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Wimbledon North Conservation Area Appraisal

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INTRODUCTION

This document identifies and appraises the special architectural and historic characteristics of the Wimbledon North (Wimbledon Park) Conservation Area and it also gives practical guidance on the implications of Conservation Area status.

Conservation areas were introduced by the Civic Amenities Act 1967 to safeguard areas of “special architectural or historic interest.” Wimbledon North (Wimbledon Park) Conservation Area was designated in 1993.

This Appraisal has been produced in accordance with government guidelines in PPG 15, and the English Heritage Guidance notes of August 2005. These state that local planning authorities need to define and record the special interest, character and appearance of all conservation areas in their care. The intention of this Appraisal is to provide clearly defined analysis of the character and appearance of the Wimbledon North Conservation Area, which is defensible on appeal, utilized in development control decisions. In addition, the Management Strategy addresses issues, which have been identified in the character appraisal, for the enhancement and preservation of the conservation area.

The Appraisal has been through *public consultation, amended accordingly and approved by committee.

*In accordance with Statement of Community Involvement.

CHARACTER STATEMENT

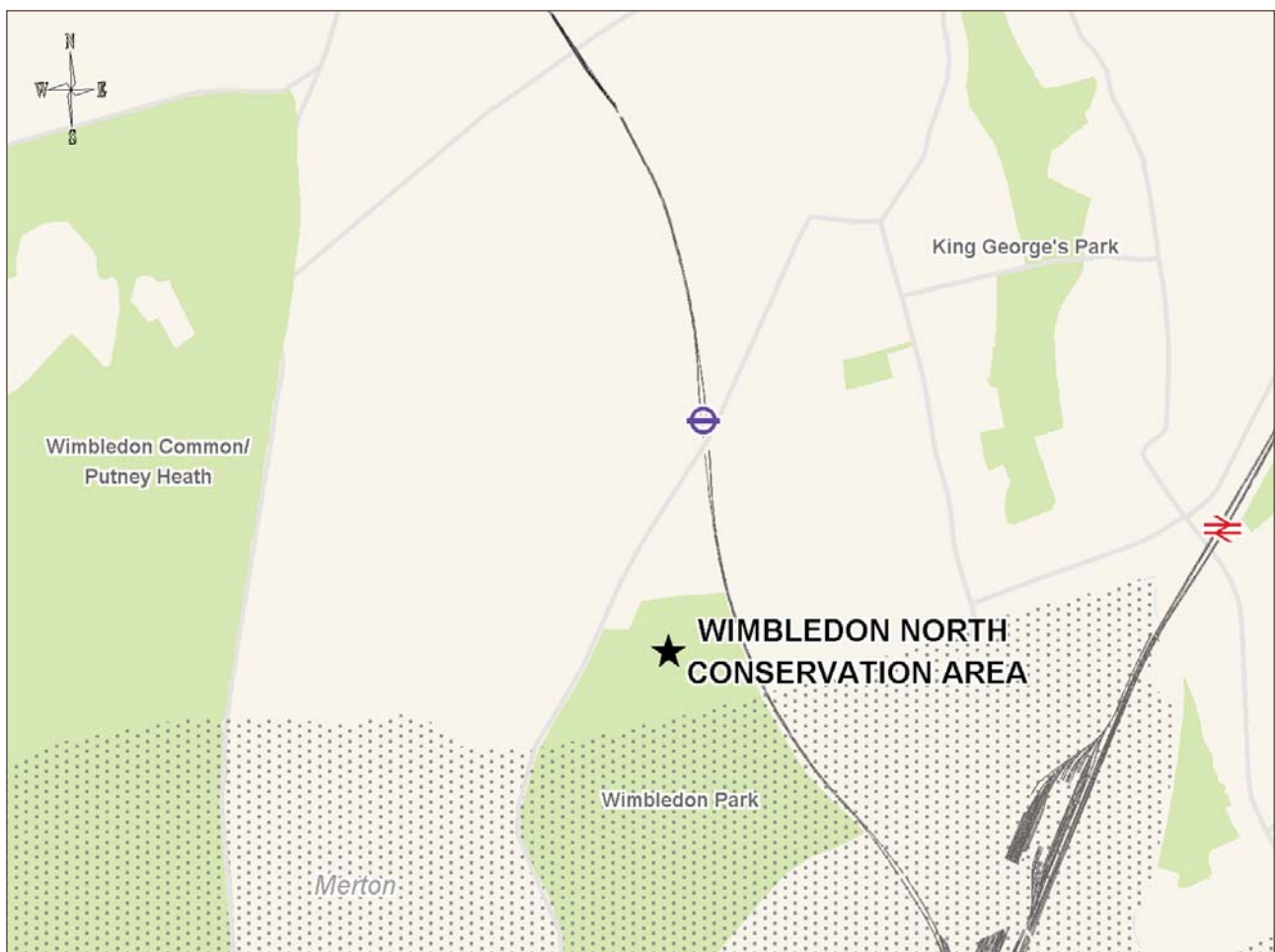
1.0 Character analysis

The special character of Wimbledon North Conservation Area is derived from the mature trees and large scale open space and the history of the ornamental park of which it is a part.

2.0 Context and location

The Conservation area covers the northern section of Wimbledon Park. The rest of the park is in the London Borough of Merton and is included in their Wimbledon North Conservation Area. Merton manages the whole park.

The Park is situated off Wimbledon Park Road and Home Park Road. It is south of Southfield's town centre and north of Wimbledon Village. The park has good bus links and is adjacent to Wimbledon Park Station in Merton.

