

Forest Hill Conservation Area Appraisal

July 2010



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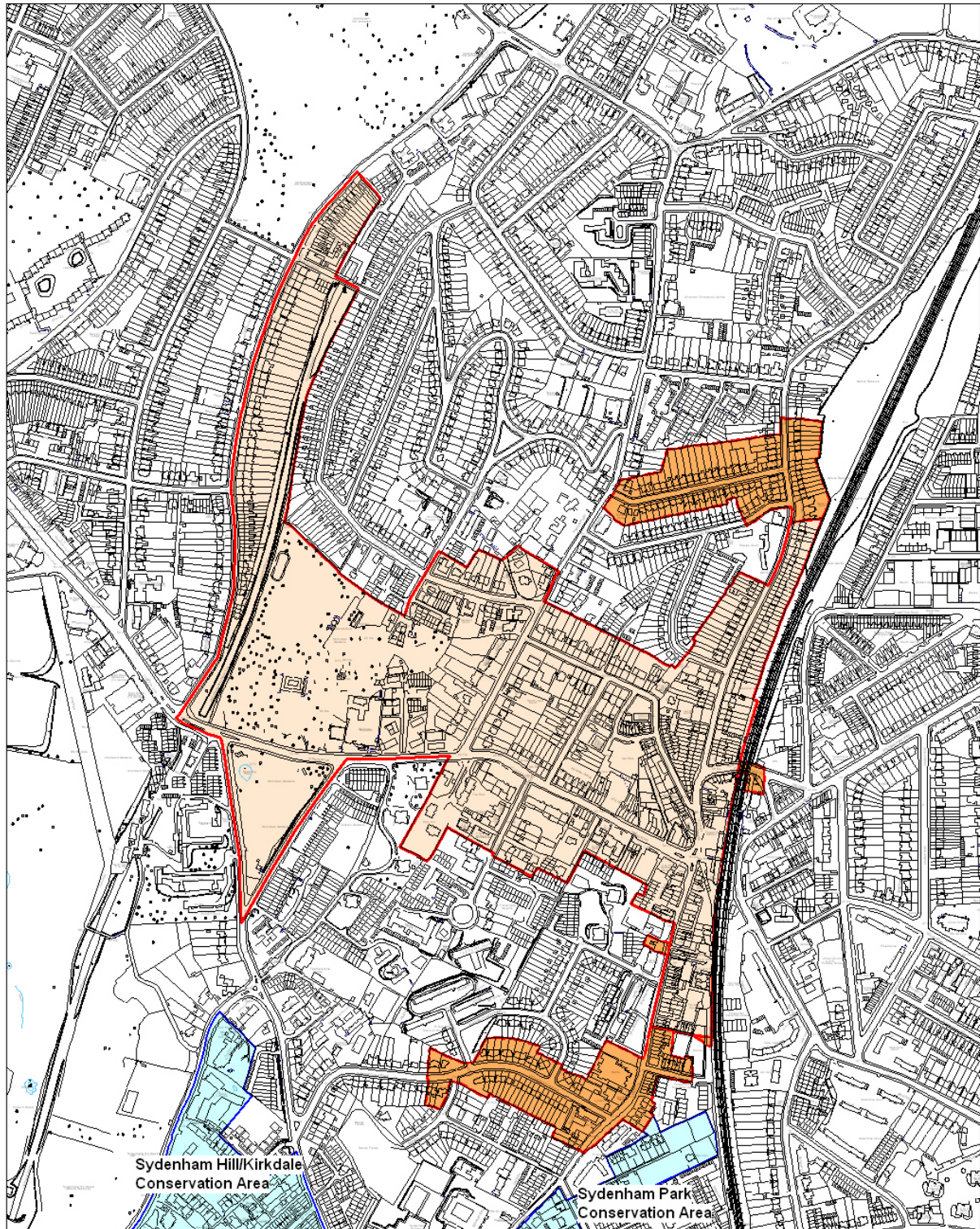
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Forest Hill Conservation Area



- Conservation Area
- Latest Conservation Area Extensions
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Designation: 1976
Latest Extension: 14/07/2010
Appraisal: 2010
Article 4 Direction : Yes, most residential streets
Area: 45.23ha



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Summary of special interest

The Forest Hill Conservation Area now forms part of the larger conurbation of London but until the mid-19th century was a rural backwater which was changed for ever when the railway line was built across part of Sydenham Common in 1839. The generous designation encompasses suburban residential streets, mainly built between 1840 and 1900, and the commercial centre that developed around the railway station to serve the quickly expanding suburb and increasing population. The conservation area also includes the gardens and open land associated with the world famous Horniman Museum. Of note are the undulating topography and the many mature trees, which together with the open green spaces give parts of the conservation area a pleasant, almost rural quality.

Forest Hill retains areas of high status housing which were built on the higher ground to take full advantage of the many views both towards, and away from, the centre of the capital. Further east, where the ground drops towards the station, are further, more modest dwellings, which together with some purpose built shops provide the commercial core of the settlement, most of which appears to have been built in the later part of the 19th century. The conservation area also encompasses areas of well preserved 19th and 20th century housing. Some of the streets provide a mixture of building ages and styles that reflect the various stages of development, all of them retaining good detailing and a common building line.

There are nine listed structures in the conservation area. The Horniman Museum is a Grade II* listed building constructed in 1902 by F J Horniman, the founder of the Horniman tea company, as a philanthropic institute. A number of structures associated with the museum are listed in their own right, such as the Coombe Cliffe Conservatory and the front boundaries. The former Capitol Cinema (completed 1929) is also listed (grade II) and like the museum is an important focal building in London Road. Outside are two grade II listed telephone kiosks. Two Grade II residential properties can be found in Honor Oak Road, one of them dating from the late 18th century and therefore the oldest building in the conservation area.

