

PROPOSED CONSERVATION AREA NO.24 WEST NORWOOD CEMETERY (Leigham Ward)

Community Plan Ref: 1.5.1.1., page 66 - Conservation areas.

The *following* report is submitted by the Chief Executive and Board of Directors:-

1. A study has been made of Vest Norwood Cemetery and its environs with a view to its designation as a Conservation Area. The proposed boundary is shown on plan ref. Ho. UD/CON/194, and includes St. Luke's Church and former Hall, the cemetery itself, the former Vest Norwood Library, the new West Norwood Library with Nettlefold Hall and houses in Park Hall Road and Pilgrim Hill.

2. A Conservation Area is an area of special architectural or historical interest, which it is desirable to preserve or enhance. Vest Norwood Cemetery, originally known as the South Metropolitan Cemetery, was the second of eight London cemeteries established by Act of Parliament between 1852 and 1847 to relieve the over-crowding in city churchyards. Thirty-nine acres of hillside in Norwood, now itself over-crowded with graves and monuments were consecrated in 1877 and landscaped to the design of Sir William Tite, MP., who also designed the Royal Exchange. The cemetery's special interest lies both in the landscape design and the excellent examples of Victorian monuments of both architectural and historic interest contained therein. For example, the Greek Orthodox Mortuary Chapel is listed as a building of special architectural and historical interest, while the fine railings and walls, together with the gates and gothic stone archway at the entrance are both substantially original and intact.

3. The cemetery was acquired by the Council in 1966. At present some 400 to 300 cremations are conducted there every year, together with a few burials in existing family vaults. On 15th February, 1971 the Planning and Development Committee agreed to a scheme for the landscaping of the cemetery for use as public open space and, in principle, to the use of historic building grants for the restoration of several of the monuments. On 20th September 1971 the Committee received a progress report on the conservation and landscape improvement proposals, including a published illustrative brochure. The proposals include the retention of the original design which will be enhanced by laying lawns between the clumps of trees which are to be gradually renewed as necessary. Work has already started on clearing those gravestones not of special interest.

4. The corner of Knights Hill and Norwood High Street is occupied by St. Luke's Church, built between 1822 and 1825 and designed by Francis Bedford, architect of several such neo-classical buildings. It is listed as a building of special architectural or historic interest and forms an important townscape feature, dominating several views in the area. Its spire and hexastyle portico are seen to good effect across the cemetery.

5. Behind the church facing Norwood High Street is St. Luke's Church Hall, previously West Norwood Fire Station, which was built in 1681, and built by the church in 1917. It was much altered in 1927 and is now owned by the Council and used as a theatre by the South London Theatre Centre Ltd.

6. Opposite St. Luke's Church is the former West Norwood Library, Knights Hill, "built in 1887 to the design of Sidney R. J. Smith, architect of the Tate Gallery and Tate Libraries. Although part of the continuous frontage of Knights Hill, the rest of which has not been

included in the proposed Conservation Area, the architectural interest of the old library and its relevance to local history has merited its selection for the proposed Conservation Area.; The library is owned by the Council and occupied by the Directorate of Amenity Services but it is intended in due course to become a Social Services Area Office.

7. To the South-west of the cemetery. Pilgrim Hill features three houses of special interest - a large stuccoed semi-detached pair built about 1640, one of which forms part of the stonemason's works, many of whose products can be seen in the cemetery, and a detached stock brick cottage of about 1650.

8. At the opposite (North-eastern) corner of the cemetery. No.2 Park Hall Road is a large stucco villa, built as the first of a semi-detached pair in the late 1650s. The house forming the other half of the pair has since been demolished and what remains is used as office accommodation by an adjacent works.

9. At a previous meeting, the Planning and Development Committee requested that details of tenure be provided for any area proposed as a Conservation Area. Such information is not applicable to this area as, with the exception of those properties described above, all the properties are tombs.

10. Lambeth ownership comprises:-

- (i) West Norwood Cemetery
- (ii) Vest Norwood Library and Nettlefold Hall
- (iii) The former West Norwood Library (14 and 16 Knights Hill, now Directorate of Amenity Services)
- (iv) St. Luke's Hall (loaned to South London Theatre Centre Ltd.)
Lambeth Council is responsible for the maintenance of St. Luke's Churchyard.
Gardens.

The properties not owned by the Council are: -

- (i) 2, Park Hall Road
- (ii) 1, 2 and 3 Pilgrim Hill
- (iii) St. Luke's Church

11. It is not proposed that any change of use be made to the properties described in paragraphs 6 and 7 nor to the new Vest Norwood Library and Nettlefold Hall. The proposals for the future of the cemetery were approved by the Planning and Development Committee in February and September 1971 and are set out in the brochure produced at that time, copies of which will be made available for members to study.

12. The designation of a Conservation Area does not of itself increase the Council's powers to make grants but it does enable applications to be made to the Civic Trust. The Trust has been empowered by the Secretary of State to act as agent for the Department of the Environment for grants of up to 50% towards the cost of any scheme of enhancement in non-outstanding Conservation Areas. This grant scheme was started in European Architectural Heritage Year (1975) and has been recently extended into 1976.

13. No additional costs for maintenance are likely to be incurred over and above those for which the Council has made provision since buying the cemetery in 1966. However, consideration could be given to seeking a DoE grant in respect of the proposals approved in February 1971 for listed monuments. Such an approach would be more likely to succeed if the area was designated a Conservation Area. The Director of Development Services considers that the Historic Buildings Council would be likely to designate this particular Conservation Area as outstanding if requested to do so.

14. Under Section 277 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1971 > the Council must consult the Greater London Council before a Conservation Area can be designated.

Planning and Development Committee

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- (1) That the Greater London Council be consulted on the proposal to designate the area shown on plan ref. No. TJD/CON/194 as Conservation Area No.24;
- (2) That the Director of Administration and Legal Services be authorised to carry out the necessary action to give effect to the above.

For decision

Public Services Committee

For information