Nos. 37 and 39: A mirrored pair of two storey detached houses in brick and render built in 1913, with two storey bay windows under a pseudo half-timbered gable.

Nos. 41 and 41a: A two storey house built in 1914 in brick and render with a two storey bay window under a deeply projecting gable. The character of the house has been undermined by the installation of pseudo sash plastic windows and a crazy paving forecourt devoted to car parking.

No. 43 lies within Sub Area 15, The Ridgway.

Positive and Negative Features

The road has an attractive homogeneity, with all but one of the more distinctive houses on the eastern side being built between 1906 and 1911, and those on the western side between 1906 and 1924. Six of them are locally listed and another three also merit consideration. Despite the many trees and areas of mature landscaping, the slightly over-wide street gives a somewhat suburban feel which is increased by extensive areas of hardstanding to some of the front gardens.

Preservation and Enhancement

The architectural homogeneity of the street should be maintained by resisting the demolition of any of the houses to open up the extensive rear gardens for development. Further erosion of the townscape by inserting plastic windows and paving front gardens should also be discouraged before the problem gets any worse.

SUB AREA 20: SPENCER HILL

Extent and Justification

Spencer Hill is the eastern-most of three parallel roads in the Conservation Area running down the escarpment between St John's Road and Worple Road. It is self-contained in that at the road's northern end the escarpment flattens out and takes on a somewhat different character, while its southern end marks the southern boundary of the Conservation Area.

Spencer Hill's main justification for inclusion in the Conservation Area is the pleasant tree lined setting of its distinguished houses, enhanced by the vista south-east along its sinuous curves towards Wimbledon town centre.

Character

Like the adjoining streets, Spencer Hill is lined on both sides by attractive domestic property of varying architectural and historic interest. They are not quite as distinguished as those further north, none of them being statutorily listed and only seven of the 31 properties within the Conservation Area being locally listed.

The Vic Soc report described Spencer Hill as *A road of (mainly) large Victorian villas varying in quality from moderately good to genuinely distinguished. The hilly site and matured trees and shrubs give the road character and charm.*

History

Map of Sub Area 20
Spencer Hill was probably laid out in the 1860's and '70's, the great majority of the houses dating from the latter part of the nineteenth century, about half a dozen from the early years of the twentieth, and another four from the 1960's and '70's. In contrast to the roads to the north, Spencer Hill appears to have been developed from the south end, with Nos. 24 to 28 on the east side being built in 1890 and Nos. 17 to 21, opposite, in 1873, the next two up the hill from 1884, and the next pair in 1888. The top four on the west were constructed between 1882 and 1890. They pre-date most those on the east side, perhaps because west-facing back gardens are more desirable.

All four of the late twentieth century houses are on the eastern half towards the southern end of the road, with three blocks of flats at the southern end just beyond the Conservation Area. Their presence reflected the economic potential for redevelopment at close proximity to the town centre. This potential was of considerable concern to the Vic Soc, which recommended that Nos. 1-7, 4, 6, 10 and 14 be added to the local list, and whose 1973 report stated:

*Property interests have recently bought numerous houses in Spencer Hill, notably towards the lower end, and are believed to be seeking more. Sites are now being demolished for redevelopment with blocks of flats of various sizes, presumably of the same “functional” type the firm in question have already constructed in Worple Road. This erosion is destroying the character of the street, and while some of the houses are little more than charmingly idiosyncratic, others are worthy of local listing.*

Designation appears to have come at the right time, since thirty years later only three of the houses have been replaced by blocks of modern flats, the fourth modern building being an infill in the side garden to No. 16.

**Buildings**
Seven of the thirty-two properties in Sub Area 20 are locally listed, another nineteen also make a positive contribution to the character of the Conservation Area, three have a neutral effect (including one of the three blocks of flats) and the other two blocks and the extension to No. 21 have a generally detrimental impact.

Odd numbers, east side, north to south  

Spencer Hill from the northern end

**No. 1:** A locally listed late nineteenth century three storey double-fronted detached house in grey stucco with white painted window surrounds and rusticated corner quoins, set on a wide plot with generous landscaping. The VicSoc report described No.1 as a large villa of classical proportions, with steps and portico and Nos. 3, 5 and 7 as good villas with pointed arches and gables and elaborate barge-boarding.

**No. 3:** A substantial two storey detached house dating from 1881 in red brick with many elaborate features, including ornamental gables, dormers, square bays and double height windows, set in landscaped grounds, which is recommended for local listing.

Nos. 5 and 7 are of similar design and appear to form a pair. No. 5 is a locally listed two/three storey late nineteenth century double fronted detached house in pale stock brick with red brick banding, the southern three storey gabled wing having ornamental barge
boards and a square asymmetrical two storey bay. Much of the front garden is devoted to car parking. No. 7 is a **locally listed** two/three storey double-fronted detached house dating from 1882 in pale stock brick with red brick banding, the large glazed white painted flat roofed central porch dividing a three storey projecting bay with a dominant gable to the north and a two storey square bay to the south.

