

CONSERVATION AREA APPRAISAL

XV RICHMOND ROAD

Location

Richmond Road runs west from the town centre, just over a quarter of a mile from the sea. It passes through several Conservation Areas. The core of the Richmond Road Conservation Area is the section between Gratwicke Road and Salisbury Road. The boundary extends northwards to include a group of 1930s white stuccoed houses on Victoria Road and southwards to incorporate a group of 19th century villas on Westbrooke.

Origins and Development of Settlement

Development in this area began in the second half of the 19th century. Nearby, Park Crescent had been established as early as 1829, but remained "right out in the fields" for nearly 20 years after it was built (Nairn). The road layout appears to date from the 19th century, but there are a number of flint walls in the designated area which may have originated as agricultural boundaries.

Prevailing Former Uses

The pattern of wealthy, detached, residential development, epitomised by the white stuccoed villas, was established in the mid-1840s. Twenty years later, the church of St. Mary of the Angels and Our Lady of Sion Convent were built on the west side of Gratwicke Road. Sion Junior School and St. Mary's Convent lie on the eastern edge of the Conservation Area, separated from St. Mary's Church by Victorian villa development.

Architectural and Historic Qualities

The three substantial grade II listed villas on the north side of Richmond Road were erected, circa 1845, as a high-status residential development. They are set well back from the main road and at an angle to the boundaries of their uncommonly large plots. Each is designed in a different architectural style: No. 56 (Heslington House - on the corner of Victoria Road) is Classical, Gothic, but all are white stuccoed. Their windows vary according to the theme of the building: large, eight-pane vertical sliding casements (Westerfields) and leaded casements (Tudor Court). Roofs are similarly varied: flat (Heslington House), domed (Westerfields) and steeply pitched clay tiled with gables and massive ornate white chimneys (Tudor Court).

The Victorian stuccoed villas to the east of the church are nearly as large as the listed villas, but are more tightly packed together. They have much smaller plots, but their back gardens have been sacrificed to provide a more spacious setting for the houses, as seen from the street. Although the plot on the corner of Crescent Road and Westbrooke is undeveloped, its high boundary wall prevents it from contributing any impression of openness to the streetscene. The smaller Victorian villas on the southern edge of the designated area are cut off from this group by a modern block of flats (Westbrooke Court). They too are sited at the back of their plots, giving them large front gardens.

Sion Junior School is a two and a half storey late Victorian red brick building with a gabled slate roof and large, two-pane timber sashes. St. Mary's Convent, to the south, is a long, yellow-brown brick structure of similar height with a red pantiled roof and two-pane timber sashes. Adjoining its southern end, is a white stuccoed villa, similar to the group south of Westbrooke Court; its northern end is attached to a polygonal building with a slate roof and polychrome brickwork. Both convent and school have suffered from insensitive window replacement and the presence of a pre-fabricated building in front of the school.

Stylistically, the five houses north of Heslington House clearly belong to the 1930s, but are linked to the other residences in the Conservation Area by virtue of their white render finish and massing. Their crittall windows and some of their doors have, sadly, been replaced with uPVC. They have hipped roofs covered in green, orange-red and dark grey pantiles, giving them something of a mediterranean appearance.

The buildings on Abbots Close have white painted pebble-dash harmonising with the villas' stucco (though the house immediately north of Tudor Court is unpainted). Their windows are fairly small wooden casements (some leaded) and their steep roof slopes are covered in brown clay tiles. A white-rendered modern extension discreetly links the two buildings to the rear of Tudor Court.

The ground is fairly level throughout the area and the houses are mostly two or three-storeys high. Westbrooke Court, however, has six-storeys and consequently its negative impact is pronounced. Its plain design and its materials (concrete and yellow brick) are not characteristic of the locale.

Prevalent and Traditional Building Materials

Smooth, white-painted stucco predominates, but there are unpainted and pastel painted renders and some pebble-dash. Roofs are very varied, displaying slates and tiles of many colours and designs. Window frames are generally of timber and painted white.

Contribution of Greenery

In the Victorian parts of the Conservation Area, high garden walls and mature trees combine to screen the houses from the road, making them slightly mysterious and giving the area an atmosphere of well-established affluence. The houses to the north of the listed villas are closer to the road and have less greenery and lower walls; the 1930s group on Victoria Road is especially exposed, but the buildings at the rear of Tudor Court are hidden by the development along Christchurch Road. Apart from the grounds of Westbrooke Court, most of the area's green space (and the school playing-fields to the west) is enclosed, but may often be glimpsed from the street.

Enhancement Opportunities

Abbots Close

- Rationalise parking arrangements.

Victoria Road

- Resurface the pavement to conceal the pipe trenching.
- Replace the lamp-post with one of special design.
- Replace the uPVC windows of the modern buildings with others of appropriate design and materials.

