



THE PAST, PRESENT & FUTURE

Is HADRA Going in the Right Direction?

Over the past few years HADRA has come to appreciate that most residents moved to this area because it offered a good quality of life. Although it is fatal to generalise, much of the quality relates to the low density of buildings as well as to large gardens and extensive areas of green space. HADRA has focussed strongly on protecting this low density by opposing all planning applications which infill gardens. We have also opposed extensions and buildings unsympathetic to the Tudor and Tudorbethan style of existing houses. Such development, apart from destroying the lifestyle qualities that resident's desire, also runs the risk of reducing housing values over the longer term.

It is important to note that HADRA is not opposed to sympathetic extensions and development overall, and understands the need for change. Clearly, what is sympathetic or otherwise is always open to question and with a desire to be transparent, this document has been prepared and published on the website to outline how HADRA has reached its current stance.

The first part of the document relates to our research completed on the most extensive development in the HADRA area, initially called Coulsdon Court Estate. This means that roads outside this 1930's area, and buildings erected subsequently, are not included, in part because no information has been located. We welcome any information residents can provide on these omissions, perhaps from old house deeds.

The first part of the document is principally on the history of the HADRA area, much of this sourced through Bourne Society documents, for which we are grateful. It is followed by the information we have located about the development of the housing and the ecology. From this we have identified the qualities sought by the initial developers and, in most cases, these form

the current HADRA aspirations. It is important to note that none of these qualities can be enforced! We hope that residents will see the logic in the HADRA approach and that they will give their support. We remain keen, as always, to receive resident's views.

The Development History

The Coulsdon Court Estate has a distinctive character created by a combination of unique factors. The roads and houses were built following the sale of land north of Coulsdon Court, an ancient manor built on the North Downs. The houses were built sympathetically on large plots to ensure that a seamless boundary existed between the beautiful mature trees and meadows of the court park and the development. As London expanded around Coulsdon this small area has remained relatively unspoiled and bypassed by the worst excesses of urbanisation.

At the time of the development in the 1930's it was not realised that the wide spacing of the houses, the extensive gardens and the focus on hedges and natural planting was what we now consider to be environmentally friendly. The gardens now provide a wealth of ecological niches and maintain a high number of bird, insect and mammal species. The area is a fine example of how houses and wildlife can co-exist providing the residents with a healthy and inspiring place to live.

There has been much concern in recent years that that infilling and insensitive development will destroy this character. There is also real concern that were the golf course to be developed it would destroy forever the profound relationship between the estate and the houses. During 2008 attempts were made to gain conservation status through Croydon Council, but these failed. Hartley Way was given interim approval as a Local Area of Special Character (LASC) although this will not apply before 2012. Much of this concern is based on the fact that houses built in the twentieth century are undervalued and vulnerable. In reality, these houses are good examples of attractive traditional building techniques and include the local vernacular (flint) to a small degree. It would be farsighted to give them early protection and prevent excessive urbanisation.

The Character of the Area

Hartley and Coulsdon Manor comprises of residential housing and the adjacent hotel, previously Coulsdon Court, and the associated golf course in just less than 300 acres. The area is midway between Purley to the east and Coulsdon to the west. The altitude varies from 100 and 150 metres and the area is above two valleys cut into the chalk of the North Downs, one parallel to Old Lodge Lane in the east and one parallel to Coulsdon Road in the west.

At the time the properties were constructed the marketing focus was directed at the healthiness of the area in order to attract people from central London, where air pollution was increasing. Coal burning on household fires and in factories was the main cause of this, allied to very little wind blowing across the Thames valley in general, which could change the air. Even by modern marketing standards, it is surprising that death statistics were actually

highlighted in the promotion of the area. For instance, the local guide to Coulsdon, Purley and Sanderstead in 1934 stated on its front pages the words:

For Garden Homes Set amidst the Surrey Hills

The preface to this guide stated: *"This is now one of the largest Urban Districts in the country, and is besides, in the true sense of the word, a health resort. The death rate is 8.5 per thousand of the population, being 4.9 less than the average for the whole of England and Wales; and though the birth rate is 13.4 per thousand (that for the whole country being 16.3), the deaths of infants under one year is only 5.0 per thousand, compared with 7.4 for England and Wales.*

In the official guide for 1951 the preface states: *The district covered by this guide developed very rapidly in the years up to 1939 because many people desired to take up residence on the Surrey Hills and enjoy the health giving benefits of breathing in the invigorating air of these parts. It is a happy thing that almost without exception the residential development of the district has not detracted from the general appearance. It was naturally, a little sad to see green fields being intersected by roads for the erection of houses, but the houses which have been built abutting on them are of pleasant modern design, with no irritating uniformity, and prospective residents have insisted upon good gardens, for which this neighbourhood has always been well known.*

It is apparent that at that time the houses were constructed excellent views existed from most of the roads in the area, but as the trees have multiplied and matured, the views have declined considerably. Nonetheless, the roads are elegant and tree lined, and with the altitude, are light and breezy. The roads often delineate the old roads or boundaries of Coulsdon Manor. It is not known precisely how the developers designed the area but covenants indicate a desire to create a garden suburb using native hedges and trees. The original planting completed by the previous owners of the manor were incorporated into the design. In particular, the yew trees lining Hartley Old Road and Coulsdon Road where it joins Hartley Down, are retained. There is also a very limited use of small flint walls around garden boundaries which shows a desire to maintain the vernacular in construction.

