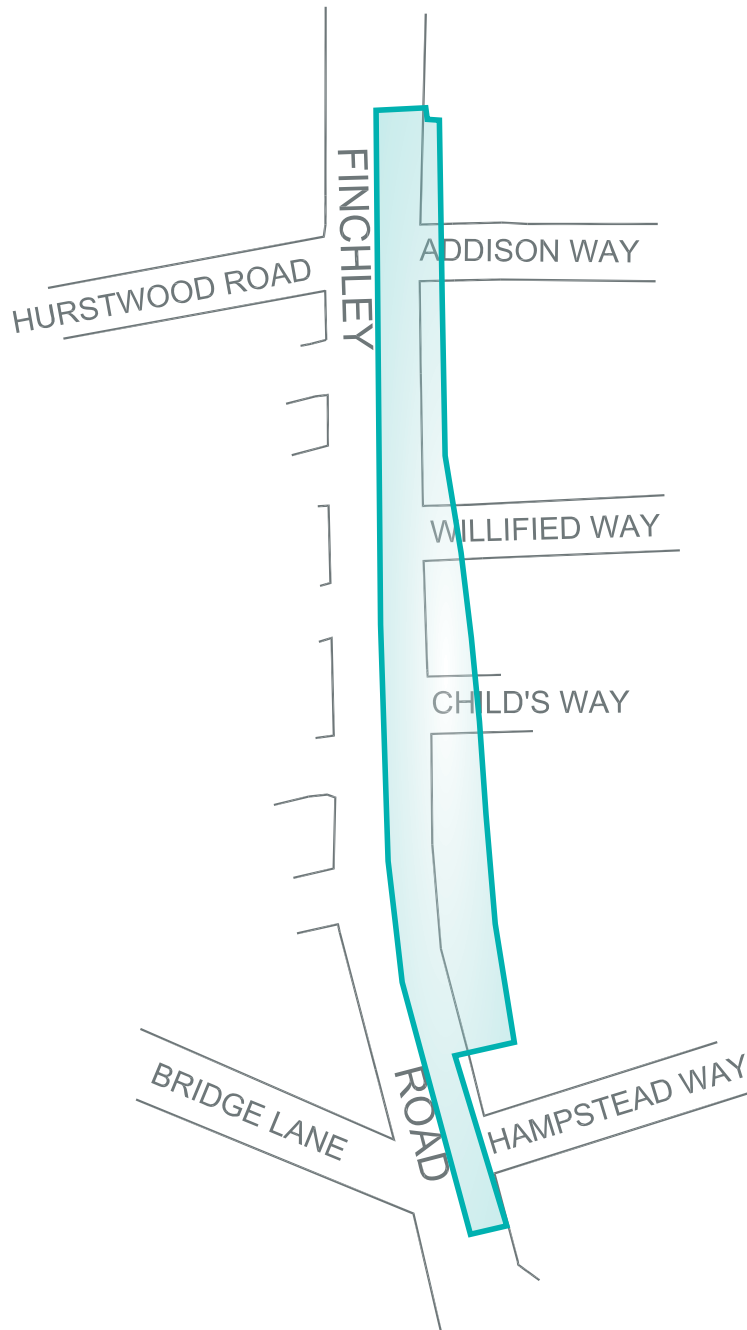


Hampstead Garden Suburb

Finchley Road – Area 16

Character Appraisal



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Contents

Section 1	Background historical and architectural information	5
1.1	Location and topography	5
1.2	Development dates	5
1.3	Originating architects and planners	5
1.4	Intended purpose of original development	5
1.5	Density and nature of the buildings	5
Section 2	Overall character of the area	6
2.1	Principal positive features	7
2.2	Principal negative features	8
Section 3	The different parts of the main area in greater detail	9
3.1	M&S to Willifield Way	9
3.2	Willifield Way to Addison Way	11
	Map of area	

Character appraisal

Section 1 Background historical and architectural information

1.1 Location and topography

Finchley Road forms the western boundary of Hampstead Garden Suburb but only the eastern side of the road is within the Hampstead Garden Suburb Conservation Area. From the junction with Temple Fortune Lane, the road rises gently to the north for about 200 metres and then follows the slope down to the junction with the North Circular Road at Henleys Corner.

