



**PETTS WOOD**  
**LONDON BOROUGH OF BROMLEY**  
**HISTORIC AREA ASSESSMENT**

**NOVEMBER 2019**



Beams Ltd, The Castle, Hertford SG14 1HR  
Tel: 01992 504331  
Email: [conservation@beamsltd.org](mailto:conservation@beamsltd.org)

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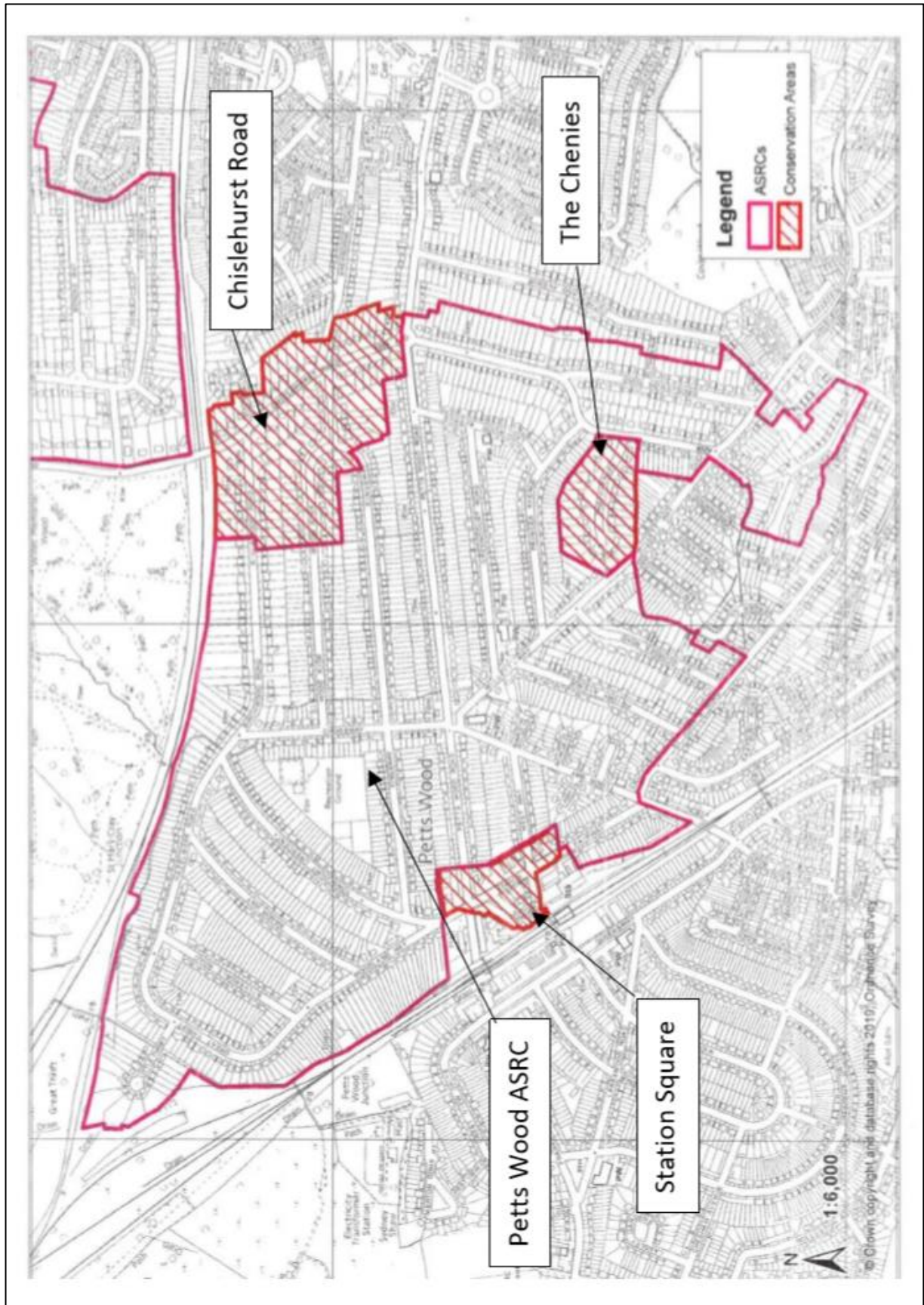


Fig. 1. Petts Wood ASRC and conservation areas map.





Fig. 2. Birchwood Road, looking east

## INTRODUCTION

This report was commissioned by Bromley Borough Council in October 2019 to assess the Area of Special Residential Character (ASRC) known as Petts Wood for conservation area designation. The ASRC is directly adjacent to three conservation areas in the Petts Wood area, these are Station Square, Chislehurst Road and The Chenies which are all part of the Inter-war development of Petts Wood (Fig. 1).

The purpose of the report is to establish whether the ASRC warrants conservation area designation based on an assessment of its special architectural and historic character (Fig. 2). The report will also look at the townscape qualities which contribute to the overall character of the area and which is a significant aspect of historic area assessment.

This report has been produced using guidance laid out by Historic England in *Conservation Area Designation, Appraisal and Management: Historic England Advice Note 1* (2019) and *Understanding Place. Historic Area Assessment* (2017).

## Planning Policy context

A conservation area is defined under section 69 (1: a) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 as “an area of special architectural or historic interest the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance”.

The same section of the P (LB & CA) Act 1990, 69 (2) goes on to state that Local Planning authorities should “determine whether any parts or any further parts of their area should be designated as conservation areas; and if they so determine, they shall designate those parts accordingly.”

The NPPF 2019, Para. 186 states that “When considering the designation of conservation areas, local planning authorities should ensure that an area justifies such status because of its special architectural or historic interest, and that the concept of conservation is not devalued through the designation of areas that lack special interest.”

An ASRC is a residential area the special and distinctive quality and character of which is recognised by the LPA and provides the area with additional protection to that conferred by other policies. The London Borough of Bromley Local Plan 2019 Policy 44 is clear that development within ASRCs “will be required to respect, enhance and strengthen their special and distinctive qualities”. Specific management guidelines are laid out in the Appendices Section 3.

In addition to the guidelines in the Local Plan, two Article 4 directions exist for Petts Wood, firstly requiring planning permission for alteration to gates, fence walls or other means of enclosure (2016) and secondly requiring planning permission for any alteration to front roof slopes (2017).

The major policy weakness of ASRC designation is the lack of protection against demolition, there are no additional controls unless a building is statutorily listed within an ASRC. Once an area is designated as a conservation area it becomes subject to both national and local conservation policies on conservation areas as set out in part 16 of the National Planning Policy Framework 2019 (NPPF) and 5.1 of the London Borough of Bromley’s Local Plan 2019.

Were the Petts Wood ASRC to be upgraded to conservation area status the resulting additional controls would be as follows:

- The requirement in legislation and planning policy to preserve or enhance the character and appearance of the area
- Control over demolition of unlisted buildings
- Control over works to trees
- Limitations on types of advertisements
- Restriction on types of development which can be carried out under permitted development rights
- Support for Article 4 directions to remove permitted development rights where avoidable damage is occurring
- Clarification of archaeological interest

## SUMMARY OF CHARACTER

Petts Wood is a garden suburb laid out in the late 1920s and 1930s by Basil Scruby having been inspired by the garden suburb movement, in particular Hampstead Garden Suburb. With his architect Leonard Culliford he created a masterplan which defined the roads, amenities and plot sizes which remain largely unchanged to this day. With covenants on the plots he was able to control the building lines, roof heights and materials so that the area preserves a highly ordered and regular appearance despite the variety of architectural design and detail. Of note within the suburb are:

- The prevailing neo-vernacular architectural style evoking a rural and historic idyll.
- Multiple neo-Tudor houses, many by Noel Rees with a restricted black and white palette.
- The Cecil Pamphilon Houses on Chislehurst Road
- Individually designed highly idiosyncratic neo-Tudor houses on Great Thrift.
- Large high status neo-Tudor houses on Birchwood Road.
- The modernist semi-detached houses of the Closes off Tudor Way
- The limited palette of materials, encompassing black timber, white render and red bricks and tiles contrasting with the green setting.
- Lush verdant garden suburb character developed through lawns, shrubs, low hedges and trees in generous gardens to the front and rear of the houses.
- Regular plot sizes creating a sense order and control.
- Open aspect to many of the plots due to their width, low boundaries and long gardens.
- Remaining historic tree specimens within gardens and sometimes in the street.
- The historic woodland setting backdrop of Petts Wood to the north.



