

# Materials and details

The predominant materials in the conservation area are yellow London stock bricks, Welsh slate and stucco. Brickfields existed extensively in the area including on the undeveloped land later to become Hilly Fields. The later houses around Hilly Fields and to the south of the area were constructed in red brick and clay tiles.

## Windows

Windows are key features in all the houses in the conservation area. The location of the windows, their proportions, the number of glazing bars, the use of coloured glass, or the presence of old glass and the decorative treatment around the windows, all give each house its special character. The diversity of window types across the conservation area makes a strong contribution to the area and therefore they should not be altered.



## Boundary treatment

Relatively few original boundary walls and railings remain, but those that can be seen are often sturdily built with materials and details to echo those of the properties they enclose. Some large decorative caps exist, often with the name of the house carved in the stone. Where sympathetic boundary treatments have been reinstated the setting of the house and consequently the appearance of the conservation area is greatly improved.





## Doors

Many doors in the conservation area are richly detailed. They are heavier and have deeper mouldings than doors generally available today. Many have leaded lights and coloured glass or even their original etched glass. Further attention is drawn to entrance doors by their elaborately detailed surrounds and porches. Doors add to the richness of the conservation area.



## Brickwork

Stock bricks were made on site and their soft yellow colours are a major characteristic of the area. Where houses have been cleaned the effect is stunning.



## Paths

Sadly many early paths have long since disappeared, but the colourful encaustic tiles and patterns from the 1890s are of great historic value to the area. Original York stone paths are extremely rare.



## Architectural detail

Brockley is rich in architectural detail, which was included in house designs to increase their quality and reflect the status of their owners. Even the seemingly plain terraces have some ornamentation such as bracketed eaves, imitation stone quoins and stucco cornices over doorways and windows. Such detail adds luxury and quality to the area.



## Roofs and chimneys

Houses in the conservation area are finished with slate or clay tile roofs topped with substantial chimney stacks and terracotta pots. Dormers only appear on rear roof slopes as seen above and roof lights are not a historic feature of front roof slopes.



## Areas of neutral character

Most buildings in the conservation area either make a positive contribution to the character of the area (see Form and character of the conservation area) or are damaging to its character (see Elements damaging or threatening the character of the area). However in a few cases, relatively recent development has had a neutral impact on the area.

Nos 74–83 Rokeby Road and Brockley Gardens have a neutral effect as their scale, materials and design make no attempt to compete with the historic architecture, but neither are they buildings of sufficiently high-quality design to make a positive contribution.

Jasmine House on Wickham Road is a similar case which displays restrained 1950s style in its simplicity with simple balconies and elegant Crittal windows for decoration. Although of six storeys, the building is less visually intrusive as it sits lower on the slope and it follows the building line of the Victorian houses with an expanse of lawn and trees softening its impact to the front.



74-83 Rokeby Road. Low key housing which does not damage the character of the conservation area



Jasmine House follows the building line of Wickham Road and its impact is softened by trees



# 3 **Elements** damaging or threatening to the character of the conservation area

Infill development and new build  
Mews development  
Commercial development  
Streetscape  
House extensions  
Permitted development

# 3 Elements damaging or threatening to the character of the conservation area



St Peter's Court



Colin Blanchard House

Although Brockley conservation area retains a strong historic layout and character, there are negative elements which harm and detract from that special character. Such elements provide opportunities for improvement over time while others serve as examples of detrimental development which will no longer be permitted in the conservation area.

## Infill development and new build

Post-War infill development: Large blocks of flats such as Colin Blanchard House and St Peter's Court in Wickham Road detract from the historic character of the conservation area as their design bears no relation to the surrounding architecture. However, the softening effect of street trees and the conformity

of their building lines and front gardens does mitigate their impact to a certain extent. Two buildings on Coulgate Street also have no historical or design relationship to the area.

Development in rear gardens: A survey of 'corner sites' undertaken in October 2003 showed that 33% of rear gardens surveyed had garages or hard standings and only 17% had substantial modern development. Although the larger developments may well replace other structures, such as garages, the modern buildings have generally had an adverse impact on the character of the conservation area due to their size and poor quality of design.

