SUB AREA 5: CHESTER ROAD (WEST), SYCAMORE ROAD AND BEECH CLOSE

Extent and Justification
The Sub Area consists of a post war housing estate of two storey terrace houses and three storey balcony access flats along Chester Road and Sycamore Road. It is located to the west of Sub Area 2, West Side Common and is surrounded on the other three sides by Sub Area 1, Cannizaro Park.

Map and Location Map of Sub Area 5

History
The houses and flats adjoining Chester and Sycamore Roads were constructed in the early 1950s, probably as a Council Estate. The area originally formed part of the Cannizaro estate.

**Character:**

The houses are modest in scale and character, and very typical of low density Council housing of this period. Although the buildings are of less architectural or historic interest than most of the others in the Conservation Area, they have mellowed well and the generous landscaping has matured, giving the estate an attractive atmosphere. The flats are rather less attractive than the houses, but they do not detract significantly from the overall character.

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**Buildings**

**The houses at the west end of Beech Close**

All 56 houses and the nine blocks of flats have a neutral effect on the character and appearance of the Conservation Area.

**CHESTER ROAD:**

**Nos. 8 to 30 & 38 to 56 even, and 9 to 25 & 37 to 45 (odd):** Two storey terrace houses typical of 1950s council estates, set in pleasantly matured landscaped grounds.

**BEECH CLOSE:**

**Nos. 1 to 8 (consecutive):** A continuation of the estate houses in Chester Road forming a particularly pleasant recess within the wider landscaping.

**SYCAMORE ROAD:**

**Nos. 2 to 71 consecutive:** Three storey balcony access flats forming part of the landscaped estate. Although they provide a variety of scale in what would otherwise be a somewhat bland composition, their proportions and massing along each side of Sycamore Road are less successful than the two storey houses.

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**Positive and Negative Features**

The estate has been identified as a separate Sub Area because it comprises later infill to the historic properties to the east. Although it tends to detract from the area’s historic integrity, most of the housing makes a moderately positive contribution to the architectural character because it honestly reflects the style of its day.

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**Preservation or Enhancement**

This part of the Conservation Area should be retained in its present form. An **Article 4 Direction** should be considered to ensure that the character of the houses is not undermined by unsuitable piece-meal alterations.
SUB AREA 6: THE CROOKED BILLET, STRACHAN PLACE AND CINQUE COTTAGES

Extent and Justification

This part of the Conservation Area consists of a triangle of grass and trees lined by buildings on the north and west sides, and is known as The Crooked Billet after one of the two public houses on the north side. It forms a "hinge" between the Cannizaro Arm and the rest of the Conservation Area, and is an important focal point both scenically and socially. It is also different in character from the areas to the north and south and should therefore be considered separately from other the parts of the Conservation Area.

History:

The area is named after the public house at No.14, one of a row of modest properties on the north side of the green, the earliest of which are probably the grade II listed group at Nos.17 to 20. Milward can find no evidence for the legend that Thomas Cromwell’s father took over a brewery and inn called the “Crooked Billet” in 1513, since the first mention of an ale house of that name does not occur until 1759 and a brewery until the 1770s. A row of a dozen or so cottages, including the Crooked Billet, are shown on the John Roque map of 1745 and
twenty-five are shown on the 1772-1776 map, including Cinque Cottages and a group at or near Strachan Place. Many of them were built by William Jennings, a local bricklayer who died in 1784. The original cottages were mostly occupied by craftsmen and poor labourers, but it was also an early home of the Watney family, who set up the Wheatsheaf Brewery to the west of the cottages [Milward 1989 pp.81-2]. The various maps of the area show a variety of building arrangements, indicating that the area has been redeveloped at fairly regular intervals over the past couple of hundred years.

Character

The part of Wimbledon known as The Crooked Billet consists of two groups of properties of greater density than those in the surrounding Area. Pevsner describes them as a delightful haphazard collection of C18 and C19 cottages [p.458]. Their modest scale and unspoilt historic character form an attractive group, particularly when seen in conjunction with the trees which line the northern side of Woodhayes Road, to the south.

