



Supplementary Planning Document
London Borough of Merton



Pelham Road Character Assessment



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PELHAM ROAD CONSERVATION AREA

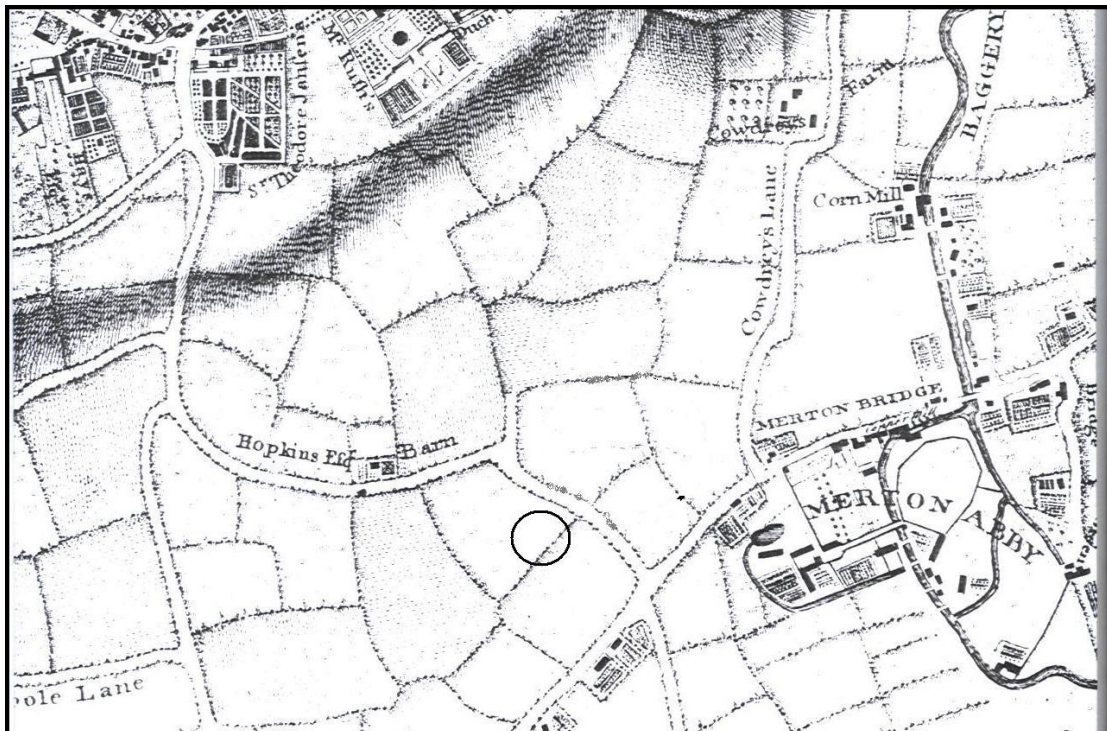
Character Assessment

London Borough of Merton
2004

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The Approximate position of the Pelham Road Conservation Area (circled) on the John Roque Map of 1741-5



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. Pelham Road Conservation Area is one of 28 such areas within the Borough, and was designated by Merton Council in 1985, For a limited period in 1988 small grants were provided for the area's enhancement, including the creation of a mould as the basis for the reinstatement of stucco mouldings. The first of the Borough's conservation area design guides was produced for Pelham Road in 1989.

