

Charleville Circus Area of Special Local Character

This document provides a short description of this Area of Special Local Character, and a statement of significance. It should be used to inform planning applications within the ASLC.

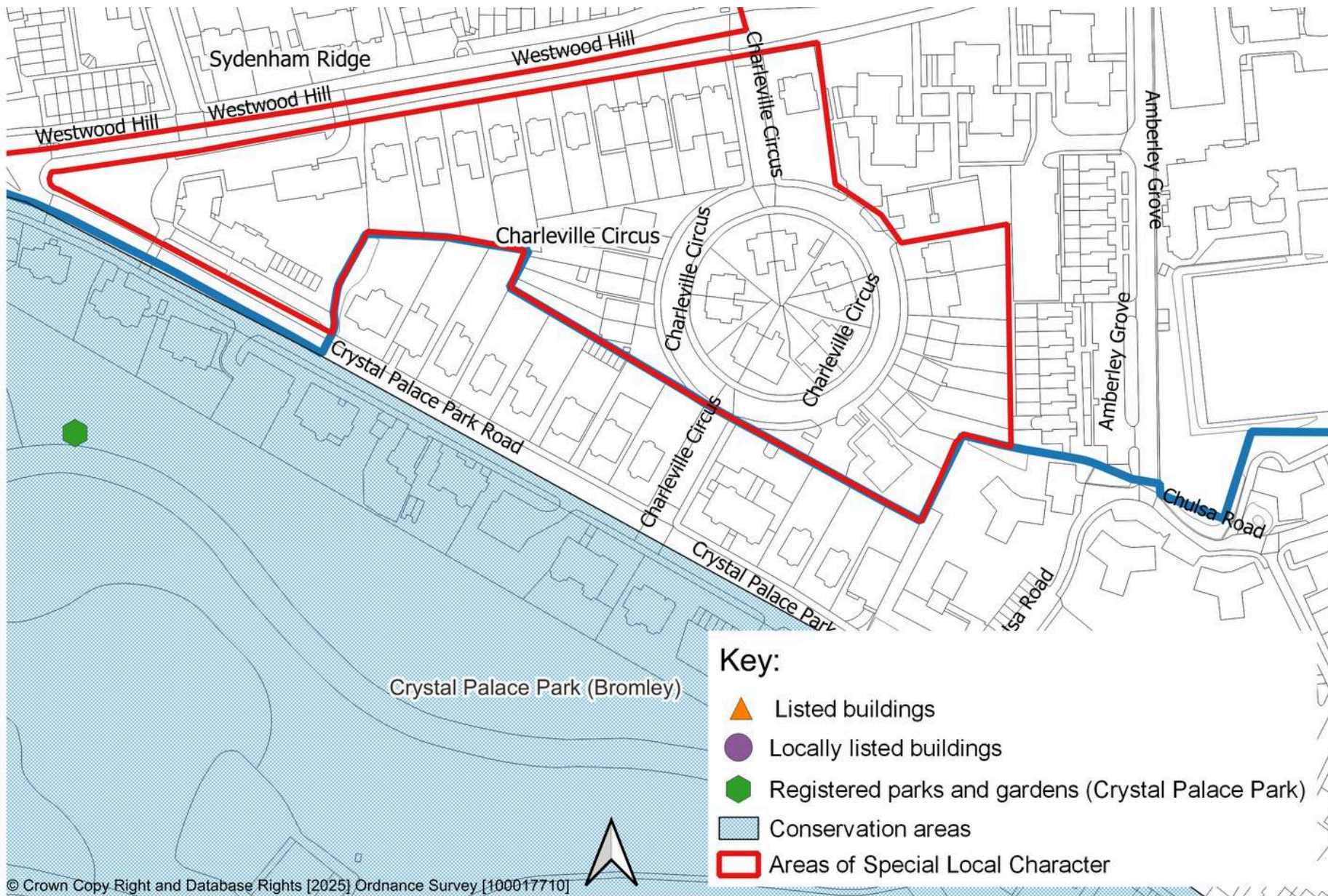
Description of the area

Charleville Circus is an unusual circular road located between Crystal Palace Park Rd and Westwood Hill with large residential properties organised in short terraces and semi-detached pairs. The building adjacent to the entrance from Westwood Hill - Caen Tower - uses a plethora of architectural elaborations to create an eye catching corner piece.

