WHITGIFT ESTATE CONSERVATION AREA STATEMENT

Designation:

Conservation area designated:- ../../2026

1. Summary of Significance

1.1 The Whitgift Estate represents a defined area developed in the 1920s and 30s when London was undergoing a rapid expansion between world wars. This was as a result of improvements in transport and the desire for housing on all levels within easy reach of Croydon Town Centre and Central London but with close access to open space for more healthy living. In addition, this estate was planned and developed along generous lines with mainly large, detached houses set in generous garden plots with wide streets and grass verges. An added feature was easy access to outdoor amenities including golf and tennis, allotments and a large park. Houses were mainly built in English vernacular, Art Deco and Moderne styles popular at the time, but with good quality materials and detailing. The work of a number of local architects is represented on the estate, with some houses sharing similar features and sometimes a mix of styles. Overall, the estate retains its original character and is an example of a defined high-quality, low-density garden suburb-style residential development representative of the era within the Borough of Croydon.

2. Location and setting

2.1 The Whitgift estate area, just east of Croydon town centre, consists of Grimwade Avenue, Sandilands, Fitzjames Avenue, Mapledale Avenue, Harland Avenue, Upfield, Radcliffe Road (south of Harland Ave), Ranmore Ave, and the south side of Addiscombe Road between the Shirley Park Golf Club and just east of Sandilands.

2.2 It is bounded by tramline to the west, Addiscombe Road to the north, Lloyd Park to the south, and Shirley Park Bowling Club and Shirley Park Golf Club to the east; the area also incorporates a playing field within the centre of the estate.

2.3 The estate was developed to align with the sloping and undulating topography of the area, with the streets rising and curving from north to south - from Addiscombe Road towards Grimwade Avenue and running east to west in a more undulating pattern.

3. History and development

3.1 In 1596, Archbishop John Whitgift founded his charitable Foundation through the acquisition of lands across Croydon. That October, he purchased approximately 87 acres eastward near Stroud Green, together with several farms at Woodside, Shirley,

and Addiscombe, for the sum of £1,400. This established the Whitgift Foundation's ownership of the land that would later form the Whitgift Estate. These agricultural lands generated income supporting the Hospital of the Holy Trinity (the Almshouses) and the Grammar School that Whitgift had established in Croydon.

3.2 For more than three centuries, from 1596 through to the late 1920s, the land remained under Whitgift Foundation ownership and continued in agricultural use. Addiscombe Road connected the town of Croydon to the hamlet of Addiscombe, which allowed trade to easily move between the two. During the 19th century, the character of the surrounding area began to transform. The opening of Addiscombe Road station in April 1864 proved a catalyst for change, attracting local businesses and new residents to the district. This marked the beginning of suburban expansion in the locality, though the Whitgift Foundation's farmland remained undeveloped.

3.3 By the 1890s, the first roads were being laid out in anticipation of future development, including Mapledale Avenue, Fitzjames Avenue, Grimwade Avenue, and Upfield. This infrastructure planning preceded actual residential construction by several decades, demonstrating the gradual transition from agricultural to suburban use. Addiscombe Road was the exception, with some houses already being built by this time.

3.4 A significant milestone occurred in 1913-1914 with the establishment of Shirley Park Golf Club on land adjacent to what would become the Whitgift Estate. Designed by renowned golf course architects Herbert Fowler and Tom Simpson, the course opened on 18 July 1914. This prestigious sporting facility signalled the beginning of upscale residential development in the area, establishing the character that would define subsequent development in the 1920s and 1930s. Other sporting developments included the merger of Addiscombe Cricket Club (previously on Canning Road) and Ashburton Cricket Club, which relocated in 1905 to part of Woodbury Farm on Radcliffe Road. In 1924, the club bought its current Sandilands ground from the Whitgift Foundation and merged with Radcliffe Road Tennis Club to form what is now the Addiscombe Cricket and Lawn Tennis Club.