## TOWNSCAPE INTEREST

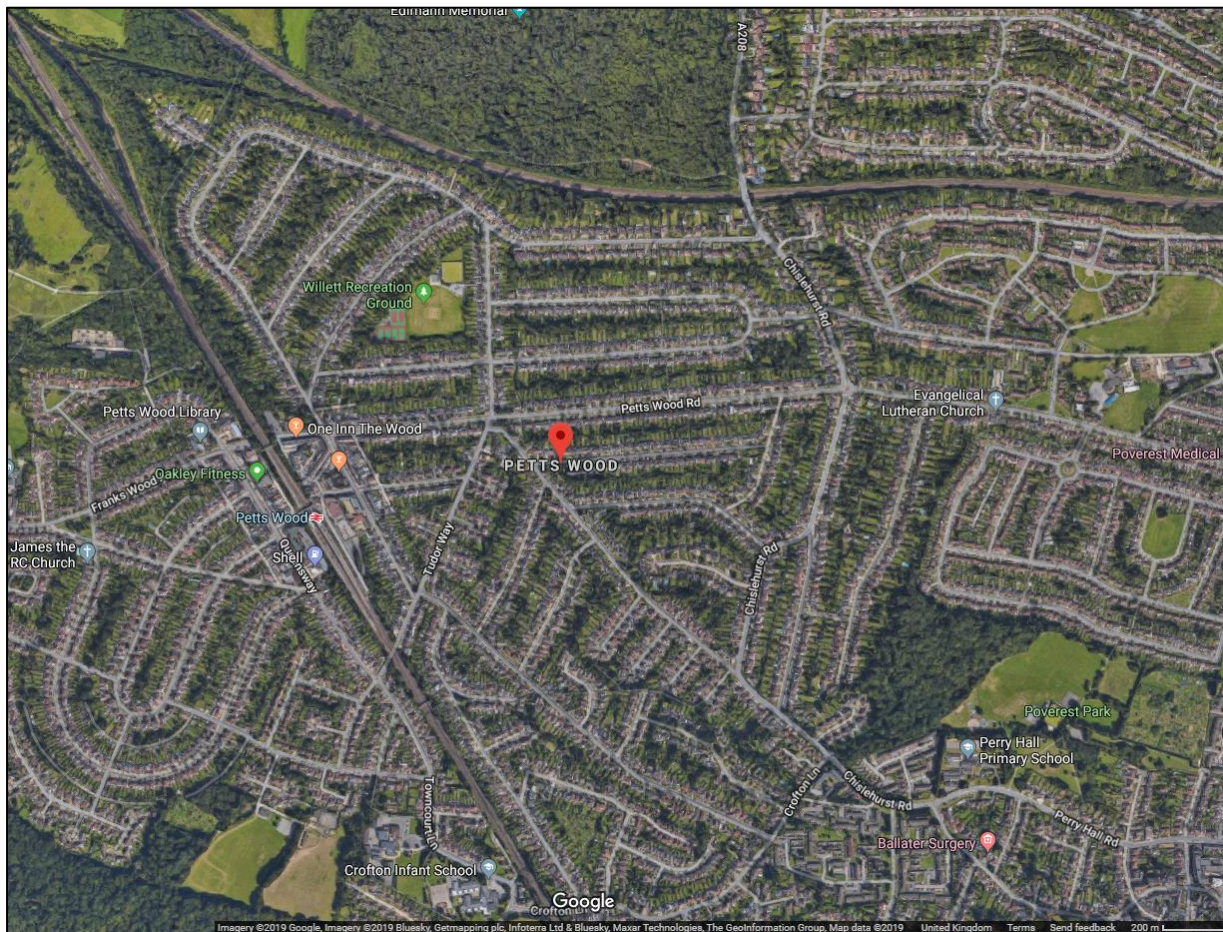


Fig. 3. Aerial view of Petts Wood, (Google maps)

### Location and topography

Petts Wood is a suburb located in south-east London, in the northern part of the London Borough of Bromley (Fig 3). It is approximately eleven miles south east of central London and one mile in either direction from Chislehurst to the north and Orpington to the south. Although originally part of the parish of Chislehurst, Petts Wood became a parish in its own right in 1935.

The topography of the area is gently rolling hills with high points at Great Thrift and along the Chislehurst Road, with the valley of the Kyd Brook in the centre of the suburb. The geology of the area is gravel known as the Blackheath Pebble beds. The north-west area remains the most densely wooded and formed part of the ancient woodland known as Petts Wood before it was divided from the northern section by the railway.

The area is bisected by two railway lines, to the north, the London to Dover via Chatham route and to the west the London to Dover via Tunbridge route. Kyd Brook previously crossed from north to south across the area of the suburb but is now mostly underground and appears only intermittently. The area is bounded to the east by the Chislehurst Road.

The ASRC is directly adjacent to the Chislehurst Road, Station Square and The Chenies conservation area, collectively they cover the 1930s development of Petts Wood East which extends to ca. 112 hectares with ca. 1500 houses.



## Urban layout

The road layout of the suburb works in harmony with the existing topography and where possible developed existing roads. The Chislehurst Road is an ancient road running between Chislehurst and Orpington. Tudor Way and Crossway appears to be built along the lines of what was Green Lane, a lane that ran along the valley of the Kyd Brook, crossing the area from north to south. Petts Wood Road runs from near the station up to the Chislehurst Road and where this cuts across Tudor Way, Willett Way runs to the south east to connect to the Chislehurst Road further south. Fairway runs parallel to the train track and leads into Station Square and onto Woodland Way. These are the key roads from which the heart of the suburb is laid out.

To the east of Crossway and Willett Way the roads run on an east/west axis with the exception of Ladywood Avenue and Grosvenor Road. Between Tudor Way and Willett Way they run on a north/south axis most probably limited by the existing early twentieth century development in this area off St John's Road. St George's Road and Priory Avenue are extensions of early twentieth century roads. The only exception are the four *cul de sacs* of Maple, Acacia, Hawthorn and Ash Close which are perpendicular to Tudor Way. The Covert runs off Crofton Lane and is set slightly apart from the main body of the suburb.

To the north-west is a loop road, Woodland Way which curves around the north-west edge of the suburb turning into Great Thrift and later Hazlemere Road. There are three roads curving across the loop following the curve of the hillside, Silverdale Road, Manor Way and Towncourt Crescent.

The road names are derived from generic woodland themes, such as Woodland Way or The Covert or refer to the names of specific woodlands for instance Little and Great Thrift. Old farms are referenced such as Towncourt Crescent. Other names evoke a historic and monarchical past for instance Tudor Way, Manor Way or Kingsway, Queensway and Princes Avenue. The intention is to make the link with the natural environment of the area as well as the past.

The area is characterised by the width and regularity of its building plots which along with the road layout remains largely intact. The wide plots allow for significant gaps between the buildings which gives the area its distinctive open feel. The generosity of the plots allows the garden suburb character to come to the fore, with picturesque front gardens and views through to gardens and trees behind the houses. Where boundaries are kept low and front gardens are long, this enhances the airy spacious feel of the suburb. This is particularly in evidence in the Chenies, parts of Princes Avenue and St Georges' Road. Elsewhere the plot sizes are not quite so generous but their regularity helps to create a sense of order and control over the varied designs of the houses. Roads such as West Way or the lower parts of Kingsway and Wood Ride fall into this category and have a higher density feel with smaller front gardens and taller boundaries.



Fig. 4. Hazlemere Road, front garden

### Open space, gardens and trees

Petts Wood streetscapes have an open and verdant character, with good sized front gardens and deep rear ones with plenty of trees in evidence all contributing to the garden suburb character of the area (Fig. 4). The roads are all of a generous width. The main road into the centre is Petts Wood Road, a very long and straight road. It is significantly wider than the others with verges to either side planted with trees at intervals, creating an avenue. A number of the other roads in the area also have trees planted on the streets, Princes Avenue, Ladywood Avenue, Towncourt Crescent and the lower stretch of Kingsway for example. These trees were planted for town landscaping and add to the verdant garden character of the area.

Gardens are often used at road junctions to further the sense of verdant space. One particularly large example is on the corner of Towncourt Crescent and Woodland Way, where there are a small group of older trees at the corner, including one odd one on the pavement just outside the garden.

The only green open public areas within Petts Wood are the relatively small Memorial Hall Gardens, with its beautiful old trees, and the triangular Willett Recreation Ground off Crossway. Hidden behind the houses on Crossway, Towncourt Crescent and Kingsway, the Recreation Ground appears to be almost accidental in its conception. It is a large area, with some well-developed trees.

