SUB AREA 25: THORNTON ROAD, HILLSIDE AND BERKELEY PLACE

Extent and Justification

The eastern and western boundaries of Sub Area 25 comply with the normal arrangement of following the junction between the back gardens to the houses in adjoining roads – those of Denmark and Thornton Roads to the east, and Berkeley Place and Ridgway Gardens to the west. But in between (unlike any other part of the Conservation Area) Sub Area No. 25 encloses three separate parallel roads. This is because the front facades and gardens of each road faces on to the rear gardens of the one adjoining it, making them visually and socially inseparable from their neighbour.

History

The earliest roads to be developed south of the Ridgway - Hillside, Sunnyside and Berkeley Place - are all cul-de-sacs and date from the 1850s. Thornton Road may originally have formed the rear access to the stables and other outhouses to the rear of Hillside, and because of the modest scale of most of the houses in Thornton Road, they give the impression of having been converted from such early structures. But in fact Thornton Road (together with Denmark Road) were the first two roads to be laid out all the way from the Ridgway to what was then Worple Lane, Nos. 13 southwards dating from the 1870s and 1880s, and the northern section being built in the early twentieth century [Milward, 1998, p. 92]. Berkeley Place, also a cul-de-sac, was built at about the same time as Thornton Road, the houses dating from between 1879 and 1883. The 1848 tithe map shows the land now occupied by Hillside and Berkeley Place covered by allotment gardens [Milward 1989 p.150].

One reason why Hillside and Berkeley Place are cul-de-sacs is the varying steepness of the escarpment between the Ridgway and Worple Road as one moves from east to west. At the eastern end there is a dramatic drop between Sunnyside (Sub Area 17) and Raymond Road, restricting access down to Wimbledon town centre. The slope then becomes less severe, enabling three straight roads connecting the Ridgway with Worple Road (Sub Areas 20, 22 and 23). Immediately to the west, the southern end of Thornton Road has to take a double bend to cope with the increasing gradient before becoming Thornton Hill. The greater steepness further west inhibited the development of Hillside and Berkeley further south than the top of the escarpment.

Character

Because of the “one-sided” character of Thornton Road and Hillside, the rear gardens, extensions and sheds to the houses on the east side of Hillside impinge of the character of Thornton Road, and those on the east side of Berkeley Place have a similar impact on the character of Hillside. It is only with the double-sided housing layout of Berkeley Place that this sequence ends.

THORNTON ROAD

Thornton Road is named after Richard Thornton, who sold it for development in about 1860 [Milward 1989, p.175]. The VicSoc report describes the road as follows:
Seventeen cottages, larger and later than those in Denmark Road, and four semi-detached pairs at the lower end. In some of these one can trace the trademarks of the builders responsible for the more imposing houses in Spencer Hill.

*Map of Sub Area 25, Thornton Road, Hillside and Berkeley Place.*
Despite the shallow plots to the houses, further cottages have been built behind those fronting the east side of the road, along Corbier Court and Thornton Road East. According to Milward:

*Then in the early 1820s William Croft, a timber merchant of West Place, bought a narrow piece of land from Richard Thornton of Cannon Hill and on it laid out South Place with twenty-one small cottages, one a Beer Shop known as “The Jolly Gardeners”. [Milward 1989, p.150]*

South Place has since been redeveloped. These later additions are described below at the positions where their narrow access lanes interrupt the sequence of those at the front.

**The rear gardens of Nos. 6 to 8 Hillside, showing the variety of buildings and materials.**

**Buildings:**

Consecutive numbers, east side, from north to south

(No. 1 Thornton Road is included in Sub Area 15C.)

Although none of the properties in Thornton Road are listed, they all make a positive contribution to the character of the Conservation Area except No. 18 with its utilitarian shop front. However, the same cannot be said of the buildings on the west side.

**Nos 5 to 12 Thornton Road**

**Entrance to Corbiere Court**

**Nos. 2, 3 and 4 Thornton Road:** A terrace of three two-storey houses built in 1902, with triple windows to each floor. Nos. 2 and 4 have been rendered, No. 2 in pink and No. 2 in white. Like many of the houses on this side of the road, the small front gardens are bordered by white picket fences.

