

2 Form and character of the conservation area



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Figure 17: Shallow gardens in Earlsthorpe Road.



Figure 18: Queensthorpe Road.

Architectural and historic character

The Thorpes is a planned development of 1901–1914 of terraced and semi-detached houses along a regular grid-like road network. It is a good example of a well-preserved lower-middle-class Edwardian suburb. The comfortable villas and their peaceful, green setting reflect the aspirations of those they were designed to attract.

The character of the conservation area depends largely on the cohesive nature of the Thorpes development. Despite their several different styles, which in part reflect the gradual development of the area, the houses in the conservation area have a strong group identity due to a limited palette of materials and common design elements drawn from the most popular of contemporary architectural influences.

Gardens

The houses have shallow front and much deeper rear gardens, which, with roadside trees, contribute to the calm suburban atmosphere of the area. The straightness of the roads and the shallow setback of the building

line from the rear of the pavement also results in a fairly strong sense of enclosure.

House styles

Unity also results from a fairly regular form and building line. The villas, which are for the most part semi-detached or in short terraces, are of two storeys (very occasionally 2 1/2), and are consistently set back from the pavement by the width of the shallow front garden. However, the way in which the villa rows on several of the roads step up the hill towards Mayow Park, and the frequent occurrence of projecting ground storeys, porches, bay windows and gables to the front elevation introduces variety and interest to the streetscene and depth to the facades.

Figure 18: Queensthorpe Road. A fairly consistent height and building line are disguised by the use of porches and bay windows and by the way in which the roofline steps up the hill. Individual houses are further distinguished by prominent party walls. The first floor of one house to the left of centre is set back with a railed balcony over the ground floor; other buildings within the conservation area have

projecting lower storeys with slate or tiled roofs.

The quality and interest of the design and detailing of the houses contributes greatly to the character and appearance of the area. The attractive and unusual villa pairs and terraces have a strong period feel; this is enhanced by a good survival rate of original features to most parts of the area.

The design of the houses is varied, although groups of houses and sometimes entire streets in a similar style can be identified. These are discussed in more detail below. The principle design influences, used in an eclectic and imaginative way, reflect the most popular of contemporary styles. Features drawn from Queen Anne, neo-Georgian and vernacular styles are mixed and adapted with some skill to create villas with both individuality and a strong group identity.

Houses on Earlsthorpe and Queensthorpe Roads show a strong Queen Anne influence. They are of red brick and roughcast with slate roofs: decorative plasterwork (pargetting) has been used on projecting gables, and a steeply pitched tile roof above a ground floor window to the left of the picture is reminiscent of tile-

hanging. Windows have heavy timber frames. Principally they are double-hung sliding sashes with the upper sash only divided into many small panes, however to the right of the picture the paired gables of the houses on Queensthorpe Road have Venetian windows to the ground floor. Timber doors are panelled with glazing to the upper part, again of many small panes with timber glazing bars.

Houses on Bishopsthorpe road show a vernacular flavour. Groups of semi-detached houses have sweeping catslide roofs and the casement windows set in stone mullions.

Front doors

Figure 22a shows a door to a house on Bishopsthorpe Road. The style of the door has a strong Arts and Crafts flavour, but the flat door-hood is a Neo-Georgian feature.

Figure 22b is of another very different door on Bishopsthorpe Road, with the door having a Queen Anne influence in the small-paned glazing to the upper part. The semi-circular fanlight is again Neo-Georgian in inspiration.



Figure 19: Queen Anne influence in Earlsthorpe and Queensthorpe Roads.



Figure 20: Queen Anne influence in Kingsthorpe Road.



Figure 21: Bishopsthorpe Road vernacular.



Figures 22a and b: Eclecticism in detailing.

Windows



Figure 23a

Figure 23a shows the Queen Anne-influenced sash window design typical of most of the area. The subdivision of only the upper sash into smaller lights was a feature born of economy often found on medium-sized houses of the period.



Figure 23b

Figure 23b shows a variation on this basic design, with three sash windows grouped under a single roughcast arch (note the arched heads to the lower sashes).



Figure 23c

Figure 23c shows a window on Earlsthorpe Road. The grouped sashes are divided by fluted mullions and, unusually, by a heavily moulded transom. The arch above the window group cuts into a band of roughcast below the eaves of the bay and has decorative pargetting in a floral design to the tympanum. Figure 23d shows a Venetian sash-style window found in some houses on Queensthorpe and Bishopsthorpe Roads.



Figure 23d



Figure 23e

Casement windows typically accompany the cottage style of architecture apparent in some of the later houses on the estate. Figures 23e and f show various types of casement window that can be seen in Bishopsthorpe Road.

Several houses in the area feature stained glass windows on side elevations. Stained glass was often used by the Edwardians to give light with privacy to service areas and stairwells. The design of the glass often had an Art Nouveau influence and this is apparent in several windows in the Thorpes area. Figure 23g shows a very attractive stained glass window on the return elevation of a projecting gable to a house in Earlsthorpe Road.



