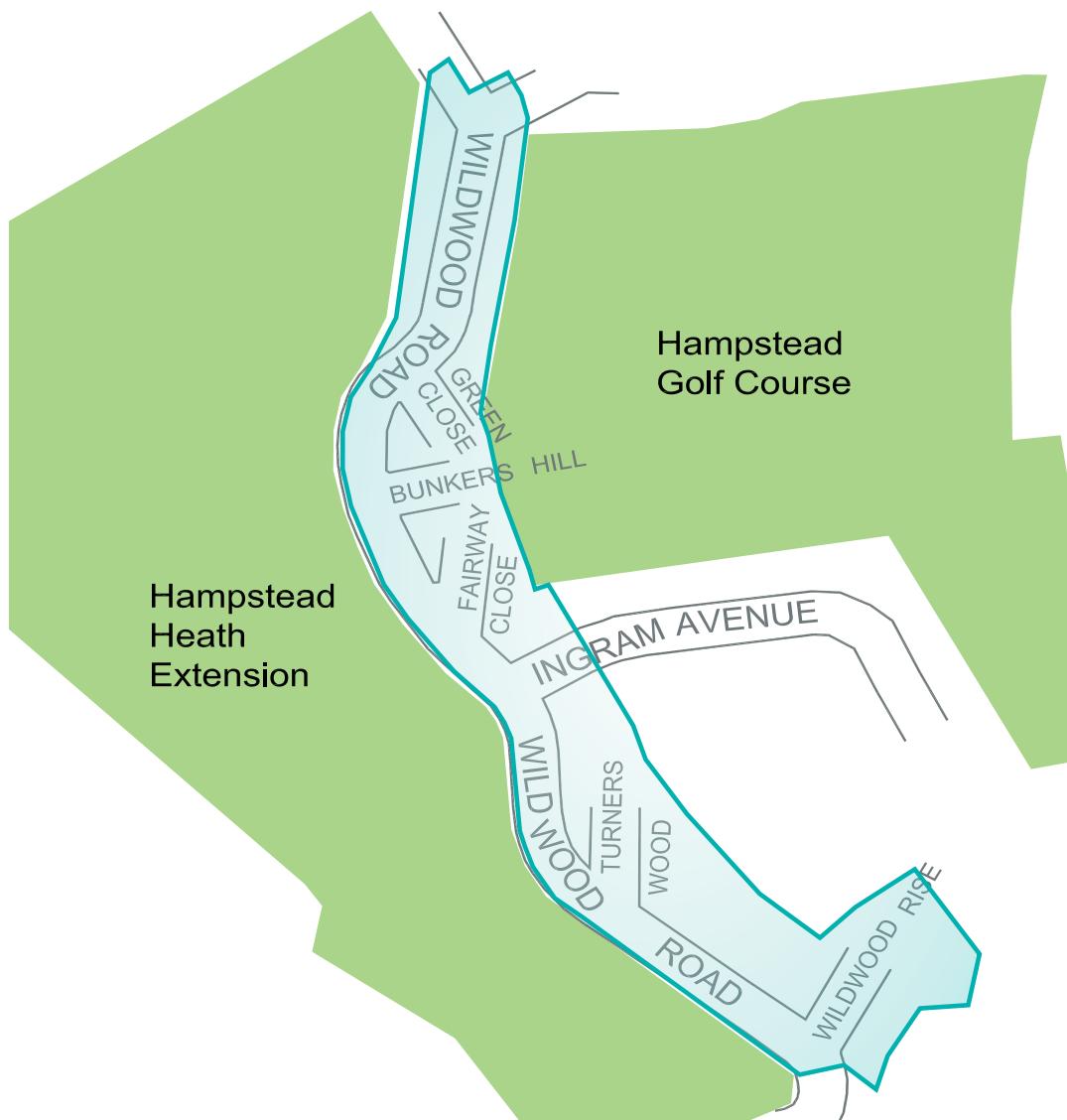


# Hampstead Garden Suburb

## Wildwood Road and its Closes – Area 7

Character Appraisal



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Map of area



# Character appraisal

## Section 1 Background historical and architectural information

### 1.1 Location and topography

Wildwood road runs north-south up a strong incline within the south east corner of the Conservation Area and borders the east side of the Heath Extension. The southern two thirds of the road has houses only on the eastern side while the northern third has a more conventional character with houses on both sides. Consequently, there is unusual numbering with Nos. 1-15 (odd) facing Nos. 46-64 (even). There are several small closes. Steeply rising topography means that many houses on the eastern side are stepped up the hill, much higher than the road and they enjoy views over the Heath Extension. The Golf Course and Turners Wood are located to the east and the Hampstead Heath Extension to the west. The section of Wildwood Road from Meadoway to Kingsley Way forms part of Area 4.

