

Tongdean Conservation Area - Character Statement

1. Location and context

The Tongdean conservation area is an inner suburban area to the north west of the city on rising ground and straddling the old borough boundaries. It is predominantly a residential area and comprises parts of Tongdean Avenue, Tongdean Road, Dyke Road Avenue and The Spinney. Development took place largely between c.1860 and 1939, with the majority of housing being early 20th century. The wider setting of the area is similarly suburban residential but much of it of later date. The conservation area is low rise within a wider low rise context and has no landmarks; consequently the area is not apparent in long views.

2. Summary of the area's special interest

2.1 Character

The character of the area is that of a well-to-do residential suburb with impressive individual large houses, imposing boundary walls and extensive mature greenery. Its special interest derives from the grouping of individually-designed large houses dating mainly from early 20th century on generous plots, with mature street trees and dense garden and boundary planting. This area developed ahead of the suburban spread of Brighton & Hove into the country, as a quasi-rural 'hamlet' for well-to-do Edwardians. The area remains low density in character with many properties still in use as single houses. Dyke Road Avenue is heavily trafficked by vehicles, contrasting with the much quieter Tongdean Avenue and Road, but all are little used by pedestrians. The simple street pattern of Tongdean Road, Tongdean Avenue and Dyke Road Place remains unchanged since the 1900s and follows field patterns and tracks or lanes across open country.

2.2 Appearance

The houses are substantial in footprint and scale, set back behind generous front gardens and driveways. Some are largely hidden from view by mature trees, shrubs and high walls. The majority of houses date from the 1920s and 1930s but there are a substantial number of Edwardian houses on Dyke Road Avenue. There is a variety of architectural styles in a variety of materials, reflecting both the architectural eclecticism of the period and the manner in which they were individually commissioned and built. But the most common style is a form of Tudorbethan or vernacular revival in brick, tile and half-timbering. There are notable common architectural features: prominent pitched roofs, chimneys and gables. Substantial boundary walls help to give the area visual continuity and emphasise the distinction between private grounds and public realm.

Mature street trees, mainly Elm and Sycamore, dominate the public realm in Tongdean Avenue and Road. The area is not apparent in any long views; in oblique views the dominant features are the roofs, trees and boundary walls. An important view from within the area is from the junction of Tongdean Avenue and Road up towards Dyke Road Avenue, in which the street trees frame the distant gable of Dyke Lodge.

2.3 Distinct Character Areas

Paragraphs 2.1 and 2.2 summarise the overall special interest of the area and the unifying features. However, there are two distinct character areas within Tongdean and they are considered in more detail in paragraphs 4.1 and 4.2. The two character areas are (a) Dyke Road Avenue and (b) Tongdean Avenue/Road.

2.4 Buildings and Archaeology

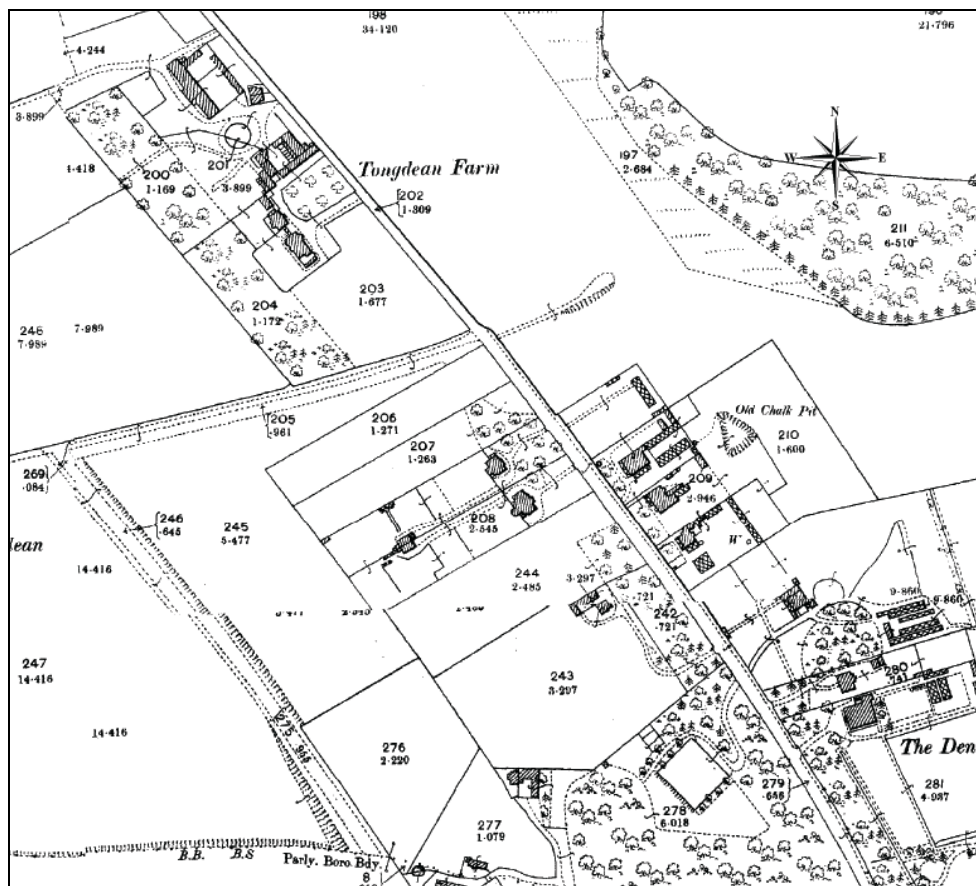
There are no archaeological designations in place within or adjacent to the conservation area and none of the buildings are statutorily listed or locally listed.

