



WIMBLEDON VILLAGE

CONSERVATION · AREA
DESIGN · GUIDE



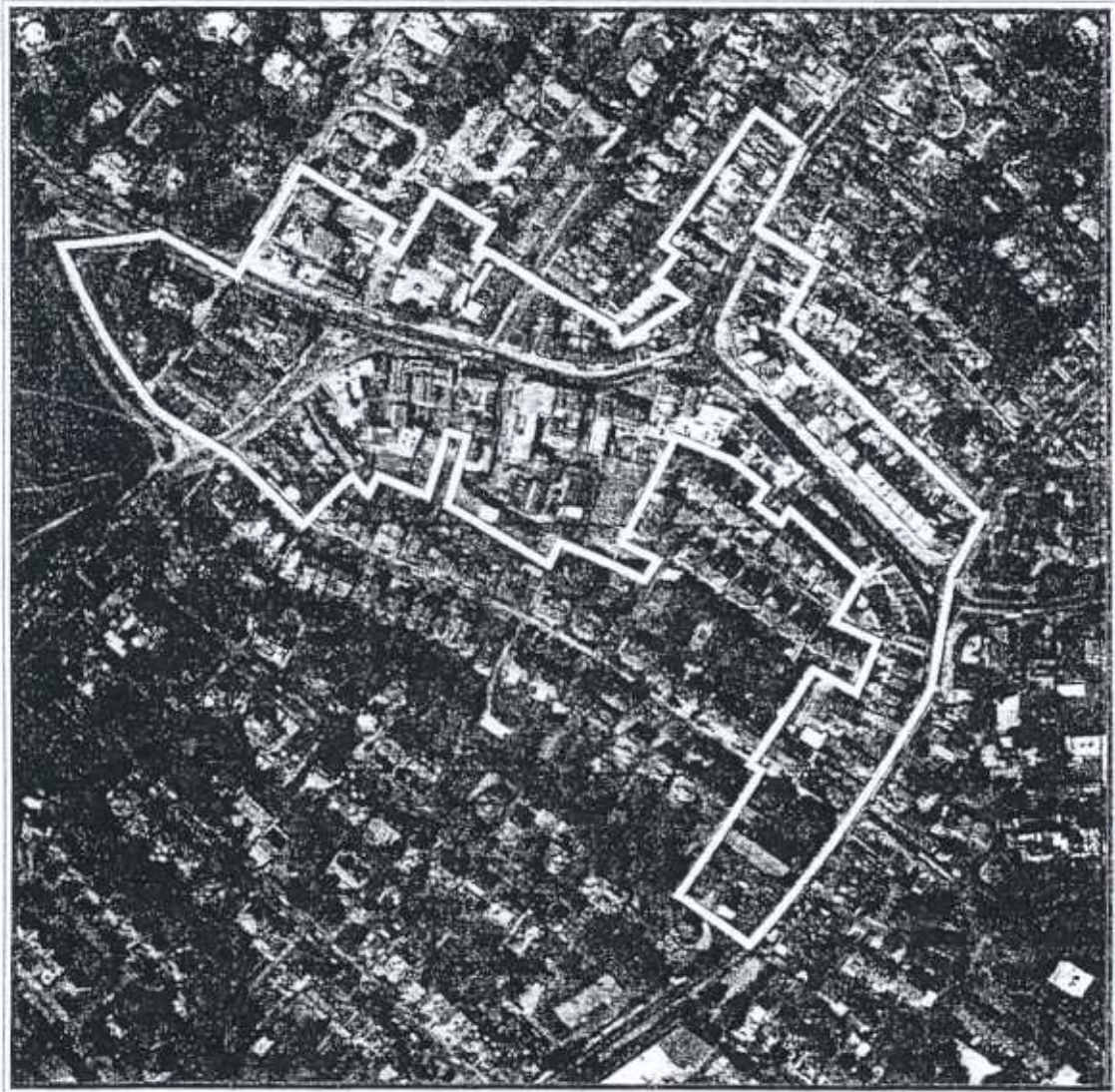
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Designed & produced by the Design & Plans Team
Environmental Services Department of Merton Council, March 1996



Wimbledon Village Conservation Area

INTRODUCTION

Conservation Areas are designated by the Council as areas of special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which should be preserved or enhanced.

The Wimbledon Village Conservation Area was originally part of the Wimbledon Conservation Area, which was designated in 1968 and extended in 1976. Following a further extension to the Wimbledon Conservation Area in 1986 to include areas to the north, it was subdivided, because of its size and varied character, to create a tight boundary around the commercial area of Wimbledon Village and two residential areas of Wimbledon North and Wimbledon West.