Another group of significant buildings, some of them listed and all dating to the later half of the 19th or the early 20th century, are currently located just outside the conservation area. They include an existing and a former school, the Forest Hill Public Baths, and a library, all forming a group of municipal buildings to the south of the commercial centre in Dartmouth Road.

The conservation area contains seven areas of different character which are provided by the variety in the buildings, their different uses, and the landscape quality. These are the commercial core and railway station, five different areas of residential housing (divided according to building type and age), and the Horniman Museum and its open green spaces.

Forest Hill has undergone a period of significant economic decline, resulting in the loss of much historic detail and the deterioration of several buildings to a point where they have had to be replaced with modern structures. Fortunately, the area is now seeing an upward trend in investment and economic activity, which may provide opportunities for the restoration of some of these buildings and the enhancement of other sites.

1 Introduction

The Forest Hill Conservation Area was designated in 1976 and extended in 1997 to include the commercial core of the area along London Road and Dartmouth Road. Following a review of the conservation area in 2008 and 2009, it was further extended on 14 July 2010.

Conservation areas are designated by the Council for their special architectural or historic character and appearance. As part of the latest review, this character appraisals was written to provide information on the special character of the area. The appraisal does not constitute a comprehensive study and any omissions do not therefore imply that an element does not contribute to the character of the area.

1.1 The conservation area today

The Forest Hill Conservation Area is located in the south western part of the Borough and is bounded to the west by the London Borough of Southwark. It contains about 400 buildings, most of them purely residential but with a significant percentage, (about one third), in mixed commercial and retail uses with residential accommodation above. The latter are concentrated at the eastern end of London Road around a complicated road pattern which fronts the station, an area which constitutes a well defined and lively town centre. Forest Hill has been identified as a district shopping centre, one of seven across the Borough.

Because Forest Hill is a typical Victorian railway suburb, the provision of public transport has contributed to how the area developed and how it now appears. The railway line to Sydenham from London Bridge Station forms a strong eastern boundary, and another railway line, the former South Eastern and Chatham railway, runs along the western fringe of the area between Wood Vale and the Horniman Gardens. This is now disused and has been relandscaped and made into a pleasant Nature Trail.

The other piece of transport infrastructure that shapes the conservation area is the South Circular Road. This important corridor brings both advantages and disadvantages. With its steady stream of buses and cars it makes Forest Hill an important gateway into the Borough, but traffic congestion remains an obvious problem. The gentle rise and fall of the London Road, with the Horniman Gardens and the Horniman Museum on the crest of the hill makes a good impression when entering the conservation area from the west. However this is not matched by the approach from the east due to the run down appearance of the properties along Waldram Crescent and the southern end of Devonshire Road around the railway bridge.

The predominant character of the conservation area is residential and well-treed, with a fine collection of mostly Victorian and Edwardian houses. The variety of architectural styles makes for a pleasant townscape, full of picturesque incident. The most striking characteristic is the topography itself, which rises steeply from London Road to over 100 metres on the north. A slightly less dramatic incline occurs to the south. The varied topography, coupled with mature planting, produces some fine local views as well as long distance views out over south east London and on towards the fringes of Kent to the east, and over central London to the north west.

The conservation area has recently seen two major developments, namely the building of an extended Sainsbury's Supermarket and the construction of Hamlet House, both of which are in London Road and both of which replaced earlier buildings which had been vacant for prolonged periods.

Although the area is experiencing some economic growth, several shops are currently vacant, which has a negative impact on the area's appearance and creates problems for the overall long-term viability of the Forest Hill shopping area as a whole. However, there are opportunities for enhancing these frontages which must not be ignored.

The Horniman Gardens to the north of London Road and the Horniman Triangle to the south provide areas of important open space, maintained as public parks and gardens. The recently modernised facilities of the museum are particularly well used by school children and other visitors, and the café and grounds are extremely popular as a meeting place by families with young children.



Two buildings that define Forest Hill's identity: The prominently positioned public house The Hob at Devonshire Road and the Grade II listed Horniman Museum at London Road*

1.2 Planning Policy

Forest Hill is one of 27 conservation areas in the Borough. Under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, the Council has a duty to formulate and publish proposals for conservation areas and to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character of such areas. *Planning Policy Statement 5 (PPS 5): Planning for the Historic Environment* asked local authorities to collect this information and make it publicly available. The Lewisham Unitary Development Plan (UDP) includes a comprehensive set of policies to ensure that where development takes place in a conservation area, it is sympathetic and to a high standard of design (URB 16). Character appraisals are a material consideration in the planning process and are used when determining planning applications and appeals.

The UDP also contains policies to preserve the character, historic interest and setting of listed buildings (URB 18 & 19) as well as Locally Listed Buildings (URB 20). Inclusion in the List of Local Interest Building is a material consideration in determining planning applications.

The crucial role of advertisements and shop fronts in affecting the appearance of the shopping centres and conservation areas within the Borough is recognised in a series of policies to control them and ensure sympathetic design (URB8 & 9) . A supplementary planning document on shopfront design has also been in place since 2006.

The Forest Hill Urban Design Framework & Development Strategy (SPD adopted in 2003) provides directions for the development and management of the town centre, and sets out the development principles for certain key sites within the area. Some of these sites have already been implemented in recent years, such as the re-development of the Sainsbury's Supermarket and Clyde Vale, while other schemes, such as Forest Hill Station and Louise House are still at planning stage. Demolition works of the Pools' building (not including the front building which is locally listed) have recently started and the application for their re-development is currently being assessed.

1.3 Public consultation and adoption

This document was made available for public consultation between 17 August 2009 and 25 September 2009 in accordance with the Planning (Local Development) Regulations 2004 and the Council's Statement of Community Involvement.

