

How to Contact the Society

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USEFUL ADDRESSES

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Bonfires 852 9121 Ext 354 or 365

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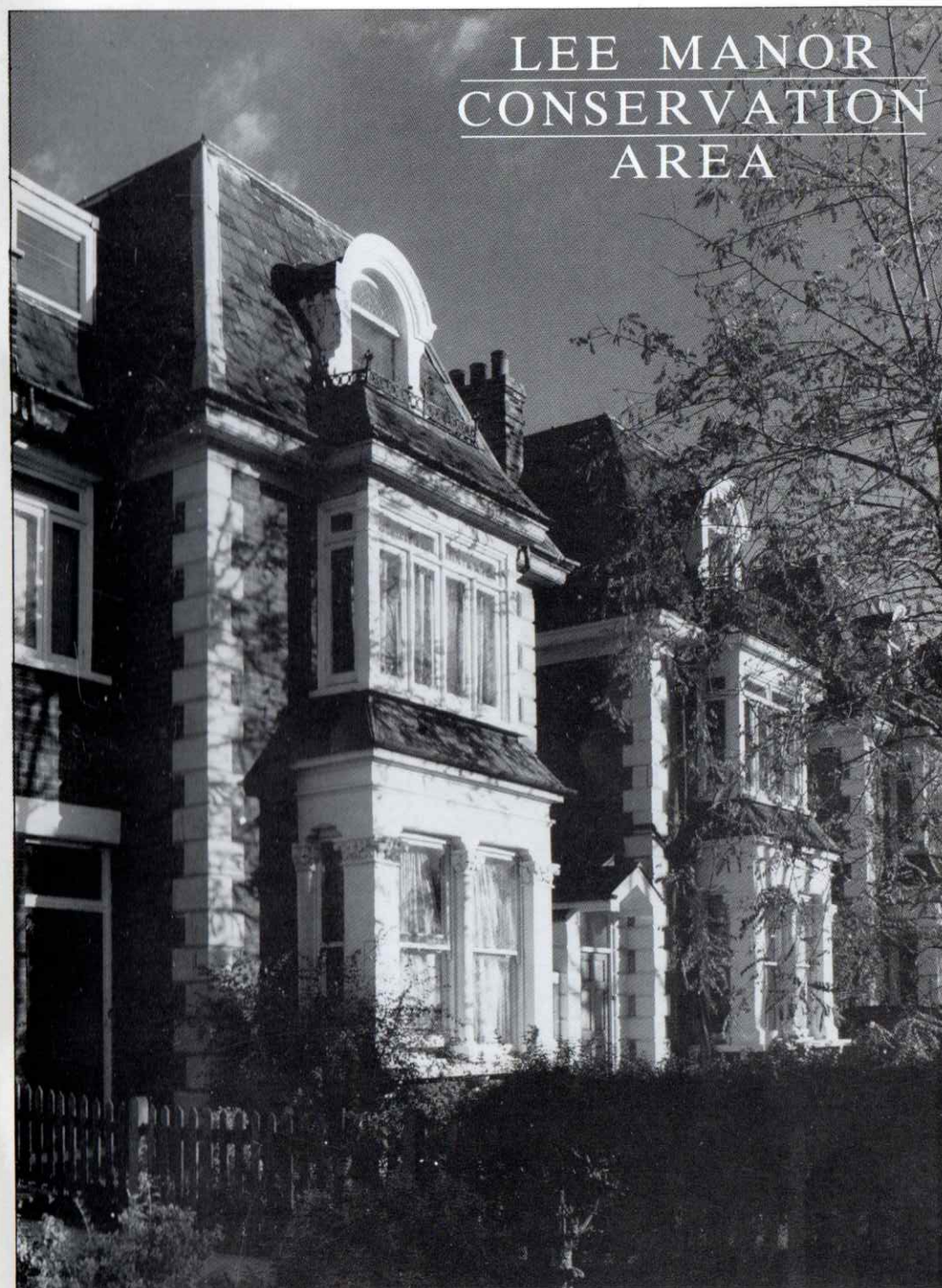
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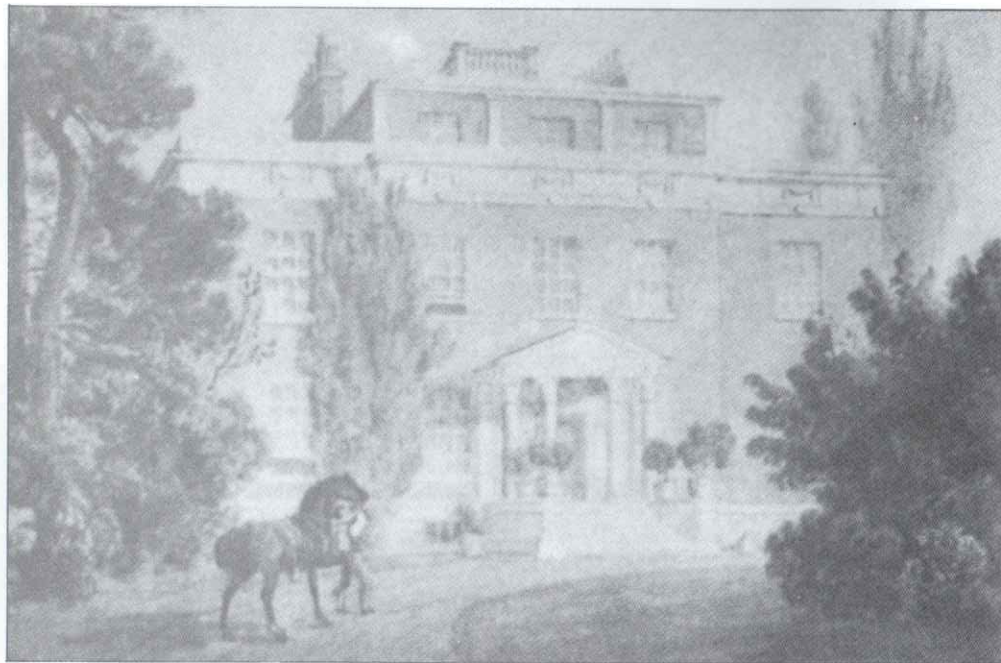
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LEE MANOR CONSERVATION AREA



