

COMMITTEE REPORT FOR: TOWN PLANNING COMMITTEE , JUNE CYCLE D.D

DIRECTORATE CONSULTED: AMENITY SERVICES, PUBLIC SERVICES CATEGORY

TITLE: PROPOSED CONSERVATION AREA NO.25 (MINET ESTATE)

COMMUNITY PLAN REF: VOL 1 1.5.1.1

WARD: VASSAL

This report is submitted by the Director of Development Services

1.00 SUMMARY

The following report presents the case for the designation of the Minet Estate in Myatts Fields as a Conservation Area. The report sets out the architectural/ environmental and historical characteristics which, in the opinion of the Director, constitute sufficient reason for the designation.

2.00 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.01 That the Committee give their approval in principle to the designation of the above area as shown on the displayed plan No. UD/CON/S09, subject to formal consultations with the Greater London Council, in accordance with section 277 of the Town and Country Planning Acts 1971-1974.
- 2.02 That the Director of Administrative and Legal Services be authorised to carry out the necessary action to effect the above.

3.0 BACKGROUND

- 3.0 In January 1979 the Minet Conservation Association produced a report proposing the designation of a Conservation Area in Myatts Fields which includes the area south-west of Camberwell New Road and around the Myatts Fields Park.

This report was submitted to the Director of Development and a copy was sent for consultation to Sir John Betjeman an advisory member of the Historic Buildings Committee of the Greater London Council.

- 3.02 The GLC, in their letter of the 18th January 1979, asked for this Directorate's views and expressed the informal opinion that Myatts Fields is certainly an interesting area. A number of buildings in the locality are included in the draft for the revised list of Lambeth as of special architectural or historic interest (grade II) or as items of local importance.
- 3.03 Regarding the definition of a possible Conservation Area, the Minet Conservation Association have put forward the boundaries proposed by the Director in this report. The GLC have informally suggested that it, would be appropriate for the area to include the open space itself and the properties immediately fronting it; in the GLC's words, "this would be a reasonable basis for a designation".
- 3.04 The Director's proposals regarding the definition of the area are shown on plan UD/CON/209 , and have been drawn to include not only the open space and the properties directly facing it, but also the remaining of the original estate. In this way, not only the central core of this historic development will be protected but also the equally important street pattern, public buildings, the majority of individual houses of the original estate, the specially designed groups of houses and the overall environmental character.

4.00 HISTORIC AND ARCHITECTURAL IMPORTANCE (REASONS FOR DESIGNATION)

- 4.01 Historical Reasons. The largest part of the development of the Minet Estate took place between 1870 and 1890. It was built by members of the Minet family who owned the land and who did the management of the Estate through several generations (1868-1968).

The Minet Estate is a successful example of a number of private housing estates which were built in the second half of the nineteenth century and following the expansion of the railway services in South London to attract large numbers of people with modest incomes to live south of the river and work in Central London. This particular estate is historically connected with the Metropolitan extension of the London, Chatham and Dover Railway Company which was opened in 1863. The Estate is a very good example of "self sufficient" suburban developments of that period. Apart from a wide variety of house-types, it also provided schools, a community hall, a library which has been rebuilt after destruction during world war 2, a park with sports facilities, a number of churches three of which still survive, shops and other amenities.

One of the historically interesting aspects of the Minet Estate is the strict management and control applied by the Minet family, not only over development as such during the development period, but also later over maintenance, leasing, general environment and the minimum price at which the properties (leases) should be sold. In spite of such strict control and rules, people's life in the Estate is said to have always been marked by an excellent and extremely democratic community spirit.

4.02 ARCHITECTURAL/ENVIRONMENTAL REASONS

The overall character of the Minet Estate is that of a late: Victorian speculative domestic development. Its unique characteristics lie in the small architectural and environmental scale, its well designed mature landscape, the careful design of the groups of houses, and public buildings, and the variety in the type and size of the houses, and in the architectural detail, which reinforces the visual entity.

There is a strong consistency in the visual appearance of the buildings which are mostly constructed in strong red brickwork with simple stonework decoration or contrasting brickwork and capped with heavy pitched roofs, generally in Welsh slates with ornamental ridge tiles. The corner buildings have small tiled turrets with decorative ridge pieces, which provide visual landmarks without being ornamental. None of the buildings are over-rich in ornamentation, but there is a variety of stone-window-mullions and porch-stonework. Some buildings have decorative brickwork with patterns, reliefs and inset panels. There are stained glass fanlights over entrance doorways and still many well preserved patterned ceramic tiled pathways in front gardens. Inside, many of the houses have ornate cast-iron staircases, moulded ceilings, tiled fireplaces and stone skirtings.

The public buildings spread amongst the housing on the Estate. They were built by the same developers and at the same time as the houses and they give a sense of cohesion to the whole neighbourhood. The Church of St, James' makes an impressive landmark. Other important public buildings are the Kenning-ton Secondary School with its minaret-type turrets, St. Gabriel's College with its small Chapel, the Minet Library and the Longfield Hall and various sectarian chapels commissioned by minority religious groups.