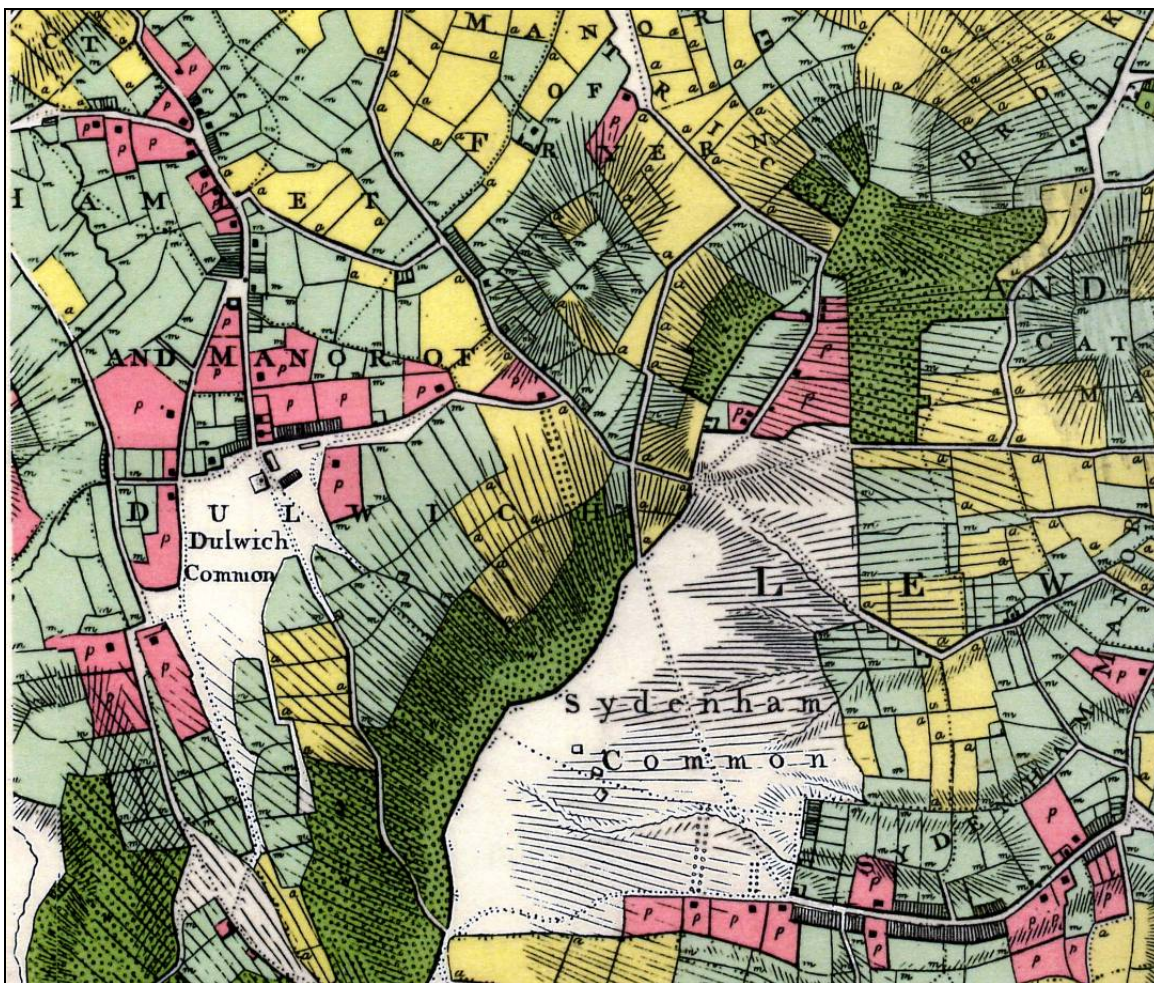
Residents, businesses and stakeholders were sent details of the proposed conservation area and character appraisal, including the proposed Article 4 Direction and recommendation for the future management. They were invited to attend a public workshop and exhibition to discuss the proposal with officers. The Council's formal response to the public consultation is available on the Lewisham Council's website.

This character appraisal was adopted by the Mayor and Cabinet on the 14 July 2010.

2 The history of the area

The settlement of Forest Hill is located on part of what was once Sydenham Common, which included open land and woodland. Thomas Milne's map of 1800 shows that the area actually contains two hills – Forest Hill to the north and Round Hill to the south, with what is now London Road running from north west to south east between them. At this point, it appears that there were very few buildings in what is now the conservation area, as only one has survived - Hill House (No. 64 Honor Oak Road), which was built in c1796.

The Croydon Canal was built through the area in the early 19th century and opened in 1809. It was intended that the canal would provide a route for Croydon's business community to access London markets, as well forming part of an inland waterway between London and Portsmouth that would help to protect British shipping from French and Dutch attacks during the Napoleonic Wars. Whilst the canal was popular as a pleasure route, it had little commercial success, partly because the twenty six locks in the Forest Hill area created a serious bottleneck.



Extract of Thomas Milne's land use map of 1800, showing the area of Forest Hill and environs

The year after the canal opened Sydenham Common was enclosed by Act of Parliament, which allowed the development of the area. A total of 219 acres of the Common were awarded to the Earl of Dartmouth (also Viscount Lewisham), whose agents divided the land into smaller plots for renting to market gardeners and for building. Subsequently, a new public house, built to service passing trade on the canal, was named the Dartmouth Arms. Ashberry Cottage (No. 62 Honor Oak Road) was built in about 1820.