### 1.2 Development dates

This area was part of the original 1907 purchase by the Trust from Eton College. The plots were laid out in the initial years of the Suburb and there are examples of early houses such as Nos. 1-15 (odd), a distinctive G.L. Sutcliffe group built in 1911-13, and another Sutcliffe group in Turners Wood. Wildwood Rise was built between 1914 -1917. Most of the remaining houses were built later, between 1923 and 1930. Three examples exist from 1954-1964.

### 1.3 Originating architects and planners

There are some groups designed by single architects, notably the Sutcliffe groups mentioned above and clusters by C.H. James and by C. Cowles Voysey at Nos. 32-44 (even) Wildwood Road, Green Close and Fairway Close. Both James and Cowles Voysey chose to live here in houses they had designed. The majority of the remaining houses were designed individually by architects commissioned by owners or speculative developers. Most of these architects had already designed houses elsewhere in the Suburb and were very comfortable with the character of the Suburb. This familiarity with the "feel" and architectural conventions is reflected in the cohesion of the buildings.

### 1.4 Intended purpose of original development

Wildwood Road was always intended for wealthy owners. "*This is the high ridge from whence some of the most distant views are obtained - on which the rich will build their homes.*" wrote Henrietta Barnett on her copy of the plan for the Suburb prepared by Raymond Unwin in 1905, referring to Wildwood Road.

### 1.5 Density and nature of the buildings

Density is low, with substantial houses on large plots. A few of the largest houses have recently been rebuilt or extended backwards and underground.

## Section 2 Overall character of the area

Wildwood Road has a unique street scene and character within the Suburb due to its splendid open location. It is surrounded by open space: the Hampstead Heath Extension to the west and the Golf Course and Turners Wood to the east. There are spectacular views over the Heath to Central Square. The rural atmosphere is enhanced by the winding road layout, the dominance of holly hedges and established trees remaining from old woodland or field boundaries. As one moves south, the character of the road changes subtly; sizeable houses and plots, uncommonly large front gardens, high hedges and gates provide privacy from the street and an intimate woodland feel is generated by the Hampstead Heath Extension trees.

Many houses are of high architectural quality, with a large number Grade II or locally listed. Wildwood Road is unusual in being developed over a long period and has more visual variety than other roads designed and built within a short space of time. There are several coherent architectural groupings by single architects. Sutcliffe designed both the Grade II-listed Nos. 1-15 (odd) which have unusual balconies facing the Heath and the later Turner's Wood, an English vernacular close. Cowles-Voysey and James designed pleasant Neo-Georgian clusters. Most other houses were designed by individual architects, though the dominance of Neo-Georgian elements provides continuity and the large plot sizes give adequate space for individuality in design.

The overall character of the road has survived well. The main factors which detract are inappropriate extensions and houses built in the 1950-70s when planning controls were lax and, secondly, the cumulative effect of poor replacement garage doors, front doors and gates.

### 2.1 Principal positive features

#### Layout and public realm

- low density development; Wildwood Road and its closes are surrounded by open green space
- many houses are built on a ridge facing the Heath and are mainly stepped up the slope to make the most of the view
- winding road layout and holly hedges give a country lane feel
- in contrast, the closes are intimate and quiet
- in the south, extensive front gardens seclude houses from the road
- green street lamp posts are unobtrusive.

#### Landscape and trees

- mixed trees along the eastern side of the road
- abundant Heath trees reduce need for street trees along the western side
- some large garden and street trees are remnants of old woodland and field boundaries, such as the oaks on the corner of Wildwood Rise and in the garden of Spaniard's Field

- the central section provides beautiful views over the open Heath ([Photograph 1](#)).



