



## Woolwich Common Conservation Area Appraisal

### REVISION NOTE - August 2014

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On 27<sup>TH</sup> March 2012, the Government published the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).

The NPPF supersedes previous national planning policy; see Annex 3 of the NPPF for a list of previous policy documents replaced by the framework.

The London Plan 2011 supersedes the London Plan 2008 (with consolidated alterations 2004).

On 30<sup>th</sup> July 2014, the Royal Borough of Greenwich adopted the Royal Greenwich Local Plan: Core Strategy with Detailed Policies.

The Royal Greenwich Local Plan: Core Strategy with Detailed Policies supersedes the Greenwich Unitary Development Plan 2006 (UDP).

**Please note, the Woolwich Common Conservation Area Appraisal remains a valid and endorsed document pending the review of the document under the Planning (Listed Building & Conservation Areas) Act 1990 Section 69. The references to UDP and London Plan 2008 policies in this document are now redundant but the policies within the NPPF and the Royal Greenwich Local Plan: Core Strategy with Detailed Policies are very similar and the intent is the same. This conservation area appraisal remains almost entirely relevant and useful in the application of the NPPF and the Core Strategy.**

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**Royal Artillery Barracks.**

## **Woolwich Common Conservation Area Character Appraisal**



**Paul Sandby c 1770 view of Woolwich Common -  
Jolly Shipwrights area showing Government House and windmill.**

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## **Introduction**

The Woolwich Common Conservation Area Appraisal has been produced by the Royal Borough of Greenwich. It consists of three parts:

- A **Definition of the Area's Special Historic Interest**,
- An **Explanation** of conservation areas and the planning policy context;
- A **Character Appraisal** identifying the main elements that contribute towards the special architectural or historic interest of the Conservation Area; and

Additionally the Royal Borough of Greenwich has produced a separate **Conservation Area Management Strategy document** which makes proposals for small boundary alterations to the Conservation Area and additions to the List of Buildings of Local Interest. It recommends management plans for green spaces and makes recommendations for protection of views, trees and the street scene, and for monitoring and review.

## ***1. Executive Summary and Definition of Special Historic and Architectural Interest***

The Woolwich Common Conservation Area encompasses a group of spectacular historic military buildings of outstanding architectural interest set within an area of ancient Common Land.

**Spatial character and open land:** The principal spatial feature of the area remains the Common with its flat open grassland set below Shooters Hill. However, the Common has been divided up and is separated into visually differing elements many of which are now dominated by military buildings and fences.

The northern part of the Conservation Area comprises three different spaces.

- 1) The most striking spatial feature is the immense 330m frontage of the Royal Artillery Barracks which faces onto the parade ground and the Barrack Field and creates a grand formal northern edge to the Common. The splendid parade ground merges into the large open space of the Barrack Field, which lies between Grand Depot Road and Repository Road and is bounded on its south side by the Ha-Ha. This area is a designed landscape.
- 2) Second, to the west the hilly area of Green Hill, Repository Woods and the Rotunda area forms a series of smaller spaces, mostly private and only accessible to members of the public with permits. The character of this area is of a military training landscape.
- 3) Lastly, to the south-west lies Charlton Cemetery (with Charlton Park and Charlton House on the other side of Cemetery Lane but in the Charlton Conservation Area). This area can be characterised as a landscape of remembrance.

The area now called "Woolwich Common" lies in the southern half of the Conservation Area, and has been in military ownership since 1803-6. It is a large, flat, fully publicly accessible open space. Its best frontages are Ha-Ha Road to the north-east, Academy Road to the east, and Shooters Hill Road to the south. Woolwich Common mainly has the traditional character of a Common – being grassed and bounded by trees. However there is a large encroachment to the north east at the west end of Ha- Ha Road in the form of the former Wireless station. To the south of the Royal Military Academy on the east side of Academy Road lie three 19<sup>th</sup> century grass covered reservoirs.

These form part of the surviving ancient Common, and the open character of the reservoir land is protected as Metropolitan Open Land. The character of this area can be defined as an urban parkland landscape.

The fringes of the Conservation Area comprise six separate areas defined by buildings.

- 1) To the north lie the secluded Barracks buildings – visually surrounded by large historic walls and the Barracks frontage.
- 2) To the north-east lies the ruined Garrison Church and, beyond, the Connaught Mews buildings – the former Royal Artillery Hospital.
- 3) To the south east of Woolwich Common is the Royal Military Academy. Here, James Wyatt's striking picturesque Gothick edifice of 1803 fronts onto a well proportioned large square, which complements and emphasises the scale and very impressive character of the Academy.
- 4) To the south an especially fine avenue of very large trees lines Shooters Hill Road, with a series of fine building complexes behind – in particular the former Royal Herbert, Brook and Castlewood hospitals, and the former Medical Officers Mess of 1909, Adair House a 1928 nurses quarters, and two former Shooters Hill Police Station buildings.
- 5) To the west of Woolwich Common lies the 1978 Queen Elizabeth Hospital. Here, the white concrete and glass modern hospital is a large visual intrusion into the Common on a site previously occupied by the Veterinary hospital and Shrapnel Barracks.
- 6) Finally south-west of the hospital and separated by it from the Common is Hornfair Park, complete with playing fields and Lido – the latter outside the Conservation Area but meriting inclusion.

**Views:** Three specific types of view significant to this Conservation Area are identified in this character appraisal - panoramic views over the Common, views across the Common, views of buildings. Each type of view makes a particular contribution to the character of the area and thus would merit protection and enhancement.

The importance of the open spaces of the Woolwich Common Conservation Area lies both in their individual character and their inter-connection. The value of the open character is greatly enhanced by the connections to open spaces beyond the conservation area in particular Shooters Hill to the south east, Charlton Park and Maryon Wilson Parks to the west, the private spaces around Rushgrove House and Mulgrave Pond to the north, and the open spaces round Eaglesfield School to the east.

The extent and quality of open space, whether public or private, plays a decisive role in forming the character of this Conservation Area. Reflecting this, all of the open space within the Woolwich Common Conservation Area is designated as Metropolitan Open Land and this land is protected from development pressure.

### **Architectural and historical character:**

The buildings in this Conservation Area (and its environs) express varying styles which may be conveniently summarised as:

- Georgian military buildings
- Victorian hospital buildings
- Monuments and Ordnance
- 19<sup>th</sup> century housing
- 20<sup>th</sup> c post war military buildings (Queen Elizabeth's Hospital etc)

A fine collection of 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> century watercolours, aquatints and sketches survives, enabling a visual appreciation of the character of the Common and the military buildings in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century. In particular the work of the important topographical painter Paul Sandby who worked as a surveyor for the 18<sup>th</sup> c. Ordnance Survey and was drawing master at the Royal Military Academy for 30 years. Sandby's drawings include views of the 18<sup>th</sup> c Royal Artillery Barracks and the Jolly Shipwrights tavern on Barrack Field.

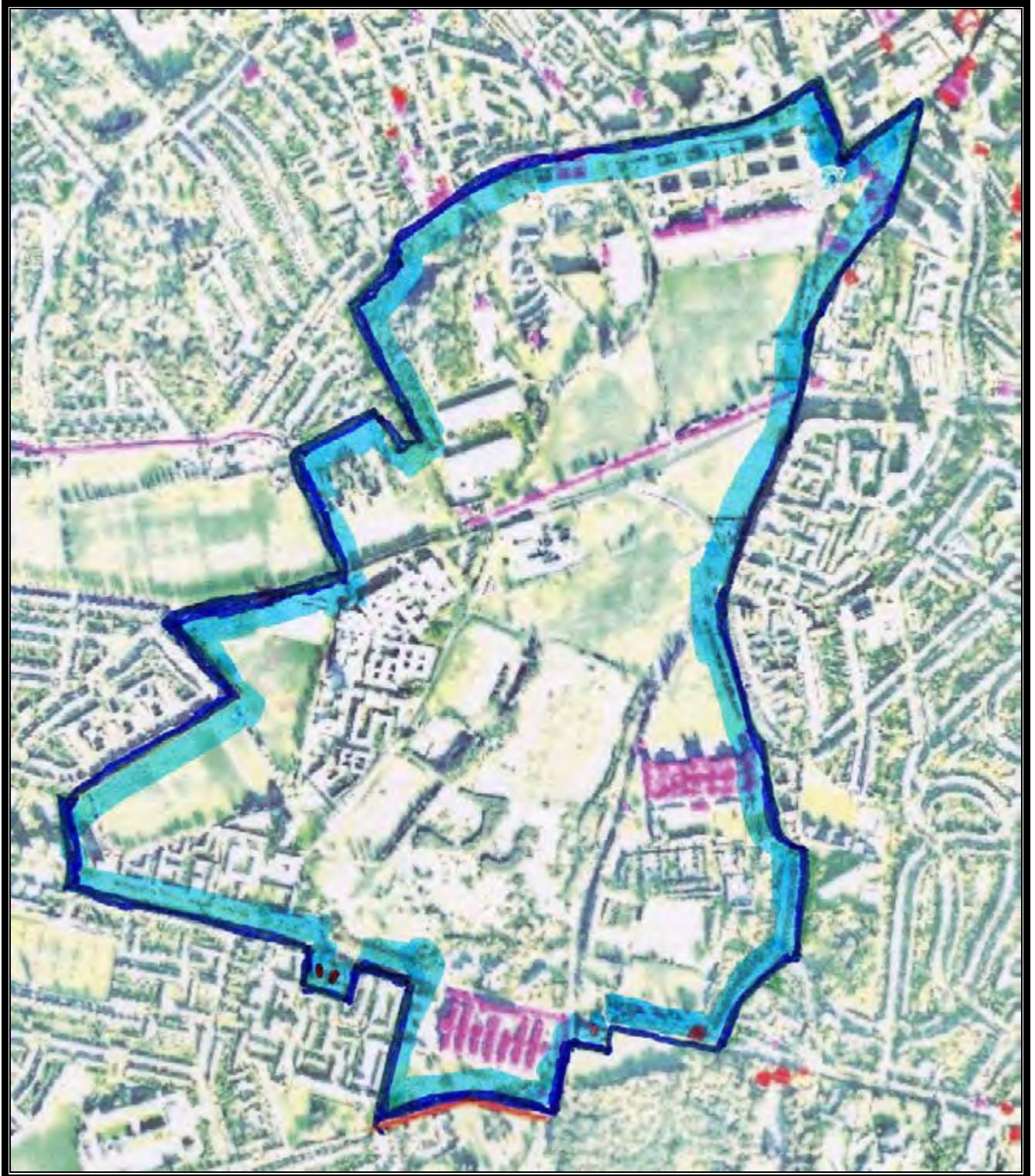
The defining events in the architectural development of the Common are

- James Wyatt's 1775 construction of the Royal Artillery Barracks,
- the 1803 acquisition of the Common by the Board of Ordnance (War Department),
- Wyatt's 1805 Gothick fantasy Royal Military Academy
- The 1819 relocation of John Nash's 1814 Rotunda from Carlton House to the heights above Woolwich
- A continuous history of construction of military and latterly civilian hospitals over two hundred years, from the 1780 Royal Artillery Hospital through the 1865 Royal Herbert Pavilions, the 1894 Brook Hospital, the 1899 Castlewood Hospital to the 1975 Queen Elizabeth Hospital,
- Several conservation campaigns to preserve the Common from further military encroachment, especially that of the 1928 Woolwich Common Joint Committee.
- Recent campaign to prevent former stadium site from being utilised for hospital car parking.

The military use of the Common during the Napoleonic Wars was contested by local people and the subsequent history of military–civilian relationships has left a negotiated and delicate balance in place between military compounds and publicly accessible (but sometimes military owned) open land. For security reasons, some of the military land remains private.

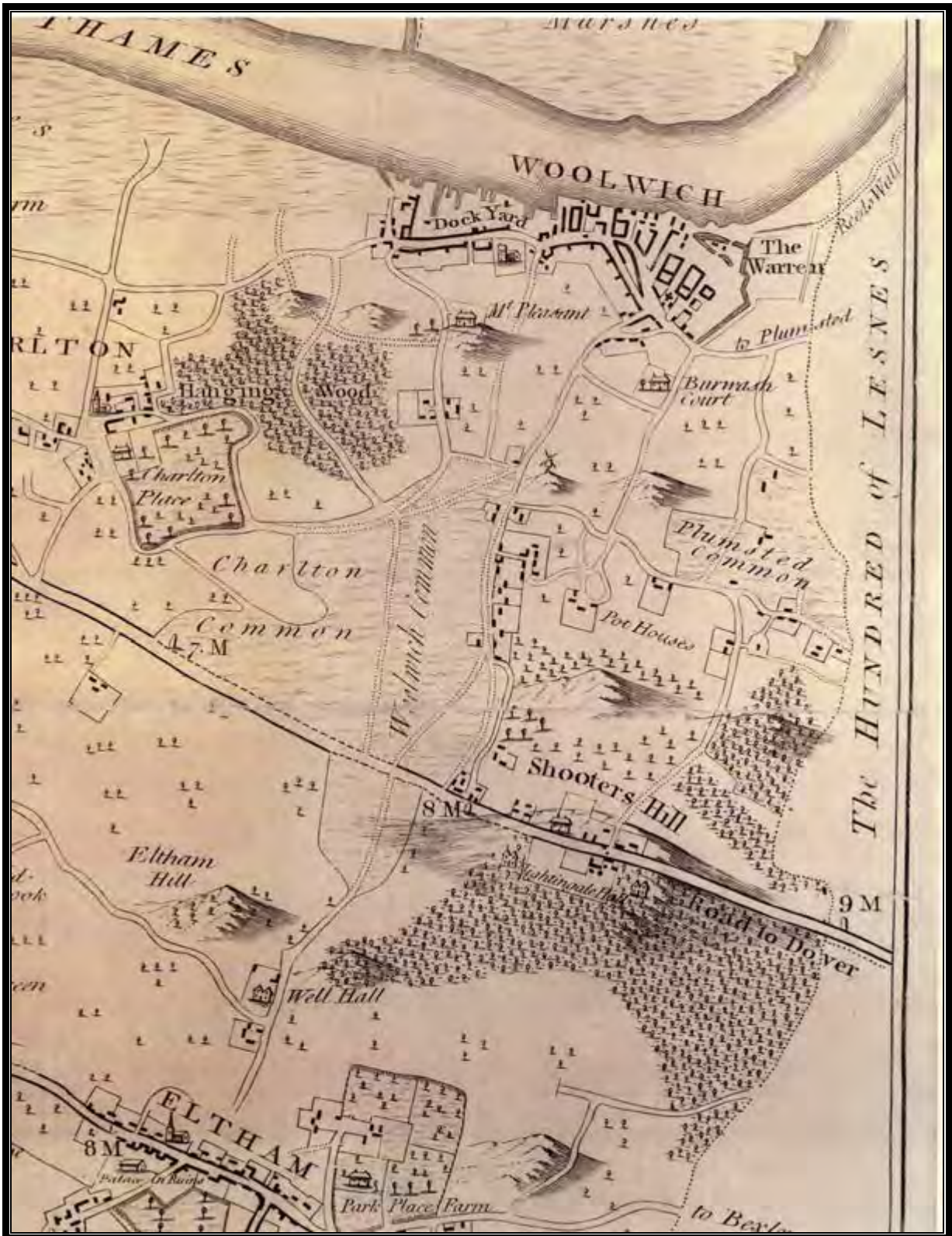
In general this is an area in which definition is provided by large buildings often set in larger grounds, fringed by mature large trees and significant remnants of Common land. There are a large number of Georgian military buildings in the area, many built for display. On the two parade grounds there was a significant collection of battle and other monuments, and also a collection of ornamental cannon captured in field battle celebrating military victories. Much of this has been removed by the Royal Artillery to the new headquarters at Larkhill on Salisbury Plain.