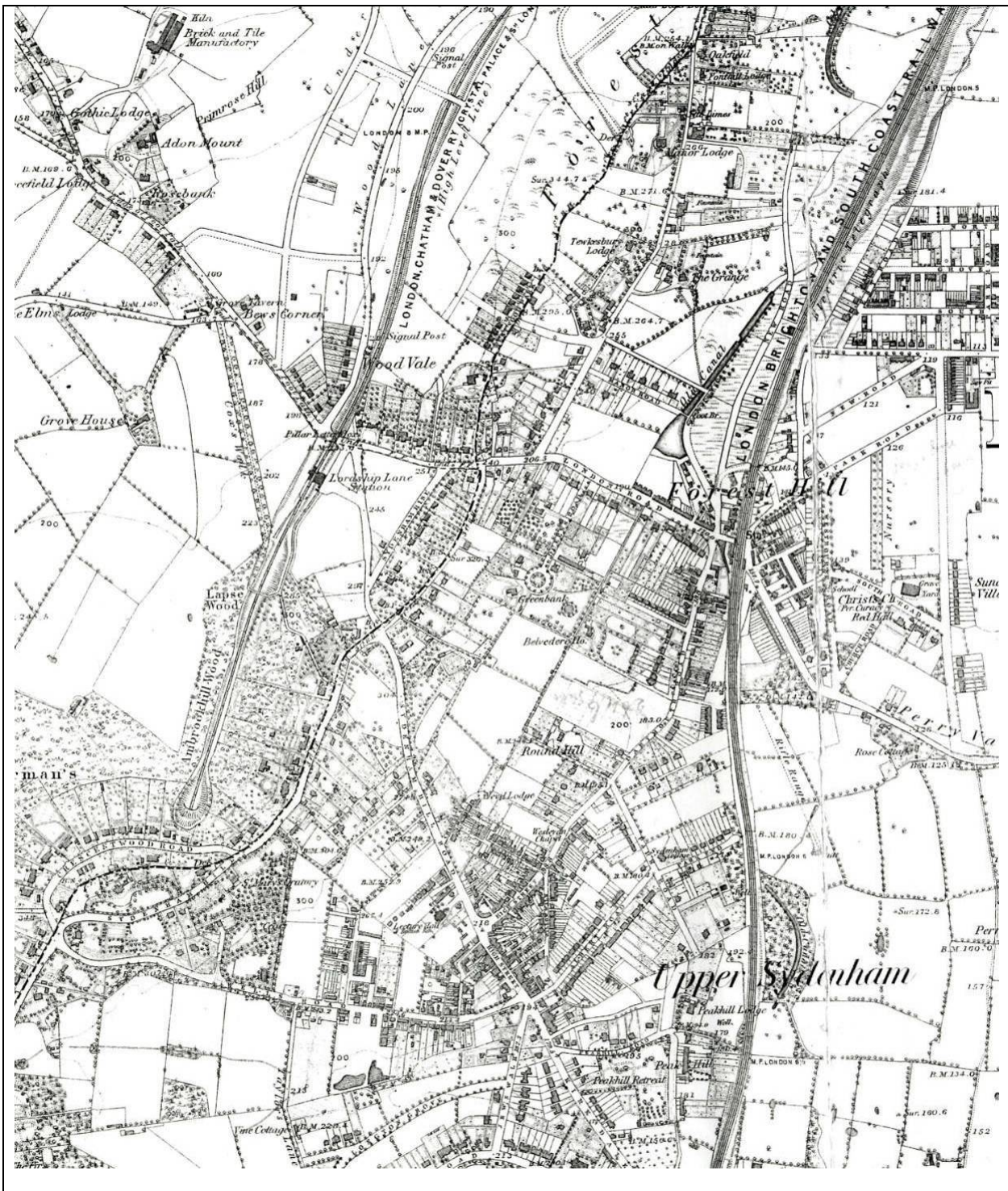
The canal was closed in 1836 and some of its route was covered by the line of the London and Croydon Railway, which opened in 1839. The Dartmouth Arms acted as the station until 1845. The line was built as an experimental 'atmospheric railway', which was powered by a pipe running between the rails from which air was sucked by a series of beam engines and into which a piston, attached to the underside of the train, was fitted. Unlikely though it sounds, the technology actually worked and the train is recorded as having achieved a speed of 70 miles per hour. Sadly the vacuum was maintained in the top of the pipe by leather flaps soaked in tallow, which were very attractive to rats and, therefore, required an uneconomic level of maintenance. The vacuum powered train was abandoned for a conventional steam locomotive in 1847.

The availability of a rapid train service into the centre of London and the tranquil rural setting, now available for development, stimulated the growth of a settlement of large villas for wealthy city workers. The hill itself provided attractive views across the rolling landscape of Kent and Surrey to the south east, whilst building materials near at hand included bricks from Perry Vale just to the south east. Most of the earliest houses were built well back from the road in long, narrow plots often with carriage drives shared between two semi-detached properties. In many cases only one side of a road was at first developed, ensuring that the attractive views were not screened by new buildings.

This form of layout is shown on the First Edition Map of 1870. This shows development along the north side of London Road, where the present Horniman Museum is now located, on the west side of Honor Oak Road; on the north side of Manor Mount; and on the south side of London Road from Sydenham Lane to Dartmouth Road. The north side of London Road from the junction with Devonshire Road to No. 58 London Road was also built.

Along the newly created Dartmouth Road going south, buildings are shown on both sides of the road, as far as Clyde Vale. Many of these to the west of the road have been demolished and were replaced with blocks of flats in the 1960s. These mostly comprised semi-detached houses and some more modestly sized terraced housing. Although smaller than those built on the hill, many of these properties stood back from the road with front gardens providing an area of separation, many of which have now been infilled with built-out shops. Only at the northern end of Dartmouth Road, where the commercial activities were centred close to the railway station, were the buildings set directly behind the pavement.

