

Kirkdale



Lewisham

Recommendation

Adopt as an Area of Special Local Character for meeting the selection criteria for architecture, historical connection, and townscape.

Description of the area

Kirkdale ASLC is centred on the junction between Kirkdale and Dartmouth Road. Kirkdale lies on a south facing slope climbing upwards towards the junction with Sydenham Hill. Dartmouth Road slopes gently towards the East. The ASLC comprises of a commercial core and residential buildings distributed across the area, but most notably at the northern fringes. The commercial focus is on Kirkdale, and contains a wide variety of building typologies built between the 1850s and the early 2000s. There are 2 pubs (plus another in the immediate setting) and three groups of listed buildings along the stretch included in this ASLC boundary, illustrating the importance of Kirkdale/Dartmouth Rd as a local centre of note since the early 19th C. The residential buildings within the ASLC boundary are similarly varied in style and period, with early timber clad cottages (89-91 Kirkdale) contrasting with larger detached and semi-detached villas on Kelvin Grove and 3 storey terraces on Fransfield Grove, as well as the 1930s Art Deco inspired Denham Court.

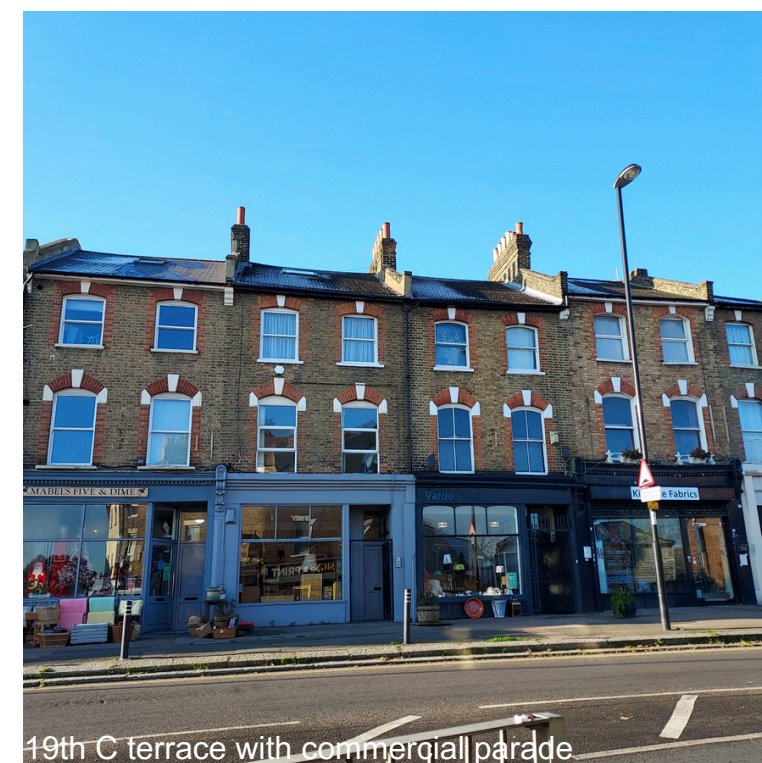
1. Architecture

An eclectic mix of buildings, many of which are of particular architectural quality or distinct historic interest:

- 3 groups of listed buildings, see listing descriptions
 - High Street Buildings, 134-146 Kirkdale, HE ref. 1392512
 - Former Sydenham Public Lecture Hall, 84 Kirkdale, HE ref. 1402184



89-91 Kirkdale, the only remaining timber clad paired cottage of the ASLC



19th C terrace with commercial parade



Urban remnants of the historic cottage typology on Dartmouth Road

- 124-128 Kirkdale, HE ref. 1080021
- Pub architecture: the Fox & Hounds and the Bricklayer's Arms (and just outside the ASLC boundary, the Woodman). Public Houses are some of the earliest buildings that survive (Fox & Hounds 1826, reconstructed 1889, Bricklayers' Arms 1834, rebuilt 1860 and 1924, Woodman 1845). Interestingly, the names of these 3 pubs reflect the history of the area: the Fox & Hound (like the Greyhound Inn in nearby Cobbs Corner CA), is connected to fox hunting, which was presumably a popular sport at the time of Sydenham Common. The Bricklayers' Arms recalls the suburban development of the area following the enclosure of the Common. The Woodman refers to the history of the Great North Wood and the diverse occupations it supported.
- 89-91 Kirkdale: a pair of locally listed surviving timber clad cottages, representing the first phase of residential development of the area around the junction of Kirkdale/Dartmouth Rd following the enclosure of Sydenham Common.
- Two storey, two bay cottage buildings in brick and render with a variety of roof forms (some hipped, some M-shaped,) on Dartmouth Road and Kirkdale, possibly hidden behind modern projecting shopfronts on Kirkdale (for e.g. 103, 109, 111, 121, 123 Kirkdale and 217 – 234 and 174-180 Dartmouth Road – see roofscape).
- 97 Kirkdale and 184-190 Dartmouth Road – A terrace of three storey two bay buildings with ground floor shopfronts, hipped roofs and tall chimneys, in London stock brick (some have been rendered), embracing the curve at the junction of Kirkdale and Dartmouth Rd.

