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.

Extract from and key to the Merton unitary Development Plan
The dominant use of West Wimbledon Conservation Area is residential, and under policy **ST.10**, the Council is committed to protecting and, wherever possible, enhancing the character and amenity of all residential areas. Under policy **ST.13**, the Council will seek provision of a wide range of types of housing and tenure, and policy **ST.12** requires 95% of additional housing to be provided on previously developed land.

The increased emphasis by central government on high standards of architectural design and the need to provide sustainable forms of development make policy **ST.17** highly relevant to the built environment and its preservation in conservation areas. Policy **ST.18** provides a general commitment to protect, preserve or enhance all aspects of the Borough's environmental heritage, including the Borough's conservation areas, statutory and locally listed buildings, scheduled ancient monuments, historic parks and gardens, and archaeological sites. And under policy **ST.19** the Council is committed to safeguarding areas of importance to nature conservation. Under policy **ST.20** the Council is committed to protect the Borough's natural environment, including areas of Metropolitan Open Land, open spaces and sports pitches, allotments and important rear gardens, and under policy **ST.21** to conserving and enhancing the Borough's biodiversity and natural heritage. These strategic policies are particularly relevant to this assessment since its primary objective is to assist in the preservation and enhancement of the Conservation Area's character and appearance.

Traffic congestion in the Conservation Area is a serious problem, and under policies **ST.32**, **33** and **34** the Council will seek to reduce overall traffic volumes by encouraging access by foot, cycle and public transport, while restraining car parking under policy **ST.35**.

**Housing**

Under policies relating to the retention of residential accommodation (**HP.2**), and rehabilitation and vacant dwellings (**HP.3**), a change of use will not normally be granted to any of the buildings unless it is in such a condition that such a change is crucial to its retention. The few buildings within the Conservation Area that are in poor condition are identified in the assessment.

Under policy **HP.4** the density of new residential development will normally expected to be at a minimum of 150 habitable rooms per hectare. An exception is where the character and appearance of the surrounding area would be adversely affected.

Although policy **HP.5** the Council normally permits single dwellings to be converted to flats, under policy **HP.6** the conversion of flats into dwellings that would lead to a loss of residential units is not permitted unless there is a need for larger family accommodation in the area.

In view of the character and uses with the Conservation Area, other housing policies that might be relevant include:
- **HN.1** and **HN.2**, regarding the proportion of affordable housing in any residential development.
- **HN.3**, requiring a mix of housing types in residential proposals.
- **HN.4** regarding the provision of residential institutions and housing for older people.
- **HS.1**, requiring residential amenity.
- **Schedule 1** of the UDP identifies sites proposed for housing, none of which occur within the West Wimbledon Conservation Area.

**Education**

Because the significant proportion of the Conservation Area is devoted to educational use, policy **C.10**, under which the loss of school sites will be resisted, and policy **C.14**, regarding new educational facilities and extensions / improvements to existing ones, may be applicable.

**The Natural Environment**
Despite the moderately high density of residential development throughout the Conservation Area, much of the space and land between buildings is of considerable value to nature conservation and the following policies are highly relevant.

Wimbledon Common and Cannizaro Park are designated as Metropolitan Open Land (MOL).

Policy **NE.1** explains that the use of land within an MOL must maintain its open character, improve its landscape character and nature conservation quality, and provide opportunities for outdoor recreation. And under policy **NE.2**, proposed development and change of use within or adjoining an MOL is also very strictly controlled.

Wimbledon Common and Cannizaro Park also form part of the series of linked informal open spaces within Merton and surrounding Boroughs, known as Green Chains, and under policy **NE.2** any development is expected to respect their character or function.

Cannizaro Park and the parts of Wimbledon Golf Club and Wimbledon Common adjoining Southside, Westside and Camp Road is also designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and a Site of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC), and under policies **NE.5** and **NE.6** proposals which may have an adverse effect on these sites of nature conservation will not be permitted.

Under policy **NE.5**, Green Corridors, the Council has identified a network of relatively continuous areas of green spaces leading through the built up parts of the Borough which serve as a network for the movement of plant and animal species, and where development will normally be resisted. The Common, Cannizaro Park and the area adjoining the Crooked Billet form part of this network, and under policy **NE.8** the Council will encourage the management of landscape features identified under policies NE.4 and NE.5.