Derivation of Names

Many of the roads include the name "Hartley". Locally it has been rumoured that the name implies some connections to the famous jam producers, but no evidence of this has been found. It is probable that the name directly relates to the special character of the area with regard to wildlife and the environment. The word Hart is old term for a male deer, particularly red deer stag, and the word ley means grassland. The spelling leigh or lee was often used to denote a sunny grassy clearing between trees. The word Hartley literally paints a picture of stags feeding on lush grassland between mature trees. That the area appeared this way in the past is reinforced by the earliest name for The Hartley Old Farm, first recorded in the Court Rolls in 1425 as "Hartlees". It is possible that this farm had a much earlier foundation back in the mists of time.

Various old names were given to the fields or pieces of land now beneath the houses. The more obvious ones include 'chalk pit field' (under Cearn Way), 'kitchen field' (adjacent to

Hartley Old Farm), 'ley field' (top of Hartley Old Road & Hartley Hill – this 'ley' may have been used for 'Hartley') and 'eleven acres' (under Hartley Farm).

Less obvious are names such as 'wimble stimble' (under Hartley Old Road to Hartley Down), 'Osmans Field' (Hartley Old Road to Old Lodge Lane), 'Merchants' (under Coulsdon Court Road), 'lanch' and 'great king hill' (under the golf course). All these names can be seen on the Bainbridge 1785 map of the area.

Historical Development

Coulsdon Court

The manor of Coulsdon has been variously spelled over the centuries and is mentioned in the Domesday Survey when it was held by the abbey of St. Peter, Chertsey. After the dissolution in 1537 it was granted to various owners and ultimately passed, in 1782, to Thomas Byron.

The present and much extended building of Coulsdon Court has been renamed Coulsdon Manor by more recent hoteliers. It was built in 1850 by 'Squire' Thomas Byron. It was said to be constructed of the last bricks to be made locally at Crossways, Old Coulsdon. It was erected on the foundations of The Old Hartley Farm, which was demolished to make way for the new house. This was recorded as a major break in the medieval Coulsdon pattern as the farmstead was first mentioned in the Court Roll for 1425 when it was called "Hartlees". This new house was the second "Coulsdon Court", as the existing "Grange" at Old Coulsdon was previously the Squires residence. A new "Hartley" farm was built on the north side of the estate to utilise the fields, and the fields to the south were added to Coulsdon Court farm, once situated at Old Coulsdon. Both farms were tenanted and not managed by the Byron family.

The house included three reception rooms and a dining room as well as a library, gun room, the butler's, the head housemaid's and staff sitting rooms and a large kitchen on the ground floor. Upstairs there were sixteen bedrooms each with a dressing room, plus one bathroom and one WC to serve them all.

Byron laid out the parkland complete with a ha-ha, very much a status item in the Victorian period, much of which remains. This is similar to a dry moat, with a below ground wall forming the side nearest the house. It meant that the cattle, sheep and deer could graze up to and into the moat, but not get over the facing wall and back into the garden. With fences or hedges removed this created an extensive and unimpeded view from the house over the garden and out into the fields. It was reminiscent of the great estates and a sign of wealth.

Thomas Byron succeeded his father as squire in 1845 and one of his first acts was to give land for the building of a school for Old Coulsdon, there having been only a small school in a cottage run by the Rector before this. Thomas's school has remained on the same site, rebuilt a couple of times, by the pond on Bradmore Green.

Like his father Thomas married into the Jeffreys family, to his Aunt Charlotte's daughter Julia. He was Squire for only 18 years but he changed the face of Coulsdon in that time with the Court bringing in the gentry.

Around that time, the court and farms plus the Grange employed 150 men on farming, and perhaps 80 people as servants. It seems that up to 80 women also did the laundry, mostly from their own homes, and using Farthing Down as the drying fields.

Squire Thomas Byron resented the public road called "Hartley Old Road" passing so close to his new Coulsdon Court, and in particular seeing farm workers and occasional trade passing by. He blocked off the Queens Highway near the top of Hartley Old Road but was forced by Parliament to build a new road in its place. This was opened in 1854 and called "Byrons New Road", which was later changed to called Hartley Down, to enable travellers to bypass the Court. He also created a private gated drive at the head of Hartley Old Road as a grand entrance to the Court.

Thomas Byron died in 1863 and his son Edmund inherited the title at the age of 19 years. He was Squire for 58 years and became well known for his passion for field sports. The house was the scene for hunting meets and huge shooting parties. He is said to have persuaded the railway company to move the Caterham line in order to protect his best hunting country. He had a desire to maintain Coulsdon Court as a manorial estate from which no other human habitations could be seen. He is said to have been so incensed by the hilltop appearance of the new Cane Hill sanatorium in 1882 that he had trees planted along the western skyline, now the Woodlands, in order to obscure the hospital. Evidence of his extensive tree planting, especially yews, exists all over the area.