3. History

3.1 Origins and historic development

Dyke Road until around 1800 was the main route into Brighton from the north. That section north of Tivoli Crescent North was named Dyke Road Avenue by 1892. From 1928 the area was absorbed into the Brighton Borough and Hove Borough, east and west of Dyke Road Avenue respectively. Tongdean Avenue and Road were developed and named in the 1920s.

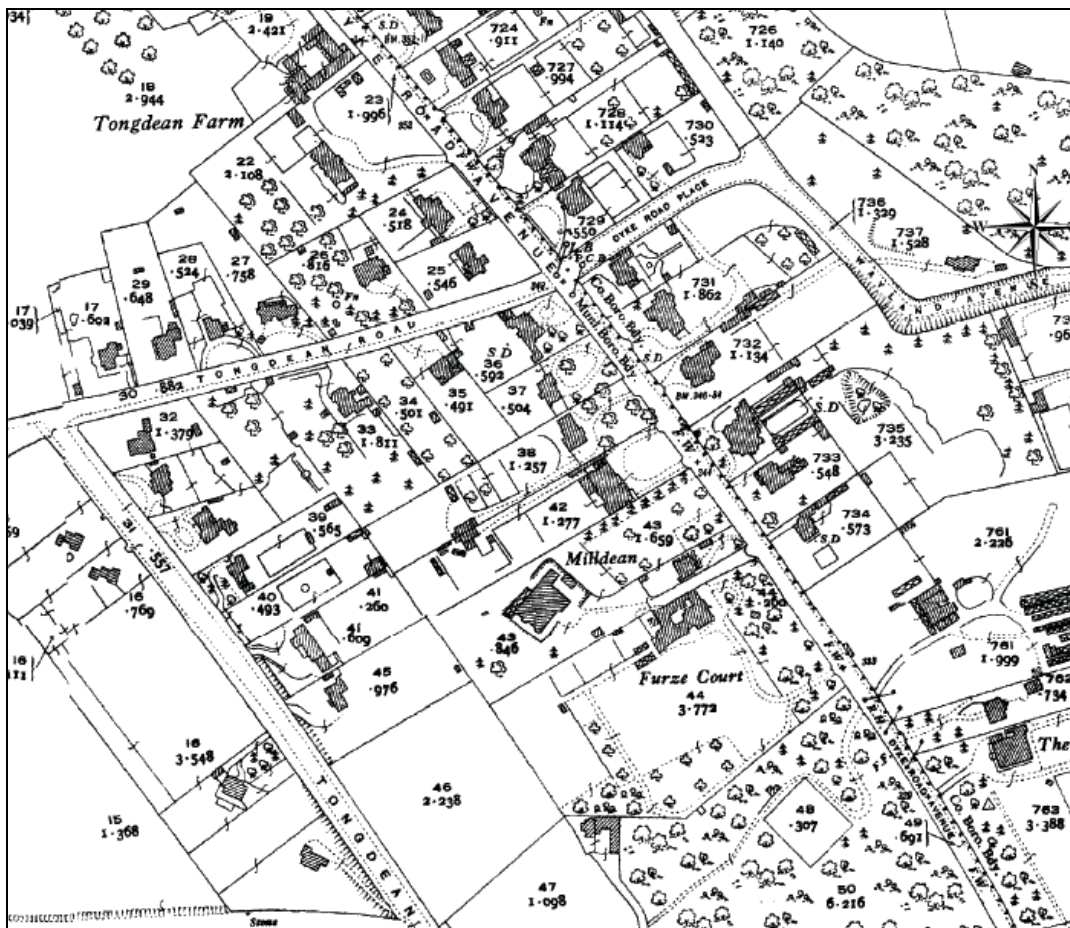
The 1890 Ordnance Survey map (below) shows the area as essentially open country, with Tongdean Farm where The Spinney is today. Some modest buildings and walls on the north side of The Spinney appear to be the remains of cottages or outbuildings associated with the farm and the road itself follows the original entrance to the farmhouse. Two houses existed either side of what is now Tongdean Place. Tracks or lanes that correspond to Tongdean Road and Dyke Road Place are evident, crossing open countryside.