(Entrance to Corbiere Court)

**Nos. 1 to 8 Corbiere Court:** Two rows of two storey terrace houses built in 1965, to the north and south of a finely landscaped pedestrian courtyard, the upper floors being tile hung. The combination of extensive planting and carefully arranged white picket fences at the entrance make a particularly attractive contribution to this part of the Sub Area.
Nos. 5 to 12 Thornton Road: A terrace of eight houses, partly of two storeys and partly of two-and-a-half, built in 1910. Their brick detailing, curved roof slopes, semi-hipped roofs to the end houses, flat topped dormers and metal support brackets to the porches indicate a neo-vernacular influence. Despite being largely unaltered, they were rejected for local listing, although their group value is acknowledged.

(North entrance to Thornton Road East)

Thornton Road East, from the south; the landscaped entrance to Nos. 20 and 21

Thornton Road East, 4, 5, 6 and 13a: A terrace of four attractively landscaped two-storey cottages in stock brick which, because of their typically Georgian white rendered window reveals and pointed arches over the front doors, may have been built at the same time – or even earlier – than Nos. 13 to 17 Thornton Road, in front.

Thornton Road; Nos. 18 and 19 Thornton Road; and No. 21 Thornton Road at the rear.

Nos. 13 to 17 Thornton Road: A terrace of five two-storey houses built between 1877 and 1883: Nos. 13 and 14 are of pale stock brick with rounded-headed arches to the entrance porches. Nos. 15, 16 and 17 are of similar design but smaller in scale. They are of stock
brick, but Nos. 16 and 17 have been rendered white, and all three have fake shutters to the first floor windows.

**Nos 18 to 21 Thornton Road:** A group of five mainly commercial properties of various periods squeezed onto a small site. **No. 18** is single-storey, projecting forward of the general building line and fronted by an out scale picture window. **No. 18a**, behind No. 18 and facing north, is of two stories and was built in 1887. **No. 18b, the Shrine Memorial Hall**, lies behind No. 18a, facing west, at the back of the site. It is also of two storeys and was also built in 1887. **No. 19** is an unusually designed two storey office building built in 1984 in stock brick: the round-headed windows are encased in two-storey recessed brick arches with red brick quoins, and the corners are surmounted by raised coping stones topped by stone roundels. **No. 20**, which sits behind No. 19, also dates from 1984, and is reached from an un-named access way to the south of No. 19. **No. 21** lies at the rear of Nos. 22 to 27 Thornton Road, dates from 1984, and is reached by the same access way as No. 20. It is one-and-a-half storeys with an attractively curved gable end surmounted by a roundel.

The complex of Nos. 19, 20 and 21 Thornton Road is a pleasing and imaginatively designed complex which enhances this part of the Sub Area, one of the best features being attractively designed paving in herringbone brick and granite setts.

**Nos. 22 to 27 Thornton Road:** A terrace of six two-storey houses built between 1882 and 1889 in pale stock brick with rounded arches to the paired entrance porches.

**Nos. 28 to 35 Thornton Road:** Four pairs of semi-detached four-and-a-half storey houses built in the 1870s. **Nos. 29 and 30** have a continuous canopy on iron columns over the upper ground floor, and **Nos 31 to 35** have entrances at piano nobile level approached up substantial flights of steps. All have canted bays to the principal floor and round-headed arches to the paired entrance porches. The floors of the eight houses were built without regard for slope of the escarpment, so that, although the principle floors to Nos. 29 and 30 are almost at ground level and have vehicular access on to paved forecourts, the houses at the southern end are elevated considerably above road level, with increasingly high brick walls to the front of the gardens.

![Nos 30 to 34, and the typically carefully landscaped front gardens to Nos. 28 to 30.](image)

**Consecutive numbers, west side, south to north**

As explained above, there are few properties on the west side which face on to Thornton Road, and several of these have been built so recently that, as with back gardens elsewhere in the Conservation Area, the layout of the buildings and landscaping to the back gardens of Hillside shown on the map of the Sub Area are merely indicative.

**No. 38 Thornton Road:** A modern detached two storey house in stock brick with a gable facing the road and a bow window to the ground floor, behind a high brick wall.
**No. 17 Hillside:** The eastern part of the large three-storey office block of No. 17 Hillside and its large characterless extension dominate the southern end of Thornton Road. Further details are given under the section on Hillside, below. North of its eastern entrance gates are further two storey outbuildings to No. 17 in stock brick.

**No. 40 Thornton Road:** No. 40 is hidden from view by a two storey high almost windowless wall which provides a distinctly negative anti-social element to this part of the Sub Area.

