

Blackheath

Conservation Area Appraisal



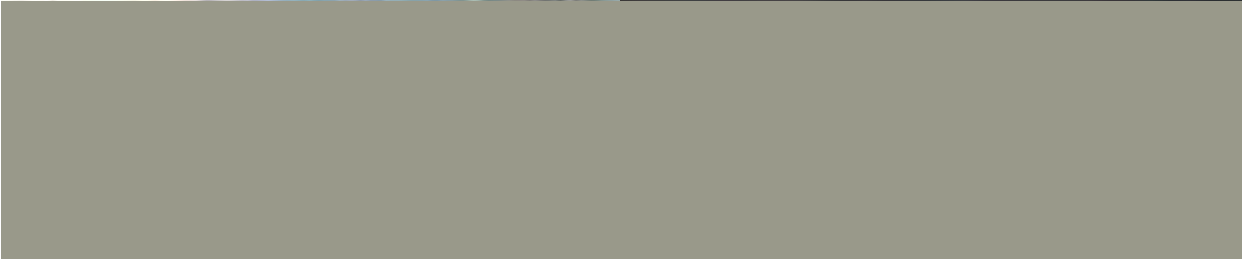
2013

Blackheath

Conservation Area Appraisal

Contents

1.	Introduction	1
2.	Planning policy context	3
3.	Historical development	5
4.	Special interest and character assessment	7
5.	Appendix: Useful information and contact details	114



I. Introduction

Between 1968 and 1970, the Council designated three conservation areas covering Greenwich and Blackheath. In a boundary review carried out in 2002, Blackheath was subdivided into two separate conservation areas, known as Blackheath and Blackheath Park.

This report is one of five conservation area appraisals currently being undertaken by the London Borough of Greenwich in partnership with English Heritage, and has been prepared by Urban Practitioners.

A companion report, Greenwich and Blackheath Conservation Areas Management Strategy and Conservation Guidance, complements this study.

It should be noted that Blackheath is divided between two boroughs, with the Village and much of the Heath falling within the Lewisham borough boundary. These are also in conservation areas.



Blackheath: Definition of special interest

Blackheath Conservation Area is predominantly residential and covers the streets and houses to the east of the Heath between Kidbrooke, Maze Hill and Blackheath Park. Most of the Heath itself is outside the conservation area and within the London Borough of Lewisham but its spacious, green sweep has a crucial bearing on the area's setting and character.

The Blackheath area has a long history, and is straddled by the Old Dover Road that was part of the Roman Watling Street. The built character of the area today however is characterised by the spacious, leafy avenues that were laid out in the nineteenth century as part of London's suburban growth. Despite some war damage the area is remarkably intact, and away from the main roads of Rochester Way and Shooters Hill Road, this part of Blackheath has a sedate and airy character.

The conservation area has a number of important set pieces. The earliest of these is Morden College, built as a charitable foundation in 1695. Close by and in a commanding position on the Heath is the Paragon, an outstanding Georgian composition of large villas linked by colonnades. St John's and St James' churches

that were built as part of London's housing growth make an important contribution to the Blackheath skyline.

The area was substantially complete by 1900 and later development has tended to be piecemeal, infilling large plots or repairing bomb damage. The most adventurous of these is the Vanbrugh Park housing estate to the north of the conservation area, built in 1961-65 by Chamberlain Powell and Bon. Its tower block and the close-knit terraces below provide an interesting contrast with the pattern of the adjoining streets.





Blackheath Conservation Area

Figure 1.1 Blackheath Conservation Area

Reproduced from Ordnance Survey mapping with the sanction of Her Majesty's Stationary Office, Crown Copyright. Unauthorised reproduction may lead to prosecution or civil proceedings. Greenwich Council LA100019695.

2. Planning policy context

This appraisal is a non-statutory planning document but it relates to, and should be read with, current national, regional and local planning policy.

The key documents are referred to below.

