

Loampit Hill Area of Special Local Character



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

Boundary Map

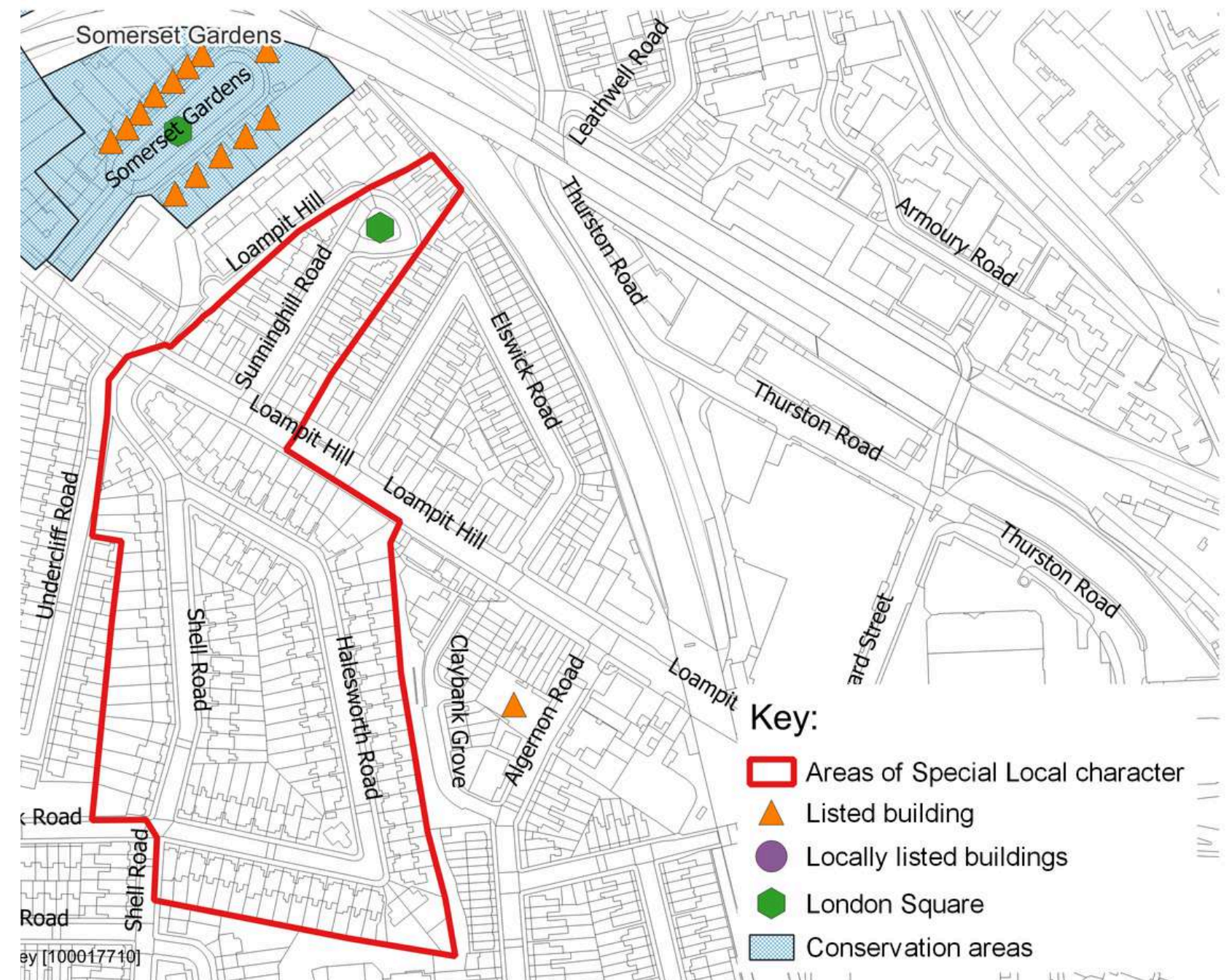
Description of the area

The Loampit Hill ASLC comprises a group of houses with common architectural features in a contained area to the north and south of Loampit Hill. To the north is Sunninghill Road and its green, to the south are Shell and Halesworth Roads.