Trees are an important visual and historical element of Petts Wood. Small swathes of trees as well as many individual trees are protected by Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs), reflecting the level of their importance to the area. Bromley's tree preservation map shows concentrations of TPOs in what were historically, wooded areas, such as around Little and Great Thrift going down towards Towncourt Crescent, and in the Birchwood Road and Wood Ride area, and the Willett Close and The Covert area (Fig. 5). There are also notable small concentrations around St Francis of Assisi Church on Greencourt Road and by Memorial Hall at the end of Woodland Way. In The Covert, extant trees have been used within the streetscape itself, informing its layout. These trees are substantial in size and affect the natural light in the street, giving a very different woodland ambiance.



Fig. 5. Little Thrift, looking north-west

### Gaps and views

Views of trees and the woodland beyond, seen through building gaps and over roofscapes, are key in connecting these residential areas to their woodland history and setting (Figs. 5 & 6). The majority of the trees in the area are situated in or behind the long rear gardens which are a feature within this designed landscape. They can be seen through the generous gaps between the houses and they frame the predominantly hipped roofscapes in these areas. This is particularly impressive in the circle at Little Thrift, where the fanned orientation of the houses makes the most of these gaps to expose the woodland beyond. Along Hazelmere and Birchwood Roads, the main body of the remaining Petts Wood woodland rises behind, to the North, creating a particularly impressive halo of trees to the roofscape, with good tangential views to be had from Great Thrift, Silverdale Road, Manor Way and Towncourt Crescent. These visual gaps are generous throughout East Petts Wood and care should be taken to preserve them for the role they play in the designed landscape, both visually and in connecting with the historical trees and woods.

The planned layout of the streets was designed to use the topography of the area, which has some gentle hills. The wide and very straight Petts Wood Road provides a very long and direct view down into the centre. But the streetscapes are better appreciated where the roads curve round, such as at the bottom of Birchwood Road Looking up, or at Great Thrift.





Fig. 6. Birchwood Road, looking north-east from Towncourt Crescent

## HISTORIC INTEREST

### Early History

Evidence of early occupation of the Petts Wood area has been found in the form of flints and bronze axes. The Romans settled in many Kent valleys and there are also several sites of settlements within the wider area of Petts Wood, including a villa in Crofton Road. However, the earliest evidence of human settlement directly within the Petts Wood area is the manor of Town Court dating from the 13<sup>th</sup> century, known later as Town Court Farm.

Petts Wood derives its name from the Pett family who were heavily involved in ship building during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries at Deptford, Woolwich and later Chatham. The Petts held the title of Master Shipwright under Edward VI and Elizabeth I. The only documentary connection of the family is the 1577 will of William Pett which refers to “my landes lyeing within the parish of Chislehurst in the County of Kent and the tenements appurtyning to the same, also the lease of a cobbywood called Hawkeswoode with the 300 oaks growing up the same”. The woodland was acquired in order to provide timber for shipbuilding.

Despite William Petts’ will it is thought that the Petts held the wood on a long lease and the actual owners were the Wootton family, who are recorded as the owners in 1687. The wood passed by descent to the Earls of Chesterfield, when the line died out in the eighteenth century it was sold to Thomas Borret who subsequently sold it in 1790 to Hermen Berens a London merchant of Dutch origin. It remained in the Berens family until the 1920s.

## **Nineteenth Century**

With the exception of the arrival of the two railway lines in the 1860s, very little changed during the nineteenth century. The area remained a rural landscape of woodlands, meadows, lakes and small streams interspersed with old farms, cottages and country houses. The London Chatham to Dover line had cut off the northern section of Petts Wood, however Ordnance Survey maps for 1871 and 1896 show large areas of woodland remained south of the line and are variously named Great Thrift, Little Thrift, Town Court Wood, Cornayes Wood and Birch Wood.

The ancient Town Court Farm and estate, was cut off to the west of the Southern Railway. Green Lane runs from the farm parallel to the stream known as Kyd Brook and was the main artery across the Petts Wood area. Further east another winding lane (now the Chislehurst Road) links Orpington to Chislehurst with a spur road leading eastwards to St Mary Cray. The 1896 map also shows Ladywell, a large Victorian villa approximately on the site of The Chenies that was built in 1872 and was the centrepiece of the Ladywell Estate. Further to the south in the 1896 map is Scads Hill House, built in 1890 on a six acre plot, now an area between the Chislehurst Road and The Covert.

## **Twentieth Century**

The only part of the area developed for housing prior to the development of the 1920s and 1930s, was the area to the north of Crofton Lane. The 1910 Ordnance Survey map shows the planned St John's Road with St George's Road and St Peters Road (now Priory Avenue) (Fig. 7). These side roads were shorter than they are now and ended at the boundary of the Ladywell estate. Many of the houses on these roads were occupied by railway workers who worked out of Orpington station to the south.

The outer reaches of London were coming under increasing pressure for development in the 1920s. in response to this and fearful for the future of the area, a campaign began to save Petts Wood to the north of the railway and acquire it in memory of William Willett, a local resident who had campaigned for daylight saving and who had ridden his horse in Petts Wood every morning. The wood was finally acquired in full in 1928 and is now administered by the National Trust.

The catalyst to the development of the area was the marriage of Adolphus Chudleigh's daughter, to a Cornish farmer, James Langdon. Chudleigh and Langdon bought the Town Court Farm and estate for £7474.00 in 1920 so that the young couple could be close to the widowed accountant. However, the land was poor and the railway bisected the estate, soon Chudleigh began to consider development. He hoped to sell the Town Court estate to Jack Kent, a developer who in 1923 had bought the Ladywell estate and the Cornayes estate from the Berens family. When Kent died unexpectedly in 1925, Chudleigh and Langdon bought the two estates from his widow for £11,475. They now had four hundred acres of land for development and began to look for a developer.

That developer was to be Basil Scruby who had worked on many estates in the Essex area having grown up in Harlow, but none were as ambitious or high status. At Petts Wood, he hoped to build a an upmarket rural retreat for London commuters inspired by the garden suburb movement, in particular the example of Hampstead Garden suburb by Henrietta Barnet. The new community would be only half an hour from the centre of London yet retain the calm and character of the English countryside with architecture to compliment its rural character.

The success of the venture would depend on being able to open a station at Petts Wood to take the commuters into London. In 1928 Scruby agreed with Southern Rail that a station would be built to service the new suburb to which he would make significant contributions of both land and money. The station opened on July 9th 1928 and was long enough for an eight car train, by 1932 the demand had grown and a second platform was built. The line was electric and fast and the trains terminated

in a number of different London termini, Petts Wood would become one of the best served stations on the network.

Scruby worked with the architect Leonard Culliford to develop a masterplan which they produced in 1928 and work began soon after in Petts Wood Road. Scruby bought the estate in sections on which he built the roads, divided up the plots and then sold to builders with covenants controlling and regulating the use and appearance of future buildings. As sales were completed Scruby was able to buy more land and the builders more plots. The chain was often precarious and many builders went bankrupt. There were as many as forty-five different builders involved in the building of Petts Wood East, some built entire roads others just one or two houses. The most notable were Leslie Carter Clout, Cecil Pamphilon and Noel Rees.

Culliford was responsible for the design of the road layout working with the existing landscape. He also designed "model houses" as guidance for the builders who he then went on to supervise to ensure that their buildings met Scruby's demands. Scruby's covenants ensured that building lines, minimum cubic capacities and frontages were laid down. The walls were to be brick, stone or roughcast of an appropriate type, roofs had to be English tiles from natural clay or stone laid to a pitch of not less than 45 degrees.

In the masterplan, Scruby ensured that the infrastructure for drainage, gas, water and electricity was in place to service the area. He also planned a shopping area around the square outside the station. Work began on the north east side of the square in 1928 and the shopping area was completed by 1930. In the centre of the square opposite the station, was the estate office from which prospective clients would be picked up for visits to potential plots.

The marketing for the area emphasised the fast journey into London and the rural setting. "A sylvan town with birds, trees, flowers – a real country home that thanks to the boundary of Petts Wood will always remain country". As far as possible trees were preserved and built around and new trees were planted. The area typified the idea of "rus in urbe" with its country style cottages and back drop of woodlands. The style of most houses is neo-Tudor, evoking elements of country cottages to emphasise the rustic setting. There are dark oak beams on white walls barge boarded gables, leaded lights in windows, elaborate porches and oak front doors with iron hinges and knockers. Internally many houses have wood panelling and inglenook fireplaces.