**Map 1: Woolwich Common Conservation Area aerial photograph: Locally listed buildings – red, listed buildings – purple, conservation area boundary – blue with blue shadow.**





Map 2: The 1778 Hasted map gives a clear overview of Woolwich and its Common in context. Woolwich is sandwiched between the Dockyard and the Warren (the national military arsenal). The Thames and its marshes are shown on the north, Plumsted Common and Lesnes Abbey in the east, Shooters Hill, Well Hall and Eltham to the south, and Charlton Place, Charlton Common and Hanging Wood to the west.



For security reasons some of the military land is enclosed by fencing, some of which is detrimental to local landscape character. The fencing clashes with the setting of distinguished classical Listed Buildings (especially Georgian buildings such as the Rotunda) within green but urban open space.

In addition there are a number of good later 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> c buildings such as the former Royal Herbert Hospital and Shooters Hill Police station on the South Circular Road.

There is also some more intensive housing development both within and bounding the Conservation Area, for example as the three phases of the Master Gunner Estate which it is recommended should be removed from the Conservation Area.

Much of the Common has been subject to, and continues to undergo, major change. The biggest changes include the change of use of almost all the institutional buildings to residential accommodation and the associated removal of historic features and guns, the departure of the Royal Artillery from the Barracks (in 2007 - to be replaced by other Army units including the King's Troop, Royal Horse Artillery) and the refurbishment and conversion to housing of the Royal Military Academy.

## ***2. Explanation of Conservation Areas and the planning policy context***

**The Woolwich Common Conservation Area** was originally designated by the Royal Borough of Greenwich in May 1975. It has been extended twice: in September 1991 with the addition of the Royal Herbert Hospital and Connaught Barracks; and in 1996, the addition of part of the old Brook Hospital. The area now comprises 192 hectares and is the largest Conservation Area in the Royal Borough of Greenwich.

**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. The Royal Borough has 20 designated Conservation Areas.

**Which properties are within the Woolwich Common Conservation Area?** The following address list is based on postcode addresses, but some open land does not have a postcode address and has been included only where there is a clear name. For this reason, the address list cannot be as definitive as a map. Therefore, in the event of doubt, or to ascertain whether a particular parcel of land is within the Conservation Area, it is better to locate the land on the OS large scale map.

## Addresses within the Woolwich Common Conservation Area

Aberford Gardens, complete;  
Academy Road, complete;  
Artillery Place – wall to south side;  
Academy Place complete including 3-6 (consecutive);  
Baker Road complete  
Broad Walk, 259;  
Cemetery Lane, Cemetery, cemetery lodge;  
Charlton Park Lane 110, sports ground;  
Circular Way, complete;  
Claydown Mews complete including 1-17 (consecutive);  
Connaught Mews complete including Artillery House, Lantern House & Nightingale House;  
Constitution Rise 1-3 (consecutive);  
Edith Cavell Way complete including Water Tower, 1-29;  
Gilbert Close complete including 1-80 cons Robertson House, Mennie House, Godwin House;  
Florence House, Sidney House, Boulter House, Sutherland House;  
Grand Depot Road, St George's Church, Royal Artillery Barracks;  
Greenhill, complete;  
Greenhill Terrace, complete;  
Ha-Ha Road, complete;  
Hill Reach – wall to south side of road;  
Hornfair Park;  
Little Heath 126-136 (even);  
Mansergh Close, complete;  
Master Gunner Place, complete;  
Pallett Way, complete;  
Portway Gardens, complete;  
Prince Imperial Road, complete including Royal Military Academy;  
Red Lion Lane, complete;  
Repository Road, complete;  
Royal Artillery Barracks Artillery House;  
Shooters Hill 25-33 (odd) and Castlewood;  
Shooters Hill Road Police Station 400, 401 (Kidbrooke Telephone Exchange), 403 (Adair House),  
405 (Victoria Day Centre), 414 (Galton House);  
Slater Close, complete;  
Stadium Road, complete including Queen Elizabeth Hospital, St Nicholas' House;  
Stane Way, complete including 1-27 (consecutive);  
Tellson Avenue, complete;  
Well Hall Road, 423 The Lodge;  
Woolwich Common (parts of the road of this name) incl. Woolwich Common Nursery School;  
Royal Artillery Institution;  
Woolwich Common – i.e. the common itself.

**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. The complete or substantial demolition of any building or free-standing structure over 115 cubic metres in volume requires an application for Conservation Area Consent.
2. Conservation Area Consent is also required for the substantial or complete demolition of a garden wall.
3. Planning permission is normally required for all alterations to the external appearance of a building, however in the case of single family occupied houses; there are permitted development rights to make minor changes.
4. The following works require Planning permission in a Conservation Area:
  - 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.
  - Trees are protected by special controls requiring notice of pruning, lopping or felling works to trees within a Conservation Area. The Royal Borough's Tree Officer should be contacted for details of these controls.

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.

5. Proposals for development on land outside but affecting the setting of the Conservation Area are assessed for their impact on the character and appearance of the Conservation Area and may be refused were this would be judged to be detrimental.

### **The Planning Policy Context:**

Planning applications must be decided in accordance with development plan policies unless material considerations indicate other wise. The development plan comprises the London Plan, the Greenwich UDP, together with Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) and Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD). 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:

**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 Statement 5, Planning for the Historic Environment, sets out current government guidance on Conservation Areas and Listed Buildings. There are currently 20 conservation areas in the London Borough of Greenwich.

**Listing:** English Heritage designates buildings of special architectural or historic interest as either Grade I, Grade II\* or Grade II 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.

**The London Plan (2004 as amended 2006 & 2008).** The Mayor of London 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 Unitary Development Plan (UDP) was adopted on 20<sup>th</sup> July 2006. The more relevant development planning policies are in the Open Space and Design Chapters. In particular, Open Space policies O1-4 Metropolitan Open Land, O5 Green Chain, O10 Community Benefits O11 Sports Grounds, O15-17 (Footpaths and Cycleways), O18-25 Nature Conservation. The most relevant Design Policies are Urban Design (D1 & D2), Trees (D8), Residential Extensions (D9 & D10), 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 i) from Shooters Hill to central London is relevant and Woolwich Common is included in the Shooters Hill Area of Special Character. Details of all these UDP policies can be found on the Royal Borough's website.

The Royal Borough has started work on a new type of statutory plan, the Local Development Framework. This will be a suite of documents that will eventually replace the Greenwich 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 Local Development Framework regime. The most relevant are Supplementary Planning Guidance on Residential Extensions, on Shopfronts and on Conversions.

**Conservation and Design Guidance:** The Royal Borough plans to produce a non-statutory guidance document for the public giving advice on a conservation approach to repairs and minor changes which will apply throughout the Borough. This is intended to be placed on the Royal Borough's website as a downloadable web document



### **3. Character Appraisal**

Planning Policy Statement 5 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 appraisal of each conservation area. This appraisal follows the nineteen criteria recommended in English Heritage's 2005 guidance note "Conservation Area Appraisals".

#### **I. Location and Setting:**

Woolwich Common lies above and immediately south of Woolwich town centre which itself lies on a bend in the river Thames about eight miles east of the City of London.

**Physical character:** Woolwich Common is one of three partly surviving ancient Commons in the Borough (the other two being Charlton and Plumstead) and comprises an area of mainly flat land between Woolwich and Shooters Hill. Woolwich itself lies below the Common and developed on a dry firm site at the edge of the riverside marshes. The landscape setting of Woolwich Common includes views up to Shooters Hill above and views over the River Thames below. Topographically it now comprises open flat commons divided by roads, partly inaccessible and in military use. To the south east, Shooters Hill rises in places very steeply from the Common; and to the north the land drops steeply to Woolwich town centre and the River Thames.

**Geology:** The geological base of the Woolwich area is a 500 foot thick layer of chalk. Old Woolwich was built on promontory or natural causeway of chalk rising ten foot above high tide level – now Market Hill. On the Common itself there is a layer of poorly drained sand clay and pebble London glacial deposits known as the Blackheath beds. Immediately to the north in Woolwich the chalk is covered by a 40 foot thick layer of well- drained fine Thanet sand. The Thanet sands drain well and are suited for building foundations, they have also been exploited for various purposes including founding and glass making – and leaving in the wake many sandpits. Pattison's sandpit was exploited to create the site of Woolwich Arsenal Station, and the site of Bowater's pit lies further up the hill towards the Common. The sand surface on the various Commons contributes to the name of 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. These deposits are capped by plateau gravels which start at 400 feet above sea level and form the summit of Shooters Hill. The sequence can be seen in the Charlton pits. The southern section of the Common was used for extensive dumping of building materials after WWII. This area was subsequently landscaped and planted and this has changed the prevailing soil conditions from acid to alkaline.

## 2. Origins and historical development.

The name 'Woolwich' is thought to have originated from a Wool farm. In 918AD it was known as Uuluuich, but by c1085AD it is known in the Domesday Book as Hulviz, (a hill reach), probably as Shooters Hill, the highest local point, is nearby. Other recorded old English references are Wolewic in 1089AD, Wulwic' in 1226AD and Wolwych in 1610AD.

**The Tudors** had located their principal naval dockyard at Woolwich, to take advantage of deep water next to a small chalk spur above high tide level and surrounding easily excavated marshland. By 1546, the need for naval gunnery had already led to the establishment of a gun wharf. The 17th century saw the construction of the Arsenal at the Woolwich Warren site to the east of the naval dockyard. In 1677 Captain Richard Leake of Woolwich was appointed master-gunner of England with a commission to "exercise scholars to shoot in Great Ordnance".

In the 18<sup>th</sup> century military presence consolidated and increased with the establishment of the Royal Artillery in 1712 under Colonel Bogarde. Down the hill in Woolwich, from 1718-1722, the 16<sup>th</sup> century manor house (Tower Place) was rebuilt possibly by Hawksmoor as a Baroque building (see below). This survives and has been at various times the Board Room for Ordnance Officers, and the original 1741 Royal Military Academy. The frontage was shorter than the original Tudor house so that the 16<sup>th</sup> century tower-turret became detached to the south<sup>1</sup>.



**Figure 1: 1781 view of the old Royal Military Academy Building in Woolwich.**

The ownership of Woolwich Common was originally vested in the Crown as a Royal Privilege of Eltham Manor and prior to 1775 the Common was entirely used for grazing and other common purposes, with two pubs and a few cottages on the perimeter.

<sup>1</sup> The room to the right of the entrance became the Board Room for Ordnance officers and had a bow window looking north. The room to the left of the entrance was the original Royal Military Academy which was established in 1720. The Storekeeper occupied rooms at the rear. When the present Royal Military Academy was formed in 1741, extensive alterations were made to the rear of the mansion house to provide residences for the first and second masters of the Academy on the site of the sixteenth-century brew-house, each with its own garden. Some eighteenth-century rear wings of the building were demolished in the twentieth century. The tower was demolished in 1786.

**Map 3: The Barker Map of 1748** shows Woolwich Common as open land used for common purposes. The historic division of the Common into Woolwich and Charlton follows the ancient parish boundary. Fields are already present in the northern part, suggesting some land had been sold and a degree of encroachment, for example the two fields east of Charlton Park, the northern one of which became Charlton Cemetery. The lines of two parallel north-south roads crossing the Common are clear – these correspond to Stadium Road – Repository Road and Academy Road. Ha-Ha Road can be seen joining them. The Jolly Shipwrights Tavern marked as a dot on the Common lies just to the south of the Ha-Ha Road junction with Academy Road. A few houses can be seen facing the Common on the line of Grand Depot Road and Woolwich New Road in the area



**Map 3: Barker 1748** - note that as north is at the bottom the map appears “upside down”.

between The Royal Military academy, Government House (which is marked) and The Garrison Church. To the north-west, lies Charlton House, Charlton Park and Hanging Wood. To the south-east, a building is shown on Shooters Hill (under the ‘h’) in the vicinity of the present Red Lion.

**Map 4: the 1741 Roque map** shows a Woolwich Common of much greater size than today. At its north end two roads lead from the Common to Woolwich. Cholic Lane leads down to Plumstead road and the Woolwich Arsenal at the Warren. To its west, “The New Road” follows Repository Road and Francis Street, to the west of John Wilson Street (a modern road) down to the Dockyard (marked as King’s Yard), and Old Woolwich via large sandpits.

The former Rope Yard lies on Woolwich’s eastern fringe. Woolwich New Road was then called Cholic Lane. Love lane is the clearly visible narrow lane running north-south and the large Bowater sand pits are drawn and marked as “Sand Wharf”. The Hanging Wood lies behind with the old road to Charlton Place running through it.





Map 4: 1741 Roque map.



