1.4: DEVELOPMENT

Much of the information in this part of the Assessment is based on the excellent guide by Richard Millward and Cyril Maidment Wimbledon: A Surrey Village in Maps in which various historic maps of Wimbledon dating from 1745 to 1890 which have been reproduced to a standard format.

Before 1745

There was little development in the area until Tudor times, when the elevated position and views to the south and east attracted wealthy Londoners, whose estates extended over the present West Wimbledon CA and beyond as far the Kingston Road and along the Wandle and Beverley Brook,

The John Roque Map of 1745

Map based on John Rocque's map of 1745

John Roque's map was the first to depict the area in detail. It shows that the first areas to be developed west of the Village were along the southern edge of the Common (then known as Wimbledon Heath) and on the area now occupied by West Side Common and Cannizaro Park.

The estates of the large houses along what is now known as Southside Common, or simply "Southside", included Lingfield House and Lauriston House and Cottage (1680). Lingfield House was demolished in the late 1950s and replaced by three modest detached cottages, but some of the outbuildings to the House, and are now named Lauriston Cottage survive and listed grade II. The estates extended south-east as far as the Ridgway (then known as the Ridge Way) and beyond, and the houses often gave their names to the roads which were later to be built within their grounds.
The area to the west was already occupied by Chester House (1692), Westside House and Cannizaro House (both c.1705), Stamford House (1730) and The White House (1740), and their extensive grounds. Chester, Westside and Stamford Houses are listed grade II and the estate to Cannizaro House is now a grade II* Registered Park.

William Browne built Cannizaro House for his own occupation, and he built Westside house to lease to wealthy friends.

These wealthy friends were almost certainly wealthy Londoners, who in the early years of the eighteenth century were looking for a country house within easy distance of the capital. They wanted to escape, in the words of Daniel Defoe, ‘from the hurries of business to draw their breath in a clear air and to divert themselves and their families in the hot weather’. Escape became much easier in 1729 with the opening of Putney Bridge, which made it possible to reach villages like Wimbledon ‘within an hour’s driving upon a good road’. So in summer they could leave their families to enjoy life in the country, while for the first time they commuted daily to London. [Milward undated p.2]

Some cottages and a public house - The Crooked Billet – had by then also been built at the junction of Westside and Southside.

The Bond-Hopkins Map of 1772-1776

Map based on Bond Hopkins’ map of 1772-1776

The dramatic increase in housing density can be largely attributed to John “Vulture” Hopkins, a skilful financier who invested his fortune in Wimbledon property by developing much of the land along Southside, the Ridgway and Worple Lane. The map of 1772-1776 is based on that prepared by Benjamin Bond, who inherited John Hopkins’ estate in 1774 and changed his name to Bond-Hopkins.

Between 1745 and 1775 the intensity of development increased, but continued to be located along the south side of the Common. Of those houses which survive, The Lodge was built in
1750, followed by Southside House in 1751, Gothic Lodge and South Hayes in 1760, and Rushmere House in 1770. Gothic Lodge (located strictly in what is now Woodhayes Road) is listed grade II and South Hayes now forms part of Kings College School.

Except for the construction in 1760 of Hanford Row (listed grade II), little further development had occurred among the large houses along what is now Westside Common. But there had been considerable activity to the north and south. At the northern end a workhouse and the grade II listed octagonal Charity School were built in 1752, and encouraged the erection of a string of cottages along Workhouse Lane (now the eastern end of Camp Road), while to the south the area around the Crooked Billet had become a mini-village in its own right.

Although the Ridgway was still bordered by open countryside, the boundaries of the fields on each side were already an echo of the pattern of the road network we know today. One feature, a remnant of which still survives, is The Slips, an historic right of way which led from the eastern end of the Ridgway diagonally across the escarpment down to Worple Lane. Since it avoided the steepest part of the “Wild Land” it tended to form the natural boundary of development south of the Ridgeway until late into the nineteenth century. The section between Oldfield Road and Ridgway Place still remains as a narrow pedestrian shortcut [Hawtin. P.144].

Map based on the John Corris map of 1787

The John Corris Map of 1787

The 1787 map shows that little development had occurred over the following decade, the main change being to the north of Westside, where the cottages along Workhouse Lane appear to have been replaced by more intensive development along what is now West Place.