Edmund Byron, known as Nobby, employed a butler, footman, groom, three gardeners, three keepers (gamekeepers), a cook and two maids. The walled garden was used to produce figs, grapes, apricots and quince and all the walnuts were pickled. Peacocks strutted the grounds and rabbits were said to romp over the estate wall on Coulsdon Road in order to access the cornfields on the opposite side. The head gardener made Christmas wreaths each year from variegated holly growing adjacent to the house.

Edmund died in 1921 and his funeral was said by contemporaries to be old fashioned and an anachronism at the time. His coffin was carried by tenants and staff (including head gardener Charles Stoneham) to St. Johns, Old Coulsdon to the tolling of the bell 77 times, one for each year of his age. His death ended Coulsdon as an agricultural community in that his son and grandson preferred to live in Wiltshire and sold off the estate in 1921.

Development – Expanding London

The development of Coulsdon followed the creation of Purley as a township subsequent to the introduction of rail and tram links. In no time Purley reached housing saturation and it was necessary to expand towards Coulsdon and with the benefit of easy access to the rail links, the grounds of Coulsdon Court were ideally placed for development following the demise of the Byrons.

The developer Charles Henry Cearn of Reddown Road, Coulsdon bought 298 acres for housing development, leaving the court and its immediate grounds to form the existing golf course. The historic relationship between Coulsdon Manor, the golf course and the new houses created on what was then called the Coulsdon Court estate created a unique niche in this part of South London.

Development - Implementation

The design and construction of the dwellings allied to the covenants included in the land sale created beautiful tree lined streets redolent of the finest leafy suburbs of London. The ecological value of the low density building, the wealth of suburban trees and the native woods and open grasslands of the golf course cannot be overstated. In contrast to much of London, the majority of the area is quiet and tranquil and possesses a wealth of birds and mammals.

The terms of the land sale are unusual in that it included a requirement to create a country club for golf, tennis (6 courts) and other games on 140 acres around the mansion. In the deeds the vendor was asked to use "*his best endeavours to procure that every purchaser should be entitled to become a member of the Golf Club*"

The terms of the sale clearly represent a desire to prevent any dramatic urbanisation of the area. Covenants were included and stated:

- No buildings to be erected on land other than detached or semi-detached house
- No house erected on the land to be used other than as a private or professional residence nor shall anything be done to become a nuisance etc. nor used for any hoardings
- No boundary or party fences other than wire fences and live hedges and the purchaser shall do all to maintain such parts of live hedges as in his ground and keep them at a height not exceeding 6 ft
- No building to be erected with 30 ft of the road and 4' 6" of boundaries.

Development - Architecture

Two building contractors have been identified from advertisements in official guides to Purley and Coulsdon for 1934, these are:

- John Chester, Building Contractor – address: Holmwood, Coulsdon Court. The advert shows a photograph of Holmwood, his own property (now 14, Coulsdon Court Road) presumably as an example of the quality of his houses. The advertisement states: ***Only one class of workmen and materials used whether building to contract or for speculation – THE BEST***

A second advertisement includes a photograph of a detached house in Coulsdon Road built by John Chester and priced, freehold, from £1195. The house in the photograph is one of those situated immediately opposite to the top (hotel) entrance to Coulsdon Court Road. The advertisement states:

Here is a good proposition – “made” road, open position convenient for trains and omnibuses, modern equipment and a plot with a gentle slope. 3 bed, 2 rec, kitchen, bathroom, separate W.C. and substantial garage.

- F. A. Freeman, Building Contractor – address: Hill View, 2, Hartley Down. The house at this address still exists and was clearly built by Freeman, but was not photographed for use in the advertisements.

The three advertisements include a photograph each of a large detached house. The advertisements are all for buildings on 'Coulsdon Court Estate' and read:

"Attractive, well designed freehold houses for sale situated in a delightful countryside which offers choice extensive views."

The advertisement including this text shows a new house now recognised as number 12, Hartley Old Road. A second advertisement shows a large Tudor house said to be within 5 minutes from the station and adjoining Coulsdon Court golf course. This house has been recognised as number 8, Hartley Way, which has been slightly altered over the years.

A third advertisement shows a house recognised as number 24, Coulsdon Court Road. This is an attractive Tudor house with attached garage, the house having subsequently been extended to incorporate the garage. The homes are all advertised from £1450.

It is obvious that the developers chose detached two storey houses and as the word 'speculation' is used in the advertisements, clearly saw the properties as investments for some buyers rather than as homes. The focus on the provision of garages, highlighted as 'substantial garage' in one advertisement, suggests a concern with status. Car ownership at that time was low and people owning cars were seen as the middle classes.

The builders highlight the 'Tudor' designs of two houses although the black and white timbered houses are not given any historical name. All these houses now fit within what we call the "Tudorbethan" style and are often seen as highly desirable houses in the suburbs.