As with other residential areas, the back gardens to the houses in West Wimbledon help to support much of the Borough's biodiversity, and under policy **NE.10** the Council oppose proposals that would result in significant harm to the character and biodiversity of backland areas.

According to policies **NE.11** and **NE.12**, development will not normally be permitted if it would damage or destroy any trees, or unless it retains and, if possible, enhances hedges and other landscape features. This assessment identifies within the Sub Area maps those parts of the Conservation Area which are subject to Tree Preservation Orders.

**The Built Environment**

**Conservation Areas**

Pressure for new development is particularly severe in West Wimbledon, and as far back as 1990 the Conservation Area Advisory Committee acknowledged that relatively modern infill development had taken place that was out of keeping with the area's original character [CAAC 30 August 1990 p.6]. Conservation Area policies in the UDP are therefore of the greatest relevance, and to assist in determining appropriate and sympathetic development proposals this Assessment identifies buildings of varying quality within the Conservation Area. Paragraphs 4.28 to 4.31 commit the Council to the following actions:

4.28: The Council will review and monitor the boundaries of existing Conservation Areas through the preparation of Character Assessments. A review of the boundary of West Wimbledon Conservation Area forms an important part of this Assessment.

4.29: The Council will promote enhancement schemes for Conservation Areas through pursuing opportunities for external funding and through partnerships with national funding bodies and the private and voluntary sectors. This assessment includes locations where enhancement schemes may be appropriate.

4.30: The Council can control certain adverse changes to the built environment within the conservation areas by issuing guidance and in the way that it determines applications for
planning permission and listed building and conservation area consents (for demolitions). This is the primary function of this character assessment. Statutorily listed buildings are identified in the text and on the Sub Area maps.

4.31: The Council will use Article 4 (I) and Article 4 (II) Directions where appropriate subject to the Secretary of State’s confirmation where required, to protect the special character and appearance of Conservation Areas, archaeological Priority Zones, Sites of Special Scientific Interest and Buildings included on the Local List. This assessment also identifies locally listed buildings and recommends the possible location for Article 4 Directions.

Policy BE.1 states:
Within a conservation area a proposal for new development, alteration or extension to a building or for the change of use of land or buildings will be required to preserve or enhance the character or appearance of that conservation area.

Proposals will be expected to:
(I) Respect or complement the design, scale, form and materials of existing buildings and spaces
(II) Respect street patterns or other features contributing to the character, historic value of an area or the pattern of development in the area
(III) Maintain important views within and out of the area
(IV) Ensure that the level of activity, traffic, parking services or noise generated by the proposal would not detract from the character or appearance of the area

The justification to the policy explains that the Council will encourage the sensitive redevelopment of sites that detract from the character of the area, that well designed new buildings can often enhance the character of a conservation area, and that applications for development need to be fully detailed. (This Assessment identifies those buildings that fail to preserve or enhance the Conservation Areas as well as those which have suffered from particularly inappropriate alterations or extensions.) It also explains that the Council will seek to retain buildings in the uses for which they were originally intended. The policy continues:

4.38: The Council will encourage protection of the special character and appearance of Conservation Areas, through the preparation of Design Guidance and Character Assessments for each Conservation Area. These will indicate to prospective applicants and owners the type of development which is appropriate and likely to be acceptable. Character Assessments are set out in Supplementary Planning Guidance, and development proposals will be judged for their effect on the character and appearance identified in the SPGs.

4.39: In considering schemes and proposals in Conservation Areas, the Council may be prepared to avoid the rigid application of relevant planning and highway standards if these would act to the detriment of the area’s character or appearance. In such cases proposals will be expected to be of particular quality, and must preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the Conservation Area.

Policy BE.2 explains that any development that involves the total or substantial demolition of a building that makes a positive contribution to the character of the conservation will not normally be permitted. (Those unlisted buildings that make a positive contribution to the West Wimbledon Conservation Area are indicated in yellow in the Sub Area maps.) Under policy BE.3, development proposals adjacent to a conservation area are also expected to preserve or enhance its setting, and not detract from views into or out of the area.

