

# Plumstead Common Conservation Area: Character Appraisal

March 2010



Early 19<sup>th</sup> c topographical water-colour of view to north from northern edge of Winn's Common over Plume of Feathers, Manor house, St Nicholas' Church, Plumstead Marshes, the River Thames and East London.

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# Introduction

This Plumstead Common Conservation Area Appraisal and Conservation Area Management Strategy has been produced by Greenwich Council. It consists of four parts:

- An **Executive Summary** or **Definition of the Area's Special Historic Interest**,
- An **Explanation** of Conservation Areas and the scope of Planning Policy;
- A **Character Appraisal** identifying the main elements that contribute towards the special architectural or historic interest of the Conservation Area; and

There is a separate **Plumstead Common Conservation Area Management Strategy**. This makes proposals for small boundary alterations to the Conservation Area and additions to the List of Buildings of Local Interest (Locally Listed Buildings). It recommends preparation of a management plan for the Common itself, it gives detailed guidance on how repairs can affect the character of the area, focusing on how refurbishment, repair and upgrading of the properties can be achieved whilst minimising losses of the character of the houses. Guidance is also given on planning requirements and policies for more substantial changes, on views and on trees.

# I. Executive Summary - Definition of Special Historic Interest

The Plumstead Common Conservation Area was designated to protect and enhance an area of ancient Common Land together with those Victorian houses and other buildings on its rim which contribute to its setting. This area has substantial historic interest. As well as including the sites of Bronze Age Barrows, it is focused on the Common Land of the medieval village of Plumstead gifted by the Saxon King Edgar to the Lesnes Abbey in AD 960. The medieval settlement pattern survives with the shapes of many building plots having medieval origins – for example the layout of the village high street and its relationship with former local farms and the Common. Commoners were local people with traditional legal commoner's rights to graze, gather wood and extract gravel. Formerly the Common was more extensive and it is this wider area, including land now built on, which forms the historical basis for local character evaluation. In accord with this several small extensions to the Conservation Area are recommended.

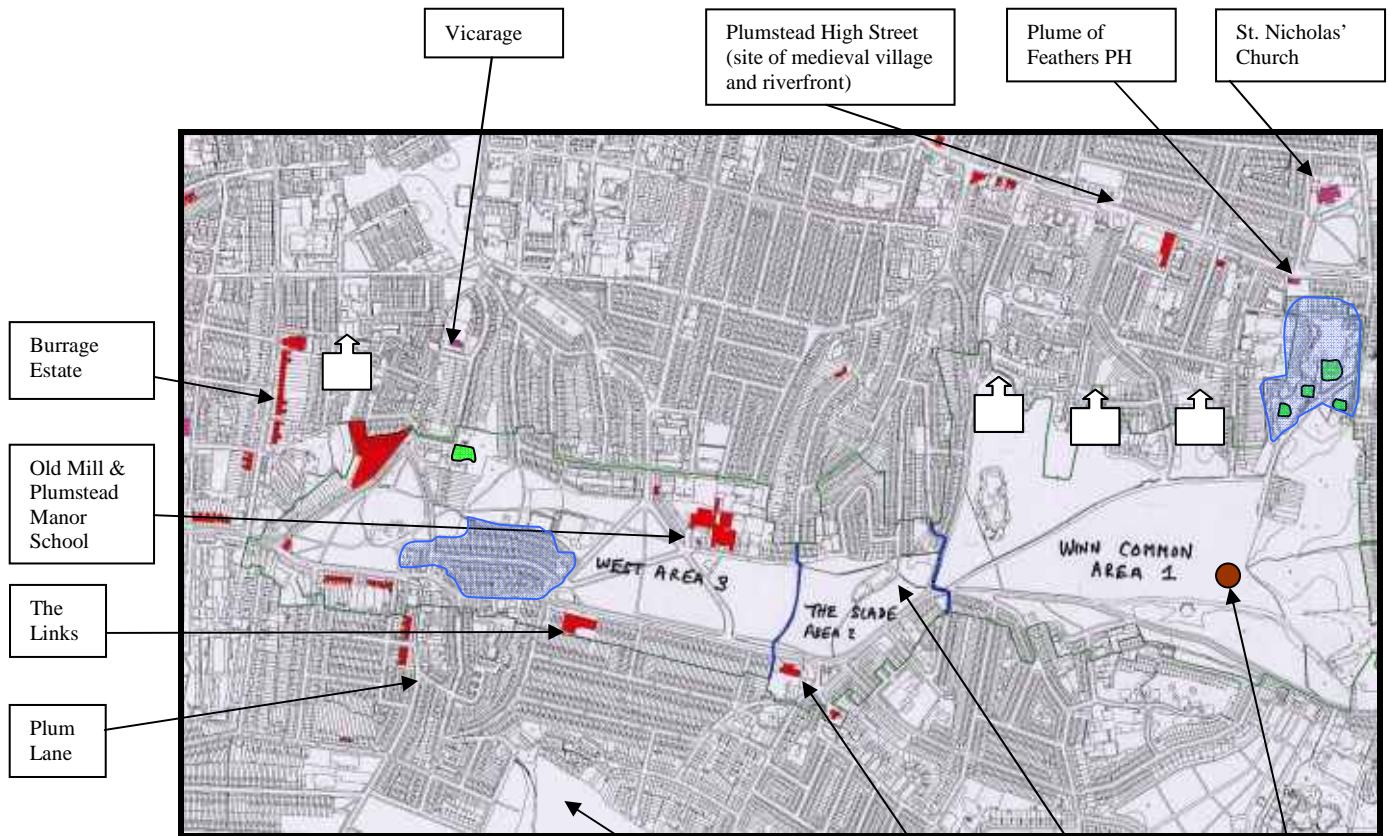
The physical structure of the Common today comprises large flat areas of recreational grassland interspersed with wild steep narrow ravines or coombes running down from the Common to the River Thames flood plain. To the South of the area the land rises steeply again to the heights of Shooters Hill. Geologically the base of the area is chalk, overlain by sand, glacial clay and summit gravels.

In spite of dense building development on the periphery, the elevated position and steep ground allows numerous spectacular views over the lower River Thames and Docklands. Other important views are to be had into and within the wild coombes and lakes. There are also numerous other significant views over the flat Common grasslands, including skyline and close up views of the skyline rim buildings. Some of these views have been damaged by intrusive housing in the form of late 20th century tower blocks. The Common is now managed by the Council's Parks Service in a manner which seeks to be sensitive preserving the traditional common character whilst maximising recreational opportunities.

Three and a half miles of mainly two storeys late 19<sup>th</sup> terraced housing front onto the Common. Interspersed are a number of local landmark buildings including The Links, and several schools, churches, chapels, and public houses. The open setting of these long lines of typical Victorian houses overlooking the Common significantly enhances their townscape character, giving them a special townscape significance and making it desirable to protect or reinstate their traditional Victorian character.

The development of Plumstead Common has been affected by the nearby naval and munitions industry at Woolwich and in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the associated demands for Common Land for housing development resulted in conflicts and an 1876 battle to prevent development on Common Land. Although this was settled in the 1878 Plumstead Common Act, in the 20<sup>th</sup> century development pressures have continued and resulted in some visually unfortunate housing towers in the Grosmont and St Margaret's areas.

Buildings in and around the Conservation Area display a varied series of architectural styles which well express the historical development of the area. These include two surviving 18<sup>th</sup> mainly vernacular style buildings both of which have survived as pubs – The Old Mill and The Plume of Feathers; early Victorian housing – exhibiting simple classically derived styles; mid-Victorian housing – generally substantial and often gabled; and a considerable number of more ornate late terraced Victorian houses; 19<sup>th</sup> c. churches. Some good late 19<sup>th</sup> century and Edwardian buildings are designed in styles derived from the Aesthetic movement and the Arts and Crafts Movement - for example the three schools, the park keeper’s cottage, The Links, some of the pubs.



**Map I: Plumstead Conservation Area – General Townscape Features**

- Locally Listed Buildings
- Listed Buildings
- Tall Buildings
- Example of Intrusion into Common
- View out of area (general schematic location only)

In retrospect, it is now evident that the late Victorian and Edwardian use of high quality architects and exemplary building materials in their municipal buildings knitted the area together and gave it its present character of a rural common in an attractive urban setting. In this area this was essentially infill building, as it followed the main period of housing development. This municipal work also saw the construction of some good quality landscape features on the Common (e.g.

playgrounds, steps, boundary fencing). The result of this fine late 19<sup>th</sup> century and Edwardian development is that Plumstead Common Conservation Area today has a subtle local distinctiveness and sense of an evolved place. This needs careful maintenance and protection from the identified potential for insensitive development inherent in the use of contemporary building materials.

## 2. Explanation of Conservation Areas and the scope of Planning Policy

**The Plumstead Common Conservation Area** was designated by Greenwich Council in May 1976 and comprises 72.7 hectares.

**What is a Conservation Area?** Conservation Areas were first designated in England following the 1967 Civic Amenities Act. Local planning authorities are obliged to designate and review conservation areas under the provisions of the 1990 Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act. These are defined as 'areas of special architectural or historic interest the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance'. There are now about 10,000 throughout England and Greenwich has 20 Conservation Areas.

**Which properties are in the Plumstead Common Conservation Area?** As well as the Common itself, the Conservation Area covers nearly all the buildings surrounding the Common. The Conservation Area comprises the following streets and properties: This address list is based on postcode addresses and it is important to note that that parcels of Common Land may not have a post code address. The address list cannot therefore be definitive as can a map. Therefore, in the event of doubt, or to ascertain whether a particular parcel of undeveloped land or return frontage land is within the Conservation Area, look at the boundary map.

Bargate Close - complete	Plumstead Common Road 72-330 & 103 - 205
Bleak Hill Lane - complete	Purrett Road 82-106 & land adjacent to 71 upwards
Blendon Terrace - complete	Ravine Grove 1-7 & 2-16
Church Hyde - complete	Revell Rise – that part of north side which is Plumstead Common
Felspar Close - complete	Rockmount Road (west -no buildings)
Garland Road - 1-7 odd	Roydene Road 96-100 & 93-121
Globe Court - complete	Sladedale Road 86
Granite Street - complete	Spinel Close - Beryl Ho. & Crystal Ho.
Grosmount Road - complete	St John's Terrace - complete
Heath Villas - complete	St Margaret's Grove - complete
Heathfield Terrace - complete	Tewson Road 102, 121-137
Heavitree Close - complete	The Slade - complete
Heavitree Road 2-84 & 1-21	Timbercroft Lane 2-6 & "Who'da Thought It" PH
Inverary Place - complete	Tormount Road - complete
Kirkham St – 1-19 & 2-12	Vicarage Park 61-68, site adjacent to 50
Kings Highway 2-32	Viewland Road 28-46
Lakedale Road 94-232 (even)	Warwick Terrace - complete
Old Mill Road - complete	Waverley Crescent 49-59 (odd)
Plum Lane 5-11	

Wernbrook Street - complete

Winn's Common Road – complete

**The following table groups streets on & around the Common from east to west**

<b>Area 1: Winn's Common</b>	<b>Area 2: The Slade</b>	<b>Area 3: West - Waverley Crescent Old Mill Plumstead Common Road</b>
Kings Highway Heathfield Terrace Winn's Common Road Bleak Hill Lane Grosmont Road Rockmount Road Granite Street Felspar Close Spinel Close Bargate Close Purrett Road Heath Villas Viewland Road Tewson Road Lakedale Road	Kirkham St Ravine Grove Sladedale Road Roydene Road Timbercroft Lane Tormount Road Garland Road	Church Hyde Heavitree Road Heavitree Close Vicarage Park Globe Court Inverary Place Old Mill Road Warwick Terrace Plum Lane St Margaret's Grove Wernbrook Street Blendon Terrace St John's Terrace

**What restrictions are there throughout the Conservation Area?** In all Conservation Areas planning applications are judged against stricter criteria, and proposals must preserve or enhance the special character or appearance of the area. Conservation Area status will also affect the decisions taken when it is judged expedient to take enforcement action. The following additional controls are automatically applied:

1. **Conservation Area Consent** is required for the complete or substantial demolition of any building or free-standing structure over 115 cubic metres in volume or for the substantial or complete demolition of a garden wall.
2. Although **planning permission** is generally required for all alterations to the external appearance of a building, in the case of single family occupied houses, there are *householder permitted development rights* to make minor changes. The following works require Planning permission in a Conservation Area:
  - Extensions over 50 cu. m.
  - The cladding of any part of the exterior of a house with stone, artificial stone, timber, plastic or tiles.
  - The installation of satellite TV antennae on chimneys or front facing walls.
  - An enlargement of the front, rear or side roof slopes, of a house including the installation of dormer windows.
  - The provision of any building, swimming pool or enclosure where the cubic content exceeds 10 cubic metres.
3. Trees are protected by special controls requiring notice of pruning, lopping or felling works to trees within a Conservation Area. The Council's Tree Officer should be contacted for details of these controls.
4. Proposals for development on land outside but affecting the setting of the Conservation Area will be assessed for their impact on the character and appearance of the Conservation Area and may be refused if this would be judged to be detrimental.

Although permission is required to undertake the above works, it should be emphasised that in exercising these controls it is not intended to prevent change. It is rather to ensure that changes are in keeping with the area's established character.



## **The Planning Policy Context:**

Planning applications must be decided in accordance with development plan policies unless material considerations indicate otherwise. In policy terms, this Conservation Area Character appraisal is a supporting document, relating to, and to be read with, current national and local planning policies. The key planning policy documents are:

**The Mayor of London's London Plan.** The Mayor undertakes to work with strategic partners to protect and enhance London's historic environment (Policy 4B. 10) and expects Boroughs to ensure that the protection and enhancement of historic assets in London are based on their special character (Policy 4B. 11). The London Plan also contains proposals for protecting and managing strategic views, including those of central London from Greenwich Park and Blackheath Point.

**Greenwich Planning policy:** The Council formally adopted the Replacement Unitary Development Plan (UDP) on 20<sup>th</sup> July 2006. The more relevant development planning policies in the Greenwich UDP are its design policies. The most relevant UDP Policies are: Urban Design (D1 & D2), Trees (D 8), Residential Extensions (D9 & D10), Telecommunications (D11), Satellite Antennae (D12), Shopfronts and Signs (D13), Street Furniture (D14), Advertisements (D15), Conservation Areas (D16 & D17); Listed Buildings (D18-22); and Buildings on the Local List (D23).

Important UDP policies protect local views (D27) and skylines and distant views to and from Areas of Special Character (D29). Local view D27 vi) from Winn's Common to the Thames is relevant and Plumstead Common is included in the Bostall Woods Area of Special Character. Details of all these UDP policies can be found on the Council's website.

Greenwich Council has started work on a new type of statutory plan, the Local Development Framework (LDF). This will be a suite of documents that will eventually replace the current Greenwich Unitary Development Plan (UDP).

**Relevant Supplementary Planning Guidance:** In addition to Development Plan policies, decisions on planning applications should take into account relevant Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) and any Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD) produced under the new LDF regime. The most relevant are Supplementary Planning Guidance on Residential Extensions, on Shopfronts and on Conversions.

**Designation of Conservation Areas:** There is a legal duty for all local authorities to keep under review and designate as conservation areas those parts of its area of "special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance". Planning Policy Guidance Note PPG 15, Planning and the Historic Environment, sets out current government guidance on Conservation Areas and Listed Buildings.

**Listing:** English Heritage lists buildings of special architectural or historic interest on behalf of the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport. The Secretary of State is also responsible for the scheduling of ancient monuments and the registering of historic parks and gardens.

**Planning applications** should be determined in accordance with the development plan (to be replaced by the 'local development framework'), unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The development plan comprises the London Plan, the Greenwich UDP (currently the second deposit draft) and relevant Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) and any Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD).



### 3: Character Appraisal

Planning Policy Guidance Note 15 emphasises the need for local planning authorities to assess the special interest, character and appearance of conservation areas. In order to define these issues it is desirable to prepare an initial appraisal of each conservation area. The following appraisal follows the nineteen criteria recommended in English Heritage’s 2005 guidance note “Conservation Area Appraisals”.

#### 1. Location and Setting:

Plumstead Common lies immediately south of Plumstead on the south bank of the Thames about nine miles east of London.