National planning policy

Since 1967 there has been a legal duty for all local authorities to designate as conservation areas those parts of its area that are of "special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance". There are currently 20 conservation areas in the London Borough of Greenwich.

Many conservation areas, but not all, are centred on listed buildings. English Heritage lists buildings of special architectural or historic interest on behalf of the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport. The Secretary of State is also responsible for the scheduling of ancient monuments and the registering of historic parks and gardens.

Planning Policy Statement PPS5, Planning for the Historic Environment, sets out current government policy on conservation.

UNESCO inscribed Maritime Greenwich as a World Heritage Site in 1997. Part of the West Greenwich, Blackheath and East Greenwich conservation area falls within the 'buffer zone' around the inscribed area and the impact of new development on the setting of the World Heritage Site is a material consideration when planning permission is being sought. An updated Management Plan for the World Heritage Site was issued in 2004.

Circular 07/2009 gives advice on the consideration of Outstanding Universal Values in relation to the protection of World Heritage Sites. In particular,

Outstanding Universal Values are highlighted as material considerations in determining planning applications and appeals. In this context, the advice emphasises the need for appropriate policies in local core strategies and in the management plans for each site. Such policies should be concerned with promoting change that will preserve and enhance the Outstanding Universal Values of the Site. World Heritage Site status is a key material consideration in the determination of these policies.

English Heritage has produced guidance for the protection and management of the World Heritage Sites in England which accompanies Circular 07/09. The guidance has been endorsed by Communities and Local Government (CLG) and the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS).

Circular 01/06: Guidance on Changes to the Development Control System includes the requirement for Design and Access Statements to accompany planning applications including those within a Conservation Area or World Heritage Site. The Circular also sets out what should be included within a Design and Access Statement.

Regional policy

The principal regional policy is contained within the Mayor of London's London Plan (the Spatial Development Strategy). The Mayor undertakes to work with strategic partners to protect and enhance London's historic environment (Policy 4B.10) and expects Boroughs to ensure that the protection and enhancement of historic assets in London are based on their special character (Policy 4B.11). The Plan also includes a commitment to protecting World Heritage Sites and safeguarding or enhancing their settings (Policy 4B.13). The London Plan and Supplementary Planning Guidance also contains proposals for protecting and managing strategic views, including those of central London from Greenwich Park and Blackheath Point.

The Mayor has produced a draft replacement London Plan, which was open for public consultation between October 2009 and January 2010. The policies addressing the historic environment in the draft replacement London Plan are broadly in line with those contained in the consolidated London Plan (2008). The draft replacement London Plan will undergo an Examination in Public in the summer and autumn of 2010, with the Mayor looking to publish the replacement London Plan towards the end of 2011.

Local policy

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

The Greenwich UDP was adopted in 2006 and in July 2009 the Government Office for London (GOL) issued a direction to extend the life of most of the UDP policies and site proposals.

The UDP contains detailed policies for the period to 2011 and in some instances to 2016.

The following policies are of particular relevance to development in and around conservation areas.

TC7 The Council will protect and enhance the site and setting of the Maritime Greenwich World Heritage Site, as defined on the Proposals Map. Development within it should preserve and enhance its essential and unique character and appearance. Views and vistas to and from the World Heritage Site will also be protected by ensuring that developments in the buffer zone of the Site or directly visible from it are visually sympathetic.

DI6 Planning permission will only be granted for proposals which preserve or enhance the character or

appearance of conservation areas, taking into account local scale, the established pattern of development and landscape, building form and materials. Where the character of a conservation area is threatened by inappropriate development the Council will seek to control these through the use of Article 4 Directions. Development on sites in the vicinity of a conservation area and which would have a visual effect on its character or appearance, should respect the setting of that area.

The UDP also contains specific policies for siting telecommunications equipment and satellite dishes, as well as for the design of shopfronts, signs, street furniture and advertisements.