Figure 23g



Figure 23f

Boundary treatments

Front walls may be of rubble stone with brick copings and timber gates; front paths were originally tiled. Figure 24a shows a boundary treatment on Princethorpe Road which, from the evidence of early photographs, is probably original. The low uncoursed rubble stone wall has a brick coping and decorative brick arches. The simple timber gate is supported by sturdy timber posts.

Figure 24b shows a detail of a flank wall on Queensthorpe Road. The lower part is similar to the standard front garden wall throughout the area. A comparable wall borders the site of the former nursery buildings further north on Queensthorpe Road. Figure 24c shows a closeboarded fence and timber gate and posts to the front of a villa on Dukesthorpe Road. The posts at least, which have an angled capping and carved 'coffee bean' motif, are probably original. They are also to be found outside some houses on Bishopsthorpe Road, in conjunction with low stone walls of the sort described above, and can be seen in early photographs of the latter road.



Figure 24a



Figure 24c



Figure 24b



Figure 24d

Figure 24d shows a gate and posts on Earlsthorpe Road. Similar posts with turned finials can be made out in early photographs and are also to be found elsewhere in the area. The privet hedge growing above the stone wall is also a typical feature.



Figure 25a



Figure 25b



Figure 25c

Materials

The individual character of the area is enhanced by the limited palette of materials employed, of which the principal ones are: warm red brick in English bond, roughcast, slate, clay plain tiles and clay pantiles. Stucco, terracotta and wrought iron are used in detailing on some of the houses.

Windows and doors are almost universally of painted timber, although some have leaded lights with or without stained glass. Other timber elements such as bargeboards and porches are also painted.

The materials seen across the conservation area are red brick and slate, although there is detailing in roughcast and clay plain tile, and pargetting to the gables and to the window arches, all of which can be seen in the Earlsthorpe Road picture (Figure 25a). This choice of materials complements the Queen Anne influence apparent in other elements of house design. Some houses in this style have parts of the ground or first floors picked out in roughcast.

A vernacular flavour to the design (porches, casement windows and sweeping gables) is reflected in the use of red brick, roughcast and clay plain tile as the principal materials. This can be seen in Dukesthorpe Road (Figure 25b).

Figure 25c shows an unusual villa pair in a loose Neo-Georgian style at the corner of Dukesthorpe and Mayow Roads. The facade is of red brick with projecting banding over its entire height; the roof of plain clay tile.

Views

The picturesque undulating topography of Sydenham has long contributed to its appeal as a residential area. The site of the conservation area is on a hillside; the grid-like road network slopes down between Mayow Park to the north and Earlsthorpe Road, then gently up again to Sydenham Road to the south. The long, straight streets have a strong sense of enclosure, and the sloping nature of the site contributes to a series of attractive views through and beyond the area.

From beneath, the buildings on Bishopsthorpe Road opposite the junctions with Dukesthorpe, Princethorpe, and in particular Queensthorpe Roads become skyline features; villa rows and terraces on these streets step picturesquely up the hill towards them. A full townscape analysis of the area is given on page 29.



Figure 26a



Figure 26b

Figures 26a and b: Two views looking north and south respectively along Queensthorpe Road. These two photographs illustrate the relationship between the layout and the topography of the conservation area. The sloping site and the long, straight roads result in a series of extensive views. Here buildings on Bishopsthorpe and Sydenham Roads become terminating features.

Principal villa styles

The following drawings give a more detailed consideration of the design features of the principal villa styles in the area. These generally fall into groups by road, and reflect the date of construction of the houses and

the gradual development of the area. Both the variety and the cohesion in design terms within the conservation area are obvious from these figures, as is the influence of contemporary architectural fashions.

1: EARLSTHORPE ROAD AND BISHOPSTHORPE ROAD.

- ~ SHORT TERRACE OR SEMI-DETACHED HOUSES.
- ~ 2 STOREYS, CONSISTENT BUILDING LINE BEHIND NARROW FRONT GARDENS.
- ~ GABLES, BAY WINDOWS, PROSPECTING GROUND STOREYS, PORCHES ARE COMMON FEATURES.
- ~ RED BRICK OR ROUGHCAST TO THE FACADES. FLOORS OFTEN DIFFERENTIATED BY FINISH.
- ~ HIPPED SLATE ROOFS, OR TILE TO BAY WINDOWS ETC AT A GROUND FLOOR LEVEL.
- ~ BAND OF ROUGHCAST BELOW EAVES AT BOTH LEVELS.

Painted timber Venetian windows, with the arch above cutting into a band of roughcast.

Gable with projecting.

Band of pargetting

Hipped slate roof with tile roofing

Prominent PARTY WALL projects from facade on a brick corbel.