The 1896 map shows significant new development within what is now the conservation area, including the creation of Wadenshaw Road and new buildings along the frontages previously left open. Both Wood Vale and Devonshire Road had been developed as long residential streets of mixed terraced, detached and semi-detached housing, and a number of churches had been



Extract of the 1st Edition 6" to the mile Ordnance Survey map of 1870

constructed, including the Presbyterian Church (St. John's) on Devonshire Road, the Congregational Church on Queens Road (now Taymount Rise), and a large Anglican church, St. Paul's, on the east side of Waldenshaw Road. Some of the earlier villa housing on the south side of London Road had been converted and extended into apartment blocks, with the gaps in between them filled, and the Forest Hill Station had been enlarged by this time. A number of public buildings further south at Dartmouth Road were completed or under construction including the

Public Swimming Baths and the Girls Industrial School (a home for girls who were either orphaned or whose parents were living in workhouses, now Louise House). Benson Road and Ewelme Road had also been partially developed as streets of lower middle class housing. The focus of commercial buildings around the junction of Dartmouth Road and London Road also appears to have developed further between 1870 and 1896 to include Waldram Crescent, as well as the industrial warehousing on Havelock Walk. By this time, nearly all traces of the canal had disappeared.



Extract of the 2nd Edition Ordnance Survey map of 1894-96

Another significant building shown on this map is Horniman's Museum built on the north side of London Road. Horniman had made a fortune from the tea trade and became a collector of anthropological artefacts, which he privately exhibited to friends and to interested members of the

public. In 1890 he opened his home (Surrey Mount) to the public as a museum and commissioned a purpose built-museum soon afterwards. This was built between 1897 and 1901 to the designs of Harrison Townsend, using a barrel vaulted roof and Art Nouveau design. Initially it stood next to a row of houses, which continued the building line to the west. These were gradually removed over the next fifty years to create the museum's and park's current frontage on London Road.

By 1914 the pattern of development as it can be seen today was very much established. Changes in the area recorded by the 1920 edition of the Ordnance Survey map include the laying out of the Horniman Gardens with a long, looping walk, a bandstand and a conservatory.



An early 20th century aquatint showing the bandstand in the Horniman Gardens



An early 20th century view looking north along Dartmouth Road

Further development during the inter-war period took place mainly in the areas surrounding the present conservation area boundary, such as at Thorpewood Avenue and Ewelme Road. The infilling of the southern side of Westwood Park to the north of the Horniman Gardens is recorded on the Ordnance Survey map of 1955-1959. The current layout of the Horniman Gardens is also shown on this map.

Later 20th century development in the conservation area included the replacement of buildings on the west sides of Honor Oak Road and Devonshire Road with blocks of flats, and the development of a residential street at Cleeve Hill, just to the north of the Horniman Gardens. In the 1960s the west side of Dartmouth Road also underwent significant redevelopment for modern offices and commercial units. One of the most significant changes during the 20th century to the area was the loss of all of its churches: St. Paul's in Waldenshaw Road was destroyed in 1944 and was never rebuilt. St. John's Church in Devonshire Road was demolished in 1983, and replaced with an apartment block, although its former Lecture Hall survives inconspicuously behind the main building line, and only visible from David's Road. The Baptist Church at Dartmouth Road fell victim to 1960s development, and the Congregational Church in Taymount Rise (now St. Paul's Conversion) has been converted into flats.

More recently the commercial centre of the conservation area in London Road has seen further changes with the construction of the enlarged Sainsbury's Supermarket building and an adjoining block of flats of contemporary design. The relatively recent redevelopment of Havelock Walk as a live/work community, reusing and, in some cases, replacing the historic warehouses, is a good

example of conservation-led regeneration. The commercial centre also benefitted from the repair of a number of historic properties and environmental improvements carried out under a Conservation Area Partnership Scheme that finished in 2003.



Redevelopment of historic warehousing for Live/Work units at Havelock Walk

Amendments to Townscape Appraisal Map following public consultation:

Amendments to boundaries:

Not to be included in proposed extensions:

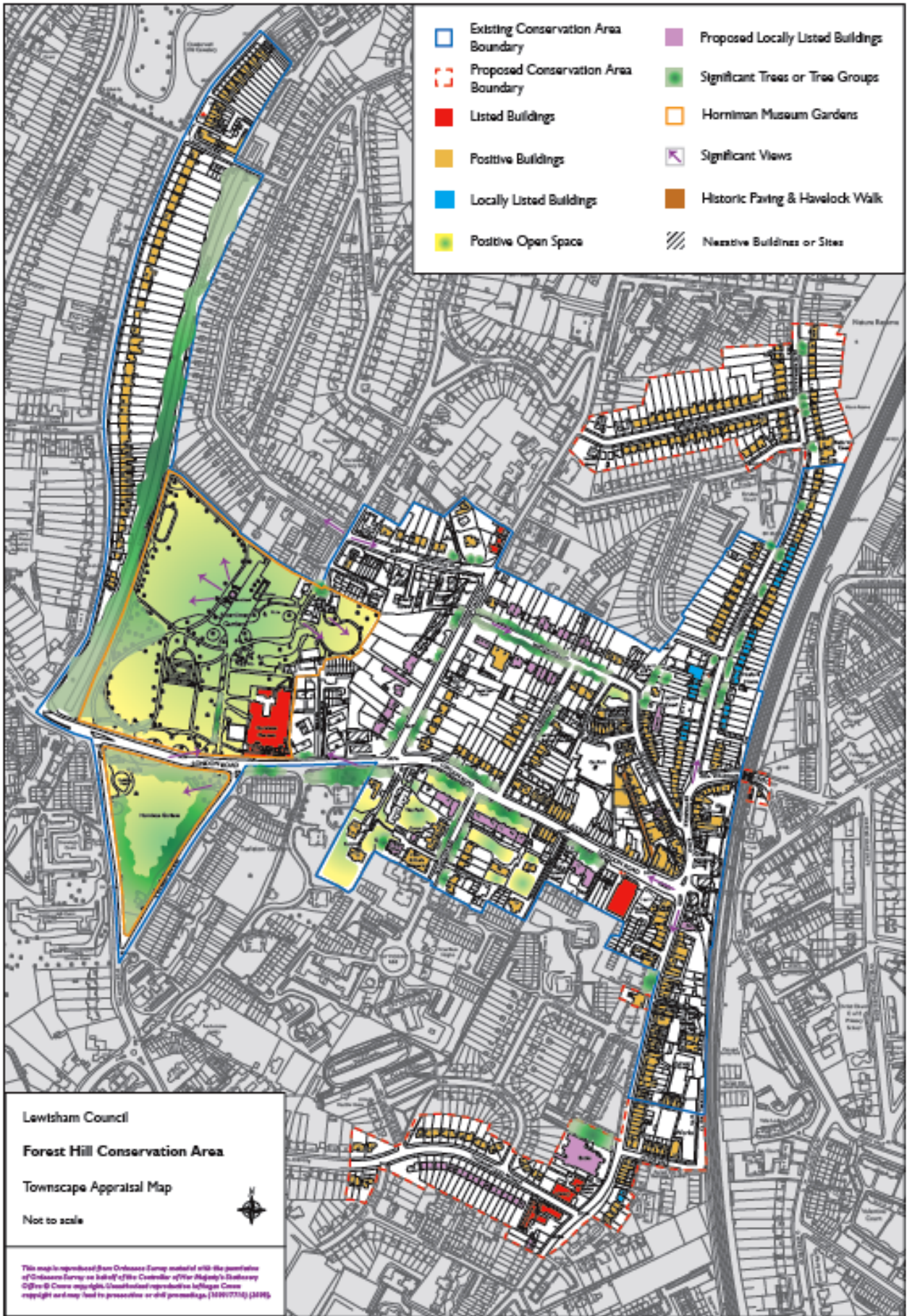
- Nos. 149, 149a, 154&156 Devonshire Road
- Corner plot Clyde Vale / Clyde Terrace (former Printworks)
- A small amendment to the boundaries at Dartmouth Place and Clyde Terrace to take account of the changes in road lay-out following the re-development of the former printing works

