

1.9 In line with the guidance given by both the Government and English Heritage 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 Wood Lane Conservation Area was designated in March 1991. It is centred on the famous BBC TV Centre. This building was designated a Building of Merit (BOM) by the Council in 1991.

3 CONSERVATION AREA BOUNDARY

3.1 The Wood Lane Conservation Area is bounded to the north by the A40 (Westway Flyover), to the east by the West London Line Railway and the M41 West Cross Route, to the south by the Metropolitan Line and by Hammersmith Park to the west. It includes part of South Africa Road, all of White City Close and part of Wood Lane.

3.2 The boundary of the conservation area is cast wide in order to protect the landmark BBC building from any insensitive development nearby. This can be seen on the plan on page 12.

4 BRIEF HISTORY OF THE AREA

4.1 By the early 19th century the east side of Wood Lane ¹, at its southern end, was beginning to be developed by a series of large semi-detached villas and in the midst of these a large property, Wood House, stood in extensive grounds. Wood Lane, and its environs, was still largely a landscape of rough open land with a few nurseries ².

4.2 By the mid 19th century railways were bisecting the open fields ³. The lower west side of Wood Lane was still covered with nurseries, but two new properties, Eynham and Wood Lane Farms, had been built on the east side. Du Cane Road to the north was built in the 1870's, along with Wormwood Scrubs Prison, whilst to the east the area of Notting Hill was fast developing.

4.3 By the end of the century the area had changed dramatically ⁴. The west side of Wood Lane, at its southern end, had been developed with speculative terraced housing, the fields flanking Wood Lane to the north being used as brickfields. The area at this time formed the northern edge of a growing and prosperous late Victorian suburb ⁵.

4.4 The most important early twentieth century development was the creation of the "White City" for the Franco-British Exhibition of 1908 on an area of common land west of Wood Lane and south of Wormwood Scrubs ⁶. Exhibitions continued to be held, mainly for the Board of Trade, up to the late 1930's, but general interest had waned and the buildings suffered from neglect. Of the original White City Exhibition the only surviving elements are Hammersmith Park, the mutilated Entrance Arch in Uxbridge Road and several of the Raised Halls behind Shepherd's Bush which are used by the Vanderbilt Racquet Club. The exhibition buildings were all built as temporary buildings.



The White City Exhibition

4.5 In 1947 the old Wood Lane station, on the Central Line, was replaced a little to the north by a new station named White City. The old station was converted to offices and finally closed in 1959. It is now derelict. Open land to the east of the track was developed for engineering works and a dairy depot.

4.6 One of the most important post war developments was the purchase in 1949, by the British Broadcasting Corporation, of the remaining parts of the White City site for the construction of Britain's first purpose built television centre. Designs were prepared in 1954 by Graham Dawbarn of Norman and Dawbarn and the building was substantially completed by 1960, when the first programme was broadcast ⁷.

5 CHARACTER AND APPEARANCE

5.1 The conservation area is centred around the famous BBC Television Centre which broadcasts nationally and internationally. Part of the justification for designating the conservation area in 1991 was the need to protect the landmark BBC TV Centre building (BOM) from any insensitive development nearby.

5.2 The conservation area contains a designated Green Corridor and area of Metropolitan Open Land following the West London Line Railway running along its eastern boundary and a Nature Conservation Area following the Central Line north of White City Station.

5.3 The conservation area can be split into sub-areas for the purposes of the character assessment in order to distinguish areas of similar character. These are shown on the plan of the conservation area on page 12. The sub-areas are :

- A BBC Television Centre and environs**
- B White City Station and industrial area**
- C White City Close**

A BBC Television Centre and environs

5.4 The BBC TV Centre was built in 1954 and designed by Graham Dawbarn (Norman & Dawbarn). The importance of this building lies in it being the first purpose built television studios in the UK. It is included in the Council's Local Register of Buildings of Merit.

5.5 The plan of the Television Centre is based on the principle of a series of interrelated studios, served by a common scenery runway, which are controlled and administered from a central hub of offices. This ingenious concentric plan is however only apparent from the inner court. The construction above ground floor is steel framed with buff brickwork panels, whilst the basement is of reinforced concrete. There are a multitude of differing cosmetic treatments applied to the elevations, such as the plain brick wall, studded with discs, which give the building a certain period flavour.