West Wimbledon Conservation Area is basically residential and is therefore lacking in civic spaces, relying on Wimbledon Village as a local civic and commercial focus, with the public social activities within the Conservation Area tending to focus on the pubs in the Ridgway, Camp Road and the Crooked Billet. The Crooked Billet and the other pub, The Hand in Hand, have the advantage of facing out on to a traffic free tree-lined area of grass on to which customers can congregate, as well as being close to the regular events on the Common. It is therefore the natural civic space for this part of Wimbledon.

Unlike The Village, it is not urban in character, but more like a traditional village green, with the two pub signs located on the green and the grassed areas left rough and informal. Spatially, however, it is not a continuation of the rough grassland of the Common, since the restricted entries from the east and west isolate it from its surroundings. The south-east side is lined by the buildings of Kings College School, which, although civic in character, are unsympathetic in scale and divorced from the rest of the Sub Area by Woodhayes Road. Except for the vehicles passing along the south-east side, the Sub Area is free of through traffic, since there this no exit into the adjoining Sycamore Road from the north-west corner of the green.

Buildings

Of the sixty or so properties in the Sub Area, seven are listed grade II, twice as many locally listed, and the remainder make a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area.

WESTSIDE COMMON

Nos. 1 and 2: The north-east corner of the green is occupied by Nos. 1 and 2 Westside Common, a pair of two storey late Victorian houses with white rendered facades which look eastwards on to the Common. Although their postal address is Westside Common, they are similar in scale to the buildings overlooking the green, and are therefore included in this Sub Area. They were added to the local list in October 1998.

THE CROOKED BILLETT

Consecutive numbers, from east to west

Most of the buildings lining the north side of the Sub Area are situated either on the back of pavement or have very small front gardens, those at the western end being fronted by white
painted picket fences, which help to give a unity to this part of the Sub Area. Concrete bollards have been placed along the kerb and timber bollards in the grass to deter cars parking on the pavement and the green.

Nos. 1, 2 & 3: A terrace of three two storey cottages of stock brick on the back of the pavement which appear to be late Victorian but post-date the Ordnance Survey map of 1890. The ground floor and side parapeted elevations have been rendered, and the plain facades have curved lintels and semi-circular arches to the recessed porches.

Nos. 4, 5 & 6: Nos 4 and 6 are a pair of two storey rendered cottages under a hipped roof, with a small front garden, which have been converted into a single dwelling. No.5 lies to the rear. They were locally listed in October 1998 and date from the late eighteenth or early nineteenth century.

No. 7, The Hand in Hand: A two storey public house shown on the 1890 Ordnance Survey map, set back behind a courtyard partly occupied by a large tree. It was added to the local list in October 1998 and makes a significant contribution to the character of the Sub Area.

No. 8: A very narrow building attached to the west side of The Hand in Hand.

Nos. 9, 10 & 11: Three small cottages, No.11 being on the road frontage, with No.9 behind it and No.10 taking up the back of the site. No.11 is a twentieth century two storey building of stock brick with a hipped roof and fenestration of somewhat undistinguished proportions.

Nos. 12 & 13: A semi-detached pair of two storey twentieth century white rendered cottages under a hipped roof, with a small front garden.

No. 14, The Crooked Billett: A two storey white rendered pub and a lower two storey side extension to the east providing access to a rear yard. Although The Crooked Billet dates from before 1745, it appears to have undergone substantial alterations to the point that it is not regarded worthy of statutory listing. However, it is recommended for local listing because of its close associations with the social history of the area.

Nos. 17 to 22: A mid eighteenth century grade II listed group of seven two storey interconnected cottages. Nos. 17 to 20 form of symmetrical two-storey terrace on the road frontage, with the two central properties recessed. Nos. 21 and 16 lie immediately behind this central pair, and No.22 at the rear. The front four are of red brick with the central section rendered white, and have small front gardens.

The listed buildings at Nos. 17 to 22

Nos. 23 to 37 comprise two rows of two storey cottages in stock brick with red brick coursing and door and window arches located in a short narrow cul-de-sac in the north western corner of the Sub Area. The attractive intimate space is gravelled, with planted borders on the north side and small gardens to the south.