Buildings to be highlighted as 'positive' buildings:

- Nos. 3, 5, 7 and 11 Westwood Park
- Nos. 1 & 2 Hill Rise

The following buildings are not Local Interest Buildings but 'positive' buildings within the conservation area:

- Nos. 43-47 (odd), 53-59 (odd), 34-40 (even), 48-66 (even), 82-98 (even) Devonshire Road
- Nos. 74, 76 and 82 Honor Oak Road
- Nos. 1 & 3, 2 and 9-15 (odd) Manor Mount



Forest Hill Conservation Area Appraisal

3 Form and character of the area

3.1 Spatial character

The conservation area contains several areas which can be differentiated in terms of their built form, spatial development, architectural style and usage. The key roads which form the backbone of Forest Hill are London Road, the historic east west route which is recorded on the earliest maps of the area, and the newer route of Dartmouth Road, which runs southwards, parallel to the railway line. The commercial centre of Forest Hill lies around the junction of London Road and Dartmouth Road, next to the railway station. Here, the construction of first the Croydon Canal, and later the railway line, left the legacy of a complex intersection of roads and changes in level. Waldram Crescent was created when the railway line cut across the historic junction of London Road and Perry Vale, which was diverted to the north to run under the railway line. It creates an unusual curving entrance into the commercial centre, tightly enclosed by the terraces on both sides of the road. The sense of enclosure is then lost due to the large forecourt to the railway station and the large area of open street and pavement at the adjoining London Road/Dartmouth Road junction.



London Road and Dartmouth Road provide the two main transport corridors through the conservation area

To the north Devonshire Road leads to further residential areas while Waldram Crescent leads into Waldram Park Road which continues the route of the modern A205 South Circular Road towards Catford. David's Road and Havelock Walk are more hidden away areas off the commercial core centred on London Road, but both are intimately connected with it. The narrow side streets running off Dartmouth Road, including Bird in Hand Passage, Dartmouth Place and Clyde Vale, provide small, secluded areas of small scale residential development just behind the main road. However, in places these have been greatly affected by recent redevelopment which overshadows the original two storey 19th century houses.

The grid of streets running across the two hillsides to either side of London Road is occupied by areas of predominantly upper middle class housing of mid 19th century construction, with later 19th century infilling. These comprise Taymount Rise (previously known as Queen's Road) and Queens Court to the south of London Road, and Honor Oak Road, Westwood Park, Manor Mount and Waldenshaw Road to the north, as well as using both sides of London Road to the west of the commercial area. In contrast to the layout of the buildings in the commercial core, with their tight urban form, these areas are notable for their large houses and later apartment blocks set back from the road in more spacious grounds with a profusion of trees and foliage lining the road and within the gardens.



Upper middle class residential development at London Road, and Manor Mount

The dense development of the buildings at the eastern end of London Road, where it meets Devonshire Road and Dartmouth Road, is relieved by the deep front garden to Nos. 29 and 31 London Road (Kings and Princes Garth) and No. 33 (Upland Court) that feature mature planting, trees and lawn to the front. Further west, the park like character of the front gardens to Nos. 67-75 and 77-85 London Road (Dorrell Estate), with mature boundary trees, provides a green link between the commercial centre in the east and the Horniman Gardens in the west. Park Hill and the overgrown nature of the area around No. 101 London Road, the Park Hill Estate and Queen's Court introduce a semi-rural character in the area that seems like a reminder of an earlier age. Deep front gardens are notable on the opposite (north) side of London Road, but are more open with fewer trees.

This greenery is continued westwards by the large public open spaces that enclose London Road. To the north of the road, the Horniman Gardens close to the museum are laid out as a more formal park while the area to the south, known as Horniman Triangle, comprise an informal field with a children's play area. The rise of the hill on the north side and the tree line on the south shield these areas from the busy traffic on London Road, providing large areas of relative tranquillity.