The buildings also interrupt the historic street layout with its house plots and long garden walls. In addition, such development leads to the loss of green space, vegetation and views across gardens from the street.

## Mews development

Piecemeal development has taken place mainly at junctions where the mews meet the street. Due to the constraints of these corner junctions, it is not possible for development to conform to the character, style and street pattern of the conservation area and this has resulted in poor quality buildings which detract from the character of the conservation area. The mews have been under increasing pressure for development for years.



1-3 Wickham Mews



Bell Court, Wickham Mews

## Commercial development

**Unsympathetic shopfronts:** Shopfronts in Upper Brockley Road, Brockley Road, Brockley Cross and Lewisham Way have had their historic shop fronts removed over the years and replaced by unsympathetic shop fronts, security shutters and oversized fascias in unsuitable materials such as aluminium and upvc. In addition, this has been done in a piecemeal fashion and without regard to the overall cohesion of the streetscape, giving rise to an unattractive and muddled appearance.

**Unsuitable land uses:** A number of commercial garages exist, such as those in Upper Brockley Road and Brockley Road, in addition to the residential garages in the mews, which detract from the area's character by their untidy, poor quality buildings as well as their noise and dirt creation. Lewisham College's car park on Lewisham Way also does not contribute to the area's charm.

**Advertisement hoardings:** Such advertisements around Brockley Cross are large and unsightly.



Non-traditional shopfronts



Obtrusive advertising



Poor quality garage building



Brightly coloured plastic bollards and modern signage

## Streetscape

**Road signs and street furniture** are intrusive because of their materials, colour, design and collective impact. Road signs are made of reflective materials and their impact is often worsened when they are grouped together giving a cluttered appearance.

**Modern bus stops** with their shelters, red plastic seating and in particular, areas of the road painted red are a startling intrusion on the historic character.

**Wheelie bins** are unsightly when left untidily in front gardens and on the street and are unnecessarily numerous due to every flat having its own bin.



Fly tipping

The Council's corporate style has been imposed on the area without regard to what might have existed historically. Earlier street names can still be seen painted onto house walls, but, today's street signs are in 'Lewisham' blue often supported by black recycled plastic posts. The design is poor and the appearance does not fit in with the character of the area. Blue plastic litter bins also look out of character.

**Fly-tipping and graffiti** occurs extensively in some mews and is aggravated by the narrowness and car-parking which impedes access to refuse-collecting vehicles. Graffiti can be seen on most timber gates leading into gardens.



New and old street signs



Wheelie bins and a blue plastic litter bin



Bus stop with painted section of road



A rear extension which is very large and changes the shape of the house



Two examples of side extensions which both close the gap between houses and alter the balance of the streetscape

## House extensions

**Rear extensions** are often clearly visible from the street due to the street layout. This means that poorly designed extensions often interrupt the clean lines of the buildings and spoil their regular appearance. Corner houses are particularly sensitive locations due to their prominent visibility and therefore require particularly well-designed additions.

**Roof extensions** can easily be seen due to their height and the layout of the streets. Full width roof extensions and bulky dormers severely detract from the character of the area.



**Side extensions:** Where buildings have been joined or the gap between buildings has been closed by side extensions, the character of that part of the conservation area is damaged. Such extensions block views, may result in the loss of trees and unbalance the historic street layout.



This aluminium window is unsuitable both in its materials and its design



A badly repointed house where the eye is drawn to the dark ribbon pointing rather than the mellow stock brick

## Permitted development

As this appraisal demonstrates, much of the special character of the area lies in the historic detail of its buildings (see section on Materials and details). Many seemingly minor alterations can damage this character and these include the installation of aluminium or upvc windows and doors, rendering, pebbledashing or painting brickwork, demolishing garden walls and removal of front-garden planting and garden paths.

