

Belmont conservation area character appraisal



Introduction

The Council has a duty under section 69 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 to review its area from time to time to consider whether further designation of conservation areas is called for.

In 2000 the south western boundaries of the Blackheath Conservation Area were reviewed and from this a new conservation area was proposed. The Council's Planning and Highways Committee designated Belmont Conservation Area on 18 January 2001. The purpose of this appraisal is to analyse and define the historic and architectural interest of the Belmont Conservation Area.

The appraisal process has involved a combination of site survey and historical research, some aspects of which have actively involved the Blackheath Society. This document follows the format recommended by English Heritage for conservation area appraisals, and has taken on board comments on earlier versions made by the Blackheath Society, the Blackheath Preservation Trust and local residents.

This character appraisal is a material consideration in the assessment of planning applications.

Location and Extent

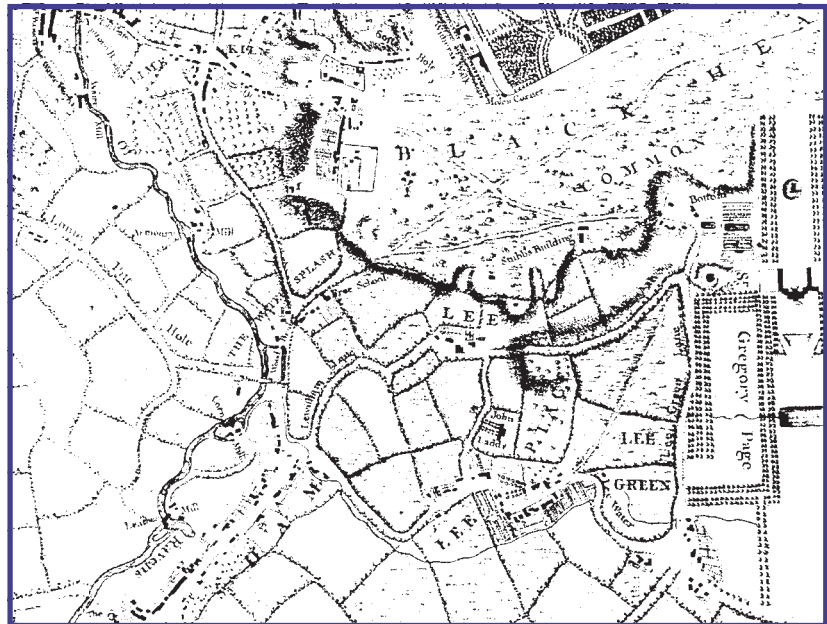
Belmont Conservation Area lies entirely within the Blackheath ward. It borders Blackheath Conservation Area to the east and St Stephen's Conservation Area to the north. The area is just north east of Lewisham Town Centre.



History and development of the area

This section sets out a general background history of the area to provide a broad context for the development of the area.

Historically, as now, the principal settlement in the area was at Lewisham. The name suggests 6th century pagan origins; this first community was based close to the modern day parish church of St. Mary, with initial expansion from it following the line of the river valley.



John Rocque's map, 1741-45

Although the Domesday (1086) population of the area was still only 3-400, the village of Lewisham was once at the heart of an extensive manor with settlements as far afield as Greenwich and Charlton.

There was also a manor at Lee, a name associated with former woodland or woodland clearance. The moated manor house, later known as Annesley's House, was located to the north of Lee High Road, and a track ran from here to the parish church of St. Margaret's. The road labelled as Lewisham Lane, on the map above, later became Belmont Hill. The old St Margaret's Church is shown to the north of the road at the hamlet of Lee. The track running south from here originally linked the church with the manor house - it will later become Brandram Road. The area is characterised at this time by an open agricultural landscape, and there are few buildings, except for a small group surrounding the church. To the south of Lewisham Lane are the grounds and the buildings of Lee Place.

The basis of the local economy was agriculture, in which sheep farming played a central role until at least the mid 17th century. There was also a port at Greenwich and mills along the River Ravensbourne. Blackheath was an expanse of common land to the north of the Parish, stretching down on either side of Lewisham Hill almost as far as the modern day High Street.

