2.4: THE RIDGWAY

SUB AREA 15: THE RIDGWAY

Map of divisions of Sub Area 15 and Key to the Maps  Extent and Justification

This sub area covers the Ridgway from its junction with the Wimbledon Village Conservation Area, at its eastern end, almost as far as its junction with Woodhayes Road. It includes not only the properties within the Conservation Area which whose addresses identify them as being on the Ridgway and which face on to it, but also those adjoining the Ridgway which tend to make a greater impact on it than on the roads to which their addresses relate.

Inclusion of these properties emphasises the fact that the Ridgway is very much an area with its own clearly defined character, rather than merely the sum of the Sub Areas which adjoin it. Or rather, it is a series of spaces of varying character which merge into each other as one progresses along it. As a means of analysing these spaces, this description of the Sub Area is separated into five sections, and to enable the maps of each of these sections to be read from left to right, the five sections are arranged below from west to east:

- Sub Area 15A: The section facing on to the Kings College School sports fields on the north side, and from Arterberry Road to Edge Hill on the south side;
- Sub Area 15B: From Kings College School sports fields to Lauriston Road on the north side, and from Edge Hill to Hillside on the south;
- Sub Area 15C: From Lauriston Road to 52 Ridgway on the north side, and from Hillside to 65 Ridgway on the south;
- Sub Area 15D: On the north side from 47 Murray Road to Sheep Walk Mews, and on the south 43 Murray Road to Ridgway Place;
- Sub Area 15E: From Nos.29 to 1 Ridgway on the south side, the northern side being within the Wimbledon Village Conservation Area.

The Sub Area does not extend as far as Woodhayes Road because the buildings on the northern side of the Ridgway form an integral part of Sub Area 14, the Peregrin Way Area. The properties on the south side between The Downs and Arterberry Road are therefore absorbed into Sub Area 28.
History

The Ridgway separates the “flat land” to the north from the escarpment to the south and was known as “The Highway to Kingston” because it was the traditional cattle route from Wimbledon Village to the nearest market town of Kingston. There is no archaeological evidence that it was frequented by early man, since no Neolithic, Iron Age or Roman artefacts have been discovered along it. In the absence of such evidence, claims by local historians that it was a Roman Road, a branch of Watling Street, or part of a Neolithic salt route, remain unproven.

It may well have been an ancient highway, but “Ridge Way Lane” was not referred to until the reign of Elizabeth I. Until well into Queen Victoria’s reign it remained a narrow country lane reaching only as far west as the present Drax Avenue. The 1841 census referred to it as “Ridgway Lane” and the 1848 tithe map shows the north side lined with the back garden boundary walls and fences to the grounds of the houses on Southside, and the opposite side separated from the meadows running down to Worple Lane by a continuous ditch, bank and hedge [Milward 1989 pp.7 & 150]. The Ridgway steadily took on the character of an urban street as first the gardens to the north and then the open fields to the south were developed.

The north side of the Ridgeway showing the fence to the Kings College Playing Fields

Character

Spaces: The spaces in Sub Area 15 are dominated by the linear character of the Ridgway. An alternating sense of enclosure and openness is provided by the varying width of the street and the layout of the buildings lining it, the earlier ones tending to consist of two and three storey terraces sited nearer to the back of pavement, and the later ones comprising individual or semi-detached houses set back behind wide landscaped front gardens.

Vistas: The subtle changes in direction along the Ridgeway, combined with its varying width and street frontage, limit the vistas along it and add to the interest and variety of its streetscape. Towards the western end a considerable extent of the Ridgeway opens out to the north with views over the playing fields to Kings College School.