D17 Demolition of buildings and structures which positively contribute to the character or appearance of a conservation area will be resisted. Conservation Area Consent for the demolition of buildings will normally be given only when planning permission has been granted for redevelopment which complies with the requirements of Policy D16. When demolition is permitted it will be subject to the building remaining until a contract for redevelopment is let.

D18 There will be a presumption in favour of the preservation of listed buildings. Listed Building Consent will only be granted for demolition or partial demolition in exceptional circumstances and will be assessed against the following criteria:

- i. the condition of the building and the cost of repairs relative to its importance.
- ii. the adequacy of efforts made to retain the building in use.
- iii. the merits of alternative proposals for the site.

D21 Proposals for changes of use of listed buildings will only be granted planning permission if it is no longer in its original or other established historic use and the new

use is beneficial to the building and is compatible with its character and features of historic interest. Such a change of use should not conflict with other policies in the Plan.

D22 The Council will assist English Heritage to maintain and revise regularly a Register of Listed Buildings at Risk from neglect and decay. The Council will promote action, including the use of building repair notices and urgent works notices where appropriate, to bring about the reuse and repair of buildings on the register.

D23 The Council will give substantial weight to protecting and conserving the special character of buildings on the Local List of Buildings of Architectural or Historic Interest, with every effort made to secure their long-term retention, maintenance and use.

3. Historical development

This section draws on the extensive research and publications by Neil Rhind and Julian Watson.

Blackheath has ancient roots and the old Roman road of Watling Street that ran from Dover to London and on to Chester is known to have crossed over Shooters Hill. The Romans settled at the Thames and although there is no conclusive evidence of habitation in the Greenwich area, there is likely to have been some traffic on the river near Deptford.

The heathland plateau above the Greenwich escarpment was relatively exposed and would not have been the first choice for a settlement. By the middle ages however there was extensive quarrying in the area, extracting brickearth for brick and tile making as well as chalk for lime burning. The presence of a royal palace at Greenwich would have created very considerable demand for such building materials. Twelfth century records indicate a church in the Manor of Kidbrooke so there must have been some inhabitants to support it, even if numbers were later reduced by the Black Death in the fourteenth century or other, less catastrophic plagues.

The Heath itself has considerable historic significance and was used as a camp for the leaders of the Peasants' Revolt in 1381. Some decades later it was the welcoming place for Henry V on his return from Agincourt. Henry VII fought Cornish rebels at Blackheath in 1497.

The first building of substance in the Kidbrooke area was Morden College to the south of Shooters Hill Road. The College was founded as a charitable institution for 'poor, honest, sober and discreet merchants who shall have lost their estates by accidents and perils of the seas, or by any other accidents, ways, or means, in their honest endeavour to get their living by way of merchandising'. The building was completed in 1697 to the designs of



Modern base reproduced from Ordnance Survey mapping with the sanction of Her Majesty's Stationary Office, Crown Copyright. Unauthorised reproduction may lead to prosecution or civil proceedings. Greenwich Council LA100019695.

Figure 3.1 Blackheath Conservation Area historic overlay - 1882

Christopher Wren's master mason, Edward Strong. Sir John Morden, founder of the College, is buried in the Chapel.

As Neil Rhind has observed, Blackheath is manorial wasteland and not common land, and remains in the ownership of the Dartmouth Estate and the Crown. The Heath has however been encroached on several occasions, beginning with the creation of Greenwich Park in the fifteenth century by Duke Humphrey of Gloucester and continuing through to the building of All Saints' Church in 1858. Perhaps the most significant land take was that of John Julius Angerstein, who in 1801 purchased the 130 acre Eastcombe estate from the Crown and enclosed a large section of Blackheath to the north of the old Dover road. This enterprise allowed the development of St John's Park parallel to Shooters Hill Road, with villas and a church on a formal, centrally planned axis. Angerstein had previously built Woodlands House in 1774 for his own occupation.