5.6 There is a recent extension on the northern end of the TV Centre Building which brings the building as a whole closer to the road. This extension, designed by the BBC's in-house architects relates well to the main building and the glazed curtain walling bay provides a focal point.



The BBCTV Centre

5.7 At the southern end of Wood Lane there is a brick wall set behind a landscaped area which includes numerous trees which provide an effective screen to the development beyond and an interesting feature along the road.

5.8 The BBC TV Centre is bounded to the west by Hammersmith Park which provides active recreational facilities for bowling, tennis and football, together with childrens' play areas. Unfortunately the buildings relating to these facilities suffer from vandalism. There is a pleasant boundary with South Africa Road consisting of recent shrub planting and a row of important trees which screen the high mesh panel fence to the playground.

5.9 The park which is maintained by the Council, also includes passive recreational facilities. This includes a pond and grassed/landscaped area which provides an attractive open space setting for the Television Centre with landscaping in places providing a strong green edge to the boundary of the Television Centre. This is a well landscaped area with mature trees providing a pleasant environment. There are views across the open area of the park towards the back of the TV Centre.



BBCTV Centre seen across Hammersmith Park

5.10 The Territorial Army Centre, off South Africa Road, is of no particular architectural interest. However it is bounded by good railings which provide a strong quality edge to the street.

B White City Station and industrial area

5.11 Immediately to the east of the Television Centre on the opposite side of Wood Lane is the White City Underground Station and beyond that to the east and north is a mixed use area of offices, storage and warehouse facilities and the Unigate Depot.

5.12 White City Station is on the Central Line and was built in 1947. It was designed by A D McGill for London Transport, who later became head of London Transport's Architects Department. It was built during the post war austerity years with a steel frame and precast concrete floors and roofs with silver grey/buff facing bricks. The use of metal casement windows continues the London Transport 1930's tradition. The dominant element of the station is the spacious double height booking hall with clerestory windows and buff glazed tiles to the floor and lower walls. It is included in the Council's Local Register of Buildings of Merit.

5.13 The industrial area consists of a variety of properties. Immediately east of the tube station is a group of four office blocks, the highest of five storeys. These provide a strong built edge behind the tube station. To the east of these is a large warehouse shed and to the north of this is the Unigate Dairy site.



White City Underground Station

5.14 To the north, on the eastern side of Wood Lane are two blocks of three storey offices providing a definite built edge and uniform building line to the road. In front of the longer block are two mature trees which are important elements in the townscape. There is a good boundary wall linked to this development following the access road into the industrial area.

5.15 Directly to the north of the Tube Station is a Petrol-filling Station which inappropriately opens the street space with a poorly defined boundary, but the brick wall to the rear screens views of the industrial area. At the southern end of Wood Lane there is a good brick wall forming a screen to the development beyond.

5.16 The northern end of the conservation area is bounded by the busy Westway and the associated fly-over. In the late 1960's Western Avenue was effectively linked to the centre of London by the construction of the Westway flyover, diverting the bulk of the east/west traffic flow from Wood Lane and Shepherd's Bush.

C White City Close

5.17 To the north of the Television Centre is a residential area which fronts onto Wood Lane and South Africa Road. White City Close (1975-78) was designed by the architects Darbourne & Dark and is one of three local authority housing developments by these architects ⁸.

5.18 Designed as a set piece the scheme has a strong cohesiveness. The estate, varying from two to

four stories, makes great play of changes of volume providing lively articulation in the townscape. This is heightened through the integral design of the porches, terraces and balconies, ramps and stairs. This breaks down what is a relatively dense housing development to a very human scale.



White City Close

5.19 The simplicity of the detailing and materials is key in defining the quality of this scheme. Built in a brownish brick with good window surrounds and other detailing providing depth in the facade the properties have flat roofs with pitched slate edging. The casement windows and original front doors are a key element in the design of the scheme providing coherence and unity through their subtle and quality detailing. Regrettable alterations, such as replacement doors of an inappropriate design and varying boundary replacements, are eroding the cohesiveness of the overall design.

5.20 Within the development, and forming part of it are well landscaped public areas; special emphasis is placed upon private access and landscaped spaces. In the centre is a grassed area with numerous trees forming a focal point within the development and there is a hard surfaced area in the western corner. Changes in surfacing materials are important in defining the shared surfaces within the estate providing a more pedestrian orientated environment.

5.21 The boundary to Wood Lane is defined by trees as well as by the steps, ramps and associated walls, and post and rail fences to the properties.