3.5 By the 1920s, the Whitgift Foundation, following the pattern of many large landholding charities of the period, began to recognise the development potential of its agricultural holdings. Several factors made the area highly desirable for upper-middle-class residential development: the expansion of London's suburbs, improved transport links, the increased use of cars and proximity to the newly established golf club.

3.6 The Croydon Corporation Town Planning Act 1925 established the Croydon (East) Town Planning Scheme, which zoned the Whitgift Foundation's farmland for residential development. Building plots were created progressively from 1925 as demand required. Restrictive covenants stipulated that plots should average one-third of an acre with detached houses only, ensuring the new estate maintained high quality and low density - a deliberate contrast to the denser Victorian terraced

development that had characterised earlier suburban expansion in Croydon. In the architectural plans, the naming of the estate is inconsistent, with the most common names being the Whitgift Estate, the Addiscombe Estate, and the Addiscombe Estate-Shirley Park.

3.7 Development proceeded at a steady pace through the late 1920s and early 1930s. By 1935, the estate was midway through its transformation, mainly moving from the north on Addiscombe Road towards the more sloping south; building was mostly complete on Mapledale Avenue and Fitzjames Avenue, partway through on Sandilands and Harland Avenue, and just started on Grimwade Avenue. The estate's street names reflected connections to the Whitgift Foundation and local history: Fitzjames Avenue was dedicated as a memorial to Walton Fitzjames Turner, a popular Governor at Whitgift School in 1921; Grimwade Avenue honoured a Croydon Councillor/Alderman; and Radcliffe Road commemorated Mr Delme-Radcliffe, who became owner of the historic Addiscombe Place manor in 1808.

3.8 The outbreak of the Second World War in 1939 brought development to a halt, with building paused throughout the conflict years. Post-war development resumed in 1947, with Grimwade Avenue and the southern section of Radcliffe Road completed during this period. By 1955, construction had completed on Ranmore Avenue and the remaining portions of Radcliffe Road. An undeveloped section of Mapledale Avenue was retained as allotment gardens at this time, while the playing field at the estate's centre remained under the ownership of the Governors of the Whitgift Foundation, marking the completion of the estate's thirty-year development.



NOTICE.

PROPOSED SALE OF LAND AT ADDISCOMBE.

The Governors of the WHITGIFT EDUCATIONAL FOUNDATION at Croydon propose to sell the land described below, forming part of their ADDISCOMBE ESTATE in building plots at not less than the prices specified, the expenses of the Governors in connection with each sale to be paid by the purchaser.

Offers should be made to Messrs. Blake, Sir & Williams, 42 & 43, High Street, Croydon, from whom further particulars may be obtained.

Any objection or representation in the matter may be addressed within 15 days to The Secretary, Board of Education, Whitehall, S.W.1.

Dated 26th November 1925.

Plot.	Situation.	Approximate Frontage.	Width at rear.	Minimum Purchase Price.
		feet.	feet.	£
4.	East side of Maple Dale Avenue.	100	—	325
5.	East side of Maple Dale Avenue, and at corner of and to the north of further proposed road.	Irregular shaped plot.		400
6.	North side of proposed road leading from Maple Dale Avenue to Upfield.	140	—	360
7.	South side of proposed road leading from Maple Dale Avenue to Upfield.	120	—	360
8.	East side of Maple Dale Avenue at corner and to the south of further proposed road.	Irregular shaped plot.		400
9.	East side of Maple Dale Avenue.	100	—	325
10.	East side of Maple Dale Avenue.	80	58	250
11.	East side of Maple Dale Avenue.	90	43	300
12.	North-east side of Maple Dale Avenue.	100	30	300
13.	North side of Upfield.	90	30	300
14.	North side of Upfield.	240	240	£4 per foot measured.

