

Appraisal no 21 Creffield Conservation area

Location

The central core of the Creffield conservation area is Creffield Road, surrounded by Inglis Road, Freeland Road and Wolverton Gardens to the west; and by Western Gardens, Montague Gardens and Laver Gardens to the east. It also includes Daniel Road and five houses at the north end of Birch Grove.

Designation details

The conservation area was designated in 1993.

History

The whole area was farmland until the 1890s, in the ownership of the Elms estate. The Elms, now part of Twyford School, was the home of the Wegg family and was inherited by their relations by marriage, the Round family from Colchester. With the expansion of the suburban population in the late nineteenth century, encouraged by the growth of the railways, the Round Estate was advised to develop the area.

This was originally done with the freeholds being retained by the trustees of the settled estate, the houses being sold leasehold.

The leaseholders were bound by strong restrictive covenants under which the houses were not to be used for business purposes or sub-divided into flats. These covenants, although often breached, remain valid today.

The western part of the area, comprising Inglis Road, Freeland Road, some of Wolverton Gardens and the western end of Creffield Road, was built first, in the 1890s. These are large detached houses, having on average three to four reception rooms and six bedrooms, of some 2,500 square feet or greater in floor area. Development of the rest of the area followed in the first decade of the twentieth century, with semi-detached houses typically having two to three reception rooms and five to six bedrooms, and between 2,000-3,000 square feet in floor area.

Special interest

As described above, the conservation area can be split into two sub-areas, each of considerable architectural coherence, but with a sufficiently strong overall unity of style for the whole to be identified as the 'Creffield area'. The Creffield style uses the expansive architectural vocabulary typical of the better quality of late Victorian/Edwardian middle class suburban development.

The speculative builders of the day were variously influenced by the trends in architectural styles set by the Gothic movement, the Queen Anne style of Norman Shaw, and vernacular revival

architecture. Out of this evolved a distinctive Edwardian house type, using a mixed palette of materials including of brick, stone, terracotta and stucco. Details such as porches and canopies could be of an exotic design. Decorative glass designs also show art nouveau influences.

The overall impression is of red brick and tiled houses, with contrasting stone or stucco details and white painted timber. Characteristic features of the houses include: Steeply pitched slate roofs, with decorative ridge tiles and terracotta finials, and tall chimney stacks. Large half-timbered, stuccoed or tile hung gables face the street frontage, emphasised by highly decorated barge boards. There are some notable corner features, such as the cupola surmounted by a wind vane at the corner of Wolverton Gardens and Creffield Road.

Most of the houses are built in red brick with tuck pointing on the street frontages. Some of the larger houses on Inglis Road are built in yellow stock brick with quoins and flat arches over the windows in red brick. There are many examples of decorative brickwork with moulded brick and terracotta panels.

The main windows on the street elevations are generally surrounded by wide stone pilasters and lintels, with a variety of ornamental mouldings and chamferings. The windows are double hung timber sashes with moulded surrounds and the top rail of the upper sash is slightly curved. Feature windows are found mainly on corner houses, include bay windows and first floor oriel windows.

Houses have either recessed porches, often with decorative stone lintels and keystones contrasting with the red brickwork, or highly decorative timber porches with tiled roofs. Entrance doors and screens are themselves highly decorative, featuring fielded timber panels with multiple lights and fanlights inset into the doorcase, generally with stained glass in leaded lights.

The Round Estate insisted that the houses were set back at least 22 ft from the back of pavement. This has resulted in front gardens that are large enough to contain lawns and shrubbery and which constitute an important part of the visual aspect of each house, and of the overall street scene. There are only a few examples of tiled paths. Garden walls remain largely intact, although the original iron railings have been lost.