Worple Avenue is a *cul-de-sac* off Worple Road lined with rows of architecturally undistinguished early twentieth century detached and semi-detached houses with mature landscaping to the front gardens. Environmentally it forms a continuation of Worple Road, its only visual link with the area to the north being the view of the flats in Oak Hill Court from the south.

**Buildings**

**Map of Sub Areas 27A, 27B and 27C**

**Nos. 3 to 19:** Four pairs of c.1930s semi-detached houses and one detached house (No.7), of two storeys with large two storey square bay windows and first floor bays over the entrances, and gabled roofs with tall chimneys to which large dormers have been inserted. The finishes are a mixture of red brick and white render with tiling to the bay windows.

**Even numbers, east side, south to north**

**Nos. 2 to 14:** Three pairs of c.1930 houses of similar design to Nos. 3 to 19, opposite.

**Nos. 18 and 20:** A pair of white rendered two storey houses with their gables facing the street, probably of a later date.

**Possible Inclusion**

Sub Area 26C was originally excluded from the Conservation Area because the early twentieth century houses along each side of Worple Avenue were not considered to be of sufficient architectural distinction to make them worthy of inclusion. They are typical of the detached and semi-detached estates built in great numbers in London in the early twentieth century, and it is unlikely that they will be regarded as of sufficient interest to merit protection in the foreseeable future.

**SUB AREAS:** 27A, EDGE HILL (SOUTH); 27B, DARLASTON ROAD; AND 27C, THACKERY CLOSE AND SAVONA CLOSE

**Extent and Justification**

Sub Area 27 is in three parts: 27A consists of the southern end of Edge Hill within the Conservation Area as far south as Worple Road; 27B covers the northern and eastern arms of Darlington Road, originally outside the Conservation Area, and almost as far south as Worple Road; and 27C encloses the recent developments further north in Savona Close and Thackery Close, outside the Conservation Area.

Sub Area 27B is placed in the same Sub Area as 27A because of the their similar character and close proximity, and areas 27B and C were considered to assess if they compared sufficiently well to be included within the Conservation Area.
As with Sub Area 26A, areas 27A and 27B are considered in Richard Milward’s Two Wimbledon Roads: The Story of Edge Hill. Before they were developed, the area now covered by Darlaston Road and the south end of Edge Hill was divided into three fields, area 27A by Little Ladies Close and 27B by Great Ladies Close to the west and Five Acre Field to the east. In 1848 Thomas Watney, whose family had farmed in Wimbledon for over a hundred years, leased these three fields, and in the 1850s the owner, Edward Berkeley Phillips, sold them to the Reverend John Brackenbury, the headmaster of Wimbledon College. Although the upper part of Edge Hill was laid out in 1869, Lower Edge Hill, as it was known, was not developed until 1884. The plots on the east side of Edge Hill were purchased by Horace Cooper, a builder of Euston Road, and another builder, Alfred Crocker, purchased those on the west side as well as eight plots in Darlaston Road. Darlaston Road is named after Darlaston Hall, in Staffordshire [Milward 1989, p.175] and, to ensure that the area remained desirable, Brackenbury imposed a covenant on the houses to prevent future occupants carrying out any manufacture of an obnoxious kind, nor any noisome or dangerous trade, business or occupation, or commit any nuisance thereon, but will use the premises as a private or professional dwelling house, and will not do or permit to be done thereon anything which shall be a nuisance to the owner or occupier of any adjoining land.
According to Milward, by a process of accretion shortly after their construction, Edge Hill and Darlaston Road began to attract Jesuit families until at least five families lived there and rumours spread that Wimbledon had become a hotbed of Popery [pp.16-18]. Most of the original residents continued to live there until the First World War, but in the 1920s and ‘30s moves were far more frequent, and after the Second World War many of the houses were converted into flats because of the shortage of staff to run them. Redevelopment followed and now twelve of the original fifteen houses on Lower Edge Hill remain, and only eight of the fourteen in Darlaston Road.