This booklet aims to stimulate an interest in the area and to encourage local people and others to play an active part in its Conservation.

Manor House



Manor House Gardens in 1910

HISTORY OF THE LEE MANOR AREA

The Lee Manor Conservation Area forms a small part of the ancient parish of Lee – “a sheltered place” – and of the manor of Lee. The manor was held by the Crown from the time of the Norman Conquest until the early 17th century when it passed through the hands of a succession of land-owners.

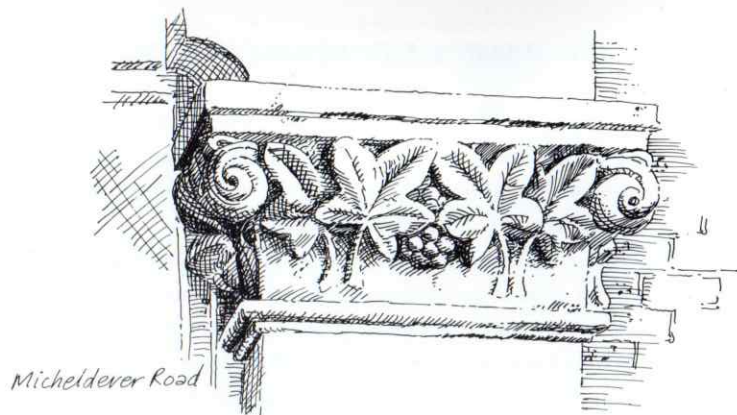
During the latter period the area progressed from a small rural community to a prosperous farming and market gardening district just beyond the southern outskirts of London. It subsequently became a popular place for wealthy City merchants to live, probably because it was in the country yet fairly close to the City of London. The area encompassed several large houses belonging to the local gentry and aristocracy, notably the 17th century brick-built Pentland House, now hidden behind a stucco facade, and the Manor House, built around 1772 by Thomas Lucas.

In 1796 the Manor House, still the architectural centrepiece of Lee, was bought by Sir Francis Baring. Francis Baring was the son of a wool merchant, John Baring, who had emigrated to England from northern Germany in the early 18th century. Born in 1740 Francis opened a small counting house, made his fortune trading American Loans and Stocks during the American War of Independence and subsequently became chairman of the East India Company. Baring Brothers remains to this day an important City merchant bank.

Sir Francis bought 623 acres in Lee for £20,000 but further purchases including the Lee Manor, Burnt Ash, Shroffold and Holloway Farms doubled his holding. He lived for a number of years in Lee on an income estimated at £80,000 a year but after buying an estate in Hampshire spent increasing time there.