The revised Ordnance Survey map of 1930 gives a snapshot of the area at that time (Fig. 8). The most complete road is Towncourt Crescent while Manor Way is only marked by a dashed line and no other roads are shown further west. Fairway, Westway, the west section of Petts Wood Road and Kingsway are mostly complete. The north east area of Petts Wood is laid out but only partially built, Birchwood Road is the most complete road which includes Tudor House on the corner with the Chislehurst Road. In contrast the layout of the south east corner has barely begun with only small sections of Willett Way marked up to Princes Avenue with a small section of Ladywell Avenue, no houses have been built. The area around the south end of Tudor Way is entirely undeveloped.

In 1929 discussions began regarding the building of a church for the new community. Scruby donated a plot of land at the bottom of Greencourt Road and initially a temporary wooden structure served the community. The foundation stone of St Francis' church was laid in 1933 and it was consecrated in January 1935. Soon afterwards in July, Petts Wood became a parish in its own right. The church is austere and barn like set in wooded glade and is the only building in Petts Wood mentioned in Pevsner.

Scruby began negotiations with Charringtons Brewery to build a public house in front of the station. When an application for licensing was submitted in 1933, locals opposed it. However, when the brewery promised that it would be built in a Tudor style by their architect, Sidney Charles Clark, to



harmonise with the rest of the suburb the opposition was dropped. The public house and hotel opened in December 1935 and was named the Daylight Inn after William Willett. It had four bars and a ballroom with a stage and became a focus for community events as well as a public house.

By 1933 Scruby's involvement in the area had come to an end, having sold off most of the plots on the east side and the area having been largely completed. Although he had planned to develop the west side of the railway as well, interest charges were mounting up and he was forced to sell the land to the Morrell Brothers building firm who went on to develop this area. Without Scruby's covenants and vision, the area was more densely developed with less architectural detail and consequently was cheaper. There remained a lasting difference socio-economically between the two sides of the railway.

The 1938 revised provisional edition Ordnance Survey map shows the road layout as it is now with north-west and south-east corners completed. It builds on the 1930 map showing the same plots and building but instead of showing similarly detailed development it shows blocks of buildings which makes it clear that by 1938 the suburb was largely complete. Willett Way remained undeveloped as well as the road frontage along Tudor Way although the Closes had been built by this date. A section of Cross Way north of the Petts Wood Road junction is also undeveloped.

By the beginning of the second world war both sides of the railway had been completed (Fig. 9). New building was restricted to bombsites or infillings. In 1939 permission had been granted for the building of Christ Church (United Reformed) church at the junction of Tudor Way and Willett Way, the foundation stone was not laid until after the war in 1953 and it opened the following year. In the 1970s, following an appeal, permission was granted for the redevelopment of the south side of Station Square in an uncompromisingly contemporary style. There was much local opposition to the proposal although it was not until 1995 that the Station Square Conservation Area was created following a local campaign. A new Tudor style office building was built in 1997 at the bottom of the station steps responding to the conservation area status of the square. The lych gate that had previously stood there was moved to the memorial gardens site. In 1998 the old estate office that had stood empty became a restaurant. Two other conservation areas were created in the 1980s, The Chenies was first in 1982 and Chislehurst Road in 1989 in response to the pressures that the area was under and in recognition of the special character of these areas of Petts Wood.

