interest: 2 properties, Nos. 1 and 3 on the south side.
- 6: 'Period elegant', where original or pastiche historic features are incorporated to create attractive shop fronts which relate well to the original character of the shopping parades: 5 properties, No. 7 on the south side and 8, 18, 28 and 32 on the north.

Roofs

The roofs are not visible from ground level. It has therefore not been possible to determine their character, materials or condition, but they are presumably low pitched. The lack of downpipes on the front facades indicates that all the rainwater falls to the downpipes at the rear of the buildings.



Nos. 1 and 3 Leopold Road from the east and north.

South Side

NOS. 1 TO 27 LEOPOLD ROAD, AND 1 WOODSIDE (odd numbers)

No.	shop front	stall riser	fascia	door to shop	door to flat	pilasters	corbels	blind	windows to flat
1-3	no	no	yes	no	n/a	no	yes	no	n/a
5	no	no	yes	no	no	yes	yes	no	n/a

Nos. 1 and 3: No.1 is a two storey house dating from 1892 which has been considerably extended: a third storey with sash windows was added behind a mansard roof in 1986; a small two storey ornamental gable-ended extension has been placed at the rear; and a single storey flat roofed shop has been added to the front and side. Except for a square oriel first floor window and brackets to the eaves, No. 1 has lost most of its original features. The shop, which has been used as a veterinary health centre since 1976, wraps around the corner and takes up all of the original front and part of the side garden. The façade is painted crème with large picture windows in dark blue and small leaded lights of frosted glass above door height. The façade and ornamental pilasters have been simplified, and an incongruous 'traditional' panelled and stained door inserted centrally. **Contribution to the CA:** neutral.

No.5: The original house, which also dates from 1892, is placed further back than No. 1 and the general line of buildings in Leopold Street, and is largely obscured by a single storey flat roofed shop which covers the space between the house and the back of pavement. The house retains its original ornamental ridge tiles and bracketed eaves, and the shop appears to have been built at the same time, since it boasts identical pilasters and corbels to the other shops in Leopold Road. The shop, for which use as offices and a travel agent, was granted in 1992, has a modern white painted front and a modern domestic door at the side labelled 5a, which presumably gives separate access to the house. **Contribution to the CA:** neutral.

Nos. 7 to 27: The buildings step up slightly from east to west, and the change in level is expressed in the treatment of the facades. The ground floor shops display a wide variety of treatments, in contrast to the unified facades to the upper floors. Details are given below.



NOS. 7, 9 AND 11 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
7	yes	yes	no	yes	yes	yes	yes	none	yes
9	no	no	no	no	none	yes	yes	none	yes
11	yes	no	no	yes	no	yes	yes	no	yes

No. 7: A two storey building whose first floor fenestration repeats the adjoining three storey properties to the west. The ground floor is used as a picture framers and the shop front is attractive and elegant. **Shop front:** White with pale yellow panels to the stallriser and details to the pilasters, which helps to emphasise the buildings' historic features. Side shop door in original position. **Fascia:** Yellow to match shop front with pale blue, classic upright serif capitals tightly squashed within the fascia. **Side access:** The original side access door is in its original position. **Level of maintenance:** fair. **Apparent level of prosperity:** High. **Contribution to the CA:** Positive.

No.9: A wine merchants with a modern elegant shop front installed in 1984. **Shop front:** The narrow dark green coloured frames to the glazing give it an elegant appearance. Central shop door. **Fascia:** Dark green glazed fascia with lettering in gold; a mixture of classic upright capitals, and the shop name in modern script which tends to undermine the attempt at elegance. The fascia fails to meet the cornice, and the space has been filled with brickwork which may be intended to match the surrounds to the windows above, but fails to blend with them. **Side access:** Presumably internal. **Level of maintenance:** The shopfront appears to have been recently installed. **Apparent level of prosperity:** High. **Contribution to the CA:** Neutral.

No.11: A shop selling antiques and ornaments whose shop front attempts to be 'different'. **Shop front:** Eccentrically designed modern front which projects slightly, excluding the door giving access to the upper floors. The outer frames are in white with dark blue inner frames and doors. Shop door at side. The blind to the shop front extends across the pilaster to No. 13, and the appearance is marred by a brick stall riser. **Fascia:** The blue fascia has been brought down on one side to the level of the head of the upper floor access door. The lettering is of white classic upright serif capitals. **Side access:** The modern dark blue side access door is in its original position. **Upper floors:** The frames to the upper floor windows are painted blue to match the shop front. **Level of maintenance:** fair. **Apparent level of prosperity:** Moderate. **Contribution to the CA:** Neutral.