2. Historical, social, cultural, archaeological

- The Sydenham Enclosure Act of 1812 was instrumental in opening the way for development of this area, and influenced the ensuing social change and development.
- Kirkdale was, until the Enclosure Act of 1812, a track across Sydenham Common, marked at its southern end by the Greyhound PH (in Cobbs Corner CA). From the enclosure of the Common, a proliferation of small cottages developed at the Kirkdale/Dartmouth Rd junction, many of them timber clad (19th C photos and paintings, see John Coulter's Sydenham and Forest Hill Past, p.80-90). Until the late 1840s, the route was called "The Common" on maps, but by the 1850s it had become "High Street", and it eventually became "Kirkdale" and "Dartmouth Rd".
- Kirkdale and Wells Park Road (which was also an existing track on the Common before 1812), were adopted by the commissioners when the Common was enclosed. The commissioners also laid out Dartmouth Road when parcelling out the Common following the enclosure. More than 200 cottages were built at the Kirkdale/Dartmouth Rd junction between 1812 and 1841.
- The only cottages of this date that retain their timber-cladding are the semi-detached 89-91 Kirkdale.
- There are a number of small two storey buildings, some with M-shaped roofs, hidden behind unsympathetic shopfronts, that are also present on the 1863 OS map and may once have had timber clad exteriors, later hidden behind modern extensions, reclad or rebuilt (e.g. 103, 109, 111, 121, 123 Kirkdale and 217 – 234 and 174-180 Dartmouth Road)
- Comparable cottages survived just outside the ASLC boundary, on Willow Way until they were demolished in the 1950s.
- The ASLC is also associated with the mid 19th century development of the principles of public education for working class children and adults, represented by the former Sydenham Institute at 84 Kirkdale, built 1859-1861. Sir Joseph Paxton (1803-65) founded the Sydenham Institute, which provided a programme of lectures, classes, concerts and entertainment aimed at the area's working class population. He was one of the foremost engineer-architects of the mid-C19 and is best known as the designer of

the Crystal Palace of 1851, re-erected to Sydenham in 1854 and eventually destroyed by fire in 1936.

3. Townscape

- The listed group High Street Buildings 134-146 Kirkdale, have landmark value and form a very distinctive part of the townscape.
- The junction between Kirkdale and Dartmouth Rd has been wide and open since it was laid out, with the three storey corner terraces 97 Kirkdale and 184-190 Dartmouth Road embracing the curve of the road.
- Looking down Kirkdale towards the ASLC, the part of Kirkdale within the ASLC boundary is clearly defined in the townscape as a commercial parade with a number of shops, high-quality pubs and commercial buildings. This contrasts with the more residential stretches of the road on either side of the ASLC boundary.

4. Landscape

There are some interesting views from Kirkdale, with the lively roofscape of the High Street buildings, and a well treed vista over south London towards Kent is visible from the upper reaches of the ASLC, but the extent of the natural environment with the ASLC is limited.

Statement of Significance

The significance of Kirkdale ASLC lies in its

- Architecture

The eclectic array of building types which show the development of the commercial focal point on Kirkdale from its origins as a track across common land to a Victorian retail centre, and subsequent (not always sympathetic)

changes. The core of Kirkdale has a fine grain and high-density urban appearance on the southern stretch of Kirkdale, the west end of Dartmouth Road and on Fransfield Road. Elsewhere, the pattern of development becomes more relaxed and suburban (Kelvin Grove and the northern stretch of Kirkdale). Views through and over the rooftops of the ASLC from within and outside its boundary give a sense of its density and lively variety of forms, including in particular the elaborate elevations, gables and finials of the listed High Street Buildings.

- History

The ASLC comprises parts of Kirkdale and Dartmouth Road (previously known as the “High Street”). This area was rapidly developed following the enclosure of Sydenham Common in 1812 and became part the fashionable centre of Sydenham, creating an attractive shopping parade and becoming ever more popular with the opening of both Sydenham and Forest Hill train stations in 1839, and the arrival of the Crystal Palace at the top of Westwood Hill in 1854.

Kirkdale is all the more interesting for what it reveals of the social history of public, working-class adult and children’s education, through the listed Sydenham Institute building (see Historic England’s listing descriptions), which was adapted and altered by Henry Dawson and extended 1904 by William Flockhart. There is also a putative connection with Sir Joseph Paxton, designer of the Crystal Palace, who has been credited as the architect of the first design iteration of the Sydenham Institute.

- Setting and connections with Great North Wood

The immediate setting of the ASLC contains several areas that are already recognised for their historic and architectural interest through CA designation (Halifax St, Sydenham Park, Jew’s Walk, Cobb’s Corner). These areas are

intrinsically linked with this ASLC as they contain the residential housing that was serviced by Kirkdale's retail and commercial services. The area has lost a number of its original buildings and the busy road detracts from its historic character, but it still retains a significant number of high quality historic buildings and has much potential for enhancement once its significance is more widely appreciated. This important junction at Kirkdale/Dartmouth Junction, as one of the earliest parts of the enclosed Common to develop, deserves greater recognition as a historically and architecturally significant area of special local character.

Features of interest

- Granite double kerbs
- Painted Kirkdale High Street sign on flank wall of 137 Kirkdale

Issues, threats & opportunities

- Building fabric in poor condition and need for maintenance
- Poor quality modern shopfronts, which detract from the historic architecture (and in some cases may hide older building elements of historic interest)
- Loss of traditional window joinery and historic detailing
- Rendering obscuring historic brickwork
- Strong pressure for development in the area, and lack of recognition of heritage significance of some of the older structures, now much altered, have led to losses of historic buildings and replacements with buildings of little architectural quality
- Traffic and traffic noise – Kirkdale is a very busy road and this can detract from one's experience of it as a historic place
- Narrow pavements in places (251 Dartmouth Rd to 103 Kirkdale) make for an uncomfortable pedestrian experience

- Difficulty crossing the road in the retail heart of the ASLC due to busy traffic, lack of pedestrian crossings, and parked vehicles
- Opportunity to address lack of greenery and trees in new developments (see Lewisham Characterisation Study 2019, p.176)

Boundary Map