Although largely commercial in character, the Wimbledon Village Conservation Area contains a number of distinctive houses and other non-residential uses, which are mainly located along the eastern end of the Ridgway and at the Common.

Particular characteristics that merit the area's designation as a Conservation Area include: the historical background, the numbers of listed buildings, the charm, character and uniqueness of the detailing of the buildings and the quality of the streetscape and the open spaces.

This design guide covers the whole of this Conservation Area and aims to highlight the main architectural features and important qualities that contribute to the area's character. It also puts forward recommendations

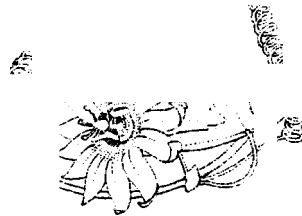
and provides guidance and advice on improvements that can be carried out by owners and occupiers which preserve and enhance the character of this area.

Merton Council can control certain adverse changes within the area by the way that it determines applications for planning permission and listed building and conservation area consents (for demolition). Although many of the recommendations included are advisory only, they nevertheless provide guidance as to good design practice, and, as such, will be taken into consideration when planning applications are considered.

Occupiers and owners have an important role to play in preserving the character of this Conservation Area. Alterations may be small in scale, but can be prominent and have a large impact on the area which for the most part has a cohesive character. Sensitive alterations and careful maintenance will help preserve the character of the area and also retain the values of its properties.

Merton Council hopes that owners and occupiers will find this publication of interest and they will take into account the recommendations made in it when considering alterations and improvements to their properties.

If you are in any doubt as to whether or not planning permission is required for alterations to your property then please contact the Development Control Section of the Council's Environmental Services Department. Telephone 0181-545 3117.



THE VIEW FROM THE HILL

Saxon Man and Early Victorian Man, looking South from their vantage point atop the Hill, would have seen a view south over the valley they both recognised.

However, behind them, much had changed across the centuries. No one knows what prompted the move from the West to the East side of Wimbledon Hill, as the prerequisite of a good water supply was available at both locations, but it is clear that the Saxons preferred the latter to the prehistoric settlement to the West and the Caesar's Camp area.

However, even the exact location of this new settlement is unclear. It does not appear in the Domesday Book even though 'Wimemannedum' is mentioned in a late Saxon charter.

Only from the 13th Century can its documented history be traced as 'Wimbledon', 'Wymbaldone' or 'Wimmeddum', and even then, it may have encompassed a collection of farms rather than a village.

From early times the slope below the hill provided better farming land than the poor gravel and clay soil of the plateau above. Isolated and small is the theme that runs through Wimbledon village history and is the strength and backbone of its unique character. Lacking a natural location on a major route, only within the last two centuries has it been considered important enough to attract even a carrier's cart, let alone a stage coach.

Its medieval history is vested in the Archbishop of Canterbury's manor of Mortlake to whom it brought a goodly income. By Henry III's time the 130 or so inhabitants' standard of living had increased noticeably from farming and mill ownership in the Wandle valley below and, apart from plague setbacks, showed continual improvement from 1400 onwards.

To the ordinary villager the traumatic changes in religion; epidemics of flu and plague; Enclosure Acts; replacement of Canterbury with Cecil's and Spencer's as owners and lords of the manor; were all to be endured or accepted but not to be allowed to disrupt the steady flow of prosperity.

Visits by their Archbishop landlords were rare but in 1550 the Cecil's built the Old Rectory and subsequently, nearby, one of the finest Elizabethan manor houses. As the wealth of local families increased so the outward trappings of success were manifest in buildings such as Eagle House, built by the Bell family in 1613 and the appearance of the first shops in the High Street.

A further burst of building activity occurred around the Common in George III's reign with the appearance of more fine houses, whose owners, for the first time, made Wimbledon a centre of Society.

By the end of the 18th Century Wimbledon was host to the King, reviewing his troops on the Common and dining locally afterwards and it became a regular retreat for Fox, Burke, Sheridan, Pitt and other leading politicians which justified at last both the carrier and the stagecoach.

The Common inevitably was as much the haven of highwaymen, duellists, gypsies and footpads, as the important animal grazing land it had always been for the villagers.

By now tradesman and farmer alike were becoming increasingly preoccupied by the needs of the poor and, through the Vestry, the provision for them of school and workhouse.

The population at the start of the 19th Century had risen to almost 1600, including a fair share of very wealthy families.

Even after the arrival of the railway, down the Hill some fifty years later, the village was still described as 'very picturesque', which undoubtedly delighted both Saxon and Victorian and which still remains a major influence on the village to this day.