Listed Buildings
Statutorily listed buildings are identified in the Assessment, and under policies BE.5, BE.6 and BE.7 the Council will encourage the maintenance, repair and restoration of listed buildings, and resist their demolition and unsuitable alteration or extension. Under Policy BE.9 the Council will encourage the continuation or reinstatement of the use for which a listed building was originally designed, but will permit a change of use if the original use is not viable and the proposed use will not be detrimental to the building’s character.
Under policy **BE.8** the Council will have special regard to protecting the setting of listed buildings, ancient monuments, Historic Parks and Gardens and the wider historic landscape, and the setting of such features, including the grade II* Cannizaro Park, are considered as part of this Assessment.

Policy **BE.10** requires that the remains of buildings of intrinsic historic or archaeological interest which are to demolished or altered are to be recorded.

**Locally Listed Buildings**

The Council has developed a local list of buildings of special architectural or historic interest, based on their architectural style, their age and history, their architectural and historic integrity, their group value, their detailing, and the use of unusual or innovative building materials. Under policy **BE.11** the Council will normally resist their total or substantial demolition, and permit their an alteration, extension or change of use if the proposal is sympathetic to their character and setting and will not detract from their historic interest. And under policy **BE.12** the Council will seek to have a locally listed building upgraded to the statutory list if it is threatened with demolition. This Assessment identifies locally listed buildings and recommends both additions to the list and upgrading to the statutory list where appropriate.

**Archaeology**

Most of the West Wimbledon Conservation Area lies within an Archaeological Priority Zone (APZ), the boundary of which is shown on the extract of the UDP map above and on Sub Area maps, as well as adjoining the Scheduled Ancient Monument (SAM) of Caesar’s Camp. Policy **BE.13** explains that there is a presumption in favour of the preservation of SAMs and other nationally important archaeological sites and their settings. The Council will not grant permission for development that failed to comply with this presumption, and may require a preliminary archaeological site evaluation and archaeological impact assessment before proposals for development within the APZ are considered, as well as on other sites of archaeological potential, in accordance with policy **BE.14**.

**New Buildings and Extensions**

Policy **BE.15** requires that all new buildings and extensions should be designed and orientated to ensure that adjoining property retains adequate daylight, sunlight and privacy, and be protected from visual intrusion, noise and disturbance.

**Urban Design**

Policy **BE.16** explains that development proposals need to respond and reinforce the local patterns of development and landscape, distinguish between private and public areas, and create attractive, distinctive, adaptable, varied, safe and accessible public spaces that provide adequate circulation; and policy **BE.17** explains that, to help towards these objectives, the Council may be prepared to apply planning and highway standards flexibly.

**Gardens**

Under policy **BE.24** the Council seeks to protect rear gardens and other open space which contribute to the quality of the area, and resist off-street car parking in forecourts and gardens where it would result in the loss of trees of amenity value, significant front boundary walls or the greater part of the existing front garden space, or where it would adversely affect the local amenities. A significant number of the front gardens in the Conservation Area have been largely given over to car parking, and many original front garden walls have been lost; the Assessment identifies their location and recommends that Article 4 Directions be used in some areas to strengthen the Council’s ability to resist such changes.

**High Buildings**

Under policies **BE.19** and **BE.21**, the Council will normally resist proposals for high buildings and structures which have an impact on such sensitive locations as conservation areas, historic parks and gardens, listed buildings, and important local views, panoramas and prospects.
Design of Development

Policy BE.22 explains that applications for new development will need to include design statements showing how the proposals have been designed to a high standard that complements or enhances the character and local distinctiveness of the surrounding buildings, and respects their siting, rhythm, scale, density, proportions, height, materials and massing, as well as being safe, and secure against crime. And policy BE.23 requires alterations and extensions to respect or complement the design and detailing of the original building, be sympathetic to its form, scale, bulk, proportions and its external materials, respect its special relationship to adjoining buildings, and complement the character and appearance of the wider setting. Also, policy BE.24 requires roof extensions and dormer windows to be compatible with the existing roofs in size, design and materials.