- Towards the south the Heath Extension becomes more densely wooded, creating an intimate, rural feel, but removing landscape panoramas ([Photograph 2](#))
- many houses still conform to the original leases which specify holly hedges along this section of Wildwood Road:- Use of this indigenous woodland species adds to the countryside atmosphere ([Photograph 3](#)).



2.



3.

## Building type and design

- a large number of Grade II and locally listed buildings
- some houses were designed as coherent groups by a single architect, such as Sutcliffe, Cowles Voysey, and James; these buildings are architecturally consistent, often combining elements of symmetry and subtle asymmetry

- many individual houses are attractive and landmark buildings
- though a wide range of architects were involved, designs do not jar as most have traditional styles features and materials, creating continuity between properties
- the 1920s-30s homes are mainly Neo-Georgian in style
- most houses have integral garages, some linking properties as a design feature.

## Materials and detailing

- the Sutcliffe groups have characteristic neo-vernacular features; combinations of half-timbering and red brick, dark tiles, arched brick doorways, steep catslide roofs, bay windows
- typical elements of Neo-Georgian houses include sash or casement windows, white columned porticos, pediments over porches, fanlights, prominent chimney stacks, steep roofs and dormer windows
- pantiles on some houses, fashionable during the 1920s and 1930s
- high-quality decorative brickwork on most houses, such as soldiers or voussoirs above windows and doors, door arches, brick quoins, tile creasing, chequered brickwork.

## 2.2 Principal negative features

### Layout and public realm

- no grass verges
- unsightly high poles marking parking restrictions
- the yellow brick roundabout at the junction with Kingsley Way is overgrown, has intrusive signage, and contrasts starkly with the red brick surrounding houses ([Photograph 4](#)).



4.

### Landscape and trees

- high hedges provide privacy, but detract from the open street feel
- use of species other than holly in hedges
- overgrown hedges
- loss of front gardens to extend hardstanding for cars.

### Building type and design

- later 1950s and 1960s houses which do not fit ambience of area, but large front gardens shelter these from view

- alterations to houses that affect integrity and symmetry of design e.g. unsuitable dormer addition to No. 22.

## Materials and detailing

- a few examples of inappropriate replacement windows and front doors and many more garage doors which do not fit the character of the houses ([Photograph 5](#))
- large gates on some properties, particularly within the southern end of the road, can be confrontational
- the original leases suggest a few houses in the southern end, such as 6 and 8, were to have a partly open cleft oak fence 4'6" reflecting rustic farm fencing. These has now been removed.



## Section 3 The different parts of the main area in greater detail

While the above features are found throughout the area, certain features are more characteristic of particular sections. To illustrate some of these features Wildwood Road is divided into five sections.

- 3.1 Wildwood Road – Nos. 1-23 (odd) and Nos. 46-68 (even)
- 3.2 Green Close, Wildwood Road – Nos. 32-44 (even), Bunkers Hill, Fairway Close
- 3.3 Wildwood Road – Nos. 4-30 (even)
- 3.4 Turners Wood
- 3.5 Wildwood Rise

### 3.1 Wildwood Road [Nos. 1-23 (odd) and Nos. 46-68 (even)]

This section of the road feels more urban because it has houses on both sides of the road which make strong architectural statements. The roundabout junction with Kingsley Way has several interesting architectural examples. Nos. 62 and 64 are a semi-detached pair by M.J. Dawson. The Grade II listed building is centred on a tall shallow-angled bay which dominates the façade. There is much use of decorative brick and tile creasing, particularly round the front doors, with a dated stone number plaque above ([Photograph 6](#)).



Paul Badcock, and Badcock and Goodridge, designed Nos 19-23 (odd) and 68, (1921-23) now locally listed. No. 23 is a large house in the Parker and Unwin tradition, with leaded casements, brick mullions, and inventive use of tilework. Nos. 19 - 21 is a picturesque tile-hung pair designed to appear as a single house. No. 17, by Knight, 1922, has an impressive parapeted centrepiece with brick pedimented stair window, an open brickwork balcony and a curious dormer between chimney and roof ([Photograph 7 - see overleaf](#)).