The Thomas Milne Land Utilisation Map of 1800

Until the turn of the century, West Wimbledon continued to be largely untroubled by new development. According to Milward and Maidment, for the previous two hundred years Wimbledon had been:
a countrified parish dominated by the Common, large private parks, a network of fields and some dense woods which still covered the land on both sides of Copse Hill. [Milward 2000 p.23]

Map based on the Thomas Milne Utilization Map of 1800

Wimbledon Village was surrounded by five large private parks. Those to the west comprised Old (or Warren) Park, and the Prospect Place estate. The latter originally covered 60 acres off Copse Hill but was enlarged to 250 acres in the late 1790s. Wimbledon was becoming increasingly fashionable, as indicated by the design of one of the few additions at this time to the large houses on Southside - Wimbledon Lodge - which was in the latest Greek Revival style, with Coade Stone lions on either side of the entrance and elegant caryatids supporting a balcony overlooking the garden. [Milward 2000 p.23]

Although the Ridgway was still rural in character, two groups of cottages had been built to the south-east approximately on the lines of Oldfield Road and Thornton Road.

The row nearest the Village appears from the map to include 5-17 Ridgway, 1 to 13 Oldfield Road and 1-5 Linden Cottages. If so, the present terraces date from between 1787 and 1800 and comprise the first development between the Ridgway and Worple Road within the conservation area. However, this does not seem to accord with Millward’s researches about the origins of Brickfield terrace, as set out in the description of Sub-Area 14A, below.

According to Milward, the group further from the Village, known as Croft Cottages, was also built in the 1820s as model cottages for applicants of good character and cleanly habits [Milward 2000 p.25]. They appear to have been built on or near the land now occupied by 47 to 73 Denmark Road.

One useful feature of the 1800 map is its indication of land uses. Since the area between Southside and the Ridgway formed the grounds to the houses on Southside, they were - not
surprisingly - mainly laid out as parkland. The meadowland immediately south of the Ridgway was grazed by sheep and cows, but changed to arable land on the lower slopes towards what is now Worple Road.

The fields in Wimbledon were managed by four farms: Manor (or Wimbledon Park) Farm, Cowdrey Farm, Warren Farm and Watney Farm. Much of the land within West Wimbledon Conservation Area appears to have originally formed part of Warren Farm. It was first mentioned in 1617, and from 1785 to 1812 it was run by the Watney family, of brewery fame. In about 1770 John Watney built **Rushmere House** on Southside Common and a farm house between Southside and the Ridgway.

**The Tithe Map Of 1838**

![Map based on the Tithe Map of 1838](image)

*Map based on the Tithe Map of 1838*

The most significant change at this time was the opening of the London and South West Railway, south of Worple Road, in May 1838. Until then, no settlement had developed below the Wimbledon plateau and, although a directory of the time described Wimbledon as a **beautiful and highly genteel village**, by today's standards many of its four hundred or so houses were apparently little more than hovels.

The line of the railway was originally to be north of its present alignment, crossing Worple Road near its present junction with Spencer Hill and following a course about midway between the present line and the Ridgway. As the 1838 map shows, almost nothing had been built south of the Ridgway at that time, and the cutting needed to enable the trains to cross the escarpment would no doubt have resulted in a very different housing layout in this part of the Conservation Area. But the Earl of Cottenham, who owned the fields west of Pepys Road, opposed an alignment so close to his house, and the Company was obliged to move it further south.

The time then taken from "Wimbledon and Merton" Station to Nine Elms was only 18 minutes, from where commuters could board a river steamer to the City. [Milward 1989 pp.98-9]
The Ordnance Survey Map of 1865

Whereas the 1838 map shows little change from its predecessor, that of 1865 indicates a dramatic increase, mainly south of the Ridgway. As Hawtin explains, Wimbledon was no longer a *rus in urbe*:

*Industry, mining and shipping created a new middle class. So in XIXthC Wimbledon we find soldiers in plenty, Anglo-Indians, civil servants, lawyers from British and colonial postings, merchants, engineers, railway constructors, hereditary aristocracy and a new mercantile middle class.* [Hawtin p.101]

The map shows that, although Southside Common had been lined with gracious villas for about a hundred years, residential expansion did not commence from Southside towards the Ridgway, but on the meadowland further south, presumably because the estate owners were content to sell their land for development so long as the new properties did not encroach too closely on the vistas they had so long enjoyed.

One villa whose view was compromised, however, was *Lingfield House*. *Lingfield Road* was constructed across its grounds and houses were built backing the village with attractive views west over the neighbours’ estates towards Kingston. Most of these houses survive and, although the VicSoc Report suggested that many of them should be listed, only No.28, the *Village Club and Hall* at the junction of the Ridgway, is on the statutory list, grade II. No.28 was designed by SS Teulon in 1859 and is now the home of the Wimbledon Society Museum. Of the 24 houses on the east side of Lingfield Road, 15 are now *locally listed*.

South of the Ridgway, about a dozen roads and tracks were laid out in the 1850s and ‘60s, two of which, *Denmark Road* and *Thornton Hill*, reached as far as *Upper Worple*, the present Worple Road.
The 1865 map indicates that the road nearest the Village, Grosvenor Hill, contained particularly large detached houses. Many of them have either been demolished or suffered unsympathetic alterations, and are now converted into flats.