During the 16th century the open spaces of Blackheath became a popular place with the royal family for exercise and display, and minor courtiers often took houses in the area. Nonetheless, during the 17th century most of the inhabitants of the area were still small farmers and husbandmen.

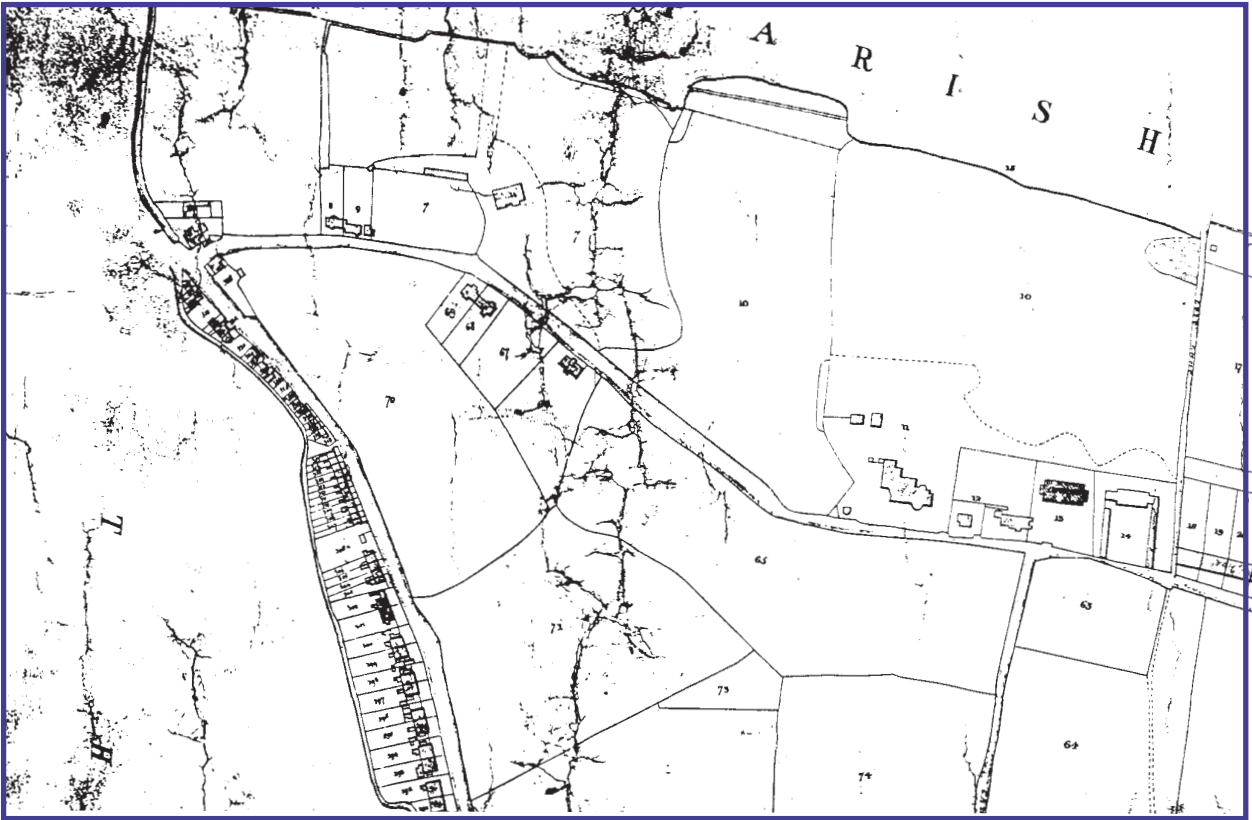
Despite considerable population growth, physical changes to the landscape during the 17th and 18th centuries were relatively slight. There was only one new settlement created during the period—upmarket Blackheath. Elsewhere, the expanding population was absorbed by ‘infill’ development. Lewisham remained the largest village in the area.

More significant was a gradual change in the composition of the population around this time. Farmers and farm labourers began to give way to manufacturers, workmen, merchants, professional men and tradesmen. Changes to the economy and infrastructure of the area probably contributed to this shift, with the growth of Lewisham’s first serious industry based around the River Ravensbourne and the improvement after 1717 of local roads by the New Cross Turnpike Trust.

