

# The Brixton Society

Understanding the Past, Looking to the Future  
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## **CONSERVATION AREA REVIEW – Loughborough Park (CA27)**

### **Introduction:**

The comments below are provided by the Brixton Society in response to the Council's proposed changes published on 2<sup>nd</sup> December 2020. They comprise our proposed **additions** to, or **omissions** from, the existing Conservation Area, and **clarification** of points within the Appraisal, in addition to **comments** on the Council's proposed changes. As far as practical, these responses follow the sequence of the Council Appraisal or report (*original paragraph numbers are shown in italic where relevant*).

### **Background:**

The Brixton Society was established in 1975 as the amenity society covering the wider Brixton area. We regularly comment on local plans, policy changes and individual planning applications, and try to promote good practice in design and planning within our area. The Society has supported the concept of Conservation Areas since its early days. It proposed the extensions to this CA made in 1987.

### **Character Appraisal** (*Section 2, paras 2.1-2.101*)

Sadly, there are a number of errors, ambiguities and non sequiturs. We do not have the time to offer a full re-write, so only the most significant are outlined below:

*Paras 2.5 & 6: Early History:* This does not match with the account given in the Survey of London. We are intrigued to learn the source of the assertion that Loughborough House was originally the manor house. More important, the Manor of Lambeth Wyck was let to Sir Stephen Fox and his descendants from 1701 onwards, and the family retained interests until some of their building leases expired in the 1920s.

Most of the northern part of the estate was developed by the third Lord Holland in the 1820s, with another phase southwards following in the 1840s and 50s around Barrington Road and into Loughborough Park, completed

under his widow Lady Holland. The family surrendered some of their interests to the Church Commissioners once development had been completed.

*Para 2.9:* It is not clear what is meant by the “smaller terraced housing” north of Coldharbour Lane. The shopping parade 322-354 Coldharbour Lane and the isolated group at 356-8 appear to predate construction of the railway viaduct. East of Barrington Road are a series of substantial terrace houses to a denser design, built very soon after the railway opened. To their east are apartment blocks of c.1890.

*Para 2.14 (and 2.29):* The dates stated are wrong. The surviving original houses were refurbished around 1969 for a 15-year life, on the assumption that long-term development would take place after the motorway system was complete. At the time the motorway proposals included provision for the M23 to extend along the Shakespeare Road railway sidings to an intersection with the East-West Ringway in the vicinity of Loughborough Junction Station.

The limited design life also limited the scope of the refurbishment, so after some 50 years, the need for further work is likely to arise.

### **Spatial Analysis/ Character Areas:**

*Area 1, para 2.37:* Although Tilia Walk is mentioned, the whole of the Loughborough Park amenity open space has been ignored by this section. Fortunately some work has been done recently to restore its condition and renew some of the children’s play equipment.

There is a substantial building in the centre of this pocket park, provided by Lambeth in the early 1970s. It was closed several years ago, with its associated adventure playground and playgroup, but has been maintained in good condition. We would prefer to see it brought back into use as an amenity for the park and the surrounding community.

*Area 2, para 2.41:* This is inaccurate. Nos. 53, 55 and 57 were combined to form the Brixton Orphanage for Fatherless Girls. The education block to the rear was built as an annex to the orphanage, rather than by the London School Board. This institution flourished between 1876 and 1936, and the buildings were later used as an annexe by the Brixton School of Building.

*Area 3, Para 2.48:* 356-358 Coldharbour Lane are described in the same sentence as mid-19<sup>th</sup> century and early 18<sup>th</sup> century! In fact, they are survivors of the 1850s phase of suburban middle-class development known as Angell Town.

*Boundary Treatments, para 2.77:* Although charming at the outset, the white-painted picket fences from the 1969-70 refurbishment scheme suffered from a lack of maintenance. The style has retained a more presentable appearance where timber stain finishes have been used. It would be helpful to include more guidance for owners at this point.