7.



8.

Nos. 1-15, by Sutcliffe in 1911-13, are listed Grade II and are described by Mervyn Miller as "among Sutcliffe's best work". The substantial, three storied linked-detached houses are a mixture of red brick and half-timbering with dark tiles. There are textured brickwork details around windows and arched doorways, and red brick quoins. Other features include casement windows, prominent chimneys, hipped gables and bay windows. Nos. 5 and 7, 9 and 11 are linked by a canopy roof above entrances to rear garage, while Nos. 1 and 3, 13 and 15

are linked by arched passageways. Some of these houses sustained bomb damage during the war but were restored to their original state even at a time of severe shortage of building materials. No. 11 has an extended entrance porch. At the rear are roofed balconies and brick arched loggias, providing views over the Heath ([Photograph 8](#)). These balconies were rather quaintly termed sleeping balconies (clearly, benign summers were expected) and many have now been in filled with windows, though Nos. 3 and 5 remain in their original state. Small gates link the rear gardens to the Heath, in significant contrast to the large security gates of the houses towards the southern end of the road.



9.

The Sutcliffe group is largely symmetrical, but there are subtle differences between buildings. For example, Nos. 3 and 13 seem identical with a prominent brick bay and chimney, roundel window,



these are high quality buildings with Nos. 48, 50, 52, 56, 58 and 60 being locally listed

- Nos. 56-60 by James and Hennell (1923). They have graceful stripped Georgian frontages, in dark brick and red brick quoins. The group is nearly symmetrical, though 60 and 56 have contrasting shaped tall stair windows and small areas of tile creasing
- Evelyn Simmons built No. 54 for himself in 1923. The 'chalet' bungalow design is unusual in the Suburb. It has an L-shaped plan, on a double sized plot, enabling maximum utilisation of the large back garden; deep roofs, with large flat roofed dormers, sweep down to ground floor level
- Nos. 50-52 form a symmetrical pair of detached houses, with an off-centre front door and roofs sweeping over front projections including a garage
- Robert Atkinson's 1923 house, No. 48, has a quiet classical façade with pantiles, and a timber doorcase with decorative fanlight above.

### 3.2 Green Close, Wildwood Road [Nos. 32-44 (even)], Bunkers Hill, Fairway Close

Wildwood Road becomes more open at this point with houses only on the east side of the road. These have spectacular views across the Heath Extension. A restrained Neo-Georgian style characterises the houses in this section, most being built between the late 1920s-mid 1930s. This gives the group a marked cohesiveness.



Nos. 1 and 2 Green Close are substantial Neo-Georgian houses, designed in Soutar's Office in 1935. No. 2 terminates the steep driveway. No. 3 Green Close by James in 1930, fronts on to Wildwood Road and has a large side extension in the same style, unbalancing the composition ([Photograph 11](#)). In 1929, Cowles-Voysey designed a cluster of houses centred on the narrow cul-de-sac of Bunkers Hill. The entrance to Bunkers Hill is flanked by two different, but complimentary Neo-Georgian designs, a

symmetrical group of three (Nos. 38, 40 and 42) and an asymmetrical pair (No. 34 and 36). All are locally listed. The groups are linked by garages, have subtle aprons under the windows, pantiled roofs and mostly have timber sliding sash windows on the ground floor, with metal casements above. The

12.



pair of Grade II houses, at the top of the steep Bunkers Hill, are fine examples of 'stripped Georgian' with an elegant symmetrical frontage, Flemish Bond brickwork, pantiled roof and steel casement windows. There is a central twitten door masquerading as the front door. Cowles-Voyesy himself lived in No. 2 from 1929 until his death in 1981 ([Photograph 12](#)). C.H. James designed Nos. 32 and 32a Wildwood Road and neighbouring Fairway Close. All are 'stripped Georgian' houses with pantiled roofs, red brick and

attractive white door cases, though No. 32a has an out-of-character porch addition. James designed No. 3 at the head of the close for himself – this is now Grade II listed ([Photograph 13](#)). Nos. 1 and 2 Fairway Close have steel windows, while No. 3 is a mixture of casements and sashes. No. 2 has the house number cut in topiary by the front door ([Photograph 14](#)).



