

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Section 69 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 states that every local authority shall from time to time determine which parts of their area are areas of special architectural or historic interest the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance, and shall designate them as conservation areas. The Borough has 43 such areas designated over 22 years, of which Dorcas Conservation Area is one.

1.2 Once an area has been designated, certain duties fall on the local authority; in particular under section 71 of that Act whereby the local authority must from time to time formulate and publish proposals for the preservation and enhancement of those conservation areas.

1.3 The Council is doing this in stages. The first stage is this document which is called a Conservation Area Character Profile. The "profile" aims to give a clear definition of what constitutes the special architectural or historic interest which warranted the designation of the area as a Conservation Area. It also includes some broad design guidelines which will aid all concerned in their efforts to preserve or enhance the character of the conservation area.

1.4 Each profile document is intended to form a sound basis, justifiable on appeal, for development control decisions and for the guidance of residents and developers.

1.5 The next stage will be the production of more detailed design guidelines where necessary in consultation with the Hammersmith and Fulham Historic Buildings Group, Fulham Society, Hammersmith Society and other local groups. Policy documents for the preservation and enhancement of individual conservation areas may be prepared and will be the subject of local consultation.

1.6 The profiles and subsequent design

guidelines will be supplementary planning guidance and will support the Council's statutory Unitary Development Plan which sets out the planning policy framework for the development of the borough and development control decisions. They will constitute material planning considerations in the determination of planning applications.

1.7 The Government has given guidance to local authorities on how to operate the legislation in their Planning Policy Guidance document (PPG15), entitled "Planning and the Historic Environment". Here we are reminded that the prime consideration in identifying conservation areas is the quality and interest of areas rather than that of individual buildings. There has been increasing recognition in recent years that our experience of a historic area depends on much more than the quality of individual buildings. This would include the historic layout of property boundaries and thoroughfares; a particular 'mix' of uses; characteristic materials; appropriate scaling and detailing of contemporary buildings; the quality of advertisements, shopfronts, street furniture and hard and soft surfaces; vistas along streets and between buildings and the extent to which traffic intrudes and limits pedestrian use of spaces between buildings. The Secretary of State therefore intends that conservation area legislation should be seen as the means of recognising the importance of all these factors and of ensuring that conservation area policy addresses the quality of townscape in its broadest sense as well as the protection of individual buildings.

1.8 This intention is reinforced by English Heritage in their document "Conservation Area Practice" which recognises that as the number of conservation areas being designated continues to grow their designation is increasingly being looked at more critically. It is therefore even more important than before that there should be a clear definition, recorded in some detail, of what constitutes the special architectural or historic interest which warranted the designation of every conservation area.

1.9 In line with the guidance given by both the Government and English Heritage, therefore, this conservation area profile will aim to define the character of the conservation area on the basis of an analysis of all or some of the following criteria

- the origins and development of the street patterns, the lie of the land;
- archaeological significance and potential of the area, including any scheduled monuments;
- the architectural and historic quality, character and coherence of the buildings, both listed and unlisted, and the contribution which they make to the special interest of the area;
- the character and hierarchy of spaces, and townscape quality;- prevalent and traditional building materials for buildings, walls and surfaces;
- the contribution made to the character of the area by greens or green spaces, trees, hedges and other natural or cultivated elements;
- the prevailing (or former) uses within the area and their historic patronage, and the influence of these on the plan form and building types;
- the relationship of the built environment to landscape/townscape including definition of significant landmarks, vistas and panoramas, where appropriate;
- the extent of any loss, intrusion, or damage that has occurred since designation;- the existence of any opportunity sites;
- unlisted buildings which make a positive contribution to the conservation area according to English Heritage's criteria.

2 DESIGNATION

2.1 The Dorcas Conservation Area was designated in September 1982. It was felt that the unified character of the area created by the buildings on Vernon Street, the majority of Southcombe Street and part of Munden Street remained largely intact and should be retained.

3 CONSERVATION AREA BOUNDARY

3.1 The Dorcas Conservation Area is bounded to the north by Hammersmith Road, to the east by North End Road, and to the South by the Fitzgeorge & Fitzjames Conservation Area.

3.2 The Dorcas Conservation Area boundary can be seen on the plan on page 8.

4. BRIEF HISTORY OF THE AREA

4.1 Throughout the 18th Century the Great West Road (Hammersmith Road) formed the main route from London, via Kensington and Hammersmith, to Bath and Bristol. North End Road, from its junction with the Great West Road, was the main route South to Fulham. Apart from some imposing houses located along these highways this area known as 'North End' was, according to the local historian Faulkner in 1839, "the great fruit and kitchen garden, north of the Thames, which has supplied the London market since the 17th Century".

