

THE PARK, YEOVIL CONSERVATION AREA APPRAISAL



South Somerset District Council 2009

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YEOVIL THE PARK CONSERVATION AREA APPRAISAL

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Planning Policy Guidance Note 15 'Planning and the Historic Environment'.

Introduction

The Park is a distinctive area of late C19 development to the west of Yeovil town centre, south of Preston Road, with a cemetery of 1863 to the north of the main road. The residential areas are composed of The Park, running south off Preston Road and West Park, an east-west link to Grove Avenue, which runs back to Preston Road. Characteristic architecture, the use of a variety of details, spacious layouts and valuable trees (particularly in the associated Sidney Gardens) are all-important assets. The District Council has designated the area as a conservation area in April 2008.

Conservation areas are areas of special architectural or historic interest, the character of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance. Designation allows for strengthened planning controls, gives protection to trees, and provides control over the demolition of unlisted buildings.

In order that designation is effective in conserving the special interest, planning decisions must be based on a thorough understanding of the conservation area's character. Appraisals are therefore essential tools for the planning process and to manage informed intervention. The appraisal document follows the content recommended in advice from English Heritage, 'Guidance on Conservation Area Appraisals', published by English Heritage/Planning Advisory Service/DCMS, 2006.

The planning policy context

The Regional Spatial Strategy and the South Somerset Local Plan (Adopted 2006) form the context for conservation area policies. Additional guidance on the protection and management of conservation areas is contained in the national

Summary of special interest - the area's key characteristics

- A relatively unspoilt late Victorian and early C20 residential suburb with a range of attractive houses set in a well-treed landscape
- A contemporary park retaining much of its original planting and layout
- A characteristic mid-Victorian municipal cemetery with gate lodge and mortuary chapels and mature landscaping
- Three Grade II Listed Buildings in the Yeovil Cemetery lodge, gates and twin mortuary chapels
- About twenty unlisted late Victorian and Edwardian buildings of individual architectural merit and group value and over two dozen other unspoilt examples of detached and semi-detached houses
- Two large groups of attractive buildings, with boundary walls, hedges, gardens and a number of trees
- The use of a range of local building stones and brick, combined with render, false half timber, tile hanging, terracotta, slate, clay tiles and pantiles
- Rich architectural details, notably in building mass and skylines, roofs and chimneys, porches, window surrounds, stringcourses, ironwork and boundary walls and gate piers.

MAP ONE SHOWS THE PARK'S ASSETS

Assessment of the special interest

Location and context

The Park lies about one mile (two kilometres) WNW of Yeovil town centre, partly on and to the south of Preston Road. Immediately to the east is Queensway, a modern road improvement. There are other extensive areas of suburban development to the north and south of Preston Road and the remains of Preston Plucknett village to the west, set in modern residential surrounds and adjacent to the Yeovil Airfield and Westlands factory site.

General character and plan form

The character of the area is suburban but this may be qualified by the survival of some of the rural character of Preston Road, before late C19 development, in the form of a road cutting, hedge banks and mature trees.



Yeovil Cemetery

The Park and West Park have the character of one of the first generation of Garden Suburbs, with large houses set in a generous landscape.

The overall **plan form** is that of a linear main road development of mainly large detached houses, set in gardens and with an expansive cemetery area and a rectangle of subsidiary roads with linear plots of detached and semi-detached houses, mainly set within gardens or front spaces. The triangular green space of the Sidney Gardens relates closely to the layout of The Park, which forms two of the three boundaries.



The Park and Sidney Gardens

Landscape setting

The area is sited on a gentle slope from north to south, with a small north-south valley, along which runs a small stream, between The Park and Grove Avenue, which is apparent on both Preston Road and West Park. The large green spaces of the Yeovil Cemetery, to the north of the main road, are enhanced by a number of fine specimen trees. Trees are also significant in the late Victorian Sidney Gardens; they appear in front gardens and in roadside planting, and seem to fill the valley behind many of the house plots. The front gardens of the larger plots are important in providing a spacious setting for the architecture and the rear and side spaces, although less visible, add to the feeling of handsome houses set in generous plots.

Historic development and archaeology

There are no known pre-C19 archaeological records for the area. Early maps, such as the Preston Tithe Map of 1849, show little development on Preston Road between the Kingston area of Yeovil and the separate village of Preston Plucknett. There are several large houses set in extensive grounds, at Grove House and Hollands. The Park is marked on the 1830 Day Map, associated with an area called Ram Park. On the north side of the road, at Summerlands, the Yeovil Union Workhouse was built in 1837, designed by Sampson Kempthorne.

