

Woodford Green

Conservation Area

Highams circa 1800

The Woodford Green Conservation Area was jointly designated by both the London Boroughs of Redbridge & Waltham Forest in 1970.

Conservation Areas are areas chosen because of their special historic and architectural interest, and have been given special protection under planning laws.

This does not necessarily mean that the Area is 'frozen', or that no change or development can take place. It does mean, however, that the best features of the area should be preserved; and that new building (including alterations and extensions) should be designed and carried out sympathetically, to preserve or enhance the character of the area.

Those who live and work in the area should be aware, in particular, of the following requirements:

Conservation Area Consent is required for the demolition of any building in the area, and higher standards are necessary for any works requiring planning permission.

More detailed restrictions on 'permitted development' apply, and consent is required for external cladding to houses, alterations or additions to roofs, and in most cases for the installation or replacement of a satellite dish.

Listed building consent is required for any of the following works:

The demolition or partial demolition of any Listed building in the Area.

The alteration or extension of a Listed building in any manner which would affect its character. This applies to internal as well as external works, including painting.

If you are in doubt about any work you are proposing, advice is always available from the Council Conservation Officers of Waltham Forest or Redbridge.

Trees make a valuable contribution to the special character and appearance of the Conservation Area. Many are already protected by Tree Preservation Orders, and thus Council consent is required before any works can be carried out. For the remainder, 6 weeks written notice to the Council is required of any intended tree works.

Again, free professional advice is always available from Council Tree Officers:

London Borough of Waltham Forest 020 8496 2819

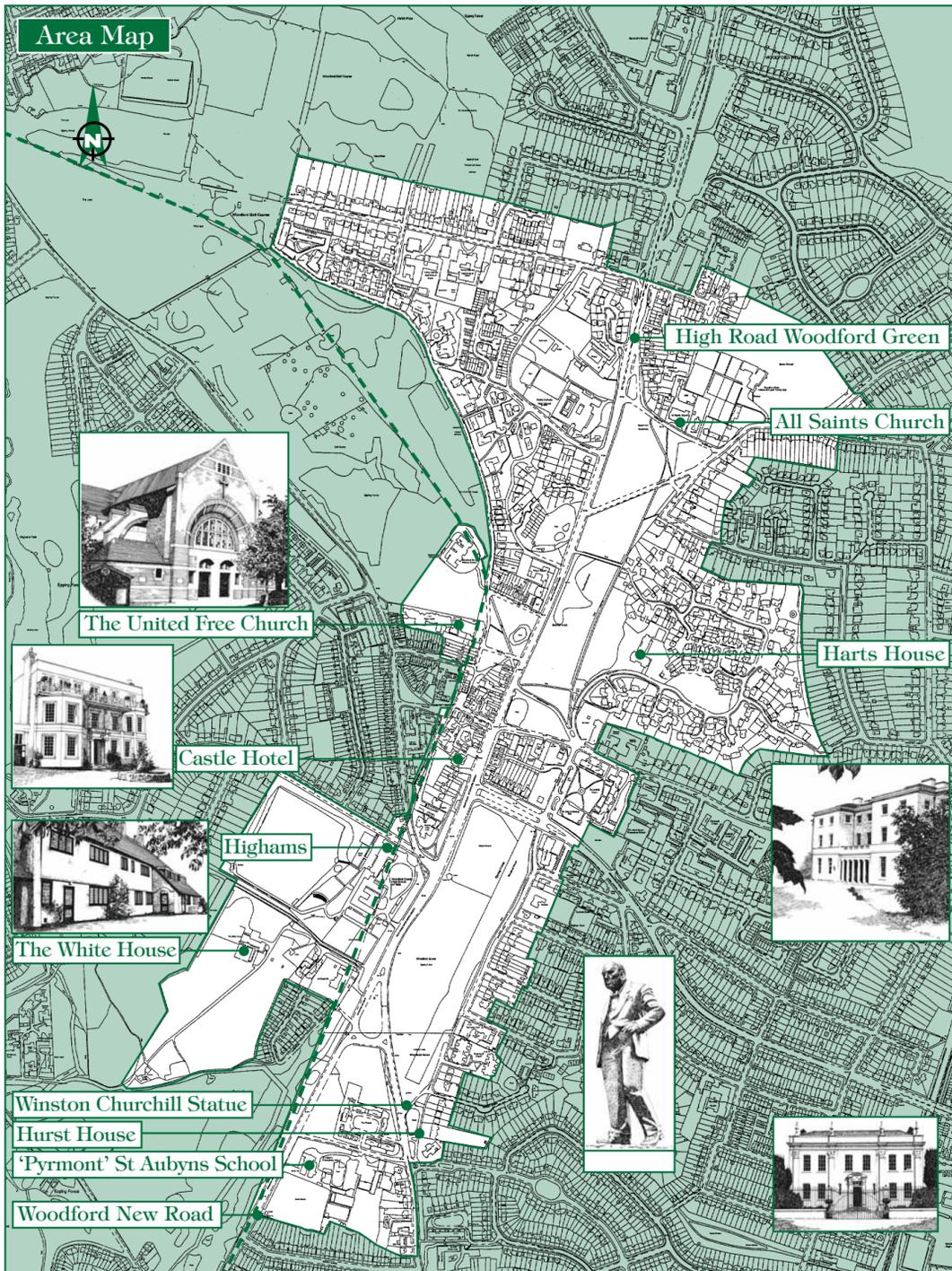
London Borough of Redbridge 020 8708 2278/2269