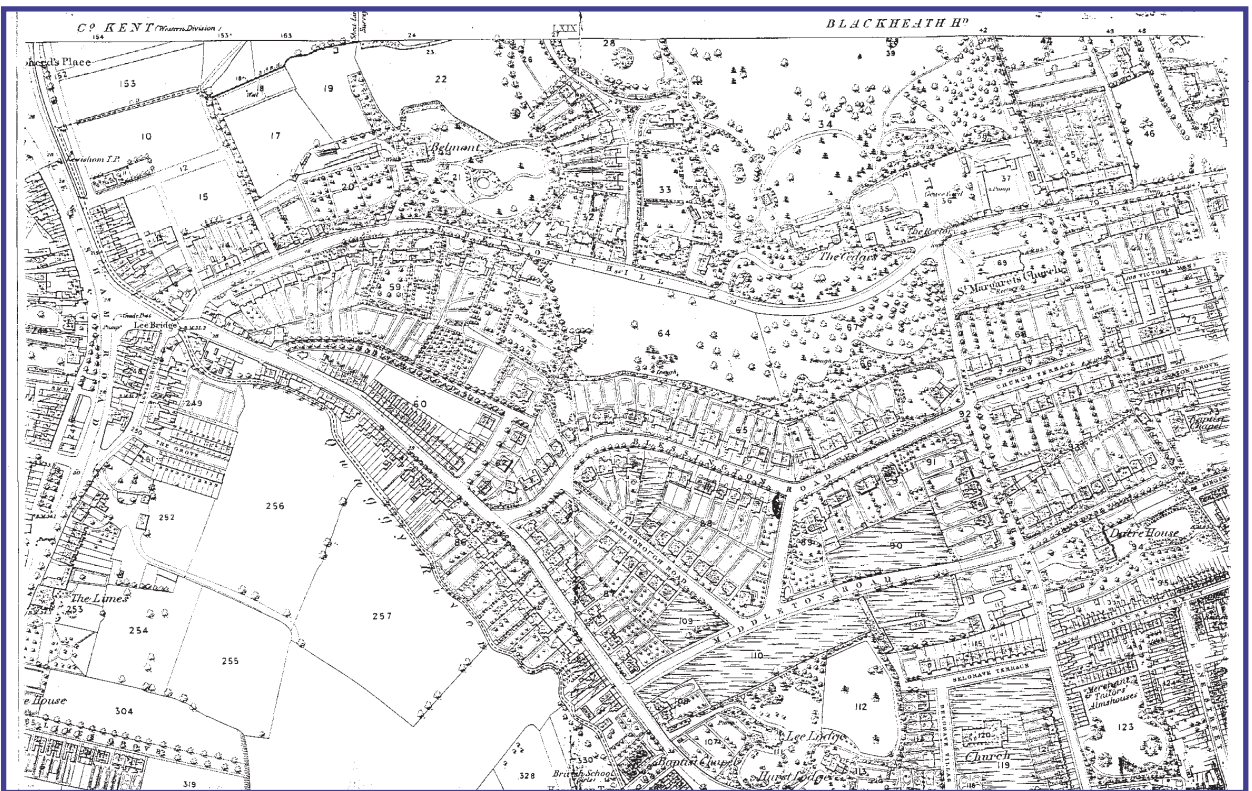
As a result, farmland to the north of the Parish was increasingly given over to form the parks and gardens of wealthy new inhabitants. The 1650s had seen the first attempts in the area to attract these rich settlers to new purpose built accommodation; from 1688 the 2nd Lord Dartmouth began the development of fine suburban houses at Dartmouth Row on the western edge of Blackheath. His tenants included some aristocrats, but were mainly from the City. During the 18th century Lee also became a popular location for the country retreats of business men, particularly as land became available following the fragmentation of the Annesley’s House Estate.

From 1700 to 1770 there had been a gradual shift from timber built cottages to smart new brick built houses. After 1770 and before 1840, however, there was a definite move to create in Lewisham the suburban idyll, and a series of villas with large gardens were constructed. The parish was rapidly ‘improved’, and a truly rural landscape began to give way to stucco villas with ornamental waters, lawns and streams, standing beside well kept roads.