*Rear Elevations, paras 2.83-85:* Most of the architectural interest of this CA lies with the street frontages, apart from a limited number of older properties

which are seen in the round. Guidance should not attempt to impose a spurious order on alterations and extensions at the rear, provided only that the principles of subordination are followed.

### **Conclusions & Recommendations** (*Section 3*)

#### *Para 3,2, item A - Character Area 3, North of Coldharbour Lane:*

We object to the deletion of this substantial section from the CA. Although reference is made to adding it to the Brixton Town Centre CA, it has not been included in the current proposals for changes to that CA, so there is a risk of it losing protection through administrative incompetence.

We have examined the different elements within the frontage westward from Barrington Road.

The triangular block between Barrington and Gresham Roads and the railway viaduct comprises Brixton East (a restored 1860s warehouse), the Gresham Baptist Church, and a modern apartment block on the footprint of an earlier block destroyed in a riot in 1985, but nevertheless a satisfactory infill.

Between Gresham Road and Valentia Place is a mid-19<sup>th</sup> century commercial frontage with several examples of a slightly larger shop type at the eastern end and the western end bookended by the former Angell Hotel.

Beyond Valentia Place, 356a, 356 and 358 Coldharbour Lane are isolated survivors of the original Italianate residential development north-east of Brixton Town Centre, so are still appropriate for retaining with contemporaneous development in the Loughborough Park CA.

The remainder of the block west of Valentia Place, up to the Town Centre CA, now comprises undistinguished modern apartment blocks, though we had hoped to encourage better design quality when proposing these sites for inclusion in the Loughborough Park CA. There is no longer justification for retaining them within this CA.

#### *Item B – Shakespeare Business Centre and 86-104 Shakespeare Road:*

We support their addition to the CA. The former warehouse at 245 Coldharbour Lane in particular is an important landmark at this road junction.

*Item C – 277-385 Shakespeare Road:* We see no compelling reason to delete these properties from the CA. If these properties were worth including in the CA in the 1980s, the case for retention must surely be stronger now. The effect of deletion would be to introduce uncertainty and planning blight, while reducing oversight of any future development.

*Item D – Article 4 Direction for front gardens and boundaries:* This is supported in principle, but we are disappointed not to see more specific proposals. Some guidance should be included on secure cycle storage, where demand appears to be rising faster than forecourt car parking. The paving of front gardens is only Permitted Development if the paving material is permeable, and SUDS principles should be followed to minimise the rapid run-off of rainwater, which can overload the drainage system.

*Item E – Local Listing:* We support the inclusion of the properties in the schedule. However, it ignores a major landmark building in Loughborough

Park, namely the Evelyn Grace Academy, which is a rare example in this country of a building designed by Dame Zaha Hadid. It clearly shows continuity in style with her earlier MAXXI Art Gallery in Rome, while including some innovative features like a diagonal running track spanned by the main block.

**Building Contributions** (*Appendix 1*)

We generally agree with the assessments stated.

**Boundary Changes** (*Appendix 3*)

Surely this should be Appendix 2, not 3?

We commented on the Council's proposed changes above (under *Section 3*) but we also propose another addition, the Evelyn Grace Academy. This stands on the site of the 1963 Council vehicle depot, which was a low-rise group of buildings. The present building, by Dame Zaha Hadid, now makes a more dramatic contribution to the street frontage when approached along Moorland Road from Coldharbour Lane.

Statutory Listing of modern buildings is a slow process and was only achieved recently for the Brixton Recreation Centre. In the meantime there is always the risk of unsympathetic or ill-considered alterations or additions. Inclusion of the Academy within the CA would provide some additional oversight pending listing.

**Generally:**

Although this Conservation Area is formed around surviving suburban development which preceded the arrival of the railways, there are also important later insertions. Landmark buildings, whether listed or not, should be included in the overall scheme as far as possible.

We are disappointed that the Council remains hostile to standing consultation arrangements for Conservation Areas, having closed its Conservation Areas Advisory Committee in 1988. As a result, it is difficult to mobilise local support to complement the Council's limited resources for promoting good practice or enforcing planning controls.

*Alan Piper,  
Secretary.*