Crescent Road

- Remove the concrete post which stands opposite the listed St. Mary's Church. This appears to have been a bus stop at one time, but is no longer in use.
- Replace the metal safety barriers outside St. Mary's Church with barriers of special design.
- Remove the roundabout sign at the north end of Crescent Road and replace it with the roundabout sign which currently stands a few yards to the north.

Richmond Road

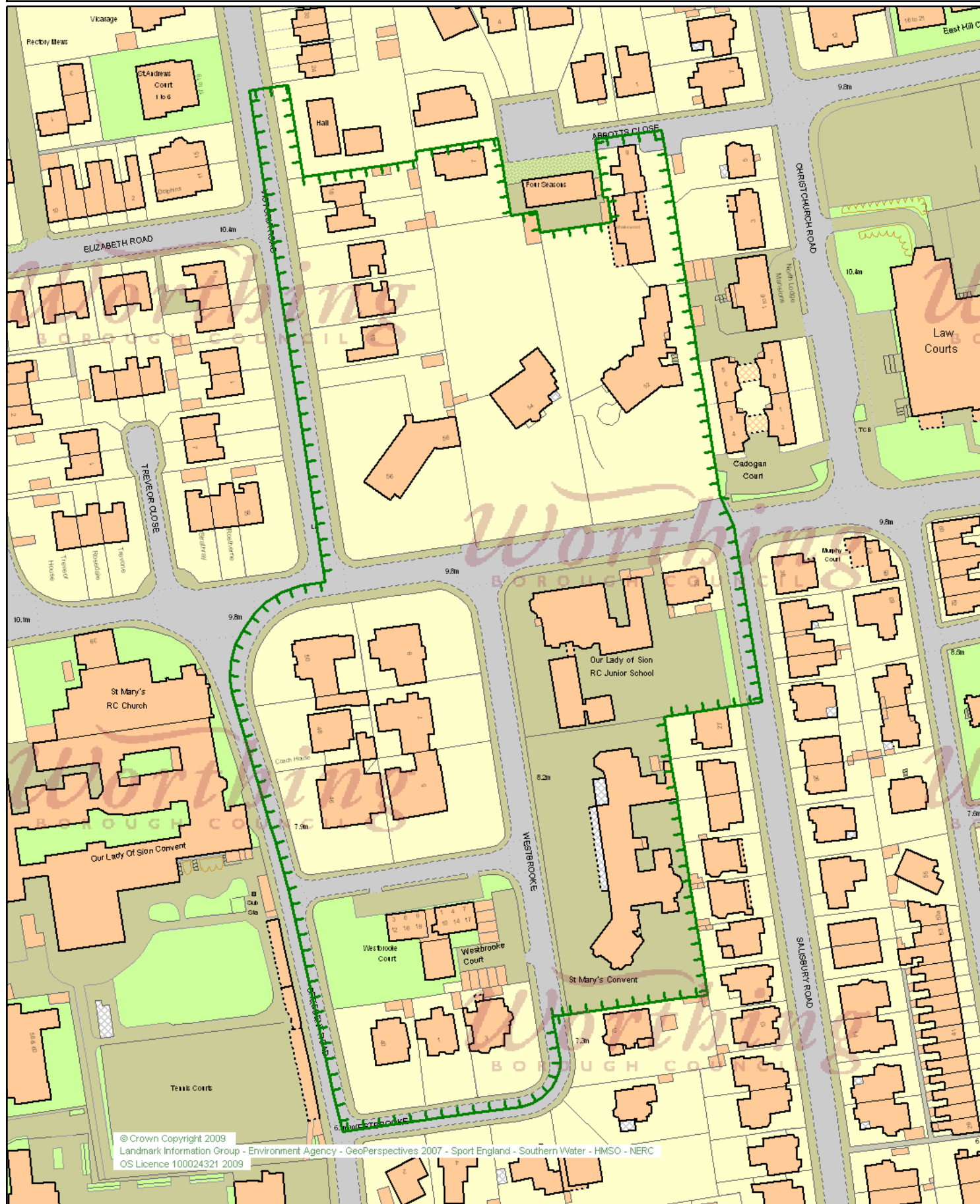
- Replace the sign post to the station with one of special design.

Westbrooke

- Clean graffiti from the rendered wall to the east of Westbrooke Court.
- Replace the modern lamp standards with others modelled on the one outside the Convent (opposite the junction).
- Repair and repaint No. 5.
- Permit demolition and appropriate redevelopment of Westbrooke Court.
- Remove the overhead wires in Westbrooke.
- Pave or resurface the scarred tarmac pavements.
- Rationalise the parking arrangements. There are too many parking notices.
- Plant additional trees around Westbrooke Court.

Gratwicke Road

- Clean the graffiti from the sub-station outside Sion School.



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