Advertising

Under policy BE.29 the Council considers making orders for Areas of Special Control of advertising panels and displays where a stricter degree of advertisement control is considered essential to the preservation of the special character and appearance of an area, such as conservation areas. Under policy BE.28 they would not normally be permitted in the West Wimbledon CA, which does not appear to suffer from inappropriate advertising.

Shop Fronts

Under policy BE.30 shop fronts that contribute to the local character should be retained and features of historic value preserved or reinstated, solid security shutters resisted, and separate upper floor access to be retained or restored. Policy BE.31 requires the design of new shop fronts should be related to the scale and character of the building and enhance the street scene, and under policy BE.32 advertising on shop fascias should enhance the street scene, approval not normally being given for internally illuminated signs in conservation areas. (See also policies TC.12 and TC.13.)

Street Furniture and Materials

Under policy BE.33 the Council will endeavour to ensure that the street environment, including street furniture, is designed to a high standard and is appropriate to the character of the Conservation Area and of any nearby listed buildings. Also, when implanting environmental improvements the Council will endeavour to retain and re-use traditional materials, provide more trees and install more appropriate street furniture.

One of the sources of information used in this Assessment is the Areas Character Survey of eight parts of the Conservation Area produced by the Wimbledon Society, which identify such features as street lights, street name plates, traffic signs and paving surfaces where the Society regard them as inappropriate. The Society might be asked to complete its survey of these features and to recommend appropriate replacements as a guide to future road improvements.

Telecommunications (policies BE.49 and 50)

Under policies BE.34, 35, 36 and 37, the Council will consider the impact of telecommunications development and apparatus on environmentally sensitive buildings and areas.

Leisure and Recreation

Open Land

Urban Green Space is defined as open space to which public access is restricted or not formally established but which meets or is capable of meeting recreational or non-recreational needs within an urban area. It not only includes areas of over 0.4 hectares (1 acre) listed in Schedule 2 of the UDP, such as Wimbledon Common, Cannizzaro Park, the Royal Wimbledon Golf Club, Wimbledon Park Golf Course, Wimbledon College, and Cannizaro Park allotments, but also smaller areas not included in the Schedule. Under policy L.5 development will only be permitted on such spaces not only where the land has no significant recreational, nature conservation, social, cultural or educational function or potential, but also where it has no significant historical, structural or amenity value, and provision can be made for equivalent open space in the same locality.
The loss of any public or recreational open space will not normally be permitted under policies L.6 and L.7, and under policy L.10 the Council will not normally grant permission for development that would result in the loss of allotments, such as those to the north-west of Cannizaro Park, unless they are surplus to requirements and their development would lead to community benefits.

**Arts Culture and Entertainment Facilities**

Wimbledon is an important cultural centre and some of the smaller cultural facilities, such as church halls, schools and historic buildings, are located within the West Wimbledon Conservation Area. Under policies L.13 and L.15, the Council will encourage provision of cultural facilities and resist normally development that would result in their loss.

**Community and Religious Meeting Places**

The Conservation Area and its immediate environs contain church buildings which make a significant contribution to the local townscape. Under policy L.14, the Council will favourably consider applications for community and religious meeting places.

**Public Houses**

The Conservation Area also contains a couple of public houses which form communal focal points, and under policy L.16 the Council will not normally permit their redevelopment.

**Town Centres and Shopping**

**Development Outside Town and Local Centres**

Policies TC.2 and TC.10 state that large developments for retail, leisure, entertainment, office or other town centre uses will normally be permitted outside the town centres of Wimbledon, Mitcham and Morden, or within local centres, only if there are no suitable sites within or adjoining these centres.

**Neighbourhood Parades**

The row of shops forming 65 to 87 Ridgway is classified as a neighbourhood parade, and under policy S.4 permission for uses outside Class A.1 will normally be permitted. Details of the present uses of these shops are given in Sub Area 15. Environmental improvements to neighbourhood parades, such as landscaping, tree planting, seating and other street furniture is sought through development proposals under policy S.7. Such proposals for this part of the Conservation Area might be included in any survey carried out by the Wimbledon Society. The Council will normally permit a range of uses and changes of use in the floors above shops, and support proposals to bring upper floors back into use, as explained in policies TC.12 and TC.13. Policy S.6 may permit new or extensions to small-scale retail development, such as the replacement of an existing shop, and policy S.8 imposes strict limitations on the development on A3 food and drink uses.