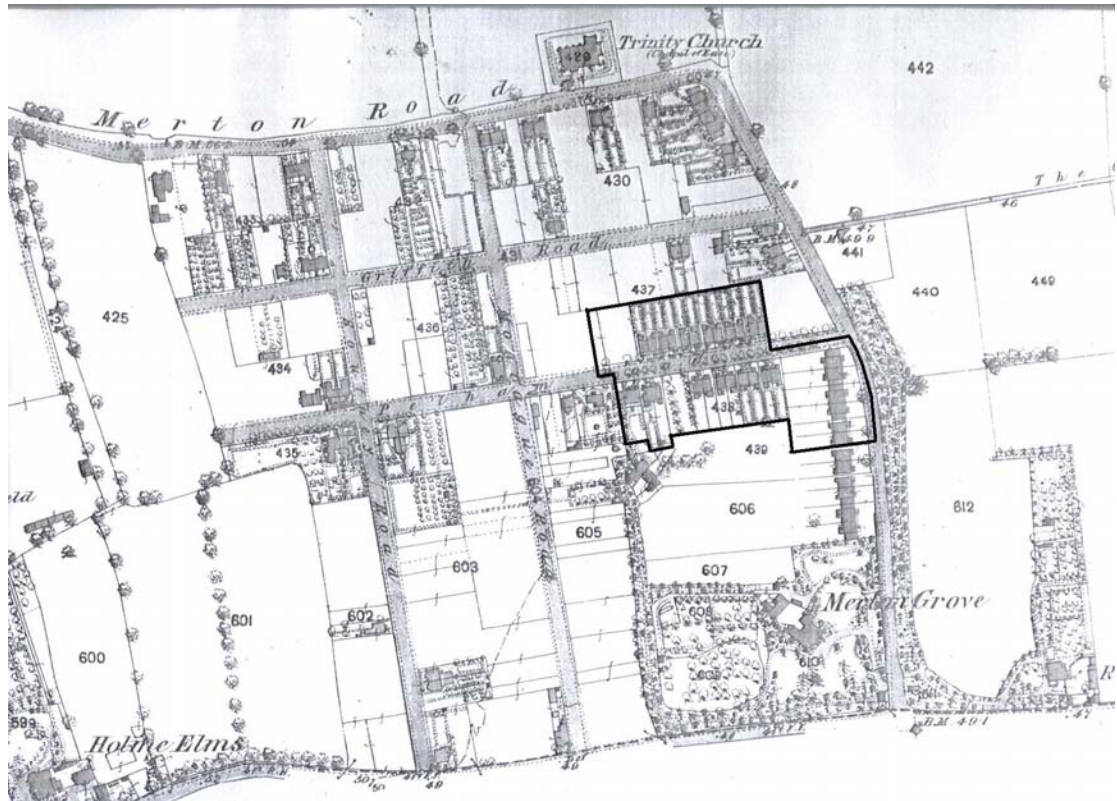
Character Assessments

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.

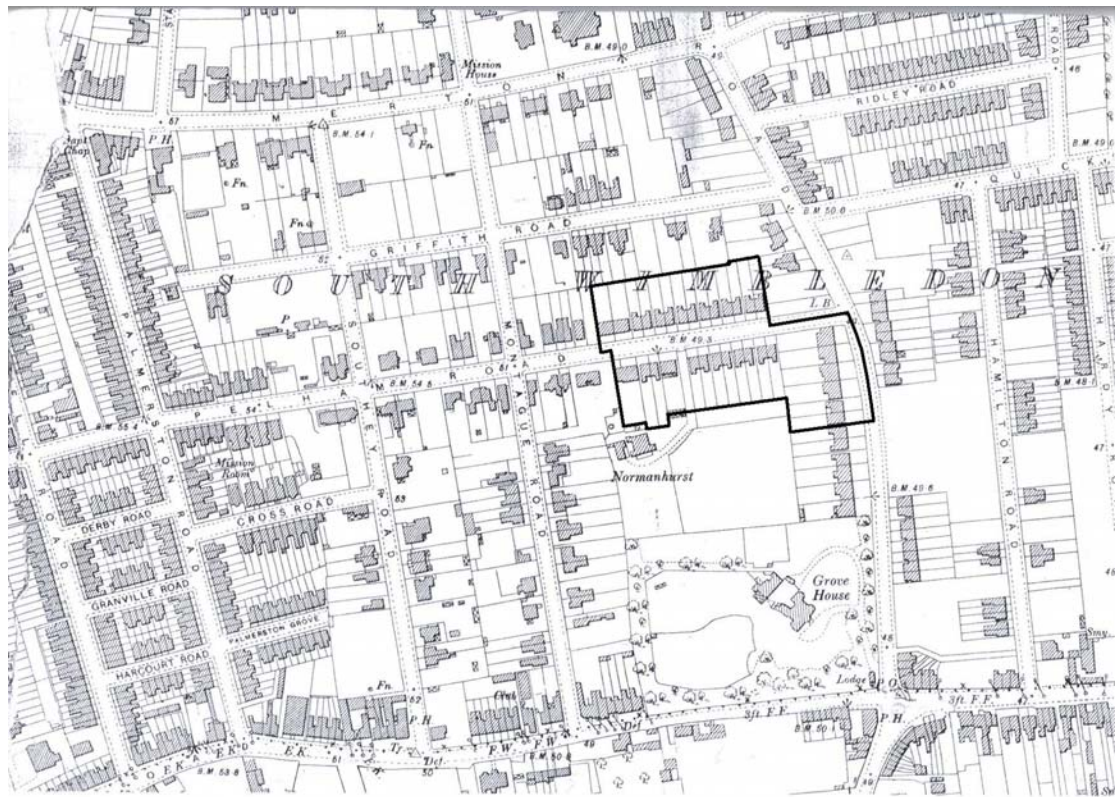
The purpose of a character assessment is to set out the specific characteristics which merited the Area's original designation and which make it worthy of protection against unsuitable alterations or development. The assessments provide a tool to help the Council assess the impact of development proposals, 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.