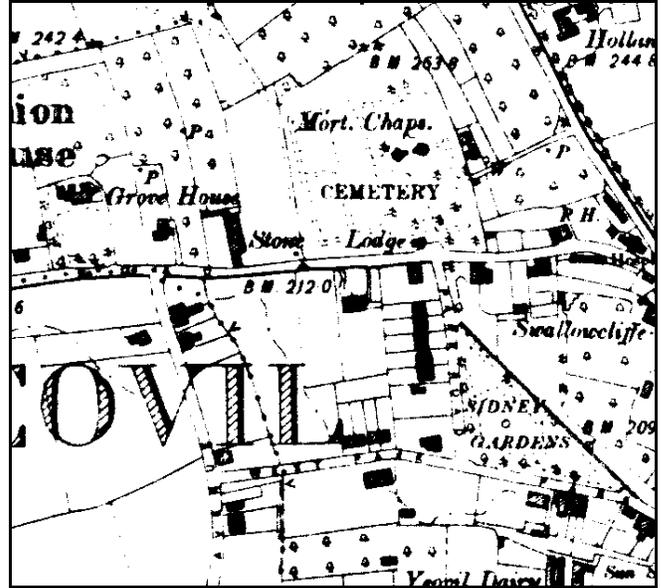
In 1863, the Yeovil Cemetery was laid out with an entrance lodge and twin chapels for Church of England and Nonconformist users. There is an adjacent Friends' Burial Ground.



Cemetery lodge and gates

In 1880, Christ Church, a large Gothic style Reformed Episcopalian Church, was built on the eastern arm of The Park, adjacent to the present Nos. 17 and 19. The church was demolished in 1905 and the stone was used to build Christchurch Villas, later on the line of Queensway.

The Park area was laid out as building plots from the 1880s onwards (there are building dates on buildings from 1881). The 1901 Ordnance Survey map, based on a survey of 1885, shows The Union Workhouse, Grove House, the northern end of The Park (named Park Road) and the Sidney Gardens. There are several properties, including the Episcopalian Church on the south side of The Park and Grove Avenue only has developed plots on its east side.



1901 OS map, showing Cemetery, Sidney Gardens & developed plots

The Sidney Gardens were created in 1898 on one and a half acres of land at Ram Park, at a cost of £760, to commemorate the Diamond Jubilee of Queen Victoria. The land was a gift from the Mayor, Alderman Sidney Watts. A bandstand was donated by James Bazeley Petter and a fountain by John Howe Farley (in 1899).



Turn-of-the-century houses in West Park

The area was gradually infilled by development up to and after the Great War and there are some characterful examples of 1920s and 30s houses as well as modern properties, from the 1970s onwards. In the Second World War, an emergency water tank, for firefighting, was sited in the area. Other more recent changes include

the building of Queensway, with some demolition on the east fringe and changes of use of some of the larger properties for offices, nursing home and sheltered accommodation.

The **archaeological potential** of an area of fairly recent development is likely to be small, apart from genealogical research on burials in the Cemetery.

Spatial analysis

The character and interrelationship of spaces

There are a number of types of spaces that contribute to the overall character of the conservation area:

- The formality of the Cemetery with its memorials, grassed margins and ornamental trees, with a straight vista to two identical chapels and a further view through the space between them to more trees and the more modern parts of the Cemetery
- Another designed, formal space in the Sidney Gardens whose triangular space is bounded by large houses on all three sides, although the residential area to the east is less apparent, screened by trees and hedges



Spaces: Cemetery chapels (below left) and The Park (above)

- Corridors, exemplified by West Park with some large houses on both sides, made more subtle by its slight changes in alignment and the steep fall to the valley bottom and rise back up to the junction with Grove Avenue; the latter is also an obvious corridor with houses on the eastern side nearer to the road than those on the west; again trees and the gently curving road line give subtlety and interest to views up and down its length



West Park looking back east to The Park



Grove Avenue

- Preston Road is another corridor, older in origin and less formal in character, bounded by high hedges and trees on either side of the shallow valley bottom.