The west side of Dartmouth Road (outside the conservation area) was partly redeveloped in the later 20th century with retail, office and residential buildings of much greater scale than the existing late 19th century buildings. These have had a significant impact on the character of the

conservation area, detracting from the Victorian and Edwardian buildings on the east side of the street, but also providing large paved areas of public space.

Although a relatively ancient route, Wood Vale on the western edge of the conservation area was not developed for housing until the later part of the 19th century. When this did occur the rapid development of uniform sized plots and standardised design features provided a strongly rhythmic frontage facing the road, enhanced by the gentle curve of the street. These properties are mostly set back from the road with generous front gardens, but lack the more established greenery and have fewer open spaces between the buildings seen to the east.

The development of Devonshire Road is of similar date to Wood Vale but the route it follows is entirely a creation of the late 19th century, created in-between the former route of the Croydon Canal and the new railway line. The road runs uphill from Waldram Crescent, with a gradual curve which limits views along it. The use of standard sized plots and blocks of matching houses on Devonshire Road and the side streets (Benson Road and Ewelme Road) provides a strong rhythm to the street frontage, although the variation between design details and the interjection of some larger scale later development intrudes into this uniformity. A number of large trees including oaks, maple and horse chestnut grow as boundary trees between plots or just behind the pavement, making a significant and very positive contribution to the established character of the townscape.



Greenspace at the Horniman Gardens



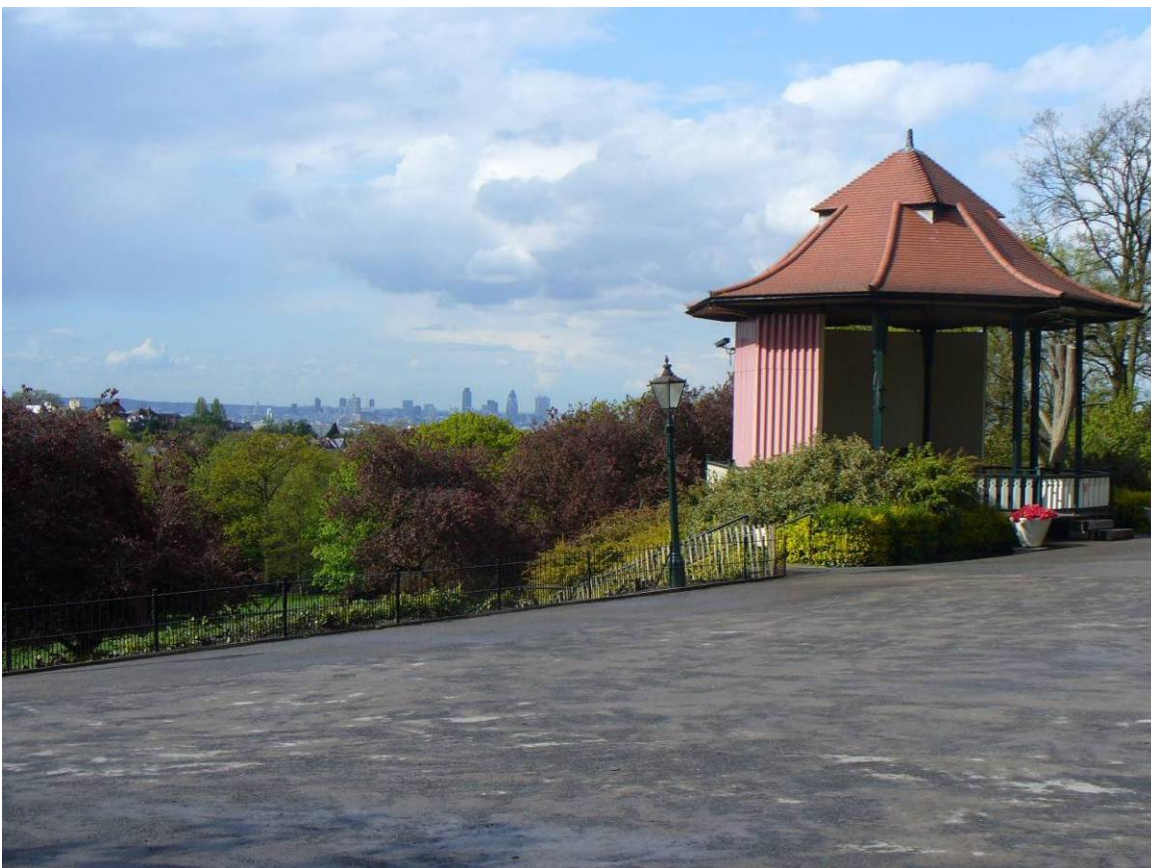
Dartmouth Road looking north past the Bird in Hand Public House



Late Victorian residential development on Devonshire Road (left) and Wood Vale (right).

3.2 Views

Although the ground within the conservation area rises steeply in places, the dense development and thick tree cover in many locations generally restricts views apart from local vistas which terminate in buildings or vegetation. However, the location of Horniman Gardens on the highest ridge of Forest Hill does provide outstanding views to the west and north-west over Dulwich and towards the city centre. Features which can be identified include Wembley Stadium, Battersea Power Station, the London Eye, St Paul's Cathedral and No. 30 St Mary Axe (The Gherkin). The finest views are from within the Bandstand itself, although sadly the side facing the city centre view has been covered with profiled metal sheeting for security reasons. Other excellent views, looking south east towards Kent, can also be obtained from the terrace which lies close to the entrance from Horniman Drive. The Horniman Museum is a landmark building which makes a significant contribution in views looking up hill and westwards along London Road with the museum clock tower rising up above. The mosaic on the front wall is also impressive in views from directly in front of the museum. The well-treed sweep of road running down the hill on London Road in the other direction also has value as a distinctive view within the conservation area and as an approach to Forest Hill's commercial core.



View from the Horniman Gardens across the central London skyline

Views along the gardens behind rows of houses, such as those seen from the north end of Waldenshaw Road, or along the backs of properties on Honor Oak Road from London Road, are also significant and enhanced by the mature trees and other planting.