Southbrook Road



Micheldever Road

The next two generations of Barings lived in Lee but the principal family residence had become the Hampshire estate. Lee Manor House remained in the hands of the Baring family until 1899 when it was sold to Lewisham Borough Council for use as a library while the grounds became a public park.

There are many reminders of the Baring family in local names. When Sir Francis Baring was elevated to the peerage he took his title from the tithing (a district containing 10 households) of Northbrook in the village of Micheldever in Hampshire where he owned an estate. His title lives on in the name Northbrook School, on a site given in trust by Lord Northbrook to the rector and churchwardens of St. Margaret's, the parish church of Lee; and in the Northbrook public house on Burnt Ash Road.

Along with Micheldever most of the local street names also derive from the Baring connection. Another tithing was called Southbrook and the family also had links with the West Country towns of Taunton and Wantage. Sir Francis's wife, meanwhile, was a daughter of the Earl of Effingham.

A RURAL VILLAGE

The greater part of the area was farmed well into the 19th century with watercress beds along the Quaggy River and extensive orchards stretching down to Micheldever Road. Lee remained a rural village until the early 19th century with a village green of two acres at Lee Green. The Tiger's Head Inn, on the site of the present Old Tiger's Head, was famous for its bowling green.

In 1810 however Lee Green was enclosed and in the ensuing years some of the grander houses in the area were demolished and their grounds built over with streets of smaller houses. An 1833 map of the conservation area still shows open fields and country lanes. However, just outside the conservation area, some building has begun east of Burnt Ash Road while several streets of houses have been built to north of Lee High Road. In the last half of the 19th century the Baring estate was split up for building purposes.

The Dartford Loop railway line, which forms the southern boundary to the conservation area was opened in September 1866. The line avoided the built-up

Thames riverside, served by the North Kent line which had opened in July 1849, and provided a more direct link to Gravesend and beyond. It also confirmed the position of the South Eastern Railway Company which had been concerned that its rival, the London, Chatham and Dover Railway, might open such a line. Lee Station dates from the opening of the Dartford Loop but the much larger Hither Green station did not follow until 1895. The line was electrified in 1926.

DEVELOPMENT STARTS

By 1869 the first houses to be built on the site of the present conservation area had begun to straggle south from the crossroads at Lee Green down the west side of Burnt Ash Road but the rest of the area was still open fields and orchards. (In contrast the countryside to the north of the Lee High Road had been largely built-up).

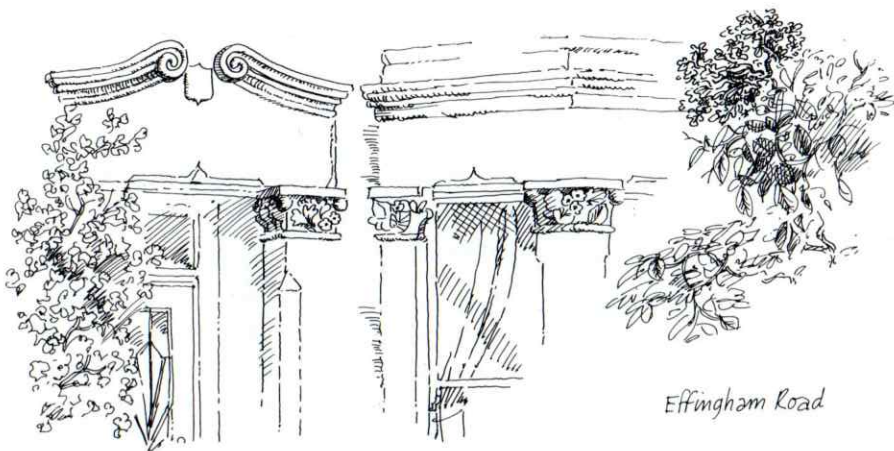
The Metropolitan Board of Works approved the naming of Handen Road in 1868, Southbrook Road in 1870 and Micheldever Road in 1878 and it is from these years that the area as a residential district in its present form can be dated.

In 1881 the Rector of Lee announced to his parishioners that Lord Northbrook intended to erect a chapel of ease in Handen Road. It was to be "a substantial structure of red brick with a tiled roof and a neat bell turret." The chapel was built in the summer of that year with seating for 650 people and consecrated as the Church of the Good Shepherd in December. As F. H. Hart pointed out in his "History of Lee" (1882) "its position is quite central to a greatly increasing neighbourhood; the houses erected in the roads near it having, in 20 months, from 1878 to 1880, risen from 110 to 220—just doubled".