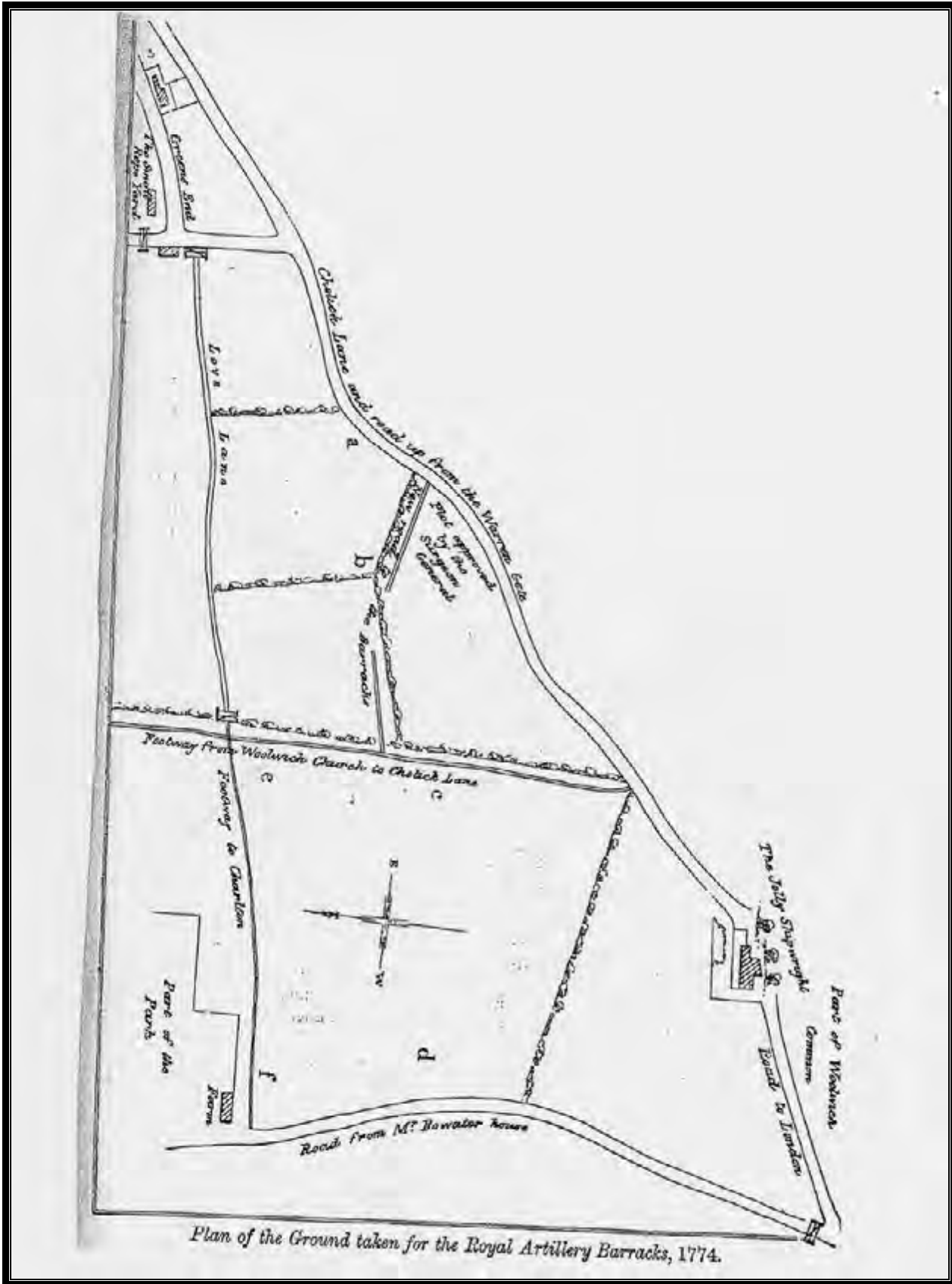
**Paul Sandby:** Several 18<sup>th</sup> century watercolours and line drawings of Woolwich Common survive, thought to be the work of the famous water-colourist Paul Sandby (1725–1809) who worked in Woolwich as the drawing master at the Royal Military Academy for thirty years from 1768. Paul Sandby was originally a map maker and topographer; significantly he became a landscape painter in water-colours, and, along with his older brother Thomas, became one of the founding members of the Royal Academy in 1768. Sandby's topographical background means that his watercolours may be expected to be quite accurate – as may be seen in the enlargement of fig 2 below. Sandby had joined the topographical drawing room of the Board of Ordnance at the Tower of London in the early 1740s and in 1746 was tasked with mapping the remote Scottish Highlands. While undertaking this exacting commission, he began producing water-colour landscapes and news of his talent soon spread. In 1752, he took up a post with his brother producing landscapes of the royal estates at Windsor, and also began producing aquatint engravings, having been commissioned by Sir Joseph Banks to produce 48 plates depicting Welsh scenery. In 1768, he was appointed chief drawing master to the Royal Military Academy at Woolwich, a position he retained until 1799. He died in London in 1809 and was described in his obituaries as 'the father of modern landscape painting in watercolours'.



**Figure 2: Paul Sandby – this watercolour from the 1770's appears to look north from near the Jolly Shipwrights Tavern. Government house is on the right and the Woolwich Common windmill behind. See Hasted's 1778 below (Map 4) for the location of the Windmill and buildings.**



**Figure 3: Line drawing of Jolly Shipwrights, possibly made 200 metres behind Fig 2.**



Map 5: 1774 map of ground taken for building barracks – source Vincent – Note that Woolwich and the north are to the left - not the top. The Jolly Shipwrights Tavern and original continuation of Love Lane southwards up to the Common are shown: Source Vincent: Key a-b: c-d-e-f: site of RA Barracks.



**Figure 3: Enlargement of Sandby's watercolour fig 2 - showing topographical detail in the vicinity of Woolwich windmill.**

The two defining events in the historical development of the Common are James Wyatt's 1775 construction of the Royal Artillery Barracks and the 1803 militarisation of the Common. The 18<sup>th</sup> century expansion of the Royal Artillery down in Woolwich led to increased use of the Common for drill and gun practice. The physical potential of the Common for the enlarged Royal Artillery was understood and James Wyatt entrusted with the building of the new Royal Artillery Barracks – with its astonishing neo-classical south facing Barracks with associated gunnery parade and drilling facilities in front of it.

In about 1800 the Jolly Shipwrights Tavern was pulled down; its site was enclosed in the Barrack Field and the public road realigned. Resistance to military encroachments was already taking place. The 1802 May 13<sup>th</sup> vestry book entry notes several encroachments “*one large piece has been added to the barrack field by the Board of Ordnance*” Parish officers are requested to walk the bounds. The December 2<sup>nd</sup> entry notes that the church-wardens charge of £48-11-6 was disallowed and reduced to £40.

In 1803, prompted by the needs of the emerging Napoleonic Wars, the Barracks were doubled in width creating an immense 330m frontage - on a scale seen elsewhere only in St Petersburg, Russia. The military consolidated control over the entire Common, by means of four special Acts of Parliament to enable their purchase of almost the entire Common for artillery and training purposes. Woolwich Common as it appears today is the result of the subsequent two centuries of military encroachment and development and various opposition movements and compromise agreements trying to reconcile the public's desire for recreational access with military needs.

**Paul Sandby and the founding of the Ordnance Survey:** Following the Jacobite revolt of 1745, King George II commissioned the Board of Ordnance to make a military survey of the Scottish highlands. The Board of Ordnance was based in Woolwich and William Roy was the engineer responsible for this pioneering work. One of the staff involved was Paul Sandby. In 1790 prompted by the French Revolution, the Board of Ordnance began a national military survey commencing with the south coast of England –a priority bearing in mind the anticipated French invasion.

## **Chronology of Developments – Buildings, Monuments and Enclosure from 1776 to the present<sup>2</sup>**

1776-82 Royal Artillery Barracks phase I built  
1777-1804 Ha-Ha constructed (according to Spurgeon – but Woolwich Common Joint Committee of 1928 says 1810)  
1779 Repository built  
1780 Royal Artillery Hospital built, enlarged 1806 (now in Connaught Mews)  
1800 “Jolly Shipwrights” Tavern pulled down and replaced by Barrack Tavern on new site to east (now part of Woolwich Common Estate).  
1802 – Second phase of Royal Artillery Barracks construction  
1802-4 – four acts of Parliament authorized purchase of land from Lady Maryon-Wilson – from John Bowater, transferring most of land in Woolwich Common to Board of Ordnance. Cottages cleared away, drill ground created.  
1803 – ‘Engineer House’ – former office of Royal Engineers – now community centre for military families  
1804 Soldiers houses built on margin of Barrack Field– demolished 1875  
1805-6 Repository grounds enclosed and Little Heath Road made up, Repository gatehouse constructed on Gun Park site  
1805-6 Royal Military Academy built  
1819 - Rotunda erected  
1837 - Gas supplied to Royal Artillery  
1839 - Royal Artillery Institution inception as room at Repository – a regimental scientific institution with instruments etc  
1848 – Mulgrave Reservoir made by convict labour  
1851 – Garrison schools Green Hill built – converted to residential 1989  
1854 - Crimean Huts erected  
1854 - Mallets Mortar constructed – now in front of Garrison School on Repository Road  
1855 - Charlton Cemetery laid out  
1861 - Rob John Little Memorial fountain and obelisk opposite Government House  
1863 - Garrison Church erected (bombed 1944)  
1865-6 Royal Herbert Hospital built  
1866 - Metropolitan Water Board reservoir – Academy Road east side, north of Shooters Hill Road  
1870 - Remount Depot  
1870 – Circular Road made  
1874 - Magnetic Office (“The Observatory”)  
1874 - Academy Grounds enlarged and laid out (possibly including demolition of parade ground enclosure wall)  
1880-1926 Married quarters Green Hill  
1881 - Afghan and Zulu wars memorial  
1890-1900 Shrapnel Barracks (1960s redeveloped as Queen Elizabeth Hospital)  
1902 – Boer War memorial – on Grand Depot Road  
1902 Veterinary Hospital (now within QEH site)  
1908 War Office scheme for housing on Eltham Common: legal case showed that Commoner’s rights still existed – War Office undertook to keep Eltham Common intact.  
1908-1910 War Office transfers scheme to Woolwich Common – riding stables on 18 acres at rear of RMA, found that in this case Commoners’ rights had been extinguished – Open Spaces Soc pointed out would be an evil precedent. Lord Eversley, OSS Chairman said whatever legal position “public’s immemorial use of the Common constituted a strong moral claim that no Government department ought to override”.  
1909 - Medical Officers Mess - estimates passed – built later  
1911 – Officers’ Mess near Shrapnel Barracks  
1912 – 18 acres at back of Academy closed  
1914 + - Wireless Station, Ha-Ha Road  
1915 - Police Station Eltham Common Corner

<sup>2</sup> This chronology is based on and developed from the 1928 Woolwich Common Joint Committee pamphlet “The story of Woolwich Common” produced as part of an important and partially successful campaign to limit encroachment and develop access agreements with the military authorities.



1917 - Pay dept huts  
 1917 - War time buildings on west of common  
 1917 - Church Army hut beside stadium  
 1918 + - Stadium  
 1923 – Barrack Field fenced – footpath closed adding 180 yards to walk between Nightingale Place and Frances Street, other footpath diversions, creation of polo field and cricket ground  
 1923 – Repository slope fenced in  
 1923 – Sports ground – pay department  
 1924 - Enclosure in front of Artillery Institution  
 1928 - “Woolwich Common Joint Committee” formed to campaign for preservation of Common – WCJC included W Chamber of Commerce, W Council of Social Service, W Regional Town Planning Advisory Committee, W Rotary Club and many other organisations, supported by Local and Kent Press, publishes “The story of Woolwich Common”, 1932 sets up Restoration Fund for Common and historic buildings.  
 1928 – Parade Ground thoroughfare closed  
 1928 - Hedge fence and poplars between Medical Officers' mess and laundry  
 1928 - Five acres above Stadium closed  
 1932 – Proposals for nurses' quarters led to opposition with petitions of thousands of signatures and widespread protests.  
 1940's – bomb damage to and rebuilding of east wing of Barracks  
 Post 1945 – building rubble from WWII bomb damage dumped on southern part of the Common  
 1960's - extensive redevelopment on Barracks site  
 1978 - Queen Elizabeth Hospital constructed for military use on Shrapnel Barracks site – transferred to NHS civilian use in 1995  
 After 1990 - closure of part or all of the Brook, Royal Herbert and Connaught Hospitals and the conversion of part or all of the buildings to residential ownership; proposed refurbishment of the Royal Artillery Barracks; closure of the Royal Military Academy & its refurbishment and change of use to residential; fall into disuse of Government House.

From the late 18<sup>th</sup> century onwards the maps become increasingly carefully drawn, detailed and reliable. We have a good map sequence in this area which can be used to establish such matters as the broad sequence of development, and also when individual buildings were put up and/or demolished. To help do this, extracts from several maps are reproduced here with a high normal degree of resolution<sup>3</sup>.

The 2006 Oxford Archaeology (OA) historical appraisal of the Barracks site reproduces part of a 1799 Map (called Mudd's in their report). Its origin is not understood and it may be the same as the preparatory drawings for the first edition OS map held in the Greenwich Heritage Centre. Part of this map is reproduced below (Map 6), it shows the Royal Artillery Barracks as six blocks soon after construction. The map also shows a mortar battery adjacent to the Commandant's pond and the Repository Buildings. The red line boundary which OA has applied indicates the OA Royal Artillery Barracks study area boundary.

The 1810 Yeakell Map (Map 7) is carefully drawn and well detailed. It represents the position midway through the Napoleonic wars. The Barrack Tavern is shown on the opposite side of Cholic Lane / Academy Road to the former Jolly Shipwrights – the new name being indicative of the growth in importance of the Army's role in Woolwich. Nightingale Place is given its old name - Ditchwater Lane. A mill is located directly behind Government House – as in the Sandby drawings. A second mill is seen a few yards up Woolwich New Road and the emerging line of Grand Depot Road is apparent with the Royal Artillery Hospital (now Connaught Barracks) between the two. The Repository Sheds are marked, as is James Wyatt's gothick new Royal Military Academy

<sup>3</sup> If this document is consulted online on the Royal Borough's website, it is possible to zoom in on the maps and see fine detail. The map images can also be blown up and copied to view detail. The absence of a building on a map will indicate it was constructed after the survey work on which the map was based map was produced a likely construction date – and resolve arguments about the age of a building.

building, with its front yard wall – long since gone but seen in a contemporary aqua tint drawing (see section 7 below). The Barracks itself is divided into horse and foot blocks and Mulgrave Pond appears behind. There is a house exactly on the site of the Red Lion PH and there are two public houses on Shooters Hill Road – the Fox under the Hill just south east of the corner of Academy Road, and the Lord Moira to the west near the site of the Brook hospital.



Map 6: Mudd's 1799 map.