North of No. 40 are the series of extensions and freestanding buildings that form the east boundary of Hillside, as described above.

**No. 17 Hillside from Thornton Road, and No. 40 Thornton Road behind its high wall.**

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**Positive and Negative Features**

The east side of Thornton Road contains some of the most carefully landscaped front gardens and boundaries in the Conservation Area, particularly Corbier Court and the entrance adjoining No. 19 Thornton Road, and the owners should be encouraged to maintain them. It is ironic, therefore, that their houses should face on to one of the most visually chaotic parts of the Conservation exposed to public view, and efforts need to be made to improve their outlook by ensuring the consistent use of appropriate materials and ensuring that new development is sympathetic in scale and character with the houses on the eastern side.

**Preservation and Enhancement**

The schizophrenic nature of Thornton Road would be more acceptable if the design and materials of the outbuildings and walls to the rear gardens of Nos. 1 to 10 Hillside was more carefully controlled. Although there is some mature planting, it only partly conceals the backs of the houses along Hillside, and the obscured townscape would be more acceptable if the variety of brickwork and fencing which forms the rear boundaries were more consistent. An Article 4 Direction is recommended to control all future boundary materials, as well as the application of more stringent control of the quality of new development.

Except at the southern end, many of the front gardens on the eastern side of the street are too narrow to accommodate car parking spaces. While this has helped to preserve the historic character of the street, it has resulted in severe congestion from parked cars. While there is obviously no room for off-street parking on the eastern side, the Council might encourage the owners of the houses in Thornton Road to discuss with those in Hillside the possibility of creating off-street parking in their back gardens on the western side by expressing a preference for garages for rent rather than further residential accommodation.

**HILLSIDE**

**Character**

Like Thornton Road, Hillside is “one-sided”, Because of their significance, details of the front boundaries are given below in the description of individual buildings. The VicSoc report describes the road as:
A quiet tree-lined enclave South of Ridgway. Its eighteen period houses are mainly smaller villas with ground and first floor only, in a plain, pure style and earlier (regency or early Victorian) than most of those in the area.

Like Thornton Road, none of the houses are statutorily listed, but five - Nos. 10 to 14 - are on the local list. The other three on the eastern side, as well as Far House, opposite, make a positive contribution, and the other three modern houses on the west side have a neutral effect. The only building which has a detrimental impact is the modern extension to No. 17, and that is mainly on to the southern end of Thornton Road.

Buildings

Nos. 1 to 4: Four semi-detached two storey houses, described in the VicSoc report as early Victorian, but with a modern two storey link between Nos. 2 and 3 which spoils the plain, pure style. Nos. 1 and 2 are rendered white, No. 3 rendered pale pink, and No. 4 has its original stock brick. The high boundary consists of stock brick to No. 1 and stained close-boarded fencing to the others.

Nos. 8, 9 and 10 Hillside showing the car space to No.9 and the tower to No. 10

Nos. 5 and 6: A semi-detached pair of two storey double-fronted houses in a similarly unadorned style to Nos. 1 to 4. No. 5 is in stock brick with a high close-boarded boundary fence and No. 6 is in rendered white with a low white horizontal boarded fence.

No. 7: A detached two storey double-fronted house in stock brick with red rubber surrounds to the door and windows and a stained close-boarded boundary fence.

No. 8: A detached two storey double-fronted house in pink render with white rusticated quoins at the corners and painted window surrounds with blind boxes. The high stained timber fencing has been recessed around an exposed car parking space to enable security to the house to be maintained.

No. 9: A detached two-storey house with a two-storey canted bay and a two storey flat roofed extension to the south, all in pink render.

No. 10: A two-storey house described in the VicSoc report as breaking the prevailing restraint of the other houses: a highly-ornamented Italianate villa with a small tower and a fine ilex and acacia tree. Following the recommendation of the report, it has been locally listed. The high front boundary wall is decorated with diamond-patterned brickwork.

Nos. 11 and 12: A semi-detached pair of locally listed two-storey houses which date from before 1867 in stock brick with red brick detailing and margined glazing bars to the sash windows, behind a high brick boundary wall.

Nos. 13 and 14: A semi-detached pair of locally listed two-storey houses dating from before 1867 in stock brick behind a high boundary fence.