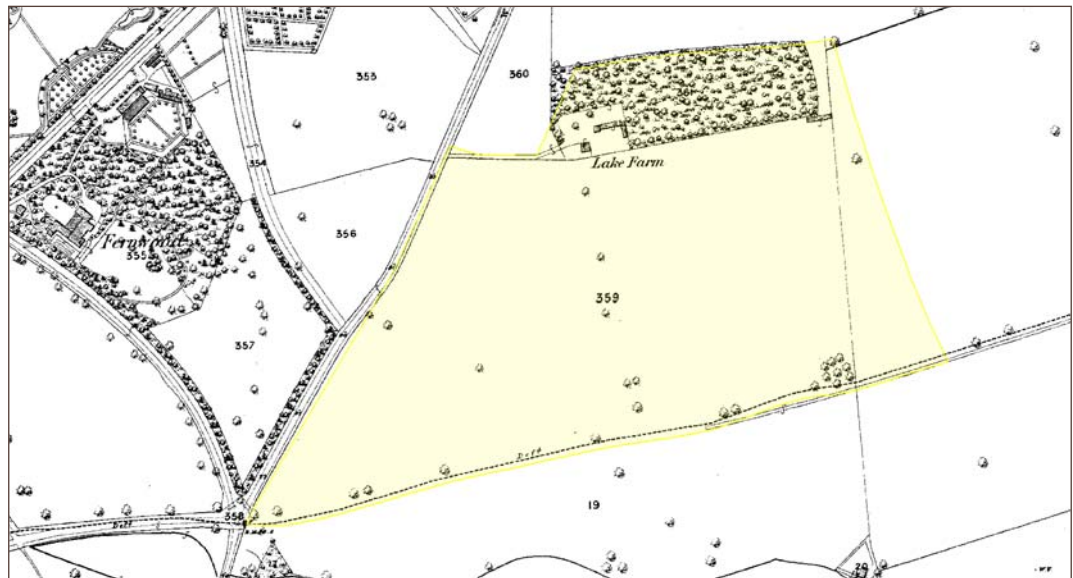


Location map

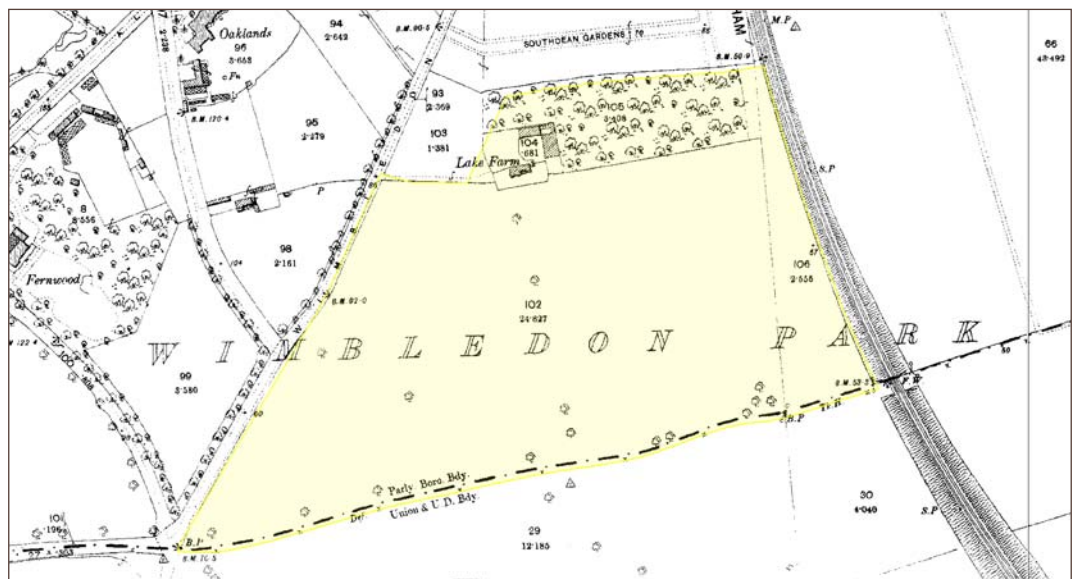
3.0 History

Today's Wimbledon Park is a remnant of the far more extensive 'New Park' or Wimbledon Park Estate; a 16th century enclosure of land that was formally part of Wimbledon Common. The original parkland extended from Parkside in the west to Durnsford Road in the east, and was enclosed by Thomas Cecil in about 1588 when he