13.



14.

### 3.3 Wildwood Road [Nos. 4-30 (even)]

This is the most southerly section of the road where the land rises steeply. Again, there are houses only on the east side of the road. The views look across to woodland on the extension, giving a more closed-in character to this section of Wildwood Road. Though the houses in this section are by individual architects working in different styles, the lack of cohesion is mitigated by the large plot size at No. 30. Wildwood Road was designed by Hoffstead in 1927 to look like a single large house, but actually contains three flats, with a shared front door to the side. It is an eclectic mixture of styles, with classical cornice, arched windows and canted double-height bay with openwork terracotta parapet.

The entrance to Ingram Avenue is flanked by two very different houses, both locally listed. No. 26 is an American 'Deep South' alien, wonderfully confident, it was designed by G. Wellesley and T. Lovering Wills in 1928. It has symmetrical semi-circular bays, formed from a giant order of Tuscan columns supporting first floor balconies ([Photograph 15](#)). In contrast No. 24 is a handsome Neo-Georgian Soutar house, designed in 1929 with his typical restraint. Attractive features include a modillion bracketed cornice, recessed corner pilasters and an open pedimented porch.

15.



No. 20 is a pleasant Neo-Georgian style house with later coach house addition. There is an unusual triangulation in fenestration, with the three first floor windows sitting between those of the ground floor. The iron-work of the front gate matches that of the balcony over the door and the original york stone front

path survives ([Photograph 16](#)). Nos. 16, and 14 are unremarkable 1960s houses built in the original garden of No.12. Set far back from the road and screened by vast front gardens, the houses have little impact on the streetscape. Concrete boundary walls and driveway pillars are rather unsightly. In contrast, No. 18 is an overblown essay in inept Classicism, soon to be redeveloped.

No. 12 is a very large timber framed Arts and Crafts house, now hidden from view by substantial rhododendron bushes. It has large canted dormer windows and an arcaded loggia along its frontage, which would originally have been open to the elements.

16.



### 3.4 Turners Wood



17.

Turners Wood is a very attractive locally listed English vernacular close designed by Sutcliffe in 1915. There are no grass verges or street trees, and houses are bounded on the street side by high privet hedges growing above a three-brick-high wall. The end house, No. 4, provides an eye-catching focal point with a timber framed canted turret, with conical roof ([Photograph 17](#)). Though not symmetrical, there is a continuity of style and building materials within the close, with steep dark tile roofs, red brick, leaded casements and arched doorways. Nos. 2 and 6 face each other with double gables joined by staircase windows, while the L-shaped Nos. 3 and 5 turn the corners having front doors set into the angle with arched porches under triangular tile roofs ([Photograph 18](#)). Most of the houses have original doors, though the

over-large gates at No. 1 detract from the comfortable, homely atmosphere.



18.

The thoughtful design gives Nos. 2 and 3 garage provision recessed into the slope on Wildwood Road, with steps to the back gardens.

### 3.5 Wildwood Rise



19.

The mixture of architects and styles within Wildwood Rise is held together by an immaculately kept streetscape ([Photograph 19](#)). Pollarded lime trees line the road, with grass verges and thin York stone paths. Boundary fences, unusual within the Suburb, add to the rural feel.

No. 2 is a Grade II listed building by Cyril Farey in 1914 which won second prize in a Country Life competition. It has a low pitched black pantile

roof, broad overhanging eaves and massive chimneys. The house was progressive for the time, strongly horizontal with sill band and canted bays, in contrast to the period style of its neighbours ([Photograph 20](#)).



20.

Nos. 4, 5 are by Field and Simmons, 1914, and No. 6 is by Simmons in 1922. No. 5 is a grand Elizabethan style symmetrical house, with a two-storey stone projecting porch ([Photograph 21 - see overleaf](#)).



Spaniards Field, located at the end of Wildwood Rise was built in 1995 to replace a much altered Soutar house. Here the rural ambience reaches its apogee as Spaniards Field is more like a small country estate than an urban villa. It is set in huge grounds, including a private lake with orangery, garage block and gatehouse. Very little can be seen from the Wildwood Rise however, due to a curved driveway and strategic planting.