The roads at right angles offer subsidiary vistas of the rich townscape to the north and south, the latter also providing occasional glimpses of the distant horizon. These vistas were presumably regarded as highly desirable by people moving into the area, since significant properties on the north side of the Ridgeway have apparently been sited either to enjoy these views or to act as focal points from the south. For example, Emmanuel Church (in Wimbledon Village Conservation Area) is located opposite the western end of Sunnyside; No.2 Lauriston Road, a substantial house on the corner of the Ridgeway, faces down Thornton Road; and Nos.58 Ridgway and 2a Clifton Road have a similar vista down Berkeley Place. At the western end, No.104 enjoys the view down Arterberry Road.
There are also a few examples of major properties on the south side of the Ridgway with distant northern vistas: No.113, Wimbledon Common Preparatory School, faces up the spur of the Ridgway leading to the southern entrance to Kings College school; and the customers on the terrace of the Swan Hotel public house have the benefit of the view up Lauriston Road. The desirability of such vistas may be one reason why there are so few crossroads along the Ridgway.

**Landmarks:** Several buildings tend to dominate surrounding or adjoining Sub Areas. The Emmanuel Church is particularly dominant, as is the modern Telephone Exchange between Ridgway Place and the southern arm of Murray Road. The substantial period houses and blocks of modern flats lining the road also contribute significantly to the character of the Ridgway, for good or ill.

**Buildings:** Because the Ridgway developed sporadically over time, the properties along its length vary greatly in age, size and character, those to the north comprising mainly substantial detached houses, and the ones on the south side consisting of a combination of smaller cottages, stables and modest residential development.

**SUB AREA 15A: FROM ARTERBERRY ROAD TO EDGE HILL**

**Extent and Justification**

This section of the Ridgway is different from the remainder because it is the only part which is not built up on both sides, having the sports fields to King’s College School to the north. At its western end the Ridgway is lined to the north by Sub Area 14, and by Sub Area 28, Arterberry Road and The Drive, to the south. Sub Area 13, King’s College School, then adjoins the northern side of Sub Area 15A, and to the south a sequence of Sub Areas reflect the parallel roads which lead from the Ridgway down to Worple Road. Moving eastwards, Sub Area 28 is followed by No. 29, Lansdowne Road. There is then a break in the Conservation Area, since the buildings between Lansdowne Road and The Downs are not regarded as of sufficient architectural or historic interest to justify inclusion. East of The Downs, the buildings on the south side of the Ridgway are included as far as the Convent of Marie Repartrice, on the eastern side of Edge Hill.

Like other conservation areas in the borough, the boundary of the West Wimbledon Conservation Area has normally been placed either along the centres of roads or between back gardens. This principle has generally been followed in locating the boundaries between the sub areas. However, because there are so few properties adjoining the Ridgway within Sub Area 15A, the northern boundary has been placed between the road and the sports fields.

**The western end of the Ridgway, looking east, and Chimneys Ct, 40 Arterberry Road**

**Character**

When viewed from the east or west, this part of the Ridgway forms an attractive gently curving vista lined with mature trees on both sides which tend to hide the very different character of the areas to the north and south. While the views of the open spaces to the north
are obscured only by the high fence along the southern boundary of the sports fields, the views south are blocked by extensive properties, most of which are modern and some of which are of limited architectural merit. This is reflected in the exclusion from the Conservation Area of the central section between Lansdowne Road to The Downs.

Buildings

Western section, south side, west to east

Of the nine properties in Sub Area 15A, only No. 1 Lansdowne Road, Lansdowne Cottage and the original gate house to the Convent of St Mary Repartrice make a positive impact on the character of the Conservation Area. The rest of the Convent has a neutral effect and the rest of the buildings tend to be detrimental to the Area’s character.

Map of Sub Area 15A, western part

No. 40 Arterberry Road (Chimneys Court): A three storey block of 11 flats in traditional construction, with pitched roofs, the ground and first floors in yellow brick with rusticated corners and window surrounds of red brickwork, separated from the rendered top floor by a cantilevered string course, and dominated at each end by yellow brick chimney stacks with red brick rustications. It was built in 1988, replacing a grade II listed building.