built the first Wimbledon Manor House. This was renamed the Elizabethan Manor House after a visit by Queen Elizabeth I.

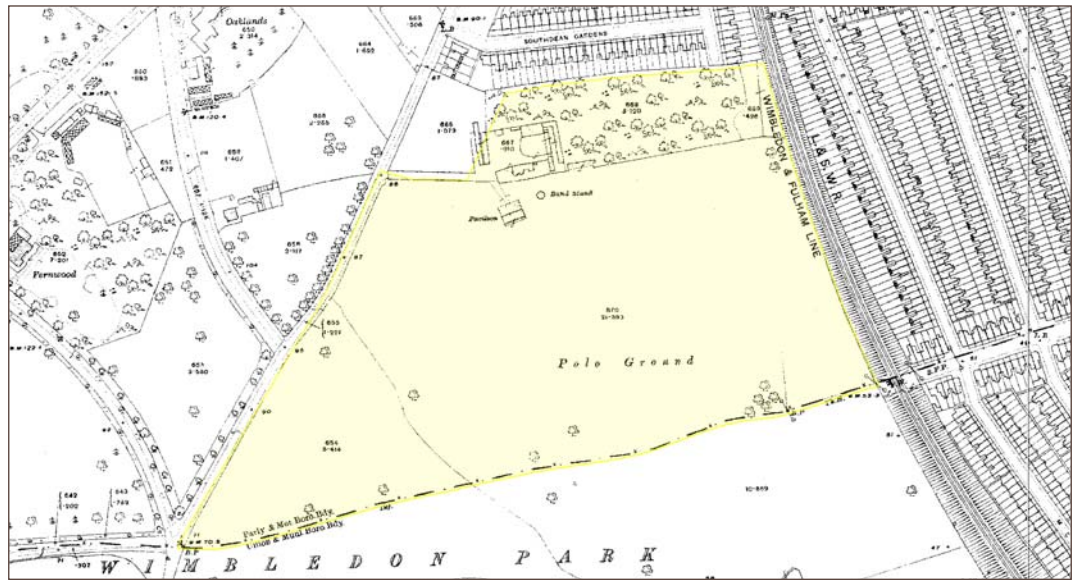
By 1610 the park covered 400 acres and it was famous for its deer for hunting. There were large clumps of trees and small woods around the park for the deer to graze. The area close to the Manor house was planted with well-ordered gardens, orchards and fishponds.