4.2 By the early 19th Century the area now designated a conservation area had assumed its embryonic form; its northern and eastern limits already determined by highways. The West and South boundaries were now established by two large residential properties. To the west, The Cedars, built in 1779, was an imposing house set back from Hammersmith Road to stand in some 3 acres of landscaped grounds. North End Villa, (later House) was built in the 1790's, set in 7 acres of grounds, including an ornamental lake. It formed the southern edge ¹.

4.3 In 1824 a group of early 18th Century buildings, on the northern edge of the site, was redeveloped as Dorcas Terrace (Nos. 89-97 odd and Nos. 99-119 odd Hammersmith Road) by W. Payne, a local builder. The name of the terrace derives from his wife's forename. Shop fronts were inserted in the latter part of the century. Until its removal in 1864 the Hammersmith

Turnpike was located in front of No. 95 Hammersmith Road and opposite the former Bell & Anchor Tavern, which was sited between Olympia and the junction with Blythe Road.

4.4 In 1848 the land south of Dorcas Terrace was purchased by the Vernon Investment Association² "for the purpose of creating leasehold ground rents", owner occupation being less common than renting in the 19th Century. By 1853 the existing road pattern was established and terraces of modest houses built. Although originally called Sun Street, by 1869 the various sections of the road had been renamed Devonshire Street (later Southcombe Street), Vernon Street and Munden Street. By the late 1850's the terrace on the South side of Vernon Street (Nos. 10-22 consec) had been extended eastwards, to North End Road, and a public house, The Rising Sun, built at the western end (now demolished).

4.5 In 1856 the Association surrendered an area of undeveloped land to the Commissioner of Police for the building of a courthouse. Located on the South west corner of Southcombe Street it was known initially as Vernon Street Police Court.

4.6 By 1869, although the surrounding areas remained largely agricultural, the opening of Kensington (Addison Road) Station (now known as Kensington Olympia) had the effect of encouraging development to the north and east of the Dorcas area and large areas of agricultural land were being turned over to brickfields. By the end of the century the whole area, now known as West Kensington was built over.

4.7 In 1923 a group of 19th Century houses to the west of Dorcas Terrace was replaced by Llewellyn House (Nos. 121-127a odd, Hammersmith Road). In the early 1950's, following bomb damage and years of general neglect, the area was in a run down condition. Buildings in Charlotte (formerly Munden) Mews were demolished along with Nos. 7-11 Munden Street and replaced with new housing. In 1971

No. 18 Southcombe Street was demolished and is now a residents car park.

4.9 To the north, particularly along the north side of Hammersmith Road on the site of Cadby Hall (J. Lyons & Co) there has been large scale commercial redevelopment in the 1980's which contrasts dramatically with the character of the conservation area.

5 CHARACTER AND APPEARANCE

5.1 The conservation area consists of a core of Victorian residential properties, the West London Magistrates Court and a built frontage to Hammersmith Road. The historic fabric of the conservation area remains intact and there have been few unsympathetic alterations to the properties.

5.2 The conservation area can be split into two sub-areas for the purposes of the character assessment in order to distinguish areas of similar character. These are shown on the plan on page 8. The sub-areas are:

- A** Vernon Street and environs
- B** Hammersmith Road frontage.

A Vernon Street and environs

5.3 This sub-area consists mainly of simple terrace houses, of a type derived basically from those of the late Georgian period, which form the core of the conservation area. Following a regular street pattern the area has a domestic scale and a regular townscape formed by the uniform appearance of the terraces. Within this fabric is the feature building of the West London Magistrates Court which was closed in 1996.

5.4 The terraced properties provide a uniform development type with a definite rhythm evident in the facades. Whilst there are four distinct designs three of these are very similar, being three storey, flat fronted, of London stock bricks, with stucco banded rustication to a semi-basement. Raised entrance levels are, accordingly, reached via

steps with stuccoed balustrades. Roofs are of simple pitched form, clad in slate with stone corbel brackets at eaves level supporting the projecting party wall. Numerous properties have been re-roofed in modern materials.

5.5 Windows and door openings generally have stucco surrounds, some flat, some pedimented and others with segmental heads though many are now deprived of their decorative mouldings (The door surround to 11/12 Southcombe Street is a hypothetical reproduction). Nos. 10-22 (consec.) Vernon Street, whilst conforming to the general building pattern, have plain door and window openings with simple brick arches.