The layout of the cottages in Oldfield Road appears basically unchanged, and large detached villas were constructed to the west, on Sunnyside. Only Nos.1-4, at the northern end, survive, together with most of the houses built at that time at the northern end of Ridgway Place. According to Milward, the latter incorporated all mod cons, such as bathrooms and gas lighting [Milward 2000 p.25].

Moving westward, the next row of houses to be laid out during this period was along the northern part of Denmark Road. The model cottages designed by Samuel Teulon were joined by the row of semi-detached houses on the eastern side. In its Report, the VicSoc recommended that almost all the houses in Denmark Road be statutorily listed and Nos.47 to 73, by Teulon, are now grade II. The pairs at 21/22, 33/34 and 39/40 are on the local list.

Croft Cottages survived on the east side of what became known as Thornton Hill (now Thornton Road), and was joined by the semi-detached houses at the northern end of the present Thornton Hill. The beginnings of St John's Road were also laid out between Thornton Road and Denmark Road, and Nos.1 to 6 constructed along the northern side.

The character of Thornton Road and Hillside, immediately to the west, are unusual in being single sided. That is to say, the front facades of the houses to the west of both roads face west, presumably to obtain the maximum benefit of the views in that direction, and the back gardens to the villas in Hillside lead directly into Thornton Road, while those along the east side of what was to become Berkeley Place lead on to Hillside. Thornton Road, Thornton Hill and Hillside are all within the conservation area, and nos.11 and 12 Hillside are locally listed.

Until Berkeley Place was developed towards the end of the century, the houses in Hillside enjoyed a particularly pleasant view because, except for Wimbledon School (now Wimbledon College, also designed by Teulon and listed grade II), the meadows further west remained open land as far as Lansdowne Road. Because of the way in which its character has been eroded, only parts of this street are included in the Conservation Area. The large houses on the eastern side have unfortunately been mostly redeveloped, but Nos. 11 to 17, opposite, are included on the local list.

Further west, beyond Map No.8, Cottenham Park Road and Pepys Road were among those laid out after Cottenham Park was taken over by developers in the 1850s. Cottenham Park Road is no more than a reminder of the 230 acres assembled by James Mayrick (1748-1818) in this part of west Wimbledon which originally made up the Cottenham Park Estate. The grounds, landscaped by Henry Repton, have long since been built over [Hawtin p.98]. Christ Church, also by Teulon, was built in 1859, and the large houses to the west of the church, along the south side of Copse Hill, were built during this period.

The Stanford & Ordnance Survey Map of 1890

The population increased from 4,650 in 1861 to 9,000 in 1871, almost 16,000 by 1881 and about 25,000 by the 1890s, during which time Wimbledon changed from an isolated village to a London suburb. Not that development proceeded unchecked. In 1871, for example, the Commons Preservation Committee was formed to prevent Earl Spencer from enclosing most of the "untamed" Wimbledon Common as a public park.

North of the Ridgway houses were beginning to appear on the western side of Lingfield Road, and Homefield Road had been carved out of the backs of the commercial properties facing the Village High Street. A few houses were also being built along The Grange, Lauriston Road and Clifton Road, which have recently been constructed between Southside and the Ridgway. Also, some activity was taking place to the south of what is now Kings College School, including Glencairn, a grade II listed house built in 1866 on the northern spur to the
Ridgway adjoining what are now the school playing fields. It was also at this time that Wright’s Alley, between the playing fields, makes its appearance.

Map based on the Stanford & Ordinance Survey Map of 1890

There had been considerable activity between the Ridgway and Worple Road, particularly on the slopes south of St John’s Road, which now stretched from Thornton Hill to Ridgway Place. The church of St John the Baptist (listed grade II) had been completed in 1875, and the houses on the west side of Spencer Hill were built between 1873 and 1888. The large houses in Thornton Hill and on the east side of Denmark Road were also built during the 1880s. By 1880, Thornton Road and South Road (which half way along became Denmark Road), reached as far as Worple Lane, now Worple Road.

As far as the slope of the hill, both were already lined with Victorian houses, small at the top, very large on the slope. A third road, Hillside, had also been built… most with large middle-class houses only on its eastern side. Even larger houses had been put up about the same time along other new roads running south from the Ridgway: Grosvenor Hill, Sunnyside, Ridgway Place and, beyond the Downs, Lansdowne Road. [Milward 1989 p.154]

Nos.1 to 10 Berkeley Place, now locally listed, were built in 1879 with their backs turned to the houses in Hillside, while Nos.13 and 14 Berkeley Place, which date from about 1880, are listed grade II. South Place, a narrow thoroughfare between Denmark Road and Thornton Road, makes only a brief appearance on the 1890 map.