On the east side there were three houses that correspond with existing numbers 24, 26 and 28 now, together with Dyke Road Nursery, all close to a chalk pit. Numbers 26 and 28 remain today, albeit with later extensions and additions. (24 is in the same location but has been rebuilt or so extended and altered as to be unrecognisable as a 19th century building). These houses were already in existence on the 1870 OS map and 26 and 28 were known as Elsinore and The Graperies respectively. Both had large conservatories and/or glasshouses.

By the time of the 1910-1912 Ordnance Survey map, there was a significant cluster of houses either side of Dyke Road Avenue and of those the following remain (though generally altered and extended): 26 (Elsinore); 28 (then known as Avenue Lodge); 30 (then known as Down View); 32 (Cransley Lodge); 34 (Dyke Lodge); 36 (Berea House); 38 (Birchwood); 40 (Highdown); 35 (then known as Stanton Lodge); 39 (Oaklands); 41 (then known as The Pynes); 43 (Wickham House); and 45 (then known as Montpelier). Tongdean Road, Tongdean Avenue and Dyke Road Place by this map date all appear as roads, though as yet unnamed. Numbers 2, 5 and 7 Tongdean Road were built by this date and the original houses survive at the heart of later extensions and alterations.

The OS map of 1930-32 (below) shows how rapidly the area developed over twenty years, with a substantial number of large houses having been developed along both sides of Dyke Road Avenue and Tongdean Road as well as into Tongdean Avenue. Tongdean Farm remained but the area was fast becoming a suburb rather than a separate 'hamlet'. By the time of the 1952 OS map, the suburbanisation of the area was more or less complete and the remaining plots in Tongdean Avenue developed.



3.2 Historic and current uses and social context

The area was developed for residential use, though it developed around (and later incorporated) a farm and a garden nursery. The early houses were built for wealthy individuals as a kind of quasi-rural 'hamlet', but little is known of the early owners/occupants.

The area remains very well-to-do, with properties in largely residential use as single dwelling houses, though some post war housing has been built within the original plots. In addition, some properties in Dyke Road Avenue have been subdivided into flats and three converted to other uses: a private clinic; a nursing home; and a children's nursery school. Some former coach houses within the grounds of the original Edwardian houses have been converted to separate dwellings. In Tongdean Avenue there are two small purpose built blocks of flats, dating from the 1930s.

4. Appraisal

4.1 The quality of buildings and streets – Dyke Road Avenue

The Dyke Road Avenue character area is heavily trafficked. The width and straightness of it means that the houses here are not generally seen as a group but rather seen in passing. This character area is mainly Edwardian and there is a fairly consistent building line. The roofscape is important. Steep pitched roofs and tall chimney stacks are prominent architectural features and gables are very common. Substantial boundary walls on a regular line, mostly in brick, provide visual coherence at street level. The public realm has little of historic interest apart from granite kerbs and some buff stable-block crossovers, but has the virtue of being relatively uncluttered and the pavements are of generous width, appropriate to the scale of the houses. There are no street trees but the large front gardens have a great number and variety of mature trees.

Of the houses, the earliest surviving ones are numbers 26 and 28 which date from before 1870. They are white painted render with canted bays. Both have been considerably extended and altered over time and the original sash windows have been lost. They have high, rendered boundary walls.