It is noticeable from the photographs that exist and in the advertisements that all the new properties were standing on open sites. Few trees can be seen and the views from the properties are far reaching in to London. The house shown in Coulsdon Court Road (no. 24) is seen from the golf course and the existing chainlink fence and dense, tall trees were not present in the 1930's. The planting and growth of new trees now obscures much of the advertised 'choice extensive views' although it is possible to see Canary Wharf from selected spots on the higher ground.

The Coulsdon & Purley Town Planning Scheme shows that, other than the Court, farm and lodges, few buildings existed in the area in 1930. The lighting and making up of the roads is recorded in council minutes in 1933 and 1934, when the building started. Plans for 1948 show all the existing streets and the great majority of existing buildings were completed by that date. A small amount of infilling has occurred since.

Development – The Hotel

The vision for the country club was not attained and although the council bought the house and surrounding golf course, it continued to decline. By 1981 it was quite run down and when threatened with demolition, residents created a furore. Subsequently, it was leased to

hoteliers by Croydon Council and after many different hotel groups, finally passed to the existing Oxford Hotels and Inns Group.

Over the years the original house has been extensively extended to create rooms and a banqueting suite, and with some marketing focus on becoming a golf resort hotel. The lease includes hotel responsibility for maintaining and surfacing that part of Coulsdon Court Road that extends from Coulsdon Road to the hotel entrance.

The Ecology of the Area

Although the leafy urban roads create a unique visual character, they also offer significant ecological benefits which are also threatened by infilling and urbanisation. A feature of the area is the extensive gardens laid out in the 1930's. At this period a limited range of plants were available so exotic and Mediterranean planting, so prevalent now (2010) was rare. This meant that hedges were planted using shrubs such as privet, beech, laurel and yew. Some of these have been left to grow large creating rather wild and often warm sheltered areas in gardens. Added to this, the trees used include beech, ash, yew, laurel and Portuguese laurel, and as these also seed themselves, further areas of wildness have developed. The exotic planting and flowering shrubs added in subsequent decades, provided they are screened or in back gardens, do not create a problem for wildlife. They often provide nectar sources at times not covered by native plants and, overall, have created an exceptional habitat for insects and birds. This is proven by the wide range of species noted including Scandinavian redwings in winter feeding on native holly and ivy. The gardens also offer abundant nesting sites and shelter.

A wide range of mammals exist and the most obvious is the urban fox. Many of these look healthy and mange appears rare. This usually suggests that residents are feeding the foxes, as with a healthy mixed diet they rarely look in poor health. A small number of roe deer live in the woodlands east and south of the golf course, and these often move to residents gardens to feed on roses and other choice plants. Staff at Dollypers Hill reserve suggest that these animals were trapped inside London when the M25 was constructed, and that numbers have increased in recent decades. Badgers are present and visit some gardens but no evidence exists as to numbers or the location of sets.

A specific feature of large gardens is that there exists room to provide compost heaps. Being large, many residents, especially as they get older, leave old trees to decline, abandon corners and embankments, and leave cut or fallen timber in 'habitat' piles. A specific benefit of this wildness in local gardens is their value to threatened bumble bee and stag beetle species, both said to be present in large numbers in this locality of Surrey.

The ecology of the golf course is extremely important as it compliments the surrounding gardens. It provides a series of different habitats which includes turf upon which badgers will find earthworms, and deer grazing. As the golf course is surrounded by trees and rough grass including some old meadow, it is a classic woodland habitat. Crickets abound, as well as brimstone butterflies and mice and voles feed the tawny owls more often heard than seen. Pipistrelle bats are also seen feeding along this habitat. The golf course includes mature species trees, native woodland, native hedges, bramble, wild boundary areas and much decaying wood. Some exemplary golf course management, whether intended or just a matter of neglect, has also maintained or perhaps created meadows and areas of rough along the fairways that include native grasses such as Yorkshire Fog. Indicator species including

meadow brown butterflies and field crickets suggest that these are most probably remnant grasslands from the Victorian hay meadows that must have existed on the Byron's estate. These survivals make Coulsdon Court very similar to, and as valuable to London, as locations such as Hampstead Heath.

As a consequence of the high altitude, tree cover and good light levels, the lichens on trees in the area are exceptional when compared to London generally. On the Brighton Road lichens are rare due to vehicle pollution levels and yet within one mile they flourish in the cleaner, often higher zones. As lichens are indicators of air pollution it is important to protect and enhance the environment in which they exist.

The Character of the Area

Key Views and Vistas

The area is undulating and as the roads reach heights of 125 metres, they are always light and airy with surprising views in all directions. From Hartley Hill the views extend over Old Lodge Lane eastwards towards the beautifully wooded streets of Kenley and Purley, and northwards to Crystal Palace. From Hartley Old Road views extend to Canary Wharf, and from Coulsdon Court Road views extend into the countryside in Surrey. The view from the bottom of Hartley Down looking up Hartley Down and Hartley Old Road, the view from Coulsdon Road approaching the hotel entrance, and the view south from the hotel patio are representative of the area and ought to be protected.

Definition of Character Areas

A brief survey of local streets has been completed, and includes:

Cearn Way

This cul-de-sac is an extension north of Coulsdon Court Road, and the housing is similar. The golf course side of the road is a short grassy bank leading into a native grasses meadow within the golf course. Unusually, the road is unadopted and surfaced with compacted flint. There are no drains or footway. The two lampposts appear 1920/1930 design but are in poor condition.