1. Architecture

The ASLC contains a group of late Victorian villas on 4 adjoining streets, combining three different house types all with strongly coherent and elaborate elevational detailing. Maps and written sources indicate that Sunninghill Road was laid out in 1884, Halesworth Road was partially built by 1899 while Shell Road was laid out by 1899 and likely built in the early 1900s.

- On Halesworth Road and the east side of Shell Rd, the substantial two storey plus attic villas are arranged to look like semi-detached pairs, but with deeply recessed connecting links between the pairs. They have a gable to the street with a semi-circular arched window, elaborate entrance porches to the outer side of each pair, supported by columns with carved capitols, and two storey part-width projecting bays. Windows are framed by decorative surrounds and lintels. Elaborately carved brackets, carved string courses as well as red brick string courses and quoins add decoration to these buildings.
- The rears of the Halesworth Road houses have a regular pattern of gables, creating a rhythm visible from Shell Road, to the sides of nos. 1 and 23 Shell Rds.



- 4 Halesworth Road is a corner building at the junction of Halesworth and Shell Rd, with a prominent two-storey turret with bay windows, creating a very distinctive and successful corner treatment.
- On the west side of Shell Road, nos. 2 to 38 is a terrace of wider 3 bay houses with central entrance porches and part-width projecting two storey bays topped by gables with central decorative roundels. The highly consistent and elaborate detailing previously mentioned are also features of these large, elaborately decorated terraced houses.
- Some houses have retained their original window tracery, with sash windows topped by small multi-paned casements with stained glass, and original timber doors with a glazed stained glass panel surrounded by stained glass lights (see nos. 30, 36 and 38 Shell Rd for good examples). Some houses have retained semi-circular ridge tiles and finials (34 Shell Road, for example), and nearly all have tall, visible chimneys with clay pots.
- On Loampit Hill, numbers 38-52 are a terrace of substantial three storey houses with a gable to the street and part-width, two storey projecting bays. The gables and elevations have red brick detailing and string courses, and bracketed window cills. They share decorative elements with the houses in Shell and Halesworth Rds, but are taller and more austere. They sit on raised ground and the paired entrance doors are approached by a flight of stone steps.
- On Sunninghill Rd, two terraces of two storey houses face each other. The four end-of-terrace buildings have a gable facing the street, dramatically and symmetrically marking the ends of the terraces. The houses are two storey, two bay houses with a single storey projecting bay window at ground floor. They share decorative detailing on the porches and window lintels with the houses in Shell Rd, Halesworth Rd, and Loampit Hill. A shorter terrace of 5 houses in the same design is located at the northern end of the road, and viewed across a green. These houses back onto the railway line.

- There is currently a variety of boundary treatments to the front gardens of the ASLC – most houses have some form of low boundary wall, the majority of which are in brick. It is possible that the original design was scalloped low brick walls with brick copings (rare examples survive at 2a, 8, 19, 21 and 97 Halesworth Rd, 2 Sunninghill Rd and to the side of 22 Sunninghill Rd). The houses on Loampit Hill have taller brick boundary walls with brick piers topped by coping stone.
- Some properties have retained original encaustic tiles in their porches and on some front garden paths (26, 32, 50, 55, 57, 65 Halesworth Rd, 5 Shell Road, and 3, 4, 5, 6, and 9 Sunninghill Rd). The prevailing pattern seems to include blue, yellow and red geometric designs.