**Physical character:** The Common lies above the originally Saxon riverside village of Plumstead which developed on a dry firm site at the edge of the riverside marshes. Two natural features define the landscape setting of Plumstead Common - the marshy River Thames floodplain below the Common and Shooters Hill above. The Common itself is a flat area of grassland a mile and a quarter long, dissected by dramatic steep valleys running north down to the River.

The geological base of the Woolwich–Plumstead area is a 500 foot thick layer of chalk. Lying on this is a 40 foot thick layer of fine Thanet sand, coming to the surface on the various Commons and giving its name to features such as Sandy Hill and the Sun-in-the-Sands Public House. Above this is a 200 foot thick layer of glacial London clay - only half that in other parts of the London basin. This is capped by the plateau gravels which start at 400 feet above sea level and forms the summit of Shooters Hill. The whole sequence can be seen in the Charlton pits. The Thanet sands have been extracted for founding and for glass-making. They are better drained and form the best foundation in the area for building. At Plumstead the chalk base is exposed on the sides of the lower Wickham Valley (Wickham Lane).



Map 2: Plumstead Conservation Area aerial photo - CA boundary green; Locally Listed buildings - red; Listed Buildings - purple

**Socio-economic consequences:** The Tudors located a principal naval dockyard at Woolwich to take advantage of deep water next to easily excavated marshland. This has since been the major influence on the development of both Woolwich and Plumstead. For the last 300 years the area has been a working-class community deriving its livelihood from dock and munitions work in Woolwich. Therefore, for originally topographic reasons, Plumstead was to become physically but not socially absorbed as a suburb of Woolwich, housing numbers of dockyard and munitions workers. Plumstead as a village with increasing numbers of munitions workers has had a politically turbulent development history, with periodic protests against encroachment on the Common or insensitive development.

**Landscape and setting of the Common.** In spite of centuries of encroachment, the Common remains sizeable. Topographically it comprises a series of open flat commons divided by roads and deep valleys or “coombes” and encompassed on all sides by housing, sometimes built on steep ground. To the south, Shooters Hill rises in places very steeply from the Common; and to the north the land also drops very steeply to the River Thames flood plain.



**Fig 1: Purrett Road well-restored house on steep ground with great views north. Figs 2 & 3: Tewson Road Banks**

There are a dramatic series of surprise views from the Common to the north, yielding glimpses of the old village of Plumstead, the River Thames estuary and extensive panoramas of East London beyond. These fine views have been appreciated for centuries – see for example the early 19th century watercolour reproduced above on page one. Further fine views to the north may be found from Shooters Hill looking over the Common towards the river.

Although many of Plumstead’s more prominent buildings line the High Street of the old village, a number of significant buildings overlook the Common. This offered the opportunity to build on elevated flat firm land with a frontage overlooking open space. The housing surrounding the Common creates an attractive and subordinate generally uniform low-perimeter skyline.

In spite of development, Plumstead has retained its Commons and woods and other important elements of its original character as much as anywhere else in London, mainly because of: -

- Plumstead’s relatively isolated position, with the Thames forming a barrier to the north;
- The continuity and dominance of military uses,
- Topographical limitations.

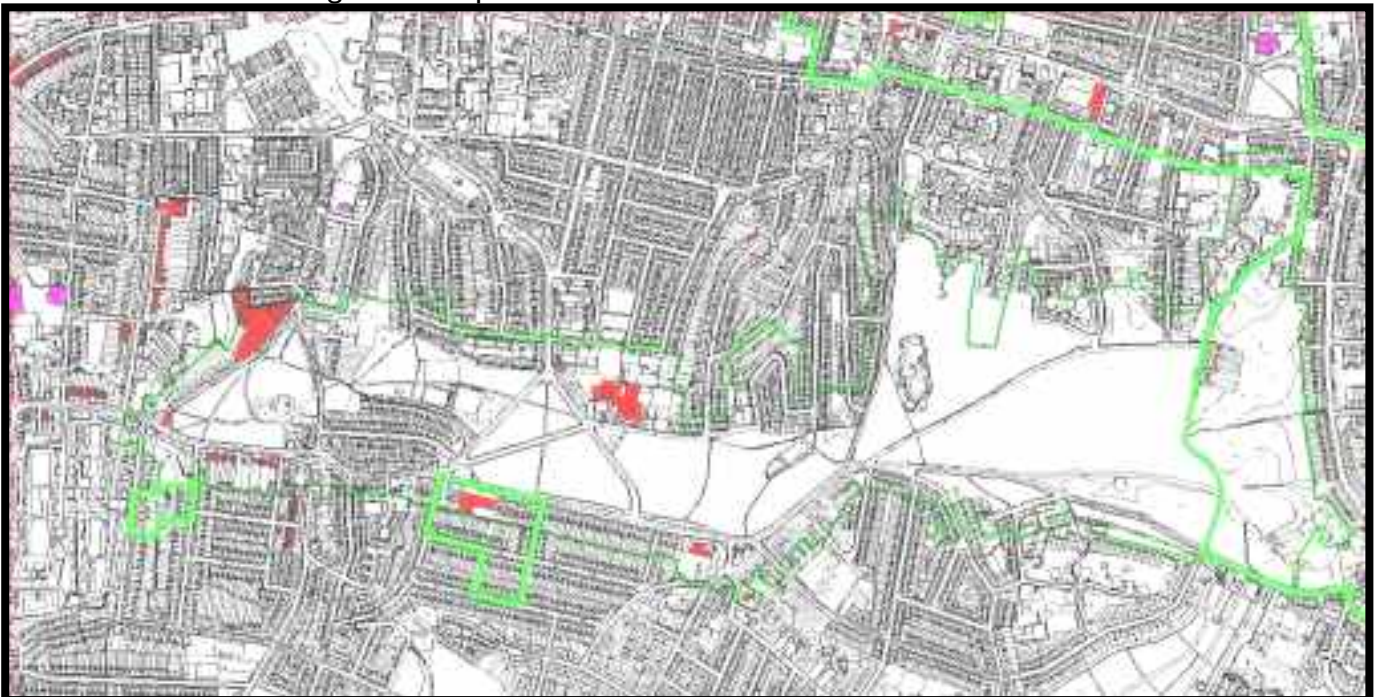
## **2. Origins and historical development.**

**Origin:** Plumstead Common is known to have been a centre for Bronze Age burial barrows. One barrow survives on Winn’s Common and is now a protected Scheduled Ancient Monument (see section 3 below). Some antiquarians accept the obvious meaning of the village name Plumstead as the “*place of plum trees*”; others suggest it referred to plumes of feathers. In any event, the village goes back to early Saxon times. The origin of Plumstead Common as a legal Common derives from the Saxon King Edgar’s gift of Plumstead to the Abbot and Convent of St Augustine at Lesnes in AD 960.



**The medieval village and Common:** From early medieval times the Manor of Plumstead was owned by the Benedictine foundation of St Augustine. There was a manorial court, a prison and a gallows. The long established Wednesday weekly market was changed to Tuesday by Henry III in 1270. In 13<sup>th</sup> c Plumstead manor officers included a steward, a bailiff, a turnkey, and a beadle. An annual fair on December 5-7 began on the eve of the festival of St Nicholas, patron saint of fishermen. Fishing included salmon, sturgeon, lampreys and whitebait; and in 1313 it is recorded that the Abbot took a whale. St Nicholas, Plumstead's medieval parish church, survives at the north east edge of the Common. Before land reclamation it stood on the 'strand' or beach.

Many of the hilly slopes above were given over to fruit farming rather than grazing, and large areas of planted orchard trees are shown on the northern slopes below the Common on the 1799, 1842 and 1867 maps (see extracts below maps 5-7). There were two manor houses, one with an associated tithe barn lay just north east the church (outside the Conservation Area). On the 1778 Hasted map this is marked as Parsonage - see map 5. A second timber framed 'manor house'



**Map 3: Plumstead Common Conservation Area, CA boundary green, Listed buildings purple, Local List red. Two Archaeological Priority Areas hatched with thicker lighter green border - (i) the east end of Winn's Common stretching north to Plumstead High Street; and (ii) around The Links.**

survived into the 20<sup>th</sup> century as the run-down semi-detached "Pilgrim cottages" and lay within the Conservation Area at the east end of Winn's Common off Wickham Lane and W.T. Vincent in his 1890 "[The Records of the Woolwich District](#)" describes it as a "decrepit and many angled structure – the remnant of a more spacious building". It is unclear whether this house was **the** Manor House, or whether it was merely the property of the Manor. Wickham Lane follows a river valley; it is marked on maps as early as 1720; it appears to be medieval or Roman in origin because of Roman archaeological finds.

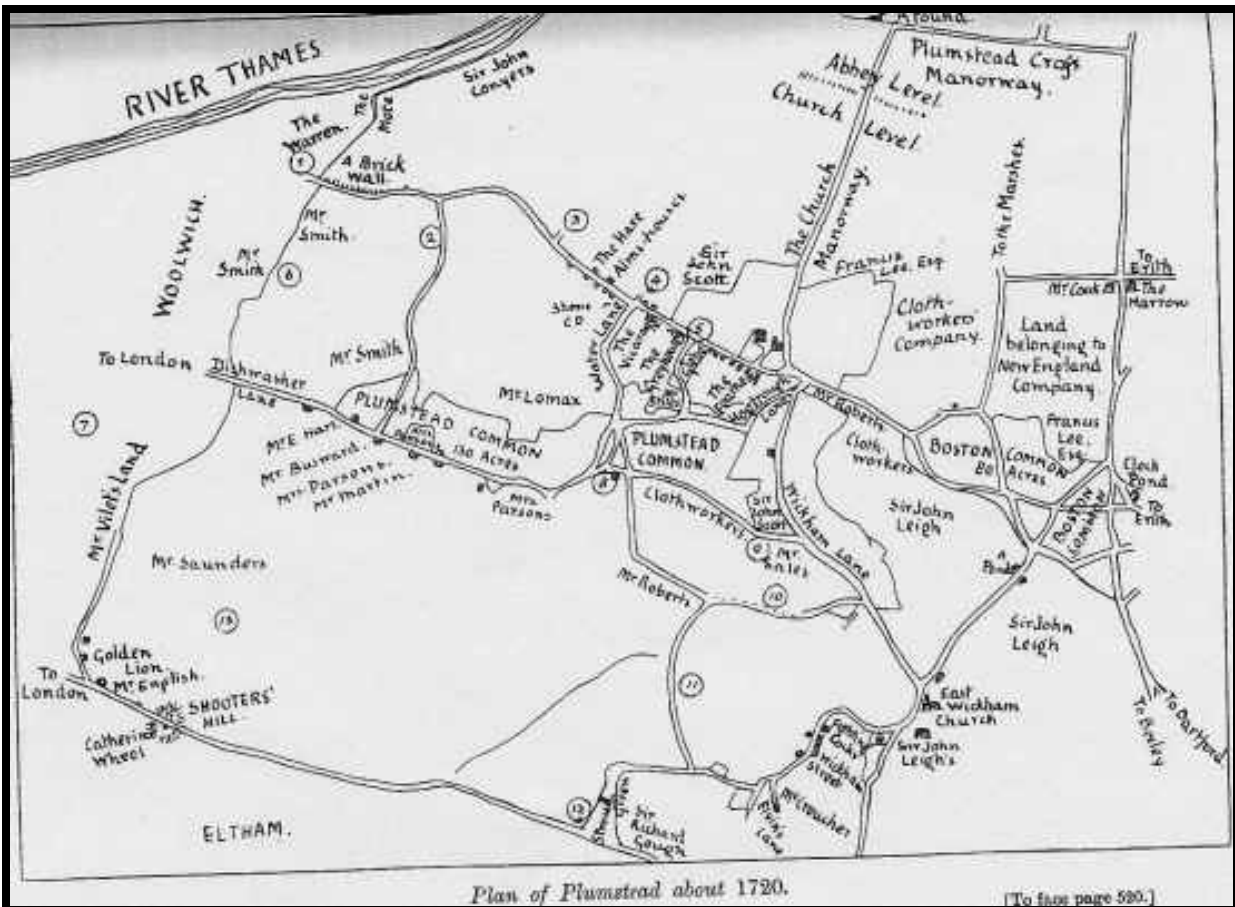


Fig 4: Plumstead Old Manor House in Wickham Lane (1897 postcard) divided into two semi-detached cottages



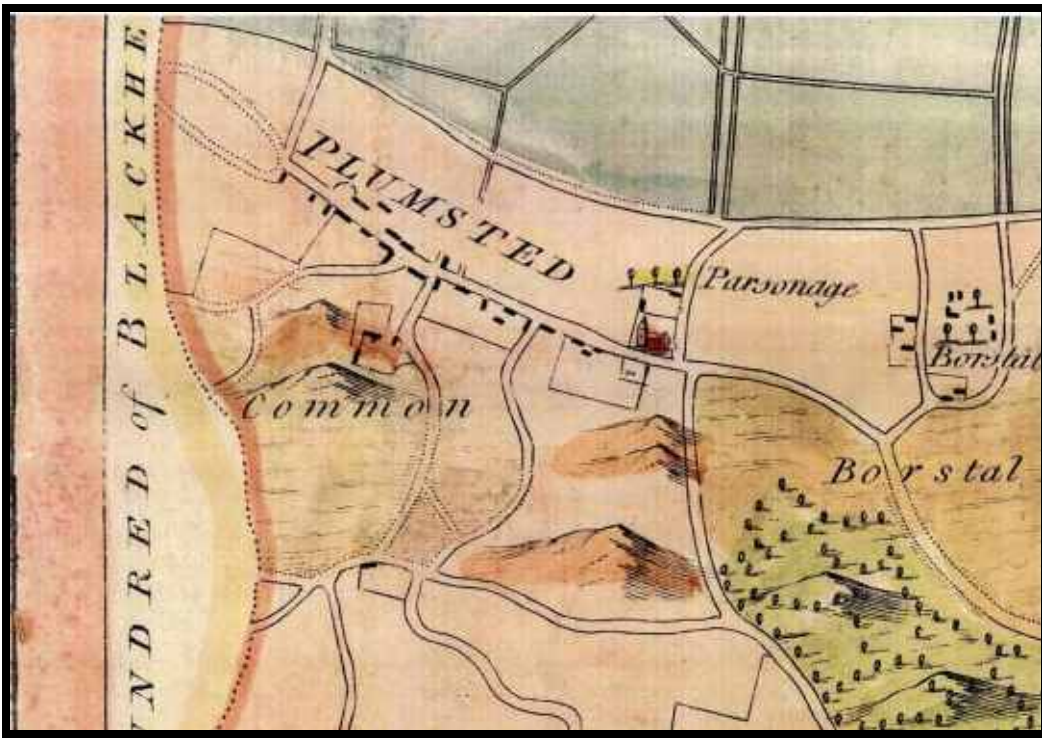
Figure 5: the other former Manor house near St Nicholas' Parish Church

**Common and Village in c. 1720:** Vincent reproduces a map which he dates to 1720 (see map 4 below). This shows the Manor House and an enclosure of land fronting to Wickham Lane. Seven houses line Plumstead Common Road, which was then called Dishwasher Lane and the owners are named Hart, Busward, Martin and Mrs. Parsons (who owned three of the houses). The Common is already much narrowed at the Slade where three tracks or roads already cut across it. In the region of St. John's Terrace, an enclosed incursion onto the common is marked as Mrs. Parson's. The Plume of Feathers Tavern is marked as The Feathers and another is marked as The Greyhound – likely the building which is now The Volunteer.