Nos. 15 and 16: A semi-detached pair of two-storey houses which may have undergone substantial later alterations. No. 15 is in stock brick, probably of mid to late nineteenth century, but its northern section appears to be a later addition, the gable of which is joined to the hip of the original by an large unsightly flat roofed tile hung dormer. No. 16 is in white render and the two storey canted bays may also be later additions. The high front boundary is of stock brick with stained timber boarded infill.
Nos. 15 and 16 Hillside, and No. 17 from the west showing the ramp to the car park

No. 17: A substantial late nineteenth century three storey villa in stock brick with two storey canted bays to the west and south elevations, whose character has been severely compromised by recent additions to the north and south. The three and four storey southern block dominates the setting of the southern end of Thornton Road, and the setting has also been spoilt by the construction of a large surface car park in the western part of the grounds.

Consecutive numbers, west side, south to north

The pleasantly informal group of houses at the southern end of this side of the road are set among mature trees and landscaping (see Sub Area 26 for details of the impact on this part of Hillside of recent developments to Wimbledon College).

Far House: A modern detached one/two storey house of unusual and ingenious design. The two storey northern wing projects forward, as does the single storey garage to the south, both being accommodated under the same south sloping mono-pitch roof, the roof fascia framing the line of the sloping northern wall and the first floor, which is clad in horizontal boarding, the ground floor being in dark render.

Nos. 18, 20 and Far House at the south end of Hillside, and a close-up of Far House

No. 18: A detached two-storey house in pink render built in 1932, whose original form has been compromised by sloping and flat roof extensions.

No. 20: A recently built detached two-storey house of traditional design in stock brick with a projecting pedimented canopy to the front door.

No. 21: A recently constructed detached two-storey house lying behind No. 20 and reached down a narrow lane, with alternate vertical panels of brick and glass.
No. 19: A one-and-half-storey cream-painted outbuilding of No. 11 Berkeley Place converted into a separate residence, the first floor accommodated under a tiled roof with dormers and tile handing to the gable end.

No 19 Hillside, with No. 11 Berkeley Place beyond

The remaining, northern, part of the west side consists of various uncoordinated sections of fences and walls of various materials and heights with the occasional outbuildings to the houses on the eastern side of Berkeley Place.

Typical view of the rear of Berkeley Place

Positive and Negative Features

Although Hillside is “one-sided”, the outbuildings to the houses on the eastern side of Berkeley Place do not make such an impact on the character of Hillside as Nos. 1 to 17 make on Thornton Road. This is because back garden development is not so extensive or dominant, and the boundary materials are more consistent and concealed by foliage. Also, the houses are set well back behind high walls and fences, which give a strong sense of enclose to the streetscape. These features, the large number of mature trees and planting, and the lack of on-street parking, make Hillside the most rural of the roads in the Conservation Area.

Preservation and Enhancement

Since the houses on the east side of Hillside are set well back from the road behind high fences and walls, the main impact on public areas derives from the boundary treatment on each side of the road. That on the east side is generally of a high standard and well maintained, while the opposite boundary needs greater control. Development to the rear of Nos. 1 to 10 Berkeley Place is continuing, and needs to take place in the context of a general coordinated design advice in conjunction with an Article 4 Direction for this part of the Sub Area to reduce the amount of visual clutter and eventually form a consisted aesthetic within the wider townscape while preserving Hillside’s rural character.
BERKELEY PLACE

The rural character of Hillside

Character

Like Hillside, Berkeley Place is a cul-de-sac, and is also well endowed with mature planting, but not only do the houses revert to the more common double-sided arrangement, they were built somewhat later and are architecturally far more distinctive, at least three of them being designed by “named” Victorian architects. Nos. 1 to 10, on the east side, were built between 1879 and 1882 and are all locally listed, while of the seven on the west side, Nos. 13 and 14 are listed grade II and Nos. 15 to 18 were considered but rejected for local listing. It is only with Nos. 11 and 12 at the southern end that this high standard diminishes slightly.

Buildings

Nos. 1 and 2, and Nos 9 and 10 Berkeley Place

Nos. 1 to 8: A terrace of eight locally listed three-storey houses dating from 1879, in stock brick with red dog-tooth brickwork to the first floor string course and eaves and flat red rubber window lintels. The plan form has been devised to accommodate substantial villas on the narrow plots by projecting the principle rooms forward to receive the south/western sun, terminating in two storey canted bays under gabled roofs, while the rest of the accommoda-
tion projects into the rear gardens, thereby enabling side windows to light the centre of the house and giving the impression of more prestigious semi-detached houses rather than terraces.