To the west of Wimbledon College, parts of Edge Hill and The Downs had also been developed. The Church of the Sacred Heart and the Cottage, at the entrance to the College, are listed grade II, and No.33, Donhead Lodge, opposite, is locally listed. At the top of Edge Hill, Nos.86-90, which date from 1897, are also locally listed, as are Nos. 4 to 12, near the bottom. While the whole of Edge Hill - if not all the buildings along it - is included in the Conservation Area, only the top end of The Downs has merited inclusion. The Drive and the eastern side of Arterberry Road were laid out in about 1870, the west side forming part of the Mount Ararat Estate. Both Atkinson Morley and The Cottage hospitals, beyond the Conservation Area, were built at about the same time [Hawtin p.148].
In contrast to this frantic activity, the 1890 map shows that there had been very little change to the part of the Conservation Area around Westside and Cannizaro Park over the past 100 years or so. The buildings at the northern end of Westside had coalesced into West Place, the Workhouse off Camp Road had given way to Almshouses and Workhouse Lane was for a time renamed Almshouse Lane [Hawtin p.118]. Otherwise, all that appears to have occurred along Westside and Southside Commons is a slight consolidation of the historic properties, most of which appear to have survived in their original state.

Maps from 1898 to the Present Day

The great majority of road building had been completed by the end of the 19th century, and the Ordnance Survey map of 1898 shows a general infilling along the roads between Southside and the Worple Road.

Except for the erection of the large late Victorian semi-detached houses along North View, the 1920 Ordnance Survey map still shows little change to the area around Westside. But by then the last of the roads between Southside and Worple Road - Murray Road - had been pushed through following the demolition of Wimbledon Lodge, the house’s distinctive semi-circular driveway forming the road’s northern entrance. Kings College School was developed along Southside. South of the Ridgway, the west side of Crescent Road had been developed between 1885 and 1893, and Ridgway Gardens was constructed on the front lawn of Wimbledon College.

Since the grid of roads within the conservation area between Southside and Worple Roads was now effectively complete, no significant changes appear on the Ordnance Survey maps of 1938 and 1951, and it isn’t until the map of 1976-7 that any infilling of the grounds of the houses along Westside is shown to have taken place. The estate along Chester Road and Sycamore Road is very typical of the 1950s, while Lordell Place and the developments north of Cannizaro House and along Eversley Park, off Camp Road, are of more recent origin.

Conclusion

It can be seen from this analysis of the various maps of the area that, although development spread gradually westward from the historic core of Wimbledon Village, as might be expected, a more pronounced movement occurred first south of the Ridgway and then to the north.

Until the coming of the railway, development was determined by outlook, orientation and distance from the Village, the large houses along Westside and Southside having extensive grounds and distant vistas to the south and west respectively. But from 1838 onwards, development occurred in clearly defined strips, first near the Village and then during the latter half of the nineteenth century between the Ridgway and Worple Road. It was only during the first half of the twentieth century that the section between the Ridgway and Southside was extensively developed, and there was little expansion west of Westside until after the 1939-45 war.

Development after 1838 and the increasing prominence of Wimbledon Town Centre over the Village from the 1870s onwards reflects the greater ease with which the residents were able to reach the town and the railway station. Housing north of the Ridgway became more attractive with the introduction of bus services through the Village, and west of Westside as car ownership increased. Not only the distance but also the climb up the hill from the station was no doubt a significant disincentive for those returning home from a hard day in the City. According to Millward, when the Station Master was asked by a commuter why the station could not have been located in the Village at the top of the hill, he replied "we did think about that sir, but in the end we decided that it would be best nearer the railway"!

The process of expansion was also far from even. Not only were individual fields developed in a sporadic way, but also land was divided and subdivided from large to smaller and yet
smaller housing plots until the area achieved the densely populated pattern of development we see today. Indeed, this process continues, with corner plots and back gardens being exploited as far as the restrictions on development will allow. Not only have large houses been sub-divided into flats, but there is increasing pressure to replace modest houses by more substantial ones on small plots.

The present extent of the Conservation Area

1.5: RELEVANT BOROUGH POLICIES

This Character Assessments has been produced within the context of the Initial version of Merton Council’s Adopted Unitary Development Plan (UDP), dated November 2003. Most of the policies affect the West Wimbledon Conservation Area to a varying extent, and this part briefly describes those of most obvious relevance.

Strategic Policies

The UDP follows central government advice, including that set out in the London Planning Advisory Committee’s 1994 Advice on Strategic Planning Guidance for London, whose objectives include the need to safeguard and improve London’s heritage, including its buildings, conservation areas and archaeological remains, and to protect and improve the quality of the green environment. It also adheres to the criteria and objectives in the Council’s Sustainability Appraisal, including the need to maintain, improve, enhance and protect the quality of the built environment.

Policy ST.1 requires development proposals to meet the principles of sustainable development, and applications for large development schemes should include a sustainable development statement.