Aerial photo of Pelham Road Conservation Area





An extract of the OS Map of 1865 showing the location of the present Conservation Area and how the houses within it form the most significant development.



An extract from the OS Map of 1898 showing the extent of development during the following thirty years or so.

Location

Pelham Road Conservation Area forms part of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century residential expansion of the centres of Wimbledon to the north-east and Colliers Wood to the south-east. It lies to the south-east of Wimbledon town centre and immediately west of Merton Road, the main route between the centres of Wimbledon and Merton. It is therefore conveniently served by a major traffic route and is about equidistant from Wimbledon and Merton Park railway stations.

Extent

At 1.5 hectares, Pelham Road is a comparatively small conservation area, since it contains only 32 properties and no extensive areas of open space. It encompasses 26 houses at the eastern end of Pelham Road and six more on the western side of Merton Road. Those in Pelham Road comprise Nos. 2 to 26 (even numbers) on the south side and Nos. 15 to 41 (odd numbers) on the north. Those in Merton Road consist of Nos. 153 to 163 (odd numbers).

History

In the mid 1740s the area east of Wimbledon was open fields with a series of country lanes joining Wimbledon to Merton and Merton Abbey, which stood to the east of the present Pelham Road. The approximate position of the Conservation Area is indicated on the extract from the John Roque map of 1741-45.

The OS Map of 1865 shows the early grid of housing development south and west of the route from Wimbledon to Merton, the roads of which had been laid out in 1854.. It was one of the first developments of the new Wimbledon south of the main railway line into London. By 1865 sporadic development had occurred, with detached and semi-detached houses constructed, mainly at the road junctions. The part within the present Conservation Area was at that time the greatest concentration of property, with the houses along Pelham Road and larger villas along the west side of Merton Road continuing as far as the substantial property of Merton Grove. A lane led between the houses on the south side of Pelham Road directly to Normanhurst. Otherwise, the land surrounding the grid of streets was still essentially agricultural.