As part of this appraisal a survey of inappropriate alterations to properties in the conservation area has been undertaken. Many of these alterations are currently carried out under permitted development rights for single-family dwelling houses. These rights do not exist in flats or houses converted to flats.

The survey results reflect these development rights. In streets such as Tyrwhitt Road, Wickham Road and Tressillian Crescent where there are higher numbers of flats, there have been relatively few unsympathetic alterations. However, in Vulcan Road and Eastern Road, which contain only single-family dwelling houses,

alterations have been undertaken to such an extent that most of the character of the houses has now been lost.

Fortunately, these are the only two roads where such extensive alteration has occurred and in the rest of the conservation area a great deal of good detail and original material still remains that is worthy of continued preservation.

## Alterations which are inappropriate

**Upvc and aluminium windows** cannot reproduce the detail and dimensions of painted timber. Mock glazing bars in particular cannot be reproduced satisfactorily and are often unattractively sandwiched between panes. Double glazing reflects the light in a different way to old glass which has reams or appears wobbly, which adds to the charm of the area. Of all the sash windows in the conservation area, 13% have been unsuitably replaced. In Cranfield Road 35% of windows have been replaced, in Vulcan Terrace 37% have been changed and in Eastern Road 70% of original windows have been removed which has drastically devalued the historic appearance of this street.

**Modern doors** are either too fussy or completely lacking in detail. Inappropriate materials have a different appearance and weather differently. Many door frames incorporate a fanlight to light the hall and it is unnecessary and unattractive to install doors with modern 'fanlights' designed in them. In the conservation area 20% of all front doors have been unsuitably replaced.

**Rendering and pebbledashing** obscures all detail and destroys symmetry and rhythm in the streetscape. It also covers the attractive appearance of old weathered brick. Of all front elevations in the conservation area, 7% have been either rendered, pebbledashed or painted with this rising to 60% in Eastern Road.

**Shortened chimneys** alter the balance of the building and the regularity in the streetscape. Often details such as decorative brick courses are also lost. Modern chimney pots and flues look out of place and give a cluttered appearance when several unsympathetic types are used together.



The lack of chimney pots make this house look incomplete

**Ridged concrete tiles** have a completely different appearance to the original slate. Modern artificial slate weathers and loses its colour over time and is less durable than real slate. In the conservation area 20% of roofs have been recovered with materials other than slate or artificial slate.



Intrusive rooflights of a modern design fitted proud of the roofslope

**Rooflights** add visual clutter to plain roofslopes which were not historically pierced with openings. They introduce unsympathetic modern materials such as coated aluminium and double glazing into traditional settings. The design of rooflights is often unsympathetic as they stand proud of the roofslope and have wide, bulky frames. When open their appearance is even more intrusive. Of houses in the conservation area, 9% have one or more rooflights on their front roofslopes. Hilly Fields Crescent and Crescent Way have the highest percentages (32% and 33%) and in Geoffrey Road, Cranfield Road and Montague Avenue, between 19–23% of houses have rooflights.



A UPVC door

**Enclosing recessed doorways and erecting porches** alters the design of houses. This often obscures detail such as glazed tiling or an elaborate front door and when modern materials are used the effect on the appearance is compounded. Of houses in the conservation area, 3% have some sort of porch or extension to their front elevations.

**Hard-standings** are fortunately not profuse in the conservation area, but where they occur they often cause the loss of trees, shrubs and other vegetation as well as the removal of the traditional wall and garden path and generally cause an unattractive 'concrete jungle' effect. In the conservation area 15% of houses have hard-standings in their front gardens. Only 11% of houses across the whole conservation area still have their original stone flag paths or later tiled paths. However, in Tressillian Crescent 40% of houses have retained their early paths.

**Satellite dishes:** A proliferation of these causes visual clutter. Across the conservation area 14% of houses have one or more satellite dishes on their front elevations and roofs. In Cranfield Road and Glensdale Road 28% and 27% of houses have satellite dishes on visible elevations.