No. 117 Ridgway and 21 and 22 Lansdowne Road: A terrace of three modern two storey houses built in 1972 facing on to Lansdowne Road, with shallow pitched roofs behind a brick parapet. The harshly pointed brown brick walls are punctuated by white painted sash windows, some of which have been replaced by small paned pseudo-Georgian casements. The block does not have significant architectural merit.

(boundary of the Conservation Area)

No. 1 Lansdowne Road, Lansdowne Cottage and No.115A Ridgway (Kingsdown): A nineteenth century classical three storey villa in stock brick containing many attractive and distinguished architectural features, including a recessed porch fronted by a pair of Tuscan
columns, elaborate string courses, heavily cantilevered ornamental eaves and semi-circular window heads. Since its exclusion from the Conservation Area may be an oversight, the boundary has been realigned to include it, and it is sufficiently distinguished to be considered for local listing.

EASTERN SECTION: North side

No.82: A typical 1930s two storey detached house with Crittal metal windows and harshly pointed brickwork.

South side, west to east

115b, Kings View Court: A four storey block of modern flats in red brick with grey slate roofs built in 1988.

Map of Sub Area 15A, eastern part

No. 2 The Downs: Although No. 2 The Downs does not adjoin the Ridgeway, it is included here because it is the only building in The Downs originally included in the Conservation Area. Its inclusion is unclear, since it is a single storey house of no particular architectural distinction built in the 1960s. The alignment of the boundary has therefore been revised to exclude it.

No. 115, Convent of Marie Repartrice: Known as Ridgelands, the original Convent was built in about 1867 and purchased in 1879 by Llewellyn Longstaff, a Fellow of the Royal Geographical Society, friend of Captain Scott and promoter of the British Antarctic expedition.
He turned it into the Surry headquarters of the Red Cross. In 1919 it became an Evangelical College for Ladies, and during the Second World War it was used by Barclay’s Bank, despite being badly damaged in February 1944 when a bomb fell at the Ridgway End of Wright’s Alley. In the 1950s it was bought by the Sisters of Marie Repartrice and transformed into a convent. But by the early 1980s it had developed serious dry rot and was pulled down and replaced by the present smaller building. [Milward 1989, p.160 & 1991, pp.19, 22 & 23]

The present Convent is a two storey building, L-shaped on plan, the major block along the western boundary of the site and a narrow wing along the Ridgway frontage. A lodge at the eastern end of this wing is all remains of the original convent buildings. Whereas the modern building is somewhat bland in character, the small lodge contains such ornate features as a projecting bracketed gable over a first floor bay window and ornamental brick arches over those on the ground floor. An application in 2000 to demolish the lodge was refused because of its contribution to the character of the Conservation Area at this prominent corner of Edge Hill and the Ridgway.

The two historic buildings on the south side of this section the Ridgway:
The lodge to the Convent of Marie Repartrice, and No. 1 Lansdowne Road

Positive and Negative Features

The most positive element of this part of the Ridgway is its gentle tree lined curve and the sports fields to King’s College School to the north. Substitution of the timber fence to Kings College School would enhance this part of the Ridgway by opening up the vista of the School buildings across the sports fields. To the south the historic integrity of Sub Area 15A has been eroded by the modern blocks of flats, most of which lie outside the Conservation area, the only historic buildings to survive being No. 1 Lansdowne Road and the lodge at the north-east corner of the Convent of Marie Repartrice. Although the traditional design of Chimneys Court makes some acknowledgement of its historic context, the uncompromising rectangular profiles of Nos. 117 Ridgway and 21 to 22 Lansdowne Road are out of sympathy with the general character Conservation Area, while the original inclusion of No. 2 The Downs appears to be something of an anomaly.