Both Councils will use their planning powers whenever necessary to control and avoid harmful changes within the Conservation Area, and will take the guidelines contained in this leaflet into account when considering planning applications.

Successful conservation however depends in practice just as much on the support and co-operation of local people. Without this co-operation, the special character and attractiveness of your area could slowly but surely be lost, to the extent that it could lose its special status.

This leaflet is therefore intended as a guide for everyone that lives and works in the Conservation Area. It draws attention to its history and special character, and outlines some basic dos and don'ts necessary to protect that character.

We hope that, with your support, it will help to ensure the continued preservation and enhancement of this special area.



Historical Background

At Woodford Green the ancient Essex parishes of Walthamstow and Woodford meet along a ridge of land 200 feet above sea level. From this ridge the ground falls gently away eastwards to the river Roding and westwards to the river Lea.

Historically the whole area was originally part of the forest of Essex, known from the beginning of the 14th century as the Forest of Waltham. From early times this was a Royal Forest, and the right of hunting was the exclusive privilege of the Sovereigns and those they allowed to share the "pleasures" of the chase. As late as the 17th century Waltham Forest was described as "alwaies especiaillie and above all theire other forests, prized and esteemed by the Kings Maestie and his said noble progenito".

Within the forest Woodford slowly developed as a collection of separate, loosely connected hamlets, with the earliest medieval village located at Woodford Bridge. By the 13th century this settlement was connected to the high ground at Woodford Green by 'the Lane', now better known as Snakes Lane East.

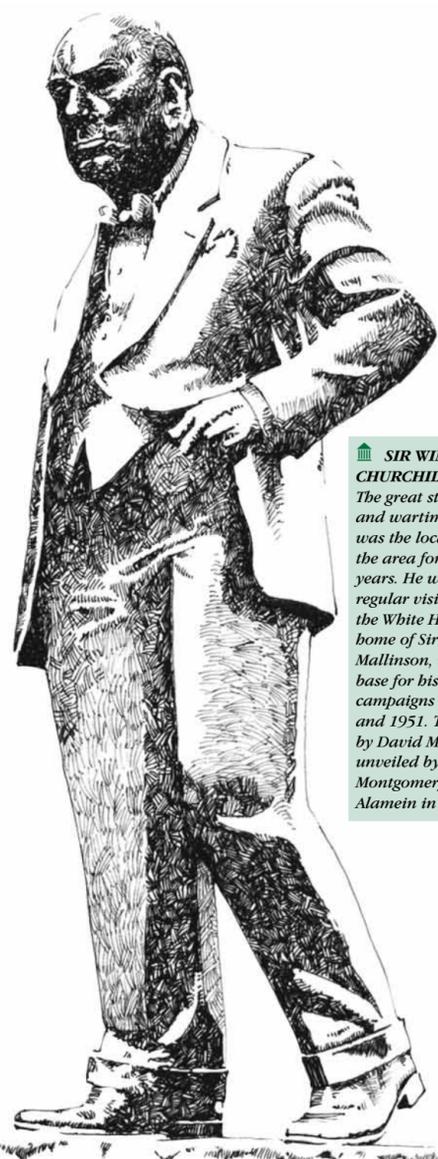
The High Road at the time was only a minor forest track linking London and Epping Heath, and because of the need to preserve the forest it remained little more than a track until the 17th century. Settlements were however gradually established along it, and whilst development at Woodford Green (then called Woodford Row) was slow, by the end of the 15th century the wooded surroundings and scenic views had made it an attractive location for wealthy London merchants and businessmen to settle.