Nos. 13, 15 and 17 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
13	no	no	no	no	no	yes	yes	no	yes
15	yes	yes	yes	no	yes	yes	yes	no	yes
17	no	no	no	no	no	yes	yes	no	yes

No. 13: An uncared-for looking Chinese take-away. **Shop front:** A modern unattractive arrangement installed in 1967, with white frames dominated by an opaque main window coloured red and devoted to advertising, and a white tiled stall riser. The shop access door has been moved to adjoin the side access door. **Fascia:** Pale pink with white lettering of classic upright serif capitals. **Side access:** The modern side access door is in its original position. **Level of maintenance:** Very poor. **Apparent level of prosperity:** Poor. **Contribution to the CA:** Negative.

Nos. 15 and 17: A newsagents whose modern shop fronts tend to be used as advertisement hoardings and would be better blanked out. **Shop Front: No. 15:** The shop front, which was installed in 1997, follows the design of the original, although the frames and door painted grey-green, with a black painted stall riser and a dark blue 'Dutch' blind containing advertising over the shop but not the side access door. No attempt is made to provide a window display, the left of the two glazed panels being covered with advertising and photos, and the right one is partly obscured by a white internal panel. **No. 17:** Metal frames and a centrally placed shop access door. Both windows are covered in adverts. A dark blue 'Dutch' blind below the fascia is used for advertising. The stall riser is in grey render. **Fascia: No. 15:** Red and white, and devoted to advertising. **No. 17:** Used as an advertisement hoarding in blue and yellow. **Side access:** The modern access doors in their original positions. **Level of maintenance:** Fair. **Apparent level of prosperity:** Poor. **Contribution to the CA:** Negative.



NOS. 19, 21 AND 23. 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
19	no	no	yes?	no	no	yes	yes	no	yes
21	no	no	no	no	no	yes	yes	no	yes
23	yes	yes	no	yes?	yes	yes	yes	no	yes

No. 19, A butchers which makes a bold attempt to create the effect of a family grocer's. **Shop front:** A recent traditionally designed front in dark stained timber with a modern glazed side shop door, a stall riser in blue and white glazed tiles, and a 'Dutch' blind in light grey and dark blue, with white lettering advertising the shop. (Although the shop is advertised as a family butchers, the window is full of bottles of wine, etc, presumably for health reasons.) **Fascia:** A white panel on a dark background, with 19th C. lettering. **Side access:** Traditionally designed access door in its original position. **Level of maintenance:** High. **Apparent level of prosperity:** High. **Contribution to the CA:** Positive.

No. 21, A Thai restaurant which attempts to create an 'oriental' shop front. **Shop front:** Installed in 1980 when it was changed to a restaurant. A basically solid front of stock bricks (matching those above) with a dark-stained central standard mass-produced doorway topped with a pseudo-Thai canopy, and dark-stained semi-circular arched windows each side. Dark stained panels above the windows accommodate air conditioning extractor grills. The dark stain extends across the halves of the pilasters within the curtilage of No. 21, **Fascia:** The dark stained canopy continues the oriental theme, with gold script lettering and flood lights along the top. **Side access:** The dark stained multi-panelled door is in its original position. **Level of maintenance:** High. **Apparent level of prosperity:** High. **Contribution to the CA:** Neutral.

No. 23, A video shop with the appearance of a standard low-end high street multiple. **Shop front:** A utilitarian white painted front with the window full of adverts for videos. A modern white painted shop door. **Fascia:** Standard logo of blue and red on white with projecting spot lights. **Side access:** Dark painted door of traditional design in its original position. **Level of maintenance:** Medium. **Apparent level of prosperity:** Moderate. **Contribution to the CA:** Negative.

NOS. 25, 27, AND REAR ACCESS WAY. Below: Historic features which are retained.

No.	shop front	stall riser	fascia	door to shop	door to flat	pilasters	corbels	blind	windows to flat
25	no	no	no	no	yes	yes	yes	no	yes
27	no	no	no	no	none	yes	yes	no	yes
access	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	yes



No. 25: An Indian take-away of typical traditional design. **Shop front:** Installed in 1997 when changed from shop to restaurant /takeaway. Dark stained modern front with central shop door and dark stained stall risers and red 'Dutch' blind. **Fascia:** Red lettering on yellow panel, with projecting spot lights. **Side access:** Original dark stained door in original position. **Level of maintenance:** fair. **Apparent level of prosperity:** Medium. **Upper floor:** Rendered lintels and capitals to first floor windows have been stained pale blue. **Contribution to CA:** Neutral..