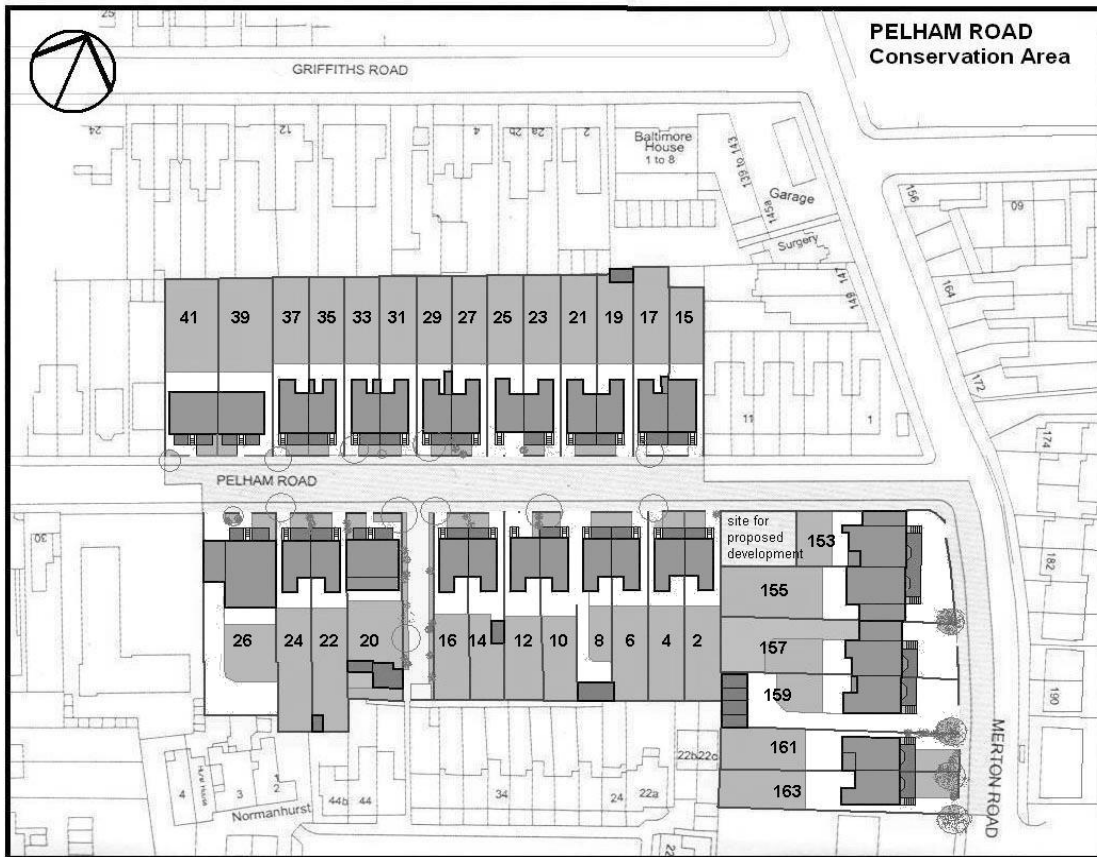
The OS map of 1898 shows that the majority of the plots in the original grid layout had been developed, and terrace housing occupied the open fields to the east and west. The north-west corner of the junction of Pelham Road and Merton Road had yet to be developed, and both Merton Grove, which had been renamed Grove House, and the six semi-detached villas immediately to the north had not yet been redeveloped. The lane on the south side of Pelham Road no longer reached as far as Grove House, but provided access to 'Normanhurst', a detached house on the backland between Pelham Road and Montague Road, to the west.

The 1913 OS map shows that virtually all the gap sites had been filled, including the corner of Pelham Road and Merton Road, and Grove House and its grounds had been replaced by similar terrace housing to that to the east and west of the Conservation Area. A feature of that time was the tramway along Merton Road connecting Wimbledon with the areas further south. The lane on the southern side of Pelham Road now provided access to Normanhurst, and to Cecil Road, which has been developed in its grounds.

Since 1913 the tramway has of course disappeared, and so has the southern half of the semi-detached villas along Merton Road, to be replaced by flats. The Conservation Area and its surroundings are now very much as they were ninety years ago, including the pedestrian passage way connecting Pelham Road and Cecil Road,



Above, an extract from the OS Map of 1913 showing how the area around the Conservation Area has been substantially developed and, below, the area as it is today





The streetscape to Nos 19 to 23 Pelham Road, indicating its general character (with the exception of the unfortunate alterations to No. 19), of pollarded trees, brick front boundary walls and brick piers, and the shallow gardens dominated by the light-wells to the semi-basements and the steps up to the front doors.

Character

Although the houses in Merton Road are grander in scale than those in Pelham Road, the design of both groups of houses is very similar, and in their different ways are of significantly greater architectural and historic interest than adjoining properties. The character of each group is considered separately.

PELHAM ROAD



The houses on the north side of Pelham Road, at the western and eastern boundaries.

Context

Pelham Road forms part of a grid of residential development, with the parallel roads of The Broadway and Griffiths Road to the north and Montague Road at right angles to the west. The road is straight and about 650 metres long, and the Conservation Area covers only about 150 metres at its eastern end. Not only were the houses within the Conservation Area built significantly earlier than their neighbours further west, they are more consistent in character than many of the properties in other parts of the Road.

Conservation Area Boundaries

The northern and southern extent of the Conservation Area is clearly defined by the boundary fences to the back gardens of the houses in Griffiths Road and Cecil Road, but the eastern and western boundaries are not always so clear-cut. At the eastern end, Nos. 1 to 13 (odd), on the north side of the road between the Conservation Area and Merton Road, are typical of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century terrace houses found throughout much of south London, and are considerably less grand in scale and proportion than the houses within the Conservation Area. The existing boundary is therefore appropriate and should be retained.

