

# Brockley conservation area

character appraisal



# Brockley conservation area

Brockley conservation area was built by a number of speculative developers between the 1830s and early 1900s, with the majority being built in the 1870s and 1880s. The houses were built in a variety of architectural styles which were popular in the mid to late Victorian period and display good quality Italianate stucco and Gothic terracotta detailing. Many houses are set in wide, tree-lined roads with large front and rear gardens and some with mews to the rear, adding to the area's spacious and leafy appearance.

The character of the conservation area derives from all the elements outlined in this appraisal with their interrelationships being just as important as their individual existence. The conservation area was designated by the council in 1973 in recognition of its special architectural and historic interest. It was extended in 1991, 1993 and 2005.

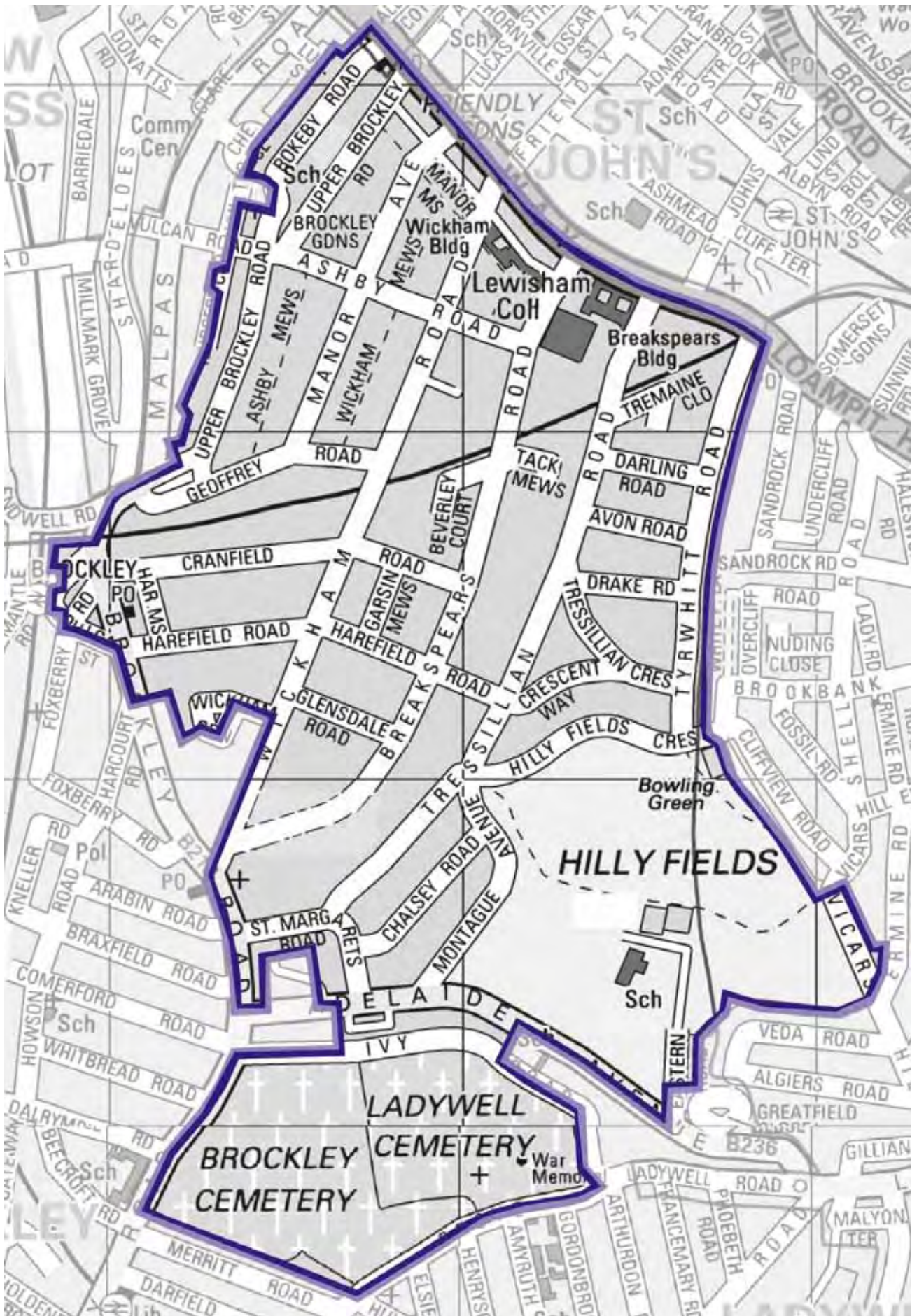


This character appraisal provides an assessment and definition of Brockley's special historic and architectural interest as recommended by both Planning Policy Guidance Note 15: Planning and the Historic Environment and English Heritage best practice advice. Appraisals are not comprehensive studies and the omission of a particular building, feature or space should not be taken to imply that it does not contribute to the character of the area. This appraisal will be a material consideration when determining planning applications and planning appeals relating to Brockley conservation area. Information on planning controls and appropriate alterations are given in the Brockley supplementary planning document available from the planning information desk.