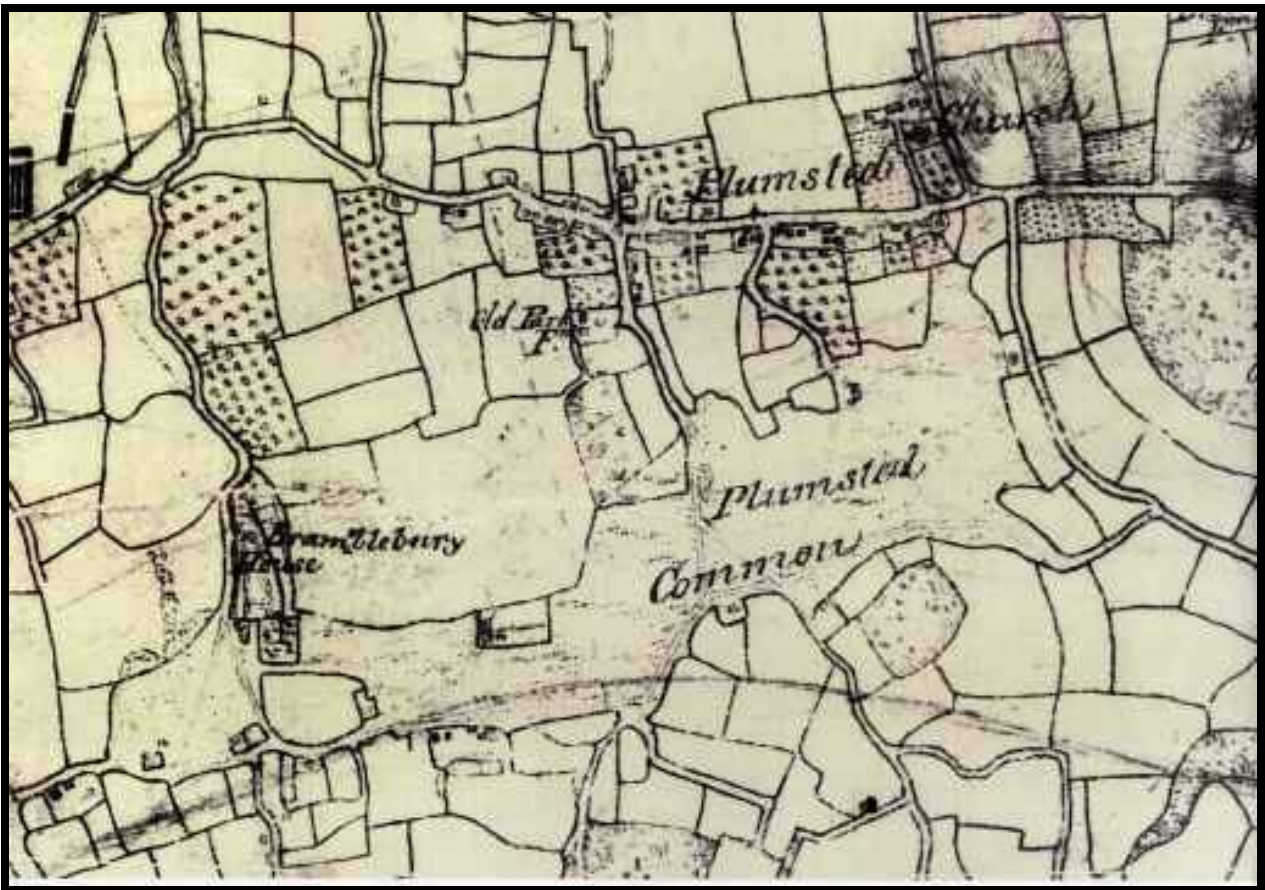
Map 4: Plumstead in 1720 (from Vincent)





**Map 5:** extract from 1778 Hasted map of *Little and Lesnes Hundred*

**Plumstead Common & Village in 1800:** The 1801 Census shows the population of Plumstead numbered 1,166, most of whom lived in or close to the village. The original Ordnance Survey mapping of England commenced with the Kent survey in 1891 – which was the area the Woolwich Ordnance factory was situated in. The first one-inch map published was of Kent and was published in 1801. The following map extract is copied from the 1799 larger-scale preparatory drawings for this map. Plumstead Common has a shape and boundaries remarkably similar to today, with several later encroachments such as St Johns Terrace un-built but already enclosed.



**Map 6: 1799 Ordnance Survey Department drawings preparatory to first edition 1801 one-inch map.**

There are numerous orchards and fields and three named buildings: Old Park Farm, St Nicholas' Church and the 1793 Brambleberry House (later to become St Margaret's Vicarage). Other buildings marked include the Manor House (on Wickham Lane), the 1764 Old Mill, two buildings near the Links, the Plume of Feathers, and a sprinkling of houses along Plumstead High Street.

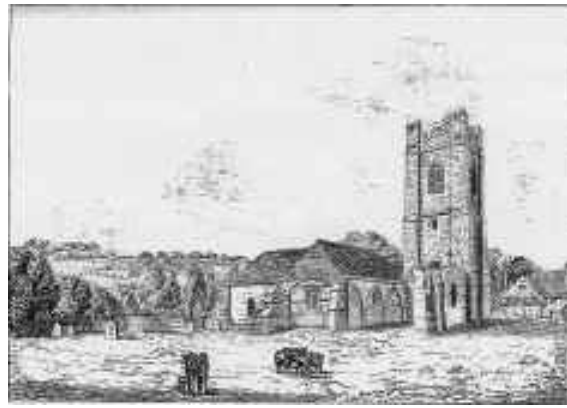
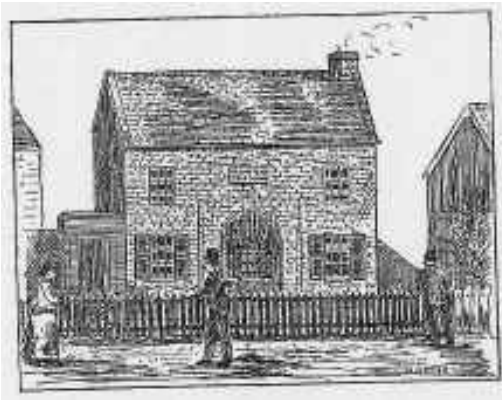


**Fig 6: mid 18<sup>th</sup> c. Old Mill - 20<sup>th</sup> c drawing**



**Figure 7: Old Mill and Pub - drawn c. 1820**





**Fig 8: 1797 Plumstead Free School Fig 9: St Nicholas' Church 1780**



**Figure 10: Brambleberry built 1793, drawn c. 1820 Church**



**Fig 11: 1867 OS map St Margaret's**

**Vicarage**

**Brambleberry - renamed The**

**Legal status of Common land:** Common land is a legal remnant of the medieval Manorial system. Although Common land is owned by an individual (or a company or local authority), other people, called Commoners, have rights over it including rights to graze animals, cut bracken, fish or collect firewood. Pressure for access by people other than the commoners was first voiced in the south of England, where landowners attempted to prevent public access to some of the commons around London. In 1865 the Commons Preservation Society formed to protect open spaces in London, later its interests became national and it was renamed the Open Spaces Society. A major success was the Law of Property Act 1925 which gave the public right of access 'for air and exercise' to all commons in urban areas in England and Wales. In about 1930 common land in England & Wales was registered, and its ownership and the rights of the various commoners recorded. The Commons Registration Act 1965 required re-registration including confirmation of claims to rights of common.

**History of Plumstead Common:** The Benedictine ownership of the Common continued until 1539 when the Abbey and its land, including the Common, was seized by Henry VIII and given to the Boughton family. In 1685 the Boughtons' sold the Common to a John Michel of Richmond who, in turn, passed it on to Queens College Oxford by his will of 1736, for the maintenance of eight fellows and four scholars. Winn's Common is named for Thomas Winn, a local landowner who built almshouses for poor widows on the Common – on the site where the Workhouse was later built. Winn died in 1800 and is buried in St Nicholas' Church.



The 17<sup>th</sup>, 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries saw the sale of small plots of Common Land which, when eventually built on, became minor encroachments, as on other metropolitan commons. However from 1850, the College's Trustees started enclosing and selling larger pieces of land. Plumstead's villagers were slow to take action, but eventually, in 1870 Queens's College lost a court action and had to remove fences erected since 1866. Some of these enclosures can be seen by comparing the 1842 tithe map (Map 6i & 6ii) with the 1867 OS (Map 7i & 7ii). Additional pressure on the Common came from the military. Following the outbreak of the 1870 Franco Prussian war, the War Office, claiming the right of being an immemorial user, used the Common for troops exercises and firing, so intensively that it became a "barren desert". Although they had had this privilege, they had hitherto made little use of it.

The people of Plumstead strongly opposed such overuse, stating that they had the right to graze cattle, geese and other livestock, the right to cut turf and to dig for sand and gravel on the Common. They claimed the right to use the open space for sports and other pastimes. Hundreds of people joined in demonstrations and dug gravel and sand for their own use. These actions attracted the attention of the Commons Protection League. On 1st July 1876 the League's John De Morgan spoke to a crowd of about 1,000 local people in front of the Old Mill beerhouse (the windmill had been converted into a beerhouse in 1853). De Morgan then took the crowd around the Common removing recently erected fences. The authorities, afraid that the revolution had started, arrested him and other demonstrators and charged them with riotous assembly, and disturbing the peace. John De Morgan was sent to prison for two months, but public objection resulted in his release after seventeen days. These "riots" led to the 1878 Plumstead Common Act under which about one hundred acres of land from Queens College was acquired for £1000 for permanent public open space. Just before the Act was passed more roads were built on tracks across the Common dividing it into the two portions seen today.

**Development history 1800-1867:** Plumstead's population grew tremendously in 19<sup>th</sup> c – by 5,400% as can be ascertained from the census:

Year	Population	Year	Population
1801	1166	1871	28,318
1841	2816	1891	52,754
1851	8373	1901	63,327
1861	24501		

The physical impact of development from 1800 to 1867 can be appreciated by, comparing the 1800, 1842 and 1867 maps – see extracts below. The 1842 tithe map provides a detailed picture of property ownership. It reveals only a small increase on the number of buildings on or around the Common, commensurate with the 1801-1841 population increase of 170% for the parish as a whole. The number of houses or buildings along Plumstead Common Road has increased from seven to about ten. Little huts which may be no larger than small tenant-cottages or outbuildings are shown as well as large houses such as Bramleberry and Park Farm. One house is shown on Bleak Hill on the site of the present Laurel Cottage. To the

west of the Common near Sandy Hill, the new Burrage Estate is partly constructed.



Map 7(i): 1842 Tithe map (east)

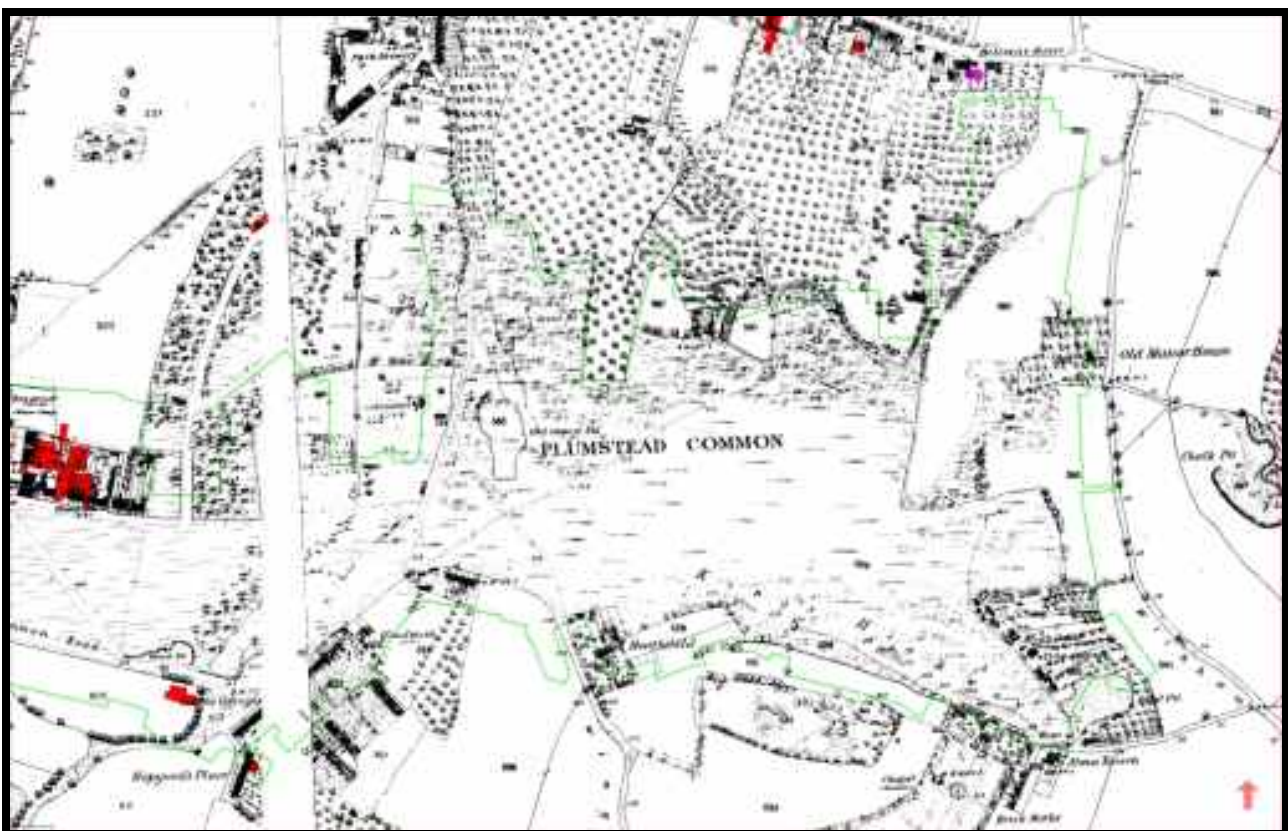


**Map 7(ii): 1842 tithe map (west)**

The next 25 years saw a further tenfold increase in population of the parish from 2,816 to about 28,000. In 1855 St. James Church on Burrage Road was built as part of the Burrage Estate. In 1856 the Plumstead Board of Works was formed as part of the Metropolitan Board of Works, London's first strategic authority. Children attended church schools and St. Margaret's School was built in 1856 on Plumstead Common (later Plumstead Central School). In 1859 Plumstead Station opened and a new parish church, St Margaret's, was built (demolished in the 1970's with St. Nicholas reverting to being the parish church).

Corresponding to this huge population growth, the OS 1867 map shows substantial new development. Park Farm is now Park Brewery and next to it is the Clifton Castle Tavern. Lakedale Road is marked as Cage Lane (after a lock up near the High Street). At Burrage Road, on Sandy Hill to the west of the Common, the Burrage estate has become the first estate to be constructed east of Woolwich. There is a substantial development at The Slade. The Alma Tavern appears at the east end of Kings Highway. In spite of all this, the Common in the late 1860s retained its rural character and development around it has yet to begin in earnest.

**From 1867 to 1907:** Over the next 30 years the population would increase dramatically again – more than doubling from 28,000 to 63,327. This 19<sup>th</sup> c urban development sequence was influenced by the growth of military based industry in Woolwich and commenced from the west. The initial estate development sequence being (i) the early Victorian Burrage estate (ii) the post 1870 Herbert estate (with an 1870s roller skating park – Herbert Park Roller Skating Rink, Eglinton school site; and (iii) the late 19<sup>th</sup> century Plumstead Park Estate – on the site of Park Farm. By 1900 the landscape had been utterly transformed with a sea of housing on all sides of the Common. Essentially changes since 1907 in Plumstead have been confined to minor infill.