During the eighteenth century the land in the area changed hands and by 1783 a substantial property to the south of Blackheath, Wricklemarsh House, was in the ownership of timber-merchant John Cator. Cator demolished the mansion which stood in Blackheath Park and began to develop the estate for housing. One of the first leases from the Cator estate was in 1793 to Michael Searles, a local architect and surveyor and son of the Surveyor to Morden College. Searles' enterprise resulted in the Paragon development, one of London's most impressive set pieces, although funding was restricted. After 1820, more houses were built to the north of Morden College on former farmland at Kidbrooke as part of the St Germans Estate by a local land agent, William Dyer. By the 1860s Shooters Hill Road was substantially developed.

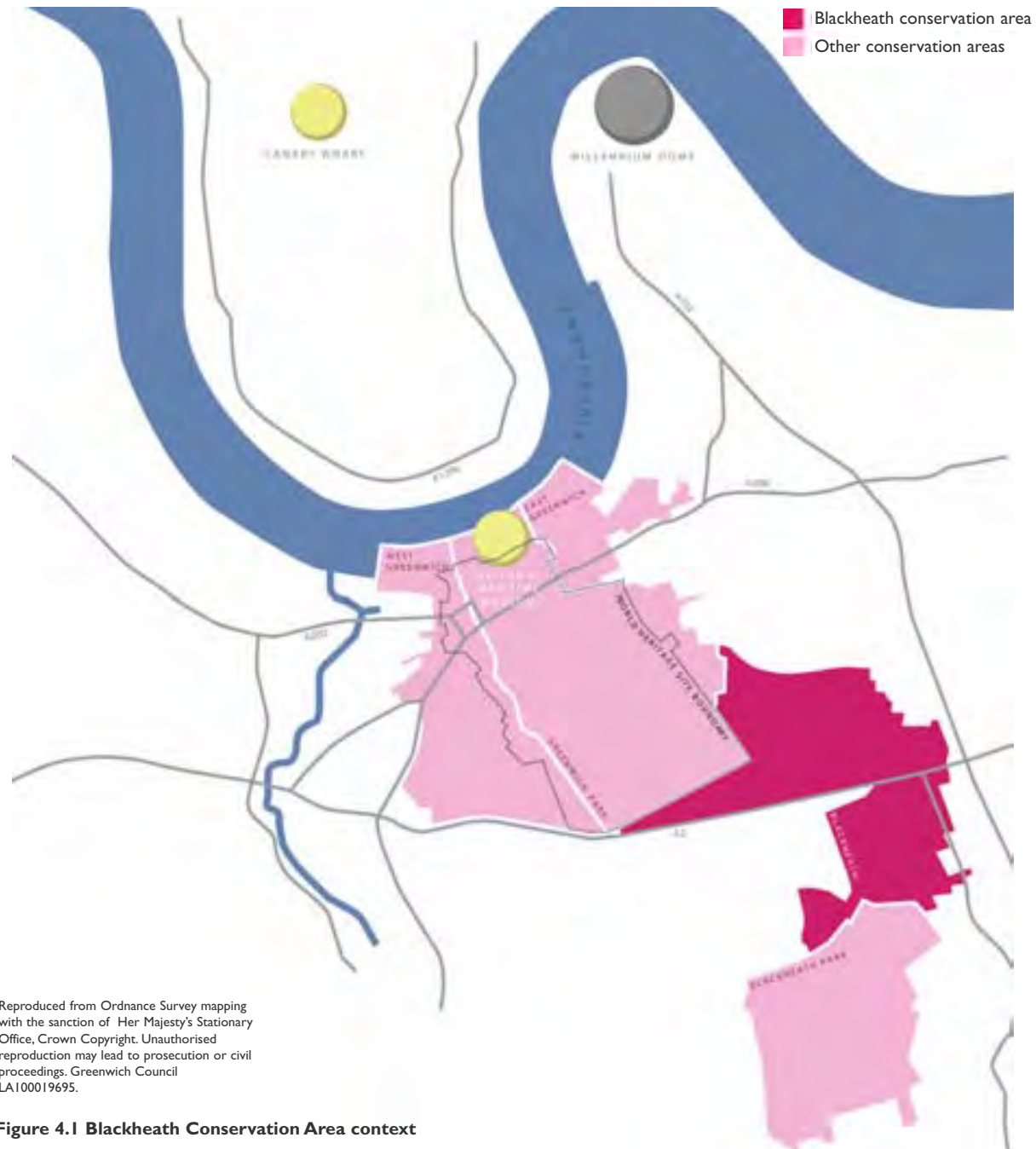
The railway came to Blackheath in 1849 and provided a further impetus to suburban growth. In the latter decades of the nineteenth century, more large houses were built on land to both sides of Shooters Hill Road and to the east of Greenwich Park.