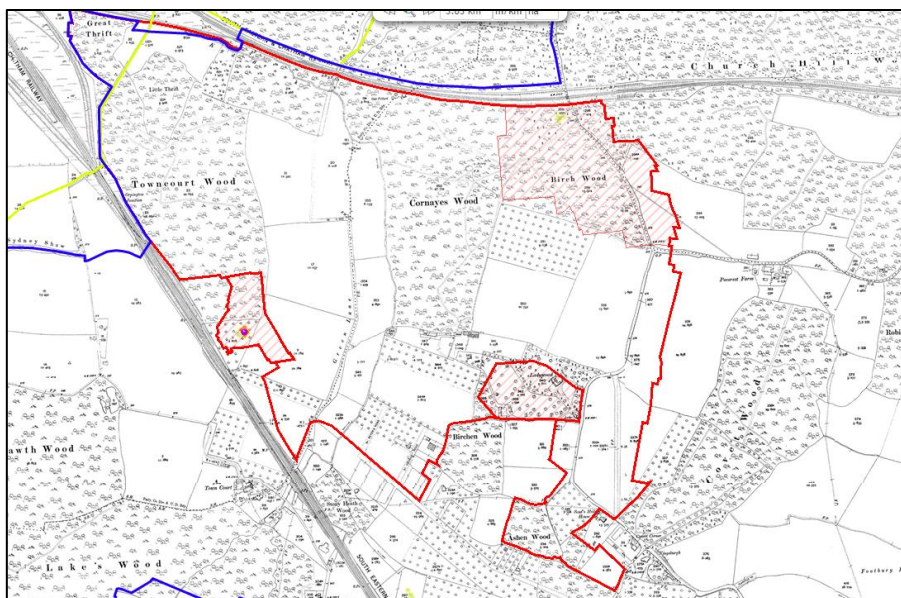


Fig. 7. Ordnance Survey map, 1910

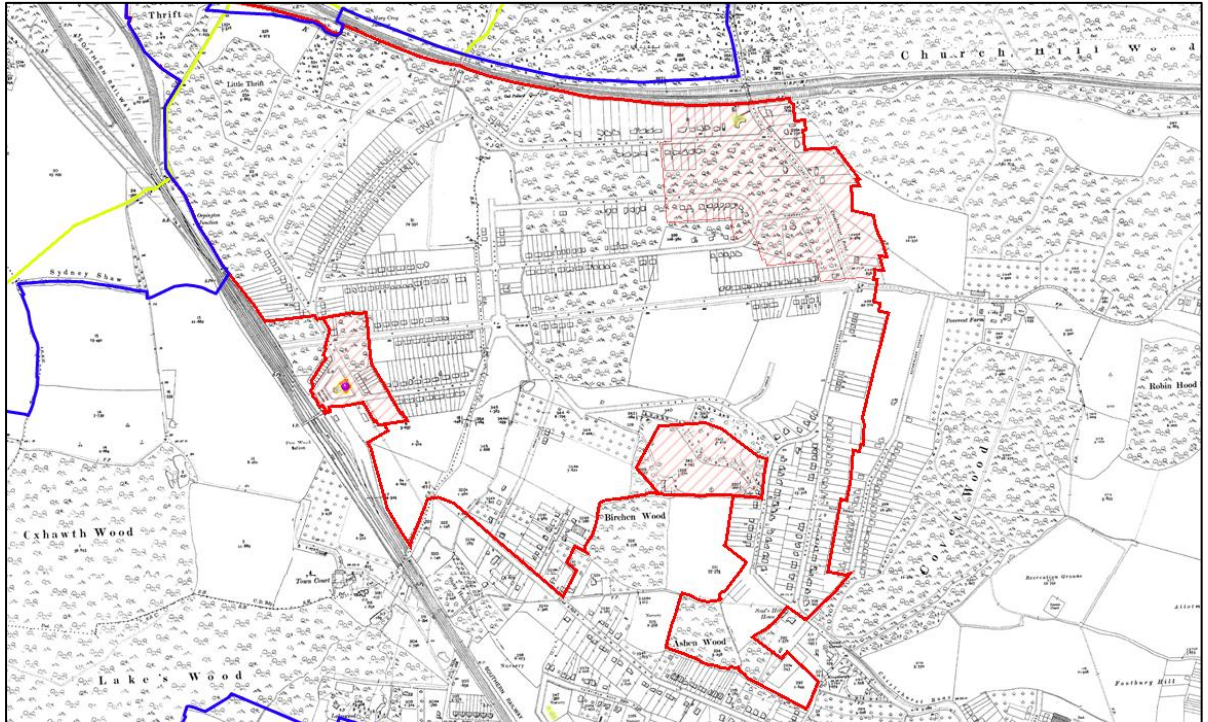


Fig. 8. Ordnance Survey map, 1930

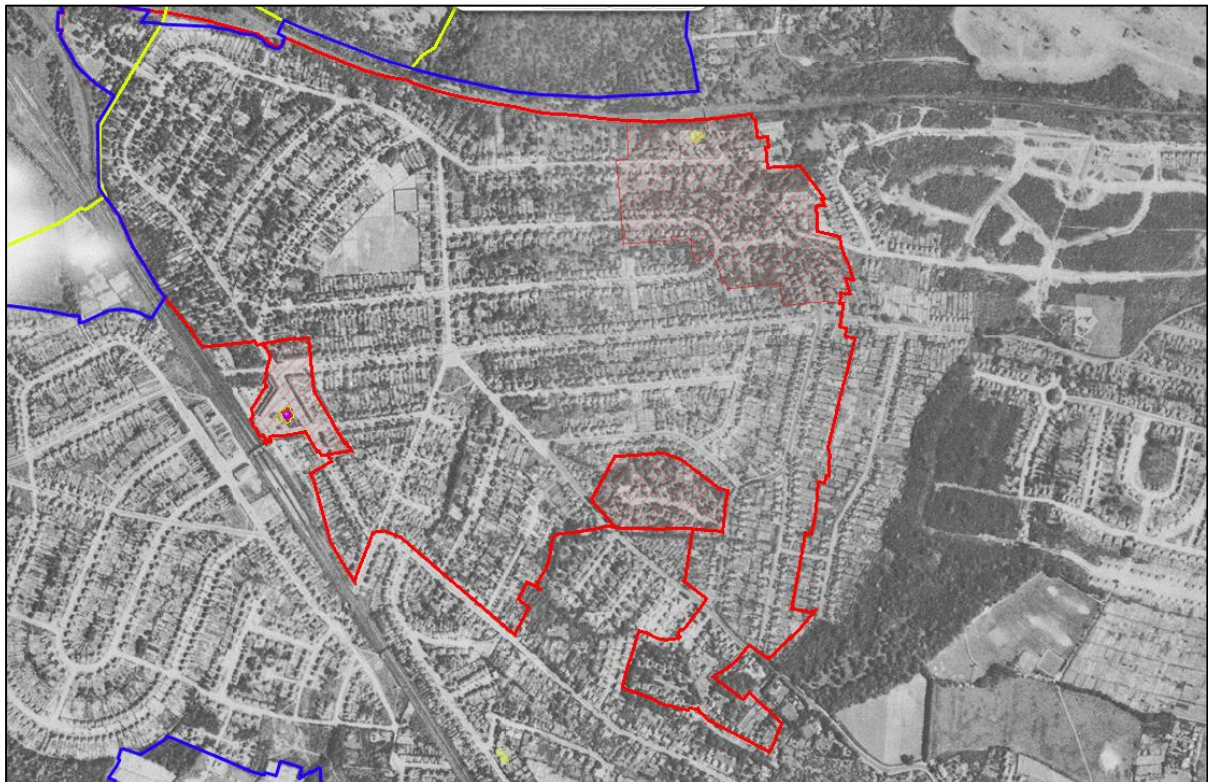


Fig. 9. Aerial view, 1940s



## ARCHITECTURAL INTEREST

### The North-West Area:

#### **Woodland Way, Towncourt Crescent, Manor Way, Silverdale Road, Great Thrift, Little Thrift, Hazledene Road.**

Towncourt Crescent was one of the first roads to be laid out and completed within Petts Wood at the end of the 1920s, the rest of the area to the north-west was laid out in the 1930s and was completed by 1938. The roads closely mirror the curve of the land creating interesting views in all directions. Before development this area was still very much an area of woodland, Petts Wood now forms a back drop to the houses on the outer side Great Thrift, Little Thrift and Silverdale Road which contributes positively to the setting of this area. There are good surviving specimen trees in many of the gardens that are glimpsed between the houses. The plots are spacious with clear gaps between the buildings and the front gardens are well preserved with low boundary walls enhancing the open and spacious open character.

Semi-detached houses predominate throughout the area. Here the prominent pairs of principal gables to the front help to create a visual rhythm along the roads and serve to unify the area as a whole (Fig. 10). The detached houses also have principal gables which echo those of the semi-detached houses. The roofs are almost entirely hipped, instead of gables, the front bays and projections are also sometimes hipped, adding to the variety and interest of these roads. Many houses have porches constructed of heavy timbers under hipped roofs while others have recessed porches behind rendered semi-circular porches possibly influenced by the Arts and Crafts architect, Voysey. The plots are wide enough to have garages to the side and some early garages survive set to the side and rear.

The area is also unified by the limited palette of materials. Large parts of this area are white rendered with contrasting dark timbers' particularly the area at the top of Great Thrift leading round to Hazlemere Road (Fig. 11). Sometimes the timbers are simply decorative and applied to the gables and upper floors, at others they are structural. The timbers are mostly hardwoods such as oak or elm and stained black increasing the contrast with the white render. The black and white houses clearly stand out in their green settings. The roofs are all red clay tiles inspired by the local Kent peg tiles, while some of the bay windows are tile hung. More than in other parts of Petts Wood, many of the houses are constructed in red brick and some have prominent external brick chimney stacks. Unusually for Petts Wood, there is a notable use of stone perhaps in connection with the developer, John Sutcliffe, who was a stone mason from Lancashire and is known to have worked at Great Thrift. This takes the form of low walling, used decoratively as stone nogging or on chimney stacks for dramatic effect.

The predominant architectural style of the Petts Wood area is neo-vernacular and this area is no exception. The styling of the semi-detached houses takes many forms. There are many standard half-timbered semis with hipped roofs and double height gabled bays and wooden porches (Fig. 12). A number of building companies are known to have worked in these roads. Reed and Hoad were closely connected to Scruby and worked out of his offices in the main square. They built the "Baronial Hall" type houses on Manor Way, these had panelled halls and spacious living rooms for the princely sum of £1195.00 (Fig. 13). Around Great Thrift and Hazlemere Road are more interesting variations on this theme, possibly designed by Noel Rees, with smooth render, dramatic half timbering and recessed Voysey porches under cat slides (Fig. 11). Also of interest in this areas are a group at the east end of Silverdale Road of cottage-like semis with curved bay windows juxtaposed with flat gables above and distinctive scalloped leadwork below the windows, the windows themselves are wooden casements with diamond set leaded lights (Fig. 14). Along Manor Way there are examples with variations on the standard hipped roof, several have cat slides to the



side either with no front gable or small half dormers. There is also an unusual gambrelled roof semi with a central hipped projection.

On Towncourt Crescent most of the semi-detached houses follow a similar pattern. However, there is a group of more classically styled semis with small pain bay windows with a curved leaded roof and *oeuil de boeuf* windows in a panel above the main entrance (Fig. 15). There are some unusual canted semis with an Alpine character, at the corners of several roads which have half hipped roofs, white rendered elevations and areas of half-timbering. The windows are wide casements with shutters and heavy timber doors house (Fig. 16).

Detached houses are interspersed. Notable groups of detached houses are found at Little Thrift, at the top of Great Thrift and in clusters around the junctions of Manor Way and Woodland Way and Thorncroft Crescent and Hazlemere Road.

Along Woodland Way the detached houses are predominantly brick or with hipped roofs. The double height bay windows have hipped roofs as well. There are a few examples with timber gables to the front. Numbers 43 and 47 are unusual hybrid houses with hipped roofs but a more clearly modernist rendered elevations with Crittal windows (which were made locally) and striking full height staircase windows to the side of the entrance (Fig. 17).

There is a particularly interesting and idiosyncratic group of detached houses at the top of Great Thrift that are unique within the area. The most interesting are on the south side of the road and are particularly unusual and finely detailed (Fig. 18). Each one is individually designed but collectively they form a group. The style is an idiosyncratic Tudor country cottage style with a particularly organic feel (Fig. 19). Numbers 14 to 24 are perpendicular to the road with timber framing and render with a wavy rustic surface and prominent external brick chimney stacks, some stacks are directly on the front elevation which is highly unusual (Figs. 20 & 21). The windows are black wooden casements with diamond leaded lights. The roofs are gabled or half hipped with red clay tiles (Fig 22). Many have internal garages which project slightly forward of the front elevation. The entrance doors are timber planked in Tudor style with iron door furniture. The effect is self-consciously rustic with a touch of 1930s hacienda style in the render.

Little Thrift is a *cul de sac* to the north-west of Great Thrift surrounded by mature trees (Fig. 23). The prevailing style of the houses here have an architectural style that is more closely inspired by Voysey than the neo-Tudor houses on Great Thrift (Fig. 24). Where they have hipped roofs these overhang with deep eaves supported on brackets over semi-circular double height bay windows. The decorative scalloped leadwork below the diamond leaded windows is also found again. The porches are recessed behind rendered arches.