1.2 Development dates

This section of Finchley Road formed the boundary of the 323-acre Wyldes estate, the original landholding purchased for the building of the Suburb. The Finchley Road turnpike was constructed in 1826 but, until the coming of the underground railway to Golders Green in 1907, the road was bordered by farmland with only a small number of buildings clustered around Temple Fortune Farm at the junction with Temple Fortune Lane. The first major buildings, Arcade House and Temple Fortune House at the junction with Hampstead Way, were completed in 1912. The developments to the north of these dramatic buildings were constructed later, between 1933 and 1938.

1.3 Originating architects and planners

In the mid 1930s, J.C.S. Soutar designed 858 Finchley Road and the Trust's offices at 862 Finchley Road, the drawings of the latter being signed by his assistant W. Powell. Other architects whose work is represented include A.B. Mitchell (Belmont Court, 1933), Godard and Smith (Clarendon/Dudley/Montrose Court, 1934) and J.B.F. Cowper (The Pantiles, 1935).

1.4 Intended purpose of original development

The Finchley Road frontage was reserved for shopping parades to serve the new community. The initial development was dominated by the desire to define the boundary of the Suburb and to emphasise its separation from the sprawl of speculative building elsewhere. The landmark Temple Fortune gateway buildings did this on a grand scale. Later developments were not of the same magnitude or design quality, but the notion of a 'barrier' persisted. Buildings consisted of blocks of flats and commercial property, including a 3,000 seat cinema, the mighty Orpheum, which opened in 1930 and was demolished in the 1980s when it was replaced by a Housing Association development. These buildings all front onto Finchley Road and shelter the roads behind from the noise and traffic of the main road. The early flats in Arcade House and Temple Fortune Houses were built for rent and aimed at people of modest income. Later developments, like The Pantiles, were designed as labour-saving flats with fitted kitchens and aimed at commuters seeking a 'modern' living environment.

1.5 Density and nature of the buildings

The concentration of blocks of flats results in a higher population density than in the streets behind.

Section 2 Overall character of the area

The overall character of Finchley Road is obviously determined by the developments on both sides of the road notwithstanding the fact that only the eastern side of the road is in the Hampstead Garden Suburb Conservation Area.

It is primarily a flourishing shopping centre with aspects of the public realm designed to facilitate this. The wide pavements, the ease with which shoppers can cross the road using five crossing points, the provision of on-street parking and the reduction of traffic to single lanes in the main shopping area, all contribute to a shopper friendly environment. Three bus routes with frequent services serve the area. There is noise and pollution from traffic, but it is not overwhelming and traffic speeds are reduced by the crossings, which have settings favouring pedestrians. Most of the shops are on the non-Suburb side of the road, but those on the east side combine shops and flats in a dramatic way (Photograph 1).



Temple Fortune House and Arcade House are important architectural statements contributing to the character of the area (they are described in full in Area 2, to which they belong, both chronologically and stylistically). The sense of a planned streetscape does not continue after these buildings. Moving northwards the developments are varied: the Art Deco influenced style of the M&S store; blocks of Neo-Georgian flats; Bimbeck Court; a modern sheltered housing complex, consciously designed to use materials and detailing commonly found in the Suburb; and, more exotically, the green tiled 'Pantiles'. Individually, these are all interesting buildings which address the scale of the street, being of a similar

height and mass, but they do not relate to each other to create any particular effect. In this central section the pavements are very wide, even where parking bays encroach onto the paved area. There are no street trees until after the junction with Willifield Way, so the general feel on the eastern side of the road is very open, even somewhat bare.

North of Willifield Way, the character changes as Finchley Road widens to four lanes and the noise and traffic of the busy junction with the North Circular intrudes. On the Suburb side, mature trees are set in raised brick beds in the pavement. The Hampstead Garden Suburb Offices, and Clarendon/Dudley/Montrose Court, are both set back behind low, planted boundary walls and built in Neo-Georgian style, giving a quiet and dignified character to this section. This wide tree-lined pavement contrasts starkly with increasing traffic on the road and, in its own way, it marks the boundary of the tranquillity of the Garden Suburb.