1. Architecture

- Charleville Circus ASLC contains a group of buildings of notable character, built in similar styles over a short period of time (with some later infill development) in the late 19th C.
- Two pairs facing the two entrance to Charleville Circus (nos 2-4 and 10-12), were built in red brick, with white plaster quoin and lintel detailing on the bay windows, and white painted cills.
- Two groups of 3 paired houses (nos 1-11 and 15-25), staggered around the outer curve of the circus, have elaborate architectural detailing in neo-Gothic and Italianate styles.
- Caen Tower, at 43 Westwood Hill, is an impressive late Victorian neo-Tudor building built in red brick with decorative plasterwork made to appear as stone mullions around casement windows. It retains some historic stained glass and has a timber framed top floor.

Boundary Map



2. Historical, social, cultural, archaeological interest

Historic and geological connection to the relocation of the Crystal Palace on Sydenham Hill. When plans were made for the re-erection of the Crystal Palace on Sydenham Hill, the Crystal Palace Company purchased nearly 400 acres of land. They did not need the sites north of Crystal Palace Park Road and proceeded to sell them off. George Wythes of Bickley Hall bought the site enclosed by Crystal Palace Park Road, Lawrie Park Road and Westwood Hill. Wythes hired William Goodwin, a local builder, and they started developing Lawrie Park. By 1858 there was “a large manufacture of bricks on the upper part of the land”. Charleville Circus, the final development, was built over this brickwork in the mid-1880s, hence its unusual circular layout.

Nobel Prize for Literature winner, Kazuo Ishiguro OBE, wrote most of his well-known novel 'The Remains of the Day' in four weeks whilst living in the top floor flat of 9 Charleville Circus, owned by Michael and Lenore Marshall. The best-selling book won the Booker Prize in 1989. In a Guardian article, Kazuo Ishiguro mentions dedicating the book to the memory of Lenore Marshall, who passed away soon after 'The Remains of the Day' was finished. One of the book characters mentioned is a named “Mr Marshall of Charleville House”.

3. Townscape

The interest of Charleville Circus mostly lies in its circular layout.

4. Landscape

Charleville Circus has a green and verdant character, as a result of most houses having hedges and planted front gardens. There are no street trees, but several front gardens and parking contain tall, mature trees. The houses



Caen Tower, 43 Westwood Hill



also have rear gardens, though these are quite cramped for the houses inside the circle. There are several mature trees in the rear gardens of the houses on Westwood Hill and Crystal Palace Park Rd.

Summary of Significance

Charleville Circus and the buildings on the triangle of land formed by Westwood Hill and Crystal Palace Park Road comprise large late 19th C yellow and red brick villas built using bricks made from the local clay, developed by George Wythes and built by William Goodwin.

The whole site was first used as a brickfield when the area saw widespread investment as a result of the re-erection of the Crystal Palace in Sydenham in 1852 and the creation of Crystal Palace Park and two new railway stations (Crystal Palace High Level Station and Low Level Stations). The site was developed as part of the ensuing sub-urbanisation of this part of southeast London and its layout reflects the former brickfield's boundaries. The Penge Mainline Railway Tunnel, stretching from Sydenham Hill to Penge East, passed directly beneath Charleville Circus, below numbers 10, 19, and 21.

The large villas have a lively mix of neo-Tudor and Italianate detailing. Their front and rear gardens and mature trees contribute to the creation of a green character. The layout provides an interesting pedestrian experience and evolving views through gaps and around the buildings which add visual interest. The historical connections to the nearby development of Crystal Palace Park and the suburbanisation of this part of London are connections to key historic events.

Issues, threats & opportunities

- Unsympathetic render obscuring original brickwork.
- Door and window replacements with unsympathetic materials.

- Paving over of front gardens has led to the erosion of the green front garden setting of some of the houses, detracting from the greenery appreciable from the street.
- Large open spaces of parking, especially in front of Lincoln Court, 27 Charleville Circus, and to the rear of 35 Westwood Hill and of 100 Crystal Palace Park Rd.