Preston Road, looking east

- The spaces around the larger houses created by front and rear gardens enclosed by walls, shrubs and hedging,

are usually a mixture of hard surfaces, paths, lawned areas, flower beds and informal shrub planting and, in many examples, trees. These spaces give individual buildings an appropriate setting and dignity and provide wildlife habitat, amenity space and visual enjoyment; even where they are not very visible from the public realm, rear gardens may be glimpsed in the gaps between buildings.

Key views and vistas include:

- Views into the Cemetery from the entrance gates and back south into The Park;
- Northwards from The Park to the gates, buildings and trees of the Cemetery;
- Across Sidney Gardens SE and NW to the houses of The Park;
- On West Park west into the valley floor and from the floor back up to the houses at the junction with The Park;
- Up and down Grove Avenue, with perspective views of houses following the curving building line;
- East along Preston Road past the grounds of The Knoll.

The **colours** of the area are predominantly the buffs and oranges of the local building stones, with large areas of a warm red-orange brick and the tawny colour of tile hanging. There are occasional patches of white render. These colours are interspersed with trees and large patches of greenery, with some rich browns from beech hedging (in winter).

Landmarks are -

- The cemetery entrance lodge and gates;
- No. 45 The Park at the junction between The Park and West Park
- Nos. 2-8 West Park, at the top of the hill
- Nos. 38 and 40 Preston Road
- The large former houses at the junctions between Preston Road and The Park (No. 63) and Grove Avenue (No. 72, the British Red Cross offices) are also prominent because of their size and corner positions.



Landmark buildings, West Park (top) & Preston Road (above)

Uses: offices (top) & residential home (above)

MAP TWO SHOWS SOME OF THE ELEMENTS OF SPATIAL ANALYSIS

Character analysis

Definition of character

The Park is an area of predominantly late-Victorian/ Edwardian development with a good degree of consistency of building styles and materials. It has many pleasant details in its architecture and some distinguished individual and groups of buildings.

Activity, uses and influences on form

Uses have been and are predominantly residential, with a variety in the size of houses and a sub-division of some of the larger ones to apartments, residential and care homes and offices.

The Cemetery has a gate lodge and two chapels and a modern toilet block and office. Sidney Gardens retains its amenity and recreational uses, although it has lost its bandstand.

Building types are varied, showing distinct functions and hierarchies and include:

- the specialised cemetery lodge and the twin chapels, the latter each with an open narthex or *porte cochere*, main body and transepts, the southern ones with apsidal terminations
- large detached mansions of substance and architectural display, two storeys, usually with a second floor in the gables and roof space, with porches, capacious halls, a range of family and reception rooms and service rooms at the rear; conservatories are in evidence, as well as large coach houses or garages



Large houses, The Park

- middling large houses in mirror-image, semi-detached form, with many of the features of the larger houses
- smaller, later C19-early C20 detached houses in Grove Avenue and West Park, with informal, consciously picturesque layouts (The Combe on the south side of West Park is 1930's Tudor with an inset porch in an L plan) or symmetrical with central entrances (No. 21 The Park, classical, No. 3 West Park, classical, and No. 29 Grove Avenue, 'moderne' 1930s)



1930s detached house (bottom left) & early C20 semis (above)

- early C20 semis on the east side of Grove Avenue, with two storey bays and entrances either paired in the middle or at each end
- modern detached, semi or residential block infill, of varying details, but all a maximum of three storeys.

Qualities of buildings and contribution to the area

There are three Grade II Listed structures, the two cemetery chapels and the entrance lodge and gates. These form a fine group, linked to each other spatially by a straight access drive that passes between the chapels and is enhanced further by mature tree planting. The wider cemetery has curving paths and more informal planting that show the many monuments to their best advantage. There are several unlisted tombs, of large size and architectural pretensions that are of particular value. The whole ensemble is a good example of a mid-Victorian municipal cemetery.



Cemetery mortuary chapel & memorials

Amongst the many unlisted Victorian and Edwardian houses, the following are of **particular significance** because of their architectural refinement and position relative to the wider landscape:

- The Knoll, Preston Road, brick and clay tiles, large chimneys with raised straps, two storey canted bays and segmental heads to the sash windows; the nearby former brick and pantile lodge, gate piers, stone boundary wall and mature planting are all of value
- Nos. 38 and 40 Preston Road, a large brick and stone house of 1889 with a polygonal turret, large chimneys and an attractive wooden porch and its neighbour of 1907 with canted bays with curved tops and pilasters, set in a splendid garden
- Nos. 39 and 41 Grove Avenue, two large detached houses, all brick, with terracotta panels, fluted piers to the canted bays and frilly barge boards;
- A series of large detached and semi-detached late Victorian (date of 1895 on the hopper head of No. 53) houses on the NW side of The Park, Nos. 51-63, with many of the details in the fashionable vocabulary, bays, porches, dormers, gables, hips and half hips, tall chimneys, balustrades, string courses, half timbering and a pretty wood conservatory with coloured glass lights
- The large No. 45 The Park, with a series of gables, bays, projecting chimney

flues, tall chimneys, 1908 date on western block

- No. 31 The Park, Park Lodge, a large mansion of red brick and stone, coped gables, 'Baroque' enrichments to the porch, gable profiles and window surrounds
- Nos. 2 & 4 and 6 & 8 West Park, impressive array of gables, square end towers with shaped spirelets, leaded lights
- No. 10 West Park, a rock-faced stone mansion with a large canted bay, balustrades, inset Tuscan porch and large conservatory, good stone boundary wall with curved ramps.



No. 31 The Park, Park Lodge



Nos. 2 & 4 (top) and No. 10 (above) West Park

In addition, the fountain in Sidney Gardens is of visual and historical value.



The fountain, Sidney Gardens

The whole of The Park and the Sidney Gardens and the eastern part of West Park forms a high quality **group**, as do both sides of Grove Avenue, within the conservation area, up to the junction with Preston Road.

Local prevalent building materials

Materials include:

- Ham Hill stone for ashlar walling and dressings, ranging from the cemetery buildings to the larger houses and on window and door surrounds on smaller houses, like those on Grove Avenue;



Ham Hill and Junction Bed limestones, cemetery chapels

- widespread use of the paler, biscuity brown, local Junction Bed limestone in dressed stone forms ('boasted' on the base of the cemetery lodge; rock-faced on No. 10 West Park) either with Hamstone ashlar details or with brickwork;
- use of Bath Stone, with its characteristic buttery colour, in some dressed stone and ashlar work;
- the general use of local Yeovil warm red brick, often with stone dressings, throughout the area;
- one or two examples of darker brown brick in 1920s and 30s buildings, such as No. 29 Grove Avenue;
- panels and gable ends of tile hanging, with wooden shingles on one or two modern houses on West Park;

- false half timbering in gables, for example, No. 61 The Park;
- occasional use of rough-cast render (Nos. 47-51 The Park), contrasting with brick or tiles;



Render (top) and red brick (above) & false half timber, The Park

- **roofs** of clay tiles or slate, with hexagonal slates and colour banding on the cemetery lodge, Double Roman and flat pantiles and glazed pantiles on one or two pre-War houses.

Local details

These are characteristic of late Victorian and early C20 architecture, including:

- roofs with stone coped gables, gables with timber bargeboards, hips and half hips;
- tall chimney stacks, usually brick with banding and corniced tops and vertical

strap work (ashlar on the cemetery lodge);



Gables, hips, tall chimneys, Preston Road

- busy skylines, created by the variety of roof forms (often on one house), chimneys, crested ridge tiles and pinnacle-like ends to ridges, especially where the roof is hipped;
- towers with concave spired caps (Nos. 2 and 4 and 6 and 8 West Park);
- dormer windows in front elevations or on long catslide roofs to sides, gabled and camber-headed;
- large, bold gables to fronts and side elevations, often with one large gable and another, subsidiary, gable, with features like the gable wall face projecting over the main wall and bracketed or corbelled; some gables are shaped, in Dutch gable form;



Gables & canted bay, The Park



Gables & towers, West Park

- the use of differing materials, such as brick, stone, tile hanging, false half timber and render, to provide pattern and texture on elevations;
- rectangular patterning created by horizontal plat bands and string courses and vertical pilasters or panels of tile hanging;
- on many of the larger houses, complex compositions of units to create projections and recessions, L or U-shaped in plan form, with features like porches inset in the angles, subsidiary single storey annexes and side canted bays or conservatories;



Compositions of units, The Park

- a variety of window types, ranging from stripped down Gothic plate tracery at the cemetery lodge, richer moulded Venetian Gothic types in the two cemetery chapels, stone mullions with

flat arches, wooden vertical sashes with either no glazing bars or bars confined to the upper light only, and wooden casements with bars or leaded lights;



Flat arches & stone mullions, south side of The Park

- window details such as cambered arches with brick or stone lintels, expressed keystones and wooden cornices over individual casements;
- extensive use of square and canted stone bays, often two storey, with balustrade crests, moulding or hipped or swept roofs;