Wimbledon North 1869-1874



Wimbledon North 1896



Wimbledon North 1916-1919



Wimbledon North 1930s

Charles I in 1638 bought the manor for Queen Henrietta Maria. New gardens with walks and an Orangery were created. Many trees and flowers including tulips were brought over from Holland. During the English Civil war many of the mature trees in the park were lost to ship building.

By 1720 the gardens were altered again, becoming more ornamental, and a Great Avenue leading from the house towards Putney dominated the park. The Grand Avenue cut across what is now the south-western corner of the golf course. No trace of it remains today.

In 1764 the Lord of the Manor, Earl Spencer, employed Lancelot 'Capability' Brown to improve the view northward from his mansion Marlborough House. The Great Avenues of trees were cut down. Over the next twenty years the estate was transformed from Renaissance gardens into a more natural looking landscape.

Many surviving oak trees were planted at this time. Horse Wood was revitalised so to create a great backdrop for his great vista from Marlborough House. The major element of his landscape plan was a large lake, which is still a centrepiece of the park today.

In 1846 the Earl Spencer sold Manor of Wimbledon to a property developer John Augustus Beaumont. He planned to turn Wimbledon Park in a 'site for villa dwellers', which 'would have no rival in England.' He began by selling off plots of land along its western edge by the common. A number of large architect – designed mansions began to appear in there own spacious grounds.

The District Railway was extended from Putney Bridge to Wimbledon in 1889, and a new station built at Wimbledon Park. This has resulted in the eastern part of the Wimbledon Park Estate being engulfed around the Vineyard Hill area. Only the central area of the estate was preserved. During this time the remaining parkland was leased to a variety of sports clubs. The Golf Club located in the park in 1890.

So to prevent further loss of the Park to development the Wimbledon Corporation Act was passed in 1914. This allowed the purchase of 155 acres of remaining park land from Lady Layne 33 acres in Wandsworth and 122 acres in Merton.

During the First World War, the land between Horse Close Wood and the lake was used as allotments. With other parts of the park was used as a piggery. Despite public ownership of the land more of it was developed in the 1920's and 1930's part to fund the development of sports facilities in the park. The athletics compound was opened in 1948.



Aerial photo - 1940

4.0 Landscape analysis

The conservation area includes, Horse Close Wood, a large open grassed area, two car parks and Wimbledon Golf club. It is popular and important open space used by the wide community.



Aerial photo - 2006

In the rest of the park (within Merton), the most significant feature is the 12 hectare lake. The surviving parkland extends around the lake on which the various sporting and recreational facilities are laid out. The area is characterised, as in the Wandsworth section by extensive grass, divided mature trees. Recreational facilities are extensive and include football pitches, cricket grounds, a bowling green, tennis courts and children's play area. Formal planting includes a rock garden with dwarf conifers and a lawn with rose arbour.

4.1 Horse Close Wood

Horse Close Wood consists mainly of oaks and ashes, there are areas of tall elm scrub to mark the position of trees lost to disease. The wood appears on the oldest known maps and may have survived from the ancient forest that would have once covered the entire district. Clumps of Midland hawthorn can be seen in the woods this is an indicator of ancient woodlands. Many trees, oaks especially were added to the woods when Capability Brown transformed the park for the Earl of Spencer. There are plaques providing information on the history and nature within Horse Close Wood, in the Park.



Views of Horse Close Wood

4.2 Open park land

The majority of the conservation area consists of open grassed area dotted with mature oak and plane trees. It is used in for informal recreational use and for sports. There is a concrete footpath running around the periphery of the open grassed area leading to the southern end of the park. The bins and park benches are located adjacent to the path allowing views over the grass towards the lake.



caption



caption

4.3 Vehicular access and car park

There are two vehicular access points, one leading to the car park adjacent to Horse Close Wood. There is high gate and fence recently installed. It is laid in rough asphalt and although in state of disrepair its more informal look is softer for its Horse Close Wood backdrop.

The car park next to the eastern boundary is small but well used and is again of rough asphalt.