Nos. 11-17 Southcombe Street

5.6 The timber sash windows remain, there having been no unsympathetic replacement of windows. Most ground floor windows have small balconies, but only one retains its decorative ironwork. Some original doors with glazed panels survive, but many have been inappropriately replaced. In the recent past many of the entrance steps and balustrades have been replaced by concrete steps, with mild steel balusters.

5.7 This terrace has been truncated at its northern end but the elevation to Vernon Street is articulated by four blind windows with stucco surrounds. A uniform scheme of appropriate rear extensions has been built along the whole terrace (Nos. 15-23 consec. Munden Street). These replaced earlier privy blocks. This terrace is probably the oldest on the site. There is a uniform boundary treatment which provides a good edge to the street and there are trees in many of the

front gardens which are important features in the townscape.



South side of Vernon Street

5.8 Nos. 15-23 (consec.) Munden Street are owned by a private Housing Association. They are similar to the above but are more severely classical. There is no semi basement; the lower storey, at ground level, being in the form of a banded rusticated stucco plinth. The valley gutter roof, concealed behind a flat parapet with a high entablature, drains to the rear and accordingly, the facade is unencumbered by pipe work. A classical order, between the plinth and entablature, is implied by recessed panels on the line of each party wall.



View south along Munden Street

5.9 Munden Street also contains modern development which respects the scale and form of the surrounding development. To the north there is a converted garage which now provides commercial/workshop space. The new front and fascia signage provides a discreet and simple facade.

5.10 In 1980 the Rising Sun Public House, No.

3 Vernon Street, Nos. 1-6 (consec.) and Nos. 12-14 (consec.) Munden Street were demolished, and replaced by Local Authority Sheltered Housing. Nos. 24-27 (consec.) Munden Street and 1-4 (consec.) Charlotte Mews were also rebuilt around this date. These are generally two-storey and built in a style respecting the rhythm of the facades of the neighbouring terraces. Boundaries are defined by picket fences which provide an edge to the street and stress the domestic character of the development.

5.11 Throughout the sub-area front areas were generally defined by cast iron railings sitting on low, rendered, walls running between entrance gate piers. Very little of the ironwork survives and the piers and low walls have been much mutilated or rebuilt in a variety of materials. Where there is a change of level, due to a semi-basement, some original full height railings have survived, most notably outside No. 30 Vernon Street.

5.12 The West London Magistrates Court, (listed Grade II), located in Southcombe Street and following on from No.5, was built in 1914 and designed by the architect John Dixon Butler³. The building sits easily in the scale of the street pattern and respects its domestic context. Before this the site was occupied by the West London Police Court and in 1889 it was rebuilt and extended to absorb Nos. 6-10 (consec.) of the adjacent terrace in Southcombe Street.



The West London Magistrates Court, listed Grade II

5.13 It is a two storey building, with basement, in an austere version of the prevalent Free Classical and Civic style, in red brick with a

hipped slate roof over deep, dentiled, eaves. The eaves, door and window surrounds are in Portland stone. The main entrance surround has a broken segmental pediment, on banded rusticated pilasters, enclosing a carved coat of arms. The ground floor windows have moulded surrounds with stepped head and sill upon a flush string course. All the windows are multi-pane sashes.

5.14 There is interesting Arts and Crafts detailing in the hopper heads and terracotta basket weave vents. This overall design continues along Southcombe Street in a single storey extension. There are utilitarian, modern extensions to the Vernon Street elevation. A hopper head to the downpipe on the front elevation where it adjoins No. 5 Southcombe Street is inscribed as being installed in 1941.

5.15 The original railings remain in front of part of the property and are important in defining the street edge and the setting of the court. There is a good wall to part of the Vernon Street boundary, finished with glazed bricks to match the court building.

5.16 Views to the rear of terraces are evident throughout the sub-area, particularly of the properties in sub-area B facing Hammersmith Road. The back facades are generally unaltered or have sympathetic alterations, and are important in defining the character and appearance of the area. To the south the tall mansion blocks of the Fitzjames and Fitzgeorge development can be seen rising above the terraced properties of Vernon Street.

B Hammersmith Road frontage

5.17 In contrast to the domestic scale and quiet character of sub-area A this sub-area is of a grander scale fronting the busy and historically important route of Hammersmith Road.

5.18 Dorcas Terrace, Nos. 99-119 (odd) Hammersmith Road, was built in 1824 by the builder developer W.S. Payne. This is a terrace typical of the Late Georgian ribbon developments