Square bays & sashes, Grove Avenue

- oriels with bracketed supports, seen in large gables;
- stone or brick porches of Tuscan Classical, Gothic, vaguely Tudor or 'Wrenaissance' styles, particularly on some of the grander houses;



Park Lodge, porch

- humbler wooden porches on posts or brackets, usually shaped and moulded, usually with gables, and doorways set under a pentice roof that, in examples on Grove Avenue, runs across the tops of ground floor bay windows;
- doors of two or three panels, with some attractive details such as circular portholes with bars and leaded light fanlights over;

The two sheets of drawings, at the end of the report, show some of the above details.



Bracketed canopy & 'porthole' door, No. 7 West Park

- planked doors on the cemetery lodge, with strap hinges;
- occasional rubbed brick, terracotta or tile creasing adornments in the form of corbelling, reeded pilasters on windows, embellishments to window and door surrounds and date plaques;



Elaborate doorcase, Grove Avenue



Terracotta adornments, Grove Avenue

- ironwork verandahs and rails over porches.

Boundary walls are of great importance, with dressed stone and brick with details like curved ramps to accommodate changes in level, cambered or round copings and several elaborate ashlar gate piers, with balled tops and more elaborate shaped tops (examples of both at The Knoll). The cemetery entrance gates have gabled Gothic piers, as well as speared ironwork railings. Less elaborate piers tend to have pyramidal tops.



Ramped boundary wall, West Park

The Cemetery has a great range of monuments, varying in style and materials and reflecting historical fashions. There are classically-inspired obelisks and urns, Gothic Revival chest tombs and coped slabs, Celtic crosses and various head stones. There are some good examples of cast iron surrounds, in the form of low railings or posts with chain links.



Cemetery monuments

Parks, gardens, trees and green spaces

The Sidney Gardens are an important example of a late C19 park, imbued with the spirit of the Picturesque, with curving and meandering paths and informal groups of trees. The overall shape is triangular, with The Park forming the two shorter sides. The circular bed around the fountain introduces some formality. The Gardens are a valuable local amenity, as well as providing a fine setting for the surrounding buildings. There are Tree Preservation Orders in the grounds of Park Lodge, No. 45 The Park and No. 38 Preston Road and on the western side of Grove Avenue and of Sidney Gardens.



Trees in The Park



The Cemetery is also an important green space, of considerable amenity and wildlife value. Its buildings and trees complement each other. There are also a number of attractive front gardens, with trees and shrubs, particularly along West Park. Rear and side gardens, although generally less visible from the public realm, are important for their amenity value; the generous setting that they give to the buildings; and for their wildlife habitats.

The area is also fortunate in its considerable number of mature trees and tree groups, with impressive conifers in the Cemetery, yews, cedar and beech in the Gardens, conifers on the junction of The Park and West Park, large trees on both sides of West Park, in the grounds of the large houses either side of Preston Road, on the west side of Grove Avenue and along the watercourse in the 'valley' south of Preston Road and north of West Park. Overall the tree presence in the area is one of its key characteristics.

Negative factors

The conservation area seems to be well maintained, with well cared for properties and an attractive public realm, notably in the Gardens. There are, however, examples of poor quality alterations to some of the houses, with window alterations, some introduction of uPVC, and loss or reduction of front gardens to create parking.

The Cemetery has problems with the condition of a number of its monuments and smaller headstones, with health and safety issues. Without some repair and remedial action, some of the finer memorials may be damaged or lost.



Fine trees: Sidney Gardens (top) & Cemetery (above)



Erosion of detail: The Park (top) & Grove Avenue (middle); Cemetery monuments (above)

Summary of issues

The area would benefit from consistently high quality repairs and alterations to buildings; improved control over tree management; and a stronger policy and control regime for larger scale development proposals for individual plots, including rear and side gardens. There may also be scope for improvements to the public realm.

A longer term maintenance regime for the Cemetery's memorials would be beneficial, subject to the availability of resources.

Special note

Planning control over minor works

A Direction under Article 4(2) of the General Permitted Development Order was made on 30th April 2008 and amended onto restrict the right of landowners to carry out certain minor works in order to protect the character appearance of the conservation area. The Direction applies to the whole area with the effect that the works listed in appendix 1 shall not be carried out unless planning permission is granted by the Council.

