Extent and Justification

Denmark Avenue is the middle of three parallel roads on the slope of the escarpment between St John’s Road, to the north, and Worple Road, to the south. It is different in character from the roads on the flatter land to the north, while the southern end marks of the boundary of the Conservation Area. It has been included because of the quality of its architecture, particularly those buildings on the western side, lining the attractive vista southwards towards and beyond Worple Road.

Character

As with the roads which adjoin it to the east and west, Denmark Avenue is lined on both sides by residential property. The numbering starts at the north-west corner and proceeds consecutively down the western side as far as No. 22, and then continues from south to north on the other side up to No. 36.

History

In its report, the Vic Soc explained that the roads:
are composed of the same general kinds of larger-type Victorian villas (though with many interesting variations), usually slate-roofed, and their development probably dates from the 1860s and 70s: some elegant smaller and earlier houses are interspersed. They boast a fine and varied growth of trees and shrubs. All three roads have suffered grievously from recent demolitions, and the threat of an unlimited number to come.

Denmark Avenue has twenty-six such houses, built by various hands and showing affinities with those in nearby roads (eg, Thornton Road and Berkeley Place).

Although the VicSoc’s fear of an unlimited number of demolitions has proved unfounded, thanks to the road’s inclusion in the Conservation Area, Denmark Avenue has not survived unscathed, because since that report was written a couple of sites have been redeveloped and a few other houses have suffered unsympathetic alterations.

At the time of the report, the western side had suffered only one casualty, No. 16, which had been developed in conjunction with Nos. 24 and 26 Thornton Hill, but extensive development was taking place to the east, particularly at the southern end: Lumley Court at No. 25 had been built in 1970 and Parker Court and Wellesley House replaced Nos. 23, 24 and 27 in the same year that the VicSoc report was written. Nos. 28 to 31 were then replaced in the 1980s by Naomi Watts House and a couple of town houses, and Nos. 6 and 6A have recently been superseded by Spencer House.

Buildings

There are about thirty properties in Sub Area 11; five of them are locally listed, about twenty more also make a positive contribution to the character of the Conservation Area, two are neutral, five (including the four blocks of flats on the eastern side) tend to have a negative effect, and the impact of one – No. 6 – is seriously detrimental.

Consecutive numbers, west side, north to south

Nos 1 to 4: Two pairs of imposing late nineteenth century semi-detached four storey houses in pale stocks with red rubber rusticated quoins at the corners and party wall, and white rendered lower ground floors. The entrances are in recessed side wings at piano nobile level, reached by substantial flights of steps. They have canted bay windows at lower ground and ground floor level, No. 4’s extending to the first floor. A glazed canopy encloses the stairs and porch to No. 3. They make a significant group and appear to be little altered. Because of its corner position, No. 1 and its rear garden impinges significantly on the character of the western end of St John’s Road.

No. 5: An attractive nineteenth century double-fronted three storey house in grey pebbledash with white painted rusticated corner quoins and door and window surrounds. A flight of steps leads to the entrance at piano nobile level, and a fourth storey in the roof is lit by a central semi-circular and two square flat-roofed dormers. The front garden is abundantly planted, and the sunken driveway leads to three garages at the rear.

No. 6 Denmark Avenue

No. 6, Denmark House: A five storey detached block of flats designed in a pseudo-classical manner which replaced Nos. 6 and 6A in 1989. The lower ground floor is devoted to car parking; the white rendered upper ground floor contains a central porch with classical motifs and Tuscan columns; the first and second floors are of yellow stocks with Georgian
proportioned windows surmounted by ornamental pediments, and a pair of flat applied columns with nominal ionic capitals. The third floor is built into a flat roof with sloping sides with projecting dormers and a minimal pediment containing a thermal window, above a heavily projecting coping. The front area is mainly devoted to car parking. Denmark House is the type of development which should be strongly resisted: it is a pretentious pastiche considerably out of scale and character with its surroundings which has a seriously detrimental effect on the architectural integrity of this part of the Conservation Area.

Nos. 7 and 7A: A semi-detached pair of two storey houses built in 1923 in a cream render, with white painted door and window surrounds, canted bay windows under gables with “half timbered” infilling, and canopied entrances in recessed side wings. The symmetry has been impaired by dropping the southern half to cater for the sloping ground, and by the insertion of a large box dormer above the gable to No. 7A.