During the 18th century the composition of Lewisham’s population continued to change. By 1800, only a relatively small minority of



Tithe Map 1839



inhabitants of the parish were still employed in agriculture. A larger number of people were working at the silk mills to the north of the parish, and in the brick fields at Lee.

However a substantial and growing proportion of of the population were not employed in Lewisham at all- Lewisham was already moving towards its future as a retirement and commuting suburb.

In general new building at this period continued to be of substantial detached villas. Indeed, in 1847 Lewisham could still be described as a village of 'many good houses and villas, the residences of wealthy merchants and tradesmen of the metropolis, who have been induced to settle here on account of the short distance from London, the salubrity of the air, and the beauty of the surrounding country' (Samuel Bagshaw in his *History, Gazetteer and Directory of the County of Kent* (1847), quoted in Coulter's *Lewisham History and Guide* (1994).

The real transformation of Lewisham and its neighbours Blackheath and Lee into suburbs of London came during the second half of the 19th century. Several factors contributed to it, but principal amongst these were the improvements in public transport that the century witnessed.

In 1836, a railway station was opened at Deptford. In 1839 the London to Croydon Railway was opened, running through Forest Hill and Sydenham. The first services to Lewisham and Blackheath ran in 1849. The 1839 Tithe Map shows that Belmont Hill is still surrounded by fields, but there are now few detached and semi-detached villas along its length, notably at plots 66-69 Belmont Hill (No 69 has since been renumbered as no.24: and the other half of this semi-detached villa pair has been demolished). The original St Margaret's Church has been replaced by another building on the same site to the north of the road. The neighbouring house is the Cedars, which survives today. further west are the house and grounds of "Belmont", the site of the Edwardian Boyne Road development.

Although preceded by events in the 1820s and 30s in Blackheath and Lee, the 1840s saw the first development of terraced and semi-detached 'genteel villas' in Lewisham. These houses were built with the lower rather than the upper middle class in mind, and spelt the beginning of the end for the substantial detached villas in spacious grounds that had characterised the area for some time. From the mid 19th century the transformation from rural to

suburban landscape began in earnest, with fields disappearing under a sea of roads and houses. The map of 1863 shows that the row of villas at 6-24 Belmont Hill is now complete, and to the south Belgrave Terrace and Belgrave Villas have appeared. The old St Margaret's Church has been substantially demolished and a new church built to the south of the road.

With the coming of the railways, speculative building became rife. Later, during the 1890s, there was another key improvement in the public transport of Lewisham with the establishment of a network of horse trams.

From the 1880s the rich began noticeably to migrate from Lewisham further out into the country. Large houses proved difficult to let and tended to be bought by developers. In a relatively short time very few of the parish's grand villas remained.

The new houses in the parish were aimed at the middle classes and the respectable working classes. Although the parish acquired a reputation for 'privet, pride and poverty', or 'pride, poverty and pianners' (Sam Price Myers writing in 1949, quoted in Lewisham History and Guide by John Coulter 1994), the town was in fact still prosperous. The decline, if there was one, was not into poverty, but into a dull uniformity of lower middle class and artisan respectability, with the majority of new families headed by commuters to the city or to factories in places such as Bermondsey and Greenwich.

The population of the parish rose steeply- in the 20 years between 1881 and 1901 the number of Lewisham inhabitants doubled: 'the quiet and... lazy village was bursting into a populous town' (Rev. Augustus Legge in the Parish Year Books 1880-3, quoted in Coulter's Lewisham History and Guide, 1994). By the beginning of the 1st World War, almost all the farmland in the parish had disappeared.

After 1918, the 'Homes for Heroes' initiative was instrumental in the construction of the first council estates in the area. The influx of working class people from the inner city decisively altered the social and political balance of the borough, although in the interwar years old mansions and villas continued to be demolished to make way for middle-class semis.

Lewisham suffered badly during World War II: 20,000 homes were destroyed or seriously damaged by the bombings.



1914. The Boyne Road development (1907-1909) has appeared to the north of the western end of Belmont Hill

In 1945 a quick and drastic solution was favoured and blocks of flats sprung up in their place. As the middle classes began to move further out of town, the population of the area fell. The first decades of the second half of the 20th century saw Lewisham pass into a period of economic decline and further demolitions from which recovery has proved slow.