Of the surviving Edwardian houses, Cransley Lodge (32) and Dyke Lodge (34) are the most distinctive and distinguished. Both are half-timbered Tudorbethan, executed with conviction in that the timber framing looks convincing. Dyke Lodge was built by 1901 and is very prominent on the corner of Dyke Road Place. It has a particularly distinctive entrance bay with arcaded open porch, balustraded balcony above with half round oriel window and a prominent roof dormer over, suggestive of a long gallery. The roofs are slate. It was designed by W E A Graham, about whom nothing is currently known. The boundary wall to Dyke Road Place is an unusual example of brick headers laid diagonally in courses.

Cransley Lodge, built between 1901-10, is a mixture of red brick, tile hanging and render facing beneath a steep clay tiled roof, with long horizontal dormers, an oriel window to the gable and a tall brick chimney stack centrally placed. This house also has the most impressive boundary treatment of all the houses; tall red brick walls and gate piers with terracotta coping and ball caps.

Still on the east side, Birchwood (38) was built in 1907 with elements of 'arts and crafts' style but also anticipating 1920s suburban housing. A red brick ground floor, rendered first floor and wide bays with leaded light windows beneath a slate roof. Number 40 (Highdown) also has an 'arts and crafts' style, but in its overall form rather than its detailing. It is of roughcast render under a steep clay-tiled roof with windows that cut through the eaves, possibly influenced by the designs of Charles Voysey. Both houses have attractive brick boundary walls.

Numbers 30 and 36 (Berea House) are typical red brick and tile hung Edwardian houses with slate roofs, but on a larger scale than most of the period. Both were built by 1910. Number 30 has a turreted corner. Berea House has rendered bays. An undistinguished late 20th century house has regrettably been built right adjacent to Berea House, within its original grounds, but is largely hidden from view by mature trees. Both houses have attractive high brick walls.

Of the surviving Edwardian houses on the west side, the most notable is number 39, now the Victoria Oaklands nursing home, built by 1901 in a competent Old English vernacular style influenced by Norman Shaw. The elevations are a mixture of red brick, tile hanging and half-timbering, with stone mullions and dressings to some windows. It has an attractive high brick boundary wall. Number 35, originally known as Stanton Lodge, is believed to date from 1906 but was later extended to the south and much altered. It is rendered with timber sash windows beneath a distinctive series of clay tiled roofs with cranked eaves.

Number 43 (Wickham House) was built between 1901 and 1910. Little of the house can be seen from the road, apart from the steep clay tiled, roof due to the extensive trees, but it is of plain roughcast finish with slight reminiscence to the style of Voysey. The tall boundary walls are polychrome brick. Number 45 is a typical Edwardian example of vernacular revival in a mixture of materials but very well detailed, with a rounded turret bay and three tall red brick chimneys. The plain brick number 41 may incorporate an Edwardian house, much altered and extended, or may have been rebuilt in the inter-war period but is undistinguished.

Of the other houses within the proposed boundary, there are some 1920s and 1930s examples which reflect the Tudorbethan style of the best Edwardian houses but in a less convincing manner that is more typical of the suburban style of the inter-war period. Notable examples are number 42 (Earlsmead), number 46 and number 48 (Baronsmead).

There is very little visual reminder of Tongdean Farm at The Spinney except for some remnants of farm cottages or outbuildings, incorporated into number 9 The Spinney (April Cottage), and a length of flint and brick walling along the north side. The houses themselves are late 20th century and make no positive contribution to the special interest of the area. Most are excluded from conservation area.

4.2 The quality of buildings and streets – Tongdean Avenue/Road

Tongdean Avenue and Road have a quiet suburban feel with grass verges and mature Elm and Sycamore trees. Development mainly dates from the 1920s and 1930s. The houses are set well back from the road and some are set at an angle to it. Tongdean Road climbs quite sharply towards Dyke Road Avenue and has an intimate feel, reinforced by high boundary walls and hedges and narrow footway.

Tongdean Avenue is wider and the verges more substantial. The properties are on gently sloping sites with those on the east side set higher than those on the west side. Some houses are completely hidden from view due to the slope, the degree of set back and dense screening by trees and shrubs. Boundary lines and heights are irregular. There is more variety of tree species, with many ornamental flowering types. Both Tongdean Avenue and Road have granite kerbs, buff stable-block crossovers and cast iron electric lighting columns, though extended with modern lanterns.