By the late 16thC larger more elaborate houses began to be built, interspersed with modest timber cottages erected on the manorial waste. This gradual development inevitably came at the expense of the forest land, which was under ever increasing pressure from inclosure and clearance.

This trend continued through to the 18th and early 19thC with new houses being built, strung out along the High Road from George Lane in the south to Woodford Wells in the north. By 1748 the houses of Woodford were said to be scattered and "of brick, several storeys high, well built, and some of them handsome. The inhabitants are partly farmers, but still more gentlemen". Among the most significant surviving houses erected at this period are Hurst House, also known as the Naked Beauty, Highams, and Harts House.

The central block of Hurst House was erected between 1711 and 1735 making it one of the oldest surviving buildings in Woodford. It originally had extensive grounds, including fruit and kitchen gardens, stables, coachhouses, and ample accommodation for a wealthy resident, his family, and his servants. Its rather fanciful alias is a reference to a now disappeared statue of a naked woman that once stood in the garden.

Highams, designed by William Newton, was erected in 1768 by Anthony Bacon MP and was for many years the Walthamstow manor house of Higham Bensted. Its extensive grounds were laid out by the distinguished



SIR WINSTON CHURCHILL
The great statesman and wartime leader was the local M.P. for the area for many years. He was a regular visitor, and the White House, home of Sir Stuart Mallinson, was the base for his election campaigns of 1950 and 1951. The statue, by David Mcfall, was unveiled by Viscount Montgomery of Alamein in 1959.

landscape designer Humphrey Repton in 1793/4, and included a lake formed by damming the nearby river Ching. Repton's Lake survives today, once more within the forest boundary, and the name 'Highams Park' has now totally superseded the original 'Hale End' as the name for both the nearby station and suburban area.

Hurst House dates from 1816 and was a Regency replacement for an earlier 17thC mansion built by Sir Humphrey Handforth. Its name is actually older still, deriving from the family of Richard Hert who was living in 1270.

The most famous resident of the 17thC house was Richard Warner the botanist, who established a botanical garden there and in 1771 printed 'Plantae Woodfordiensis'. His name is perpetuated in Warner's Path and Warner's Pond.



Hurst House (or the Naked Beauty)
Probably the oldest surviving building in the area, the central core of the building was built circa 1714 by a brewer, Henry Raine. Badly damaged by fire in 1936 the building was subsequently restored, and was referred to by Pevsner as "the best house of Woodford".