By the start of the twentieth century, the housing development was substantially complete and a parade of shops was established at the junction of Old Dover Road and Stratheden Road. Gaps were gradually filled in, a process that continued after the Second World War when bomb sites were redeveloped for small blocks of flats, continuing a trend of the conversion of many of the larger houses and villas. The Morden College Estate built more houses for the elderly. Two very different Council estates were built; the stylistically conservative Pond Road Estate (1954) behind the Paragon, and the more radical Vanbrugh Park development (1961-65), close to Greenwich Park.

The Rochester Relief Road, built in 1970, lies in a cutting to the east of the conservation area and carries high volumes of traffic between London and the Kent coast.

4. Special interest and character assessment

The angular boundary of the conservation area reflects Blackheath's split between the boroughs of Greenwich and Lewisham, rather than a demarcation of history or landscape. Much of the surrounding area is also within conservation areas in the two boroughs.



Reproduced from Ordnance Survey mapping with the sanction of Her Majesty's Stationary Office, Crown Copyright. Unauthorised reproduction may lead to prosecution or civil proceedings. Greenwich Council LA100019695.

Figure 4.1 Blackheath Conservation Area context

General character and urban form

Blackheath lies on an upland plateau some 40m above sea level. The land is generally flat, and the layout of its buildings and streets is largely governed by the form of the two oldest roads, the Old Dover Road and Shooters Hill Road, and to some extent by the road leading directly to Blackheath Village, Stratheden Road. The railway line has little discernable impact, being in a cutting or a shallow tunnel.

Most of the area is laid out as straight streets and avenues, deflected by ancient thoroughfares such as the Old Dover Road and Shooters Hill Road. Houses in the Paragon, on St Germans Place and on the western end of Shooters Hill Road have uninterrupted views over the Heath. The other exceptions to the general layout are the two Council estates: Pond Road Estate is arranged as a rim and spokes around the pond that once stood amid the southern avenues of Wricklemarsh House. The Vanbrugh Park development to the north is a tight-knit group of buildings arranged at right-angles to one another.

Reproduced from Ordnance Survey mapping with the sanction of Her Majesty's Stationary Office, Crown Copyright. Unauthorised reproduction may lead to prosecution or civil proceedings. Greenwich Council LA100019695.



Figure 4.2 Urban form

Key landmarks and views

The western approach to the conservation area provides long views across the Heath and several important buildings can be seen. The spires and towers of the two churches, St John's and St James', can be seen over the rooftops and St John's is positioned to be seen from Kidbrooke and, looking east, from St John's Park.

The houses fronting the Heath present a positive edge to the green expanse. The Paragon is easily the largest and most striking composition, taking full advantage of its setting, and complemented by the early Victorian houses on the south side of Shooters Hill and the westward-facing sequence of houses on St Germans Place.

Morden College is also a noteworthy landmark by virtue of its size and architectural distinction.

Apart from the churches there are almost no tall buildings in the area, with twentieth century housing largely following the prevailing domestic scale of two, three or four storeys. The exception is the expressive eight storey block of flats (Westcombe Court) at Vanbrugh Park by Chamberlain, Powell and Bon.