2.1 Principal positive features

Layout and public realm

- the impressive architectural statement in the Temple Fortune gateway buildings marks the entrance to the Artisans' Quarter and defines this shopping area as distinctive
- wide pavements with some York stone paving around the Temple Fortune gateway
- some on street parking for shoppers
- pedestrian crossings enable shoppers to access shops on both sides of the road easily
- single lane traffic moves relatively slowly
- buildings front onto the road and create barriers, sheltering houses behind from noise.

Landscape and trees

- mature street trees in the most northerly section of the road
- pleasant planting in front of flats softens an otherwise bare streetscape.

Building type and design

- the Pantiles are Grade II listed buildings of major architectural significance
- mixture of styles; Neo-Georgian, Art Deco, and pastiche Italianate enliven functional buildings.

Materials and detailing

- Arts and Crafts influences; dark brick, steep roofs with dormers, timber framing, casement windows, chimneys as major design feature, external staircases and stone facings on arcade pillars
- Neo-Georgian; brick, and plaster doorcases, timber sash windows, parapet roofs and symmetry in layout of blocks of flats
- pastiche Italianate; brick and rendered elevations, green metal casement windows, horizontal lines, flat roof or green glazed pantiles.

2.2 Principal negative features

Layout and public realm

- excess of street furniture, signs not co-ordinated
- lack of street trees in the central section of Finchley Road.

Building type and design

- poor maintenance detracts from the architectural impact of the Pantiles; it weakens the contrasts between materials and the crispness of the horizontal lines so important to the intended design.

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

Certain features are more characteristic of particular parts of the area. To illustrate some of these, Finchley Road can be divided into 2 Sections:

3.1 M&S to Willifield Way

3.2 Willifield Way to Addison Way

3.1 M&S to Willifield Way

Character and landscape

In this section of the road there is a sequence of large buildings with no architectural resonance between them or with the buildings on the opposite side of the road. The character of the area is determined by the characteristics of the individual buildings, and by the wide pavements and boundary planting in front of the flats, which provide a 'frame' for each building.

Architecture

Moving northwards from Temple Fortune House, the M&S store is a 1934 Art Deco-influenced showroom, now converted to a modern supermarket with a rear car park. The building is flat roofed with strong horizontal lines; metal windows run the length of the first floor level and this, together with the cream and green colour scheme, makes quite a dramatic statement ([Photograph 2](#)). The contrast with Temple Fortune House works well, adding visual interest to the shopping area.



2.



3.

The neighbouring Belmont Court (Mitchell, 1933) combines flats and retail premises in a three-storey Neo-Georgian courtyard development. The central section is raised up and set back from the main road on an access drive behind a green bank. The commercial premises are housed on the ground floor of the two wings, which project onto the pavement. The building relies on the ordered symmetry of windows and doors for its traditional feel, and inevitably, this is compromised by the need to accommodate the shops. The shop fascias about the central doorcases in the wings; the fascias themselves are not always sympathetic to the style of the building ([Photograph 3](#)).

Birnbeck Court is a block of Housing Association flats for the elderly, developed on the site of the original Orpheum cinema which had been reincarnated as the Odeon cinema. It was built after a Lands Tribunal



4.

Hearing in 1980 ruled in favour of Hampstead Garden Suburb Trust in relation to the requirements of the design brief. The flats draw on common features of Suburb architecture, steep tiled roofs, two-tone brickwork, and a hipped roof tower which echoes both the tower on Temple Fortune House and, more explicitly, the tower on the bombed Willifield Way clubhouse. The change of level as the land begins to fall to the north is dealt with by a sunken garden, which makes a positive contribution to the character of the road (Photograph 4).