Nos. 10 and 11 Denmark Avenue

Nos. 8 to 13: Three pairs of imposing generously proportioned four storey semi-detached houses built in about 1870 in pale stocks with white rendered lower ground floors and porch and window surrounds. Substantial flights of steps lead to side entrance porches at piano nobile level. Although the front gardens contain generous planting, several of them are largely devoted to car parking. Nos. 10, 11 and 13 are locally listed and No. 11 includes a side wing consisting of an attractive conservatory above a garage. In view of the similarity of No. 12 to the other locally listed buildings, No. 12 is also recommended for local listing.

Nos. 14 and 15 Denmark Avenue
Nos 14 and 15: A pair of attractive semi-detached four storey nineteenth century houses in stock bricks with white painted semi-circular arches over paired windows to the first and second floors and to the entrance porch at piano nobile level up substantial flights of steps.

No. 16: A four storey detached block of post-war flats of mundane appearance which fail to make a positive contribution to the character of this part of the Conservation Area. The featureless front elevation merely presents two vertical rows of standard catalogue windows, the entrance being at the side, and the forecourt is devoted to car parking.

Nos. 17 and 18: Two four storey detached late nineteenth century houses in stock brick and white rendered lower ground floors, with entrances at piano nobile level approached up substantial flights of steps, and canted bay windows to the ground and lower ground floors. Some details, such as the semi-circular arches over the entrance porch and first floor window above, are similar to Nos. 14 and 15. In both cases the front gardens are largely devoted to car parking.

No. 19: A two storey detached late nineteenth century double fronted house in stock brick and white rendered surrounds to the central entrance porch and canted bay windows on each side. A pleasantly proportioned house to which has been added a second floor consisting of a massive gable of 45 deg. pitch clad in tile hanging with a very large centrally placed studio window. The design of the gable is so out of character and scale with the rest of the house as to appear grotesque. The front garden is mainly devoted to car parking.

No. 19 Denmark Avenue, above, and Parker Court, Nos. 23 and 24, below
Nos. 20, 21 and 22: Three two storey detached late nineteenth century houses in white render of similar design to No. 19, indicating the pleasant proportions and generously arranged fenestration of No. 19 before the addition of the second floor studio.

Consecutive numbers, east side, from south to north

Nos. 23 and 24, Parker Court: An extensive three and four storey block of 15 flats at the corner of Worple Road and Denmark Avenue dating from 1973, in red brick with white painted panels between the windows and fascia boards to the flat roofs, the lower of which form balconies with glazed balustrades (and described in the Wimbledon Society’s environmental assessment as being built in pink brick and plastic). Parker Court is a high density development entirely at odds with the period properties to the west and north, and not suitable for inclusion in the Conservation Area.

No. 25, Lumley Court and No. 27, Wellesley House

No. 25, Lumley Court: A three and four storey block of flats built in 1970 of similar materials, detailing and proportion as Parker Court, which presumably set a precedent for its design. It is no more appropriate for inclusion in the Conservation Area than its neighbour.

No. 26: A substantial two/three storey detached house dating from 1884 in pale stock brick with red rubber surrounds and low arches to the windows which contains many interesting features, the main block being dominated by a gable clad in red tiles and containing a two storey projecting wing, and a two storey octagonal tower forming the southern wing. Permission for a four storey block of 9 flats was granted in 1978 and an application for 11 flats was refused in 1990. The well landscaped forecourt is partly devoted to car parking.

No. 27, Wellesley House: A three and four storey block of 11 flats erected in 1973. Although built of variegated grey brick and partly clad in white painted horizontal boarding, No. 27 is very similar in scale and proportion to Nos. 25 and 23-24 and is not appropriate development for inclusion in the West Wimbledon Conservation Area.
Nos. 28 and 29, Naomi Watts House: Another very substantial block of four storey flats and a two storey rear extension built in about 1980 of red brick and tile hanging which area unrelieved except for white painted string courses. Again, the size, scale and monotonous repetition of the facades make it unsuitable for inclusion in the Conservation Area.

Nos. 30 and 31: A pair of three storey detached houses built in the 1980s of pale stock brick and red rubber window arches and string courses to the first floor, the ground floor consisting of an entrance porch and white painted double garage doors. The design shows some respect for the scale and materials of other period buildings in the street, although the wide spacing of the windows fails to achieve the generous proportions of earlier property. Although they fail to enhance this part of the Conservation Area, they do not detract from it.