No. 27, empty at time of inspection. **General impression:** A newly installed modern utilitarian shop front with an off-centre entrance door, painted white throughout, with a stallriser of off-white glazed tiles. **Contribution to CA:** Neutral. **Passageway:** Narrow single storey passageway to small rear yard. **Upper floor:** The first floor fenestration continues that of the adjoining shops.



No. 1 Woodside: A double-fronted two-storey house with canted bays to one side and squared bays to the other, In yellow brick with red brick string courses and rusticated quoins which repeat the details of the adjoining shops, as do the ornamental capitals to the sash windows. Centrally placed doorway with a window above. The slate roof has been increased in pitch to accommodate which are lit by large sloping rooflights. The small front garden is filled with mature shrubs and is bordered with a white picket fence above a brick wall, and the central white picket front gate is supported on red brick piers. **Contribution to CA:** Positive.



Above: Leopold Road from the western end, illustrating its canyon-like quality. Below, the extra wide façade to No. 32 Leopold Road.



North Side, nos. 32 TO 2 AND 1A STRATHEARN ROAD

Like the properties on the south side of Leopold Road, the ground floor shops display a wide variety of treatments, in contrast to the unified facades to the upper floors. They are arranged photographically from left to right to indicate their relationship to each other and provide a sense of visual continuity.

Nos. 32 to 8: The facades consist of three Georgian proportioned sash windows on each floor separated by brick piers of about the same width as the windows. As with the south side, the properties step up slightly with the slope of the street.

No. 32: Florists with an elegant period shop front with many original features retained. **Shop front:** A wider shop front because of fan-shaped plot, with an additional bay, a separate shop window to west, and wide pilasters. The pilasters, fascia,



NOS. 30, 28 AND 26 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
32	yes	yes	yes	yes	none	yes	yes	yes	no
30	no	no	no	no	yes	yes	yes	no	no
28	no	no	no	no	no	yes	yes	no	no
26	no	no	no	no	no	yes	yes	no	yes/no

stall-riser and frames are all freshly painted in white. **Fascia:** Elegantly painted shop name. **Blind:** Traditional green and black striped blinds to main and side windows. **Side access:** None; original door opening retained as part of shop window. **Upper floors:** Original sash windows retained. **Level of maintenance:** High. **Apparent level of prosperity:** High. **Contribution to CA:** Positive.

No. 30, A newsagent/tobacconist whose front is used as an advertising hoarding. **Shop front:** modern utilitarian front installed in 1974 with a central shop door. No attempt has been made to provide a window display, the window being full of small adverts and notices. The stall riser and traditional red and white blind are also used as advertising space, as is the white **fascia**. **Side Access:** Retained with dark stained side access door. **Upper floors:** Lower lights to sash windows replaced with top hung casements. **Level of maintenance:** poor. **Apparent level of prosperity:** Low. **Contribution to the CA:** Negative.

No.28, An estate agent with a straightforward utilitarian shop front. **Shop front:** Modern, fairly smart front with white frame, stall risers and central shop doorway. Property adverts neatly displayed. **Fascia:** Neat, white, with shop sign in elegant modern lower case sans serif. **Side access:** Retained, with standard modern 'half-moon' black painted door. **Upper floors:** Upper lights to sash windows replaced with top hung casements. **Level of maintenance:** High. **Apparent Level of prosperity:** High. **Contribution to CA:** Positive.

No. 26: A shop selling pet food and accessories whose front is used as an advertising hoarding. **Shop front:** Modern, metal frame, picture window with low stall riser. **Fascia:** Dominant, white lettering on red ground. **Side access:** retained. **Blind:** Dominant red Dutch blind used as hoarding. **Upper levels:** The first floor windows are original but the upper lights to 2nd floor sash windows have been replaced by top hung casements, 12-light on first floor. **Level of maintenance:** fair. **Apparent level of prosperity;** fair. **Contribution to CA:** Neutral.



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 Laundrette 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	1 a	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	1a	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	8	6	4	2	1a	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	

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 clearstory 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 left, 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.