Figure 4.3 Key landmarks and local views



Character analysis

For the purposes of this study, the conservation area can be examined as four broad areas:

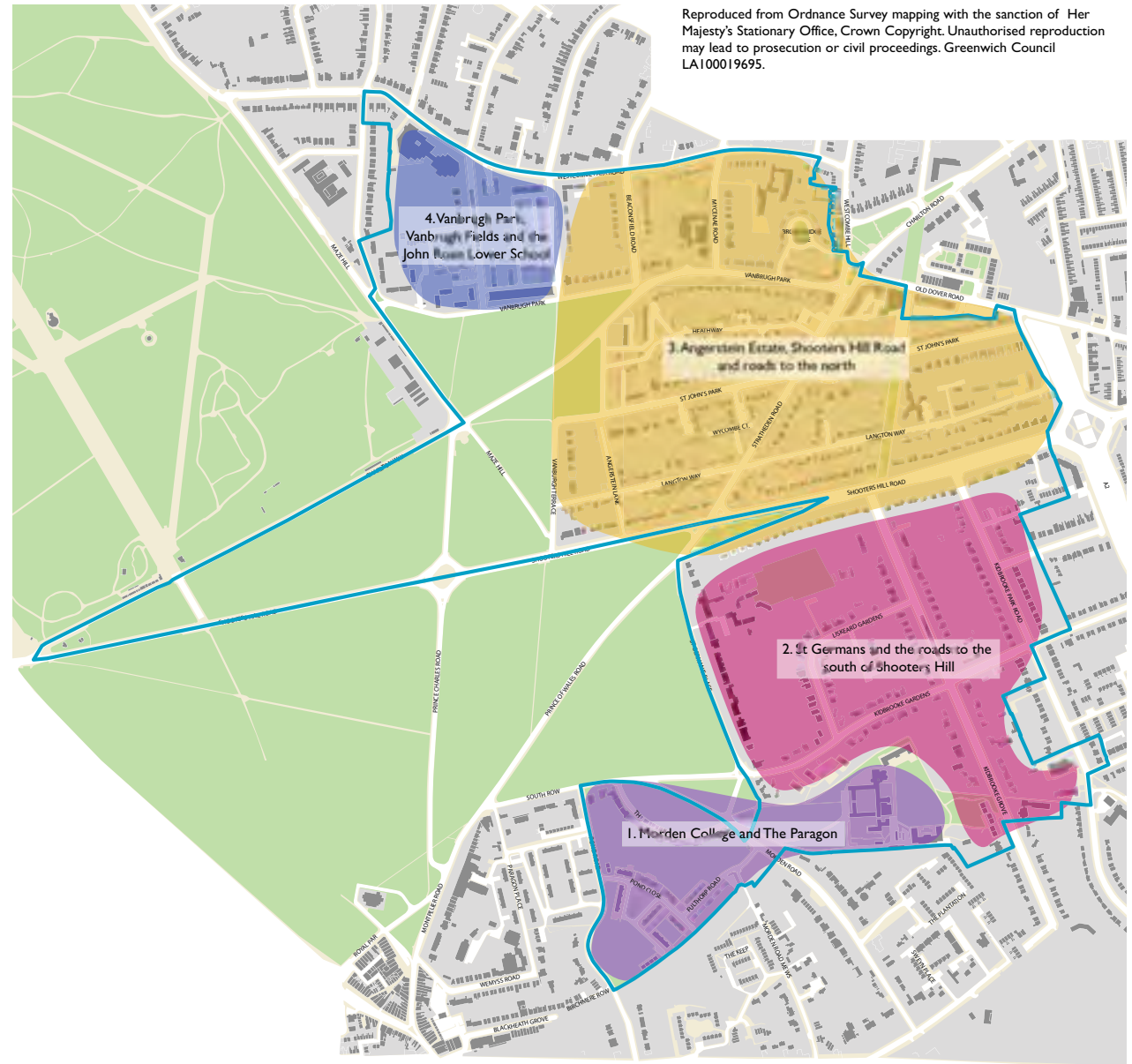
- 1 Morden College and the Paragon;
- 2 St Germans and the roads to the south of Shooters Hill Road;
- 3 Angerstein Estate, Shooters Hill Road and the roads to the north; and
- 4 Vanbrugh Park, Vanbrugh Fields and the John Roan Lower School.