**Transport (policies PT.1 and 4)**

As explained under part 1.1 of this Assessment, West Wimbledon suffers from considerable congestion from private cars, and it suggests ways should be investigated to reduce this problem. One way would be to improve public transport through the area, to reduce the need for transport by car. Although the Conservation Area is conveniently close to Wimbledon Town Centre, with its rail, underground, Tramlink and bus connections, the walking distance from the westernmost part of the CA is about 30 minutes. The only other public transport is the bus routes around the Conservation Area through Wimbledon Village to the west and along Worple Road to the south, and the 100 bus route along the Ridgway as far as Atkinson Morley Hospital. There is no bus route through the area which links Wimbledon Village with other centres further west. Under policy PT.1 the Council is committed to pressing for improved public transport, including adequate accessibility.

**The Road Network and Traffic Restraint**
The Ridgway is the only Local Distributor Road in the Conservation Area, the others being Local Access Roads and since the Council is committed to supporting modifications that achieve local environmental and safety benefits under policy RN.2, part 1.1 of the Assessment suggests that various improvements to the road network might be introduced to reduce traffic flow and congestion though the Local Access Roads.

**Walking and Cycling**

The Conservation Area contains a significant proportion of educational buildings and facilities, and policy WC.2 explains that the Council intends to implement a programme of safer routes to schools to reduce car journeys, reduce accidents and encourage walking. According to policy WC.3, new developments such as schools or housing will need to provide facilities or cycle parking.

The Conservation Area contains two cycle routes, one along Southside Common and the other along The Grange and Ridgway Place, and under policy WC.5 the Council intends to continue its contribution to the London Cycling Network.

**Parking**

Some residents' parking spaces in Wimbledon are already subject to metered controlled parking zones and controls are being extended to Wimbledon Village. Further extensions should form part of the suggested traffic survey of the Conservation Area. Policies PK.2, PK.3 and PK.4 provide controls related to new development.

**Land Use/Transport Integration**

The UDP explains that the Council will consider the impact of new development on the environment and the transport infrastructure under policies LU.3 and LU.1, its accessibility to public transport under policy LU.2, and the way in which it improves conditions for pedestrians, cyclists and public transport uses under policy LU.4.

**Schedules 2, 3, 5 and 5**

The UDP includes schedules of sites designated for various purposes. The following, most of which are also referred to elsewhere, relate only to those within or immediately adjoining West Wimbledon Conservation Area.

**Schedule 2: Open Spaces**

- Metropolitan Open Land: Wimbledon Common (333.2 h.)
- Public Open Space (over 0.4 h.): Cannizaro Park, Westside Common (13.95 h.)
- Urban Green Space (Over and above 0.4 h.): Royal Wimbledon Golf Club Wimbledon Common (60.70 h.), Wimbledon Common (165 h., excluding Royal Wimbledon Golf Club)
- Educational Open Space: Wimbledon College, Edge Hill SW19 (4.29 h.)
- Allotments: Cannizaro Park, Westside Common, SW19 (0.76 h.)

**Schedule 3, Conservation Areas, Historic Parks and Gardens and Listed Buildings**

- Conservation Areas: Details of adjoining conservation areas are given on para. 1, 2, Context.
- Historic Parks and Gardens: Cannizaro Park
- Listed Buildings: Details of listed buildings in the CA are given in the relevant Sub Areas.

**Schedule 4, Other Sites**

- Sites of Special Scientific Interest and Sites of Metropolitan Importance for Nature Conservation: Wimbledon Common and Putney Heath
- Sites of Borough (Grade 1) Importance for Nature Conservation: Cannizaro Park, Royal Wimbledon Golf Course south

**Schedule 5, Archaeological Priority Zones and Scheduled Ancient Monuments**

- Archaeological Priority Zones: Wimbledon Common, Wimbledon Village
- Scheduled Ancient Monuments: Caesar's Camp, Wimbledon Common