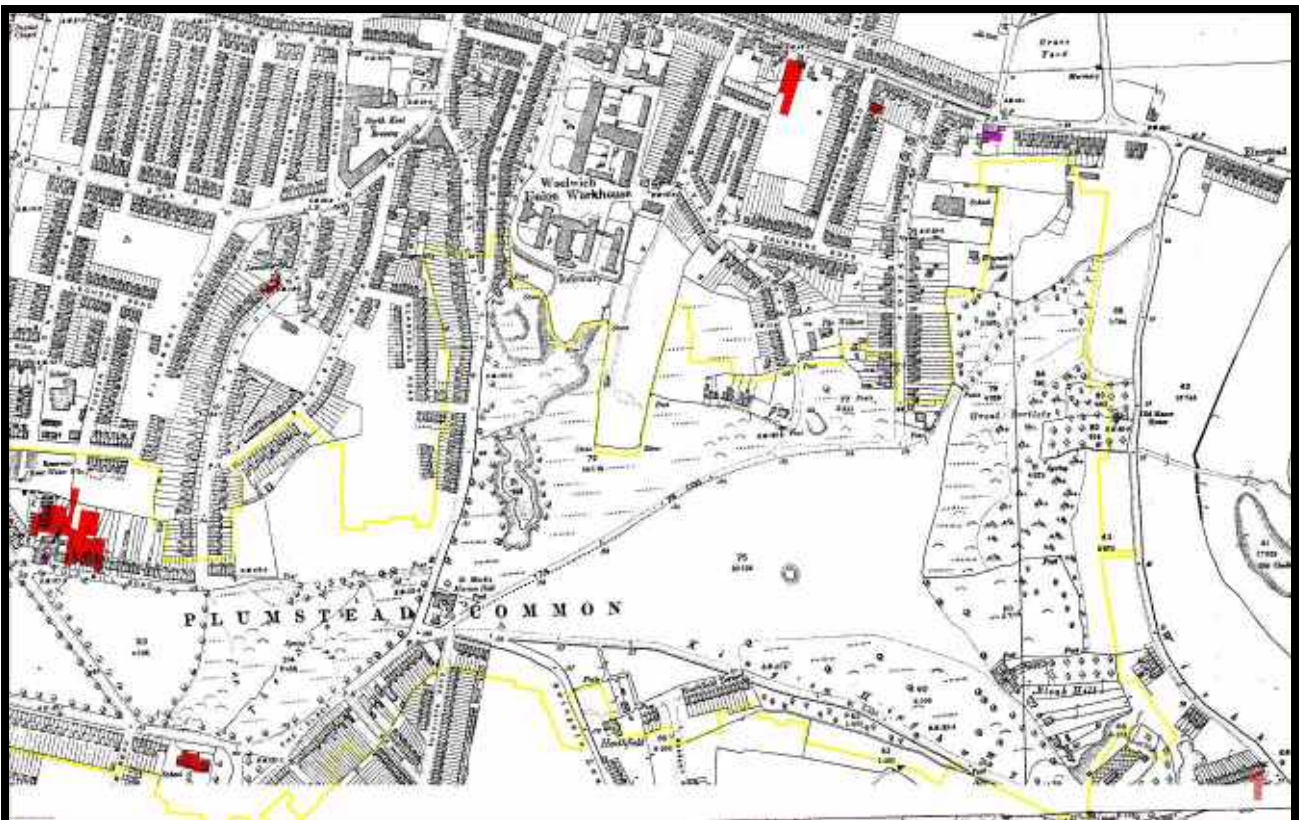
**Map 8(i): OS 1867 map (east)**





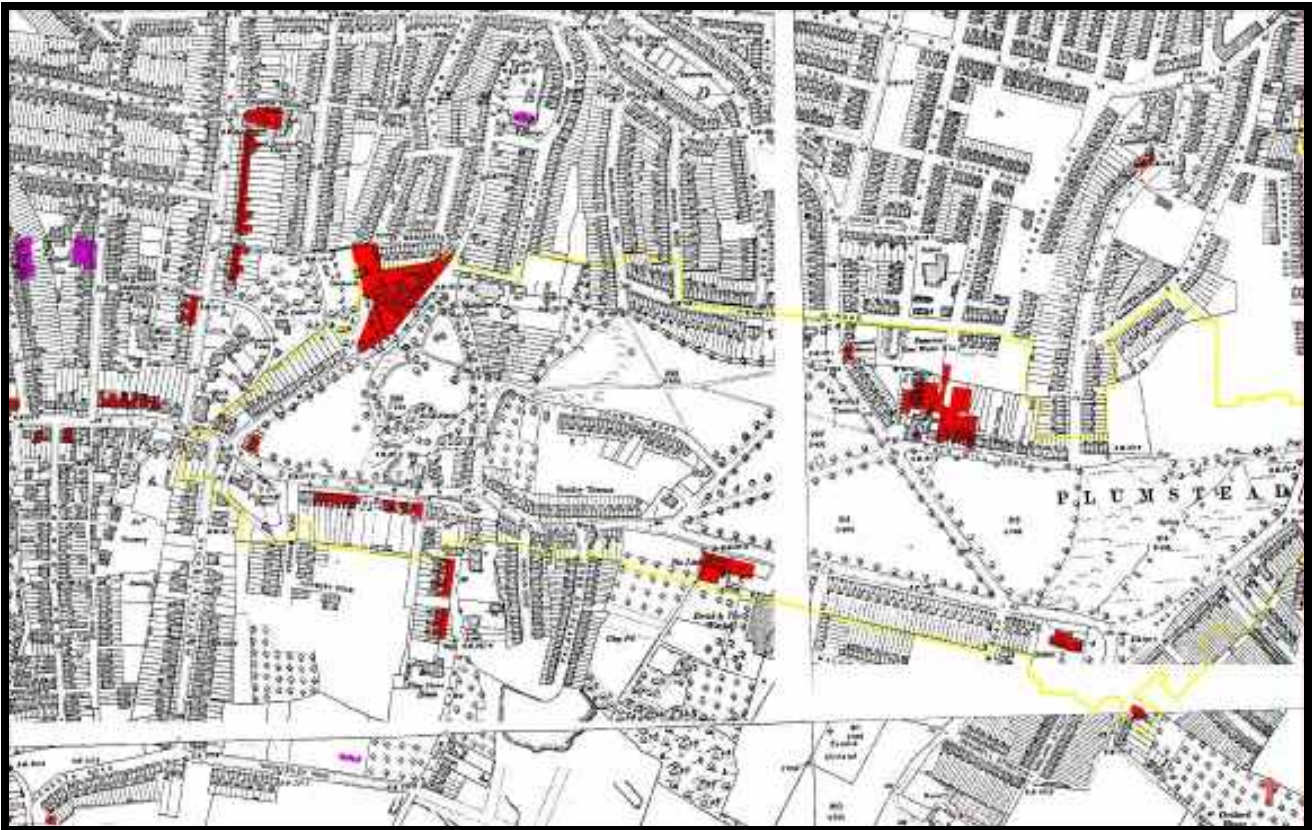
Map 8(ii): OS 1867 map west

A few new roads were constructed to the north of Plumstead Common Road between the Herbert Estate and the Slade. The ancient Plum Lane now ran between roads in which superior Victorian and Edwardian houses approached the heights of Shooters Hill.



Map 9(i): 1894-6 OS map east





**Map 9(ii): 1897 OS map west**

Substantial gaps remained, for example, William Dawson, a successful brick and tile maker, still lived in a large house called “The Links” with parkland and behind this, his brickfield and brickworks. Dawson gradually sold off his other land for housing, becoming a developer himself. At the beginning of the 20th century he closed his works to enable Palmerston and Macoma Roads to be completed. In 1905 his old house was redeveloped by the Royal Arsenal Co-operative Society as a new “The Links,” a terrace of elegantly designed shops. This provided a much needed and smart shopping area for the new up-market estate.

The School Board for London formed after the 1870 Education Act, had responsibility for education within the Metropolitan Board of Works district. Thus, education in Plumstead became the responsibility of the new Board. The Slade School of 1884 was apparently designed by the famous School Board for London architect Edward Robson.

In 1872 the Woolwich Union Workhouse was opened between Plumstead High Street and Tewson Road. After its closure in 1929 the workhouse became St. Nicholas Hospital. The site has now been redeveloped for housing – though some buildings remain. The Cage Lane Evangelical Free Church was built in 1879, and the People’s Hall of the Evangelical Free Church at the Slade built in 1880. In 1889 the County of London was created – and this extended to Plumstead. In 1896 new almshouses were constructed near the Common on Waverley Crescent and Heavitree Close.



**Fig 12: 1896 new Almshouses, Waverley Crescent. Almshouses visible on left**



**Fig 13: Heavitree Close c.1900 - 1896**

**The 20<sup>th</sup> century:** Between 1900 and 1914 the Royal Arsenal Co-operative Society built over one thousand homes on land that they had bought at Abbey Wood at the eastern extremity of Plumstead. In 1900 the Metropolitan Borough of Woolwich was created and the ancient parish system of government and the 1859 Board of Works disappeared. The new Council proceeded energetically and within a few years a range of well-designed modern amenities were installed. In 1900 the London Tramways Act (Electric) enabled a network of electric trams throughout London and a new electric tram service ran along Plumstead High Street to Abbey Wood. In 1903 Woolwich Council introduced electricity building a combined refuse incinerator and electricity generating station in White Hart Road, Plumstead. In 1904 Plumstead Library was opened in the High Street, and, in 1907 Plumstead Baths and Washhouses were built on an adjacent site. In 1919 Plumstead Museum was opened on the first floor of Plumstead Library. The library flourishes, but the baths have been demolished to make way for a small housing development. On the Common the Council built an attractive Park Keepers House Lodge and Yard next to The Lodge on Waverley Crescent



**Figure 14: Park Keepers House**

By 1915 the population of Plumstead was 77,357 and by 1919 it approached 80,000, but after World War I the workforce in the Royal Arsenal at Woolwich declined rapidly causing a consequent reduction in the population of Plumstead to 76,778 in 1921, then to 70,200 by 1932.

The remainder of the 20<sup>th</sup> century has mainly seen infill and redevelopment schemes. There have also been further conflicts over development and encroachment, some of which have been successfully resisted. The picturesque multi-gabled Plumstead Manor School was constructed next to the Old Mill and opened as a Girls school in 1913. The four Great Bartlett's tower blocks appear to have been constructed in the 1950's. There is a range of these squat towers overlooking the Common, including for example, The Oaks on the site of a former large house of the same name between St Margaret's Grove and Burrage Road.

In 1967 the fine St Margaret's church was demolished, and, in 1974 the 1902 church of St Mark was demolished. In 1976 these were replaced by the amalgamated Church of St Mark and St Margaret. The

new church is severe externally, but contains objects from both demolished churches. Next door the old hall of the 1902 St Mark's church survives. The demolition of St Margaret's Church and its replacement by a tower block has seriously damaged the visual landscape and setting of the area, in particular the views out of the west end of the Common and its relationship with the Vicarage. In the early 1970's a new development proposal emerged for the area involving an Adventure Playground encompassing of the 1902 Blendon Terrace ornate Edwardian bandstand and a new 17 storey residential tower block on the St. Margaret's Church site. In 1973, in the resulting Town Planning Public Inquiry Decision, the Inspector accepted the case for the adventure playground on the bandstand site, with the eventual consequence being demolition of the bandstand, but reduced the number of storeys in the tower block to 12. This was built and is the out-of-scale and squat 12 storey Azile Everitt House.

In 1976, the protective aspect of the planning framework for the area was strengthened by designating the Conservation Area. However, the Plumstead Society, which had led resistance to the proposals, fell into abeyance. The formation of a new community group to facilitate community representation did not take place until 1991, the year of formation of the Plumstead Common Environment Group.



**Fig 15: Bandstand & St Margaret's church with Blendon Terrace**



**Fig 16: Replacement for church - the 12 floor Azile Everitt House**



**Figure 17 & Figure 18: The Oaks from the Conglomerate stones (see section 6 below) on Plumstead Common - another nearby tower overlooking the Common**

### 3. Archaeological significance

The UDP defines two Archaeological Priority Areas:

- The 15<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup> century potteries site around The Links. This area has been so defined based upon evidence of 15-17th century pottery industry occurring within this part of Plumstead. It is likely that there would be similar industrial activity along Plumstead Common Road this

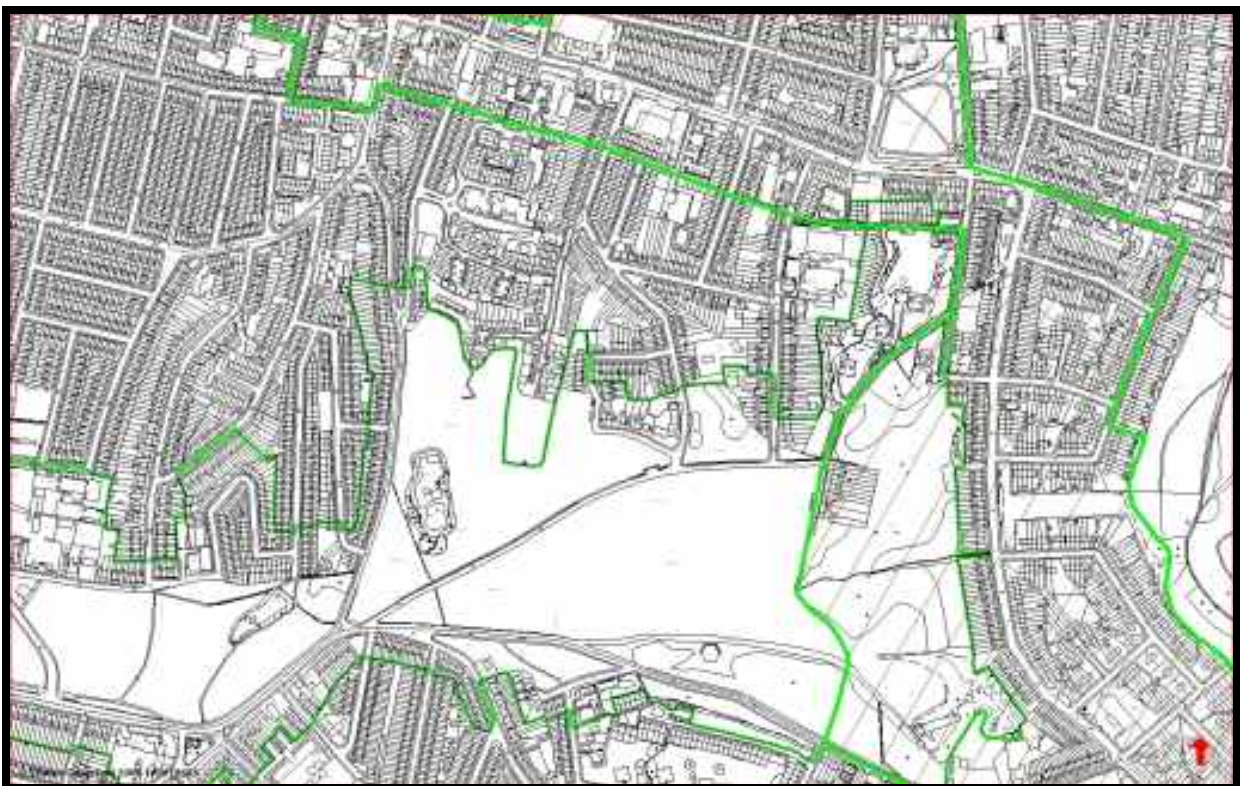


route taking advantage of the locally occurring clay sources, but the prescribed area has to be relatively small to reflect the limited current information about the local archaeology.

- The very eastern part of Winn's Common. The extensive area of Plumstead Common dates from Saxon times but has been encroached upon and reduced. In addition to the occurrence of the occasional archaeological object, the main focus of interest is the Bronze Age barrow designated as a Scheduled Ancient Monument in 1974. Through prehistory, burial practice changed with a shift from the Neolithic (4000-2000) emphasis on the community to the middle of the Bronze Age (2000-750) when it dramatically switched to the individual. These two burial mounds date from this latter period and have remained a prominent feature on the landscape ever since. Across much of Britain such burial mounds would have been a common site, but today in London they are rare survivals. They are likely to have been located on marginal land and in a position from which they would have been clearly visible. There is no evidence to suggest that the mound later became the focus for additional Saxon burials or even being 'recycled' as bases for medieval windmills.

There is a Listed eighteenth-century windmill on the northern edge of the area on Old Mill Road; Although working ceased in the 1840's, and the sails have gone, the mill tower survives. Since 1853 it has formed part of the Old Mill Public House. Some of the common land has been used as a source of building and road repair material - which has influenced the current character of the landscape.

English Heritage recommends that the Area of Archaeological Interest be considered for extension to include whole of Winn's Common i.e. Plumstead Common from Lakedale Road east-wards. This designation is part of the UDP and needs to be considered as part of the process of its replacement by the Greenwich LDF (Local Development Framework).



Map 10: Winn's Common Area of Archaeological Priority (hatched) & boundary of eastern part of CA

#### 4. Character and relationship of spaces

The principal spatial feature of the area is the Common with its flat open grassland, coombes, rim and perimeter housing, all set below Shooters Hill and above the Thames Estuary. The Common is the centralising focus of the area, and although reduced in scale, it remains an important and remarkable survival. It includes three types of landscape:

**Commons:** The dominant character is of common land, i.e. extensive flat grassland spaces enclosed by post and rail fencing and a fairly continuous perimeter skyline of small scale Victorian housing. These spaces, especially in the east (Winn’s Common) have been beneficially preserved from conversion into the more formal park landscape. Winn’s Common also incorporates a Bronze Age round barrow. .