Sub Area 27A, Edge Hill (South)

Character

Typically for a street of its period there is a profusion of mature trees and attractive landscaping. The WimSoc’s environmental assessment for the part of Edge Hill south of Wimbledon College explains that the roadway retains several original manhole covers and a postbox, but the original granite sett gutters have been replaced. It continues:

The principal merit of this street lies in the homogeneous grouping of houses on each side of the street. Each row registers as a coherent group, with the pleasing proportions and features of the individual houses contributing to the overall effect. Although various alterations have been made to the houses, the group effect bears a fair resemblance to the original Victorian character.

Buildings

The VicSoc report called Darlaston Road an architectural lucky dip and all fourteen properties in Sub Area 27A make a positive contribution to the character of the Conservation Area, with five of them locally listed.

Odd numbers, west side, south to north

Nos. 1 to 11: Alfred Crocker completed Nos. 1 and 3 Edge Hill before the end of 1883 and the remainder in the late 1880s, and sold them for between £1,200 and £1,400. They consist of six detached double-fronted houses of two storeys plus a semi-basement, in stock brick with red banding, and canted bays to the ground and lower ground floors, each side of the round arched ornamented entrance porch, which is approached up a substantial flight of steps. According to the Wim Soc environmental assessment, they are all divided into flats, and Nos. 7, 9 and 11 have been combined to form a Jesuit Mission. Unfortunately, the roof line, with its ornamental soffit, has been spoilt on Nos. 1 and 7 by the addition of full width dormers, and the back gardens to Nos. 1, 7 and 9 are dedicated to car parking.

The overlarge dormer on No. 1 Edge Hill and Nos. 13a and 14

Nos. 13a and 15: A semi-detached pair of. two storey houses in pale stock brick with fenestration to match those to the south, including the red banding, canted ground floor bays and ornamental eaves. No. 13 was named Padley by the most distin-guished of the Jesuit
families, Lewis and Margaret Eyre, who built a private chapel in the house, including a large stained glass window [Milward, p.17]. The two houses have undergone so much alteration that they look like mid twentieth century copies, possibly with features salvaged from the originals, but according to the Wim Soc assessment, traces of the original No. 13 are visible. A modern extension has been added to the end of No. 15 to form a separate dwelling.

Even numbers, east side, south to north (No. 1 is in Sub Area 27B)

**No. 12 Edge Hill**

Nos. 4 to 12: Five *locally listed* detached two storey houses built in what Milward refers to as *decorated red brick* by Horace Cooper in 1884 (some have the date inscribed over a first floor window) and sold at the time for about £2,000. Each of them has a main entrance in the south wing, with a porch topped by an arch in alternate brick and stone quoins and further decoration above, a projecting central section with ornamental brick panels between the windows and in the gable end, a ground floor canted bay to the north wing, and a secondary entrance at the north end. According to the Wim Soc report, Nos. 6 and 8 are divided into flats, but since each of the houses spans the whole width of its plot, the long back gardens have not been exploited for car parking; instead the front gardens to Nos. 4, 6, 8 and 10 mainly consist of hard paving.

**No. 14:** A detached two storey house plus a third storey in the roof space, similar in design to Nos. 4 to 12 and built at the same time, but with an additional east wing. Details include rendered eaves and ornamental tile hanging to the "half-timbered gable ends. It was the last of the houses to be built and dates from 1894. The owner constructed a private chapel and sold it to the Jesuits, who used it for parish meetings until World War II, when it was converted into flats [Milward, pp. 17-18].

Positive and Negative Features

Despite the insertion of overlarge dormers and garages sited in the back gardens of several of the houses on the west side of Edge Hill, Sub Area 27A retains most of its traditional architectural and historic character.

Preservation and Enhancement

Further erosion of the character of the Sub Area should be strongly discouraged by refusing permission for the erection of dormer windows or other alien features to the front of the properties and the construction of garages or hardstanding in the rear gardens.