Originally intended as a chapel attached to St Margaret's, the parish church of Lee, the Good Shepherd appears to have become independent around 1890. A



Royal Mail Sorting Office



Effingham Road

commentator writing around 1900 conceded that there was not a great deal to be said about the decoration of the church which was plainly built with no stained glass windows. In 1919/22 the church and its hall were restored and the hall was enlarged.

Partly because of the building-over of fields in the area the Quaggy remained subject to occasional severe floods. One occasion was in 1878 when several nurseries along its banks, including the Effingham Nursery of Messrs Gregory & Evans, was seriously damaged while elsewhere in Lewisham many people were made homeless.

The Ordnance Survey map for 1896 shows most of the present conservation area to be built up though only in Taunton Road do the houses extend as far west as Manor Lane. In Effingham and Micheldever the roadways themselves had yet to be extended as far as Manor Lane. In 1896 these two roads still end in fields just to the west of Wantage Road.

Most houses in the area still date from that period, seventy to a hundred years ago. As a result the area retains many visible links with its nineteenth century past.

FACING THE BOMBS

However, the war years of 1939-45 also made their mark. Several houses at the junction of Manor Lane with Effingham Road and Handen Road were destroyed by high explosive bombs on the night of September 17, 1940. The air damage reports of that night reveal that a crater 10ft by 20ft was blown in Manor Lane. Early reports of that night record four casualties but later, presumably when the situation was clearer, the records show there were none.

In December, 1940 five incendiary bombs landed on the Church of the Good Shepherd. With most fire appliances called away to the docks—the main target of the raid—there were no pumps available to save the church and it was largely destroyed. The parish hall, only a few feet away, was saved however and became a temporary church. The main church was not rebuilt until 1956.

A comparison of pre- and post-war maps shows four houses were also destroyed in Taunton Road. Most of the homes destroyed or badly damaged were replaced in the mid-1950s when a small private developer built houses.

The “town houses” in Micheldever and Wantage Roads of the sort being built in the 1960s and 1970s were not replacements for war damage but simply filled gaps left by previous builders. In Micheldever Road the building took place at the bottom of what had been the very large garden of the Handen Road vicarage.

This brief history of Lee shows its growth, like many other country areas on the outskirts of London, from fields to village to suburb. Despite its absorption into the mass of London it still retains many vestiges of its rural past. There seems no reason to grieve the changes in quite as dramatic terms as those employed by Josiah Thomas, a local shoemaker known as The Lee Poet, in verses written in March 1859.

*Oh, Lee! Oh, Lee! What are thou doing?
 Dame Nature says you've worked her ruin;
 Where once was lovely meadows green
 Now brick on bricks in piles are seen
 The blackberries on brambles wild
 No more shall tempt the peasant child;
 The primrose decks thy banks no more,
 And the sweet violet's reign is o'er;
 And even I am grieved to see
 The loss of each familiar tree.**

*From The Story of Lee by R.R.C. Gregory and F.W. Nunn (1923)



Micheldever Road

Burnt Ash Road



Effingham Road

HISTORY OF THE LEE MANOR SOCIETY

Nowadays, most people would rather live in an old house. Twenty years ago, "modernisation" was a selling point in estate agents' literature, and the rather spurious streamlining of old houses was considered to be a great asset.

Today the words "many period features retained" work magic in the hearts of prospective buyers.

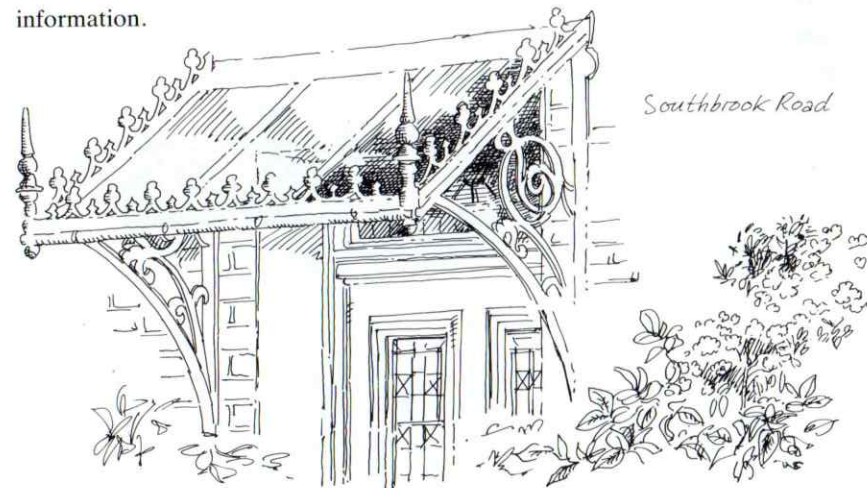
Despite the disgraceful and wholesale demolition of vast tracts of traditional houses in towns and cities in the 1960s and 1970s, a large quantity of eighteenth, nineteenth and early twentieth century housing stock has survived.