Character areas

The Belmont conservation area can be divided into two distinct areas of differing character which are described in this section.

1. Boyne Road Area

This area consists of an Edwardian development dating from 1907-11 within the former grounds of the villa Belmont. It includes Boyne Road and Caterham Road, with the corresponding frontage onto Belmont Hill.



View along Boyne Road towards the centre of Lewisham

Immediately to the east, and within the existing Blackheath Conservation Area, are the rear gardens of a group of substantial semi-detached 19th century villas which face onto Belmont Grove, and a row of large 19th century houses, one listed, lined along Belmont Hill itself. To the north the area adjoins the St Stephen's Conservation Area, which consists principally of more modest mid 19th century terraced houses.

The eclectic, exuberant, typically Edwardian houses making up "Area 1" were designed by architect Reginald C Fry ARIBA (1878-1932), and formed the basis of his entry to the 1912 Daily Mail 'Home of the Year' competition. The builder was H & J Taylor.

These streets are characterised by modest terraced and semi-detached two storey villas of largely similar plan and size. The building line is consistent between and within roads, with the houses set slightly back from and often above the pavement. The site is sloping and the houses step attractively down the hill, particularly as Boyne Road curves round to the west. There are long views from top of the site towards the centre of Lewisham in which the Citibank building is a prominent landmark.

Larger rear gardens compensate for the very modest size of their counterparts at the front, which are typically enclosed by a brick or rubble stone wall, with a timber gate and posts. Front gardens nonetheless make an important contribution to the character of the area, particularly since there are relatively few significant trees visible from the public domain.



Despite the relative consistency of plan-form and layout within the area, the houses themselves show great variety in design, with Old English, Arts and Crafts, Neo-Georgian, and Queen Anne influences all apparent, sometimes in the same property. Here and there, for example in the attractive tiling to porch interiors which is in itself a typical Edwardian feature, there are Art Nouveau touches.

The villas have hipped or gabled roofs often with prominent party walls and paired projecting gables above the façade. Original materials include brick (in various colours), render, roughcast, timber and plain clay tiles. Typical design features include tilehanging, mock timber framing, moulded bargeboards, bracketed gables, bracketed sills, pargetting, brick quoins, and string courses.



Windows are in general timber casements in a variety of designs, some with leaded lights with or without stained glass. Single and double storey bay windows are common - these may be square, canted, bow or polygonal. Oriel windows, bulls eye windows, and Venetian windows can also be seen. Front doors are typically of panelled timber, and often have leaded lights, fanlights and sidelights. The doors may be within recessed porches with semicircular or Tudor arches or under flat door hoods.



The entrance into the area from Belmont Hill is marked by polygonal corner 'towers' with weather vanes on the houses on either side of this top end of Boyne Road. The house at the junction of Belmont Hill and Lockmead Road also addresses the corner, here by means of an angled, double, two storey bow window surmounted by a 'bell turret'.



2. 6-24 Belmont Hill



View up Belmont Hill from the corner with Lockmead Road. Area 2 is on the right, Area 1 - left. Note the fine trees to the front of the villas in Area 2.

This area consists of a number of early-mid 19th century villas, formerly known in part as Cornwall Terrace, lined along the southern side of Belmont Hill as it curves down towards Lewisham town centre.

The buildings are either detached, semi-detached, or linked by later additions to form short terraces. There is a consistent building line set well back from the road and a consistent height of 2-2 ½ storeys. Nos. 6 and 8 (not listed) are very similar to the listed villas although they are more altered - for example, their facades have been rendered and painted. Nos. 20 and 22 are a 2 ½ storey semi-detached villa pair in a yellow-grey stock brick with stucco detailing and recessed entrance bays to either return wall.