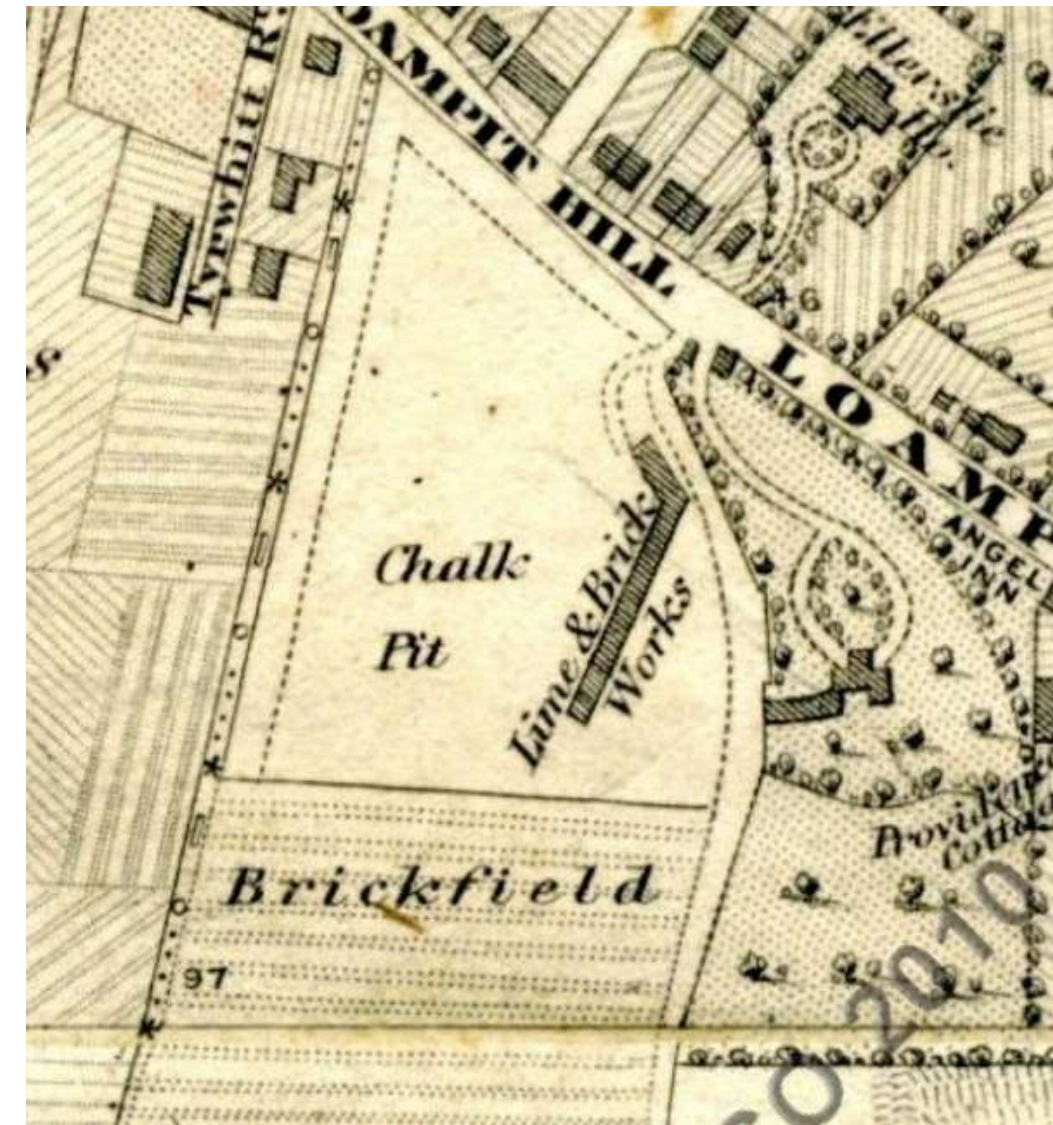


Elaborate window joinery, original front doors, surviving stained glass in the Loampit Hill ASLC

2. Historical, social, cultural, archaeological interest

- This area has a clear connection to the Lee family, lime and brick makers and merchants on Loampit Hill since the 1790s, whose materials were used for the construction of the rapidly expanding Lewisham and Blackheath in the 19th century. In the 1841 census, Loampithill House resident John Lee is described as a British merchant, and in the 1881 census, Edmund Lee is recorded as a widower and brickmaker employing 40 men and 2 boys. As evidenced by their names, Loampit Hill and Loampit Vale were areas known as pits where soil, earth or clay (loam) were extracted, including by the Lee family. This has had an impact on the topography of this area with the dip in terrain in Undercliff and Sandrock roads adjacent thought to be the result of extraction.
- The development exemplifies a trend of speculative development with high-quality, cohesive development in a range of house sizes in Lewisham in the mid to late 19th century as the arrival of the railway made the area a desirable commuter suburb. In particular we see the 19th century trend of demolishing large houses with generous gardens to build middle class residential developments.
- The developer for Shell Road was W H Collier, whose proposal to create three streets, Shell St, Nuding St and Overcliff St was approved in June 1896, and the developers for Halesworth Rd were the Hodson brothers William, James and Frederick, who got permission on the same date. W H Collier had already developed parts of Lewisham, and the Hodson brothers were the sons of builder Thomas Hodson, who started building in Dalston and moved to Lewisham in 1867, working on Tressillian Road and surrounding streets in Brockley.
- The Booth notebooks' description of the new houses on Halesworth Rd in 1899 captures a response to this rapidly changing landscape: "Halesworth Rd. 2st (i.e. 2 storey) houses, pretentious, any amount of ornate, machine-worked stone and toy pillars at porticoes. "Good class", servants. Road not