Prominent CHIMNEY. CHIMNEY BREAKS project at first floor level.

Semi-circular fanlight with a brick arch.

Rectangular fanlight with arch cutting into band of roughcast above

Timber windows at first floor level with leaded lights, the windows remind of an oriel.

Pargetting is used as a decorative feature on GABLES, WINDOW ARCHES and in banding under the eaves. Flowing floral designs incorporate motifs such as masks and urns.

Panelled timber doors. May be double or single, recessed, flush with the facade, or within a porch, usually with a FANLIGHT of one of a variety of designs (see above.)

Typical panelled timber doors, recessed beneath a segmented brick arch. Part glazed, with small lights and heavy glazing bars. Rectangular fanlight.

The basic WINDOW is a timber sliding sash with the upper sash only divided into a number of small lights. This design, shown left, is reminiscent of the 19th Queen Anne style. Above the window is a flat or segmental brick arch or an arch cut into a surrounding band of roughcast. Other window designs are shown above.

Queen Anne's style sashes may be grouped in twos or threes, sometimes with dividing columns and capitals.

Projecting GABLES and BAY WINDOWS (canted or square) are recurrent features. WITH PROSPECTING GROUND STOREYS and PORCHES they add depth to the facade, and mark a basically regular building line.

Other doors and porches:

Egg and shell STRIPE COURSE in terracotta.

Panelled timber door, part glazed with leaded light with stained glass motif. headed fan and side lights.

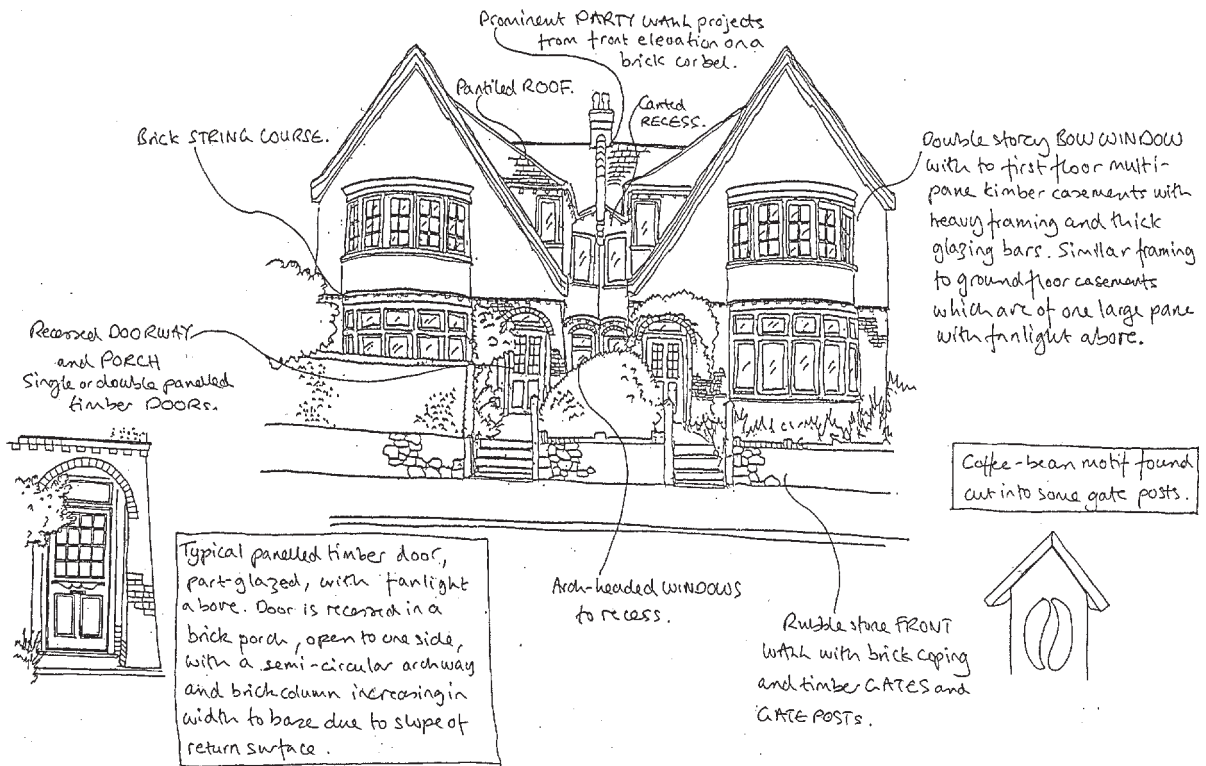
Typical panelled and part glazed doors within a classical style. Columnar porch.

windows to the return elevation are often of stained glass to protect the privacy of stairwells and service areas. An Art Nouveau influence is often evident in the design of the glass.