Advice

The District Council can advise on the need for Listed Building Consent or any planning permission that may be required, and can provide advice on matters such as methods of maintenance and repair, extensions and suitable materials.

Useful information

Criteria used for assessing the contribution made by unlisted buildings: two basic criteria were used; the actual design characteristics, such as mass, skyline, interesting details and materials; and position relative to the wider setting and groups of other attractive and important buildings.

References and further reading

Understanding Place, Guidance on conservation area appraisals, English Heritage, August 2005
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Maps

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Text and photographs by John Wykes Planning and Conservation 2008

Appendix 1

Article 4(2) Direction applies to

- The enlargement, improvement or other alteration of a dwelling-house, ie changes to windows, doors, or other

openings, roof coverings, chimneys, rainwater goods etc, where the enlargement, improvement or alteration would front a highway, waterway or open space.

- The enlargement of a dwellinghouse consisting of an addition or alteration to its roof where the addition or alteration would front a highway, waterway or open space.
- Any other alteration to the roof of a dwellinghouse where the alteration would front a highway, waterway or open space.
- The erection or construction of a porch outside any external door of a dwellinghouse where the construction would front a highway, waterway or open space
- The provision within the curtilage of a dwellinghouse of any building or enclosure, swimming or other pool required for a purpose incidental to the enjoyment of the dwellinghouse as such, or the maintenance, improvement or other alteration of such a building or enclosure where this would front a highway, waterway or open space.
- The provision within the curtilage of a dwellinghouse of a hard surface for any purpose incidental to the enjoyment of the dwellinghouse as such where this would front a highway, waterway or open space.
- The erection or provision within the curtilage of a dwellinghouse of a container for the storage of oil for domestic heating.
- The installation, alteration or replacement of a microwave antenna on a dwellinghouse or within the curtilage of a dwellinghouse where the installation,

alteration or replacement would front a highway, waterway or open space.

- The erection, construction, maintenance, improvement or alteration of a gate, fence, wall or other means of enclosure where the erection, construction, maintenance, improvement or alteration would front a highway, waterway or open space

Appendix 2

Glossary of architectural terms

Ashlar: best quality masonry with smooth face and narrow joints

Balustrade: a parapet or rail made of small pillars

Barge board: inclined projecting boards placed at the gable under the tiles or slates

Baroque: florid, exuberant form of classical architecture

Boasted: roughly shaped

Bracket: projection from the face of a wall, usually supporting a weight

Camber headed: very shallow, flat arched

Canted bay: splayed or angled sides to projecting window

Casement: opening lights hinged at one side

Catslide roof: subsidiary roof that carries on from main slope

Cock-and-hen coping: vertical, alternating long and short stones on top of a wall

Coped gable: angled capping, usually raised above height of adjoining roof

Corbel: projecting block that supports a beam or parapet

Cornice: a moulded projection that caps a wall or a full classical entablature

Dormer: window placed in the inclined plane of a roof

Dressed stone: masonry worked to produce an even finish but not as precisely as ashlar

Expressed key stone: projecting central part of an arch

Flute/ting: channeling, usually vertical in a pier or pilaster

Glazing bar: sub-division of a window, defining an individual pane

Half timber: structure former of a timber framework, filled in with plaster or brick

Hipped roof: both roof slopes are angled back at corners; **Half hip** is where the top portion of a gable is hipped and the lower part fully gabled

Hopper head: box at top of a drain pipe

Lintel (or lintol): horizontal stone or wood former to top of door or window opening

Moderne: 1930s simplified and up-to-date architectural style

Mullion: vertical bar dividing window lights

Narthex: entrance porch in a church

Oriel: projecting window on an upper floor

Pantile: a clay roof tile of shaped or curved section

Pentice roof: a lean-to against a main structure

Pier: a post or column

Plat band: a slightly projecting horizontal band that is wider than a string course (qv)

Plate tracery: earliest form of window tracery with flat, simple openings

Porte cochere: a covered porch big enough to accommodate vehicles

Ramp: change of height in a wall achieved by a step down (or up) in the coping or capping

Reeded: grooved or fluted

Rock-faced: stonework deliberately left with a projecting, natural-looking finish