The houses that concern us are in the part of South-East London known as Lee, and more correctly the 'The Lee Manor Conservation Area'.

It was during the early 1970s that part of this area (Micheldever and Burnt Ash Roads) came under threat from development.

On February 13 1975 the local council called a public meeting in the hall of the Church of the Good Shepherd to announce their interest in declaring Micheldever Road and adjoining parts of Burnt Ash Road a conservation area. More than 100 people attended that meeting; a steering committee was formed to discuss the proposal in more detail, to carry out a survey and to canvass support from a wider section of the area.

Subsequently, the committee and various sub groups held many meetings to consider various council suggestions and formulate their own ideas for the designation of a conservation area. Councillors attended these meetings to provide welcome advice and information. Mr John Marchent of the Planning Department was a constant source of guidance. Leslie Silk, who first mooted the idea of a conservation area, and two other local councillors, Gareth Hughes and Bob Daltrey gave much advice and support to the committee at this time. Other conservation areas, interested local groups and the Civic Trust gave useful information.



The result was that after this multi-layered consultative process, it was agreed that the area outlined as the Micheldever Road conservation area should be accepted as a first stage of a larger area to be known later as the Lee Manor Conservation Area. It was also agreed to carry out a survey of the local population and a historical and architectural study of a larger area and to consider this for inclusion at a later stage.

During the initial survey over three hundred households were contacted, and information was collected regarding attitudes towards conservation proposals and opinions about amenities in the area.

THE DECISION TAKEN

There was no outright opposition. The survey showed that approximately half the houses were owner-occupied, while the rest were rented. The Borough of Lewisham and various housing associations were major landlords.

There were doubts in the early stages of the survey about the wisdom of including Effingham and Taunton Roads. But it was felt that to exclude them would be inconsistent with the idea of creating a cohesive unit, bearing in mind their proximity to the Manor House gardens. Thought was also given to include Brightfield Road and Hedgley Street as representing the smaller scale of domestic building in the area—ultimately however, the two roads were excluded.

The committee unanimously recommended to the council to designate as soon as possible *a conservation area bounded to the south by the railway line, to the west by Manor Lane, and to the east by Burnt Ash Road. To the north the suggested boundary would run along the middle of Effingham Road to Wantage Road up to Taunton Road, and then around the perimeter of the Manor House Gardens to include the Manor House library and Pentland House.*

This recommendation was approved in 1976 and thus came into being the Lee Manor Conservation area.

In 1989 the area was extended by the council to include Lee British Rail Station (built 1866), the Royal Mail Sorting Office and the former council depot in Woodyates Road. Numbers 5–23 in Upwood Road were also included.



HOW DOES THE SOCIETY FUNCTION?

The Society takes an interest in the planning and development of the neighbourhood and, as the need arises, focuses on particular matters of concern. It monitors closely all aspects of traffic and transport. One such concern is the seemingly ever increasing volumes of traffic within the area.

Funds are raised to publicise the Society's activities and recruit new members. Fund-raising consists mainly of jumble sales and 'plant marts' (where people donate plants and flowers from their gardens for resale). A newsletter is published annually with members contributing articles pertinent to conservation and of interest to the area in general.

Monthly meetings are held as well as an AGM in March. All residents are encouraged to attend these meetings, and stand for election as officers.

We attend the Lewisham Borough Conservation Advisory Committee and Planning Panel meetings, which form links with other conservation areas, as well as keeping the Society in touch with local happenings. We are also members of the Victorian Society, and have links with the Civic Trust.

Achievements of the Lee Manor Society

4 Handen Road—A derelict house for a number of years, the Society campaigned vigorously for refurbishment with subsequent success.

88–94 Burnt Ash Road—The Society encouraged the rebuilding of these four houses, which had been badly damaged by vandalism and a fire.

Pelican Crossing/Burnt Ash Road—Initial pressure through the local Press helped the installation of this much needed pedestrian crossing.

October 1987 Storm—In conjunction with the Lewisham Environment Trust the society donated money to help with replacing the lime trees in Micheldever Road lost after the October storm in 1987.