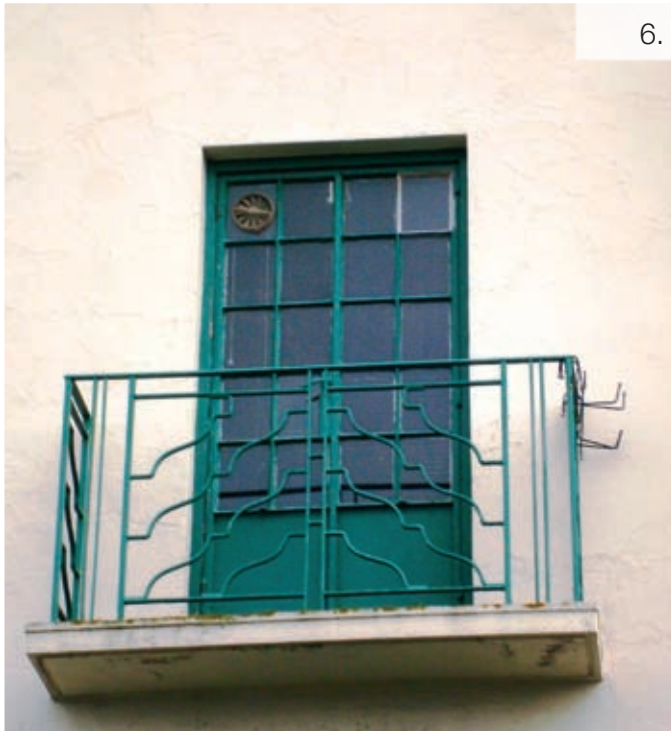
'The Pantiles' is another courtyard development in a pastiche Italianate or 'hacienda' style with modernist influences. The flats are built on a raised podium set back behind an attractive grassed area; access from Finchley Road is by an imposing flight of steps with flanking parapets (Photograph 5).



5.

Green painted steel small-paned casement windows are ranged across the front of the building, creating strong horizontal lines that are arched on the ground floor, rectangular on the first floor and broader on the third floor, hard up against the eaves (Photograph 6 - see overleaf). The two wings compensate for the slope with three-storey bay windows in the southern wing and four-storey squared bay windows in the

northern wing; brick staircase towers rise above the shallow hipped green pantile roof. At the rear there is bold banding on the projecting staircase turrets ([Photograph 7](#)). Sadly, the exterior finish is not in good order, which detracts from the impact of this listed building. Nonetheless, it is an unexpected and exotic style that adds substantially to the character of the area. At the corner of Willifield Way, there is a weak echo of the tower at the Temple Fortune Gateway, in an end of terrace house perched on top of a paint showroom and accessed under a tall turret.



6.



7.

3.2 Willifield Way to Addison Way

Character and landscape

Traffic occupies four lanes as Finchley Road falls towards the junction with the North Circular and traffic speed and noise increases. The mature street trees and boundary planting on this side of the road are a pleasant foil for the traditional architecture.

Architecture

On the corner of Willifield Way, Soutar designed No. 858 in an Arts and Crafts style; originally a house and consulting room, it is now used as offices. A hipped tiled roof sweeps steeply down on two sides with dormer windows set into the roof. The Willifield Way elevation contains the main door set into a recessed porch under a gable ([Photograph 8 - see overleaf](#)).



8.

Below this Soutar and Soutar-influenced architects reinstate Neo-Georgian as the main style of building. The Trust Offices at 860-864 Finchley Road (by Powell in Soutar's office, 1935) repeats the language of Lutyens' Central Square. It has a five bay front, prominent chimneystacks, elegant doorcase, arched, full length sashes at ground floor level and flat-headed sashes at first floor level nudging the underside of the cornice on the parapeted roof. Lutyens' favourite silver grey facing brick with cherry-red dressings



9.

gives elegance to the frontage onto Finchley Road ([Photograph 9](#)). It sits very well with the neighbouring blocks of Clarendon/Dudley/Montrose Courts which are built in a similar style, although with greater regard for economy in materials. The central block is set back behind the carriage drive and is flanked by two side blocks which are stepped forward.



There is absolute symmetry in the design (Photograph 10) with sash windows, a shallow tiled roof, and elegant doorcases with a large pediment-topped sash window above (Photograph 11). It is the kind of building often referred to as 'well-mannered', in a slightly disparaging way, but its visual harmony is in striking contrast to commercial premises on the opposite side of the road and the flats make a positive contribution to the character of the area.