**No. 7a:** Immediately south of the main building is an attractive little one-and-a-half storey **locally listed** coach house which has been converted into a separate dwelling.

**No. 9 in its original but unmaintained state, and No. 11, well maintained but altered**

**Nos. 9 and 11:** No. 9 is a **locally listed** two storey double fronted detached house dating from 1888 in pale stock brick with red rubber lintels and a semi-circular arch to the central porch, large dormers to each side, ground floor projecting bay windows topped by curved pediments, and a small recessed wing to the south. Despite its date and location, No. 9 is meanly proportioned, poorly landscaped and lacks the architectural distinction of its neighbours. Also, its division into flats in 1975 resulted in a driveway leading to a parking area at the rear. No. 11 is a two storey double fronted detached house dating from 1888 in white render with a garage wing to the south. Despite its contrasting surface finish to No. 9, and its careful maintenance and pleasantly landscaped forecourt, its features are identical, indicating that the two houses were built as a pair.

**No. 13, rendered with its picturesque porch, and No. 15, with a modern porch**

**Nos. 13 and 15:** No. 13 is a two storey double fronted detached house dating from 1884 in white render, with a particularly charming asymmetrical porch separating a projecting gabled bay with an ornamental barge board to the north and a single storey canted bay topped by a semi-dormer to the south. Despite the white render it appears to have retained most of its original features (although the porch may be later) and is recommended for **local listing.** No.15 is a two storey double fronted detached house dating from 1884 in pale stock bricks with red banding. As with Nos. 9 and 11, the identical features to No. 13 indicate that these two houses were built as a pair, despite the contrast in surface finish and the unsympathetic
modern porch to No. 15. The house is divided into six flats and the front garden is largely devoted to car parking.

Nos. 17, 19 and 21 are of similar design and all date from 1873.

**No. 17:** A classically proportioned two storey double fronted detached house in red brick with white render to the central porch and single storey canted bays on each side, white painted first floor sash windows, and ornamental eaves brackets. Its generous proportions attractive classical detailing and unspoilt character make No. 17 worth consideration for **local listing**.

No. 17, in its original state, and the much altered No. 21

**No. 19:** A similar house to No. 17 but with single storey square bays each side of the subtly different entrance porch. This house is also recommended for **local listing**.

**No. 21:** A substantial two storey double fronted detached house in white render with a large extension to the south which contains a third storey inserted in the roof. Its similarity to Nos. 17 and 19 is largely hidden since much of its original character has been lost and the front garden is largely given over to car parking.

**No. 23:** A two storey double fronted detached house in red brick with white painted single storey square bay windows each side of the entrance porch and a white rendered hooded string course around the tops of the first floor windows.

**No. 25:** A two storey detached house dating from 1871 in white render whose main double-fronted façade faces on to Worple Road. Although it retains many of its original features, including a central semi-circular porch with classical detailing and canted ground floor bay windows to the east elevation, it appears to have been extremely poorly maintained and now sits in a sea of car parking with the rear garden occupied by a row of seven garages. It is presumably in multiple occupation and only its inclusion within the Conservation Area may have saved it from demolition.

The sadly disfigured No. 25 Spencer Hill

Even numbers, east side, north to south

**No. 2:** A substantial two/three storey detached late nineteenth century villa in cream render with white window and door surrounds, string courses and rusticated corner quoins. The west facing two storey classically proportioned and detailed symmetrical front façade, is disrupted by two substantial dormers which break the line of the ornamental eaves and are unrelated to the fenestration below. The more substantial three storey south elevation faces over
extensive well landscaped grounds and continues the treatment of the main façade in a more informal way with canted bays, dormers, etc. The house makes a strong impact on this part of the Conservation Area, the front façade closing the vista eastwards along St John’s Road, and the open grounds to the south provide views of the house and beyond towards Ridgway Place. It was converted into six flats in 1974.

No. 2 Spencer Hill from the west, and from the south showing the extensive grounds

No. 2a: A detached one-and-a-half storey house built in 1961 in the south-east corner of the grounds to No. 2, dominated by a gable over stained horizontal timber boarding and a battered rough stone chimney very much in the style of the 1960s.

No. 4: A locally listed three storey plus basement double fronted detached house built in 1882 similar in design to No. 1, opposite, in pale stock brick with white window surrounds, columned entrance porch, string courses and rusticated corner quoins. The house, which the VicSoc report described as imposing, was converted into three flats in 1951 and four flats in 1981, and the front garden is devoted to car parking.