- **Coombes:** The wilder “nature areas” including narrow steep ravines or coombes, and also several lakes on the Common, probably created by 19<sup>th</sup> century gravel extraction
- **Play areas:** Although small in extent compared to the commons and coombes, the play areas incorporate a surprising range of recreational facilities, listed below.

### Plumstead Common Recreational Facilities and their use.

<b>Facilities on Plumstead Common (General):</b> Woods; Open cut grass areas; Ecological areas; Green Chain Walk crosses the Common. Regular events held on common including Plumstead Make Merry, Anti Racist Festival, and the Asian Meila
<b>Recreational Facilities on Plumstead Common (West):</b> Bowling green and pavilions; Tennis courts; Rugby club and pitch (leased out); War memorial; Lodge and yard. The yard is unused and is scheduled for disposal); Running track (marked out for local school but used by community during summer); Adventure playground managed by Children & Young Peoples Services
<b>Recreational Facilities on Winn’s Common:</b> Children's playground; Paddling pool and facilities; Trim Trail ; Football pitches
<b>Recreational Facilities on The Slade:</b> Children's playground; Toilets including disabled; Slade Ponds (balancing ponds). "The Slade" Green triangle fronting shops is part of the Common and provides toilets and a playground (facilities under review).

A feature in the Conservation Area which affects its landscape quality is the visually intrusive 1950’s Grosmont residential point blocks.

## 5. Key views and Vistas:

Views are an important feature contributing much character to this Conservation Area. UDP policy D27 vi) protects the local view from Winn’s Common to the Thames. Skylines and distant views to and from Areas of Special Character are further protected by policy D29 which includes Plumstead Common as part of the Bostall Woods Area of Special Character. D27 states that **“planning permission will be given for development which would not have a seriously adverse effect on the overall perspective and essential quality”** of the Local View. D29 requires giving **“special consideration to the safeguarding, restoration and enhancement of character, scale and quality of open spaces and associated buildings”**, protecting **“Skylines and distant views both to and from the Areas of Special Character”**.

Four specific types of view significant to this Conservation Area are identified in this character appraisal (Panoramic out, across Common, Buildings, and Coombes). Each type of view makes a particular contribution to the character of the area and thus would merit protection and enhancement of its value both as defined in the UDP (see above) and for any additional contribution to the character of the area.

- I. Occasional Panoramic views** from the Common to the north over the Thames to east London: The scale and extent of the view means that these can be quite spectacular. Some of the eastern views will be protected by D27 and all will be covered by D29. Panoramic views over the wide expanses of Common from Shooters Hill appear to be limited to views from parkland as views from streets tend to be of tree clumps and the roofs of houses.



**Figure 19: View north from Viewland Road**



**Figure 20: Gap view north from Winn's Common (Roydene Road)**



**Figure 21: view north over St Nicholas' Coombe**



Figure 22: Sladedale Road surprise view

**2. Views across the Common:** These views are frequent and significant. They will generally be protected by UDP policy D29.



Figure 23: Winn's common



Figure 24: Plumstead Common west



Figure 25: Winn's Common Road with traditional post and rail fencing

**3. Views of Landmark buildings:** In this Conservation Area in spite of the central focus on the green Common, buildings still play an important role, especially those which can be viewed from the Common. In some cases there are surviving old photographs showing how the building looked in past times (c.f. former views of The Links and the Slade Steps illustrated below). Views of these buildings, particularly from the Common are protected, in particular by the inclusion in policy D29 of reference to "***open spaces and associated buildings***".





**Fig 26: St John's Terrace PH**



**Fig 27: Italianate tower, St Margaret's School;**



**Fig 28: Woodman**

Many of the views of interesting buildings include the Common in the foreground, combining view types. Two old postcard reproductions showing the historical continuity of appreciation of these views are illustrated below. One change over the last hundred years has been the extensive growth of trees, see below. One result is that in summer the Links can no longer be seen from the Common due to tree-masking.



**Fig 29: 1911 view over Common to The Links, Fig 30: The Links from the common today, Fig 31: view from Road**



**Fig 32: 1900 Slade steps and ponds –less natural, less wooded and more 'parkified'; Figs 33 & 34: Slade lake and steps today - note extensive tree growth**



**Figure 35: The Slade school from Common**



**Figure 36: Plumstead Manor school from Common**

**4. Views into wild coombes woody groves and lakes:** Generally protected by UDP Policy D29.



**Figure 37: Slade Coombe – left ‘natural’ Pond**



**Figure 38: Slade**



**Fig 39: Slade country footpath – creating maintained but wild, natural-maintained balance**

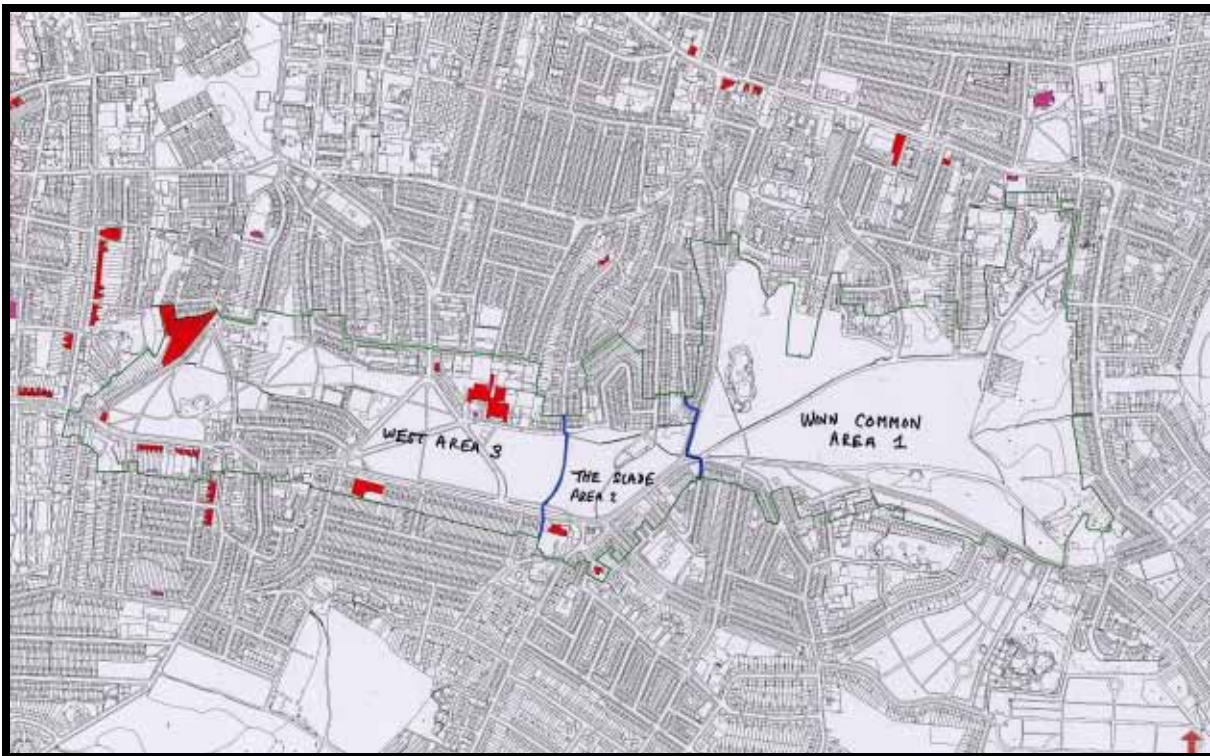


**Fig 40: Slade Steps**

## **CHARACTER ANALYSIS**

### **6. Definition of character areas**

Two features define the general visual character of the Common: open space within a perimeter rim of housing. For a more focused analysis of the character of the Conservation Area, it is useful to divide it into three slices running east- west.



**Figure 41: Plumstead Common: Division into three character areas**

### **Character Area 1: Winn's Common & Lakedale Road Area**

*Extent:* Includes Lakedale Road, Viewland Road, Great Bartletts (Winn's Common east), Grosmont area (Winn's Common north east), Bleak House area (Winn's Common south-east), Heathfield and Winn's Common south, Playground and Paddling Pool.

*Land Uses:* Common land and residential perimeter.

*Building Quality:* mainly 19<sup>th</sup> century terraced housing in varied condition, some with original character.

*Listed Buildings:* none.

*Locally Listed Buildings:* none

*Other important buildings and structures:* steps and railings on Kings Highway

*Scheduled Ancient Monument:* Bronze Age Barrow on Common

*Building Materials:* yellow and red stock bricks, wooden box sash windows, slate roofs, boundary railings

*Heritage Assets:* Common, Steps, Perimeter housing, Wickham Lane backs onto Common

*Views out:* various views to north over Plumstead and Thames to E London

*Local Distinctiveness:* open land with low scale perimeter housing, railings, long flights of steps

*Notable local features within setting:* St Nicholas' Coombe, traditional townscape with a number of distinctive buildings along Plumstead High St, St. Nicholas' church and gardens, Plume of Feathers PH, Woolwich cemetery especially boundary walls railings and chapel. Grosmont towers (detrimental).





**Fig 42: view north from Winn's Common**    **Fig 43: One Grosmont tower**    **Fig: 44 view east across the Common**

### **Character Area 2: The Slade**

*Extent:* Area between Lakedale Road and footpath across Common running from Chestnut Rise to Greenslade School – including The Slade, Greenslade School, The Slade Steps, Slade Ponds, Coombe, part of Sladedale Road, part of Roydene Road, & Tormount Road

*Land Uses:* recreational uses on common land, houses, shops and churches.

*Building Quality:* homogenous good mid 19<sup>th</sup> century terraced housing some altered some retaining original character. Interesting variety of small churches and chapels.

*Listed Buildings:* None.

*Locally Listed Buildings:* The Greenslade School (formerly known as The Slade School), “Who'da Thought It” PH

*Other important buildings:* “Woodman” PH, several small churches fronting Common including St Mark with St Margaret (for interior and historical reasons); Catholic and Evangelical Churches

*Building Materials:* yellow and red stock bricks, slate roofs.

*Heritage Assets:* Slade Green triangle, Slade steps, Ponds, Steep wild ground, occasional panoramic views north, and views across common to building frontages.

*Views:* occasional panoramic surprise views to north, views across common, views of building frontages to south.

*Local Distinctiveness:* wild coombes, dramatic steps, steep ground, townscape of former village green, 19<sup>th</sup> century parkland, some hidden surprise panoramic views north from gaps in coombes, open land with low scale perimeter housing, some surviving ornate railings, some quietly traditional unspoilt or sympathetically restored Victorian houses.



**Figure 45: Slade Coombe**



**Figure 46: View out from bottom of Slade**

### **Character Area 3: Plumstead Common West**

*Extent:* Area west of footpath across Common running from Chestnut Rise to Greenslade School and Waverley Crescent – including The Links, Plumstead Manor School, The Old Mill, Cricket field,

Heavitree Close, bowling greens, tennis court, playground St Johns area of residential including streets within Common)

*Land Uses:* Mainly common land and residential, but also significant retail, community uses, pubs schools and churches.

*Building Quality:* Some early and Mid Victorian terraced and semi detached housing north of Plumstead Common Road, elsewhere mixed good 19<sup>th</sup> century terraced housing retaining much original character. Several interesting buildings with stylish architectural features.

*Listed Buildings:* Old Mill, Greek Revival villa at 108 Plumstead Common Road

*Locally Listed Buildings:* Plumstead Manor School, The Links, Plumstead Almshouses, St Margaret's C. of E. Primary School, Prince of Wales PH, 86-100 & 106-110 Plumstead Common Road

*Building Materials:* yellow and delicate mixed pink/red stock bricks, slate roofs, some ornate railings

*Heritage Assets:* Common, special buildings, houses with ornate railings, winding former rural Plum Lane

*Views:* Over Common, including to Old Mill and Plumstead Manor School.

*Local Distinctiveness:* Grassed open Common land with low scale perimeter housing, railings, strange conglomerate stones on Plumstead Common concealed in trees behind houses in Blendon Terrace. An old 19<sup>th</sup> century workshop building in yellow stocks survives in the passage at the rear of 106 Plumstead Common Road.



**Fig 47: Old houses in Plumstead Common Road (PCR), Fig 48: workshop at rear of 106 PCR  
Fig 49: Rear or garden elevation of 106 PCR**



**Fig 50, 51 & 52: workshop at rear of 106 PCR**





Fig 53: west end of St John's Terrace,



Figure 54: The bend at the bottom of Plum Lane



Figure 55 & Figure 56: First World War memorial to fallen comrades in London 8<sup>th</sup> Howitzer Brigade RFA



Fig 57 & Fig 58: Conglomerate stones

**Setting:** The following areas and structures relate to the Common either spatially and or historically. They may be considered as potential small extensions to the Conservation Area - these are reviewed in the separate Management Strategy

- Burrage Area
- Vicarage Area
- St Nicholas' Coombe

- St Nicholas Area
- Woolwich Cemetery, Rockcliffe Gardens & William Barefoot Garden
- Plum Lane Area

## 7. Former and current uses and influence on plan form and buildings

**Historic former uses in the area** include grazing on the Common, fruit trees, sand and gravel extraction, and wood gathering. From at least the 17<sup>th</sup> century small parcels of land on the common itself began to be sold, and such land was fenced. Significant building development on this land did not commence until the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The 19<sup>th</sup> century saw increased use of the Common for military maneuvers, and building on land sold off in earlier times. Further encroachment onto the Common itself for housing was limited. **Current uses** include varied recreational use of the Common, including walking and play. Uses on the rim are mixed and in addition to residential include schools, pubs, shops, and churches.

**Pub uses:** There are several public houses in the area and each makes a distinct visual contribution to the area's presence and its local character. Loss of pub use in a prominent pub building would be detrimental to the pub building's presence and signification in the area, and in turn damage the area's character. Changes of use to some commercial uses, such as a retail shop or restaurant, may be permitted development. Whilst having a negative impact on the character of the area, such changes may not be subject to planning control.

**Church uses:** There are a number of small churches, chapels and meeting rooms in this area reflecting the area's traditional religiously non-conformist tradition. Churches provide social as well as religious facilities and are a valuable community resource contributing identity and thus character to the area. Changes of use away from religious or social/community uses will generally detrimentally impact on local character and may be contrary to the UDP policy C2 'loss of a Community facility'.

## 8. Architectural and historic qualities of the buildings

The buildings in this Conservation Area (and within its environs) express varying styles which may be conveniently described and illustrated in the following groups:

- **A few surviving 18<sup>th</sup> mainly vernacular style buildings** – specifically the Old Mill and Plume and Feathers public houses,
- **Early 19<sup>th</sup> century and early Victorian housing** – exemplified by simple classically derived styles
- **Mid-Victorian (1865-1880) housing** – generally substantial and often gabled



Fig 59: Plumstead Common Road – early Victorian housing;



Fig 60 & Fig 61: Mid -Victorian housing

- **More ornate late Victorian housing – the most common in the area – e.g. at Lakedale Road**



Figure 62: typical bay fronted late Victorian housing – Lakedale Road

- **19<sup>th</sup> c. churches**
- **Late 19<sup>th</sup> century and Edwardian buildings** – often in Aesthetic movement and Arts and Crafts derived styles for example the three schools, the park keepers cottage, The Links, some of the pubs
- **Shop buildings and shopfronts**
- **20<sup>th</sup> century residential towers**
- **Other 20<sup>th</sup> c buildings**



Figure 63: The Slade

**Plumstead Common Frontages:** In this Conservation Area, the principal focus of attention is the three miles of building frontages to the Common. Some of these frontages are long and relatively unbroken - with the best examples being Lakedale Road, the long and continuous south side of Plumstead Common Road, The Slade (the best sections being 82b-110 and The Slade). The former comprises 82 Plumstead Lodge, 82b small ornate lodge, 86-110 classical terrace, 106-110 detached Victorian houses. The Slade has a central feature comprising The Slade School, the triangle, 29-33 The Slade (Holy Cross Catholic church), 35 (The Woodman), and then 37-38 (Evangelical Chapel). Other frontages overlooking the Common whose continuity has significant townscape character include Lakedale Road, Old Mill Road St John's Terrace and St. Margaret's Grove.

