SUB AREAS 2A AND 2B: WEST SIDE COMMON AND CHESTER ROAD (EAST)

Extent and Justification

West Side Common forms a line of properties between Cannizaro Park and the western side of Wimbledon Common, on each side of the entrance to Cannizaro House. They comprise a substantial proportion of the earliest and architecturally most important buildings still extant within the Conservation Area, and their prominent position makes a major contribution to the setting of this part of Wimbledon Common.

History

By the time Roque produced his map of the area in 1745 West Side Common already contained an almost continuous row of substantial properties, including Stamford House, Westside House and Chester House. By 1776 a few more, including Cannizaro House, Hanford Row and West Cottage (adjoining Westside House) had been added, together with The Keir in 1800, and Bardon Lodge and Lime Cottage by 1865. This edge to the Common has therefore remained comparatively unchanged for over 150 years.

Character

Most of the buildings along this part West Side Common provide a grand ensemble of distinguished period buildings set in heavy wooded and attractively landscaped grounds. Although many of them have been altered by being divided into apartments or converted to other uses, they still make a very substantial contribution to the character of the Conservation Area when viewed from the east across Rushmere Pond. Their architectural quality and historic character enhance this view and any new development should ensure that this quality is maintained. The houses are set back from the road behind a wide grass verge, mature trees, a gravel path and high brick walls, and the views from the path and over the boundary walls provide a pleasant vista of the Common. The attractiveness of the verge is, however, compromised by a variety of bollards of different materials paced along the sides of the driveways into the separate properties, which appear to have been installed at different times without any attempt at co-ordination or consistency.
Map of Sub Area 2A, Westside Common, southern section
Buildings

Sub Area 2A: Nos. 1 to 19 Westside Common, Lordell Place & 2a To 6 Chester Road

Nos.1 and 2: Nos.1 and 2 comprise a semi-detached pair of two storey late 19th C. houses much in scale with the buildings at the southern end of West Side Common around The Crooked Billet (Sub Area No.6). They are therefore included in that Sub Area.

No. 3, Chester House: Chester House is listed grade II, the list description putting the date of its construction as circa 1700 or earlier, and Pevsner states Chester House (much altered) was built in c.1670 and owned in the C18 by Horne Took, who built himself a tomb in the garden [p.457]. According to Milward, its first known owner was living there in 1692, but it is also said to have been built by the Duke of York, for his mistresses, before he was crowned James II. Its owners include the political activist John Horne-Tooke, whose guests included Tom Paine, and Sir Francis Burdett MP. During the Napoleonic Wars his neighbour at Cannizaro House, Henry Dundas, tried to have him convicted for sedition.

Chester House was substantially re-modelled in the nineteenth and centuries, and in 1938 it was threatened with demolition. However, it was saved by the outbreak of the Second World War and instead was later converted into the head office of Barclays Bank.

Chester House, No.3 West Side Common

The five bay main section, of immaculate Georgian proportions, is of two storeys plus roof dormers. The ornate soffit moulding is repeated in the pediment to the projecting northern entrance wing, and a lower two storey five bay wing at the northern end conceals a higher extension at the rear. Milward praised the virtues of the extensions: Unsightly Victorian additions have been pulled down and a new wing in perfect keeping with the original five bay house has been built. Chester House is now one of the finest looking buildings in Wimbledon [Milward 1989 pp.76-81]. However, in the 1990s the northernmost part was demolished to provide access to Lordell Place, an estate of nine houses in the rear garden.

Lordell Place

The boundary wall and a garden building attached to the rear wall of the original garden date from the early to mid eighteenth century and are also separately listed grade II because of their group value with Chester House. However, any visual link with the main house has since been obscured by the 1990s housing in Lordell Place. Because of its use as offices, the front garden of Chester House is now given over to car parking, but the high wall and planting along the front boundary shield vehicles from the Common and make an important contribution to this part of the Conservation Area. Both Chester house and the greensward in front of it are subject to Tree Preservation Orders.

The occupants of Chester House include: Benjamin Lordell (1692); Madam Belitha (1741-1777); The second William Blake (1736-1791); John Horne-Tooke (1792-1812); Mary Horne-Tooke (1812-1821); Linwood Strong (1821-?); Blackwood Gore Currie (?-1837); James Stevens Forbes and his sister Katherine Stewart Forbes (1857-1892);
Sydney Smith, William Leuchars, Thomas Raffles Hughes, Lord Onslow, Lord Kilmore, Lord Churston, Sidney Martin (1893-1939); Barclays Bank (1939 onwards).

**Nos. 1 to 10 Lordell Place:** Lordell Place lies at the back of Chester House and was built in the 1990s within the original garden, the access having been built past the northern end of Chester House. The ten medium density two storey houses are designed in a traditional manner, with sash windows, rusticated corners to the brickwork, ornate soffits, and pitched roofs to the dormers. They are arranged in linked blocks around an attractively designed well landscaped courtyard, Lordell Place being subject to a Tree Preservation Order.

**Shutters (No.5a?):** This house is a typical two storey detached post war house with few architectural pretensions. It was presumably built in the south-eastern corner of the original gardens to Worsley House, to the north.

**Bramble Bank (No.5b?):** Bramble Bank occupies the remaining frontage between Shutters and Worsley House. It is a two storey detached house designed in a similar style to the houses in Chester Road and Sycamore Road, and may have been erected at about the same time.