British Rail/Lee Station—When BR announced plans to rebuild the ticket office, we considered the style and materials inappropriate to the area, and said so to BR and our local M.P. With his support changes were made in relation to materials, which are now more in keeping with the local area.

Article 4 Direction—All the Mansard Houses in Micheldever Road have been approved by the Department of the Environment for an Article 4 direction. This provides for extra planning controls to stop unsympathetic development to these unique and fine houses.

56–62 Burnt Ash Road—In 1990 these four splendid houses were listed as Grade II, after representation by the Society to English Heritage.

K II Telephone Box*—This telephone box situated outside the Manor House Library is now a Grade II listed "building" thanks to the efforts of the Society.

*Designed by Sir Giles Gilbert Scott

Southbrook Road



Handen Road

WHAT IS A CONSERVATION AREA?

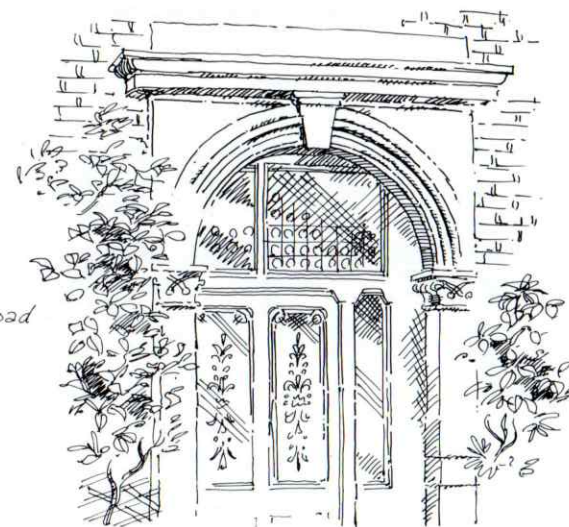
The statutory definition is "an area of special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance". The important thing to note is that the character of the area rather than individual buildings is relevant. All the buildings and trees within a Conservation Area are protected by special controls. Individual buildings of special historic interest can be protected by 'listing' and are then subject to a variety of stricter controls.

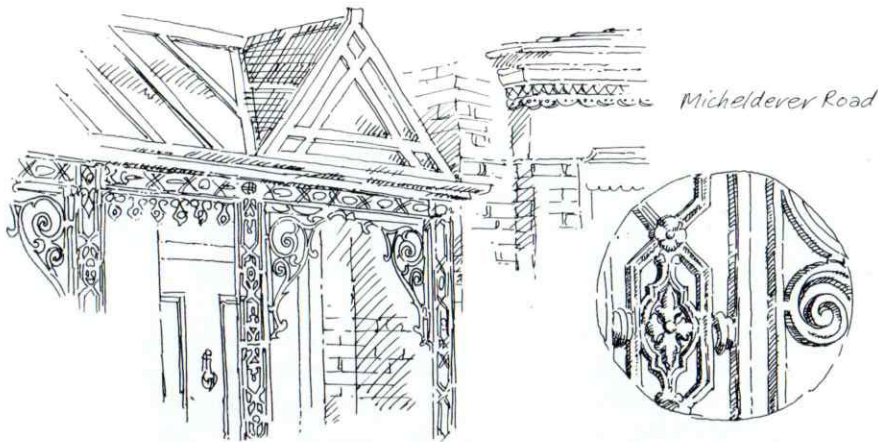
Local authorities have a duty to consider whether they should designate any part of a district as a Conservation Area. Conservation Areas were first set up in 1968 and kept under review. Lewisham has recently set up several new ones and has extended the Lee Manor area.

When an area is designated the local planning authority is expected to put forward a positive scheme for the area, stating its policy and intentions, and giving details of the measures considered appropriate for maintaining and enhancing the characteristics of the area. This can cover not only building development but also open spaces and traffic.

Local authorities are advised to set up conservation advisory committees consisting of people who are not members of the authority to make recommendations to the council before planning applications are decided. The Lee Manor Society is represented on the Lewisham Borough Conservation Advisory Committee and sees all planning applications relating to the Conservation Area.

Southbrook Road





What are the special controls?

Some restrictions apply to all Conservation Areas. No demolition of buildings is allowed without consent and most trees may not be lopped or cut down without prior permission. Other restrictions on development vary from area to area. The borough has to decide what new development should and should not be permitted in a Conservation Area. The effect for people living in a Conservation Area is that planning permission is needed for a wider range of alterations to their property than in other areas.