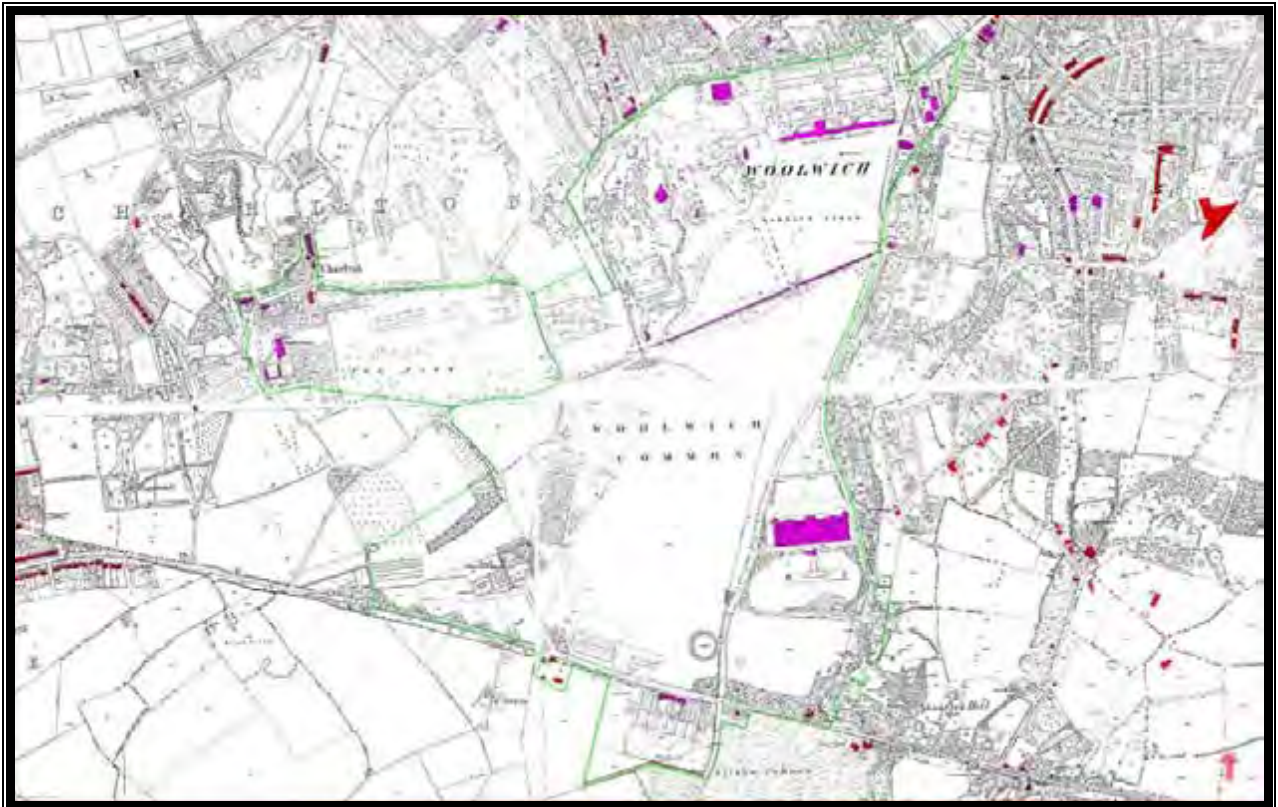
Map 7: Yeakell 1810.



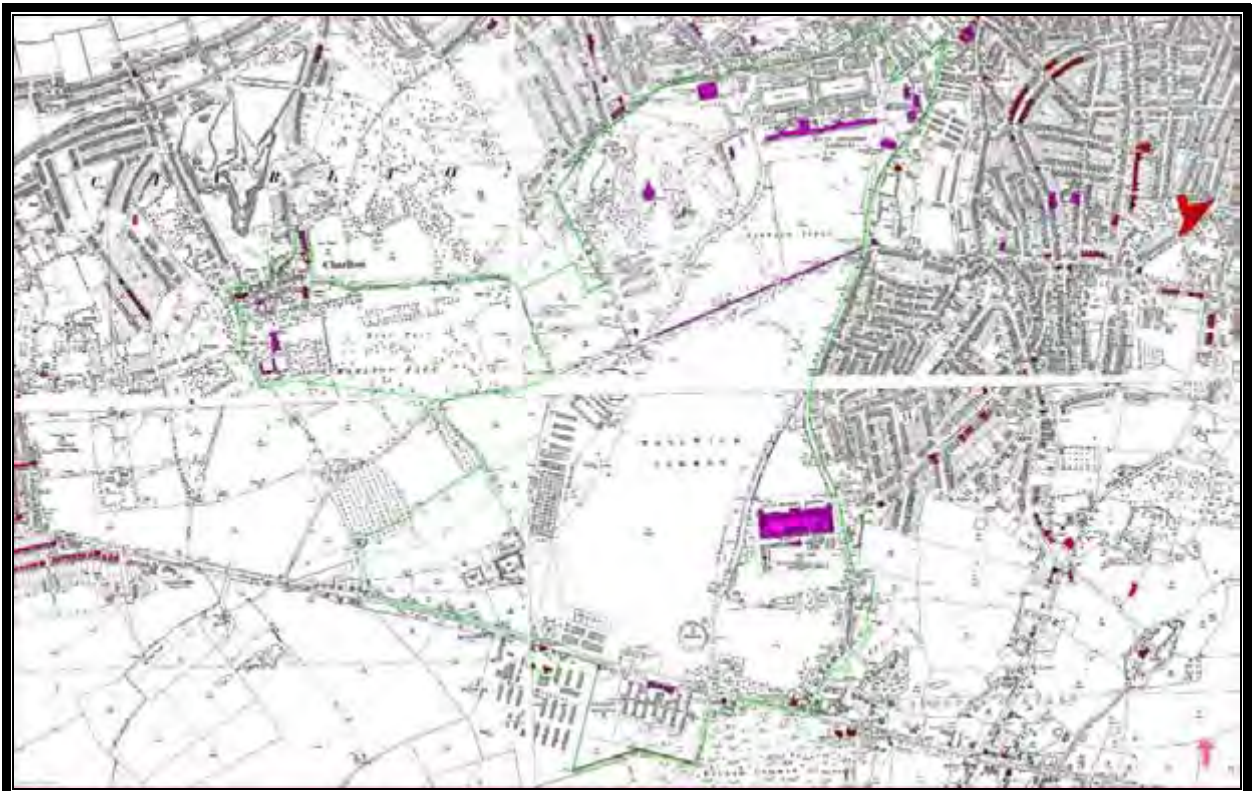


Map 8: Jones 1845 – exceptionally detailed cartography.





Map 9: OS 1870 - green line indicates current Conservation Area boundary.



Map 10: OS 1890 - green line indicates current Conservation Area boundary.

The 1845 Jones map and the 1870 and 1890 OS map extracts (Maps 8, 9 & 10) chronicle the main part of the development process, tracking the construction sequence of the majority of buildings. There is much valuable reference historical information which can help evaluate planning proposals. Together they provide an accurate and detailed account of the extent of development in 1845, 1870 and 1890. Comparing these three maps helps decide how old a particular building affected by development really is, which is important in evaluating the heritage significance of existing land proposed for development in a planning application.

The Repository area of the 1870 OS map shows practice field fortifications in detail down to individual gun platforms. The Observatory is now marked as the “Magnetic Office. Footpaths and landscaping are marked to the north of the Repository in the area now called “The Dell”. Green Hill School and the Limber shed appears (store house for gun limbers). In the south-west of the Conservation Area (the site of the Master Gunner Estate and Queen Elizabeth Hospital) the map shows many structures associated with the Royal Horse Infirmary including troughs, huts, stables, and a cadet bathing pond.



Figure 4: Gun Limber (internet image).

### 3. Archaeological significance

Woolwich Town, as opposed to Woolwich Common, was the first choice for settlement in all periods from the Paleolithic and Mesolithic the Bronze, Iron and Roman ages. A Paleolithic axe has been found north of the Royal Artillery Barracks. A possible Iron Age oppidum<sup>4</sup> has been identified 700m NE of barracks (WDAS 1988 14-15). There is evidence of Roman occupation in Woolwich and Woolwich New Road may have a Roman origin. Shooters Hill Road follows and lies on the Roman Road from London to Canterbury.

In AD 964 King Edgar granted land at Woolwich to Abbey of St Peter at Ghent – the abbey’s ownership was confirmed by William conqueror in 1081 but ceased by 12<sup>th</sup> c. The medieval church of St Lawrence located just to the north-east of the site of Royal Artillery Barracks was central to medieval Woolwich.. The medieval period instituted the six legal commoners rights – of *pasture*, of *pannage* – let pigs eat acorns etc, of *estovers* – to take fallen branches, of *turbary* – to dig turf or peat for fuel or thatch, *piscary* to take fish, and of *common in the soil* – to take stone sand and minerals.

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<sup>4</sup> Explained in glossary at end of this document  
[www.royalgreenwich.gov.uk](http://www.royalgreenwich.gov.uk)

# CHARACTER ANALYSIS

## 4. Character and relationship of spaces

The principal spatial feature of the area remains the Common with its flat open grassland set below Shooters Hill. The Common has been divided up and is separated into visually differing elements many of which are now dominated by military buildings and fences.

The northern part of the Conservation Area comprises three different spaces.

- First, the most striking spatial feature in Woolwich: The immense 330m frontage of the Royal Artillery Barracks faces onto the parade ground and Barrack Field creating a grand formal northern edge to the Common. The splendid parade ground merges into the large open space of Barrack Field, which lies between Grand depot Road and Repository Road and is bounded on its south side by the Ha-Ha. There is a publicly accessible pedestrian footpath across the south side of the parade ground from Grand Depot Road to Repository Road. The footpath provides an important vantage point for seeing the Barracks and as such is important to enable public appreciation of the character of one of the main designed historical showpieces of the Conservation Area.
- Second, to the west the hilly area of Green Hill, Repository Woods and the Rotunda area forms a series of smaller spaces, mostly private and only accessible to members of the public with permits.
- Third and south-west of this lies Charlton Cemetery (with Charlton Park and Charlton House on the other side of Cemetery Lane but in the Charlton Conservation Area).

The area now called “Woolwich Common” lies in the southern half of the Conservation Area, and has been in military ownership since 1803-6. It is a large, flat, fully publicly accessible open space. Its best frontages are Ha-Ha Road to the north-east, Academy Road to the east, and Shooters Hill Road to the south. Woolwich Common mainly has the traditional character of a common – being grassed and bounded by trees. However there is a large encroachment to the north east at the west end of Ha- Ha Road in the form of the former Wireless station. The traditional common character is also compromised by the former Stadium to the west. To the south of the Royal Military Academy on the east side of Academy Road lie three 19<sup>th</sup> century grass covered reservoirs. They form part of the surviving ancient common, and, like it, are protected as Metropolitan Open Land.

The Common is surrounded and bounded by seven separate areas, the edge of the Common mainly being defined by buildings.

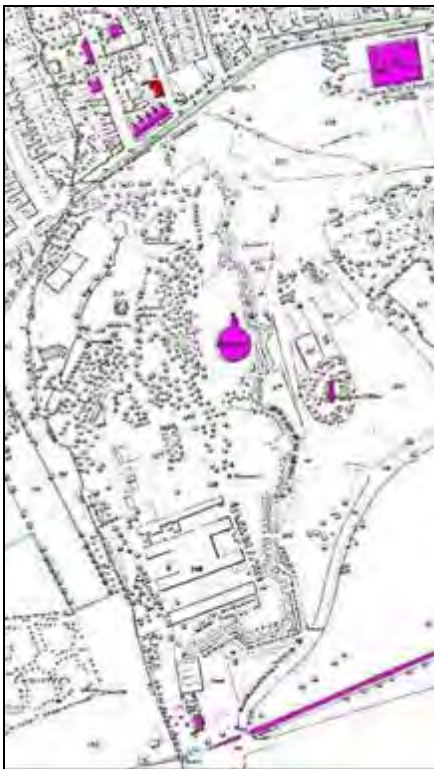
- To the north lie secluded Barracks buildings – visually surrounded by large historic walls and the Barracks frontage.
- To the north-east lies the ruined Garrison Church and, beyond, the Connaught Mews buildings – the former Royal Artillery Hospital.
- To the south east of Woolwich Common is the Royal Military Academy. Here, James Wyatt’s striking picturesque Gothick edifice of 1803 fronts onto a well proportioned large square, which complements and emphasises the scale and very impressive character of the Academy.
- To the south an especially fine avenue of very large trees lines Shooters Hill Road, with a series of fine building complexes behind – in particular the former Royal Herbert, Brook and



Castlewood hospitals, and Victoria House, the former Medical Officers Mess of 1909, Adair House a 1928 nurses quarters, and the Shooters Hill Police Station.

- To the west of Woolwich Common lies the 1978 Queen Elizabeth Hospital. The white concrete and glass modern hospital is a large visual intrusion into the Common on a site previously occupied by the Veterinary hospital and Shrapnel Barracks.
- Finally, south-west of the Hospital and separated by it from the Common is Hornfair Park, complete with playing fields and Lido – the latter outside the Conservation Area but meriting designation.

**Historic planned and/or designed landscape:** The main Royal Artillery Barracks block is central to a designed landscape and provides a central aesthetic focus. To the south the Barracks looks out onto the Barrack Field, which in turn is demarcated from the Common by a ditch - the Ha- Ha. To the west of Repository road the landscape is undulating. The Rotunda was originally constructed in a commanding position but the views are now compromised by heavy tree growth of Repository Woods to the west and the married quarters to the east. (See *comparative map extracts below*). The northern aspect is relatively un-obscured by modern development. To the west of the Rotunda the 1870 OS map shows paths within a wooden landscape and a pond at the bottom of the steeply dropping land.



**Maps 11 & 12: 1870 and 2004 OS Map extracts showing Rotunda, Magnetic Office and Ravelin.**

**Training landscape:** The wider Royal Artillery Barracks site contains a number of ravelin, gun emplacements, earthworks and other features related to Artillery training; these are mainly located south west of the Barracks in the Gun Park and Repository Woods area. The 1799 map shows a mortar emplacement (now under a car park). The 1832 map shows large practice fortifications including a series of ravelin and stone revetments. The 1870 OS map (see map extract) shows the practice fortifications in detail. The Oxford Archaeology report on the Barracks complex<sup>5</sup> considers

<sup>5</sup> Referenced in Appendix 1, the report contains more detail on the location of current and former military practice fortifications.

that “*these fortifications are representative of an extremely rare type of practice fortification which survives in a relatively good state of preservation except at the northern end*”.

**Summary:** The importance of the open spaces of the Woolwich Common Conservation Area lies both in their individual character and their inter-connection. The value of the open character is greatly enhanced by the connections to open spaces beyond the conservation area in particular Shooters Hill to the south east, Charlton Park and Maryon Wilson Parks to the west, the private spaces around Rushgrove House and Mulgrave Pond to the north, and the open spaces round Eaglesfield School to the east.