View up Honor Oak Road from London Road



View east from Manor Mount over Lewisham to north Kent

3.3 Streetscape

The street lighting in the conservation area is all modern. Along London Road and elsewhere in the commercial core the lights are very tall, black painted steel lighting columns with simple lanterns. Similar, though shorter versions, are found in the secondary streets.

Footpaths and pavements are also covered in modern materials, mainly black tarmacadam or a variety of concrete slabs, paviors or setts. The survival in most of the streets of the original 19th century granite kerbs is a positive feature, those in the older streets such as London Road and Dartmouth Road being wider (300 mm) and those in the secondary streets being narrower (100 or 150 mm). Original granite setts and kerbs have also survived in Havelock Walk, where they contribute to the industrial character of this part of the conservation area. Unfortunately, in places they have been disturbed by the cutting through of trenches for modern-day services, and replaced in black tarmacadam, to the detriment of the overall streetscape. Some of the pavements, such as the ones in London Road close to the shops, are protected by modern black bollards or plain black painted steel railings, such as the ones outside Sainsbury's.

Black plastic litter bins, the occasional CCTV camera, and plain black 'heritage' style signposts complete the public realm in a relatively unobtrusive way. Much more obtrusive, and very visible in certain locations, are advertising hoardings, particularly along Dartmouth Road. These are located on the flank walls of some of the buildings, either where they turn down into side streets or alternatively where there is a gap in the built-up frontage. Street names are provided by Lewisham Council's standard signage using white letters on a blue and grey background, set on short dark grey supports. Occasionally the older signs remain, with white painted raised lettering on a cast

iron back with cut-off curved corners. A good example is fixed at first floor level on the end house in David's Road.



Above: Traditional cast iron street sign on David's Road

Right: Broad granite kerbs



The commercial centre of the conservation area is somewhat overwhelmed by street traffic signage associated with the main road, which is not perhaps surprising given that the South Circular Road is one of London's primary routes. A Lewisham Council information kiosk, to a standard circular design with a curved 'lead' roof, also features. Green and black wheelie bins and a plethora of 'A' boards add to the visual clutter. Where the properties beyond the immediate commercial core retain a front boundary and/or garden, these can provide opportunities to screen the bins, which are to be greatly encouraged.

Controlled pedestrian crossings at the busy junctions of London Road, Dartmouth Road and Devonshire Road, are much needed and allow pedestrians to move about the central area in safety. This junction was widened in the early 20th century to allow for the new tramlines, but to create a better environment, the pavements could be extended and the carriageway narrowed.

3.4 Trees

Large and very prominent mature trees on boundaries, in private gardens, and within Horniman Gardens make a particularly beneficial contribution to the special character and appearance of the conservation area. Key species which can be seen include London planes, horse chestnuts and pollarded limes, and there also a number of oaks and maples. These are particularly prominent in Devonshire Road, Manor Mount, Honor Oak Road and in the western end of London Road. These large trees provide an attractive setting for the 19th century or later villas and other buildings, and

some of the trees may possibly date back to the mid-19th century when the area was first developed. Cumulatively they give the conservation area a pleasant, sylvan character which is one of its most noticeable features. In the Horniman Gardens, soft planting to create traditional herbaceous borders, as well as more exotic plants, add to the many trees and shrubs to create a very attractive public facility. On the south side of London Road, the Horniman Triangle is almost totally surrounded by large mature trees and despite the proximity of the South Circular Road, the area retains a rural quality which is unusual in this part of London.



The many mature trees in the conservation area make an important contribution to its character and appearance

3.5 Boundaries

Originally, most of the front boundaries appear to have been built of the same yellow London stock brick which was used for the majority of the buildings. There was probably some use of cast iron railings, but these appear not to have survived the Second World War, although some reproduction railings can be seen in David's Road. Incrementally, the brick walls have been lowered or removed altogether, often to allow vehicular access into the front garden. This has reduced the sense of 'containment' to the street and further such losses should be discouraged. Where they remain, the remaining brick walls are sometimes reinforced by the use of clipped hedges, shrubbery or trees, which add to the sylvan character of the conservation area. The remaining brick walls are of varying heights but most commonly are in places one and a half metres high, with a string course and a brick, rather than stone, coping.

The Horniman Museum retains its original stone gate piers facing London Road. The various black painted steel railings along the street frontage appear to be relatively modern, though they are fortunately neutral in their impact.



Boundaries tended to match the style and materials of the houses they belonged to. Rare survivals in the area are No. 16 Westwood Park (left) and No. 8 Manor Mount (right)



Railings to the front of the Horniman Museum (left) and cast iron railings in David's Road (right)

3.6 Car Parking

There is pressure for on-street parking due to the proximity of Forest Hill Station and the various shops in the commercial centre, as well as conversion of many of the larger properties into flats. There is no parking at all on the South Circular Road (red route), but in other areas closer to the centre, parking is controlled and must be paid for. Free on-street parking can be found further away from the main centre. The museum also generates demand, as it does not have a car park of its own for visitors. The loss of front gardens to car parking, which has already been mentioned, is an ongoing problem within the conservation area.

3.7 The natural environment

The conservation area is an intensely man-made environment which does nevertheless provide opportunities for wildlife to flourish in private gardens and the public green spaces associated with the Horniman Museum. These gardens, with their water features, plants and trees, also support

varied ecosystems. The former railway line to the west of Horniman Gardens has also been developed as the Horniman Railway Nature Trail, a long, narrow nature trail with a pathway for visitors.



The CUE Building at the Horniman Museum was designed to make a positive contribution to both the natural and built environment

Overall, the conservation area is particularly fortunate in the number of large mature deciduous trees such as horse chestnuts and oaks which are known to support a wide variety of insect and bird species.