24 Belmont Hill. A detached villa in the Gothic style.

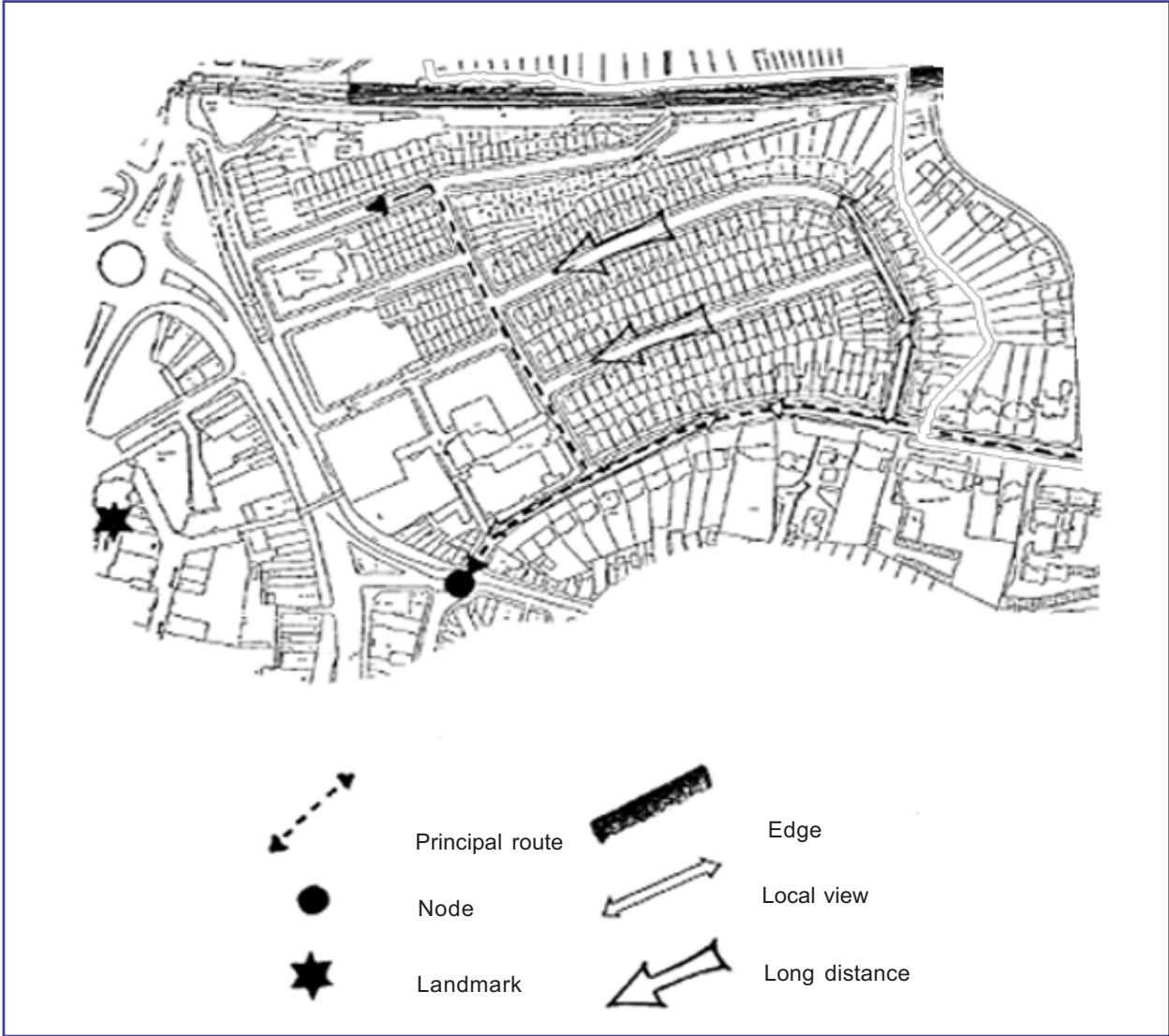
Nos. 10-18 Belmont Hill are grade II listed buildings dating from the early to mid 19th century. They are two storey villas with basements and linking walls between them. The basements are stuccoed whilst the rest of their elevations are in stock brick. The 'Georgian paned' sash windows are finished with flat gauged brick arches. Nos. 12 and 14 have protostyle porches with square columns and balustraded sides. No. 24 is by George Ledwell Taylor (1780-1873) who also designed the villa Belmont, which was situated to the north of the road, and gave it its name. All the villas have substantial rear gardens; a number also have deep front gardens with a several good trees and in some cases original boundary walls. Elsewhere (most noticeably at nos. 6 and 8) all or part of the original front garden area has been given over to forecourt parking.



The setting of the conservation area

The map below gives a townscape analysis of the Belmont conservation area.