Cearn Way was recorded in 1921 as the tradesman's entrance to Coulsdon Court and that it was rough and steep. It appears the Squire was upset if tradesmen went too close to the court and brewer's drays were expected to stop short and the employees manually roll the barrels to the house.

Coulsdon Court Road

The detached houses were built around 1935 in Tudor, art deco and arts and crafts design, with one bungalow added in 1947. The properties are widely spaced and homogenous with few extensions to the original properties. Most properties are attractively hedged, and many mature trees exist between houses but principally along garden bottoms adjacent to Coulsdon Road. These are protected by some Tree Preservation orders (TPO's) and include beech, Scots Pine, ash and yews, many of which must have been planted by the Byron's, perhaps as

screening to Cane Hill. The properties are all to the left of the road, looking north, and the right comprises the boundary of the golf course which is also densely planted with trees, many self set. The lampposts appear 1920/1930's design but are in poor condition.

Coulsdon Road (small section adjacent to Hartley Down)

This section includes the original Coulsdon Court Lodge and includes some exceptional knapped flint walling and many mature yews planted by the Byron's. Due to excess vehicle parking on verges, poor tree pruning and a general lack of understanding, many of the old yew trees are in very poor condition.

The character of this spot was recorded by an early traveller; *On the right is a grove of yew trees. In 1921 it was rather an eerie experience to walk that way on a winters night. There was no street lighting, for gas and electricity had still to come, and the road at this point was engulfed in deep shadow. The wind whispered, twigs rustled, branches creaked; an owl gave its sudden mournful cry as the wayfarer hurried on. There was no traffic save for a solitary cyclist or a farmer jogging his way home, drowsy at the reins.*

Hartley Down (previously called Byrons New Road)

Entering this road from Reedham leads to an attractive vista up the two roads as the split with Hartley Old Road is reached. A harmonious lawned corner between the two roads supports three street trees and a seat and greatly complements the view. This small area was planted with 2,000 daffodils by HADRA in 2008. The houses are mixed and contain some semi-detached, with a high incidence (for the area) of UPVC and extensions to many properties. The urbanised feel of this road is highlighted by speed bumps, hatching, illuminated bollards and unattractive concrete lampposts. The street trees are uniform and exceptional in the higher reach but spasmodic and poor lower down. The lower area includes excessive conifer growth and some overgrown hedges. Hedges could ideally replace existing larchlap fencing. The high walls and garage fronts on the left side of the road are sometimes lacking in planted screening. Some render to walls is painted in rather bright colours

The name Hartley Downs first appears on an early map for 1762 but does not appear on later maps nor seems to have been in general use after that date.

Hartley Farm Estate

A private cul-de-sac in which the original Hartley Down farmhouse exists together with four other houses added in recent decades. There are no street lights or footways. An old mixed hedge exists along the one side (west) of the road. This tenanted farm was built by the Byron's to manage the fields north of Coulsdon Court after Hartley Old Farm was demolished.

Hartley Hill

This road offers two perspectives. The higher part (from 46 & 55) comprises of individually designed detached houses with extensive hedges, grass verges and good street trees. This

greenness creates a model London suburb. The lower part of the road is steep and the garages under the house line on the north side result in extensive walling, some of this rendered and ugly. The absence of hedges and the few spasmodic street trees in this part fail to shield these features adequately. The views eastwards are exceptional and the vista to the wooded streets of Purley and Kenley notable. The modern lampposts are jarring, and many vehicles are parked on the footpath. Many vehicles are 'rat-running' and excessive vehicle speeds are routine.

Hartley Old Road

This rising road with mature yews and other trees, and a grass verge on one side, is an attractive urban road. The trees include a walnut, mature oak and ash, hollies, whitebeam and many other ornamentals. The vista from the top looking north extends as far as Canary Wharf. There are very few alterations to the detached properties on either side, and unusually in this area, bungalows predominate on the east side. The 1930's roof line includes various levels and pitches and creates an attractive vista. Some 1920/1930's style lampposts remain with many later replacements. There is also some attractive low flint walling in the lower part of the road. The cul-de-sac at the top of the road was the site of a Coulsdon Court lodge and entrance to the main drive to the manor house.

Hartley Way

An attractive steeply curving road with Tudor style detached properties. The gardens were often edged with a short flint wall and this is a notable feature of this road. A mature horse chestnut was removed in 2009, although the circular flint wall, now badly split, remains. A 2' grass verge complements this attractive urban setting. Being elevated there are vistas to open countryside. The street trees are very mixed, both in species and in size, one is dead, and they are badly spaced. Two 1920/1930's style lampposts exist although the remainder have been unsuitably replaced in recent decades. Drivers use this road as a 'rat run' and traffic is slowed using speed humps.

This road was given interim approval as a Local Area of Special Character (LASC) although this will not apply before 2012.