## 5. Key views and Vistas:

Views are an important to the character of this Conservation Area. UDP policy D27 (i) protects the local view from Shooters Hill over Central London and the Thames. Skylines and distant views to and from Areas of Special Character are further protected by policy D29 which includes Woolwich 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**”.

Three specific types of view significant to this Conservation Area are identified in this character appraisal - panoramic views over the Common, panoramic views across the Common, views of buildings. Each type of view makes a particular contribution to the character of the area and thus would merit protection and enhancement.

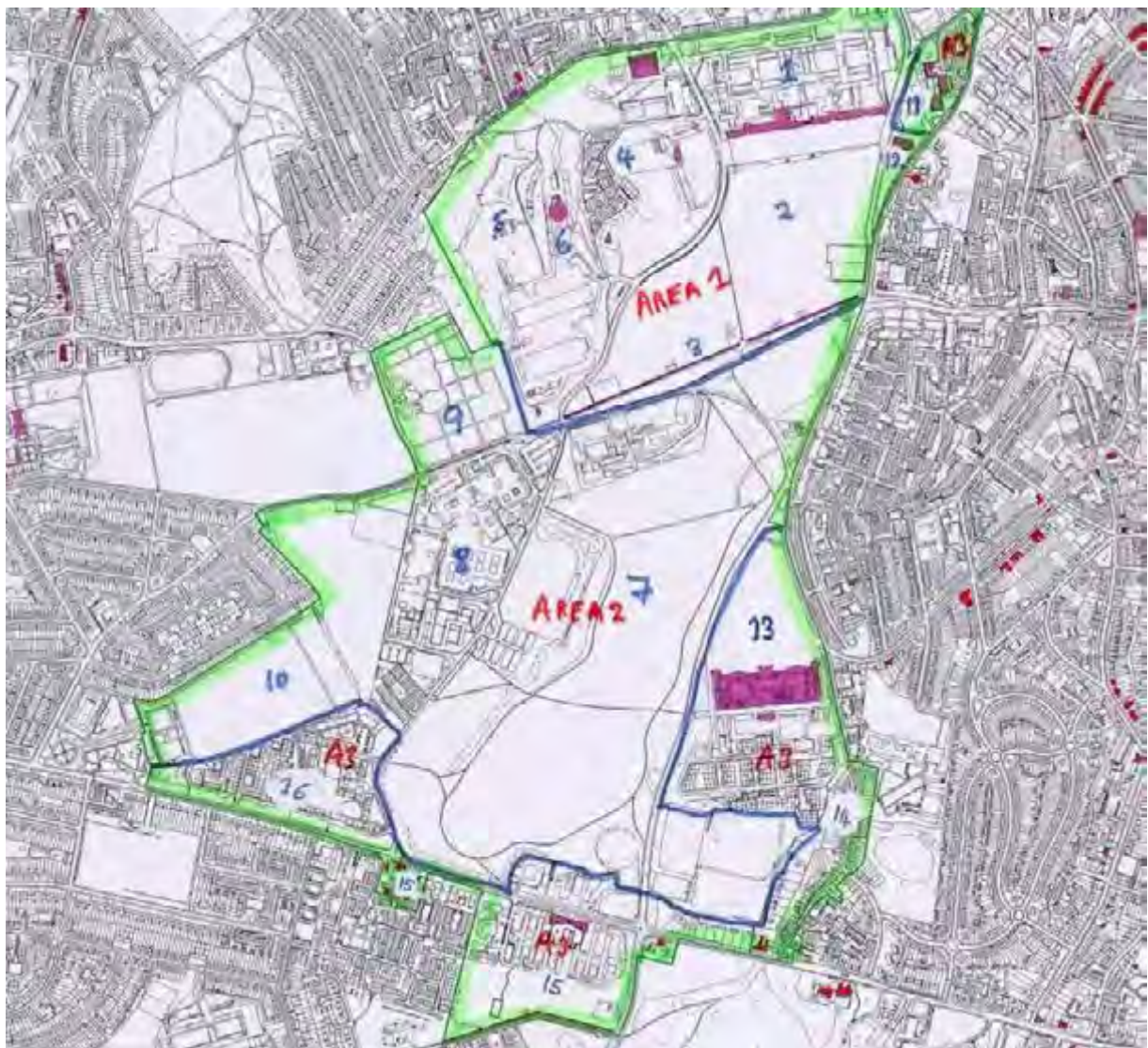
1. There are fine **panoramic views** over the Common from Shooters Hill to the north over the Thames to London: The scale and extent of the view means that these can be quite spectacular. These views will be protected from inappropriate or visually intrusive development by policies D27 and D29.
2. **Views across the Common** are frequent and significant and are generally protected by policy D29.
3. **Views of landmark buildings:** In this Conservation Area there are a large number of landmark buildings and monuments. The setting of these often spectacular buildings plays an especially strong role. In many cases there are valuable surviving drawings, water colours and old photographs showing how the building was set in past times. 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**”. Some of the area’s more significant landmarks include:
  - Wyatt’s Royal Artillery Barracks frontage from points around parade ground (not visible from the Common because of trees)
  - Wyatt’s Gothick Royal Military Academy
  - Nash’s Rotunda Museum
  - Government House
  - Brook Hospital Water Tower
  - Former Herbert Hospital
  - Shooters Hill Police Station
  - Other listed and locally listed buildings and structures



## 6. Definition of character areas

The Conservation Area can be divided visually into three types of urban landscape:

- Area 1 Barracks and Repository Area: Publicly inaccessible open land in military use – often incorporating significant Listed Buildings (Barracks, Repository Woods, Rotunda etc.)
- Area 2 Woolwich Common: Traditional publicly accessible common and parkland (Woolwich Common and Hornfair Park). The white modern 1978 Queen Elizabeth Hospital sits uneasily in this area.
- Area 3 Built fringes to east and south: Current or former hospital or associated buildings many converted to residential use (1780 Royal Artillery Hospital, 1805 Royal Military Academy, 1865 Royal Herbert Hospital, and the 1894 Brook Hospital



**Map 13: Character Areas - Conservation Area boundary green, character areas numbered in red, blue numbers represent component sites of each character area (refer to relevant text) .**

These areas are divided by four roughly parallel long frontages of special character –

- (i) the military wall bounding the south side of Little Heath, Hill Reach and Artillery Place,

- (ii) the front of The Royal Artillery Barracks itself,
- (iii) The Ha-Ha, and
- (iv) the tree lined avenue of Shooters Hill Road,

Interspersed into the three areas are several more formal open spaces in various locations including a cemetery, sports and play areas, viz. Charlton Cemetery, various playgrounds.

### **Character Area 1: Barracks and Repository Area**

*Extent (numbers refer to map).* Barracks (1) and Barracks field (2), Ha-Ha (3), Green Hill (4), Repository Woods (5), and Rotunda (6).

*Land Uses:* Military land including barracks, parade ground, sports ground, former Commandant's gardens, gun stores, former Common land, soldiers' family houses.

*Building Quality:* Outstanding

*Listed Buildings:* Barracks, former Garrison School, Rotunda, gun store, observatory. Ha-Ha, boundary wall to Hill Reach

*Monuments:* numerous military and other monuments including Zulu monument, Victory statue, commemorative or captured guns and cannon etc – see also Local details section below

*Locally Listed Buildings:* none

*Buildings within setting:* 70 Little Heath, officers' housing 40-49 Hill Reach (Listed), Rushgrove House (Listed), Mulgrave Pond

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

*Heritage Assets:* outstanding 18<sup>th</sup> c. composition of frontage to Parade Ground

*Views out:* various views north to Thames & E London *Local Distinctiveness:* Military character associated with over 200 years military use and ownership

### **Character Area 2: Woolwich Common**

*Extent (numbers refer to map).* Woolwich Common (7), Queen Elizabeth Hospital (8), Cemetery (9), Hornfair Park (10)

*Land Uses:* Common land, parkland, burial ground, NHS hospital, reservoirs.

*Building Quality:* except for cemetery chapel not significant

*Listed Buildings:* none.

*Monuments:* Temperance drinking fountain and Obelisk - dedication to Robert John Little – SW diagonally opposite Government House (see fig 58 and Table of monuments)

*Locally Listed Buildings:* none

*Other important buildings and structures:* memorials and stones in cemetery

*Building Materials:* concrete and metal windows (QEH), mixed polychromatic stock bricks, wooden windows, slate roofs, boundary railings (cemetery and chapel)

*Heritage Assets:* Open space

*Views out:* various views to Shooters Hill, view from Cemetery Lane over Charlton Park to Charlton House

*Local Distinctiveness:* survival of ancient Common land

*Notable local features within setting:* view over Charlton Park to Charlton house



**Figures 5 & 6: Queen Elizabeth Hospital.**

### **Character Area 3: Built fringes to east and south**

*Extent (numbers refer to map).* Connaught Mews (11), Garrison Church (12), Royal Military Academy (together with parade ground in front and church at rear)(13), residential Red Lion Lane Area (14), Shooters Hill Road Hospitals (15), Master Gunner Estate (16)

*Land Uses:* Hospitals and Military Academy in residential use, church preserved as a ruin, residential apartment blocks.

*Building Quality:* varied – surviving historic buildings good – many listed or locally listed, Master Gunner Estate undistinguished and does not complement area

*Listed Buildings:* Connaught Mews, Royal Military Academy, former Royal Herbert Hospital,

*Locally Listed Buildings:* Brook Hospital, Castlewood Hosp, Shooters Hill Police station

*Other important buildings and structures:*

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

*Heritage Assets:* Royal Military Academy, Woolwich Common

*Views out:* outstanding view of front of Royal Military Academy, various other glimpse views of Royal Military Academy, various views to Shooters Hill especially from Prince Imperial Road (part east of roundabout)

*Streetscapes:* Red Lion Lane, Shooters Hill Road (trees), Shooters Hill (hill tree-scape)

*Notable local features within setting:* Engineer House Woolwich New Road, Government House, Red Lion PH and buildings in area, Shooters Hill, Charlton Lido



**Figures 7 - 10: Red Lion Lane streetscape.**





Figures 11 & 12: Housing on Woolwich New Road - within setting but not within Conservation Area.



Figure 13: view over parade ground to Royal Military Academy.



Figure 14: Red Lion Lane.



Figure 15: Ball finial Herbert Hospital.



Figure 16: Herbert Hospital - main entrance block.



Figure 17: Victoria House - former Medical Officers Mess.

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

**Historic former uses in the area** include grazing on the Common, sand and gravel extraction, and wood gathering. In the 18<sup>th</sup> century there were a few cottages and public houses. Significant building development on this land did not commence until the large scale military set pieces of the late 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> century. The 19<sup>th</sup> century saw increased use of the Common for military manoeuvres, and building on land previously acquired. Encroachment onto the Common itself for housing was limited to military and nurses quarters and the Master Gunner estate.

The two most significant **current uses** are the varied military and recreational uses. The military uses – barracks, training colleges, gun and equipment stores etc. – impact on the access, boundary character, privacy, style and quality of buildings, and scale of the building complexes in the area.

Many of the 19<sup>th</sup> century hospital buildings are large, characterful and in many cases listed structures which have been preserved, mainly by conversion to residential flats. Uses on the periphery are mixed and include some residential in Green Hill and Red Lion Lane, but there is more residential accommodation in purpose-built or converted large blocks. There are a very small number of other buildings including pubs, shops and public buildings such as a day centre, a police station, and a nursery school.

## 8. Architectural and historic qualities of the buildings

The buildings in the Conservation Area (and its environs) are of varying styles which may be conveniently summarised as:

- Georgian military buildings,
- Victorian hospital buildings, of considerable secondary interest
- Monuments and Ordnance, until recently a unique collection, now with the departure of the Royal Artillery, partly dispersed
- 19<sup>th</sup> century housing
- 20<sup>th</sup> c post war military buildings (Queen Elizabeth's Hospital etc) and housing.

In this section consideration is given to the Georgian Buildings. Schedules are provided of Listed Buildings, Locally Listed Buildings, and Listed and Locally Listed Buildings proposed to be included in the expanded Conservation Area.

**The Georgian military buildings:** These buildings are the main architectural interest of the Conservation Area, only the principal four groups of buildings are considered here.

1. James Wyatt's neo-classical 1776-1802 Royal Artillery Barracks designed at the beginning of Wyatt's career
2. The Gun Park complex
3. The Rotunda
4. James Wyatt's later Gothick Royal Military Academy of 1803 onwards.

James Wyatt's two very striking outstanding building complexes dominate this Conservation Area, both are Listed II\*. The size of Wyatt's large building complexes and the picturesque effect of their frontages addressing large parade grounds and the Common beyond, re-interpreted and re-defined the character of Woolwich Common in a quite fundamental way from the moment of construction two hundred years ago. That re-defined character survives to this day. In addition to their architectural value, these iconic buildings reinforce each other adding a boundary, a form of enclosure and definition to the Common.

The third Grade II\* Listed Building is John Nash's Rotunda rebuilt here and set in formerly designed landscape gardens. Compared to the above it is small in size, but it is of significant importance architecturally. Its distinctive silhouette and secluded setting give this building, great importance to the Conservation Area as a whole.

Grade II Listed Buildings include the 1810 Ha-Ha, the 1863 Royal Garrison Church of St. George (ruin), the Connaught Barracks and gate, and the Royal Herbert Pavilions. There are also a number of visually important monuments.