The local topography is undulating. In general the ground rises between Lewisham and the church, but slopes away to either side of Belmont Hill, as the name might suggest. This topography contributes to a series of views into, out of and through the area which are illustrated below.



Materials and details



The materials and details used on the houses give them their special character as well as giving the whole conservation area its distinctive appearance.



The houses in the conservation area show great variety in design, with Old English, Arts and Crafts, Neo-Georgian, and Queen Anne influences all apparent. Original materials include brick (in various colours), render, roughcast, timber and plain clay tiles. Typical design features include tilehanging, mock timber framing, moulded bargeboards, bracketed gables, bracketed sills, pargetting, brick quoins, and string courses.

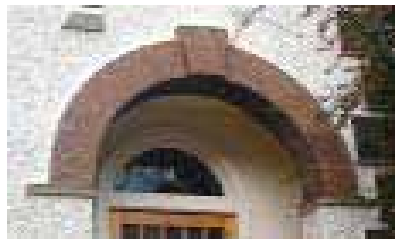
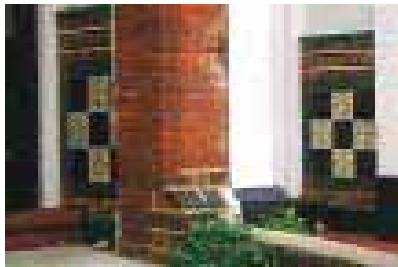


Windows are always distinctive features of a house and here a variety of designs can be seen. Original windows are made of painted timber, some with leaded lights, some with stained glass. Bay windows are common and may be square, canted, bow or polygonal. Oriel windows, bulls eye windows, and Venetian windows can also be seen.



Front doors are typically of panelled timber, and often have leaded lights, fanlights and sidelights. The doors may be within recessed porches with semicircular or Tudor arches or under flat door hoods.

Some entrance porches still have original tiling in Art Nouveau designs.



Negative factors and negative or neutral areas

This section will consider negative factors affecting the character and appearance of the conservation area as well as noting any negative or neutral sites or areas within its immediate setting.



Many houses in the area have lost their original plain clay roof tiles in favour of concrete replacements.

The consideration of negative factors and negative and neutral sites forms a vital part of a balanced appraisal; however it should be stressed that the impact of these factors and sites on the character and appearance of an area is variable in nature, in degree, and in ease of reversibility.

General negative factors:



Replacement uPVC door, sidelight and fanlight. Although this example has tried to match the original, it is a poor substitute.

- **Loss of original features**
The loss or inappropriate replacement of original features such as windows, doors, chimneys, roof materials, facade finishes and boundary treatments has a serious detrimental affect on the character and appearance of buildings and areas and may be irreversible.
- **Forecourt parking**
The loss of front boundary walls, fences or hedges and of part or all of the front garden in order to provide off street parking is a negative factor affecting several of the possible extensions.
- **Satellite Dishes**
The installation of satellite dishes in prominent locations such as front elevations or roofslopes has a negative impact on the character and appearance of areas affected. However it would be relatively easy to remove or re-site offending dishes.



Wheelie bins stored in plain view



An extreme example of the effect that unsympathetic repainting of a facade can have on the character of a house.



Loss of front gardens and boundary walls to make way for forecourt parking.



Poor quality modern street furniture and graffiti harm the setting of these listed buildings.

■ **Wheelie-bins**

Refuse wheelie bins have a detrimental affect on the character and appearance of an area wherever they are stored in plain view. This is a problem in most of the conservation area, but not one which is irreversible.

■ **Street furniture and hard landscaping.**

The quality of the street furniture and of the hard landscaping of public spaces within most of the conservation area is at best indifferent and at worst very poor. This has a corresponding effect on the character and appearance of the areas concerned.

Area 1: The Boyne Road Area

Many houses in Area 1 have suffered from incremental changes such as replacement uPVC windows, unsuitable replacement doors, unsuitable replacement roof coverings, and painting or pebbledashing of the facade. In combination, these incremental changes can have a serious effect on the character and appearance of individual or groups of buildings.