## **The North-East Area:**

### **Birchwood Road**

This road was one of the first to be laid out and built upon and is without question the grandest road in the area, characterised by the number of large well detailed detached houses, many of which the original developers lived in. Tudor House at the top of the road was finished in 1930 for Leslie Carter-Clout one of the builders in the area. He used Culliford for the neo-Tudor design which won House of the Year. Following threats to demolish it, this end of the road became part of the Chislehurst Road conservation area in 1989. Many of the houses were built by W H (Freddie) Love in a predominantly Tudor style with the odd exception and a few modern replacement houses (fig. 25). The palette is red brick ground floors with timber framed first floors, with a patch work of rendered and herring bone brick nogging. Roofs are mostly pitched with prominent gables to the front. Some have garages to the side with wooden pairs of pointed doors. Most have asymmetric front

elevations but a group have central entrances, number 20 is particularly unusual (Fig. 26). At number 24 there is a blue plaque in memory of the opera singer, Sir Geraint Evans who lived there (Fig. 27). There is little difference between these houses and those that are included further up Birchwood Road within the conservation area in terms of architectural interest.

### **Kingsway and Wood Ride.**

Kingsway and Wood Ride form a loop off Crossway rising up towards the Chislehurst Road. Only Kingsway extends across to the west rising up towards Towncourt Crescent. These roads were laid out in the early stages and most of the houses completed by 1930. The loop at the east end, with houses by Noel Rees is of special interest and lies within the Chislehurst Road Conservation area. Reed and Hoad and John Sutcliffe mentioned previously, also built many of the houses here. The roads cross over the Kyd Brook at the Crossway end.

The section of Kingsway to the west of Crossway has unremarkable semi-detached houses. The pitched roofs of some sweep down over the porch areas adding variety. There is a large detached timber framed house at the top near Towncourt Crescent and an unusual detached house in a more classical style with plain rendered elevations and casement windows behind small Juliette balconies. At the other end is a house that reads as a bungalow although it does have a small first floor dormer on the front elevation. It is unusual within the area as Scruby had banned bungalows from Petts Wood.

The other side of Kingsway commences with semis which are plainer with rendered elevations and brick detailing around the porches and windows. Further up the hill are more detached houses with combinations of neo-Tudor elements such as half-timbering and diamond leaded lights. The houses are quite densely packed in comparison to the top of the hill which is more open.

Along Wood Ride there is a notable use of rough cast as an elevation material on the semi-detached houses. These follow standard forms with double height bay windows to the front, but are notably wider and often the brick ground floor rises up to the base of the first floor window or the area between the two windows is brickwork. The detached houses are asymmetric. The front gardens are generous and set behind low walling.

### **Petts Wood Road**

This is the main road crossing Petts Wood linking the station area to the Chislehurst Road. The road is noticeably wider and more spacious than the other roads, with wide verges and deep gardens in front the houses (Fig. 28). At the west end are shopping parades that link into the main shopping area around the station, the rest of the road is residential.

The shopping parades continue the neo-Tudor architectural style seen around the station area (Fig. 29). They are constructed in brick with timber framed first floors with rendered or brick infill panels. The parade on the north side has a low first floor and exposed rafters at eaves level, this creates a cottage-like character. The shop fronts are particularly well preserved on this side with recessed entrance doors and leaded lights at fascia level. The shops step down the slope in pairs creating an arresting rhythm. Some still have chimney stacks on their front roof slopes.

The first section up to Crossway is entirely semi-detached houses with hipped tiled roofs. Many have "M" shaped paired principle gables to the front where the eaves swoop down over the entrance porch. There is a distinctive use of materials, with waney edged timber cladding on the gables and bay windows and timber braces within porches, this use of "raw" timber straight from the tree, contributes both to the rustic theme as well as the historic theme (Fig. 30). There are some striking chimney stacks across the ridge of some of the houses on the north side which are brick at the top

and rendered below and have a strong modernist feel in contrast to the previously described rustic architectural character.

Beyond Crossway, “M” shaped semis dominate the south side of the road (Fig. 28). A variety of materials are used and the front elevations divided in different ways. The tips of the gables are often in different materials to the rest of the house, using hung tiles, weatherboard, render and decorative tiles. The main elevations area mostly rendered but pebble dash and brick are also used. The porches are recessed with a round window above. The north side of the road has more detached houses particularly as the land rises up. These are relatively modest on narrow plots with block like forms, often with hipped roofs.

### **The South-East Area:**

#### **Greencourt Road, Princes Avenue and Ladywood Avenue**

These roads were laid out slightly later than the 1928 roads. The 1930 Ordnance Survey map shows Princes Avenue marked by a dotted line and only a small section of Ladywood Avenue, Greencourt Road does not appear at all. Collectively they are unified by their neo-Tudor architectural style and their restricted black and white palette of render and timber contrasting with their green settings.

Greencourt Road commences with the church of St Francis, this is a barn like brick church designed by Geoffrey Mullins and consecrated in 1935. It is set in an attractive glade of trees. Despite its size, the dull coloured bricks and woodland setting means that it is recessive in terms of the street scene. The houses contrast strongly in terms of their palette with the church. Initially the palette is white, black and red brick although this gives way to a more limited palette of black and white further up the road. The neo-Tudor semis have white elevations with black timber window frames with diamond leaded lattice windows and dark stained timber doors (Fig. 31). The scale is relatively modest with small flat roofed garages to the side, deep recessed arched porches, generous front gardens. At the top is a canted semi-detached house with an Alpine character, similar to those on the corner of Hazlemere Road and Great Thrift.

Ladywood Avenue is a mixture of detached and semi-detached neo-Tudor houses with dominant heavy timbers (Fig. 32). The render is very rough and distinctively wavy, with deep eaves and prominent rafter ends and lattice windows which all contribute to the rustic character. At the southern end are several brick detached houses. The Quaker meeting house is on the corner with Greencourt Road in a detached house. The original intention was low boundary walls and an open aspect however now several of the houses have fences and hedges between the plots. Reed and Hoad are known to have built on this road.

Princes Avenue is a wide road which is only emphasised by the low or non-existent boundaries in front of the houses at the northern end and the character is particularly open and spacious here with generous lawned front gardens. The houses are by Noel Rees, the best known builder in Petts Wood who is synonymous with neo-Tudor houses in the area. He was a successful builder already in the more upmarket suburbs of London such as Chorleywood but he retained a particular fondness for Petts Wood. Appalled by the banality of much interwar housing he sought to create houses of “novelty and charm”. They have a quirky and distinctive character and houses were still being marketed as Noel Rees houses fifty years after they were built.

Princes Avenue is particularly notable for the Noel Rees group of austere semi-detached houses with “M” shaped gables projecting forwards of the low catslide roofs to the sides (Fig. 33). These are all the same and the curve of the road lends visual variety and interest as the pairs of gables are juxtaposed. The timber-framed semis also by Rees are wider than average and have cat slides to the



front (Fig. 34). The two types are found together elsewhere in Petts Wood, notably on St George's Road and The Covert.

Noel Rees wrote about his houses on Wood Ride in a manner that could be applied equally to Princes Avenue, the houses are of a "distinctive design, pleasant half-timbering, overhanging bays, sweeping gables, timbered porches, all set away from the road, bright and sunny in white dress. No fences, but little low crazy stone walls".

### **Chislehurst Road and Grosvenor Road**

The Chislehurst Road is the historic road between Chislehurst and Orpington, hence its meandering character towards the southern end. The top section is within the Chislehurst Road Conservation Area. Grosvenor Road is a spur road that cuts across the curve in Chislehurst Road. The 1930 Ordnance Survey map shows that Grosvenor Road and the section of Chislehurst Road parallel to it were laid out and largely built by this date. The west side of Chislehurst Road was laid out in the 1930s.

Grosvenor Road is an unremarkable road of semis and detached houses. They are notably wide plots for the semi-detached houses, consequently many have been altered to the side. The houses are mainly painted render under tiled roofs, there are only two examples with half-timbering on the front elevation. At the junction with Elysian Avenue are a pair of unusual L shaped vernacular style houses with two storey entrances with classical style parapets.

The parallel section of Chislehurst Road is equally unremarkable. However, the section to the north, up to the roundabout, holds far more architectural interest. The houses are detached and set in large plots set well back from the road. Those on the east side are earlier and have a strong neo-Tudor character, with prominent gables to the front and porches. They are mostly rendered and painted white but the section towards Grosvenor Road has several examples with brick elevations and herringbone brick nogging between the timbers.