No. 6: A locally listed late nineteenth century two storey double fronted detached house similar in design to Nos. 17 to 21, opposite, in pale stock bricks and with a particularly attractive landscaped garden, the central symmetrical stepped pathway dividing around an arrangement of topiary. The VicSoc report described it as a small villa in a good style.

No. 6 with its landscaped garden

Nos. 8, 8a, 8b and 8c: A terrace of four narrow fronted two storey houses built in 1907 in red brick and white render, their roofs stepping down the hill. Their front gardens are largely devoted to car parking.

No. 10: A locally listed two storey double fronted detached house dating from 1894 in stock brick and red rubbers around the windows and at the corners which the VicSoc report described as unusually good early neo-Georgian. At the time it was divided into flats, but appears to have since reverted to single occupancy.

No. 12: A three storey block of six flats built in 1962 in red brick with recessed balconies. The rear is largely occupied by garages.

No. 14: A locally listed three storey double fronted detached house similar in design to Nos. 1 and 4 in pale stocks with white surrounds to the windows, porch and eaves, but with the central porch at first floor level reached up a long flight to steps, and a garage inserted at ground floor level. According to the Council it dates from 1913, but it may be older since the VicSoc report described it as an unusually good early villa in a pure style.
No. 14, with its first floor entry, and the uncompromising modern design of No. 16a

No. 16: A post war two storey detached white rendered house with a built-in garage.

No. 16a: A three storey detached house of uncompromisingly modern design built in 1967, with a half landing plan arrangement to utilise the sloping site, resulting in a split façade, the cills on one side lining up with the window heads on the other. Despite its thoughtful design, it fails to meet the general architectural standard of the houses in Spencer Hill.

No. 18: An anonymous looking three storey block of six flats built in 1973 in red brick with white window panels, the rear of which is largely devoted to car parking. The Vic Soc described its predecessor as a cousin to No. 14, and stated: Planning permission should never have been given (as it was on 1 February 1973) for the "redevelopment" of an early Victorian house of this quality.

No. 20: A late nineteenth century two storey double fronted detached house in stock brick with white window surrounds and central porch dominated by two dormer windows with canted lights and pointed roofs.

No. 22: A three storey block of six flats in yellow brick with carefully proportioned and detailed window panels and an access road under to garages at the rear.

Nos. 24, 26 and 28: Three two/three storey houses built in 1890, the top floor being placed in the gable, the end of which faces the road Nos. 24 and 26 being of stock brick and No. 28 having been painted white. Except for a pair of ground floor bays, the houses are somewhat meanly detailed.

Positive and Negative Features:

Although architecturally Spencer Hill is not in the same league as some of the roads on the other side of the Ridgway, its situation on the sloping escarpment of the original “Wild Land” and the road’s subtle curve provide a particularly attractive vista down to Worple Road and beyond. Because of its timely inclusion into the Conservation Area only Nos. 12, 18 and 22 have been redeveloped. An indication of what might otherwise have happened if development pressures had not been resisted is shown at the southern end, where on the east side Hanover Court, Saville Court and Mayfair Court (Nos. 34 and 35 Spencer Hill and
61 Worple Road) have been built to house 26 flats, and on the west No. 25 Spencer Hill is being allowed to steadily deteriorate, presumably in the hope of eventual redevelopment.

Preservation and Enhancement:

Because of the generally high standard of planting and landscaping, little additional enhancement is required. Further encroachment of car parking on to front and back gardens should be resisted by means of an Article 4 Direction, and opportunities taken to reinstate planting whenever possible. Besides continuing to protect No. 25 in the hope that it will eventually be returned to single occupancy, other opportunities should be seized to take houses out of multiple occupation, particularly No. 9.

SUB AREA 21: ST JOHN’S ROAD

Extent and Justification

St John’s Road is the only road which runs along the slope of the escarpment, the other roads being aligned entirely or partly at right angles to the contours. It continues the east-west circulation along St John’s Passage, forming a link between six of the roads which run up and down the slope: the southern part of Murray Road and Spencer Hill to the east, Thornton Road and Thornton Road to the west, and Denmark Road and Denmark Avenue in between.

Character

Since the most effective way of utilizing sloping ground is to build along the slope, so that each row of houses is able to benefit from the distant views over or between the lower row in front, it may appear perverse that more roads were not built along the escarpment, but this is in fact the result of two factors, one historic and the other topographical. Firstly, it reflects the way in which this part of Wimbledon developed, as an ad hoc process as the lower parts of the estates to the villas up on Southside Common were sold off. And secondly it indicates that the slope was not too severe for each house and its garden to step sideways up the slope, but was too steep for houses to be arranged along the slope without resulting in steeply sloping front and back gardens. Although the improved views and level access roads of housing built along the slope results in improved amenities, such a layout needs to be planned as a whole with ingenious internal arrangements because of the difference in levels between the front and back gardens.
St John’s Road is one of the places where houses could be built along the slope, and the opportunity might have been taken to build a row of grand villas along the north side to exploit the distant views over South Wimbledon. But in fact the houses, which date from the later nineteenth century and later, are quite modest and architecturally undistinguished. The VicSoc report referred to Nos. 1 to 6 St John’s Road as large Victorian cottages of good quality and No. 6a as a Denmark Road cottage, whose address has slipped round the corner and recommended it be statutorily listed.