FRONT WALL of rubble stone with brick coping and piers. Timber GATES of a simple, sturdy design

2: 51-65 BISHOPSTHORPE ROAD

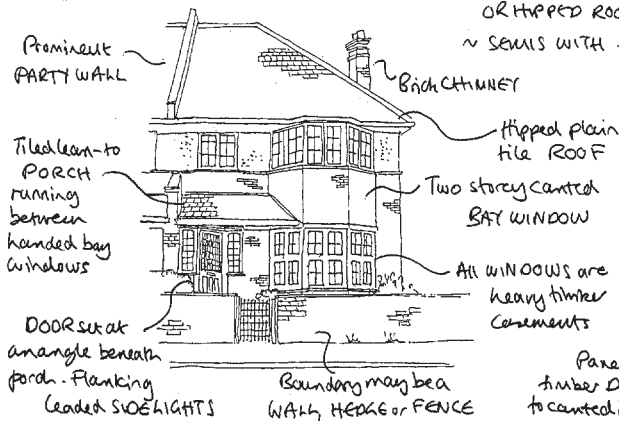
- ~ SEMI-DETACHED PAIRS WITH HANDED FACADES
- ~ RED BRICK TO GROUND FLOOR, SMOOTH, PAINTED RENDER TO FIRST. PAINTED ROOFS.
- ~ PROJECTING GABLES WITH CATSAIDE TO INNER ROOFSHOPE



3: 32-52 BISHOPSTHORPE ROAD AND 29a-48 MAYOW ROAD

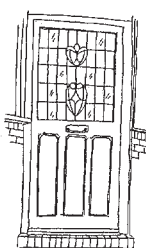
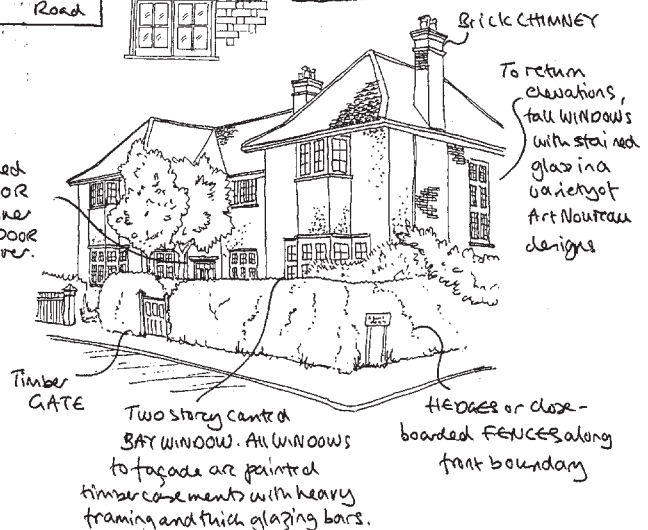
- ~ BISHOPSTHORPE ROAD: SEMIS WITH A U-PLAN. CANTED INNER CORNERS; 2 STOREY CANTED BAY WINDOWS.
- ~ MAYOW ROAD: DETACHED HOUSES OR SEMIS WITH A RECTANGULAR PLAN; 2 STOREY CANTED BAY WINDOWS, SEMIS WITH TILED PORCH ROOF RUNNING BETWEEN.
- ~ FACADES ROUGHCAST AND RED BRICK. PAINTED OR PLAIN TILED GAMBEL OR HIPPED ROOFS.
- ~ SEMIS WITH SYMMETRICAL FACADES.