This document was made available for public consultation between May and late September 2005 in accordance with the Planning (local development) Regulations 2004. Residents and businesses in the area were sent details and invited to a public meeting to discuss the character appraisal as well as the proposed Article 4(2) direction and supplementary planning document. The council's proposals were largely supported, but concerns were raised over the pressure for development in the mews and the removal of Eastern Road from the conservation area. In response, the council has kept Eastern Road in the conservation area, as it forms part of the setting of Hilly Fields and has included a presumption against residential development in the mews in the supplementary planning document. The appraisal and supplementary planning document were the subjects of a sustainability appraisal. The sustainability appraisal and consultation statement are available from the Conservation and Urban Design team. This character appraisal was adopted by the Mayor and Cabinet on 14 December 2005.

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# 1 History of the area

Location and population

The origins and development of the area

Archeological potential



# 1 History of the area

## Location and population

The area traditionally known as Brockley corresponds roughly to the modern SE4 postal district and is located in the north-west of the London Borough of Lewisham.

As originally designated in 1973 the area comprised properties between Lewisham Way in the north and Adelaide Avenue/Hilly Fields Crescent in the south, and between Brockley Road/Rokeby Road in the west and Tyrwhitt Road in the east. In 1991 the boundary was extended to include Kingswood Cottage in Vulcan Road and again in 1993 to include the old cottages in Coulgate Street, parts of Brockley Road, Hilly Fields and Eastern Road.

The conservation area borders the St John's conservation area to the north, while the Telegraph Hill conservation area lies slightly to the north west, both of which are also residential in character. Brockley conservation area lies mainly in the Brockley ward, but the southern part is in Ladywell ward.

The 2001 Census statistics show the conservation area to be similar in social make-up to the borough as a whole. The population of the conservation area is approximately 6,800 people living in 3,129 households with an average household size of 2.2 people. Owner-occupied households comprise 45% of the area; the remainder are rented. Approximately 30% of residents are from ethnic minorities. Just under 55% of households own one or more cars. All these figures are similar to the borough as whole.

Differences occur in the employment numbers, with 5% more people in full-time employment (65%) in Brockley compared with the rest of the borough. There are half as many pensioners in the area (7.6%) compared to the borough as a whole (15.7%). Dwellings occupied by one person amount to 32%, which is higher than the borough as a whole (23%) and finally there are 4% fewer families with children in the area and 4.7% more couples with no children.



'A view of Brockley in Kent 1772': Farm land covered the area before the 19th century



Brockley's location in Greater London



John Roque's map of 1744



Tithe map of 1836 to 1891



St Peter's church

## Origins and development of the area

The name Brockley has Anglo-Saxon origins meaning place in a clearing, implying an early wooded landscape. The word also has the same roots as 'brook' and 'lea', meaning rivers and streams. The area occupies high ground above the flood plain of the Thames.

A watercourse flowed through this area to the Ravensbourne at Deptford. The route of this can be traced in the garden boundaries between the houses in Malpas Road and Upper Brockley Road/Nursery Gardens and at the rear of houses in Rokeby Road.

In the 12th century the Premonstratensian Order established a priory in Brockley (situated just north-east of St Peter's Church). However, less than one hundred years later the monastery was dissolved. After the order's departure the area remained largely agricultural.

In the early 1800s the Croydon Canal was constructed from the Grand Surrey Canal at Deptford, which ran through New Cross, Brockley and Forest Hill to Croydon. Although the

construction of the canal was a major civil engineering operation, its working life was short-lived. In the 1840s the London to Brighton Railway Company acquired the site and the canal was converted to a railway. The oldest buildings in the area are the cottages at Nos 1–3 Coulgate Street (1833) and their location suggests a connection with the canal.

In the late 17th and early 18th centuries Deptford had begun to expand outside its confines as a Royal Dockyard town. By the early 19th century an extensive area south of Deptford Broadway was being referred to as the 'New Town', and this included some ribbon development on the north side of Lewisham Way, just outside the boundary of the Brockley conservation area.

However, the main impetus to development in this area appears to have been the construction of the North Kent Railway in 1849 with its station at St John's, which provided access to undeveloped farmland on the south side of Lewisham Way. The Deptford tithe map shows the ownership of pasture and market gardens in this area between 1836 and 1891. Brockley landlords William Wickham Drake and Anne Tyrwhitt Drake leased their land to



speculative builders for residential development and their names can now be read in street names in and around the area.