At the western end, the boundary on the southern side of the road is clearly defined and should also be retained, the adjoining property being a modern block of flats and utilitarian design. And on the north side the boundary is marked by No. 43, an undistinguished modern house. The houses further west, although quite different in style from those within the Conservation Area, are distinctive in their own right and may have been built at about the same time or shortly after.

The pedestrian walkway between Nos. 16 and 20, from the north and south.



Streetscape

Pelham Road, which is covered in bitmac, is straight with no significant focal points at either end. The kerbs are of granite and the pavement is of slabs of ASP which have been offset to reflect the normal arrangement of stone paving. The part of the street within the Conservation Area is lined with attractive Plane and Horse Chestnut trees at regular intervals along the pavement which, although heavily pollarded to prevent them blocking light to the houses and obstructing traffic, make a significant contribution to the attractive character of the street

scene. Many of the front gardens also contain trees, some of which have been allowed to grow to a substantial height, and these also add to the street's attractiveness.

A significant streetscape feature is the pedestrian access way between Nos. 16 and 20, which leads southwards into Cecil Road. This route is attractively paved and landscaped, with brick paving and semi-mature trees. An electricity sub-station which formed the focus from Pelham Road has been removed and the remaining plinth could form the focal point of some more interesting feature. Unfortunately, the low railings bordering some of the areas of planting have fallen into disrepair and the walkway tends to attract household refuse. The future treatment of this part of the Conservation Area therefore requires careful consideration.

The Front Gardens

Almost without exception, the boundaries to the front gardens consist of low walls terminating in higher piers, all in London Stock brick with white stone copings. The front gardens to the houses are shallow, and are dominated by flights of steps leading to the principal floors at *piano nobile* level, which are bordered on each side by solid rendered parapet walls. The raised principal floors enable the lower ground floors to be well lit with the help of light wells which take up the metre or so of front garden adjoining the houses. Many of the pathways are paved in black and white checkerboard, diamond or other patterned tiles, which should be retained.

Although this combination of steps and light wells allows little room for planting, many of the front gardens contain attractive areas of greenery within and dividing the gardens. In several of the gardens the front boundary wall has been removed to enable cars to be parked in the front garden. In view of the lack of garages, commendably few front gardens have been converted into car parking areas, and any further such alterations should be discouraged since they undermine the unity of the street scene and tend to detract from the character of the Conservation Area.



The unfortunate alterations to No. 19 and the parking forecourt to No. 12 Pelham Road

The Houses

All the houses make a positive contribution to the character of the Conservation Area and are locally listed, being remarkably consistent in their design and with very few significant alterations. They are all of two storeys with a semi-basement. Nos. 20 and 26, on the south side, are detached and the remainder are semi-detached. Nos. 39 and 41 on the north side and 20 and 26 on the south side are double-fronted, and the rest of the semi-detached houses are single-fronted. In a couple of the houses the lower ground floor has been converted into a garage.

The front elevations are of light coloured brick with white rendered corner quoins and surrounds to the windows and porches, while the lower ground floors are finished in rusticated white render. The timber windows are almost invariably of the traditional sash design, painted white. The rows of red brick chimneys project prominently above the dark grey Welsh slate roofs on the line of the party walls. The principal floor has canted bays and round-headed porches, the top floor having three rounded headed windows and the lower ground floors a

single window recessed under the bays. Doors or windows have also been provided under the steps leading up to the dark painted front doors. The few significant variations or alterations on the standard design are set out below.

Many of the houses have been converted into flats and details are given for each house. Various extensions and alterations have been provided to the rear of the properties, that to No. 26 being particularly large. Details of rear paving and planting are not included because they do not impact on public spaces.

North Side:

No. 15: The brickwork to the front façade of No. 15 has been rendered in white. The house was converted into three flats in 1971.

No. 17: A replacement bay window has been inserted. The house was converted into three flats in 1980.

No. 19: This house is the only one to have undergone seriously detrimental alterations: the façade has been rendered and the rounded-headed windows and porch have been squared off and plastic side-hung small-paned casements inserted to both the first floor and bay windows. Those on the first floor have been placed flush with the front face of the façade, the lack of reveals depriving the building of its normal feeling of depth and solidity. Only the bay window remains, and that has been re-roofed in red tiles. The whole operation is an object lesson in what not to do to a building to preserve its character and saleable value. The house has been divided into three flats.