**Continuity and Discontinuity:** Unfortunately in all these terraces and rows (and also in frontages not overlooking the Common), townscape continuity and unity is undermined by poor alterations and repairs. In the case of single family residential occupiers, these are generally beyond planning control, although such control could be asserted by instituting an Article 4 Direction.

**Local landmark buildings:** A number of buildings are memorable and may be described as having landmark character (\* = not in CA)

The 9 Pubs	The Star, The Prince of Wales, *The Alma Tavern, The Old Mill, * The Plume of Feathers, The Ship, The
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	Woodman, Who'da Thought It, The Prince Albert
The 3 schools	Plumstead Manor, The Slade, St. Margaret's Primary
The 5 churches	St. Mark & St. Margaret's, Evangelical Church, Catholic Church of the Holy Cross, *St. Nicholas' Church, *Trinity Methodist (setting), *Congregational Chapel
Houses & Other	Plumstead Almshouses, The Links, Vicarage, The Lodge, Park Keeper's Cottage, 82b Plumstead Common Road,



**Fig 64: Catholic Church of the Holy Cross**    **Fig 65: Woodman Road**

**Figure 66: 82b Plumstead Common Road**

**Listed Buildings:** There are two Listed Buildings in the Conservation Area:

(i) The remains of the former windmill at rear of Old Mill Public House on Old Mill Road. This was built in the early-mid 18<sup>th</sup> century and was converted to a pub around 1848 (Vincent p 533). The picturesque windows in the tower are visible in the 1820 drawing and the c 1900 photograph and remain today.



**Fig 67: Old Mill working in 1820**  
**2006**



**Fig 68: c. 1900 as part of pub.**



**Figure 69: Old Mill in**

(ii) 108 Plumstead Common Road, Greek Revival, Doric porch with Triglyph frieze, stuccoed front, later Victorian windows.



**Figure 70: 108 Plumstead Common Road with Greek Revival features**

Several other Listed buildings lie close to or within the setting of the Conservation Area: The Vicarage, formerly known as Bramblebury, St Nicholas Church and The Plume and Feathers on Plumstead High Street. These are recommended for inclusion in the Conservation Area. Other listed buildings in the vicinity include the Fire Station, the Library and the Volunteer PH all on Plumstead High Street and a Berthold Lubetkin's plot of three small modern houses on Genesta Road.

**Locally Listed Buildings:** There are 19 buildings entered on the Local List, as follows: (marked in red on map extracts above):

**Old Mill Road:** – Plumstead Manor School: 1914, Edwardian Classical 'Wrennaissance' style, featuring a row of alternating segmented and triangular pediments. Pevsner comments "*easily the most satisfying of the many Woolwich secondaries with (admirable) post war extensions (by Powell and Moya 1970-3), festive neo-Wren brick front*" (*Buildings of England: London 2 South p 284*)



**Figure 71: Plumstead Manor School Road**



**Figure 72: 86-100 Plumstead Common**

### **Plumstead Common Road:**

**111 Prince of Wales PH** – late 19<sup>th</sup> c pub with Dutch gables, 2 storeys and attic, red brick white stone dressings, curved gables have round windows with four keystones

**86-100:** terrace built 1848, 2 storey stock-brick, terrace, ornate parapet, concealing modern pitched roof, cornice on 92-100, 86-90 parapet rebuilt without cornice,

**106-108** Two detached 2 storey houses with hipped slate roofs, 106 in yellow stock bricks, projecting bay window to g/f with parapet roof and wider o/h eaves, on brackets, 108 rendered and painted front, projecting classical style porch,



**I10 & I10b:** early 19<sup>th</sup> c villa with alterations, 2 storeys and basement, low pitched hipped slate roof, with eaves Soffit , multi-coloured stock brick with stuccoed front Doric porch with sides now glazed, 2 storey one bay right extension, (I10b)



**Figure 73: Prince of Wales PH Road**



**Figure 74: I10 Plumstead Common**

**‘The Links’ clock tower – 196-212:** The original “The Links” was an early Victorian house constructed by the prominent local builder William Dawson in front of his brickworks. It is marked on the 1867 OS map extract. The present Links building dates from 1905 and was constructed by the Royal Arsenal Co-Operative Society and is a prominent local landmark. Rising from and forming part of upper floors of RACS supermarket, the 1st floor central section in red brick, with side wings in pebble dash render. The 2<sup>nd</sup> floors have Tudor style half timbering, with rendered panels. Most of the front windows have been replaced with UPVC, but the r.h.s. front window is original. There is an Oriel window to 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> floor of central section. The r.h. wing at 1<sup>st</sup> floor level is missing.

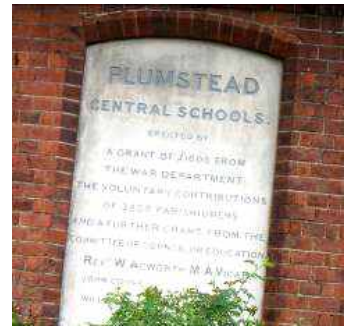


**Figure 75: The Links today 1907**



**Figure 76: The Links from the air in 1907**

**Greenslade School, a.k.a. The Slade School:** fronting Plumstead Common Road & The Slade, – London School Board 1884, in LSB style, some windows extend up into the roof; probably designed by Ernest Robson.



**Fig 77 The Slade School, ER Robson? Figs: 78 & 79: St Margaret's C. of E. Primary School & foundation stone**

**St Margaret's Grove – St Margaret's Church of England Primary School**

**Timbercroft Lane** The “Who'da thought it?” PH: much altered and extended possibly early 19<sup>th</sup> c, later g/f front extension, rendered and painted front.



**Figure 80: old post card – Who'da Thought It**



**Figure 81: Who'da thought it PH**



**Figure 82: The Who'da thought it? drawn by J Llwyd Roberts in 1929, the origins of the name of this 19<sup>th</sup> c pub are obscure.**

**53-7 Waverley Crescent – 1896 - almshouses -3 buildings - see photos above on page 19.**

**Locally listed buildings near to and relating to the Conservation Area:** There are a number of contextually and historically important areas bordering Plumstead Common Conservation Area. These were formerly Common Land, or are within its visual setting, or have a significant historical relationship to the Common. The following Locally Listed Buildings express these relationships.

**Burrage Road** – the first of the 19thc developments in Plumstead

- East side - 193-235, early 19<sup>th</sup> c 2 storey houses
- former St James Church, yellow stocks Italianate,
- west 240-48: mid 19<sup>th</sup> c 2 storey houses

**Plumstead Common Road:** 83-89 odd; tall early Victorian 3 storey houses

**Plum Lane** 10-32: mid Victorian terraces,

**Plumstead High St** – Green Man PH, Volunteer PH, Red Lion PH, Plumstead Library, 1903, Plumstead Fire Station 1913

**Rippolson Road** (close to Plumstead High St): – Old stable and forge, former Farrier's workshop, arch dated 1883; interest historical rather than physical

**Other important buildings within the setting of CA:**

**Plumstead Common Road** - Trinity Methodist church

**Vicarage Road** – 18<sup>th</sup> c vicarage of former St Margaret's church

**Plumstead High Street** - Plume and Feathers PH



Figure 83: Plume and Feathers - 19<sup>th</sup> century photograph picture



Figure 84: Contemporary picture

**St Nicholas' Road** - St Nicholas' Church and St Nicholas' Gardens

**King's Highway (south)** - Woolwich cemetery

## 9. Contribution made by unlisted buildings within CA

The significance of the unlisted buildings lining the Common has already been noted. Similarly, the contribution of all traditional buildings (i.e. pre-1914). In addition to these, a few buildings possess particular stylistic character, for example:

### Houses

82b Plumstead Common Road (partly spoilt by insensitive minor alterations)

St John's Terrace / Waverley Crescent - The Lodge,

Waverley Crescent - Park Keepers House stables and yard (next to The Lodge).





**Figure 85: park keepers cottage**



**Fig g 2: The Lodge**

### **Public houses**

35 The Slade – The Woodman,  
 Waverley Crescent – The Ship  
 158 Plumstead Common Road - The Star  
 Old Mill Road - The Prince Albert

### **Churches**

Old Mill Road - St Mark with St Margaret – and older hall  
 29-34 the Slade: - Roman Catholic Church of Holy Cross,  
 37-38 the Slade: - Evangelical Free Church

## **10. Significant local details and their conservation**

A variety of local details contribute character to the area. The following list identifies several types of detail – doors, porches, fences gates and boundary walls, windows, roof details, wall details, satellite dishes and shopfronts. There are additionally a few particular details worthy of specific mention – the list is by no means exhaustive, therefore omission of a feature is not an indication of lack of significance:

- Post and rail fencing on Common
- Front garden details including decorative front garden railings
- Red brick string courses – on large houses in west area of Common
- Clock tower on The Links
- Italianate decorative tower on St Margaret’s School
- Fish-scale slate roofs, for example on Lakedale Road
- Front garden boundary ornate railings e.g. on Sladedale and Lakedale Roads
- Trellis over doors
- Classical porticos – e.g. 110 Plumstead Common Road
- Window surround details - for example on Lakedale Road



**Figure 86: recessed doors and red string courses**



**Figure 87: & Figure 88: Post-&-Rail fencing near the Slade – detail differences reflects varying maintenance specification**



**Figure 89 Stylish railings**



**Figure 90: reinstated railings**



**Figure 91: Gothic door surrounds**

**Front doors:** Original Victorian front doors were a design feature and a selling point. In older properties these are four-panelled, sometimes with the upper panels glazed. Different houses were built in different styles and designed with different front doors, and groups of similar houses normally shared the original door design. The detailed design quality of the door made a statement about the character of the house and its relationship with its neighbours. A number of the original front doors have regrettably been replaced. Detailed examination of replacements reveals that the joinery details are usually different and are not good copies. The wood of replacement doors (internal and external) is much inferior. When looking at a house, the eye is first drawn to the style and detail of the front door of a building as its entrance. The character and variety of the surviving original front and other doors makes a significant contribution to the Conservation Area's special character.



**Fig 92: Quality restoration – old door set in recessed porch; Fig 93: Two doors, one old, one new; Fig 94: Elaborate 1897 door**

Replacement of original doors is not conservation and should not be necessary. Replacement with modern ‘off the peg’ designs always detracts from the character of the individual property and its contribution to the street scene as a whole. This also may result in the loss of distinctive door furniture such as letterboxes and door-knockers. Mock-Georgian type doors and similar “off-the shelf” varieties are detrimental to the Conservation Area.

Old front doors are worth repair. Any decayed timber can usually be replaced with a matching piece of seasoned timber and for this reason, the replacement of original doors, which are in a repairable condition, is not recommended. Where planning control powers exist (for example on flats or mixed use properties) replacements should normally not be agreed.

If the original door has been lost, the new door should carefully follow the design and detailing of the original door on that house – and if the original design is not known it may be possible to copy an original from a similar house nearby. It is insufficient to install a match to another door used in the area. The design should pay particular attention to the glazing configuration and panel mouldings re-using original ironmongery such as doorknockers and letterboxes. Sometimes it will be possible to buy an appropriate second hand old Victorian door. Victorian doors were painted, never stained or polished.

**Porches:** Purpose-built porches to the front or side of houses are not an original feature in this area. As houses are grouped in terraces the erection of porches would generally disrupt the continuity, and new porches always require planning permission. If the opportunity arises to remove a porch, this will enhance the Conservation Area. Generally, the erection of new porches is detrimental to the conservation area. **Recessed Porches:** Some houses have recessed front doors with arched surrounds. It would be inappropriate and damaging for glazing or doors to be introduced into these openings.



**Characterful fences, gates and boundary walls:** Low plain brick walls, sometimes originally topped by dwarf railings or hedges, are the main original pattern for front boundaries throughout the area. There are a number of original metal railings in the area. Front gates also tend to be either modest wooden gates with wooden fences, or metal gates with brick walls. Wherever a new boundary treatment is needed, the original treatment should be ascertained by looking at similar houses and reinstating the original pattern. It would not be appropriate to introduce a wooden fence where there is a run of brick walls. New railings walls and gates should follow the local original pattern. Demolition or removal of the whole of a front garden wall, railings, fence or gates will require Conservation Area Consent.



**Figure 95: Interesting newly reinstated ornamental railings in front of unsightly painted bricks**

**Effect of Hard standings in front gardens:** The area was designed without significant provision for residential off street parking. In general the front gardens are small and not large enough to accommodate a car. The introduction of a paved, concrete or other hard standing into a front garden to create car parking space will always damage the character of the area. The creation of off street parking in this area will usually require changes to fences and a footway crossover – which will require Planning Permission if the road is a trunk road or classified road. This should normally be refused for the associated loss of on-street parking as well as impact on the appearance of the conservation area.

**Conserving external walls:** The walls of many of the houses were constructed from soft yellow or red London stock bricks and bedded in lime mortar. A few houses have fine moulded brick details. Some others have original elaborate stucco surrounds to doors and windows. Sometimes yellow brickwork is dressed with even softer red bricks – as a decorative feature in arched openings, string-courses or dog toothed eaves. These soft bricks are porous and their unpainted finish is designed to help the house breathe naturally, helping reduce internal condensation and external brick spalling. This finish is of value and should be conserved - and not painted, rendered or cleaned by sandblasting.

Brick surfaces are generally well over 100 years old and have weathered to a mellow appearance. The surface should not be regarded as dirty; it has acquired a hard surface or patina giving an aged appearance. Cleaning should be avoided, unless needed to remove genuinely damaging sulphurous deposits. To preserve the patina, any cleaning undertaken in spite of this advice should be gentle, using a brush, soap and water or the Jos system. Abrasive or chemical treatments can permanently damage the old soft bricks should always be avoided. The Council's firm advice is not to disturb the original finishes where they survive; partly to retain authenticity, partly to protect the building from spalling and damp, and partly for reasons of appearance and uniformity.

In a few cases the exterior brickwork has been painted but this is structurally unwise and unsightly and should be avoided. It detracts from the original character of the houses and makes the brickwork impervious to moisture transfer, and creates dampness and condensation problems inside. In cases where brickwork is painted, consideration should be given to the removal of the paint, if needed using a specialist firm. Bricks are generally in good condition and they should not need repair or

maintenance. The use of stone, artificial stone, pebble dashing, cement rendering, timber, plastic or tiles to clad any part of the exterior of a property is not considered acceptable.



**Fig 96: Cladding & pebble dash disfigure traditional housing**

The re-pointing of brickwork is generally crude and damaging to appearance, it needs only to be carried out on a patch basis where it becomes essential, the old mortar having badly deteriorated. Care must be taken to match the composition, the strength and the original colour of the mortar, which should be finished with flush or slightly recessed joints. The original mortar was lime rich, which is sacrificial – beneficially sucking out moisture from the bricks and allowing minor movements in the structure. Where remedial pointing is required care should be taken to match the colour and lime consistency of the original mortar.

With the exception of a few houses (for instance in Burrage Road), external rendering is not a characteristic feature and should not be applied to houses with plain brickwork. Similarly, the painting of external walls obscures features and so should be avoided. Where the front walls of have already been rendered or painted, it may be possible to remove the render or paint. This is frequently done in Italy where it is seen as more acceptable to reveal the resulting “old” marked and worn brickwork. The Council will always accept such revealed imperfections in stripped brickwork, but it is quite understood that this will not be to the taste of all owners, or that they will not wish to bear the expense of render or paint removal.

**Character and conservation of old windows:** The predominant type of window is the wooden sliding sash set into box sash frames, mainly with two panes to each sash. There are a few houses with multiple-pane sashes. The character of the original timber casement windows is not always fully appreciated. They were designed with attention to detail – for example the precise shape of the glazing bars. Surviving original or old (i.e. pre 1914) wooden windows should be regarded as period items, worthy of retention and conservation.