**The Royal Artillery Barracks (1776-1802) complex:** This large site is the major defining feature of the Conservation Area and has been in Military ownership for over two hundred years. Pevsner describes the Barracks itself as “*being on the scale of St Petersburg, 1000ft long with room enough for 4000 men*”. It comprises a nationally important collection of 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century buildings and also later buildings of no special architectural or historic interest. There are five Listed Buildings – the grade II\* RA Barracks complex itself, the grade II\* Rotunda, Green Hill Court (former Garrison School), the MOD Police Office (also known as the Observatory or Magnetic Office), and the Gun Park building MOD number I3B. Major 1960’s redevelopment resulted in the demolition of much historic fabric on the Barracks site to the rear of the main façade. OA identify the site of spoil on east side of Barracks, as well as much building in the Repository Woods and Gun Park area. OA has produced a detailed audit and evaluation of all the buildings and monuments in the wider Barracks area. This audit was produced in order to provide a detailed analysis of the architectural and archaeological significance of the whole Barracks site prior to the approval of substantial redevelopment proposals. It identifies the “surviving historic fabric” in three areas – 1. The Barracks itself, 2. The Gun Park Area and 3. The Rotunda area. These are now reviewed:

#### **I. The Barracks complex:**

- i. The surviving Barracks range: two near identical wings of 1776 and 1801, both by James Wyatt, each of 3 blocks linked by smaller recessed columned sections. The two wings of 13-5-21-5-13 bays (57 bays each) were linked in 1858 by a triumphal ceremonial arch in the classical style to create the present unified structure. The decorated double height mess room is also likely by Wyatt. East end of range rebuilt after damage by VI Rocket in WWII, OA provides detailed audit of basements etc. The OA audit identifies 11 buildings forming the front range of 57 bays, and 32 other buildings on the main Barracks site, of these, only two or three - the canteen, Dome trainer, and historic wall are of interest.
- ii. The western-most frontage building of 13 bays (termed here B1) is the oldest and dates from 1778. Changes subsequent to the Charnock sketch are evaluated by OA, who suggest its current appearance was designed by Wyatt to match his eastern sister block in c.1805. The next frontage building is known as the Woolwich Garrison HQ, a 5 bay stuccoed link block with colonnade of Tuscan Columns. The Charnock picture shows block as one floor only, first floor probably added by Wyatt in c 1805. The third building is the west wing of the Barracks – a double pile structure of 21 bays. The Charnock view suggests its roof was remodelled by Wyatt in c 1805. Building 4 is the celebrated Officers Mess linking block with fine internal decoration – the oldest Mess in the country. Building 5 is a matching 13 bay very similar to B1. B6 is the central arch of 1858 built probably to celebrate victory in the Crimean War. B7-B11 match B1-B6, most were rebuilt after WWII and B7 is the most complete survivor of Wyatt’s work on the west side, it appears substantially unaltered and of one build (OA2.8.3).
- iii. A 19<sup>th</sup> century canteen block (MOD building 10b is curtilage listed). Extended from earlier 19<sup>th</sup> c building, retains integrity of original design.
- iv. A section of 19<sup>th</sup> century barrack wall (likewise Listed as curtilage structure). Identifiable parts of barrack perimeter and prison wall – prison yard shown on 1866 map (OA 6.2.12).
- v. Other buildings are modern mostly dating from 1960’s redevelopment





Figure 18: Sketch of Wyatt's late 18<sup>th</sup> c Barracks by John Charnock, drawn c 1800, notice that there are now extra floors on the link blocks, towers at the ends of the wing pavilions, and minor changes to the roof. These changes can already be seen in the next picture from the early 19<sup>th</sup> century.



Figure 19: Early 19<sup>th</sup> c. view of Barracks from near Repository Road.



Figures 20 - 22: 1778 Barracks Buildings B1, B2 & B3.





Figures 23 & 24: Originally 18<sup>th</sup> c. Officers' Mess and interior.



Figures 25 & 26: Central triumphal arch of 1858.



Figures 27 & 28 canteen.

**The Royal Artillery:** Before the 18th century, artillery 'traynes' were raised by Royal Warrant for specific campaigns and disbanded again when they were over. On 26 May 1716, however, by Royal Warrant of George I two regular companies of field artillery, each 100 men strong, were raised at Woolwich. On 1 April 1722 these companies were grouped with independent artillery companies at Gibraltar and Minorca to form the Royal Regiment of Artillery, commanded by Colonel Albert Bogarde. The regiment expanded rapidly and by 1757 had 24 companies divided into two battalions, as well as a Cadet Company formed in 1741. By 1771 there were 32 companies in four battalions, as well as two Invalid Companies comprising older and unfit men employed in garrison duties. In January 1793, two troops of Royal Horse Artillery were raised to provide fire support for the cavalry, joined by two more in November 1793. All RHA personnel were mounted. The Royal Irish Artillery was absorbed in 1801.

The regiment was under the control of the Board of Ordnance up to 1855 when the Board was abolished. Thereafter the regiment came under the War Office along with the rest of the army. In 1861 the regiment also absorbed the artillery of the British East India Company – 21 horse batteries and 48 field batteries – which brought its strength up

to 29 horse batteries, 73 field batteries and 88 heavy batteries. On 1 July 1899, the Royal Artillery was divided into two groups: the Royal Horse Artillery and Royal Field Artillery comprised one group, while the coastal defence, mountain, siege and heavy batteries were split off into another group named the Royal Garrison Artillery. The three sections effectively functioned as separate corps. This arrangement lasted until 1924, when the three amalgamated once more. The Royal Horse Artillery, which has always had separate traditions, uniforms and insignia, still retains a separate identity within the regiment, however, and is considered (by its members at least) to be an elite.

## **2. The Gun Park Area:**

- i. The main Gun Park building itself, listed grade II, and known as the Old Band Store because of use as store for military band instruments. The south wing of this is dated 1830. Two red bricked flat roofed additions are detrimental.
- ii. This is flanked by: Two long ranges of former limber sheds – late 19<sup>th</sup> or early 20<sup>th</sup> century and of considerable historic interest as built for a specific purpose for Royal Horse Artillery. Good surviving original interior features in south block.
- iii. The separate ammunition store or magazine at the Gun Park; MOD building 13d; a 19<sup>th</sup> century building shown on 1870 OS map, an interesting building still in original use. These gun park buildings appear to be in the curtilage of the main Gun Park building, if so they fall under the Gun Park building itself as Listed. They form a group of regional historic importance and sensitive reuse is recommended. They make a significant contribution to the CA character, and as such are worthy of preservation, whether they are listed or not.
- iv. The former commandant's house, shown on 1811 sketch plan and constructed in same building phase as second phase of Barracks. Listed Grade II and also known as 1&2 gate house, east facing early 19<sup>th</sup> century Tuscan portico of four columns. Now privately owned.
- v. The unlisted practice field fortifications (ravelin)



**Figure 29: Old Band Store – front.**



**Figure 30: Old Band Store – rear.**



**Figures 31 & 32: Limber sheds & Magazine.**



Figure 33: Former Commandant's house.



Figure 34: Former Garrison school – east front.

### 3. The Rotunda Area:

- The Rotunda: 24 sided polygonal building, roof in Chinese style, rises to octagonal cupola with weather vane, interior has one huge central Doric column supporting inner canvas ceiling with ropes. Double colonnade around interior with 24 cast iron fluted columns joined by segmental arches. An unusual and unique Grade II\* Listed building by John Nash. Formerly the RA museum, subsequently the reserve collection for the Firepower Museum, now empty. Adapted from a temporary wooden structure with a canvas roof, based on an army bell tent, as one of a temporary group of structures at Prince Regent's Carlton House. In 1814 the abdication of Napoleon was the cause of great celebration and led to this as one of a new range of Nash buildings at Carlton House. Nash's original 1814 drawings rediscovered and held at the Public Record Office. The building was relocated in 1818 to its present site as a Repository of war trophies with brick walls instead of wood. The design of the roof of curve laminated timber is of particular significance and foreshadows Brighton Pavilion. The lead roof was added in 1861, and the roof and canvas replaced 1975. The grounds around the Rotunda formerly contained a fine collection of guns. These have been transferred to the Firepower Museum.
- Magnetic Office: six bays, hipped slate roof, overhanging eaves. Currently MOD police office, original purpose not known – marked as Observatory on 1845 map, possibly for the testing of compasses or other military use. Apparently was equipped with a “magnificent telescope” in 1874.
- The Museum Curators office – small rectangular two bay single storey pitched roof, dentilled eaves, c 1860, formerly a forge, on 1870 OS map, brickwork matches Rotunda, perhaps built as part of work of applying lead to roof of Rotunda. Curtilage of Rotunda. Of considerable interest and should be preserved.
- Green Hill School: mid 19<sup>th</sup> century H-Plan block, south front of 17 bays. Grade II Listed, converted into private dwellings. 5-window centre section projects slightly under pediment-like gable. End wings have moderately low pitched, slate roofs; centre roof renewed in corrugated asbestos. Multicoloured stock brick with dentil cornices running across pediment. Round window in tympanum. Gauged brick arches to sash windows with glazing bars (some renewed) those in 5-bay centre section round headed in round arched arcading. The building is a roughly symmetrical block and the South front repeats the North except that there is a central double door and the side wings have 2 windows. On East and West fronts end wings with central doors under round arched fanlights. The East front has a central double door with radial fanlight.
- Married quarters: two post-war blocks adjacent to Green Hill Court are of no interest and are arguably detrimental; main married quarters comprise 12 blocks of 1934-5 on North Slope west of Gun Park. Earliest blocks are pleasant but altered and widened small terraces. Adjacent garage detrimental.





Figure 35: Former Magnetic Office



Figure 36: Curators Office - former forge.



Figure 37: 1823 View from Rotunda, drawn three years after its relocation from Carlton House to Woolwich. Demonstrates hill-top location and fine views over old Woolwich and the river Thames. Note fix-mounted large Cannon in foreground.





Figure 38 & Figure 39: Rotunda and its interior.



Figure 40 & Figure 41: The Rotunda - 19<sup>th</sup> century watercolour and aquatint.

## **4. The Royal Military Academy**

The Royal Military Academy at Woolwich<sup>6</sup> (RMA) was originally established in 1741 to educate the military branch of the Board of Ordnance to produce officers for the Artillery and Engineers. The two corps were referred to as the Ordnance Corps until 1856. Regiments and corps gradually spun off on their own, maintaining the same competitive entrance system: sappers, gunners, signals and the tank corps.

**Character** – The Academy is described by Pevsner as “*an outstanding example of Wyatt’s Gothick style and one of the most important pieces of military architecture in the country*”. The 720 foot long picturesque Gothick front in yellow stock brick creates a picturesque view from the north across Woolwich Common from the environs of the Royal Artillery Barracks. The overall plan is symmetrical with a centre block connected on each side by plain one storey arcades to side blocks. W. F. D. Jervois added the wings in 1860. The centre Block has four corner turrets in imitation of White Tower at Tower of London. Viewed from the south the composition remains substantially as originally first designed - a dramatic ethereal Gothick fantasy of a Military Academy dominating the Common and providing a formally similar and fully appropriate counterpoint to the Royal Artillery Barracks building at the opposite end of Woolwich Common.

### **Brief chronology of development at Royal Military Academy**

1801 - The original buildings were designed by James Wyatt and construction commenced. The plan is of the shape of the present frontage buildings  
1806 enough had been built to allow 128 cadets to use buildings. The 1806 plan shows the original enclosure to Parade ground was a 9 foot wall to the east and west and a ha-ha to the north.  
1808 Plan shows a central drive  
1811 plan shows Red Lion Lane had been built.  
1830 by this date a model room, laundry and servants quarters had been added  
1857-1860 two new wings designed by WFD Jervois, plan also shows two workshops at rear, gym and racquet courts  
1873 fire to main front building and re-building, 1884 plan shows huts to rear and marks start of development of rear part of site, 1884 plan to front half shows substantial infill  
1892 additional east wing  
1902 chapel at rear on site of old gun drill shed designed by Major Hemming (R.E.) – see below  
1908 two football grounds at rear  
1910 tea room beside east tower  
1920 New photographic studio, electrical room and billiard room  
1926 chapel south transept  
1973 Playing fields at rear developed for housing

The RMA closed in 1939 although the buildings continued in military training use until the 1970’s. It is now privately owned and is currently being developed and converted for residential use.

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<sup>6</sup>The Royal Military Academy Sandhurst (RMAS) was formed in 1947 from two older institutions, the Royal Military Academy at Woolwich and the Royal Military College (RMC). The RMA at Woolwich trained gentlemen cadets for the Royal Artillery and Royal Engineers, and later for the Royal Corps of Signals and some for the Royal Tank Corps. It remained there until it was closed on mobilisation in 1939. The RMC began in 1800 as a school for staff officers which later became the Staff College, Camberley. In 1802 a new department with a new college Sandhurst was built to train gentlemen cadets as officers of the Line, into which the cadets moved in 1812.



**Figures 42 – 44: 19<sup>th</sup> Century drawings of the Military Academy.**



**Figures 45 & 46: contemporary photos of frontage.**





**Figures 47 – 49: Contemporary photos of the Royal Military Academy.**



**Figure 50: Royal Military Academy Dining Room.**



**Figures 51 & 52: Two rear views of the Royal Military Academy.**



**Church of St Michael and all Angels** – part of the RMA site on Academy Road. Built in 1902 as a church for the Royal Military Academy as well as a place of worship *a campo santo*<sup>7</sup> to those who had died in service of their country.



**Figure 53: Church of St Michael and all Angels Academy Road.**



**Figure 54: Church of St Michael and all Angels: interior with surviving hammerbeam roof.**



**Figure 55: Church of St Michael and all Angels: surviving stained glass window.**

The church was built to the design of Major Hemming of the Royal Engineers, red brick, perpendicular style, wooden hammerbeam roof. The original decorated interior survived until 2006 and included fretted perpendicular style screen, sanctuary with marble floor and railings, chancel with oak choir stalls, and a wealth of memorials. The Church's stained glass windows, internal screen, choir, reredos and other fittings have also been removed, all under Listed Building Consent consequent on disposal of the site from military ownership for housing<sup>8</sup>.

## Schedule of Listed Buildings

There are 26 separate List entries within the Conservation Area although there are only ten separate buildings (counting the Barracks as one). Most of the List entries refer to monuments or parts of larger buildings – e.g. separately listed components of the Royal Military Academy. Most buildings are Listed Grade II. John Nash's Rotunda, Wyatt's main RA Barracks, and Wyatt's Royal Military Academy are II\*.

### Academy Road

Main building Royal Military Academy 1805-8 by James Wyatt – extended 1862, partly rebuilt after 1873 fire – Grade II \* - see *above*;

West Lodge Royal Military Academy – entrance lodge 1862;

East Lodge Royal Military Academy - entrance lodge 1862;

North West Gate Royal Military Academy – four square stone piers with plinth and entablature;

Pillar box within RMA grounds – 1860s cast iron hexagonal Penfold type – front has VR insignia;

<sup>7</sup> See Glossary.

<sup>8</sup> Being relocated to the new HQ of the Royal Artillery and Larkhill Salisbury Plain, some memorials will go to the Royal Military Academy at Sandhurst.

Church of St Michaels and All Angels, Old Royal Military Academy - 1902, see *above*.