SUB AREA 15B: FROM EDGE HILL TO LAURISTON ROAD
Extent and Justification

The buildings along both sides of Sub Area 15B are entirely residential. On the north side it stretches from the eastern extremity of Kings College School playing fields to Lauriston Road, and on the south side from the Convent of Marce Repartrice, on the western corner of Edge Hill, to No. 95 Ridgway, on the western corner of Hillside. The cul-de-sac on the northern side adjoining the King’s College sports fields also forms part of the Ridgway.

Character

Sub Area 15B from the western end and Nos. 95 to 101 Ridgway

The northern cul-de-sac continues the Arcadian character of the Sub Areas to the north-east, with its mature trees on both sides providing a particularly attractive setting to the two period houses on the eastern side, Glencairn House and The White House. The road also has pleasant vistas at both ends, the northern one leading on to pathways and mature trees adjoining the sports fields, and the south view terminating with the Dutch gables to the Wimbledon Common Preparatory School and the mature planting of its front garden.
This section of the Ridgway also continues the tree lined character of Sub Area 15A, behind which reside substantial pleasant detached and semi-detached houses, mostly dating from the late nineteenth century. However, two substantial blocks of flats disrupt this attractive sequence: No. 62, Jimmy Saville House, on the north side, and No. 109, Ridgway Court, opposite. Despite being set back behind the avenue of trees, these two blocks conflict seriously with the general scale of the other buildings and the character of the Conservation Area.

The arrangement of alternating T-junctions with the side roads continues along this section, with the view south down Clifton Road culminating on the attractive facades of Nos. 103 to 107 Ridgway, and the northern ends of Ridgway Gardens and Berkeley Place focussing on the buildings on the north side.

Buildings:

Of the twenty or so buildings in Sub Area 15B, two are listed grade II, ten are locally listed, six have a positive impact on the character of the Conservation Area, one – Ridgway Court – tends to have a negative effect, and the last, Jimmy Saville House, has a seriously detrimental effect.

Even numbers, north side, west to east

The White House, and No. 70, Glencairn House: These two properties are situated on the east side of a short un-named cul-de-sac which appears to form part of the Ridgway and gives access to King’s College School. The west side of this road is lined with mature trees along the boundary to the School sports fields.

The White House: An attractive detached house built in 1929 which in 2001 was the subject of an application for extensive but sympathetic alterations.

No. 70, Glencairn House: A complex and fascinating grade II listed house designed by Roumieu now divided into three houses. A description of the house could hardly do justice to its many features, but the list description gives some indication of its eclectic design:

Red brick, polychrome decoration. Steeply pitched tiled roof to eaves. Muscular gothic style. Irregular composition. Mainly 2 storeys, 5 main bays, 4 under separate roofs. Gables to left and second from right bays. Pair of bays to right set back slightly. Steeply gabled porch to left. 2-storey shallow square sided bay window to left of this with square headed windows. Irregular fenestration: some pointed windows, some square headed windows set in pointed reveals. Polychrome bands and diaper decoration. Returns and rear with similar treatment.

Nos. 64, 66 and 68: Three locally listed three-storey double fronted detached houses plus basements built in the 1860s, with full height canted bays. No. 64 is divided into six flats and the front garden to No. 66 is devoted to car parking.
**No. 62, Jimmy Savile House:** A four-storey block of flats built in 1972 of harsh red brick, plastic windows and a false dormer. Despite its landscaped forecourt, the property makes a seriously detrimental contribution to the character of the Conservation Area.

**Views of 60 Ridgway from south-east, and north-west from Clifton Road showing the unfortunate contrast of scale and character between Nos. 60 and 62 Ridgway**

**No. 60:** A very prominent three-and-a-half storey detached house built in about 1880 in the Victorian gothic style, with steep sided gables, diamond patterned polychromatic brickwork, gothic arches and a finely detailed stone porch. The only alterations appear to be the window frames to the upper floors.

**Nos. 58 Ridgway and 2a The Downs:** A substantial locally listed house built in 1882 with a complex of prominent gables, tall chimneys and an ornate turret.