Rough cast: course-finished render

Rubbed brick: brickwork rubbed to produce ornament and close jointing

Sash: vertically hung window, of two parts, counterbalanced by weights

Segmental headed: flat arched

Shingle: wooden tiles used as a wall covering

Strap work: pattern of raised vertical and horizontal strips

String course: a narrow projecting horizontal band on a wall face

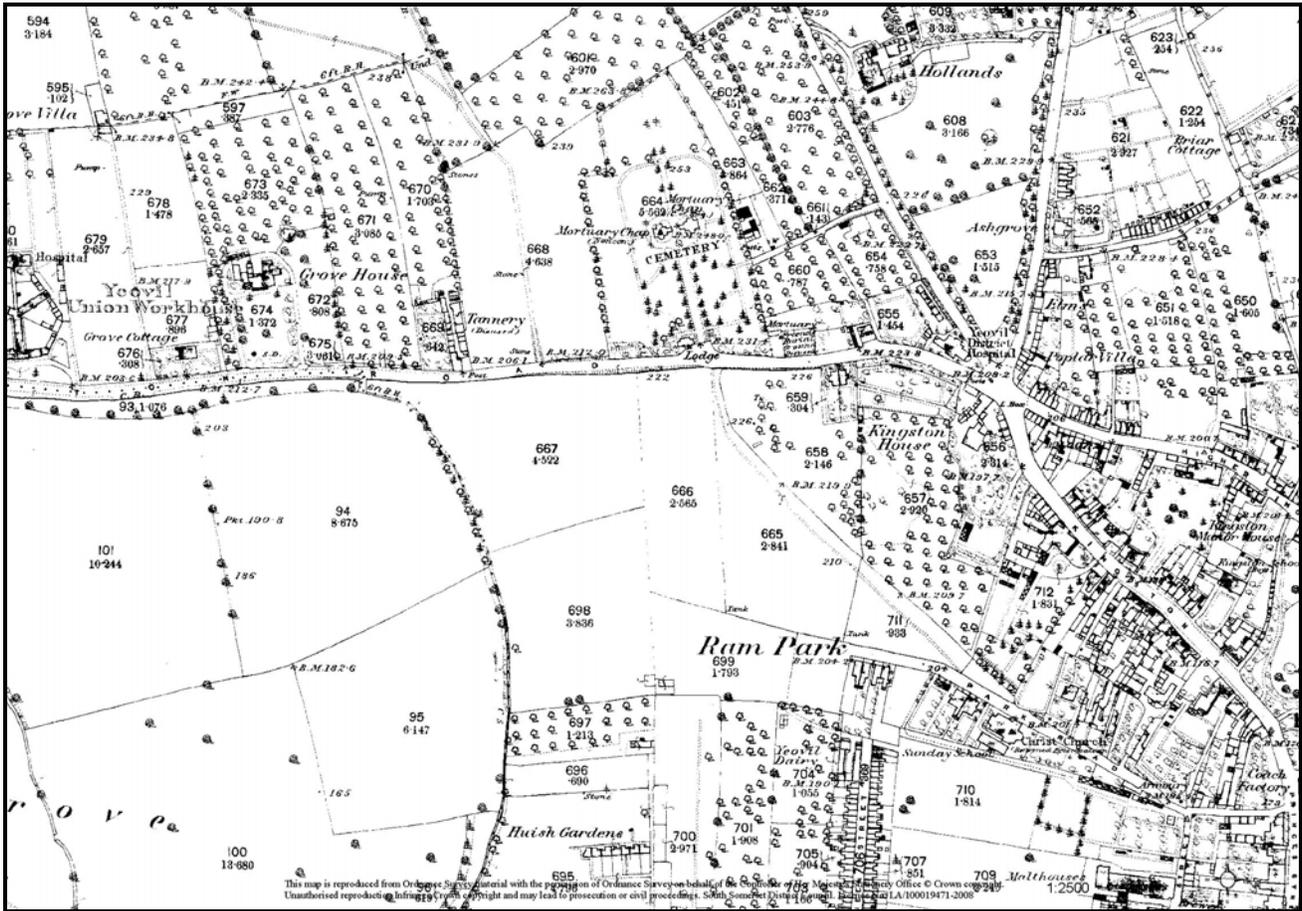
Swept roof: roof of curved, concave profile

Terracotta: baked earth, unglazed, used decoratively

Tudor Revival: C19-early C20 reuse of Tudor forms and details

Tuscan: Roman classical form of Greek Doric architecture

Wrenaissance: C19-early C20 classical revival style with elements of Sir Christopher Wren's Baroque



1888 Ordnance Survey Map with development only on south side of Park Road