- finished, houses taken as soon as ready. Uncoloured to red." The 1901 census reveals the new residents of Halesworth Rd and Shell Rd were part of the new, professional middle classes: occupations include clerks, stockbrokers, accountants, business owners, and most households employed at least one servant.
- Hyde Housing Association, the large property developer and manager, was founded in 1967 to provide and manage affordable homes in a post-war market of severe housing shortages. The first house purchased by the Association to this effect was in Halesworth Rd (number not specified).
- Shell Road and Halesworth Rds were filming locations for "Slow Horses", a spy thriller TV drama starring Oscar winner Gary Oldman, in 2023.



Stanford Library Map Of London And Its Suburbs 1864, showing Loampit Hill House and its long, curving drive, east of the chalk pit, lime & brick works and brickfield.

3. Townscape

- The layout of Shell and Halesworth Roads was influenced by the preceding development on the site - a large mid C19th house called Loampithill House, and its extensive gardens. Loampithill House was built in the 1840s, on land that belonged to the Lee family, who burnt lime and made bricks. The layout of the drive leading to this large house appears to have been retained when laying out the entrance to the residential development from Loampit Hill.
- The streets were planned and laid out in a short period of time between 1884 and 1899 on land that was previously market gardens (Sunninghill Rd) and the chalk pits and lands surrounding Loampithill House (Halesworth and Shell Rds).
- The land was developed rapidly and speculatively by at least two groups of developers, using a coherent palette of high quality materials (stock brick, red brick, stone decorative elements) and mass-produced detailing (floral corbels, red brick and decorative banding, curved cill brackets), including very fine window and door joinery with stained glass. The resulting houses are high quality, and have survived into the 21st century relatively well preserved.
- Halesworth Rd is comparatively narrow, with housing set back behind short front gardens. This, and the height of the buildings, leads to a very tightly contained and urban character, reflecting a distinctive change compared to the older houses such as Loampithill House, individually sited in large gardens surrounded by acres of land.
- The tall turret at the junction of Halesworth Road and Loampit Hill (1 Halesworth Rd) is visible in views coming down Loampit Hill and creates a striking entrance to the Halesworth Rd/Shell Rd development. It stands on the site of the historic lodge of Loampithill House.

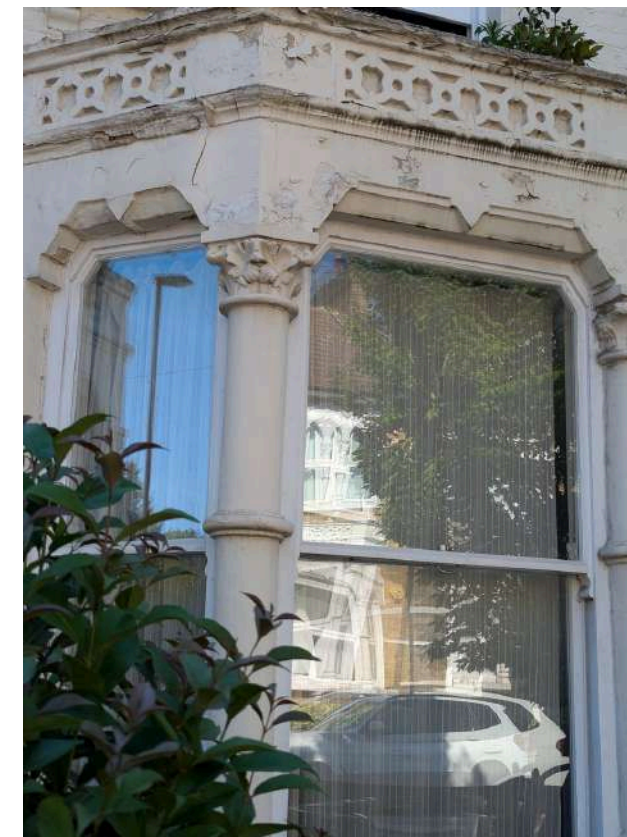
- The two-storey turret on the apex of 4 Halesworth Rd, at the junction of Halesworth and Shell Road, creates a very distinctive and successful corner treatment into this new residential development. The regular gables at the rear of Halesworth St create an appreciable pattern from Loampit Hill.
- The arrangement of terraces around a small green on Sunninghill Road (a London Square) creates a more generous, greener, more suburban layout which connects to the past use of the land as gardens.