Nos. 9 and 10: A pair of locally listed semi-detached double-fronted two-storey houses, plus semi-basements and dormers, built in 1882 in stock brick with ornamental red brick detailing around the windows and doors, including the two storey canted end bays. The front entrance porches are approached up wide staircases and topped by broken pediments, and the slightly projecting triple light bays between the entrances are topped by pediments projecting above the ridge line.

No. 11: A detached two storey house built in 1880 designed by FC Penrose in an Arts and Crafts manner with classical details, in brown brick with render at the eaves. It was considered but rejected for local listing, the listing description stating that the main features of interest include the bargeboard design and detail on the gables, the Queen Anne classical design of the front entrance building with its moulded brickwork and leaded glazing, the oriel windows, and the brick detail of the chimneys.

The house is aligned south-east to take advantage of what were substantial grounds, but over the years not only do Nos. 18, 20, 21 and Far House, Hillside, appear to have been built in the grounds and the outbuilding along Hillside converted to No. 19, but recent development to the west comprises No. 11a and a recently completed house in the north-west corner.

No. 11a: A recently built two-storey house attached to No. 11 and carefully designed to respect the character of the main block by being constructed of red brick with ornamental detailing to piers, panels and gabled roofs. It forms an acceptable termination of the southern vista down Berkeley Place.

No. 11a, which has been carefully designed to blend with No.11, compared with No. 12, which fails to relate to its context.

No. ?: A very recently completed one and two storey house of traditional construction in red brick and tile with white painted windows and dormers (shown in the photo of Ridgway Gardens in Sub Area 26).

No. 12: A recently constructed one and two-storey house in stock brick with a flat roof whose footprint is oriented on the diagonal in relation to the road and adjoining buildings, behind a high stock brick wall. Although the house is carefully designed, it is divorced from its context by its orientation and largely hidden from view; it therefore contributes nothing to the local townscape and tends to have a negative impact on the character and appearance of this part of the Conservation Area.

Nos. 13 and 14: Two grade II semi-detached three-and-a-half storey houses in red brick described by Pevsner as now sadly hemmed in, a nice freely detailed building with shaped gable to the road and a side elevation with a large archway [Pevsner, p. 457-8], and reported in the VicSoc Report as:
“The End House” (13) is an important building...and merits statutory listing. It was built in 1894 by [James] Ransome in the neo-Dutch style, of which it is a delightful example, and was lived in until recently by a grand-daughter of William Thackeray. On her death the house was converted into flats in an insensitive manner, though it retains its distinctive porch.

The report recommended that No. 13 be statutorily listed and No. 14 be added to the local list. The list description to No. 13 refers to them as a contrasting pair, and mentions some of No. 13’s many distinctive features, including a Scolly Dutch gable to the front...projecting dentil corniced porch with turned balusters and swept handrails to steps....left return of No. 13 also of architectural interest with large round headed entrance, now blocked. This presumably relates to one of the insensitive conversions, which also includes a continuous row of dormer windows along the south side of the roof which destroy the profile of the Dutch gable. No. 14 has a more traditional gable to the front, with an oriel window, tile hanging and half-timbering, with red brick to the ground floor and render at first floor level, a round-headed entrance porch, cantilevered canted bay to the first floor and leaded lights. According to the VicSoc report it was partly rebuilt in the 1920s following fire damage.

Nos. 13, 14 and 18 Berkeley Place

Nos. 15 to 18: Four locally listed detached two to three storey houses plus semi-basement dating from 1883 in stock brick and render with elaborate red brick detailing, ornate ridge tiles and terracotta finials. The main three storey south wing projects forward, has canted corners, a first floor oriel window and fake half-timbering to the rendered top floor. The classically detailed porches to the three storey entrance wings are at piano nobile level reached by flights of steps, with tall narrow staircase windows above.

Positive and Negative Features

Berkeley Place is obviously one of most distinguished parts of the Conservation Area, despite unsuitable alterations to some of the houses resulting from multi-occupation. The only negative environmental features are the wide variety of walls and fences to the front gardens.

Preservation and Enhancement

Care should be taken to ensure that any further internal changes to the accommodation does not result in inappropriate external alterations to the statutorily or locally listed buildings.