### **Grand Depot Road**

Connaught Barracks South-western part – 2 separate early 19<sup>th</sup> c buildings and a mid-19<sup>th</sup> century building;

NW entrance gate to Connaught Barracks;

Wall to SE of Connaught Barracks;

Connaught RASC Barracks - Woolwich new road – formerly called Grand Depot – former hospital Built 1780 enlarged 1806 – started as Sappers barracks;

K2 Telephone Kiosk opposite Woolwich Barracks. 1927, designed by Giles Gilbert Scott. Cast iron. Square kiosk of K2 type with domed roof perforated crowns to top panel and glazing bars to windows and door;



**Figure 56: Connaught barracks**



**Figure 57: K2 phone box just north of Garrison Church, Grand Depot Road.**

Overthrow lamp 50 yards west of Jashoda house, base of two upright cannon;

St George's Chapel (Ruin) 1863 by TH Wyatt (cousin of James Wyatt), was built when Lord Herbert was Secretary of State for War in Palmerston's administration. Its design is similar to the Herbert family church at Wilton, also by TH Wyatt. Both churches are in the form of early Christian Romanesque basilica with structural polychromatic brickwork. The mosaics at Woolwich include peacock and phoenix motifs flanking apses inside. The church was bombed in WWII and is now roofless and fragmentary;



**Figures 58 - 60: Ruins of Garrison church.**

South African War Memorial.

## Green Hill

The Rotunda - John Nash – Grade II\*- 1819 with festive tall Chinese concave roof – building started life as a mock tent in St James' Park in 1814, *for photo and evaluation see RA section above*;

Former Magnetic Office, aka Observatory, aka MOD Police Office. It is wrongly called on list “Observatory married quarters”, for photo and evaluation see RA section above.



**Figure 61: Nash Rotunda  
1819**



**Figure 62: Ha-Ha from  
eastern end.**



**Figure 63: Obelisk, monument to  
Robert John  
Little, Government House  
behind.**

## Ha-Ha Road

The Ha-Ha – stretches from SE corner of Charlton Cemetery to Woolwich New Road, 1810;

Drinking Fountain – Obelisk - all but one basin missing - 1861 to Robert John Little.

## Hill Reach (South Side)

Green Hill Garrison School Early-mid C19 building. For photo and evaluation see RA section above;

North boundary wall to grounds of Royal Military Repository.

## Repository Road

Royal Artillery Barracks – main building Grade II\* - east half 1775 – 82, west half 1802 – right hand end bombed 1940, rebuilt 1960;

Royal Artillery Barracks – Gun Park Block II – early 19<sup>th</sup> century 5 bays;



Royal Artillery Barracks I & 2 South West Gate.



Figure 64: RA Barracks central front.

Figure 65: Victory monument on parade ground.

### Shooters Hill Road

Royal Herbert Hospital – the entire site is Listed and denoted as “Herbert Pavilions” including attached front railings, perimeter chapel and retaining walls” – former military hospital – now flats, 1859-65 by Douglas Galton with R. O. Mennie – converted 1992, white Suffolk bricks.



Figure 66: Royal Herbert Hospital pavilion.

## Local List:

### Shooters Hill

Castlewood Hospital - Queen Anne Style 1889 - formerly known as Woolwich and Plumstead Cottage Hospital – includes finials lantern dormers etc – now known as Victoria Day Centre;





**Figure 67 & 68: Victoria House – formerly Medical Officers Mess – west front to Academy Road.**

Board of Ordnance marker post near Castlewood hospital – 1808;

Police Station Shooters Hill;



**Figure 69: Shooters Hill Police Station – front red brick 1915.**



**Figure 70: entrance lodge to Brook Hospital.**

Brook Hospital, five structures, four by Thomas Aldwinkle 1894-6 –gate lodge, water tower, admin block, doctor's house, pumping station 1863 Kent Waterworks Company.

### **Cemetery Lane**

Drinking fountain in Charlton Cemetery.

**Buildings not within the Conservation Area but within its setting and on the Statutory List or the Local List** Buildings marked with a \* are within an area proposed for addition to the Conservation Area.

### **Hill Reach**

\*40-49 Beresford Terrace Statutory List Grade II - Terrace of houses c 1845 – built as a terrace of ten houses for army officers, high quality architectural detailing and historical associations.

### **Little Heath**

\*70 - Detached two story house c 1830 - Local List.

### **Rushgrove Street**

\*Rushgrove House - Statutory List Grade II.

\*Garden house in grounds of Rushgrove house- Statutory List Grade II.

### Shooters Hill

\*57 - Georgian House at end of side alley - Statutory List Grade II.

\*Christ Church - Local List.

\*Christ Church School - Local List.

\*Milestone in front of Christ Church (the Ypres stone) - Statutory List Grade II.

Severndroog Castle - Statutory List Grade II\*.

### Woodrow

64 – Early 19<sup>th</sup> century 3 bay villa - Local List.

### Woolwich New Road

\*Government House - Statutory List Grade II.

\* Engineer House – used as military community centre – date early-mid 19<sup>th</sup> century - Local List.

**Figure 71:**  
Government  
House from  
side showing  
18<sup>th</sup> c.  
original  
building &  
19<sup>th</sup> c.  
addition



**Figure 72:**  
Engineer  
House.



**Figure 73:** Engineer House – view  
from Woolwich New Road.



**Figure 74:** Engineer House –  
commemorative plaque

## 9. Contribution made by unlisted buildings within the Conservation Area

**RA Barracks/ Gun Park complex:** The thorough Oxford Archaeology survey of the Barracks complex identifies the following unlisted historic significant buildings

- former canteen at main barracks (but listed as a curtilage building);
- former limber sheds;
- magazine at gun park;
- museum curators office – formerly a forge;
- practice field fortifications (ravelin).

**Prince Imperial Road estate** – this relatively recent development of the Academy playing fields is a bland modern estate which has a neutral or negative character relative to the Conservation Area.

**Master Gunner Estate** - this is a modern estate without character and plays a negative role – it is recommended for removal from the Conservation Area.

**Red Lion Lane Area** – Red Lion Lane contains some pleasant 19<sup>th</sup> century townscape which deserves careful planning control and also advice on retention of character. The area connects historically and physically with the Red Lion Public house and the buildings in its vicinity – these buildings are not in the Conservation Area – but would be a worthy addition<sup>9</sup>

## 10. Local details

This section identifies locally characterful detail under two headings:

- (i) Detail to Georgian buildings;
- (ii) Monuments.

**Detail on Georgian buildings** which are a feature of this Conservation Area include low pitched hipped roofs, fanlights, colonnades and a variety of classical brick and other detail. Exemplary detailing includes the Royal Military Academy turrets, the 1858 triumphal arch and more generally the main front to the Royal Artillery Barracks.

**Monuments:** A special feature of the area is the monuments – mainly of a military nature and commemorating battles. The following list of monuments adds to one drawn up in 1928.

**List of Monuments** (\* = on Statutory List of designated heritage assets) – Based on 1928 Woolwich Joint Committee pamphlet

**Crimean War Victory Statue\*** – John Bell, 1860, surrounded by 12 genuine cannon posts made from cannon captured in Crimean war 1856 – centre of Parade Ground. Flanked by two Russian captured mortars. Position opposite Barrack entrance reflects the importance of the Crimean War in the imagination and history of the Royal Artillery.

**Memorial of Afghan and South African Wars\*** 1877-81 - Repository Road – OA48 – several large pieces of rough hewn rock assembled to look like a megalith, central copper plate above with names, flanked by Zulu trophy weapons cast in bronze.

<sup>9</sup> See the Woolwich Common Conservation Area Management Strategy section I

**Prince Imperial Monument** 1883. In front of the Royal Military Academy is a statue of the Prince Imperial, son of Napoleon III., a Woolwich cadet killed by Zulu warriors in the Zulu war in May 1879. In 1872 the Prince became a military cadet at the Royal Military Academy. During his stay at Woolwich, his father died on 9th January, 1873, and he became head of the Bonapartist Party in France. He was a popular person at the Academy and was even admitted to the highly unofficial 'Alpine Club', a practice of which was to decorate the towers and spires of Woolwich with chamber pots on the eve of the annual inspection by the Duke of Cambridge..

**Fountain and Obelisk to Robert John Little\*** officer of Royal Marines died 1861 - opposite Government House

**Boer War 1899-1902 Royal Field Artillery Monument\*** polished Shap granite resting on 2-step base, battered plinth with pediments on all 4 sides, by Garrison Church

**Boer war 1899-1902 Army Ordnance Corps Monument** Repository Road corner

**Charlton Parish Boundary Stone** – corner of Repository Road and Ha-Ha Road sq section stone block inscribed CP



Figure 75: statue on Victory monument

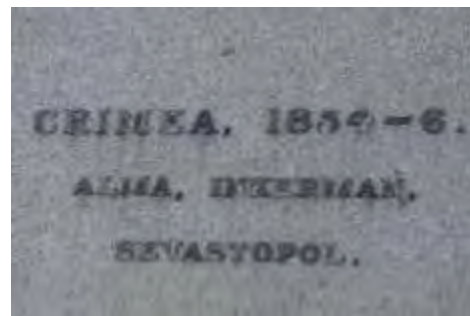


Figure 76: Boer War memorial



Figures 77 & 78: Robert John Little obelisk and water fountain temperance inscriptions – note location outside former pub



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

Architecturally the area is dominated by of late 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> century Georgian buildings. There is also much modern development often in concrete brick steel and glass. The modern buildings in this area are generally without merit and are detrimental to area character.

**Textures:** the older buildings are characteristically built in soft textured and weathered stock brick. There has been very little brick cleaning in this area and the original patina often survives.

**Colours:** Older buildings have yellow stock bricks, white window frames, dark painted doors, and grey blue slate roofs – all fostering a quiet sober character. There is much use of military green on the Artillery site, for example on fences.

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

- The earlier Georgian buildings which generally have lower angled pitches to the roofs;
- Victorian terraced houses – mainly in Red Lion Lane - with varying decorative detail
- Monuments and cannon - reviewed above;
- No pubs or purpose built schools – The Red Lion PH and Christ Church School is nearby and proposed for inclusion;
- The only churches are the ruined St George's Garrison Church and the Royal Military Academy Church of St. Michael and All Angels. The former retains some dramatic neo-Romanesque features.

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

The extent and quality of open space, whether public or private, plays a decisive role in forming the character of this Conservation Area. Reflecting this, all of the open space within the Woolwich Common Conservation Area is designated as Metropolitan Open Land and forms part of the Green Chain network of open spaces and this land is well protected from development pressure.

The topography of the Common slopes up to the south towards Shooters Hill. The northern part of the Common together with Hornfair Park and the Barrack Field is mostly grass, whilst the southern half of the common is dominated by bramble and scrub land. The stadium was built for garrison sports in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century and went out of use in the 1960's. It has since been demolished. Views onto the Common from the Barracks site are limited by development on Ha-Ha Road and by trees.

The following three Nature Conservation Areas lie within the Woolwich Common Conservation Area:

### **Woolwich Common Site of Nature Conservation of 'Borough Importance Grade 1'**

UDP Ref NC8 45 hectares. Habitat: Acid and neutral grassland, scrub, secondary woodland. This is the main part of the Conservation Area; it is a large expanse of grassland, much of it acidic, with areas of scrub and woodland near the edges. The site is managed as a meadow encouraging butterflies, grasshoppers and other invertebrates.

The sward is dominated by common bent (*Agrostis capillaris*), with sheep's fescue (*Festuca ovina*), crested dog's-tail (*Cynosurus cristatus*) and meadow-grasses (*Poa*spp) frequent. Typical acid grassland flowers include sheep's sorrel (*Rumex acetosella*), birdsfoot-trefoil (*Lotus corniculatus*) and cat's-ear (*Hypochaeris radicata*). Knotted clover (*Trifolium striatum*), which is scarce in London, occurs in one area. Bulbous buttercup (*Ranunculus bulbosus*) and oxeye daisy (*Leucanthemium vulgare*) can be found in more neutral areas, along with smooth tare (*Vicia tetrasperma*), which is scarce in Greenwich. The whole common is managed as a meadow, encouraging large populations of butterflies, grasshoppers and other invertebrates. There is free public access to the whole common, and the Green Chain Walk crosses the site. The boundary includes the former Stadium site, which supports a colourful wasteland flora.

### **Repository Wood and Charlton Cemetery Borough Site of Nature Conservation**

**Importance Grade II** UDP Ref NC24, 14.1 hectares. Habitat: Woodland, acid and neutral grassland, scrub, ponds. This Nature Conservation Area covers two separate and different sites. Repository Wood is largely secondary woodland of birch (*Betula pendula*) and sycamore (*Acer pseudoplatanus*), with some large oak (*Quercus*) and sweet chestnut (*Castanea sativa*) which may be relics of ancient woodland. The ground flora includes bluebell (*Hyacinthoides non-scripta*) and wood anemone (*Anemone nemorosa*), suggesting ancient woodland. The woodland contains three ponds, the northernmost one very large and perhaps best regarded as a small lake. This has a reasonable flora, including hornwort (*Ceratophyllum demersum*), yellow iris (*Iris pseudacorus*) and yellow water-lily (*Nuphar lutea*). It supports common waterfowl such as coot and mallard, and is used by anglers, so presumably contains fish. The two smaller ponds have little vegetation. There is a small area of scrub and neutral grassland at the northern end of the wood.

Charlton Cemetery, to the south of the wood, contains substantial areas of acid grassland, dominated by common bent (*Agrostis capillaris*) and fescues (*Festuca* spp.). Sheep's sorrel (*Rumex acetosella*) and mouse-ear hawkweed (*Pilosella officinarum*) are abundant, as is prickly sedge (*Carex muricata* ssp *lamprocarpa*), which is scarce in London.

There is free public access to the cemetery, but no access to Repository Wood.

### **Academy Place Orchard Borough Nature Conservation Site of Local Importance,**

UDP Ref NC50, 1.75 hectares. Habitat: Orchard, hedge, neutral grassland. This area is a small recently planted orchard on a covered reservoir. A wide variety of fruit trees have been planted. When mature, these are likely to be of value for specialist invertebrates. The southern boundary is an old hedge and bank, with a sizeable population of bush vetch (*Vicia sepium*), which is very rare in Greenwich.