Coulsdon Manor & Golf Course

Coulsdon Manor is a country house type hotel with 35 rooms. As it sits centrally within its 18 hole golf course grounds of 140 acres it creates the illusion of rural isolation. No other building or urban feature can readily be seen looking out towards the golf course perimeter. This isolation is reinforced at night in that the mature trees within the grounds cut out all modern street lighting, and the original and relatively weak lighting at the entrance from Coulsdon Court Road still feels rural and timeless. The woods also cut out a high degree of local urban road and train noise thereby reinforcing the rural ambience. The hotel is grade 2 listed and aspects of the old house with its south facing ha-ha can still be appreciated.

In recent decades insensitive development including a sports centre, a terrace of four houses, a car park and considerable golf improvement works have occurred around the hotel. Nonetheless, the presence of many trees has obscured this development and avoided the excessive urbanisation of the site.

Some exceptional mature species trees exist around the hotel in an area originally called 'The Grove'. More exceptional trees including cedars, sequoias and yews exist, especially on the north side of the hotel, as well as old coppice woodlands. These trees were accorded protection by Croydon Council in 2009.

Many trees define old driveways and other boundaries of the estate, these often being difficult to identify. An extremely old fig tree still grows adjacent to the wall, originally surrounding the kitchen garden, and now the north boundary of the tennis courts. An archive report states that Charles Stoneham, born 1851 was the head gardener at Coulsdon Court and was one of the bearers of Edmund Byron's coffin in 1921. One of Charles's skills was to grow figs, and he created wreaths for various funerals and at Christmas using the variegated hollies surrounding the Court. These old hollies still exist and can be seen around the north and east side of the building.

Many vistas exist and need protection but have yet to be defined. The most significant is the view from the orangery and patio looking south across the ha-ha towards St. Johns church at Old Coulsdon. Two public footpaths cross the golf course. These are footpath no. 164 from Hartley Old Road to Coulsdon Road and footpath no. 40 from Coulsdon Road to Old Lodge Lane. Vistas from these footpaths may need to be identified and protected.

HADRA Aspirations

The text above suggests that the HADRA area has a special character and is, in its current state, an important and valuable wildlife area. In support of this assertion, some residents have said that they moved here from North Croydon because that area became over developed. What they mean by this is that progressive garden infill and new properties not only destroyed the green space, but that the new residents needed central heating boilers, and brought in cars, commuted and increased congestion. Air pollution became worse and the sheer mass of people essentially squeezed out wildlife and destroyed the quality of life.

HADRA is aware that although Croydon Council take account of individual planning applications, they do not relate these to the overall impact on ecology and air pollution. Over time, building footprints get ever larger and nobody measures the intensity of human impact on the wider environment.

The special character of the HADRA area does not come from the quality of the buildings alone. The historic layout of roads, paths and boundaries, characteristic building and paving materials, a particular 'mix' of building uses, public and private spaces including the golf course and greens, and the trees and street furniture all contribute to character. All these and more make up the familiar local scene. A characteristic of the area is its elevation of between 100 and 150 metres above sea level. This creates big skies and exceptional light levels. Added to this, the elevation results in much cleaner air than in London generally.

Conservation area status would protect much of this character, but this looks unlikely to happen in the near future. In response HADRA created proposals for a new status, called GREENLANDS. This was a plan to protect the area as if it were a country park, with a strong wildlife and clean air emphasis. As country parks do not allow for residents, and no legislation for an urban country park exists, the idea was shelved in 2009. Part of the proposal was to

create a more family friendly area by developing more off road footpaths and cycleways. The support of Croydon Council to instigate and fund this work will continue.

The Coalition Government introduced in December 2010 proposals for a new LOCALISM BILL. In this they anticipate giving defined local communities much stronger influence including the right to challenge and take over services. The Bill also suggests sweeping away much of the existing planning bureaucracy and ceding power to communities.

The definition of community is unclear. East Coulsdon Residents Association (ECRA) have already recognised Coulsdon, Old Coulsdon and Cane Hill as a 'local community' in the Croydon Council Core Strategy. HADRA is probably too small to form a single area and may need to join KENDRA as a 'local community'. The Localism Bill may create the opportunity to influence the local area, and HADRA will pursue whatever opportunities arise.

What Might We Ask of Residents & the Golf Course Management?

To give interested residents some idea of HADRA aspirations, the following is a summary road by road:

Cearn Way

- See comment on ugly chainlink fence under Coulsdon Court Road, which extends into this road.
- The short grassy bank leading into a native grasses meadow within the golf course should be protected.
- Renovate the two lampposts or replace them with a 1920/1930's design.
- The street signs should be renovated or replaced with a design sympathetic to the 1920/1930's (as example see sign on Old Lodge Lane, Reedham end).

Coulsdon Court Road

- The golf course boundary is overplanted with trees, especially sycamore and self seeded trees. Some thinning to allow more light and the development of individual trees surrounded by wildflower meadow would benefit the environment and vistas.
- Consider whether the ugly chainlink fencing on the golf course boundary could be removed, or perhaps set back from the boundary so that it is not visible. This would enhance the vista along the road.
- The street signs should be renovated or replaced with a design sympathetic to the 1920/1930's (as example see sign on Old Lodge Lane).
- The 1920/1930's style lampposts should be renovated, or if not possible, replaced along with the modern replacements with a more sympathetic design.