Window repair: Existing old sashes can cheaply be repaired when necessary. Wooden windows have glazing bars, which are simpler to repair than to replace. Where repairs to the original joinery can increase the life of windows it is preferred that this takes place rather than wholesale replacement. The original timber is superior in durability to that which is obtained today – it is generally much heavier slow growing first growth timber – and is well worth conservation. Repairs may be carried out on site by inserting a new section – this is called ‘scarfing’ in timber. This straight forward carpentry technique is described in the inexpensive leaflet on timber window repairs (Townsend, A and Clarke, M (1988) *Repair of Wood Windows* SPAB Technical Pamphlet 13) published by the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings – 13 Spittle Sq London E1. Visit their website - [http://www.spab.org.uk/publications\\_Q&A\\_timberwindows.html](http://www.spab.org.uk/publications_Q&A_timberwindows.html)

Replacement windows: Where this is not possible replacements should match the original pattern or the predominant style in the terrace. Wooden replacement windows are generally the only advisable

or acceptable material as neither UPVC, nor aluminium can recreate the profile, sight lines or subtleties of the original designs. Replacement sashes that tilt are inappropriate and are discouraged.

(On windows see further section 13 below)

**Roofs:** The predominant original roofing materials throughout this area are natural slates, sometimes with clay ridge tiles. The original slates are now hard to obtain and should be conserved and re-used as a finite non-renewable resource. Grey, blue and purple Welsh slates may be available second-hand. Old slates themselves are normally in good condition – with the main problem causing slippage being nail rot. Old slates should be carefully removed and stacked on the roof according to size. A minimum recovery rate of 80 – 90% should be insisted on in the contract or building agreement. A builder's recommendation that replacement is 'necessary' may be questionable and can reflect a contrary financial interest (such as the potential resale of the old slates) or lack of available skilled labour in that firm. A high recovery rate will enable full relaying at the front and over half at the rear.

Where the **original slates are lost or where they cannot be re-used**, imported slates will be a cheap and fully acceptable option – Spanish, Indian, Canadian and Brazilian are generally all durable and of excellent quality and are now the same price as synthetic coverings. This is because the price of imported natural quarried slate has fallen and is now about the same as the less attractive and less durable synthetics. There is no longer any economic or other reason for using artificial slate.

Where there are no residential permitted development rights there will be planning control over changes to the shape of the roof such as the removal of chimney stacks or installation of wind turbines. There is control over change of roof materials on any non residential buildings (churches, schools etc.), and to buildings in mixed use (for example, buildings divided into flats).

The roofs of a number of buildings have been recovered in concrete ridge tiles or artificial slate. These are visually damaging and may impose an undue structural load on the roof timbers. Where there is planning control, they will not be acceptable for future re-roofing works. **Ridge tiles** should be re-used if feasible, or replaced to match the type removed, e.g. half-round. **Roof vents** should not be required on roofs with visible pitches, as the roof may be ventilated through eaves. Ridge vents may be used if needed and the unit is discreet. Roof vents should not be positioned on the main roof slope, this is poor practice and unsightly.

Chimneystacks and pots are a feature of the area and make a contribution to the street scene. The area's character will be damaged if they are reduced in height or the pots removed. Even where chimneys are redundant they perform an important task of ventilating the dwelling structure. They can also be reused to route services or to vent gas boilers.

**Satellite Dishes:** There are a few satellite TV dishes on front facing walls, roof slopes or chimneys on houses in the Conservation Area. Such prominently sited dishes are visually intrusive. Installations that overlook the street or break the roofline are generally visually disturbing. Concealed locations are preferable, using architectural features to screen the dish from public view.

**Shopfronts:** The original shopfronts in this area were of wood and Victorian and Edwardian period units of good design and quality joinery. Most have regrettably been altered or replaced. In some cases remnants of the originals are evident. Any genuine survivors will contribute substantial character to the area and should be conserved. In traditional shopping areas each shopfront shared common elements of design, producing a neighbourly regular pattern. A row of capitals separates fascias of a



consistent size and design. Additional regularity is created using shared motifs in the design of clerestorey ventilation grilles, stallrisers, porches, doors, pilasters and fenestration patterns.

In the majority of older buildings, traditional shopfronts have been replaced or altered, unfortunately often using inappropriate materials, with the result being detrimental to the appearance of the building, and out of character with neighbouring buildings. Such poor alterations include:

- The installation of oversized fascias.
- Removal of wood frames and replacement with unsightly bare aluminium.
- Loss of original doors.
- Removal of traditional recessed porches.
- Decay and lack of maintenance of pilasters and other surrounding features.
- Loss of traditional window arrangement and design. Traditional subdivision by mullions and transoms gives emphasis to the vertical and horizontal character of building and parade.
- Loss of detailed woodwork, cornices, modillions, fanlights and the covering of clerestories with oversized fascias.
- Loss of traditional hanging signs and their replacement with projecting box signs.
- Garish illumination of fascias by neon boxes.
- Installation of bare metal shutters mounted in large, visually intrusive, or poorly located shutter boxes. These give an alienating fortress like effect at night, contributing to the fear of crime, are often disfigured by graffiti and can also conceal burglaries within the shop.
- Loss of the clerestorey of a traditional shop front (also called top-lights). This the horizontal glazing section located below the cornice and fascia, and above the main shop window and door. Clerestories make an important contribution to local shop front character in traditional buildings.
- Loss of metal ventilation grilles below the fascia or below the stallriser.
- Loss of stall risers and /or protective stallriser grilles

**Shopfront Conservation:** Any surviving traditional shopfront should be retained. Alterations to original shopfronts or to removal of period materials capable of repair and/or contributing to the architectural or historic quality of local townscape should be avoided. Removal or alteration of such a shopfront will always require planning permission whether or not the shop is in a Conservation Area. Planning permission will also be required for the repair of a traditional (e.g. wooden) shopfront, which changes its appearance by replacing traditional with new materials or other alterations which affects external appearance. Unauthorised changes will be the subject of enforcement action and reinstatement will be required. Edwardian and Victorian traditional shopfronts have architectural and historical value. They contribute to the appearance of an area, and are worthy of conservation and restoration.

Conservative repair of traditional shopfronts retains local character and helps maintain or restore the architectural integrity of the shop building. Respect for original traditional fabric enhances the appearance and character of an area – to the overall benefit of trade. Alterations to shopfronts and replacement shopfronts, if permitted, should retain, repair, restore or reinstate any original features and materials. On traditional buildings, where refenestration is justified, replacement timber window frames will be expected to use seasoned timber, moulded and cut to the original specifications. Ornamental pilasters, fascias, consoles, and hanging, sign brackets should also be retained, repaired, restored or reinstated as appropriate. Repairs should conserve original materials as far as possible. Replacement materials should relate well to the traditional character of the building. Where appropriate, replacement materials should be finished as a scholarly replica to the same standard as the originals. This approach will apply to all surviving characterful shopfronts and buildings, not just those in conservation areas.

## 11. Predominant building materials, features, textures and colours

**Materials:** Besides the vegetation on the Common, constructed features include paths, steps, roads, and post and rail fencing. The latter was traditionally assembled from wood or concrete posts and tube steel rail. Houses and other buildings are typically built from brick, glass, wood, and for the roof, natural slates or tiles.

**Colours:** Yellow and red stock bricks, white window frames, some white stucco window surrounds and cornices, red ridge tiles, some red brick dressings and ornamental string courses, various disfiguring colours of painted bricks and render,

**Architectural features:** These may be divided into groups according to age and building type.

- The earlier Georgian and early Victorian houses generally have lower angled pitches to the roofs – designed to hide the roof.
- Victorian terraced houses – these houses celebrate the roof with decorative detail and features such as bays, gables, doorways, window surrounds, roof details,
- Traditional pubs – varied but always visually distinctive – these are generally local landmark buildings worthy of preservation
- Schools – high quality design – with picturesque individuality- in aesthetic movement or arts and crafts style
- Churches – and a number of small chapels reflecting the non-conformist element of the population
- The Clock Tower on ‘The Links’
- Council Depots with features associated with early 20thc vernacular cottage style
- Houses in exaggerated cottage style – e.g. the huge curved swept roofs of 82b Plumstead Common Road
- Tower blocks – generally poorly situated and dull - damaging to context, views, & neighbours

## 12. The contribution made by natural features – green spaces, trees, and hedges.

The extensive green open Common provides a fine setting for the largely ordinary Victorian buildings on the perimeter, enhancing their significance and the benefits of restoring their character.



Figure 97: Winn’s Common



Figure 98: Slade pond detail

Plumstead Common is designated as Metropolitan Open Land – this is a London wide protective designation being an urban equivalent to the Green Belt designation. The Common is also traversed from end to end by a Green Chain footpath – this is part of a series of linked walks through the green

spaces of South East London. The Greenwich UDP Policy O17 identifies Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation dividing them into 4 categories: Metropolitan, Borough I & II and Local. The following three Nature Conservation Sites lie on or in proximity to Plumstead Common:

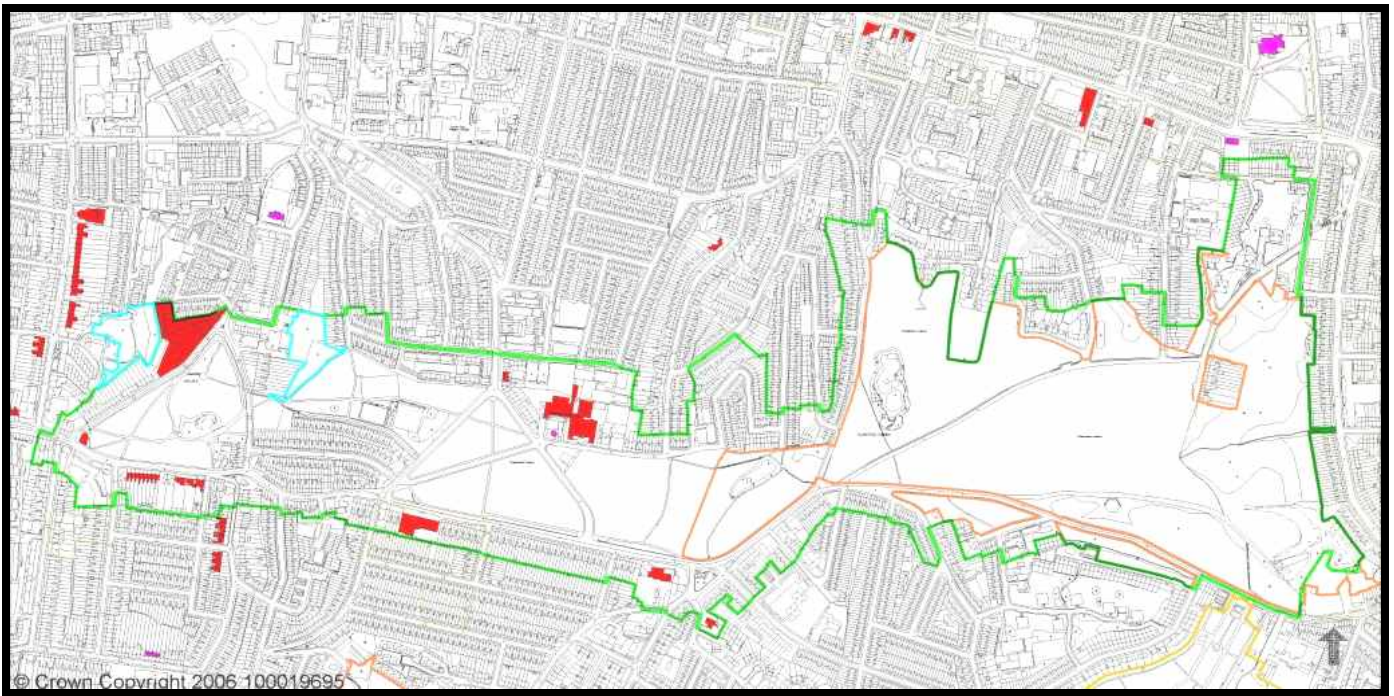
**Plumstead Common - Winn's Common, Bleak Hill and the Slade (UDP reference NC 17):**

This large Nature Site of Borough I Importance of 29.5 hectares comprises acid grassland, secondary woodland, and a pond. The extensive areas of acid grassland are dominated by common bent (*Agrostis capillaris*), red fescue (*Festuca rubra*) and wavy hair-grass (*Deschampsia flexuosa*) with typical acid grassland forbs such as sheep's sorrel (*Rumex acetosella*) and cat's-ear (*Hypochaeris radicata*). Scattered scrub of gorse occurs throughout the grassland. Areas of woodland are dominated by pedunculate oak (*Quercus robur*) and downy birch (*Betula pubescens*), with a varied shrub layer and ground flora including bluebell (*Hyacinthoides non-scripta*) and wood sage (*Teucrium scorodonia*). A small pond at the northern end of The Slade is fringed with poplars. There is free public access to the common, which also lies on the Green Chain Walk.

**The Oaks, Plumstead (UDP reference NC 42):** This Nature Site of Local importance of 0.7 hectares of woodland is the western blue area marked on the map below. It comprises the grounds of The Oaks, a former 19<sup>th</sup> century House. Although open land, it lies adjacent to and just outside the Conservation Area and it is recommended to incorporate it within the Plumstead Conservation Area (i.e. the Conservation Area of Architectural or Historic Interest). The area comprises woodland of sessile oak (*Quercus petraea*) and sycamore (*Acer pseudoplatanus*), with an understorey of holly (*Ilex aquilifolium*), lining the steep banks of a flat bottomed gully. The ground flora includes bluebell (*Hyacinthoides non-scripta*) and cow parsley (*Anthriscus sylvestris*). This is possibly a fragment of ancient woodland, though much altered. There is free public access, and the area is popular for informal recreation, especially with children.

**Plumstead Common Nature Reserve (UDP reference NC 51):** This Nature Site of Local importance of 0.6 hectares of woodland used to be known as Blendon Terrace. It is a small area of possibly ancient sessile oak (*Quercus petraea*) woodland with a dense holly (*Ilex aquilifolium*) understorey. Bluebells (*Hyacinthoides non-scripta*) are locally abundant. The site supports good populations of common birds and invertebrates, and is managed as a nature reserve. It is highly valued for its wildlife by the local community.





**Map 8: Nature Conservation Areas: red = Site of Borough Importance for Nature Conservation area grade I; blue = Site of Local Importance for Nature Conservation – also shown: Conservation Area boundary (green), Locally Listed Buildings (red), Listed Buildings (magenta).**

### **13. Extent of and management of loss, intrusion or damage to the Conservation Area.**

Historical investigation and visual survey suggest that, over the last century, there have been various significant losses to the character of the Conservation Area. Those which took place prior to the Designation of the Conservation Area include:

- Demolition of buildings,
- Physical encroachment onto common,
- Construction of roads on the Common;
- Construction of tall buildings, within the Conservation Area or affecting its setting,

The following detrimental changes have taken place since Conservation Area designation, mainly through the exercise by owners of permitted development rights

- Loss of front garden boundary railings, before and after CA designation (this is often permitted development);
- Unsightly changes to Common boundary railings;
- Minor changes to the fronts of houses (for example insensitively designed replacement window, doors, roof materials, render and painted brick),
- Poorly designed more substantial changes – dormers and extensions

These losses are reviewed looking at the degree to which similar problems could recur and what restorative or conservation remedial action can be taken.

**Demolition:** Prior to the designation of the Conservation Area a number of demolitions of important good old buildings took place in particular: Plumstead Old Manor House, aka Pilgrim cottage, Wickham Lane – early 1900's; \*St Margaret's church, St Margaret's Road, – c. 1967; \*Police station and \*Public Baths Plumstead High St: (1980's); Bandstand, Plumstead Common west – late 1970's. Several of these demolitions took place outside the Conservation Area, (\* = not in CA)

*Observations and Recommendations:* There are no significant powers to control demolition outside CA, consideration should be given to extending Conservation Area to include sites within its setting which include locally listed or other unprotected important buildings.

**Physical encroachment onto common, before CA designation:** Physical encroachments, whilst numerous and damaging to the character of the Common, appear to be confined to land parcels sold before 18<sup>th</sup> century. The Common is now legally protected from encroachment and additionally protected by the UDP designation as Metropolitan Open Land.