TYPICAL HOUSE ON MAYOW ROAD



Variation on window design, Mayow Road

TYPICAL HOUSE PAIR ON BISHOPSTHORPE ROAD



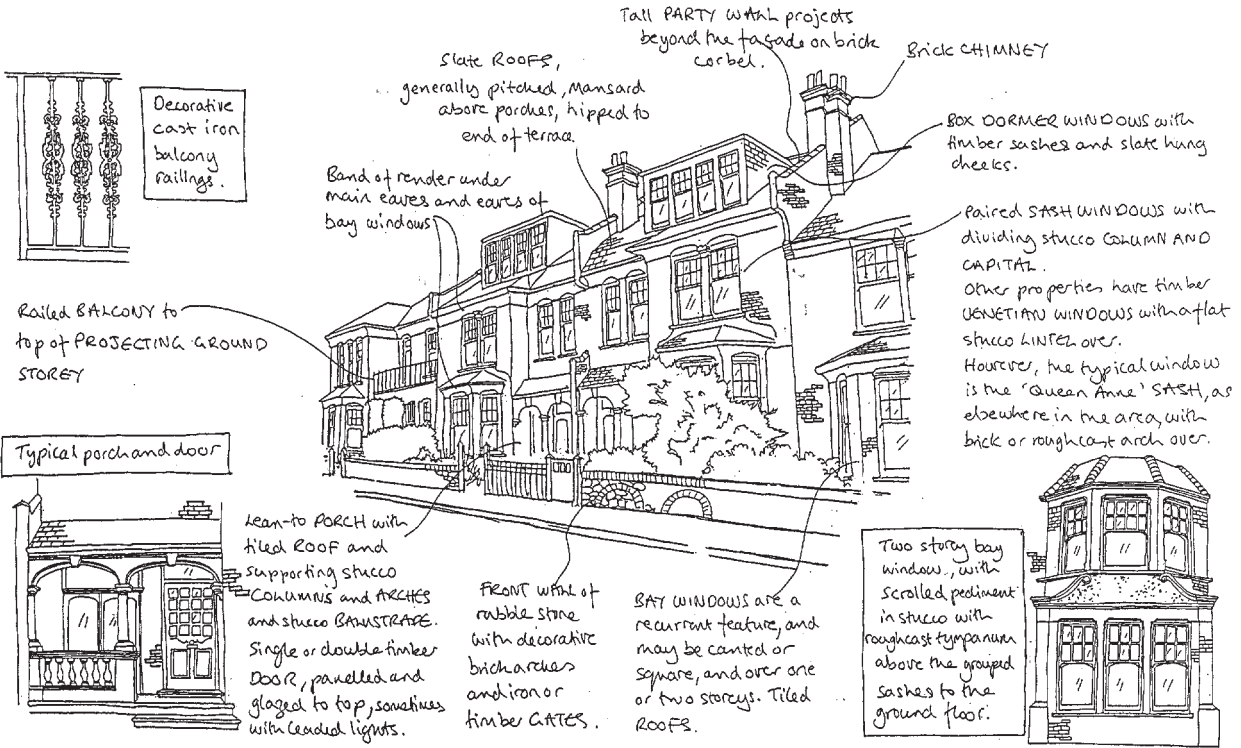
Panelled, painted timber door with leaded light



Panelled, painted timber door, with flat door hood and decorative leaded lights

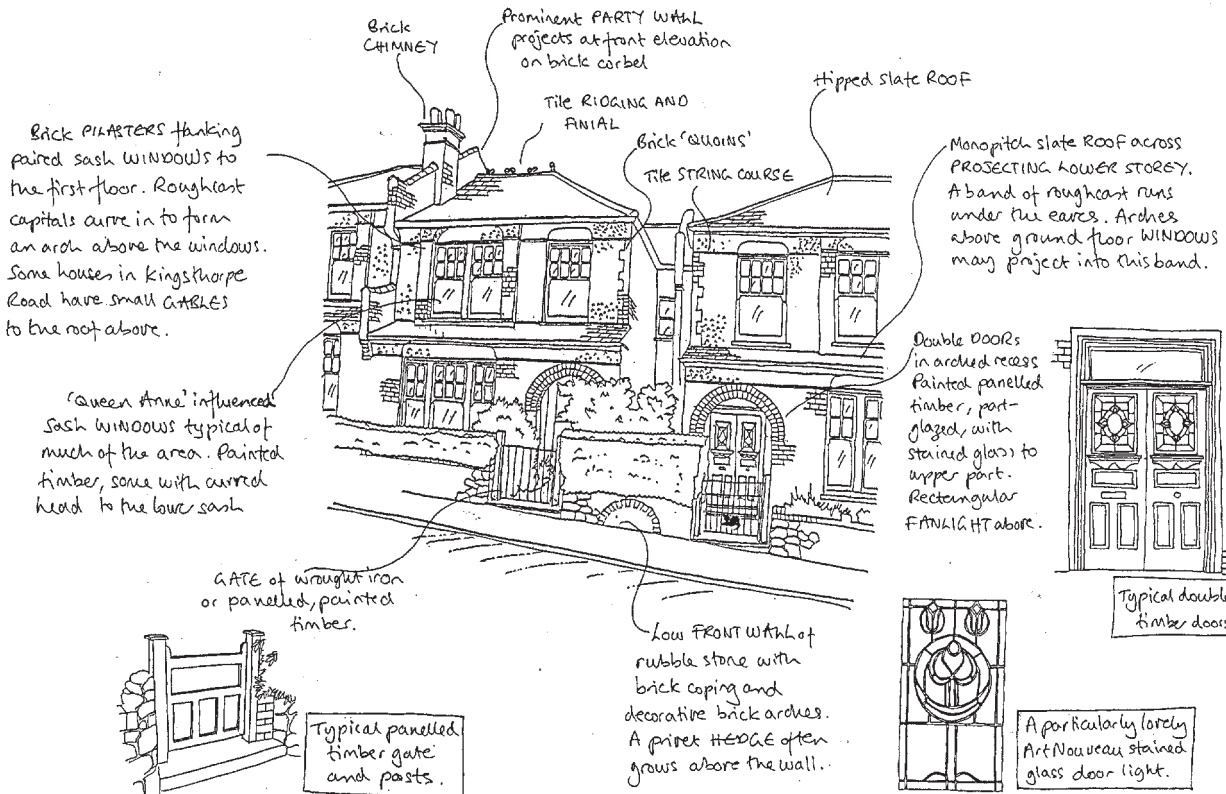
4: QUEENSTHORPE ROAD

- ~ SHORT TERRACES STEPPING UP HILL. 2 OR 2 1/2 STOREYS.
- ~ PROJECTING BAYS MASK A CONSISTENT BUILDING LINE AND BREAK UP THE FAÇADES.
- ~ RED BRICK, OFTEN PAINTED OR RENDERED AND PAINTED TO ONE STOREY. SLATE ROOFS