Coulsdon Road (small section adjacent to Hartley Down)

- Protect the existing flint walling.
- Protect the mature yews including those on the west side of the road, many of which are stressed by repeated pruning, driveway works and vehicle compaction.

Hartley Down

- Refurbish (or replace with more sympathetic design?) existing seat on corner with Hartley Old Road.
- Place 1920/1930's style seat in bricked space prepared on grassed corner with Hartley Old Road.
- Reduce urban clutter where possible i.e. speed bumps, hatching, illuminated bollards.
- Replace lampposts with those of 1920/1930's design.
- Replant street trees to agreed species and planting plan.
- Encourage house owners to remove conifer line, restrict overgrown hedges and replace larchlap fencing with hedges.
- Encourage house owners to plant green material over non-flint walls and increase the incidence of flint walling.
- The street signs should be replaced with a design sympathetic to the 1920/1930's (as example see sign on Old Lodge Lane)
- The end of Hartley Down, where it joins Coulsdon Road, has extensive grassy banks and verges. These were the focus of bulb planting by HADRA in October 2009 and 2010. Crocus were added to existing snowdrops, and 4,000 daffodils also planted. The bulbs protect existing wildflowers by preventing mowing of the grass until June each year, which creates a valuable habitat.

Hartley Farm Estate

- Protect the old mixed hedge along the west side of the road.

Hartley Hill

- The vista from most of the steeper sections looking east should be protected.
- The 1920/1930's style lampposts should be renovated, or if not possible, replaced along with the modern replacements with more sympathetic designs.
- Homeowners should be encouraged to plant traditional hedges and screen render and extensive walls with plants.
- Unsightly conifer hedge lines should be removed.
- Replant street trees to agreed species and planting plan.
- The street signs should be replaced with a design sympathetic to the 1920/1930's (as example see sign on Old Lodge Lane).
- Parking on the footpaths should be discouraged.

Hartley Old Road

- The mature yews look stressed and the causes should be considered.
- Replant street trees to agreed species and planting plan.
- The vista from the top looking north extends as far as Canary Wharf and should be protected.
- The 1920/1930's style lampposts should be renovated, or if not possible, replaced along with the modern replacements with more sympathetic designs.
- Homeowners should be encouraged to repair and maintain existing flint walls, and use such material wherever possible.

- Hedges have been removed on the higher section of the road and unsuitable modern fencing used. Homeowners should be encouraged to use traditional hedging at the front of their property.
- The street signs should be replaced with a design sympathetic to the 1920/1930's (as example see sign on Old Lodge Lane).
- The ugly wire fencing to the golf course at the top of the road should be removed

Hartley Way

- Protect the existing short flint walls and encourage homeowners to use flint walling wherever possible.
- Repair the flint wall around the horse chestnut street tree.
- Replant street trees to agreed species and planting plan.
- The 1920/1930's style lampposts should be renovated, or if not possible, replaced along with the modern replacements with more sympathetic designs.
- Can the 'rat running' be reduced and the speed humps removed?
- The street signs should be replaced with a design sympathetic to the 1920/1930's (as example see sign on Old Lodge Lane)

Coulsdon Manor Hotel and Golf Course

- The golf course appears to have been gifted with conditions supporting public access. Further research should be completed to ascertain whether the gift was to residents or whether it is possible for Croydon Council to sell the site for development.
- Many local people use the golf course to walk, exercise dogs and jog. In the past few years local people walking dogs have been a cause of friction with the golf club proprietors. It is evident that walkers do upset players in that they can trespass on fairways and put themselves in some danger of being struck by a ball. Dog mess is also left on fairways by inconsiderate owners. Such is the frequency of trespass walking that a series of informal paths have been created within many parts of the course. It is not possible to walk right around the course at present without potentially upsetting players. The solution to this would be to create a formalised permissive path structure around the course. This could be embellished with seating and perhaps public art works as well as measures to control dog waste. People using the paths could also be encouraged to use the hotel facilities and potentially increase business.
- Is there the potential to increase walking opportunities and social cohesion by promoting the hotel as a local 'pub' for residents? This would ideally require hard paving to the existing footpath from Hartley Old Road, and new paths to improve access generally. Some or all of the paths would need lighting to facilitate winter use. The use of the hotel as a 'community' centre in some way would also enhance increased local usage.
- Tennis was specifically included in the remit for the creation of the golf club. The grounds include four tennis courts that appear underused and ways to expand usage ought to be considered.
- The management of the golf course needs to recognise the value of native grassland and wildness generally, and an ecological management plan should be prepared. The minimal use of artificial fertiliser, herbicide, dye (on greens) and all forms of chemical should be incorporated within this.

- The existing wildlife corridors should be identified and ways to expand corridors considered.
- No rivers or surface water exists for wildlife so the opportunity to create pools should be taken wherever possible.
- With imagination and funding the potential to integrate the golf course within an ecological park or arboretum exists and would greatly enhance the area.
- The flint faced ha-ha has been repaired recently using brick and not knapped flint. All future repairs should be in the vernacular.