**Construction or “improvement” of roads across the Common - before CA designation:** The Common is protected against construction of new roads, but enlargement of existing roads is possible. *Recommendations:* appropriate recommendations are made in the management strategy

**Minor changes to fronts of houses (poor insensitively designed replacement window, doors, and roof materials):** Many of the houses surrounding the Common have lost character as a result of minor changes. In many cases original features have been changed, and the replacements are out of character with the conservation area. Visual inspection shows that these repairs and minor building alterations and ugly rear extensions have harmed the Conservation Area. These disfiguring alterations include the following:

- Formerly attractive brick fronts have been covered by render or pebble dash,
- UPVc and aluminum replacement windows
- Concrete roof tiles – loss of original red tiles or slate roof materials
- Loss of original front doors
- Inappropriately located satellite dishes
- Fronts of houses with painted bricks

**Loss of front garden boundary railings to common both before and after CA designation (this is often permitted development):** A4? *Recommendations:* appropriate recommendations in management strategy

**UPVc Windows:** Period windows are an important element helping unify character of this conservation area. It is tempting to replace windows framed in wood with white UPVC windows. One problem with UPVc windows is that they are made with thicker ugly frames. Whatever the detailing and construction and whatever the material, all these replacement windows have a manufactured regular square appearance which contrasts poorly with the elegant traditional construction of the original houses. Losing its old windows will always damage the design character of a house or other building and the character of the streetscape. Buildings with original or replica wooden framed windows look like real period houses and houses with replacement UPVc windows look spoilt and inauthentic. Conservation means putting effort into retaining and maintaining surviving period wooden windows. In this Conservation Area conserving the original surviving window frames, is cheaper than replacement, helps preserves the character of the house and the area, and importantly protects the resale value of the house.



**Figure 99: loss of character - UPVc windows set in pebble dash**

**Loss of or poor changes to boundary railings, walls and fences:** Original boundary treatments, in particular to front gardens of houses help integrate the character of the area and complement the architecture of the house. In some parts of the Conservation Area, for example around Lakedale Road, the original boundary treatment included stylish and interesting ornate railings. Some of these survive but many of the original boundary treatments have gone. The loss of aspects of the traditional front garden boundary treatment is detrimental to townscape.

**Changes of use detrimental to building character:** PPG 15 advises that the original use of a building of architectural interest is often the best use. In this area one change of use affecting historic character is loss of pub use – generally changing to restaurant or housing. The former is not subject to planning control – although changes to external appearance will require planning permission. In this area, an example of a change of use away from pub to restaurant is the landmark “The Ship” Public House.

**Roof extensions, dormers and rooflights:** In this area buildings have visible pitched roofs and roofscape is an important visual characteristic. Many of the houses in this Conservation Area are too small to accommodate a loft conversion without building a large ugly roof extension. Even at the rear, such a roof extension has been harmful to the Conservation Area’s character.

Dormer windows are not a characteristic feature of this Conservation Area and will generally be damaging to character on the fronts or sides of buildings. Rear elevations, however are often less visible from the street, and where the roof is large enough, a suitably designed small rear dormer window (visually appropriate to and in keeping with the house) may be less damaging. To fit in appropriately the dormer should be:

- small – with the front face no greater than one square metre
- well set in from the roof ridge and eaves
- where appropriate have pitched and possibly hipped roofs
- the materials and design should be in keeping with the style of the house

Rooflights are usually less obtrusive than dormers, especially if they are of the “conservation rooflight” style lying flush to the roof. They allow light into the roof space, but are not encouraged on visible front roof slopes. In this Conservation Area (not under an article 4 Direction), flush rooflights do not require consent.

**Rear Extensions and Conservatories:** Most of the houses in the area originally had a narrow back addition creating an L shaped Plan. In other words most houses were designed and built with a rear extension. New rear extensions will generally be built onto and increase the size of an existing

original 'extension'. The generally small size of the houses and gardens in this Conservation Area mean that house extensions will often be difficult to achieve successfully and will be over-bearing, out of keeping and damaging to the local character of the area. Several types of extension in this area have been detrimental to the character of the Conservation Area:

- “wrap around” conservatory or solid rear extensions which infill the L and project rearwards of the traditional building line
- first floor extensions
- side extensions

To avoid such problems in future the size, form and appearance of rear extensions should all take account of the characteristics of the original house and maintain an architectural unity with both the individual house and the terrace as a whole. In terms of style, to avoid disturbing the character of a house, an extension needs to be subordinate, its style will be either 'in keeping' or, if small and uncompetitive, in contrast.

**Conservatory style rear extensions:** There may be an opportunity for a light contrasting conservatory style infill extension infilling the space alongside the rear addition. This will depend on whether the garden is wide enough to avoid adverse neighbour impact. It should be glazed, with design of the bars sensitive and well detailed. It should be built in wood or metal, not plastic. Plastic PVCu conservatories look plastic, manufactured and generally have wide ugly glazing bars and are damaging. To preserve and emphasise the original shape of the house, it needs to be slightly recessed and visually distinct. The side wall of the rear addition of the house (which will become an internal wall) should be structurally retained, but may be pierced to create a door.

It will help conserve or enhance the character of the Conservation Area, if the opportunity for rear extensions is judged on a case-by-case basis, taking account of neighbour amenity considerations, and also the impact on the appearance of the rear elevation, the amount of original fabric covered, the available plot size and amenity space and the level of uniformity to the rear of the building and its neighbours.

**Redevelopment and new development:** Some buildings are clearly detrimental to the character of the area, for example the several residential tower blocks within the area or adversely affecting its setting. Therefore schemes involving the demolition of such buildings will in principle enhance the character of the area, and subject to the quality and impact of the replacement scheme on the area will be in principle welcomed.

In this conservation area all pre-1914 buildings, irrespective of their individual architectural merit, contribute to the character of this Conservation Area by virtue of their age and historical value. Government policy in PPG 15 and the Greenwich UDP (Policy D17) indicates that buildings positively contributing to Conservation Areas should be retained and not demolished. The redevelopment of pre-1914 buildings, including small buildings and industrial or commercial buildings will therefore not normally be possible.

More recent buildings if they are undistinguished may be demolished but before demolition is agreed, an assessment is needed as to the architectural quality of both the replacement building and the building and its contribution to the area – taking into account how long it has been established and its relationship to nearby buildings. Where demolition is considered acceptable, UDP Policy D17 and PPG 15 indicate that this will need to be subject to an agreed scheme for a replacement building which will enhance the character and townscape of the area.



A replacement or new building will need to respond to UDP policy D1 (Urban Design). To fit into the Conservation Area it should relate well to its neighbours having regard to the following:

- Building lines and scale of area
- Heights, massing, rhythm and roofscape of adjoining buildings,
- Characteristic building plot widths of the area
- Architectural characteristics, profile and silhouette of adjoining buildings; type, colour and origin of materials of adjoining buildings;
- Complexity and richness of materials, form and detailing of existing buildings where this contributes positively to the character of the area.

Design Statements (which are required on most planning applications under government advice (Circular DCLG 01/07 section3) will helpfully refer to these considerations.

#### **14. Neutral areas and buildings in the conservation area:**

Because of the careful way in which the Conservation area's boundaries were drawn, there are few genuinely neutral buildings in the area. Most of the terraced Victorian houses surrounding the Common are architecturally typical rather than special. But their setting frames many fine views across the Common and this elevates their significance in the street scene and enhances the importance of these ordinary Victorian buildings. In consequence, they play a special and important role in defining the character and appearance of the Conservation Area. They have roles both in defining both the panoramic skyline and in the close up character of the Common perimeter. These houses exist in numbers and have group value will be eroded by changes to individual houses. These houses are not 'neutral' and it is emphasised that the setting of the Common would be harmed if they were demolished, or their character altered.

Additionally, all pre-1914 houses in the area have age value and relevant architectural style, character making them worthy of preservation.

#### **15. General Condition:**

Perhaps for mainly economic reasons there is a general problem of disrepair of houses and other buildings. In many cases the maintenance regime has evidently been patchy and the quality of repairs poor and below a desirable standard. The problem applies to the windows, doors and roofs of houses, but also to front garden boundary treatment, to churches, to shop buildings and shopfronts, to fences to the Common, to pubs.

In some instances there is visible evidence of commendable enthusiasm for reinstatement of original materials and features by well motivated owner occupiers, but even in these cases detailed repair guidance would be helpful.

#### **16. Problems, pressures and capacity for change**

**Disrepair and poor maintenance:** The cumulative impact of disrepair and poor maintenance of buildings and structures in the Conservation Area results in an untidy and sometimes incoherent visual character. Although unfortunate, this is superficial and potentially reversible. The immediate image does not do full justice to what was and could once again be a highly attractive area. The causes are various – limitations in planning powers due to householder permitted development rights, lack of understanding of character, economic limitations of householders, varying community appreciation of environmental character.

### Potential for specific works of enhancement on the Common:

On Plumstead Common itself a number of enhancements are recommended for implementation as resources become available:

- Preparation of a management plan or strategy for the Common green space – the lead service on this being the Parks department and it would include consultation with the Plumstead Common Environment Group
- Co-ordination & desirability for unity in post and rail boundary treatment
- Interpretative panel for Scheduled monument
- The Steps – some historic reinstatement – see picture
- Lake and coombes – the current strategy of leaving wild and managing as nature area strategy is supported
- Conglomerate stones – currently hidden in self-sown trees behind Blendon Terrace – setting could be improved



Figure 100: Conglomerate stones hidden in woods



Figure 101: c. 1906 post and rail boundary treatment (at bottom of The Steps) – source old postcard

**Potential for specific works of enhancement: Perimeter and other buildings:** The investment in repair and maintenance has been very variable, with a number of worthy attempts at good quality work, but this is marred by insensitive alteration elsewhere. Lack of planning control means for the most part all this is up to the individual. New guidance on repairs and minor alterations in the management strategy may help remedy this. However although an Article 4 Direction is in theory possible, buildings are now so much altered, that it may now be considered too late. When resources permit, the following restoration works may be considered by land-owners as beneficial in principal:

- **The Links** – general restoration , reinstatement of traditional wood windows,
- **External front walls:** removal of paint or render insofar as practical;
- **Front garden railings and boundary walls and fences:** Repair and restoration and where necessary reinstatement to original design;
- **Windows:** Where replacement of original timber windows has resulted in UPVc plastic, or aluminum frames, or loss of internal sub-divisions, or installation of oversize glazing bar widths, it is worthwhile to reinstate window frames in timber, taking care to use original timber profiles;
- **Front doors:** Although many of the original front doors survive, a large number have been unsuitably replaced. Old doors should be replaced and not repaired. Where the original door is lost reinstatement should closely follow the original design which may usually be ascertained from neighbouring survivors on similar buildings.
- **Roof coverings:** Reinstatement of natural slate or other original materials

- **Reinstatement of metal rainwater goods.** These were originally in cast iron; some have been changed to PVC – these are not durable. Extruded or cast aluminium products look appropriate and better.
- **Shopfronts:** preservation and reinstatement of traditional wooden shopfronts

## **17. Report on community involvement:**

The main local group the **Plumstead Common Environment Group** (PCEG) has in the region of 200 members and has been active in support of environmental enhancement. The Conservation Area benefits from this.

**Consultation:** Public consultation has been an important feature in the preparation of Greenwich's Conservation Area Appraisals and Management Proposals. The Plumstead Common Conservation Area exercise included:

- A mail drop of c. 1500 letters advertising a 'drop-in' session and explaining the appraisal had been made 3 weeks before to all the houses and other buildings in the Conservation Area and the areas proposed for inclusion. Letters enclosing the draft appraisal sent to the Plumstead Common Environment Group and the Woolwich and District Antiquarian Society.
- The appraisal was published on the Council's website with an advertisement. The character appraisal as well as being available to download on the website was made available to be read in the Slade Library and in the Council's Planning Office.
- A 'drop-in' consultation meeting on the edge of the Common in The Slade Community Hall, 24 April 2007 from 4pm to 7pm. The caretaker administrator made available a large hall with tables and chairs. Two Conservation officers were in attendance. About 40 people visited the drop-in session including several members and officers of the Plumstead Common Environment Group. There was a three and a half hour round table discussion on a variety of issues affecting the Conservation Area. The feedback was supportive and appreciative of the research which had gone into the appraisal.

Sixteen written responses were received; several making numerous specific suggestions all included as far as possible. Changes made to the appraisal document including improved photographs and captions and more detailed information and more practical advice in the local details section.

## **18. Conservation Area Boundary Review:**

Survey work indicates that all the areas included in the original designation of the Conservation Area remain appropriate. There is a good case for several small additions to the area – as detailed in the separate Management Strategy.

## **19. Desirability of producing and adopting generic advice on conservative repair and minor changes to the Borough's Conservation Areas:**

A single Borough wide design and conservation advice leaflet should be produced giving detailed advice on a variety of matters such as repairs potentially involving minor changes to windows, doors, roof materials and shopfronts with advice on ways of preserving the original building fabric.

## **4. Contacts and further advice**

**Conservation Team**, Development Town Planning  
First Floor, Peggy Middleton House  
50 Woolwich New Road, London SE18 6HQ  
Tel: 020 8854 8888

**Parks and Open Spaces Section:** Shooters Hill Depot, Opposite Eaglesfield Road, Shooters Hill  
SE18 4LX General phone number 020 8856 2232

**Plumstead Common Environment Group** – a local independent voluntary group contact them  
via their website – [www.pceg.org.uk](http://www.pceg.org.uk)

## 5. Glossary

**Bay and bow windows** – these are windows projecting out from the wall. A **bay** window is canted and has an elongated hexagonal plan form.

**Casement window** – a window that opens on hinges.

**Clerestorey light** – any window or row of windows in the upper part of a building (originally the church windows above the nave arcade).

**Dado** – a moulded section, which runs around the wall at approximately waist height.

**Dormer** – a projecting window inserted vertically into a sloping roof with its own roof and sides, known as cheeks.

**English bond** – bond refers to the pattern in which the bricks of a wall are laid. English bond is where bricks are laid with alternate rows of headers (where the brick is laid with the short end visible) and rows of stretchers (laid lengthwise).

**Flemish bond** – the pattern created where a brick wall is laid with alternate headers and stretchers (see above), which are aligned, in each alternate row.

**Footway crossover** - an alteration to the footway ramping it to enable a vehicle to cross over to the front garden

**Gable** – The end wall of a building where the roof reaches its peak. A pointed gable follows the slope of the roof against it. A Dutch gable is one with curved or scrolled sides.

**Glazing bars** – a light piece of timber, which divides a sash window into smaller compartments. Glazing bars have different designed profiles according to the curvature – some of the most common being called ovulo, ogee and cyma.

**Leaded lights** – window where the glass is held in place by strips of lead usually arranged in a grid or diamond pattern.

**Organic development** – a building or group of buildings whose present appearance is the result of additions to its original form in different periods rather than being built as a designed architectural



composition. Examples of organic form include medieval farmhouses or churches with additions built on at various times. An example on a larger scale might be an unplanned village that has grown piecemeal over a long period.

**Oversailing brick courses** – a decorative technique where each ascending layer of bricks protrudes slightly above the previous layer.

**Permitted Development** – development that can be undertaken without planning permission as defined in the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 1995.

**PVCu** – refers to the material which mass produced modern window units are constructed from. The plastic used is subjected to a chemical process, which hardens it to make it rigid. PVC stands for Polyvinylchloride.

**Raised and fielded** – a timber panel sunk into the body of a door whose raised centre portion is reached by tapered edges.

**Roughcast** – a render coating containing coarse aggregate.

**Rustic brick** – facing brick with surfaces improved by a sand covering, or with a scratched texture applied before firing, often with variegated colouring

**Soffit** – visible underside of an arch, or underside of any architectural element such as a door or window architrave

**Spalling** – decay process whereby layers of stone flake away from the surface.

**Stock brick** – the term 'stock' refers to the name of the mould in which these bricks were originally handmade. The term now refers to the traditional bricks made from London clays, which were produced in a range of yellow and brown tones.

**Stone dressings** – the finishes, mouldings and ornaments that surround door and window openings as well as the ornamentation at the tip of gable roofs.

**Timber fillets** – in carpentry this term refers to a small piece of timber, which can be pieced into joinery to repair and restore it.

**Timber fretwork** – regular and repeated decorative timber pattern which often appears on the front of porches.

**Vernacular buildings** – vernacular buildings used traditional construction techniques, local materials and forms. Vernacular buildings were not designed by architects, and were often built for the owner rather than for sale.

**Vousoir** – a wedge shaped stone or brick forming part of an arch.