Car park on the north boundary



Car park by the district line

4.4 The athletics compound

The athletics track compound consists of a track with a profiled metal roof on a painted steel cantilever structure, with painted black walls and a concrete tiered seating area. The track has recently been resurfaced but the grandstand is a little shabby. The compound is within both the London Borough of Merton and Wandsworth. It is surrounded by a two metre high concrete post and timber panel fence, and by a high screen Lombardy Poplars, and tall Cypresses. The screen of trees obscures Capability Browns originally vistas, and is very dominant and the species and formality of the screen is out of keeping with the informal character with the conservation area.



The resurfaced athletics track



A view of the fencing and coniferous trees

4.5 Wimbledon Golf Club

Wimbledon Golf Club is a private club with its clubhouse and most of its 18 holes course in Merton. It forms the eastern boundary of the conservation area. Some of the trees are non-native and obstruct the original view lines sited by Capability Brown. An unsightly concrete post fence runs between the golf course and Wimbledon Park Road.



The golf course looking south from Wimbledon Park Rd



The concrete board fence

5.0 Topography and views

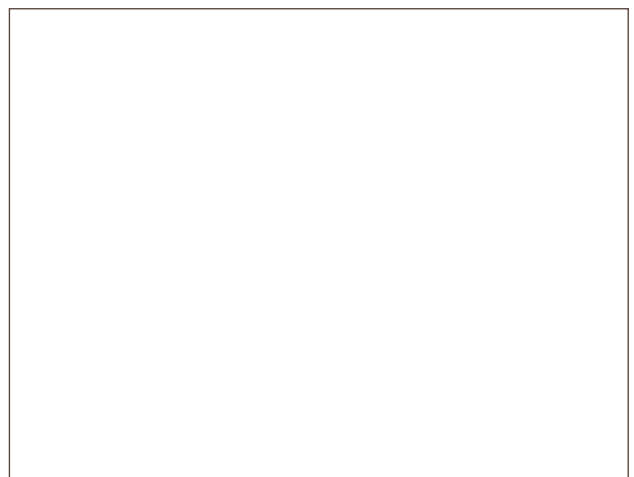
The park is at the bottom of a valley so affords views within, into and out of it. The land drops steeply from the south, and more gently from the north.

There are several historic views into and out of the Park that give an sense of the Capability Brown landscape. Views are enhanced by mature trees and planting. There are views from most of Home Park Road over the golf course to the lake and beyond. Aspects include the historic view on the alignment with both From Marlborough Manor House (also known as the Spencer Manor House), there are view towards the latter towards the lake and Horse Close Wood with Central London beyond. Some views are partly obscured by the concrete wall to the boundary of the golf course, and/or are marred by course tree planting.

From within the Park there are panoramic views across the golf course and lake from the lakeside, These include the view to the south east towards the hillside ridge, where the Home Park Road houses and their sloping, wooded, gardens rise towards the ridge of Arthur Road beyond, forming a wooded backdrop to the Park, and the view south towards St Mary's Church and the Old Rectory House.



Views from Horse Close Wood towards Victoria Drive



MANAGEMENT STRATEGY

6.0 Management

Restoration and renovation works are taking place within the park. These are focusing on recreating views and vistas established by Capability Brown whilst ensuring that sporting and recreational facilities are maintained and improved. For more information please see further reading.

7.0 Designation and planning policy

In addition to conservation area status the park has been designated with the following status. This is to aid management and conservation of the park in the future/

7.1 Register of parks and gardens of special historic interest.

Wimbledon Park is included on the English Heritage Register as Grade II*. The listing description is part of the Appendix. The designation gives no additional statutory controls, but Planning Policy Guidance note 15 'Planning and the Historic Environment' states that local planning authorities should protect registered parks and their settings.

7.2 Nature Conservation

The London ecology unit has designated Wimbledon park lake, woods and golf course as a site of borough importance for nature conservation grade I. They have also designated habitats alongside the District line Embankment

7.3 London Inventory

The park, (including the Golf Course), is included in the London Inventory 'Historic Green Spaces in Merton' published by the London Parks and Gardens Trust.

7.4 Wandsworth Unitary Development Plan (UDP)

The park is designated in Wandsworth Unitary Development Plan (UDP) as a Conservation Area, Metropolitan Open Land (MOL), Historic Parks and Gardens and Archaeological Priority area. The policies related to the different designations are listed below and form the basis for deciding planning applications.