The Local Character

HADRA does not want to be prescriptive and would prefer to work with residents in order to maintain the existing character of the area. Some of the issues include:

Entrance Gates, Fences and Walls

- Properties in the HADRA area were rarely gated. The fitting of new gates often includes fencing or walls, and is a form of exclusion, and of urbanisation. It not only detracts from the natural vegetated appearance of the roads, but also severely reduces wildlife habitats, and should be avoided

Landscape Habitats

- The latest research proves that what really matters to wildlife in gardens is 'spatial heterogeneity', which means the greatest mass of vegetation possible per square metre. This suggests that the original 1930's garden design in the HADRA area was farsighted and environmentally sound. It is best achieved by viewing gardens as three layers, the upper tree level, the mid shrub and hedge level, and the ground level. The ground level is ideally wild meadow rather than lawn, although cottage gardens plants are ideal nectar sources. Many bedding plants are sterile and do nothing to help wildlife
- Householders are encouraged to both maintain and plant traditional hedges i.e. privet, beech, yew and laurel. More modern cultivars such as green and gold conifers, photina and suchlike are not suitable and change the character of road frontages.
- Modern front garden designs, often incorporating Mediterranean planting and the use of gravels, fountains and statues, create visual clutter and are not in character. These designs items should be located to the rear of the properties which will reduce their visual impact from the road.
- Householders are encouraged to plant bee and butterfly friendly plants wherever possible. Although cottage garden and herbaceous plants are valuable, ivy, raspberries, cotoneaster, lavender and similar plants also fit within the 1930's design perspective
- Residents should be encouraged to compost, create dry hedges and habitat piles, and rot old timber by placing it on soil, to encourage insects, mammals and birds.

Croydon Council – Access and Mobility Issues

- The roads are generally steep and to encourage more walking and help the aged and/or the less mobile more seating should be provided along the verges. It may be feasible for HADRA to donate such seats if acceptable costs can be agreed, which has not been the case in the past. Residents may wish to donate memorial seats for placement in roads.

Croydon Council – Environmental & Climate Change Strategy

Croydon Council have a strategy to counteract global warming, but little impact is evident from this. More should be done to:

- Reduce road vehicle pollution and emissions from central heating boilers in order to improve air quality for residents, lichens and insects
- Ensure that planning policy promotes the use of sustainable building materials and techniques
- Ensure that each and every property retains all rainwater from gutters and driveways on the plot using soakaways and not allow it to enter streets, especially steep streets, to potentially cause flooding elsewhere
- Prevent householders developing sealed driveways that exclude the free drainage of all precipitation

Innovative Future Strategy

In creating the GREENLANDS concept, HADRA recognised some specific weaknesses in the area, which include:

- Residents routinely travel by car to Kenley Airfield & Common, Coulsdon Common and Farthing Downs simply because there are no other safer ways to access these recreational areas. Consequently, these areas are often congested with vehicles, and the few who cycle, ride horses or walk are thereby further disadvantaged
- Although both walking and cycling are recognised as essential to the future health and welfare of children, and adults, neither is facilitated in the area. Cycling is positively dangerous on narrow streets shared with busses, and often lined with parked cars. No cycling routes east to west or vice versa exist. Public walking paths are often steep and little or no maintenance takes place.

The solution is to develop a farsighted strategy to make the area a far more family friendly zone by ensuring that pedestrians, cyclists, horse & cycle riders are given priority over vehicles, which might include:

- The closure of Old Lodge Lane to through traffic, and the creation of a hard surfaced bridleway along this road to link Kenley Airfield to the HADRA area. This will have the additional benefit of stopping fly tipping along this route
- The development of permissive hard surfaced footway and cycle path from Hartley Old Road along the golf course boundary to link with Grange Park and the adjacent schools & college
- Canons Hill to Old Lodge Lane to be maintained for cycling
- Hard surfaced bridleways, permissive where necessary, to be created to link Old Lodge Lane and Betts Mead to Kenley Common

Political Strategy

HADRA has tended to be apolitical, but as local councilors have been Conservative for decades, a working relationship has developed to mutual benefit. In maintaining an apolitical view, HADRA is aware that local councilors no longer have the power to influence council policy as they had in the past. This emasculation leaves communities feeling disempowered and unable to influence what happens in their area.

The main reason for this is that a top down strategy exists whereby decisions are formulated at the centre for the entire Croydon Council area. Area differences are not tolerated and so local councilors have little or no influence. Similarly, all financial policies are centrally agreed with little or no local councilor influence. Much of the council work is outsourced, often within 5 year contracts, and once agreed, change is difficult if not impossible. There is virtually no transparency in the process.

HADRA takes the view that council budgets should be defined and allocated to individual areas, so that area spends can be identified. Once budgets are allocated, local councilors should possess sufficient powers to influence the spend directly, and not work through the existing bureaucracy.

HADRA takes the view that the budgets should be spent to support local businesses. The budget spend should highlight who and how many staff are employed in that area. These staff should be more directly responsible to local councilors, who are then able to respond more immediately to residents concerns.

END

19th January 2011