**Nos. 56a and c Ridgway, and No. 109, Ridgway Court**

No. 56b: A small white rendered box-like detached house built in 1926. The proportions of the front elevation are disrupted by a pair of domestic garage doors.

**56, 56a and 56c Ridgway and 1 Lauriston Road:** A substantial two storey grade II listed detached house in the Georgian revival style and built in 1893, described in the VicSoc report as a sold William and Mary house by [T G] Jackson, well proportioned and with careful detail (moulded egg and dart frieze under eaves and unusual turned wood uprights between windows) which Pevsner judged to be of about 1700 vintage [p.457], of stock brick with red rubbers to the window arches and cills, corner quoins and surround to the central entrance porch to the east elevation, and an arched window to the left of the entrance with a leaded ogee topped tented roof and turned balusters to the corners. Dormers have been added to the Westmoreland Green slate roof, including an oversize dormer to the south elevation. A blue plaque over the east entrance states that Robert Graves was born there in 1895. The
house is divided into three apartments, the southern end being occupied by Nos. 56a and 56c, and No. 56b has been built in the back garden. The fabric appears to be largely unchanged. With its tall chimneys and extensive dormer windows, it forms a dominant feature and closes the vista northwards from Thornton Road.

South Side (Odd Nos):

**No.113, Wimbledon Common Preparatory School**: A locally listed two/three storey early twentieth century building with prominent Dutch gables and false shutters, separated from the Ridgway by a thick screen of trees which close the vista southwards from the entrance from King’s College School. After the Second World War it was used as the Ridgway Co-Educational School in conjunction with Oakhill, on Edge Hill. [Milward, 1991, p.23]

**No. 111**: A substantial 1895 two/three-storey house of brick and render converted into apartments.

**No. 109, Ridgway Court**: A recently constructed four storey block of flats in pale brick with a flat roof and projecting balconies. Although not as disruptive to the local townscape as Jimmy Savile House, opposite, Ridgway Court is unsympathetic to the scale and character to the historic buildings in this part of the Ridgway.

**No. 107**: A two and three storey detached house plus basements built in about 1880.

**Nos. 105 and 103**: A pair of semi-detached two/three storey houses with large dormers dating from the 1880s

**Nos. 101-99 and 97-95**: Two pairs of three storey semi-detached houses dating from 1879 which are similar in design to the four adjoining pairs of semi-detached houses in Berkeley Place. All six pairs are locally listed for group value. The houses are of stock brick with slates roofs, with ornamental brick detailing and glazing patterns to the sash windows.

**Positive and Negative Features**

The typically Arcadian nature of this section of the Sub Area is marred by the two modern blocks of flats, Jimmy Savile House and Ridgway Court, the former also detracting from the views at the southern end of Clifton Road and up Ridgway Gardens.

**Preservation and Enhancement**

Care should be taken to maintain the attractive character of this part of the Ridgway, and the replacement of any of the period property with modern development should be strongly resisted. Should the opportunity arise to redevelop Jimmy Savile House or Ridgway Court, their replacements should be more sympathetically in scale with the adjoining houses.

**SUB AREA 15C: FROM HILLSIDE TO MURRAY ROAD**

**Extent and Justification**

Sub Area 15C extends from No. 2 Lauriston Road to 52 Ridgway on the north side, and from the stables on the east side of Hillside to No. 85 on the south side. It is the only part of the Ridgway – and the rest of the Conservation Area – which has a distinctly commercial character, with shops and public houses lining the southern side.

**History**

The earliest recorded development in this part of the Conservation Area was Croft Cottages, a row of 12 dwellings built in the 1820s extending from behind No.87 Ridgway, which now comprise Nos. 1 to 12 Thornton Road. The northern end of a lane which ran behind the cottages survives between No.87 the King of Denmark Public House. The remainder of the area to the south of the Ridgway remained as fields and meadows until the construction in