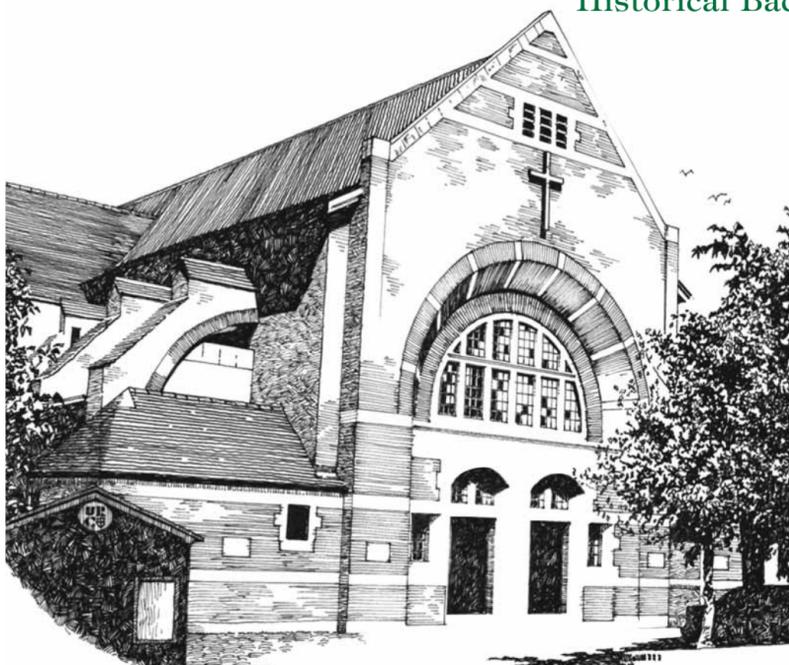
The opening of the Woodford New Road through the area in 1828 resulted in the erection of numerous new houses in the area, many on new inclosures from the forest.

The sale of the Crown's forest rights in Woodford in 1856 and 1862, plus the arrival of the steam railway in 1856 greatly accelerated this process. As a result, between 1851 and 1871 a further 182 acres of open forest land was inclosed, and the population increased rapidly with the subsequent new development.

Harts House
In 1617 Sir Humphrey Handforth, Master of the Wardrobe to James I, built a mansion called Harts on this site, and its most celebrated resident was the botanist Richard Warner (1711-1775). The house was rebuilt in 1816 as a stuccoed Regency mansion, and survives to this day.



Historical Background (Continued)



The United Free Church
This magnificent red brick and terracotta Church was erected in 1904 to designs by Charles Harrison Townsend (1851-1928), although the proposed tower was never built. Townsend is perhaps best known for the Horniman Museum and the Whitechapel Art Gallery.

This process of erosion was only halted in 1878 by the passing of the Epping Forest Act, which finally brought about the protection of the remaining 200 acres of forest land within Woodford parish. Today this land is largely represented by the open 'greens' along and beside the High Road, and the Woodford Golf course, which straddles the boundary between the Waltham Forest and Redbridge.

By the late 19th/early 20thC, improved road and rail access to London coupled with the physical attractions of the area led to vastly increased suburban developments. The families of the gentry had been gradually moving out of the area, and many of their elegant homes were demolished and the grounds developed for housing.

Those large houses that survived were often used for completely different purposes: Highams was used as a temporary hospital during the First World War before becoming Woodford County High School. Harts House was also for

many years a hospital until much of the site was developed for residential use. Numerous more 'modest' Georgian houses have also survived in largely original form, such as 'Lanehurst', 383-389 High Road, Higham Villa in High Elms, etc.

The 19th & 20th centuries also made their contribution to the special character and appearance of the area with a number of notable buildings. Prominently situated in the commercial heart of the area stands The Castle Hotel, a former posting house dating from the early years of the 19th century.

The third storey and ornate cast iron balcony are late 19thC additions, presumably added when the building was enlarged to cater for the vast influx of visitors to the nearby forest at that time.

Nearby, on High Elms, at the edge of the forest stands Charles Harrison Townsend's magnificent United Free Church erected in 1904. Further north on Inman's Row stands the Early English Gothic style Church of All Saints designed by F E C Streatfield. Erected in 1874, the church is a distinctive local landmark dominating this part of the Green.

At the southern end of the Green is St Aubyn's School, originally a substantial Italianate-style house of the mid-19thC called 'Pyrmont'. Its former outbuildings also survive on the corner of Bunce's Lane & the High Road as a Nursery and a fitness centre.



THE CASTLE HOTEL
An early 19th century Inn and posting house, now a Grade II Listed building. Forest-side villages and their Inns became immensely popular with visitors from the east-end of London following the 1878 Epping Forest Act, and the top floor addition with its decorative cast-iron balcony probably dates from this period.