Planning applications within the park whether in both Wandsworth and Merton are advertised by one or all of the following ways; in the weekly list (which is available on request), on the website, by letter, by site notice or in the local press.

7.4.1 Conservation Area status

There are two policies in regard to conservation area status Policy TBE10 and TBE11.

TBE10

Development will not be permitted if it would:

- (a) harm the character, appearance or setting of the conservation area; or
- (b) fail to respect the grain of the area.

TBE11

Development involving demolition in a conservation area will only be permitted if:

- (a) the structure to be demolished makes no positive contribution to the character or appearance of the area or is incapable of further life; and
- (b) detailed proposals for the re-use of the site, including any replacement building or other structure, have been approved.

In addition to this before carrying out any work to any tree in a conservation area it is necessary to serve a notice to the council six weeks before carrying out the intended works- this includes any kind of work whether it is just minor pruning through to complete removal. If it is proposed to remove the tree full reasons need to be given.

7.4.2 Metropolitan Open Land (MOL)

The role of MOL is comparable to that of the green belt. As such the Policy ON4

On MOL, except in very special circumstances, planning permission will not be granted for development other than:

- (a) essential facilities for outdoor sport and recreation, for cemeteries, or for other uses of land which preserve the openness of MOL and do not conflict with its purposes;
- (b) the carrying out of an engineering operation or the making of any material change in the use of land provided that it maintains the openness of MOL and does not conflict with its purpose.

Policy ON5

Development on land adjacent or close to Metropolitan Open Land

7.4.3 Historic Parks and Gardens

Policy ON6

Development which would harm the character, setting or historic features of historic parks and gardens will not be permitted.

7.4.4 Archaeological Priority Area

Policy TBE14

Where development involving ground disturbance is proposed in Archaeological Priority Areas, the council will require developers to make provision for archaeological investigation. Normally the submission of an archaeological evaluation report will be requested prior to determination. Archaeological investigation may also be required elsewhere in sites of archaeological potential.

TBE15

In appropriate cases, the council may also require preservation in situ, or excavation. The recording and publication of results will normally be required.

7.5 Merton Unitary Development Plan (UDP)

The following policies are relevant: Metropolitan Open Land NE1, NE2 and BE20, Open Space Policies L5 – L8, Historic Parks and Gardens BE8, Leisure Walking Routes WC2, L2, Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation Policy NE6 and Archaeological Priority Zone BE13 – BE14. Merton's Unitary Development Plan (UDP) was adopted in 2003. For more information see contact details or further reading.

8.0 Further reading

Wandsworth Unitary Development Plan (UDP) (Available on the website)

Merton Unitary Development Plan (UDP)

London Borough of Merton produced Wimbledon North Conservation Area Character Appraisal with Sub Area Wimbledon North Conservation. Please see Merton's website of contact them.

There have been three reports commissioned. Glasspoole Thompson (Landscape Architects) produced two feasibility reports commissioned in 1996 with Heritage Lottery Funds. Cobham Resource Consultants prepared a Historical Management Plan

9.0 Contact list

Development Control (020) 8871 7657

Conservation and Design (020) 8871 6646

Building Regulations (020) 8871 7620

Website: www.wandsworth.gov.uk/planning

Email: boroughplanner@wandsworth.gov.uk

Address: Wandsworth Council
Technical Services Department
Town Hall Extension
Wandsworth High Street
London
SW18 2PU

This character statement is intended to give an overview of the development and current character of the conservation area; it is not intended to be prescriptive, nor to be a summary of planning constraints or an inventory of individual buildings or other features whether listed or otherwise.

If you have difficulty understanding this in English, please contact:
Wandsworth Interpreting Service: (020) 8672 1043/3649 English

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Hadday kugu adag tahay inaad ku fahamto Ingriis fadlan la xiriir: Wandsworth Interpreting service: (020) 8672 1043/3649 Somali

Si tiene dificultad para entenderlo en inglés favor contactar a: Wandsworth Interpreting service: (020) 8672 1043/3649 Spanish

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