

1 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 Westcroft Square 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, and 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 Councillors, 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 Westcroft Square Conservation Area was designated in May 1980.

3 CONSERVATION AREA BOUNDARY

3.1 The Conservation Area is bounded by King Street to the south, Goldhawk Road to the west

and the London Transport District Line tracks to the north. The eastern boundary follows the rear of the properties on Ravenscourt Park (these fall within the Ravenscourt and Starch Green Conservation Area).

3.2 The conservation area boundary can be seen on the plan on page 17.

4 BRIEF HISTORY OF THE AREA

4.1 So far as is known, there is no archaeological record for this Conservation Area ¹. There are documentary sources providing information about the development of Medieval settlements within the Borough, although no significant archaeological sites have yet been discovered. During the Medieval period, the vast majority of the land in the Borough was open fields, common land and woodland, which survived until the 19th Century. The Conservation Area was known as Westcroft Field, which belonged to the Manor of Palingswick, which dates back to the Late 13th Century.

4.2 The early history of the Conservation Area has been amalgamated from a detailed analysis of maps ranging in date from the Mid 18th Century to the Early 20th Century ². In the Mid 18th Century the Conservation Area was still one open field, (Westcroft Field) delineated by field boundaries in the shape of a truncated L. This land was under some sort of cultivation attached to three houses fronting King Street.

4.3 By 1830 the land fronting King Street had been developed into more houses. The houses extending between Goldhawk Road (New Road) and the eastern property boundary of Westcroft Square were detached. This was Westcroft Place. Six of these houses had an extensive rectangular field to the rear, which was delineated by planted shrubs. One detached house had a long, narrow field of its own, which was also delineated by planted shrubs. This is the site of the existing eastern street entrance to Westcroft Square.

Faulkner mentions “a cottage forming the west boundary of the Parish, near the new road, and on the east side of the highway”. This building appears on Rocque’s (1741-45) and Salter’s (1830) maps.

4.4 The houses extending between the eastern property boundary of Westcroft Square (opposite Black Lion Lane) and a point east of Ravenscourt Park were semi-detached and terraced with long, narrow rear gardens. Hamlet House was an exception. It was detached and situated considerably back from the road, half way along its long, narrow plot of land, which contained tree planting. Faulkner mentions Hamlet House as being situated opposite Grove Road (Standish Road). Hamlet House and its plot of land is the site of the existing street, Hamlet Gardens. The existing terraced houses at Nos. 276-280 and Nos. 284-288 King Street are Buildings of Merit (BOM’s) built before 1830. The strip of land along Goldhawk Road between King Street and the railway line was open land with tree planting.

4.5 By 1853 there were semi-detached and terraced houses with short rear gardens extending along Goldhawk Road. Nos. 397 and 399 Goldhawk Road (Grade II) are one pair of these semi-detached houses which remain. To the rear of all these houses were four open areas, two of which were distinctly large. The large open area annotated as ‘1507’ on Roberts map of 1853 is the site of the Westcroft Square development scheme of the Late 19th Century.

4.6 By 1865 the railway line forming the northern boundary of the Conservation Area had been constructed. The vacant lot marking the site of the western street entrance to Westcroft Square had remained, as had the sites of the eastern street entrance to Westcroft Square and Hamlet Gardens. The site of Westcroft Square had been truncated by the railway line, and the large open area had been landscaped. Nos. 360 to 366 (even) King Street (BOM’s) and Nos. 401 and 403 Goldhawk Road (BOM’s) had also been built by then.

4.7 Westcroft Square was constructed c.1878. Its open area was originally intended for development, but was acquired by Hammersmith Council in 1929/30 as public open space. By 1893, Nos. 324 and 328 and Nos. 334 and 336 and Nos. 344 and 346 King Street (BOM) had been built. (Nos. 334 and 336 King Street may have already been in existence by 1830). No. 264 King Street had also been built by this time.

4.8 In 1897 the land occupied by Hamlet House was sold “for the construction of superior residential flats”. The residential scheme in Hamlet Gardens was completed before the First World War. The residential schemes in Kings Court and Hamlet Court followed in the inter-war period. Nos. 264-274 King Street had been built by 1912.

5 CHARACTER AND APPEARANCE

5.1 Westcroft Square Conservation Area has two distinct characteristics. Firstly, the commercial frontage facing King Street which contains a large number of Buildings of Merit, and secondly the residential area to the rear. With respect to the residential area, the principal elements are the buildings and the setting of Westcroft Square and the mansion blocks of Hamlet Gardens.

5.2 The conservation area can be split into sub-areas for the purposes of the character assessment in order to distinguish areas of similar character and similar periods of development. The sub-areas are shown on the plan on page 17.

The sub-areas are :

- A Westcroft Square**
- B Hamlet Gardens**
- C King Street and Goldhawk Road frontages.**

A Westcroft Square

5.3 Westcroft Square is a rectangular space, with the shorter sides on the east and west.

Identical terraces, three storeys over a semi-basement surround the square on each side. The terraces of Westcroft Square are of particular importance to the conservation area. The main visual interest is focused on Westcroft Square, with the most interesting views looking into and across the central space.

5.4 There are twenty two houses on the northern side, five of which extend into a short cul-de-sac on the north-west corner. The western terrace contains twelve houses, and these also extend to the south to form a smaller ancillary space off the main square, from which leads the narrow western entrance from King Street.

5.5 The south terrace consist of eight houses, and the eastern entry from King Street forms a “kink” in the street line with twelve houses lining the side of the Square. There is an area of original paving left, along the eastern flank of the south terrace.



View of south side of Westcroft Square

5.6 The facades are identical on each terrace and consist of white painted stucco to the basement and ground floor. The brickwork appears to be a yellow gault brick, which was popular at this period. The entrance doors are paired, under recessed arched porches, with plaster surrounds and a simple cornice over. There have been few alterations to the street facades and the integrity of the Square has survived remarkably intact.

5.7 The projecting bays extend from the basement to the first floor, again faced in white painted stucco. The bays have a single window facing the Square, all the windows have a curved head and sash frames to match. There are several houses where these have been remodelled and the window heads squared off.

5.8 There are two single sash windows set in the brickwork facade at first floor, above the porches. This establishes a rhythm at first floor of two bays separated by two windows above the porches. A continuous cornice line at second floor cill level separates the brickwork facade of the first and second floors.

5.9 The second floor repeats the window pattern, with a wider window centrally positioned over each bay below, consisting of a central sash and two narrow side sashes. A rendered and painted parapet line completes the elevations.

5.10 The recessed porches and projecting bays both articulate the facade and establish a clear rhythm, emphasised by the strong horizontal lines of the second floor and the parapet cornice.

5.11 The whole group would originally have had railings on the street frontage (these survive on numerous properties including the corner house, No. 35), with access to steps up to the front doors, and down to the semi-basement areas.

5.12 The ‘Garden Square’ played an important part in the planning and development of residential areas in London in the 18th and 19th Centuries. However, the social context of areas such as Westcroft Square has changed, resulting in many of the individual houses now been split into flats.

5.13 The central garden forms a suitable setting for the terraces, the relationship being a happy one spatially e.g. the high terrace forms need to be viewed from a distance. It would clearly have been a great loss if the central space had been built over.