The west side is more dynamic and unusual with an open character. The architectural style is neo-vernacular with Voysey influences. They were built by Cecil Pamphilon whose houses are often distinguished by a wooden diamond or vertical slit in the gable (Fig. 35). He was a local builder who did much of the work himself. The houses fetched as much as £1450 so were at the upper end of the market and with the proceeds Pamphilon was able to build himself a house on Birchwood Road.

The houses are varied in their front elevations but collectively are united in the limited palette of tiled roofs, white rendered elevations, dark windows and doors. The sharp angles of the gables, sweeping roofs down to low eaves and dormers, all collectively form an eye catching group particularly when viewed from Grosvenor Road (Fig. 36).

### **The Covert**

This road connects Crofton Road and The Close, both of which are outside the ASRC. It is built on the site of Scads Hill House and Ashen Wood and first appears in the 1938 Ordnance Survey map. It is distinguished by its green and verdant setting with deep front gardens, grass verges and particularly as the road climbs to its highest point, woodland character due to the mature trees in front of the houses which are presumably survivors from Ashen Wood.

The lower end of the road is mainly detached houses on the north side. The first house is individually designed on a wide plot, it has a rendered ground floor with low eaves and a tile hung gable (Fig. 37). The other detached houses on this side are in a more conventional Noel Rees style neo-Tudor (Fig. 38). The south side of the lower part of the road is later twentieth century and of less interest.

The top of the road where it flattens out is composed of semi-detached houses that are the two types found in Princes Avenue (cover illustration). Both types have prominent front gables, although one is half-timbered the other is austere and unadorned.

### **Willett Way**

The northern section of Willett Way was mapped out by 1930, however, the houses post-date the 1938 Ordnance Survey map. The southern section had been laid out and built on by 1938 with a group of distinctive chalet style houses, these are not currently included in the ASRC.

There are a three pairs of neo-Tudor and plain semi-detached houses similar to those found on The Covert and Princes Avenue, the rest are detached neo-Tudor houses in a Noel Rees style (Fig. 39). Houses on the west side have square recessed porches. The houses on the east side lack the heavy timbers and have a more refined air with diamond leaded casement windows (Fig. 40). This section of road is united by the limited black and white palette found elsewhere in the ASRC.

At the junction of Willett Way and Tudor Way is Christ Church (United Reformed) Church (Fig. 41). Although consent to build was received in 1939, the church was not actually built until after the war in the 1950s. It follows the example of St Francis in being barn like and entirely built of brick. However, it has greater presence within the street scape due its prominent position at the junction of several roads and its more open aspect.

### **St George's Road and Priory Avenue**

The southern half of these roads pre-date the development of the Petts Wood garden suburb and appear on the 1914 Ordnance Survey map as spurs off St Johns Road, although at this point there are few houses and Priory Avenue was known as St Peters Road. Priory Avenue had been laid out by 1930 but the extended part of St George's Road only appears on the 1938 map and is therefore later.

The southern end of St George's Road is very varied with bungalows and detached houses of varying dates and has a very mixed character in contrast to the rest of the ASRC. Of note is the surviving Edwardian house on the north side which has now been extended to the side. The northern end is classic Noel Rees Petts Wood style with the two types of semi-detached houses with prominent gables, one plain and austere, the other half-timbered (Fig. 42). The long lawned front gardens and lack of boundaries between the houses creates an open and attractive setting.

Priory Avenue follows the same pattern with a very mixed architectural character at the southern end blending into a more "Petts Wood" style at the northern end. There are a number of both detached and semi-detached houses which use the distinctive wavy render. These semis have timber framing only in the upper section of the first floor elevation down to the cill height of the window. They have hipped roofs including to front projections and the ends of the roof rafters are visible below the eaves. These are probably Reed and Hoad houses which are also found on Tudor Way and their detailing contributes to a rustic vernacular character.

### **Tudor Way and Hawthorn, Acacia, Maple and Ash Close**

Tudor Way is part of the ancient Green Lane, the closes however were laid out in the 1930s. The architecture of the semi-detached houses in this area is distinctively different and modernist in style in contrast to the rest of Petts Wood's vernacular/neo-Tudor style (Fig. 43). Due to the number of closes, there are not that many houses that actually front onto Tudor Way, with the exception of the

section near the railway (of which only the west side is in the ASRC). Here there are Reed and Hoad, Type A houses, similar to those in Priory Avenue that retailed for £795.

The modernist houses were built by Davis Estates one of the most prolific builders in the wider area. The design draws on the characteristics of the modernist style that was introduced to Britain in the 1920s, with its smooth rendered walls, clean lines, flat roofs and metal windows (Fig. 44). Although there are some examples of semis with flat roofs in the wider area, the style was soon adapted to have hipped roofs to reassure the mortgage companies. The houses were smaller and cheaper than other houses in Petts Wood. Although smooth render is liberally used on the front elevations, the houses are constructed of brick (Fig. 45). The windows were originally Crittall with curved ends towards the entrances, the factory was located nearby but many have now been replaced.

### **Fairway**

This is characterised by its Reed and Hoad Type A houses also found on Tudor Way and Priory Avenue (Fig. 46). What is particularly striking is the thick wavy render which is self-consciously rustic in character (Fig. 47). These were £795 which was at the lower end of the prices in Petts Wood but still above average for the developing London suburbs. There is another type of semi with gables rather than hips to the front projections which is in all other respects the same type of house.

### **West Way.**

This is one of the really early roads, it was laid out and built by 1930 and has a quiet and leafy character despite its position between Fairway and Tudor Way. The road has verges with some small street trees and the gardens are well stocked.

The overriding architectural character is neo-Tudor with small paned casement windows, the houses are small and the effect is charming and village-like in scale (Fig. 48). The builder is not known. The first house on the north side is inspired by Kentish Wealden houses while the house, next door has leaded lights and a charming oriel window on the first floor (Fig. 49).



Fig. 10. Woodland Way looking north-west



Fig. 11. Hazlemere Road looking south-east, note the recessed porch



Fig. 12. Woodland Way



Fig. 13. Manor Way, "Baronial Hall" house





Fig. 14. Silverdale Road



Fig. 15. Towncourt Crescent



Fig. 16. Towncourt Crescent and Hazlemere Road, canted semi on corner plot



Fig. 17. Woodland Way, modernist houses with hipped roofs



Fig. 18. Great Thrift, south side



Fig. 19. Great Thrift, north side





Fig. 20. Great Thrift, south side



Fig. 21. Great Thrift, south side



Fig. 22. Great Thrift, south side



Fig 23. Little Thrift



Fig. 24. Little Thrift



Fig. 25. Birchwood Road





Fig. 26. 20 Birchwood Road



Fig. 27. 24 Birchwood Road



Fig. 28. Petts Wood Road, looking east



Fig. 29. Petts Wood Road, north side, shopping parade



Fig. 30. Petts Wood Road, north side, waney edged weatherboard gables



Fig. 31. Greencourt Road





Fig. 32. Ladywood Avenue



Fig. 33. Princes Avenue, looking east



Fig. 34. Princes Avenue, looking west



Fig. 35. Chislehurst Road



Fig. 36. Chislehurst Road, looking north



Fig. 37. The Covert





Fig. 38. The Covert



Fig. 39. Willett Way, looking south east



Fig. 40. Willett Way



Fig. 41. Christ Church, Tudor Way



Fig. 42. St George's Road



Fig. 43. Acacia Close





Fig. 44. Tudor Way



Fig. 45. Hawthorne Close



Fig. 46. Fairway



Fig. 47. Fairway



Fig. 48. West Way



Fig. 49. West Way



## CONCLUSION

Petts Wood is an historically and architecturally interesting 1930s garden suburb on the outer edges of London. It is significant as a planned garden suburb with a strong overriding vision laid out by its developer Basil Scruby, both in terms of the layout and amenities as well as its architectural character. The architectural character is strongly influenced by the garden suburb movement in particular Hampstead Garden Suburb in North London which emphasises the rural ambience of the area. This is further enhanced by the vernacular architectural styles in particular neo-Tudor, often inspired by country cottages. The controls that Scruby placed on plot sizes, building lines, roof heights and materials ensures that despite the number of builders who worked in the area and the varied design and detailing of the houses there is a sense of unity and cohesiveness to the whole. It is deserving both of its ASRC status as well as the three conservation areas that form a part of it.