Nearby on the Green itself, at the head of a long avenue of Poplar & Plane trees, stands David Macfall's bronze statue of Sir Winston Churchill, one of the country's most famous Prime Ministers and the long serving Member of Parliament for the Woodford area.

To the west of the Green, nestling within the original grounds of Highams, stands the Voysey-style 'White House' of 1906. From 1924 - 1982 it was the home of Sir Stuart Mallinson, 'the grand old man of Woodford', who was a close friend of Churchill. The extensive grounds, now known as Mallinson Park, contain both the White House woods and Sir Stuart's noted arboretum.

The heart of modern day Woodford Green remains the open forest land with its areas of woodland, ponds, and rows of magnificent Chestnut trees. At its centre is one of England's oldest Cricket clubs, established in 1735 and still thriving today. Sadly the High Road itself has long since ceased to be a forest track, and the constant roar of traffic has now replaced the former rural tranquillity of the area. The physical attractions however still remain, and in the shape of the numerous historic buildings that survive along the fringes of the Greens, the physical evidence of settlement spanning nearly 300 years remains for us all to enjoy.

Design Guidance

The Woodford Green Conservation Area contains a great variety of building types reflecting its evolution over the centuries. All have their individual character and features of interest which contribute to the overall special character and appearance of the area. This special character can however gradually be eroded by unsympathetic and insensitive alterations or additions. Alterations to doors, windows and roofs, flat roofed extensions, satellite dishes and inappropriate colour schemes are just some of the more obvious things that can adversely affect the character and appearance of both individual buildings and the area as a whole, and should be avoided.

Satellite dishes are a particularly unsightly and intrusive element in historic areas, and care is required in finding a suitable location for them.

Windows

Windows are the 'eyes' of a building, and their design and construction says a lot about traditional craftsmanship, contemporary fashion and social changes. Alterations to original windows, whether timber sashes, casements, or metal windows, can detract from the historic interest and character of buildings and should be avoided wherever possible. Painted timber sashes and casements are the original and correct form of window for the majority of buildings in the area, and where they have decayed they can easily be repaired or replaced to match the original design. There are a number of local firms who manufacture and install new timber windows to match the existing, so there is no need to resort to historically and visually inappropriate aluminium or UPVC alternatives. Similarly metal windows, usually Crittalls, which were popular in the inter-war years, can be repaired or replaced with new standard sized units. These modern replacements are galvanised, powder coated, and double glazed so that the shortcomings of the originals have been eliminated.

In nearly all cases their installation requires planning consent, and they will not be permitted on any wall, roof or chimney stack fronting a highway, or in any position where their visual impact will detract from the character or appearance of the area. Satisfactory inconspicuous locations can nearly always be found. Wherever possible original architectural features should be retained intact, not just on Listed buildings. Where they have been removed or altered over the years it is still possible to reinstate them when the opportunity arises. In most cases this need not be prohibitively expensive, and it can add to the character and value of the property. Council Conservation Officers can usually advise you on specialist suppliers and manufacturers.

Roofs

Natural slates and plain clay tiles, both machine-made and hand-made, are the original roofing materials for most buildings in the Conservation Area, and are both attractive and durable. These materials are still freely available, both new and second hand, and should always be used if your roof requires repair or replacement to ensure that the original character is preserved.

New Welsh slate is now in limited supply and consequently expensive, but cheaper good quality slates from other countries is available and suitable for all but the most important Listed buildings. Concrete tiles and imitation slates of whatever material should be avoided as these are inappropriate in historic areas.

Chimney stacks and pots, even if no longer used, should also be retained in good order as they are traditional and attractive features of a historic roofscape. Second hand or new clay pots to many original patterns are still available from salvage yards and specialist suppliers.



THE WHITE HOUSE
Erected in 1905/6 and designed in the Vernacular revival style made famous by Charles Annersley Voysey (1857-1941). It was the long-time home of Sir Stuart Mallinson, a distinguished local celebrity and benefactor. The associated Arboretum contains over 100 trees planted by his many influential friends including Sir Winston Churchill, Montgomery of Alamein, and Dwight Eisenhower.