No. 25: The front boundary wall has been removed and the front garden paved to provide a car parking space.

Nos. 27 to 33: No. 27, 29 and 33 have each been converted into three flats; No. 27 In 1984, and No. 33 in 1981.

Nos. 39 and 41: Although these houses are double fronted, the style and detailing has been continued, so that there is a canted bay each side of the porch at principle floor level and five instead of three rounded-headed windows at first floor level. The only obvious variation is a flat top to the round headed entrance porch and applied squared columns each side. In 1988 a grant was provided for the reinstatement of the bay window to No. 39.



The double-fronted houses at Nos. 39, 41 and 26 Pelham Road

South Side

Over the past ten years a series of applications have been refused, mostly on appeal, for the site at the western end of Pelham Road within the rear garden to No.153 Merton Road, adjoining No. 2 Pelham Road, first for two dwellings in 1995, then a two storey coach house in 1997, followed by a detached house the same year, and a three storey detached house and double garage in 1998. Applications for development of this plot are continuing.

No. 2: The hipped roof has been replaced by a gable.

No. 4: The house was converted into three flats in 1985.

No. 8: The front boundary wall has been rendered white, the gate pillars have been removed, and the front garden and side access have been paved to provide car parking.

No. 10: A grant was provided for the reinstatement of the brick piers in 1988.

No. 12: The front boundary wall has been removed and the front garden paved to provide a parking space.

No. 14: The front boundary wall has been removed and the front garden paved to provide car a parking space.

No. 20: No. 20 is double-fronted and is of similar design to Nos. 39 and 41, except that the squared surround to the entrance porch is more ornamental. Up until 1999 the house was in multiple occupation, and 1998 permission was obtained to provide a 2/3 storey rear extension and to convert the house into four 2-bed and two 1-bed flats.

No. 22: The house was converted into three flats in 1984.

No.26: The original design of No. 26 is identical to that of No. 20, but the brickwork to the front façade has been rendered and the front boundary wall painted white. The original two storey coach house at the side has been retained, but the ground floor has been removed to provide vehicular access to the rear. In 1959 the house was converted for use as a home for unmarried mothers, old people and children, and in 1968 it was converted into a Polish Catholic Study Centre and a Youth Centre. In 1971 a single storey rear extension was added, to which a second floor was added in 1986. The house has since been converted into six flats.

Protection and Enhancement

Little needs to be done to further enhance this part of the Conservation Area, except possibly to further landscape the walkway between Pelham Road and Cecil Road, as suggested above. Also, as suggested, proposals to demolish front garden walls, pave the front gardens and insert garages at lower ground floor level should be resisted. An Article 4 Direction is recommended to control such alterations.

MERTON ROAD



The uncoordinated character of the eastern side of Merton Road, compared with the unified appearance of Nos. 153 to 163, on the western side.

Context

Nos. 153 to 163 Merton Road form part of a sequence of mainly residential properties each side of the main route from Merton to Wimbledon. The Road as a whole has little visual consistency environmentally or architecturally and, being a London Distributor Road, the noise and pollution from the constantly high volume of traffic robs it of any form of social cohesion. The three substantial semi-detached properties which make up Nos. 153 to 163 stand out as the only stretch of unified streetscape within a disparate collection of buildings of varying size, age, character, use and architectural quality.

Boundaries

The rear gardens to Nos. 153 to 159 adjoin No. 2 Pelham Road, within the Conservation Area, and the fences to the rear gardens to Nos. 161 to 163 form a natural western boundary to this part of the Conservation Area. The eastern end of Pelham Road, which adjoins No. 153, forms an appropriate northern boundary, and a block of undistinguished 20th century flats adjoining No. 163 also creates a suitable southern boundary. Although Nos. 180 to 190, (opposite Nos. 153 to 163), are of a consistent design and are moderately interesting architecturally, they are quite different in scale and character, and the properties on the eastern side of this part of Merton Road are not worthy of inclusion in the conservation area. It is therefore appropriate that only the buildings on the western side of Merton Road should be included in the Conservation Area.

History

Nos 153 to 163 are thought to date from about 1860. Together with the three pairs of similar semi-detached houses to the south that continued the western frontage on to Merton Road but are no longer extant, they were the most significant part of the grid of streets laid out shortly before 1865.