**No. 4: Worsley House, The Cottage and West Lodge**

**No. 4, Worsley House / The Cottage / West Lodge:** West Lodge was built in 1894, is listed grade II and was designed by EJ May in what the list description calls the Domestic Revival Manner. It is a substantial house of two storeys plus attics, three bays wide and three deep, with tall ornamental chimneys and the attic rooms accommodated in large gables. Except for No.23, Stamford House, it is the tallest building on West Side and therefore makes a substantial contribution to the vista of West Side from the Common. The house has been converted into three residences, Worsley House occupying the south-east section, The Cottage the north-east corner and West Lodge the rear part. Presumably the grounds originally extended as far south as Chester House and westward as far as Sycamore Road, and not only were the plots now occupied by Bramble Bank and Shutters sold for development, but also those now belonging to Nos.2a, 2, 4 and 6 Chester Road. Nos. 2 and 4 have in their turn being replaced by more pretentious properties.

(entrance to Chester Road)

Nos. 4 and 5 West Side Common are separated by Chester Road, probably inserted in the 1950s to provide access to the estate which forms Sub Area 5.

**Nos. 2 and 4 Chester Road before and after more intensive redevelopment**
**No. 2a Chester Road:** No. 2a is typical of the type of houses for which planning permission is currently being sought within the Conservation Area. It consists of two storeys plus attic (and possibly a basement storey) designed in a pastiche symmetrical classical manner with classical ornamentation applied to an otherwise bland façade. The approach, with its wrought iron gates, is also symmetrical, with garages placed each side of the entrance, creating a somewhat contrived sense of grandeur.

**Nos. 2 and 4 Chester Road:** Similar designs to that of No. 2a have been built on the site of Nos. 2 and 4. Although the earlier post war houses had little to recommend them – No. 2 had undergone so many rather unsympathetic alterations that its original character has been lost – the new buildings are symptomatic of a trend in larger houses protected by high walls and gates.

**No. 5 West Side Common:** No. 5 is a modest inter-war two-storey house with a single storey front wing which was probably built within the grounds of No. 6, West Side House.

**No. 6, West Side House:** Together with Cannizaro House, West Side House was built by William Browne after he acquired The Old Park in 1705. It therefore formed part of the Old Estate owned by the Grosvenor family from 1769 until 1827 and then their relatives, the Drax family, from 1827 to 1919. It was initially called “the mansion house” and is listed grade II. Milward considers that the central part dates from the early 18th C, Pevsner dates it to the 1760s and the list description is somewhat cautious in giving its date as “Circa 1760 or earlier” because Browne died in 1738. It enjoyed extensive views and the original modest “pleasure ground” surrounded by a ha-ha was extended in the nineteenth century. Sir Reginald Plunkett-Ernle-Erle-Drax sold the house in 1919 to Mary Dodge, an American heiress, who used it as a Theosophist Centre.

**Nos. 6, West Side House, and 7 and 7a West Side Common**

The occupants of West Side House include: William Brown (1705-1738); Thomas Walker, Surveyor General to His Majesty’s Land Revenue (1738-?); Stephen Skinner (1748-1765); Thomas Grosvenor (1765-1769) Hon. Henry Drummond (1774-1779); Thomas Scott Jackson, Director of the Bank of England (1781-1787); Robert Dundas, 2nd Viscount Melville & First Lord of the Admiralty (1819-1822); Sir John Copley, Lord Lyndhurst, the Lord Chancellor (1823-1831); Henry Currie MP (c1832-1843); Sir Thomas Shaw-Lefevre, Vice Chancellor of London University and the Clerk of Parliaments (1844 –1849); Hon. Charles Gore and the Countess of Kerry (1850-1904); Hon Joseph Maxwell Scott (1906-1919) [from Milward’s Cannizaro House and its Park etc].

Sir Thomas Shaw-Lefevre’s son George (later Lord Eversley) was a champion of the preservation of Commons, and Charles Gore’s son was the first Wimbledon Tennis Champion.

The two storey House consists of a five bay central section with a central pedimented doorway and four-bay wings on each side, forming a particularly wide frontage in stock brick with red brick surrounds to the plain Georgian proportioned windows.
Nos. 7 and 7a: These two properties comprise the grade II stable block to No.6, and date from the same period as No.6. Originally single storey, this long narrow block in stock brick has had ground floor and dormer windows inserted as part of conversion into eight apartments. Groups of garages and other outbuildings tend to clutter the area between the houses and the brick wall which borders the grounds.

No. 9, Red Roofs: Red Roofs is a two storey detached house built in the mock Tudor style with a large gable facing the Common and is thought to date from the first years of the twentieth century.

Hanford Row, Nos. 14 to 19 West Side Common

Nos. 14 to 19, Hanford Row: This terrace of modest but attractive grade II listed cottages is set back from the Common down a narrow track. It is named after the builder, William Hanford, and consists of six labourers' cottages which he erected in the 1760s [Milward 1989, p.70]. Although they retain much of their original character, including ornamental porches over the front doors, the original roofs have been canted forwards to create a steep Mansard and an effective third storey.

The southern and northern sections of Sub Area 2 are divided by the entrance to Cannizaro House, No.20 West Side Common, which forms part of Sub Area No.1, Cannizaro Park and House.

Sub Area 2B: Nos. 2a to 26 West Side Common

Consecutive numbers, from south to north

No.20c West Side Common

Nos. 20a to 20d: These four post-war properties are located to the rear of Nos.21, 22 and 22a West Side Common, with access between No.21 and the entrance to Cannizaro House. They are reached down a well landscaped, walled and gravel surfaced lane.

No.20a: Located between the access lane and Cannizaro Park, No.20a is a two storey detached house in red brick probably built in the 1960s.

No.20b: At the northern end of the access lane to the rear of Nos.22 and 22a West Side Common, No.20b is a detached house entirely concealed behind the entrance gate, high walls and shrubbery.

No.20c: No.20c is a traditionally designed two storey detached house in multi-coloured brick situated between the access lane and No.22 West Side Common. The arrangement of its dormers and cat-slide roof give it an attractive profile.