The area is under developmental pressure as so many areas close to London inevitably are. Despite this it is remarkable how unspoilt the area is in comparison to other London suburbs and how much of its garden suburb character remains. There are already two Article 4 directions for the ASRC, the first requiring planning permission for alterations to gates, fence walls or other means of enclosure and the second requiring planning permission for any alteration to any front roof slope. The Article 4 directions combined with protection within Bromley's Local Plan for the ASRC suggests that the current policies have been working well up until now. Other particular issues that might arise in the future might also be effectively controlled through Article 4 directions which the London Borough of Bromley has demonstrated its willingness to use these effectively.

The question is whether Petts Wood is of sufficient "special" interest to have the entire ASRC upgraded to conservation area status. The three conservation areas share the same historic background as the ASRC and so it cannot be argued that the ASRC holds insufficient "special" historic interest, the focus must therefore lie in its architectural interest, is this "special" enough? The area varies in its architectural interest, there are certainly groups of houses and roads that hold more interest than others. The NPPF makes it clear the LPAs must ensure that the areas that they designate as a conservation area hold sufficient interest so that the concept of conservation is not devalued (NPPF 164). It is clear that the London Borough of Bromley has adhered to this by limiting the size of its conservation areas to ensure that the quality of its conservation areas within the borough remains high and undiluted.

It is therefore the conclusion and proposal of this report that the ASRC should not be upgraded to conservation area status in its entirety, due to the size of the area, the tradition of small high quality conservation areas within Bromley, the moderate interest and repetitive nature of some of the roads, the effectiveness of existing local policy and Article 4 directions to date and a willingness by the London Borough of Bromley to use Article 4 directions effectively. Instead areas that meet the "special" architectural criteria should be upgraded. Some of this is adjacent to existing conservation areas and so could be viewed as an extension rather than as a new conservation area.

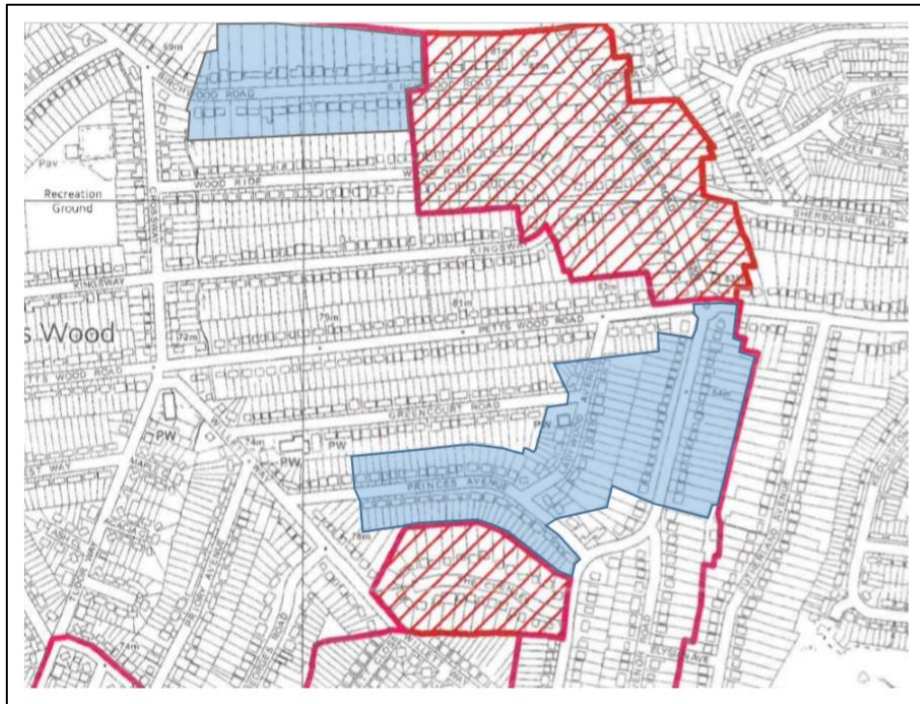
**PROPOSAL**

Fig. 50. Proposal for a conservation area extension in blue.

Roads that it is proposed to upgrade to conservation area status by extending the existing conservation area(s) (Fig. 50):

#### Birchwood Road

Detached houses are potentially more vulnerable to demolition than semi-detached houses as these require developers to only acquire the one property. At the moment under the ASRC there are no controls on demolition that are different to any other areas outside conservation areas. The architectural interest of the south side of the road doesn't appear to be any different to the south side within the conservation area, having the same neo-Tudor style brick and timber detached houses. The north side is more mixed but there are several interesting houses, number 20 is particularly eye catching and number 24 has a blue plaque commemorating the opera singer who owned it, Sir Geraint Evans. Due to the architectural interest this should be upgraded to conservation area status.

#### Ladywood Avenue

There is a limited palette and good group of Reed and Hoad houses as well as the Quaker Reading Room on this road. The green verges and trees contribute positively to the setting of these houses. Many are detached and as stated are particularly vulnerable to potential demolition outside a conservation area. This road should be upgraded.

#### Princes Avenue

This is a really good road full of Noel Rees houses. They may not be as grand as the Chenies but this does not limit their architectural interest as neo-Tudor houses that contribute to the semi-rural garden suburb character. The green setting and spacious open character is all of interest and worth upgrading to conservation area status.

### Chislehurst Road

The Pamphilon houses on this section are no less interesting than the Pamphilon houses that are within the Chislehurst Road Conservation Area to the north, they lack the woodland setting but that is all. The loss of any one of these houses to demolition and redevelopment would impact negatively on this stretch of road which is currently unified by its limited palette, regular plot sizes and angular designs. The houses on the other side of the road are of less interest but should also be upgraded to conservation area status to preserve the integrity of the road as a whole.

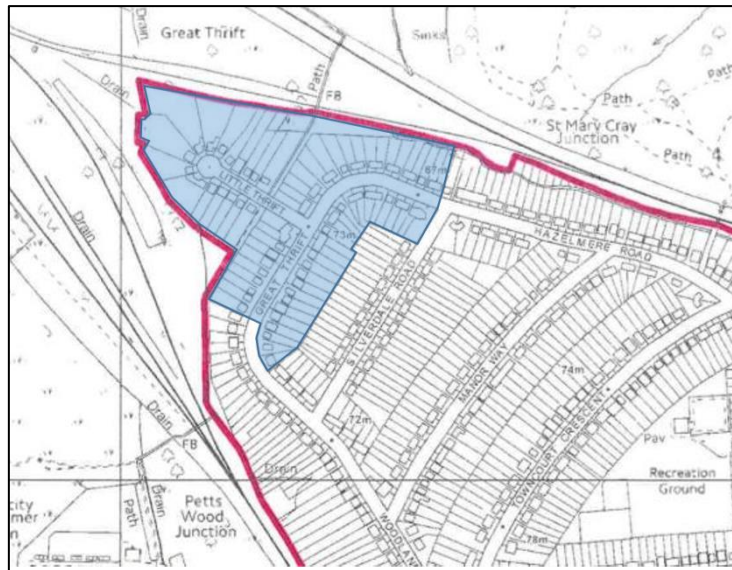


Fig. 51. Proposal for a new conservation area, “The Thrifts”.

### Great Thrift and Little Thrift

The houses on the south side of Great Thrift at the top of the hill are really unusual and interesting. This area of Great Thrift down to Hazelmere Road is deserving of conservation area designation due to its “special” architectural quality (Fig. 51). This includes the quality and detail of the houses, the attractive road layout on a hillside and the impressive setting against a back drop of ancient woodland. These three aspects work together to create something “special” and worthy of conservation area status.

Little Thrift is of slightly less architectural interest despite its interesting layout and the woodland setting, however again due to the number of detached houses it would be wise to include it in a Thrift conservation area.

If this is not supported then the group of houses at the top of Great Thrift with the unusual neo-Tudor designs should be locally listed to highlight their interest. While they remain outside a conservation area the potential for demolition is real which would be a great loss to Petts Wood.

### Other Buildings suggested for the local list

St Francis Church, Greencourt Road

Christ Church, Tudor Way



**Recommendation**

1. Extend the Chislehurst Road Conservation area to include Birchwood Road to the west and Chislehurst Road, Ladywood Avenue and Princes Avenue to the south as defined on the map (Fig. 50).
2. Create a new Conservation Area of The Thrifts as defined on the map (Fig. 51). If the proposal for a new conservation area does not find support then as a minimum the neo-Tudor houses at the top of Great Thrift should be locally listed.
3. An Article 4 direction requiring planning permission for demolition could also be applied to the entire ASRC to help preserve it for future generations.
4. Locally list the two churches.

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