Nos. 23 to 27, on the north side, date from 1885 and are largely unaltered except for an unusually shaped and not unsympathetic window inserted next to the entrance to No.24.

No.28 is a detached house built in 1920 at the western end of the terrace.

Nos. 30 to 37 form a terrace of eight north facing two-storey cottages with small gardens built in the early 19th C which were locally listed in October 1998 for their group value. Since Nos.
23 to 27 mirror those of 30 to 37, it seems appropriate to include them on the local list to help protect the unity of this part of the Sub Area.

**The courtyard at Nos. 23 to 37**

**STRACHAN PLACE**

Strachan Place is a short cul-de-sac on the western side the green south of Nos. 30 to 37, consisting of eight houses in three groups. Nos. 1, 2, 3, 7 and 8 face on to the green, Nos. 1, 2 and 3 forming a terrace to the north and Nos. 7 and 8 a semi-detached pair to the south of Strachan Place, while Nos. 4, 5 and 6 lie behind Nos. 1 to 3 and face south over Strachen Place. All the houses are of two storeys in stock brick with red brick string courses and door and window arches.

**Nos. 1, 2 and 3:** The porch which ran continuously across the ground floor bay windows of Nos. 1 to 3 has been partly removed from No.1, and a large but not entirely unsympathetic dormer window has been inserted into the front roof of No.2.

**Nos. 4, 5 and 6:** The tiny cul-de-sac which comprises this terrace of three houses forms an attractive intimate space with a gravelled finish and planted borders. Nos. 4 and 6 have canted two storey bays and the roof space to Nos. 5 and 6 have been utilised by placing a turret-like dormer window in the front roof of No.5 and a second floor window in the canted end elevation of No. 6.

**Nos. 7 and 8:** This pair of semi-detached bay fronted houses is very similar in design to Nos. 1 to 3, but have slightly larger front gardens.

**Cinque Cottages from the south**

**CINQUE COTTAGES**

**Nos. 1 to 8:** Cinque Cottages is a block of eight properties situated on the north-west corner of the green in front of Nos. 17 to 22 Crooked Billet. They date from at least 1776 and, because of their unique encroachment on to the green, may have been erected as five cottages without permission and subsequently sub-divided into eight. They are of two storeys, in red brick with hipped roofs modern fenestration and surrounded by a low brick wall.

**Nos. 46 The Crooked Billet:** The modest scale two storey cottages which form most of this Sub Area end abruptly at this point, No. 46 being a large detached four storey double fronted Edwardian house surmounted by an ornate shallow gable, with double height bay windows on one side and triple height on the other. The piano nobile is reached via steps to a central entrance topped by a pedimented porch (which may be a recent addition). The two lower storeys of the red brick façade have been rendered, and the two upper floors are reached by a side entrance and staircase.

**No.47 The Crooked Billet:** No. 47 is a four storey plus basement nineteenth century detached house in the Scottish baronial style divided into flats. The front façade is of red brick
and the other elevations of buff stock. Its features include tall gables, a turret, and a side entrance at piano nobile level under a lean-to porch.

WOODHAYES ROAD

Nos. 1 & 2, The Sycamores: These two properties appear to be the only ones which form the north side of Woodhayes Road. They lie south of No. 47 Crooked Billet on the west side of the green, and are semi-detached pair of locally listed three storey plain fronted brick and tile houses dating from the second quarter of the nineteenth century.

Positive and Negative Features

Sub Area 6 forms a unified composition despite the larger building in the south west corner, the traffic disruption along Woodhayes Road and the way Cinque Cottages tend to dominate the open space and obstruct the views of the other historic properties.

Preservation and Enhancement:

Any significant disruption to the balance between the intimate character of the townscape and the informal nature of the green would be liable to disrupt the success of the area as the principle civic space and meeting place of the local community. The only measure which might be considered is to intensify the natural barrier between the green and Woodhayes Road to further separate the communal space from the noise, pollution and visual intrusion of through traffic.

The buildings are similar in scale and period as those in West Place (Sub Area 3A) and have suffered from similarly unsympathetic minor alterations, such as plastic windows with “Georgian” window frames in No. 23, and an Article 4 Direction is recommended to control future alterations to the front facades.