**Painting:** Painting whole elevations also changes the appearance of a building and is particularly visually disruptive when one house in a terrace is painted. Stucco and terracotta detailing was not always meant to be painted and can decay under impermeable paint layers.

**Boundary walls:** Many of these have been removed, but those that remain are of great character in themselves and worthy of retention. Replacement walls can appear small and insubstantial and often not befitting the grandeur of the buildings behind them. Of front walls in the conservation area 55% have been rebuilt to modern designs. In seven streets in the conservation area more than 75% of original walls have been removed.

**Loss of garden trees:** Many trees in front gardens have been lost over time, yet they serve to soften and complement the hard outline of buildings and enhance the character and charm of the area. Only 25% of all front gardens in the conservation area still have trees. Fortunately most roads still have some garden trees and in Wickham Road 61% of front gardens have trees.



Hardstanding and UPVC windows



Poorly sited satellite dishes



A sadly altered and painted gable

# Conservation area enhancement

This character appraisal mainly aims to describe the positive aspects of the conservation area, although the last section demonstrates that there are many improvements that could be made to enhance its appearance.

The council has made an Article 4(2) Direction to control small-scale, but cumulatively intrusive developments such as the installation of upvc windows and doors or the changing of roofing materials. Details of planning controls and appropriate alterations are given in the Brockley supplementary planning document available from the planning information desk.

The council will welcome enhancements to the conservation area and suggests the following improvements, which will not only improve the character of the conservation area, but enhance the value of individuals' properties:

- reinstatement of sash windows where lost
- reinstatement of original style doors, such as the Victorian four-panelled door, where lost, or the removal of porch doors
- removal of render or pebbledash where not part of the original design
- reinstatement of terracotta chimney pots where missing
- reinstatement of slate or good quality artificial slate to roofs
- repair or reinstatement of architectural detail where lost
- front garden improvements such as the reinstatement of a stock-brick walls with stone copings; planting of shrubs, lawn and hedging to hide wheelie bins, and the repair or reinstatement of York stone or coloured tile paths
- resiting of satellite dishes to inconspicuous locations such as the rear garden
- reinstatement of traditional shopfronts and removal of internally illuminated signs.

The council aims to improve the public realm where this is in our control. The Transport Division is revising and reissuing a Streetscape Design Guide which will be a guide to appropriate alterations in conservation areas, including the use of appropriate materials, minimisation of clutter and black-painted street furniture.

The Environment Division deals with issues such as fly-tipping, graffiti and street cleansing and has set up a number of ways for these to be reported. Report problems using our Visible Difference website ([www.lewisham-visibledifference.org.uk](http://www.lewisham-visibledifference.org.uk)), by texting a photo (details on [www.lovelewisham.org](http://www.lovelewisham.org)) or by calling Envirocall (**020 8314 7171**).

# Useful contacts

## London Borough of Lewisham

**Website:** [www.lewisham.gov.uk](http://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 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.lewisham-  
visibledifference.org.uk](http://www.lewisham-<br/>visibledifference.org.uk)  
[www.lovelewisham.org](http://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 2024

### **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

## Conservation contacts

**The Building  
Conservation Directory**  
01747 871717  
[www.buildingconservation.com](http://www.buildingconservation.com)

**English Heritage**  
020 7973 3000 or 0870 333 1181  
[www.english-heritage.org.uk](http://www.english-heritage.org.uk)

**Register of Architects  
Accredited in Building  
Conservation**  
01625 523784  
[www.aabc-register.co.uk](http://www.aabc-register.co.uk)

**Royal Institute of  
British Architects**  
020 7307 3700  
(ask for specialist  
conservation architects)  
[www.architecture.com](http://www.architecture.com)

**Royal Institute of  
Chartered Surveyors**  
020 7222 7000  
(ask for specialist  
conservation surveyors)  
[www.rics.org](http://www.rics.org)

**The Society for the  
Protection of Ancient  
Buildings (SPAB)**  
020 7377 1644  
[www.spab.org.uk](http://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](http://www.victorian-society.org.uk)



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