The architectural styles in this character area are more diverse, particularly in Tongdean Road, and the architectural quality less authentic than the earlier Edwardian development in Dyke Road Avenue, but the overall effect is enhanced by the setting. There are variations on inter-war vernacular revival and Tudorbethan but there are also examples of mock Georgian, Spanish villa and antebellum Southern United States styles. Tongdean Avenue has the only examples of purpose built flats in the conservation area, dating from the 1930s, but they are small scale with pitched roofs and are low key in appearance. The site on the corner with Tongdean Road has been recently redeveloped to form two large and prominent houses of white render, plain gables, slate roofs and pyramidal roof lanterns. These provide a distinct visual contrast to the earlier housing whilst continuing the tradition of large single houses.

Any impression of uncoordinated development is avoided because of the generous spacing of the buildings in relation to each other and the unifying effect of the trees and greenery. The element of surprise resulting from seeing one architectural style after another is part of the character of Tongdean Avenue/Road.

4.3 Local details and materials

There is a wide variety of materials evident within the conservation area, reflecting not only the architectural eclecticism of the period but, more crucially, the trend away from local materials resulting from better transport links and industrial growth. Local materials, in the form of flint and brick, are notable evident in the remnants of the earlier Tongdean Farm, and in the side boundary wall to Dyke Lodge, as well as some boundary walls between houses. Brick and clay roof tiles are the predominant materials generally and will in some cases have been locally sourced. But throughout the area the emphasis is on good quality materials.

Similarly, architectural detailing reflects influences from national revival styles of the period and the work of well known architects of the late 19th century, such as Charles Voysey and Richard Norman Shaw.

4.4 Condition of the area and the extent of intrusion

The condition of the area reflects its well-to-do social status. The houses are generally well maintained and the gardens well kept. The original houses have all been extended and altered to varying degrees. In some cases, the later extensions and alterations are so extensive that the original architectural character has been severely compromised. This is particularly the case with the original Victorian houses and some of the Edwardian ones. Most of the houses retain their original roof coverings (mainly clay tile) and chimney stacks; this is particularly important given the prominence of the roofs. There is some unfortunate intrusion from late 20th

century housing within the original plots, notably where houses have been built to the immediate south and east of 36 Dyke Road Avenue (Berea House).

5. Pressures for Change and Opportunities for Enhancement

5.1 Pressures for change

The main pressure for change is likely to arise from a wish to demolish houses and replace them with higher density residential development. Additional pressure may arise from proposals for the erection of separate dwellings within the rear gardens of houses that retain larger plots. Any loss of historic houses or significant intensification of development arising from sub-division of plots would harm the special appearance and character of the area, as would the loss of boundary walls, gardens and trees.

On a smaller scale, the cumulative further loss of original architectural features and materials would be harmful, particularly in respect of the Victorian and Edwardian properties.

5.2 Opportunities for enhancement

The conservation area does not require significant pro-active intervention but rather needs careful preservation and maintenance. There is some opportunity for enhancement where original architectural features such as windows, roof coverings and high boundary walls have been lost.

5.3 Further research required

A number of issues relating to the history and development of the area warrant further investigation and research, notably:

- The date of construction of the two Victorian houses (26 and 28) and why they were built in such an isolated location at that time and who for.
- The precise date of construction of some of the Edwardian houses and the architects responsible for their design.
- Details on the architect W E A Graham, who designed Dyke Lodge.
- Details of who commissioned and owned the original houses.

Appendix A – Map of Tongdean Conservation Area



Reproduced from the Ordnance Survey mapping with the permission of the Controller of H.M. Stationery Office. © Crown copyright. Unauthorised reproduction infringes Crown copyright and may lead to prosecution or Civil Proceedings. Brighton & Hove City Council. Licence : 100020999, 2008.



**Brighton & Hove
City Council**

Date: 15/05/08

Scale 1:4000

Appendix B – Schedule of properties within the Conservation Area

- Dyke Road Avenue – East Side: 26, 28, 28a, 30, 32, 32a, 34, 36, 36a, 38, 38a, 40, 40a, 42, 44, 46 and 48.
- Dyke Road Avenue – West Side: 35, 39, 41, 43, 45, 47, 49, 49a, 51, 53, 55, and 57.
- The Conifers – 1 and 2
- The Spinney – 1, 2, 7, 8 and 9.
- Tongdean Avenue – East Side: 49, 51, 53, 55, 57, 59, 61 and 63.
- Tongdean Avenue – West Side: 30, 32, 34, 36, 38, 40, 42, 44, 46, 48, 50, 52
- Tongdean Road – North Side: 2a, 2, 4, 6, 8, 10, 12, 14 and 16.
- Tongdean Road – South Side: 1, 1a, 5, The Flat 5, 7, 9 and 11.