Possibly original boundary wall in Sunninghill Rd.



Strong rhythm of front elevations in Shell Rd.



Original timber sash windows with angled corners and green on Sunninghill Road



4.Landscape

- The tight urban layout results in the contribution of landscape being restricted to front and rear gardens, and street trees, as well as the green on Sunninghill Road.
- All houses have small front gardens, with the exception of the houses on Loampit Hill, which have much deeper front gardens containing tall shrubs and mature trees, providing a green cover on this busy thoroughfare. The majority of the front gardens in the ASLC have retained planting at the front, with some exceptions that have lost soft landscaping or been replaced by parking.
- All properties have rear gardens, of varying sizes. Because of the level difference between Loampit Hill and Halesworth Road, the gardens on Halesworth Road are very visible from Loampit Hill and contribute much needed greenery to a busy road.
- The peaceful green at the end of the cul-de-sac in Sunninghill Rd is included in the 1931 schedule of London Squares, and protected from development by that Act. The lack of through traffic creates a very peaceful, quiet environment, removed from the busy Loampit Hill, with trees on the green including a cherry tree.
- The two large mature trees in the front garden of 30 Sunninghill Rd are on the boundary, and contribute much to the street scene. There is one street tree on Shell Road, and no trees in Halesworth Rd.
- The front gardens, rear gardens, the green on Sunninghill Road, and the street tree on Shell Road all contribute to the creation of this ASLC as a verdant, peaceful and carefully designed late 19th century residential development built to cater to a new commuting middle class. This is particularly true of the front gardens that have retained low brick walls and soft landscaping, and the rear gardens visible from Loampit Hill and across 10 and 34 Shell Rd, which contribute much to the street scene.

Summary of Significance

The Loampit Hill ASLC comprises a good quality and well-preserved late 19th century residential development. It is a good example of the intensification and densification of suburban development at the end of the 19th century in Lewisham, when the arrival of the railway led to the creation of residential developments on previously unbuilt agricultural land or on land previously occupied by a large country house (such as Loampithill House), to cater to a growing middle and professional class.

The architecture is high quality and very detailed, so much so that it was considered “pretentious” by the inspector collecting social data for the Booth maps in 1899. It is also well preserved for the most part.

The planned layout of this development is well considered, with dramatic turrets marking the junctions of Loampit Hill and Halesworth Road, and of Shell Road and Loampit Hill, creating striking corner treatments. The layout and levels also contains evidence of the former land uses and layout. The rear elevations of Halesworth Road are also carefully considered, creating a repetitive pattern of gables visible from Loampit Hill.

Whilst densely developed and strongly urban in its form and layout, the development benefits from a high-quality green space designated as a London Square at the end of Sunninghill Road, and of soft planted front gardens and rear gardens.

Lastly, the area is also important for its connection to the history of extractive activities which over time gave Loampit Hill and Loampit Vale their name, and the making of bricks and burning of lime, notably by the Lee family, owners of Loampithill House for several generations. These materials were essential for the rapid urban development of Blackheath and Lewisham in the late 19th C.