The Lewisham Planning Handbook (available from the Town Hall) provides a useful description of the planning system in the borough. In general planning permission is needed for all new building works, any alterations which affect the appearance of buildings and for changes in the use of land and buildings. In addition, in a Conservation Area planning permission may be required for:

- any roof extension
- other extensions over a certain size
- any exterior cladding
- complete or partial demolition of buildings or walls
- garden sheds or greenhouses larger than 10 cubic metres
- lopping or felling trees

The Planning Enquiry Desk at the Town Hall should be consulted for more detailed information and advice.

Article 4 Directions

Buildings thought to merit additional protection may be made subject to an Article 4 Direction if approved by the Department of the Environment — examples are the houses in Micheldever Road with the mansard roofs. This means that the sort of external changes normally allowed without permission require the council's consent. The purpose is to preserve the special architectural features of such houses.

Listed Buildings

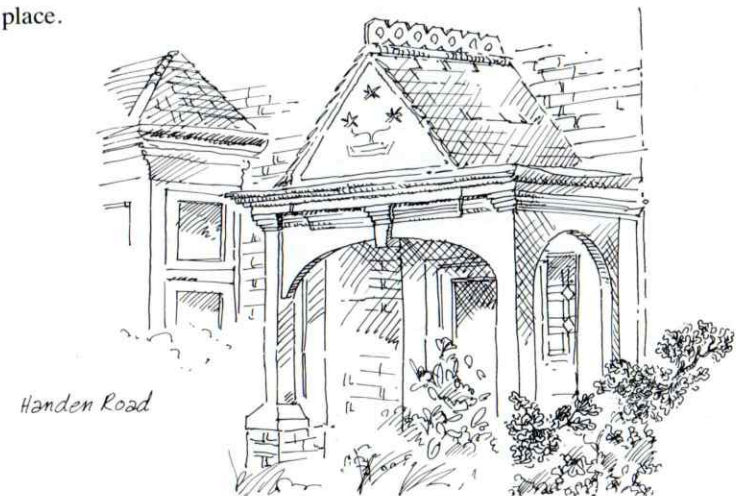
Buildings of special architectural or historic interest may be listed by the Department of the Environment. Consent is then required for any demolition or alteration, internal or external, whether or not planning permission is required. Owners of listed buildings have a duty to keep them in a good state of repair. Grants may be available to help with the cost of repairs. The Lee Manor Conservation Area has a number of listed buildings: the Manor House Library, Pentland House, 58–62 Burnt Ash Road and the K II telephone box in Old Road.

Trees

Individual trees or groups of trees can be protected by a Tree Preservation Order which protects them from being lopped or cut down without prior consent. In a Conservation Area anyone planning to do any work on a tree with a trunk larger than 75mm diameter (at a height of 1.5 metres) must give the council six weeks notice.

The Tree Preservation Officer can be contacted for advice. Any application then goes to the council for a decision on whether the work can go ahead. The council can also make the preservation of trees or planting replacements a condition for granting planning permission.

It may seem that living in a Conservation Area has disadvantages — there are more restrictions on what you can do to your property than in other areas. But the point of the restriction is to conserve the character of the area. Most people are glad that there are controls on development — to stop householders making unsympathetic alterations. It is the character of the area as a whole as much as individual houses which leads so many people to want to live here in the first place.



HOW THE VICTORIANS BUILT THEIR TOWNS AND SUBURBS

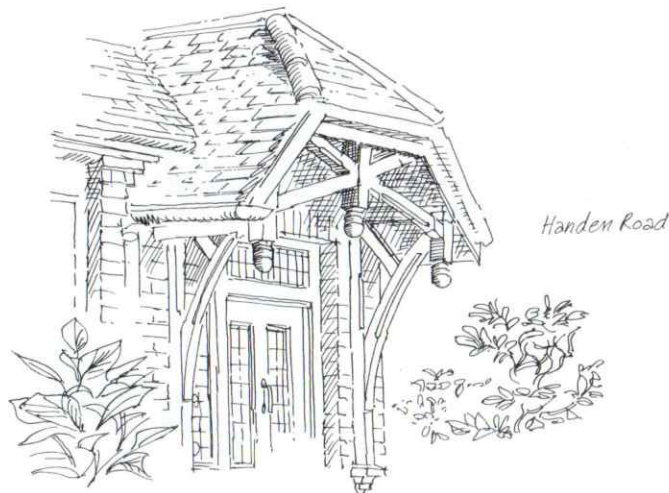
For all its charms the Lee Manor Conservation Area differs little in overall plan from vast swathes of Victorian housing throughout London and indeed in the rest of the country. Size and scale may vary depending on the ambitions of the builder but from Newcastle to Brighton Victorian suburbs were built to a similar pattern.