The only building which does exploit its position at the top of the escarpment is the Church of St. John, the roof to its tall aisle piercing the skyline in much the same way as the even more dramatic Sacred Heart Church at the corner of Edge Hill and Darlaston Road.

Left: looking east, showing Nos. 6a and 7. Right: Views west along St John’s Road, showing St. John’s Church and the mature trees on the left, with No.38 Thornton Road at the end.

Despite the modest standard of the houses, the character of St John’s Road is extremely pleasant, largely because of its elevated position, the abundant greenery on the south side, and because of the vistas to the east and west, with No. 38 Thornton Road at the western end and the houses at the junction of Murray Road and Spencer Hill in the opposite direction.

Buildings

Consecutive numbers, north side, west to east

Nos. 5 and 6 St John’s Road and Vincent Court, at the top of Denmark Avenue

St John’s Road Sub Area contains a dozen or so properties, one of which, the Church of St John the Baptist, is grade II, another eight make further positive contributions to the character of the Conservation Area, and the remaining two, No. 7 and Vincent Court, have a neutral effect.

Nos. 1 to 4: A terrace of late nineteenth century two storey houses in stock brick with bays to both floors and round-headed entrance porches arranged in pairs, concealed behind high fences and extensive planting. They have pleasant cottage gardens to the front but no rear gardens. No. 1, which has a gable facing on to Thornton Road, exploits its corner position.
Nos. 5 and 6: A late nineteenth century pair of semi-detached houses of stock brick with bays to both floors. Like No. 1, both houses exploit their outlook to the east and west, and also enjoy extensive views down Denmark Avenue.

Nos. 31 Denmark Road and 6a St John’s Road: A semi-detached pair of white rendered two storey houses dating from the 1860s which forms part of the unified rows of similar properties on each side of Denmark Road, and are included in this Sub Area because of their greater impact on St. John’s Road.

Between these houses and No. 7 is the entrance to a block of garages constructed of white painted blockwork which detract from the appearance of the Sub Area.

No. 7: A detached two storey house in white render with a pair of two storey bays, designed to reflect the character of Nos. 1 to 6 but failing to match them in proportion or detailing.

South side, east to west

St John the Baptist Church: St John’s Road is named after the church, which dominates its eastern end and provides a focal point at its junction with Spencer Hill and Murray Road. It is listed grade II and was built in 1875 to the design of Sir Thomas Jackson (1835-1924) in a Late Gothic style of red brick with a steep slate roof. Since it has no clearstory, the sides are dominated by deep buttresses reaching up to the eaves. Jackson intended it to have a tower and spire, but had to abandon his plans after problems with the foundations because the church is sited on the spring line. It is decorated by a Gothic north entrance, a Gothic five-light reticulated traceried window at the eastern end and a small tourelle and bellcote on the south side. There is also a single storey modern utilitarian church hall which tends to detract from the setting of the church.

Vincent Court: Vincent Court is a modern three storey block of flats, T-shaped in plan, with its main frontage on to Denmark Avenue and its rear wing facing St. John’s Road. It is built to a simple traditional design of red brick with tile hanging to the gable end, and balconies and timber panels beneath the windows to the main front. Although it is partly sunk below road level, it is sufficiently large to obstruct part of the view southwards from St John’s Road.

Positive and Negative Features

Because of the undistinguished character of all the properties except St John’s church and the way in which six roads intrude into St John’s Road, the road has no consistent or outstanding character. Nevertheless, it makes a modest contribution to this part of the Conservation Area and care should be taken to ensure that any new development is sympathetic in scale and design. Care should be taken to preserve the mature trees on the southern side, particularly those at the western end, since they help to obscure the unsightly block of modern flats at the southern end of Thornton Road. The variety of boundary treatments to Nos 1 to 7 contributes to the lack of consistency rather than detracting from the character of Sub Area 21.

Preservation and Enhancement

The preservation of St. John’s church is of crucial importance since it can be seen from many parts of the Conservation Area and beyond, and the redevelopment of Nos. 1 to 6 should also be resisted. By far the greatest detraction is caused by the breezeblock garages adjoining No. 7, which should be rebuilt in brick, demolished, or at least be rendered.