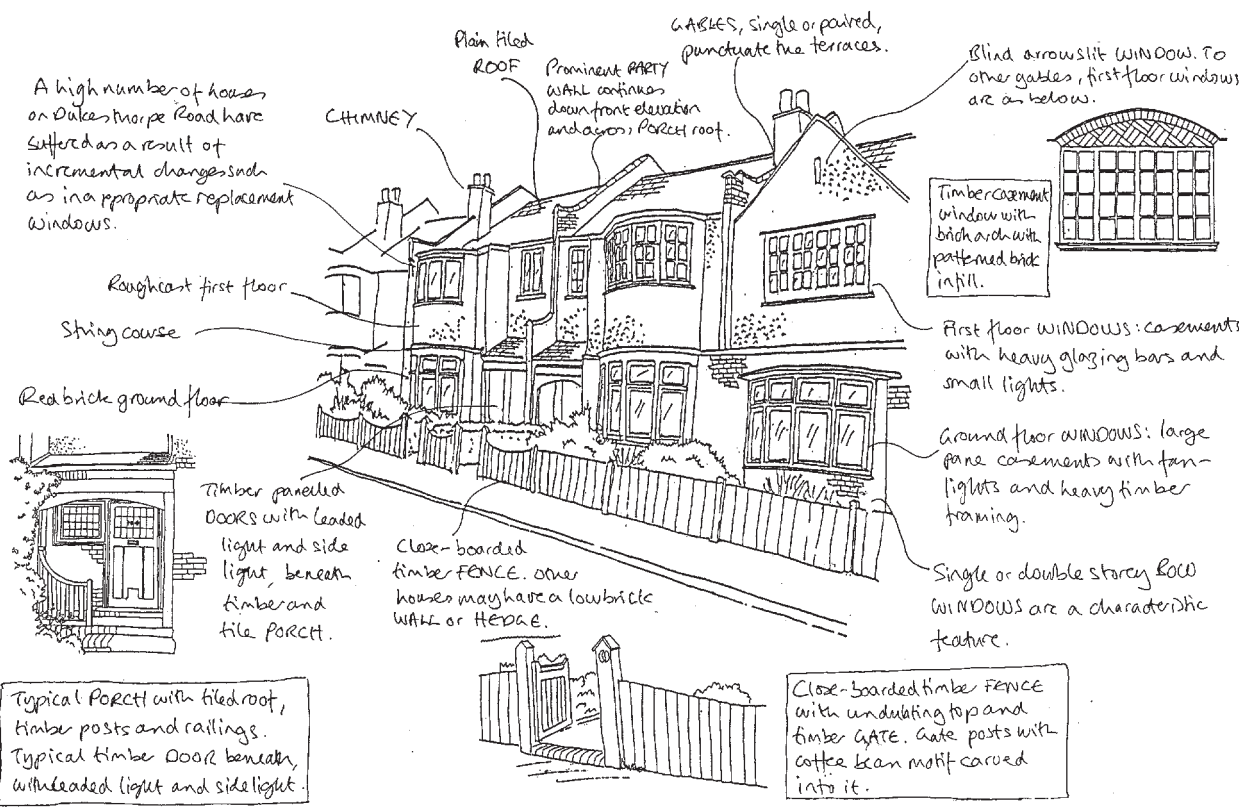
5: KINGSTHORPE AND PRINCETHORPE ROADS

- ~ SEEMINGLY SEMI-DETACHED PAIRS ARE LINKED AT REAR TO FORM TERRACES.
- ~ FAÇADES IN TWINNED PAIRS
- ~ RED BRICK TO GROUND FLOOR, ROUGHCAST TO FIRST. SLATE ROOFS.



68 DUKESTHORPE ROAD

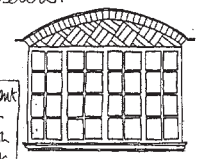
- ~ SHORT TERRACES
- ~ TWO STOREYS WITH A CONSISTENT BUILDING LINE, AND ROOFLINE STEPPING UP HILL.
- ~ RED BRICK TO GROUND FLOOR FAÇADE, ROUGHCAST TO FIRST. TILED ROOFS.



A high number of houses on Dukesthorpe Road have suffered as a result of incremental changes such as in a appropriate replacement windows.