Doors

As the public face of a property, the front door has always had a special importance. Until the early 19thC doors had always been of solid timber construction, usually of 6 panels, with light being admitted via a fanlight. By the Victorian era improved technology permitted glass to be introduced into the door itself, and door designs became much more varied. Unless constructed of dark coloured wood, however, the doors were invariably painted in a dark colour or 'woodgrained' to imitate a hardwood. Properly maintained these doors can last for many years, and many of the properties in the area still retain their original features. They should be retained wherever possible, and never replaced with inappropriate mass-produced modern designs. Despite their evocative names, Georgian, Elizabethan, Gothic, etc, few of these ready-made replacement doors bear more than a passing resemblance to any known historic original, and their use can only spoil the originality and appearance of the property.

Original 18th and 19th century door furniture, such as knockers, letterboxes, and bell pulls, is now becoming rarer, and where these features have survived they should be retained as items of interest. In nearly all circumstances these would originally have been made of cast iron and finished in either black or a colour to match that of the front door itself - not the polished brass of modern examples. Salvaged or reproduction doors and door furniture of all periods are still available from specialist sources, and the Conservation Officers should be able to advise you.

Internal Features

The original layout and internal features of historic properties are often ignored, but can be equally important elements in building conservation. Alterations such as partitions, lobbies, and through-lounges can all affect the original character of a property and need to be carefully conceived and implemented.

Materials and Colours

The traditional materials for almost all buildings in the area are brick and either clay tiles or Welsh slate. Brickwork is attractive and durable in its own right and the only maintenance ever likely to be required is periodic re-pointing. When this does become necessary it should be done only in a Lime-based mortar to match the original work, not a modern cement mix which is totally unsuitable. Flush or semi-recessed joints should be used to match the original pointing, never heavy weather-struck joints.

Brickwork should never be painted or rendered unless part of the original design, and then care should be taken to select an appropriate colour for any subsequent repainting. Irrespective of the age of the property concerned, there are certain ranges of colours that are more historically appropriate than others for both internal and external use. On 18th and 19thC properties for example, a brilliant white would never be appropriate being very much a modern development. Off whites, variously described as Gardenia, Buttermilk, Soft white etc are more authentic colours for joinery, cills, and stucco.

External colours of these earlier properties would normally be finished in a dark colour such as brown, black, dark green, dark blue or burgundy, often with the door furniture painted to match. On more modern properties brighter colours became more common and the use of white paint more widespread. Information on suitable paints and colours for any age of property is freely available as are the paints themselves.

Original fireplaces and mantelpieces, ceiling cornices and roses, skirting boards and panelled doors etc are all valuable historic features which should be kept and maintained if they have survived. All such features are still freely available from salvage yards and specialist suppliers, and will add considerably to the internal 'period' character of your property.

This leaflet can only serve as a general guide to those elements which collectively make up the special character and appearance of the Woodford Green Conservation Area and what is required to preserve and enhance it.

Numerous specialist books, leaflets and magazines are also available today from newsagents, bookshops, and specialist books such as English Heritage, the Victorian Society and the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings.

These will provide further interesting and useful reading on the care and repair of older buildings.

Further advice and information on any of the issues raised in this leaflet can be obtained by contacting:

The Conservation Officer
London Borough of Waltham Forest
Environment and Regeneration,
Sycamore House, Town Hall Complex, Forest Road
Walthamstow, London E17 4JF
Telephone: 020 8496 6737

More detailed information on local history is available at:

Vestry House Museum

Waltham Road
Walthamstow, London E17
Telephone: 020 8509 1917

The Conservation Officer
London Borough of Redbridge
Planning Services, Town Hall
PO Box 2
High Road, Ilford, Essex IG1 1DD
Telephone: 020 8708 2146

Local Studies & Archives
Redbridge Central Library
Clemence Road, Ilford, Essex IG1 1EA
Telephone: 020 8708 2417



Waltham Forest

A large print version of this leaflet is available if required