Nos. 28 and 29, Naomi Watts House, and Nos. 30 and 31

No. 33: A attractive two storey detached double fronted mid nineteenth century house in pale brick with paired windows, a prominent bay to the north of the entrance and a later two storey subservient south wing whose fenestration echoes that of the main block. It is recommended for local listing in view of its similarity to No. 34.

No. 34: A locally listed two storey detached double fronted mid nineteenth century house in white render of similar design to No. 33 but with a particularly charming verandah across the ground floor frontage decorated with trellis-work.

No. 35: A three storey detached double fronted house whose paired windows indicate that it may originally have been of similar design and age to Nos. 33 and 34, but which has undergone considerable alterations, predominantly a mansard roof added in about 1900 with one central and two double dormer windows in the steep slope of the slated mansard.

Nos. 34 and 35 Denmark Avenue: different treatments to originally similar buildings

No. 36, Yeovil House: No. 36 is included in Sub Area 21, St John’s Road.

Positive and Negative Features:
Denmark Avenue is similar in character to Sub Area No. 20, Spencer Hill, and the buildings are of equivalent architectural and historic interest, with five properties near the top of the road being on the local list compared with seven in Spencer Hill. Also, the lower part of the eastern side of both roads has been redeveloped with blocks of flats, those in Spencer Hill being excluded from the Conservation Area. It therefore appears inconsistent to include those in the south-eastern part of Denmark Avenue. Other development has marred the street’s historic integrity, particularly the redevelopment of Nos. 6 and 6A and the addition of the gable to No. 19. But there remain many historic properties in attractive settings which are largely unspoilt.

Reduction of the Sub Area

There is a case for reducing the Sub Area to exclude some or all of the blocks of flats on the eastern side because of the extent to which they conflict with the houses in scale and character. Several options were considered.

A: To exclude all the properties in the south-east quadrant from No. 23-24 to No. 31: This would exclude Nos. 30 and 31. Because these two detached houses have neither a positive nor a negative effect on the character of the Conservation Area, their exclusion does not appear reasonable.

B: To exclude all the properties from No. 23-24 to No. 28-29: These all comprise three and four storey blocks of flats except No. 26, an attractive house dating from 1884 which makes a positive contribution to the CA. Exclusion of No. 26 therefore does not appear reasonable.

C: To exclude only Nos. 23-24 and 25 to enable No. 26 to be retained in the Conservation Area. However, this would mean that Nos. 27 and 28-29 would also be retained.

D: To exclude all the blocks of flats and retain No. 26 within the Conservation Area. The retention of No. 26 and the exclusion of Nos. 27 and 28-29 would form a “hole” which would create a weakness since the reduction in planning control within the “hole” could result in a loss of protection to surrounding property. However, despite this weakness, this appears to be the best option because:

1: The Council’s planning policies allow for the protection of properties within conservation areas from unsuitable neighbouring development outside CAs; and
2: No. 26 has been threatened by applications for redevelopment at least twice, in 1978 and 1990, and pressures for development in this part of Wimbledon are strong enough for the future of the present property to be in jeopardy if it did not have the protection of conservation area legislation.

It is therefore been decided that Nos. 23-24 (Parker Court), 25 (Lumley Court), 27 (Wellesley Court) and 28-29 (Naomi Watts House) be excluded from the Conservation Area, and that No. 26 be retained within it. The revised boundary is shown on the map of Sub Area 22.

Preservation and Enhancement

Little additional enhancement is required to the Sub Area because of the generally high standard of planting and landscaping, but care should be taken to resist further areas of hard-standing within front gardens and the provision of car parking or hardstanding to the rear by imposing an Article 4 Direction. Also, unsympathetic alterations and extensions should be refused, particularly if they approach the degree of unsuitability of the gable to No. 19. Demolition of any of the existing houses should also be refused, particularly if it would result in the type of development permitted at No. 6. Should an opportunity arise to redevelop the blocks of flats recommended for exclusion from the Conservation Area, efforts should be made to ensure that new development is far more sympathetic in scale and character with the historic buildings in Denmark Avenue and Spencer Hill.