Installation of satellite dishes in prominent locations also has a negative impact on the character and appearance of several houses in the area. Wheelie bins are a more general problem due to the small size of the front gardens. The modern office block at 11-29 Belmont Hill, and the car parking areas behind it, have a negative effect on the character of the area's setting and on views from it towards Lewisham town centre.

Area 2: 6-24 Belmont Hill

The most notable negative factor affecting properties within this area is probably the loss of front boundaries and gardens to make way for forecourt parking. The unlisted buildings, especially to the base of the hill, have also suffered from incremental changes such as painting of the facade.

Given the sensitive nature of this area, with a high number of listed buildings, the indifferent quality of the modern street furniture is perhaps particularly unfortunate. A high incidence of graffiti on this street furniture and on boundary walls is also detrimental to the setting of the historic buildings. The modern office block at 11-29 Belmont Hill also has a negative impact on the setting of the area and on views into and out of it.

Useful contacts

Website: www.lewisham.gov.uk

Planning Service

Laurence House
Fifth floor
1 Catford Road
Catford
London, SE6 4SW

Planning information desk:

020 8314 7400

Conservation and Urban

Design team:

020 8314 9787 / 6071 / 8533

Planning Enforcement team:

020 8314 8092

Building Control

Laurence House
(as above)
Tel: 020 8314 8233

Envirocall

Report fly-tipping, graffiti,
potholes etc on the following
phone number or websites:

Tel: 020 8314 7171

www.lewishamvisibledifference.org.uk

www.lovelewisham.org

Highways

Wearside Service Centre
Wearside Road
Ladywell
London, SE13 7EZ
Tel: 020 8314 2181

Street trees

Wearside Service Centre
(as above)
Tel: 020 8314 7171

Housing Needs Grants

Capital House
47 Rushey Green
Catford
London, SE6 4AS
Tel: 020 8314 6622

Lewisham Local Studies and Archives Centre

Lewisham Library
199–201 Lewisham High Street
Lewisham, London, SE13 6LG
Tel: 020 8297 0682

The Building Conservation Directory

01747 871717

www.buildingconservation.com

English Heritage

020 7973 3000 or 0870 333 1181

www.english-heritage.org.uk

Register of Architects Accredited in Building Conservation

01625 523784

www.aabc-register.co.uk

Royal Institute of British Architects

020 7307 3700

(ask for specialist conservation architects)

www.architecture.com

Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors

020 7222 7000

(ask for specialist conservation surveyors)

www.rics.org

The Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings (SPAB)

020 7377 1644

www.spab.org.uk.

SPAB also operates an advice
line – please phone for details.

The Victorian Society

020 8994 1019

www.victorian-society.org.uk



For translation, please provide your details below:

Për përkthim, ju lutemi shkruajini më poshtë detajet tuaja:

Pour la traduction, veuillez fournir les détails ci-dessous:

若需翻译, 请您提供下列详情:

Wixii ku saabsan turjumaad, fadlan hoos ku qor faahfaahintaada:

மொழிபெயர்ப்பிற்காக தயவுசெய்து உங்களைப் பற்றிய விபரங்களைக் கீழே அளியுங்கள்:

Tercüme edilmesi için, lütfen aşağıda detaylarınızı belirtin:

Đề dịch thuật, xin hãy cung cấp các chi tiết của bạn phía dưới:

Name:

Emri:

Nom:

姓名:

Magaca:

பெயர்:

İsminiz:

Tên:

Address:

Adresa:

Adresse:

地址:

Cinwaanka:

முகவரி:

Adresiniz:

Địa chỉ:

Shqip/Albanian

Français/French

普通话/Mandarin

Soomaali/Somali

தமிழ்/Tamil

Türkçe/Turkish

Tiếng Việt/Vietnamese

Other language (please state)

Return to:

Kthejeni tek:

Retourner à:

返回到:

Kusoo dir:

திருப்பி அனுப்புவதற்கான முகவரி:

Şu adrese geri gönderiniz:

Göri trá về:

Planning Service

Laurence House

1 Catford Road

Catford

SE6 4RU

For other formats, including Braille, large print, audio tape or computer disc and for further information contact:

Planning Information Desk - 020 8314 7400
planning@lewisham.gov.uk

Visit www.lewisham.gov.uk for all the latest news and information about your Council's services, and the range of job opportunities we currently have on offer.