The Estate has been largely preserved as an entity. In the present decade some small-scale redevelopment has occurred (apart from that caused by war damage). The buildings are still in good repair and appear to be capable of adaptation to accommodate new requirements without altering seriously the character of the area.

There are no listed buildings in the area at present but the following are included as listable (grade II) in the draft DoE List:-

- Lilford Rd : Nos. 12-22 (even)
- Knatchbull Rd : Longfield Hall and Church of St. James

- Cormont Rd. : Kennington School/Calais Recreational Institute
:St. Gabriel's College (including forecourt and gates)
Calais Gate (flats 1-48)
- Minet Rd. :Nos. 24-40 (even)
- Camberwell New Rd :Nos. 200-228 (even)

5.0 TENURE

In September 1974 "the Planning and. Development Committee asked, for details of tenure to "be provided in reports proposing areas for designation as Conservation Areas. The following information comes from the 1971 Census and therefore it is possible that it does not accurately reflect the present situation:

Total population present: 3268
Total number of households: 1158

Of the total number of households:

155 (13.6%) were owner occupied
577 (50.7%) were Council rented
249 (21.9%) were privately rented unfurnished
140 (12.4%) were privately rented furnished

GENERAL ARCHITECTURAL NOTES

The Estate is characterised by warm, friendly looking, small scale red brick Victorian buildings with mature planting of trees and walled gardens, grouped around a small, well landscaped park.

The architecture is typical of the period for late Victorian speculative domestic building, yet the total environment created is unique and extremely pleasant. There are as yet no statutory listed buildings, but there are distinctive architectural qualities worth preserving in the details of individual buildings, in the relationships of building forms and in the overall consistency of the townscape. St. James's Church is listed as Grade 3 under the old grading.

Through the Minet family control and influence the Estate grew from the beginning as a well-balanced community attracting all but the extremely rich and poor. The housing is varied in size, lay-out and decoration, catering for the different needs and budgets of the time and reflecting the status of the original leaseholder in the different degrees of coloured tiles, door furniture, as well as the size of the house-

There is a reassuring consistency in the visual appearance of the buildings which are typically for the period mostly constructed in strong red brickwork, enriched with simple stonework decoration, or variegated and contrasting brickwork and capped with heavy pitched roofs generally in Welsh slate with ornamental red ridge tiles.. Walking through the Estate one is aware of the visual entity, yet there is considerable variety in the detail and form. This combination is due to the short period of the main Estate development and the small number of builders, involved. For example the corner buildings which have small tiled turrets with decorative ridge pieces were all built by P. Arundell, one of the chief builders involved in the creation of the Estate, These features provide landmarks without being monumental. None of the buildings are over rich in ornamentation but there is a variety of stone window mullions and decorative porch stonework., Some buildings have decorative brickwork with patterns, reliefs or inset panels. A recurring theme in the decorations alludes to the Minet family and their French Huguenot origins, with images of cats (from the French Minou/Minette for cat) and' Fleur-de-Lys motifs, as well as the Minet shield which shows a rower in a boat. There are stained glass fanlights over entrance doorways and still many well-preserved patterned ceramic tiled pathways in front gardens* Inside, many of the houses have ornate cast-iron staircases, moulded ceilings with rag and brush cornices, tiled fire-places and stone skirtings which are all worth preserving.

The Estate layout is relaxed and unregimented, with the park as the central focus and the roads around it following an informal and curved route. The original plantings of chestnuts, limes, laburnums, acacias and hawthorns, both in the streets and front gardens carries the tranquil atmosphere of the park throughout the Estate' The buildings on the perimeter of the park are particularly varied and provide an interesting backcloth viewed from the park through the trees. The Church of St. James's makes an impressive landmark on the Knatchbull Road side with its slender stone spire towering above the adjacent villas and its early development set the scale for the surrounding houses and streets. The West side of the park, which is almost totally screened by tall chestnut trees has the larger scale public buildings, namely the Kennington Secondary School with its minaret-type turrets, and St. Gabriels College., Both of these buildings are attractive for the period and not too institutional in appearance. The small College Chapel is particularly fine and has a delightful interior. These educational buildings are flanked by two five storey blocks of apartments which have decorative stepped gables and exotic fluted chimneys. Richly clad with ivy, they appear refreshingly human compared with others of the period outside the Estate and are democratically given a prime location overlooking the parks. The other two sides of the park are bounded by well articulated and varied terraced housing. Thus the Minet family ensured that the different income levels had equally attractive locations in-the Estate,

The public buildings spread amongst the housing on the Estate and built by the same developers at the same time as the houses, give the whole neighbourhood a sense of cohesion and stability. The Library and Longfield Hall are two useful buildings provided by the Minet family for their tenants and there are various sectarian chapels commissioned by minority religious groups.

In addition to the building controls mentioned in the Historical Notes, the Estate seems generally to have been developed on a sympathetic liberal and social basis. It is a direct result of this family administration that the area concerned has largely been preserved as an entity, and it is only in the present decade that some small scale re-development has occurred (apart from that caused by war damage). The Estate remains a clear example of enlightened Victorian enterprise. The buildings, which are generally still in good repair, are capable of adaptation to meet changing requirements without altering the appearance and destroying the irreplaceable quality of the Estate environment.