They owe this similarity to health and housing legislation introduced in the mid to late 19th century, to the mass production of many building materials and to improved transport links which meant Welsh slates, for example, could be easily delivered to building sites all over the country.

Street after street of Victorian housing was demolished throughout the 1960s and 1970s in the mistaken belief that Victorian was synonymous with back-to-back slums. In fact the rapid industrialisation which created overcrowded slum conditions preceded the arrival of Queen Victoria on the throne in 1837. And while the smaller, earlier Victorian homes may have lacked amenities as the 19th century progressed new laws set ever higher standards for house-building.

The Health of Towns Act of 1848 marked the start of public health legislation and this was followed from 1875 by a series of Housing Acts which required minimum distances between dwellings, the inclusion of damp courses in walls and provision of adequate natural lighting and ventilation. By-laws adopted by local authorities around the country during the 1870s set down minimum street widths and open areas at the backs of buildings.

While strictly speaking the Victorian age ended with the death of Queen Victoria in 1901, building techniques did not change significantly before 1918 and



the end of the First World War. At least one third of Britain's 18m-plus stock of housing was built before 1919 with more than 2¼m built between 1870 and 1911 alone.

The introduction of steam saws allowed carved stone window sills, lintels and brackets to be produced cheaply. The mechanisation of wood-working machinery permitted the mass-production of standard items such as doors and sash windows. The invention of machines to press brick clay more precisely encouraged the mass production of hard and durable bricks.

BUILDING TO RENT

Despite these developments the plan of the 19th century terraced house differed little from that of its predecessor, the Georgian town house. The typical Victorian house was two rooms deep and one room wide. Extra space might be provided by adding a basement or another storey or by adding a back extension to produce the common L-shaped design. But even the grandest of South Kensington 'town mansions' has only two rooms on each floor of the main body of the house.

In the smarter parts of London such as Bloomsbury, Mayfair and Chelsea houses and entire 'estates' were built by the traditional landowners, often aristocrats, while elsewhere the new terraces were the work of small local builders. But whatever the social rank of the builder almost all of the houses were built as a speculation—the builder did not have a specific tenant in mind when he started work—and for rent.

Britain now has one of the highest percentages of owner-occupied homes but until the beginning of the 20th century 90 per cent of all homes were rented from private landlords. Typically the annual rent would be about 10 per cent of the purchase price of the house, yielding a profit of about 5 per cent for the landlord.

The inhabitants of these homes could generally be described as "middle class" though this was a term which included skilled workmen, shipping clerks and wealthy, self-made industrialists. No stigma attached to the renting of property in the 19th century and some of the larger houses would be peopled by up to a dozen servants as well as the tenant's family. The eminently respectable fictional Mr Pooter of George and Weedon Grossmith's *Diary of a Nobody* (1894) rented his middle-sized villa in Holloway, North London.

The cost of building these houses appears very low when compared with present-day prices. A two-up, two-down terraced house cost less than £100 to build in 1870 though by the turn of the century the cost had risen to £150. At the other end of the housing scale the larger town mansions of South Kensington cost £4,000 to build in the 1860s.

Despite the factors which contributed to a certain uniformity in the lay-out of Victorian suburbs, architectural styles were by no means unchanged during the Victorian period. The very early Victorian homes retained the elegance of their Georgian predecessors. Pointed arches were a feature of the neo-Gothic period which followed when elements of church architecture were applied to the family home. From about 1870 an even earlier style—known as Queen Anne—was revived. This style can be best seen in the tall red-brick and terracotta-tiled mansion flats to be found in Chelsea and the suburbs of other British cities.

It was not until the 1920s that the terraced house gave way to the semi-detached houses which dominate the inter-war suburbs. But with the exception of a small number of houses built in the 1950s to replace the war-damaged originals and some 1960-style town houses the Lee Manor Conservation Area is largely a creation of the Victorian house-builder.

Founder members of the Society 1975

Mary Boga · Jeremy Coyle · Elizabeth Coyle · David Crawford
 Nicholas Davidson · Sue Field · Atheer Hammodi · Andrew Kinzett
 Josephine Laird · Biddy Macfarlane · Deborah Macfarlane · Harry Maloney
 Jack Mitchell · Julie Proudlove · Paul Richardson · Pamela Silk
 Tom Taylor · Eileen Taylor · Gwen Teanby
 Chris Wolff · Betty Wybrew