Morden College and the Paragon

The Paragon was built by architect Michael Searles and was a speculative development that was designed to impress. It succeeds in this ambition, using a colonnade to transform a sequence of freestanding pavilions into the sweep of a grand crescent. The rhythms of the columns, entrances and fenestration are wholly successful and the dark brick contrasts appealingly with the painted stonework.

The Paragon was badly damaged during the Second World War but it was sensitively restored by Charles Bernard Brown. A plaque from the 1951 Festival of Britain commemorates this achievement. Mature trees in front of the crescent complement the architecture and provide a foil for its formal design, whilst allowing views of and from the Heath.

Behind the Paragon is Fulthorp Road, named after John Fulthorp, a fifteenth century landowner. It is



Reproduced from Ordnance Survey mapping with the sanction of Her Majesty's Stationary Office, Crown Copyright. Unauthorised reproduction may lead to prosecution or civil proceedings. Greenwich Council LA100019695.

Figure 4.4 Character areas

occupied by a group of flat blocks, designed by architects Richardson & Houfe in 1954 for Greenwich Council. The conservative neo-Georgian style adopted for the buildings was requested by local residents.

To the east of the Paragon is Morden College, signalled by a trim red brick lodge, with its gable end to the road. The original College is a well proportioned essay in the English Baroque: built in brick with painted stone dressings, with shallow projecting wings and a wide entrance pediment. A straight footpath leads to the front door on axis with a delicate clock tower and cupola which emphasises the symmetry of the composition. The landscaping around the principal building dates from the eighteenth century.

Later buildings around the College take their stylistic cue from the seventeenth century building and are in a restrained classical idiom. The earliest of these buildings is dated 1844; later freestanding blocks included an infirmary with wing by Banister Fletcher (1932-3).

A public footpath dog-legs between the College buildings and emerges on Kidbrooke Grove.

St Germans and the roads to the south of Shooters Hill Road

Kidbrooke Grove is a straight, treelined avenue aligned with the spire of St John's Church. It was first developed in 1870 by Lewis Glenton, a local philanthropist who had substantially funded the building of the nearby St James' Church some three years earlier. Houses were built from the northern, Shooters Hill end first and continued over the next forty years. For the most part the properties were substantial detached houses, set back from the road behind low garden walls and since converted into



CHARACTER AREA 1: MORDEN COLLEGE AND THE PARAGON

Top left: Morden College
Top right: View from Morden College to the Paragon
Bottom left: The Paragon
Bottom right: Granite setts, Blackheath

flats or institutional uses. Looking down the middle of the Grove, the trees dominate the view.

The houses typically are built in London stock brick with painted stone dressings and heavy Italianate mouldings, sometimes offset by delicate filigree balconies. There are however subtle variations in architectural detail, reflecting the piecemeal development of the Grove. Notable examples include;

- 37 Kidbrooke Grove (Lingfield), a Queen Anne style house of 1906 by Sir Reginald Blomfield, and No 39 (Morden House) designed in 1912 by Belcher and Joass. At the southern boundary of the conservation area is one of the most substantial properties, Stonefield (1876-77), recently converted by Morden College Estate; and
- Nos 36-38 Kidbrooke Grove are an architectural curiosity, being formerly a single large house of 1888 by John Belcher that was divided in two horizontally in 1921, then rebuilt as a pair. The neighbouring properties date from the mid-twentieth century.

The footpath to the north of Stonefield is a continuation of the path from Morden College and is much older than Kidbrooke Grove and its neighbours. The route runs eastwards to join Kidbrooke Park Road at an oblique angle, just south of St James's.