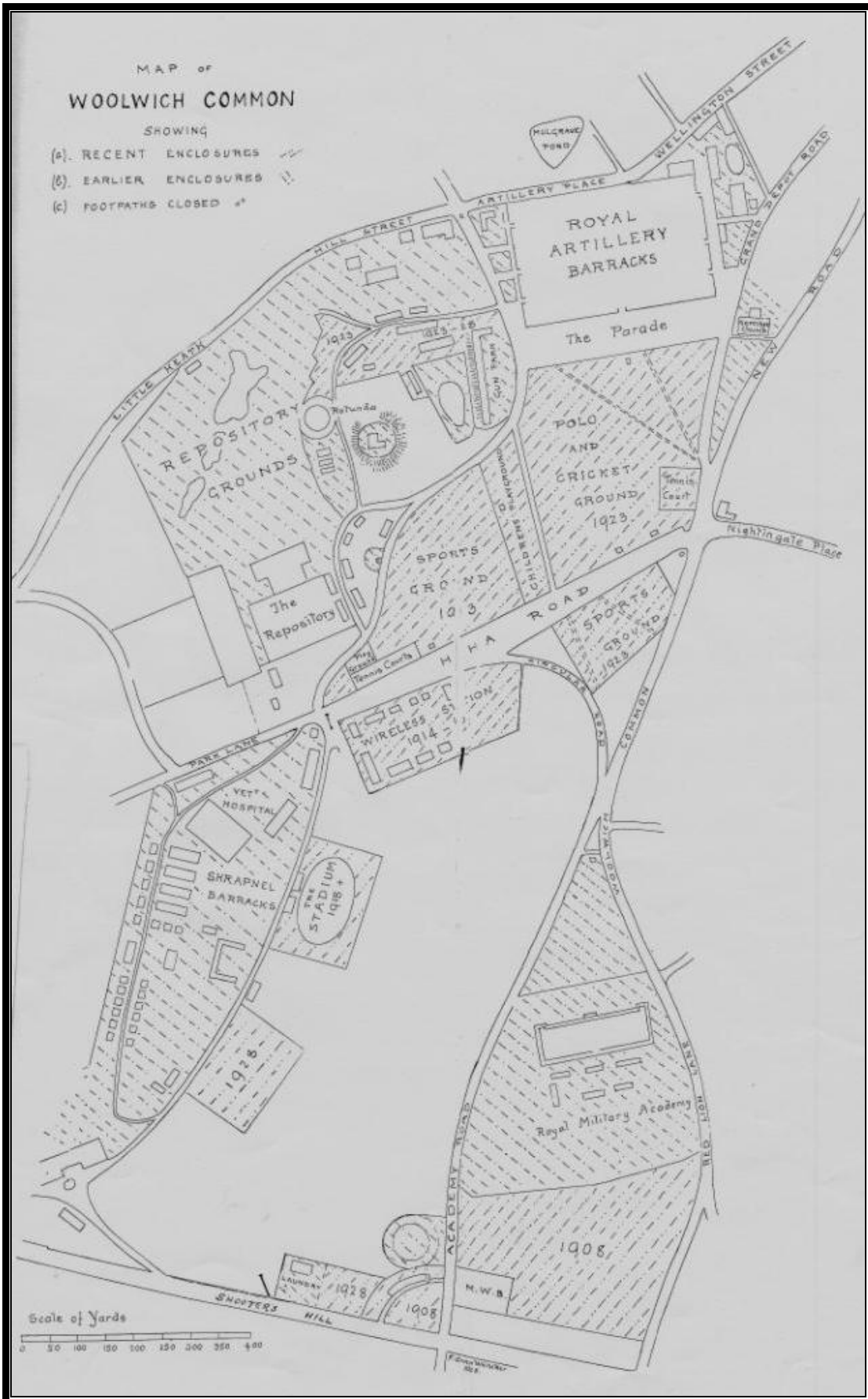
The site has considerable educational potential, and there is free public access.

## 13. Extent 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 - in some cases the identified detrimental changes took place long ago before designation (historic), and in other cases the changes have taken place since Conservation Area designation (recent). Much of the Conservation Area has been subject to, and continues to undergo major change mainly as a result of change of use to residential accommodation and the departure of the Royal Artillery. Historical experience suggests threats may recur. There are also changes expected in the near future (impending).

Historic, recent and impending damaging changes include:

- **Physical encroachment onto Common (historic):** A number of physical encroachments have taken place since 1800 which are damaging to the character of the Conservation Area. The 1928 map below shows the encroachment process at that time – distinguishing between historical and (then) more recent encroachments. 20<sup>th</sup> century encroachments include the temporary use for Military Research of the former Wireless Station between the Ha-Ha and the Common and the Woolwich Common Nursery school. The Wireless station is now set out in policy to revert to the Common. Some incursions appear to have come into being because of land parcels sold before 19<sup>th</sup> century – for example the Royal Artillery Barracks which was largely constructed on the Bowater estate. The Common is now protected from further encroachment by planning policy. It was formerly considered that the acquisition of the Common by the military in 1803 may have allowed them legal rights to develop, however this is now circumscribed by planning legislation and policy;
- **Construction of roads on the Common (historic);** Although the construction of new roads across the Common is precluded by current safeguards, widening of existing roads is possible;
- **Demolition of Georgian buildings (historic demolitions).** As elsewhere, there are many examples. For example the 1870 OS map shows a range of sometimes fine mainly Georgian houses fronting the common on the east side of Academy Road and Woolwich New Road a fine group of buildings in the Barracks were demolished in the 1960's.
- **Bomb damage** in particular to east end of Barracks and Garrison church (historic);
- **Loss of features.**
- **Poorly executed repairs** disfiguring characterful buildings (historic and recent).



Map 14: 1928 map showing 19<sup>th</sup> c and then recent enclosures onto Common - source Woolwich Joint Committee pamphlet.



- **Poor infill development** – in particular, the 1960's buildings within the Barracks complex, the Queen Elizabeth Hospital, and the Master Gunner Estate. The 1960s buildings within the Royal Artillery Barracks do not contribute to the Conservation Area and may be said to be detrimental. Similarly the 1975 Queen Elizabeth Hospital and the Master Gunner Estate. The Queen Elizabeth Hospital is by Powell & Moya and is reviewed by Pevsner who comments “*exposed concrete structure with dark panels, not especially attractive but less overwhelming than other contemporary hospitals of this size...*“. Evaluation of the contribution of the QEH has to acknowledge the architectural interest of the building and its construction by a progressive and important firm of architects. However the building complex is large and does not blend well with either the Common or its associated buildings. On balance there is too much contrast and it is considered that the QEH buildings are detrimental and negative to setting;
- **Recent new-build housing developments:** There are a number of nondescript recent housing developments bordering the Common but outside the Conservation Area – in particular, the housing around Engineer House to the east of Woolwich New Road, and the 1968-82 Woolwich Common Estate on the east side of Academy Road (historic and recent);
- **Tall buildings detrimental to setting:** Only a few tall buildings have been constructed within the Conservation Area or affecting its setting (historic). In the event that any seriously detrimental buildings are demolished, it would be an enhancement to the Conservation Area to replace them with low rise buildings.

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

‘Neutral’ development within a Conservation Area may be defined as development which could be replaced without harm provided the replacement buildings are of superior quality. Because of the careful way in which the Conservation area’s boundaries were drawn, there are few genuinely neutral buildings in the area. There may be a few neutral buildings in Red Lion Lane – but most of these including any pre- 1914 buildings are considered to contribute positively to the Conservation Area. In general all pre-1914 buildings in the area have age value and a relevant architectural style and character making them worthy of preservation. The new development on the Brook Hospital site is better than much new development in the area and may be said to be neutral.

## 15. General Condition

Most of the buildings in the Conservation area have been well maintained in good repair. This applies with emphasis to properties in military ownership. Problems associated with the preservation and enhancement of the conservation area have largely arisen as and when a building has been sold because it has become surplus to requirements. Most of the conversions to housing (Connaught Barracks, Herbert Hospital, Brook Hospital, Garrison School etc.) have left the building in good condition with a new owner. However the refurbishment may have resulted in the building being stripped of features of special architectural or historic features as part of its redevelopment. Past experience suggests that the following buildings may be potentially at risk through being currently vacant and in poor condition, or potentially at risk from an impending change of use – all are listed:

- Government House - empty Georgian building awaiting residential conversion;

- Royal Military Academy – owned by Durkan Homes ,conversion of some historic blocks to residential use complete, and new build residential blocks also complete and occupied;
- Church of St Michael and all Angels (RMA) – conversion to community use (complete);
- Departure of Royal Artillery to Larkhill, Salisbury Plain, new army units occupying Woolwich Barracks;
- King’s Troop, Royal Horse Artillery occupying part the Napier Lines area of Woolwich Barracks;

## 16. Problems, pressures and capacity for change

This section identifies problems, pressures and evaluates the capacity for change in terms of the type of problem or pressure – and also, as appropriate, the site concerned.

**Status and ownership of Common:** Woolwich Common is under the ownership and management of the military. Hornfair Park is in the Royal Borough’s ownership and is managed as a public park.

**Changes of use:** The continuation of original use by the original user is almost always best for the character of the area and the protection of the historic built fabric. However, where this is no longer possible, a compromise may help put the building on a new footing. Most changes of use are from the existing use to use as housing which is in great demand and yields the greatest development value. Where a building is listed, or features a period interior of merit, special care needs to be taken to avoid damaging the special architectural or historic of the site. Where sensitive interiors would be unduly compromised it may be necessary to resist a change to housing in favour of a less intrusive alternative – for example retaining an institutional use.

**Access:** Access is understandably restricted to military owned land in military use. However, much of this land makes, or could make, an especially valuable environmental and aesthetic contribution to the locality and the amenity of residents. Many formally private and security sensitive military sites throughout Britain are located in attractive rural areas. In a number of cases these have been the subject of access campaigns which have often resulted in carefully defined access agreements, for walkers, bird watchers and other member of the public. It would therefore be helpful for Defence Estates to review access especially to the Repository Woods and Rotunda area and identify requirements for the future with a mind to creating an agreement which allows greater public access.

**Fencing:** this should be appropriate to the character of the building or space enclosed. Heavy metal barriers with barbed wire obscure the views in and out and were not originally intended – they may not be necessary. Fencing around the public areas of the Common should be consistent and appropriate to the local Common character.

**Encroachment:** see *losses section above*. The departure of the Royal Artillery and the arrival of a new military user may enable a review of security requirements and building needs. This needs to respect the green wooded and open character of the area, in particular, of Repository Woods.

**Ravelins:** The ravelin and associated training fortifications have been identified as of significant historic and aesthetic value (Oxford Archaeology Report); these fortifications should be preserved and interpreted as a visual and physical feature.

## Sites:

**Stadium** – this structure is now demolished.

**Rotunda and Repository Woods** – public access improvements are desirable, tree pruning and or clearance should be considered to improve quality of view out.

**Research & Development site (temporary building and former Wireless Station) Ha-Ha Road** – this site has been used for military research and contains temporary buildings. It lies at the centre of the open space in the Conservation Area and was formerly part of the Common. The site should be eventually re-integrated into the Common, an aspiration given support in site proposal 01 in the UDP. This will not take place for a while and on 20<sup>th</sup> March 2008 the Royal Borough agreed a ten year extension specific planning proposal.

**Woolwich Common Nursery school** – this is an unfortunate encroachment onto the Common, it remains in use as a Royal Borough Nursery School using a series of huts, possibly c.1950s. It is not clear that the planning case for this development has ever been established and it is desirable that any opportunity be taken for bringing the site back to grass.

**Queen Elizabeth Hospital** – large site, generally low scale with one taller block – by an important architectural practice, but neither in keeping with, nor in appropriate contrast to either the Common or typical buildings in the area.

**Woolwich Common:** It would be beneficial to liaise with the military to prepare a management plan/strategy for the Common green space.

**Key listed buildings:** Interpretative panels desirable in vicinity of key buildings and structures.

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

Consultation may be appropriate with the following

- Local Amenity Societies;
- Defense Estates – Heritage Officer;
- Greenwich and Bexley Health Trust.

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

This character appraisal has found that not all the areas included in the original designation of the Conservation Area should remain within its boundaries and that several important buildings and streets closely associated with Woolwich Common and its military history border the Conservation Area. The following proposals are made in the Conservation Area Management Strategy

- Remove the Master Gunner Estate and the Queen Elizabeth's Hospital from the Conservation Area;
- Transfer Hornfair Park and Charlton Cemetery to the Charlton Village Conservation Area of (together with the currently undesignated Charlton Lido);



- Add the Red Lion Public House and environs including Christ Church and School and Castle House Lodge;
- Add Government House on the corner of Nightingale Place and Woolwich New Road and Engineer House also on Woolwich New Road;
- Add Rushgrove House and Mulgrave Pond north of Artillery Place;
- Add the former officer houses at 40-49 Hill Reach – with associated buildings and a substantial part of Woodhill;
- Rationalise boundary through houses in Little Heath and add Locally Listed 70 Little Heath.

## 4. Contacts and further advice

### **Conservation Team**

Directorate of Regeneration, Enterprise and Skills  
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### **Highways**

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### **Parks and Open Spaces**

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# Appendix I: 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.

**Campo Santo** – a burial ground (the Italian for “holy field”), Originally the proper name of the cemetery in Pisa which contained earth transported from the Holy Land during the Crusades.

**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.

**Green Chain** – a chain of open spaces in south east London extending in a virtually continuous arc through Greenwich, Lewisham Bexley and Bromley, the open spaces are traversed by and linked by specially signed Green Chain footpaths.

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

**Oppidum** - a large pre-Roman town; a Latin word meaning the main settlement in an administrative area of ancient Rome. Julius Caesar described the larger Celtic Iron Age settlements he encountered in Gaul as oppida and the term is now used to describe the large pre-Roman towns that existed all across Western and Central Europe. Many oppida grew from hill forts although by no means did all of them have significant defensive functions. Oppida surrounded by earthworks are known as enclosed oppida. The main features of the oppida are the architectural construction of

the walls and gates, the spacious layout and commanding view of the surrounding area. **Oppida** were a milestone in the urbanisation of Europe as they were the first large settlements north of the Mediterranean that could genuinely be described as towns. In conquered lands, the Romans used the infrastructure of the oppida to administer the empire and many became full Roman towns. This often involved a change of location from the hilltop into the plain.

**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.

**Ravelin** - a projecting outwork constructed beyond a main ditch

**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.

**Revetment** – retaining wall or stone facing on a construction not intended to be seen

**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.

## Appendix 2: Conservation Repair Principles

The following principles are recommended for repairs or alterations to the fabric of a period building:

**Conservation** of a period building is essentially a matter of slowing down the natural process of aging and decay and of minimising replacement in repair. This is particularly important for windows, doors and roof slates or tiles. Replacement is often unnecessary. The following principles are recommended:

- Regular maintenance and small scale repairs prevent decay.
- Repair rather than replace – retaining the maximum amount of original fabric and only replacing it where absolutely necessary.
- Take special care to conserve original features which have been largely lost through past changes.
- Carefully match repairs and replacements to the original.
- Where possible reinstate missing architectural features.
- Reverse damaging repairs and unsympathetic alterations.
- Use traditional builders and craftsmen (or specialist conservation contractors) wherever possible.
- Carefully consider the impact of changes to both the individual building and the Area as a whole.
- Details such as window and door patterns, roofing materials and decorative elements make a considerable contribution to the special character of the conservation area. Even minor changes can detract from the character, and value of a building.