Features of Interest

- The retaining boundary wall at the rear of the Halesworth Road gardens which back on to Loampit Hill, has an interesting and elaborate brick pattern for its lower part, with groups of three bricks laid horizontally and vertically to create a parquet-type mosaic pattern. There seems to have originally been a brick on edge coping over it, but since then the wall has been extended upwards in coursed brickwork.
- The shared detailing to the houses, with decorative roundels and string courses with projecting triangular elements, pillars, floral corbels, decorative lintels, elaborate brackets, and the detailed joinery and stained glass of the timber sash windows and timber doors.
- Historic metal street name plate on Sunninghill Road
- Surviving scalloped boundary walls (2a, 8, 19, 21 and 97 Halesworth Rd, and at 2 Sunninghill Rd and to the side of 22 Sunninghill Rd)
- Surviving encaustic tile front paths and porches (26, 32, 50, 55, 57, 65 Halesworth Rd, 5 Shell Road, and 3, 4, 5, 6, and 9 Sunninghill Rd)
- Roundels, lozenges, squares and rectangles at high level on the elevation of the houses and in some of the gables on Shell Road, Loampit Hill and Sunninghill Road, with motifs including jars and florals, add a level of decoration to these properties.
- Views from the even side of Shell Street across the surrounding landscape.

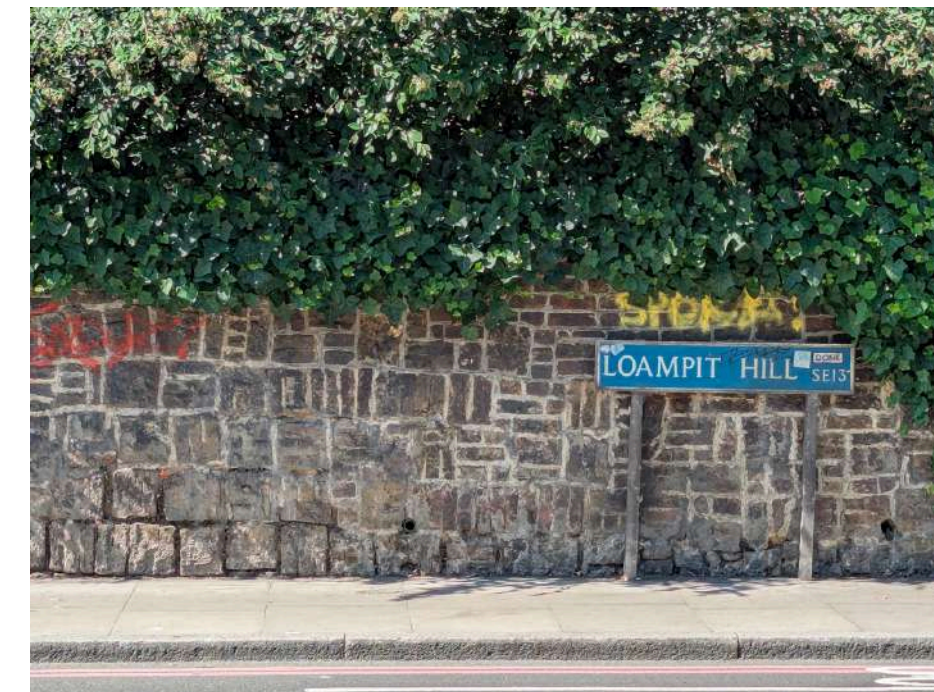
Issues, threats & opportunities

- Loss of architectural detailing including original doors and windows;
- Rendering of brick elevations resulting in loss of original architectural features, historic brickwork and stone detailing;
- Loss of some boundary treatments and front gardens for parking;
- Some front gardens have been paved over, resulting in loss of soft landscaped setting to the houses and a gap in the green street edge;
- The retaining wall on the south side of Loampit Hill was reinforced with steel and clad in timber with a painted finish. The timber cladding is now partly

- missing resulting in an unkempt and unattractive appearance.
- Removal/replacement of the cladding and painting the steel would enhance the wall's appearance. The lower sections of this wall need re-pointing in lime mortar.
- The steeply sloping rear gardens of Halesworth Rd are visible from Loampit Hill. Some rear timber fences are in poor condition or missing, leading to an unkempt appearance. There is some evidence of fly tipping/rubbish in the gardens, which are very visible from Loampit Hill.
- Opportunity to enhance the historic environment through the installation of period-style street lighting, subject to the availability of funding and streetlighting contracts.



Historic metal street name plate on Sunninghill Road



Unusual brickwork in the retaining wall along Loampit Hill