Kidbrooke Park Road is on the line of an old lane, possibly seventeenth century or earlier, between Shooters Hill Road and the farms at Kidbrooke to the south. Building began in the 1820s but accelerated after the completion of St James's Church. Neil Rhind records that the east and west sides were developed as separate ventures but both were of large detached houses on the model earlier



CHARACTER AREA 2: ST GERMANS AND THE ROADS TO THE SOUTH OF SHOOTERS HILL ROAD

- Top left: St Germans
- Top right: St James' Church, Kidbrooke Park Road
- Bottom left: Kidbrooke Park Road
- Bottom right: Kidbrooke Grove

emulated in Kidbrooke Grove.

St Germans Place is the western edge of the former St Germans Estate, which takes its name from the Cornish connections of its eighteenth century landowners. Development began in the early nineteenth century, making the earliest houses contemporary with the Regency villas on Shooters Hill Road. The houses face westwards towards the Heath and despite bomb damage and subsequent redevelopment the houses still form an impressive group with a consistent building line.

Angerstein Estate, Shooters Hill Road and the roads to the north

Shooters Hill Road is distinguished by its fine sequences of Regency and early Victorian houses: from the west, Blackheath Terrace, Albert Place, Stainton Place and Woodlands Terrace.

St John's Park runs parallel to Shooters Hill Road and is the spine of the Victorian estate of the same name, laid out in 1852. The junction with Stratheden Road is marked by the centrepiece of the estate, St John's Church, given particular prominence by flanking it within a pair of crescents. The church itself is in the perpendicular gothic style and built in Kentish ragstone with a pinnacled spire. The houses in the area are substantial town houses and villas – the earliest houses are in a yellow London stock brick, later giving way to red brick with classical ornamentation. Despite some redevelopment and its abrupt truncation by the Rochester Way relief road, the street has a cohesive character.

Langton Way to the south is much more informal and organic in appearance, having developed gradually from its origins as a mews or back lane to the big houses on Shooters Hill Road. Some of the old coach houses remain after conversion to dwellings



CHARACTER AREA 3: ANGERSTEIN ESTATE, SHOOTERS HILL ROAD AND ROADS TO THE NORTH

Top left: Shooters Hill Road
Top right: Stratheden Parade (The Standard)
Bottom left: Shooters Hill Road
Bottom right: Angerstein Lane

and there has been much infilling, of which the most distinctive is the cluster of housing for the elderly, by Trevor Dannett and Partners (1973-75).

Stratheden Road was originally a cart track leading up from the Heath and fans out at Vanbrugh Park at Stratheden Parade. A former cinema on the Old Dover Road, the Roxy, was demolished in 1981 and replaced by a supermarket, but the remainder of the development is a typical, small scale suburban shopping parade from the inter-war period.

Vanbrugh Park, Vanbrugh Fields and the John Roan School

Vanbrugh Park is characterised by tall, yellow stock brick houses with basements and three storeys above. They are embellished with restrained Italianate detail and complemented by mature trees, including cedars and planes that close long views. Stock brick boundary walls, with pyramidal caps to their piers, are a unifying feature in the streets.

On the north side of Vanbrugh Park is Broadbridge Close, built in 1952 as a part of Morden College. It is a tightly enclosed crescent of arts and crafts-styled houses sealed off behind stout wooden gates.

At the eastern end is the Vanbrugh Park Estate of 1963 whose short terraces of small houses and flats are laid out in an interlocking pattern with courtyards and trees in between. The architects Chamberlain Powell and Bon were also responsible for the eight storey tower nearby. Although some of the building materials are poor, especially the use of concrete blocks, the terraces have an intimate domesticity.

The most recent large building in the area is the extension of John Roan School, which comprised two substantial redbrick blocks completed in 1981. The complex has a neutral impact on the character of the conservation area.



CHARACTER AREA 4: VANBRUGH PARK, VANBRUGH FIELDS AND THE JOHN ROAN SCHOOL

Top left: Vanbrugh Park

Top right: Westcombe Court

Bottom left: Vanbrugh Park Estate

Bottom right: Vanbrugh Park Road West