CHIMNEY
Plain tiled ROOF
GABLES, single or paired, punctuate the terraces.
Prominent PARTY WALL continues down front elevation and across porch roof.

Blind arrowslit WINDOW. To other gables, first floor windows are as below.



Timber casement window with brick arch with patterned brick infill.

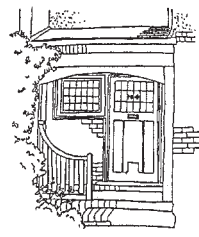
Roughcast first floor

String course

Red brick ground floor

First floor WINDOWS: casements with heavy glazing bars and small lights.

Ground floor WINDOWS: large pane casements with fanlights and heavy timber framing.

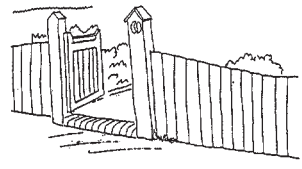


Timber panelled DOORS with leaded light and side light, beneath timber and tile PORCH.

Close-boarded timber FENCE. Some houses may have a low brick WALL or HEDGE.

Single or double storey BOW WINDOWS are a characteristic feature.

Typical Porch with tiled roof, timber posts and railings. Typical timber Door beneath, with leaded light and side light.



Close-boarded timber FENCE with undulating top and timber GATE. Gate posts with coffee bean motif carved into it.

Key buildings

All the Edwardian houses help create the character of the conservation area, but certain buildings within the area make a particularly strong positive contribution. These buildings are shown in Figure 33; the key gives a brief description of their special interest. Some of the buildings constitute particularly good or prominent examples of the villa styles described above.

Others houses cannot be readily grouped with one of the principal villa styles sketched in this section, but are of an outstanding architectural or historic interest in terms of their individuality.

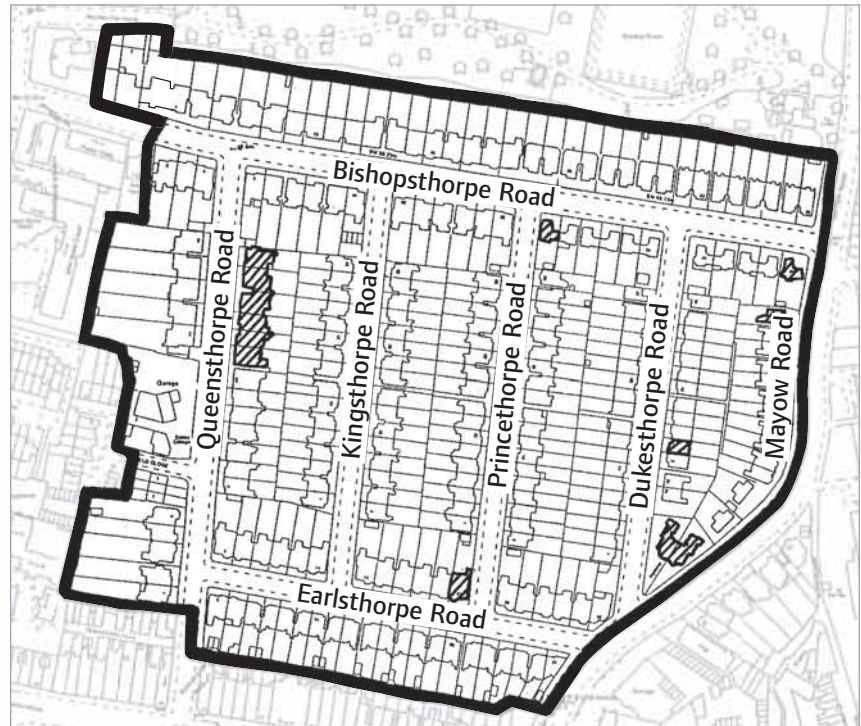


Figure 33: Map of buildings making a particularly strong positive contribution to the character and appearance of the conservation area.

Key:

- 24 Mayow Road – a simple but charming detached villa in an eclectic style retaining all its original features.
- 50–52 Mayow Road – a distinctive villa pair in a prominent corner location. Of banded red brick, with distinctive elongated sash windows with many small panes to each sash.
- 4 Dukesthorpe Road – the only villa in this road which is complete with all its original features, even down to the front fence.
- 52 Bishopsthorpe Road – this villa has much in common with those in fig 29, but it addresses the corner of Bishopsthorpe and Mayow Roads.
- 32 Bishopsthorpe Road – a particularly complete example of villa style three with attractive stained glass to the return elevation onto Princthorpe Road.
- 23 Earlsthorpe Road – a complete example of villa style one with very attractive stained glass windows fronting onto Princthorpe Road.
- 16–26 Queensthorpe Road – a fairly complete villa row with attractive balcony details.

Character of spaces within the area

The core of the area is characterised by a grid-like network of long straight streets: uninterrupted views along their length are enhanced in the case of the roads running north-south by the sloping nature of the site. In contrast, the curve of Mayow Road provides a series of revealed views. Houses are lined closely along the street edges, with gardens to the rear forming a green core to each block.