Rokey Road and Lewisham Way appear to have been developed first in the mid 1840s. By 1868 Manor Avenue, Upper Brockley Road and the northern ends of Wickham and Breakspears Road had been established.

Many of the residents in the area were professionals and entrepreneurs, many of the latter having shops and factories in Deptford. Among the more famous inhabitants in Brockley conservation area were Lilly Langtry, actress and mistress of the Prince of Wales, who is believed to have lived at 42 Wickham Road; and Marie Lloyd, the music hall entertainer, who lived at 196 Lewisham Way.



Tressillian Road



Map of Brockley 1863-8



Brockley Cross: Coulgate street can just be seen to the right of 'Wellbeloved' butchers, now the site of a car repair garage



Map of Brockley 1894-6

Terraces built for artisans are only found on the edges of the conservation area and include Rokeby Road, and Coulgate Street.

In 1857 Lewisham consisted of 5,300 acres of land containing 5,200 houses, making the burial needs of such a large community critical, especially at a time when parish churchyards were closing due to overcrowding. Lewisham and Deptford Cemeteries were created separately, but next to each other in response to this need, with Lewisham Cemetery being consecrated 27 March 1858, just two months after the Deptford Cemetery had been hallowed. The competitions to design the cemeteries were won by a Mr Tinkler and a Mr Morphew. They designed the grounds, two chapels, Sextants' lodge and entrance gates. Burial plots were sold from 1858. However, the population continued to grow so that the cemeteries filled up rapidly and by 1889, no fewer than 50,000 bodies had been interred here.

In 1866 a temporary church was established in Wickham Road, replaced in 1870 by St Peter's. At about this time the London, Chatham and Dover Railway was constructed, passing just to the north of the new church and the site of the old Premonstratensian foundation. A new station on this line was

opened in 1871 in Lewisham Road (now Lewisham Way) opposite the junction with Tyrwhitt Road and another was opened at Brockley Lane. These closed in 1917.

In 1879 St Peter's Church Hall in Cranfield Road was opened. Among the activities initially provided in this large and imposing building were Bible study for domestic servants, practice for the St Peter's Orchestral Society, meetings of the Microscopical Society; and an early form of lending library known as the Book Club of the St Peter's Young Men's Society.

The southern end of the conservation area developed in the 1880s, probably influenced by the opening of Brockley station on the London Brighton and South Coast line. Unlike others, this station has remained open.

Towards the end of the 19th century local residents raised funds to purchase an area of farmland owned by John Edward Lee's trustees, the Corporation of London's Bridge House Estates and the Vicarage of Lewisham for the creation of a public open space. The park was created in 1896 and named Hilly Fields. The West Kent Grammar School, now Prendergast School, had already undergone its first phase of construction in 1884-5 and so the



View up Cranfield Road, towards St Peter's Church

park was laid out around this existing building, designed by Charles Evans in the Jacobean style. The school was extended in 1914 and 1921 by the London County Council, taking on its present appearance.

By the Second World War there is some evidence to suggest that mews buildings were increasingly being used for workshops and small-scale employment.

The war caused some damage in the conservation area. Some houses were rebuilt as replicas while other sites were developed with contemporary housing or blocks of flats. Since then new development has been confined to a small number of infill schemes. One notable exception to this is Marie Lloyd Villas on Lewisham Way, where a 1960s educational building was replaced by housing in a contextual style.



Brickfields sprang up throughout the area to supply house builders. This one is J.W.Heath & Sons



Map of Brockley in 1914

Due to changes in family sizes, wealth and lifestyles brought about by the war, many larger houses became shared by a number of families who occupied a small number of rooms and shared the facilities. Today many of the formerly multi-occupied houses have been converted to self-contained flats. More recently some large properties have been returned to single family occupation.

In 1965, the Metropolitan Borough of Deptford was amalgamated with the Metropolitan Borough of Lewisham to create the modern London Borough of Lewisham. In 1973 the borough designated the Brockley conservation area.

Also in the 1970s the council designated a general improvement and housing action area to the north of the railway including Upper Brockley Road, Manor Avenue and Wickham Road to upgrade facilities to modern standards. However, at the time of writing market forces mean that such initiatives are no longer necessary. In 1984 an Article 4 Direction was served to restrict permitted development rights mainly in Upper Brockley, Geoffrey and Rokeby Roads in order to preserve the character of this part of the conservation area.

## Archeological potential

The council's Adopted Unitary Development Plan shows an Archeological priority area in the centre of the conservation area which corresponds to the site of the old Premonstratensian priory. The very limited Archeological excavations in the wider area have not recorded any significant findings.