Streetscape

Because of the grandeur of their scale and proportions, Nos. 153 to 163 are not dominated by the unsympathetic environment of this part of Merton Road, but stand out as a reflection of a time when this part of south-east Wimbledon was somewhat grander than it is now.

The edge of the pavement to this part of Merton Road has retained its granite kerbs, and there is a single row of granite setts along the gutter line, but the pavement has unfortunately been finished with 400 mm square concrete paviors interspersed with red and grey brick paviors; this arrangement is not appropriate to the traditional character of the area. It conflicts with the character of the buildings and should be replaced with traditional ASP paving, if possible in York Stone.

Front Gardens

The front gardens are of more generous depth than those in Pelham Road, and those to Nos. 153 to 159 are almost entirely devoted to hard standing. Except for a driveway to the side entrances, the front gardens to Nos. 161 and 163 are landscaped, although somewhat overgrown. The stock brick front garden walls have been retained, although that to No. 157 has been painted white. Although there are no trees along the pavement, the deeper frontage has allowed those within the front gardens to mature and they now provide a most welcome break to the urban character of much of the rest of the street.

Buildings

Nos 153 to 163 comprise six locally listed semi-detached villas of three-stories plus semi-basements. They are of an imposing scale and make a positive contribution to the character of the Conservation Area, enhancing the appearance of this part of Merton Road. As with the houses in Pelham Road, they are built of light coloured bricks with white rendered surrounds to the windows, porches and rusticated quoins at the corners. The roofs, which are also dominated by rows of chimney stacks on the party walls, are also covered in Welsh slate. Details include attractive scrolls over the arches to the first floor windows. The bay windows at first floor level are similar to those in Pelham Road, as are the steps up to the entrances at *piano nobile* level. These similarities indicate that not only were they likely to have been built about at the same time as the houses in Pelham Road, but were probably designed by the same architect.

However, the scale of Nos. 153 to 163 is far grander. Not only do they have an extra storey, but the proportions are more generous, as befits houses sited on a historic thoroughfare such as Merton Road. Unfortunately, the prestige of such a location has now become a

disadvantage, and because of their size they have been converted into flats, resulting in cars being parked in both the front and back gardens,. Details of their conversion are given with the details for each property.

Nos. 153 and 155: The original two storey gabled coach house to No. 155 has been retained; the one to No. 153 is a replica which was constructed after the original structure collapsed in 1994. They continue the symmetry of the main block, while being both subservient in scale and sympathetic in character in their use of stock brick, slate roofs and rounded headed first floor sash windows with a similar scroll decoration. The coach house was rebuilt in 1995 as part of a major restoration which also involved the reinstatement of the ground floor bay windows, the reconstruction of the front stairs, a two-storey extension at the rear, and the conversion of the houses into flats. The western end of the garden to No. 53 has recently been sold for development; since this site affects the character of Pelham Road it is dealt with under that section.

No. 157: A two storey rear extension was constructed in 1966 and rebuilt in 1993, and in 1987 a side extension of similar character to those at Nos. 153 and 155 was built, but of three storeys, with an open ground floor giving vehicular access to a row of four garages at the rear, which were built in 1994.

No. 159: In 1963 four lock-up garages were erected in the rear garden and in 1985 a four storey extension was built at the side and rear to allow the house to be converted into eleven flats.

No. 161 was converted into four flats in 1984, and **No. 163** was converted into four flats in 1977.

Because of their position on the corner of Pelham Road, the rear elevations are exposed to view, and the side and rear extensions, together with the addition of windows of various size and style, have deprived the rear facades of any dignity they may once have possessed.



The exposed unattractive backs to 153-163 Merton Road, compared with the somewhat overgrown character of the front gardens to Nos. 161 and 163.

Preservation and Enhancement

As with the houses in Pelham Road, the frontages of Nos. 153 to 163 have retained their original features, and it is crucial to this part of Merton Road as well as to the Conservation Area that these buildings be preserved in their present form and their character not further eroded by inappropriate alterations or extensions. Planting in the front gardens to Nos. 153 to 159 would help to soften the harsh character of the paved areas, planting along the side of the back garden to No. 153 would help to screen the view of the rear extensions from Pelham Road, and pruning and landscaping of those to Nos. 161 and 163 appears advisable. Further parking in the back gardens should be resisted,