The majority of the streets within the conservation area are narrow in relation to the height of the flanking buildings and consequently have a fairly pronounced sense of enclosure, which is heightened by the presence of street trees to either pavement. Queensthorpe, Bishopsthorpe and Mayow Roads, on the other hand, are relatively wide with a weaker sense of enclosure. Nonetheless the nature and scale of the development gives the whole area a sense of intimacy.

The Bishopsthorpe Road houses back onto Mayow Park to form the boundary, meaning that there is no public open space actually within the conservation area. Amenity space is provided solely by the private front and back gardens of the houses.

The front gardens in general have low boundaries and are highly visible from the street – consequently they make a strong contribution to the character of the area. Although they are more hidden away, glimpsed views of the rear gardens of the houses and in particular of the trees within them are also very important to the calm, suburban atmosphere of the estate. The importance of trees and gardens within the area is discussed in more detail below.

The area is bounded to the south and east by Sydenham and Mayow Roads respectively. These wide, busy roads have an impact on the character of the area (in particular in terms of noise and of traffic cutting through), and there are significant views from and to both the roads themselves and buildings along them. To the north of the conservation area is Mayow Park, a remnant of the grounds of the Old House. Trees in the park may be visible behind the houses on Bishopsthorpe Road.



Figure 34: A typical cast iron street lamp on Bishopsthorpe Road. Similar examples are found on all of the roads in the area.

Historic street furniture

Some aspects of the street furniture within the conservation area make a strong positive contribution to its character and appearance. In particular, the cast-iron street lamps found throughout the area are attractive and contemporary with the development. The columns once carried gas lanterns as can be seen in Figures 14–16; these have now been replaced with modern electric lamps. Other important survivals of original street furniture are the wall-mounted street sign to the northern end of Dukesthorpe Road, and the Edwardian postbox on Earlsthorpe Road.

Trees and gardens

Small trees lining the streets are now very important to the character of the area, although early photographs show that they were not originally present. Species include Swedish Whitebeam (*Sorbus intermedia*), Rowan (*Sorbus aucuparia*) and a *Prunus*. The Swedish Whitebeam and Rowan both bear conspicuous white flowers in the spring and red berries in the late summer and autumn, adding to their ornamental value.

The *Prunus* have a compact upright habit and attractive glossy green foliage. As Figure 35 illustrates, the distribution of these species shows quite a clear distinction by street.

Today, the majority of the trees are quite well established, although there are some younger specimens which have obviously been planted recently. The majority of the street trees are in good condition.



Figure 35: Key individual trees and tree groups in the conservation area.

KEY TO SPECIES:

- 1: Swedish Whitebeam (*Sorbus intermedia*)
- 2: Rowan (*Sorbus aucuparia*)
- 3: Poplar Sp. (*Populus* Sp.)
- 4: False Acacia (*Robinia pseudoacacia*)
- 5: *Prunus* Sp.

Other species present: box elder, sycamore, ash, cherry, fir, lilac, Laburnum, eucalyptus, lime, apple, silver birch, maple, etc.

The front gardens to the houses in the Thorpes Estate are small but very important to the character of the area. They are usually well kept and stocked with small trees, shrubs and flowering plants. Some of these trees (principal species listed in Figure 35) may be contemporary with the development (for example the mature False Acacias (*Robinia pseudoacacia*) at the eastern end of Bishopsthorpe Road and in the garden of 50–52 Mayow Road). Privet hedges are also common.

Back gardens take up a significant proportion of the area but can be seen only from certain points at the end of villa rows or terraces. Nonetheless the contribution even of these glimpsed views is a significant one.

In addition, trees in back gardens may be visible from the street frontage e.g. the rows of tall poplars (*Populus Sp.*) dividing the rear gardens between Kingsthorpe, Princethorpe, Dukesthorpe and Queensthorpe Roads (see Figure 35).

Such trees form an attractive background to the houses themselves.

The trees and plants on the streets and in the gardens in the area have a softening effect and the associated scents and sounds contribute to the peaceful



Figure 36: Street trees in Earlsthorpe Road



Figure 37: Street trees in Dukesthorpe Road

atmosphere of the suburb. The Edwardians saw the garden as a place for recreation and gardening as a healthy and respectable hobby. Gardens were an important adjunct to new houses built at the time. The gardens of houses in the Thorpes Estate contribute greatly to the period feel of the area, and are testimony to the quality of the development and the domestic aspirations of those that chose to live there.



Figure 38

Figures 38 and 39 show the front gardens to villas on Kingsthorpe and Bishopsthorpe Roads respectively. Note the privet hedging, and the Rowan to the pavement in front of the houses. Figure 40 shows a row of poplars behind houses on Princethorpe Road.



Figure 39



Figure 40