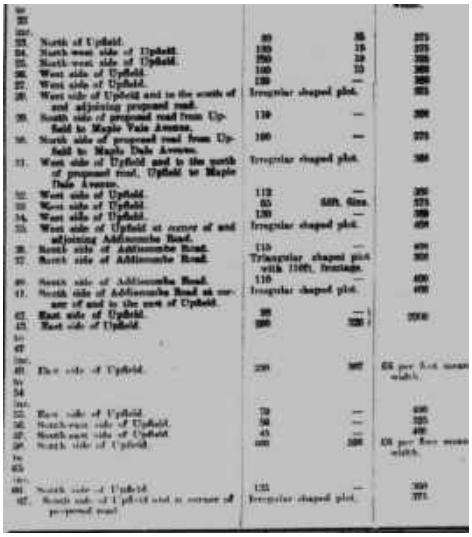


Figure 1 Croydon Times - Saturday 28 November 1925

Character and description of the area

4. Architecture

4.1 The area is characterised by well-maintained detached houses built in a mainly 1920s and 1930s English Vernacular style, but with eclectic decorative elements of Edwardian, Art Deco and neo-classicism. The architecture reflects typical larger housing styles found in some other parts of suburban Croydon of a similar age but with some distinct stylistic elements possibly unique to the area. Many of these original features still survive.

4.2 Many of the houses feature integral garages which represent the age during which the estate was developed, when the motor car added status and provided easier accessibility between cities, town centres and suburbs.

4.3 Overall, there is a wide variety of house types and plan forms, with some size difference. However, differing architectural authorship, building plans reveal consistent features across properties, including room layouts and uses popular at the time, use of garages and siting on individual plots, confirming the effectiveness of the covenant control system in helping to maintain architectural coherence but also the influence of the garden suburb movement popular at the time.

4.4 The house plans on corner plots are often set at 45 degrees across their sites, a feature developed from the garden suburb principles.

4.5 The progression of dates of construction across the estate reflect the popular suburban domestic styles of the time as they progressed from just after the First World War, through the Second World War to the 1950s.

4.6 Buildings range from typical 1930s detached Arts and Crafts inspired houses with mock Tudor/Tudorbethan and early vernacular influences, as well as some Edwardian detailing in the earlier examples and Art Deco styling in those built during the 1930s. Stylistic features include front gables, bays, oriels, porches, doors, windows (with varied shapes and some leaded or with coloured glass) and brick, tile, lead and render detailing. Many houses on the estate have steeply pitched tiled roofs with overhanging eaves and prominent chimney stacks. Most have either low front garden boundary walls, hedges or grassy verges. House names are also a feature, often painted on buildings or applied to front boundaries; this was a fashionable practice at the time.

4.7 Whilst an English Vernacular aesthetic dominates there are a few contrasting examples of a more Moderne style; some of these are features of the prominent corner plots within the estate.

4.8 A variety of materials is featured across the estate, ranging from timber and metal windows to natural clay roof and hanging tiles, with a predominant use of brick at ground floor and render on the upper parts of buildings which unify the varying designs.

4.9 Alterations and additions have taken place to a number of the houses over the decades which have had a varied effect on the character of the estate as a whole. Whilst most have continued in the style of the host dwelling, some have departed from the original and established character.

Examples of individual houses

4.10 **18 Fitzjames Avenue** is particularly well-preserved example with a high-quality design and characteristic features. It is an Arts and Crafts inspired building with tall prominent chimney stacks projecting above a distinctive roof form with three front facing projecting gables and a feature key-hole shaped recessed entrance.



Figure 2 18 Fitzjames Avenue, photo taken January 2026

4.11 Plans for individual properties identify multiple architects working on the estate, including Hugh Macintosh FRIBA (a prestigious Croydon-based architect) who designed **35 Grimwade Avenue**. This diversity of architectural practices demonstrates that development occurred through individual plot sales with buyers commissioning their own architects, rather than mass construction by a single builder.

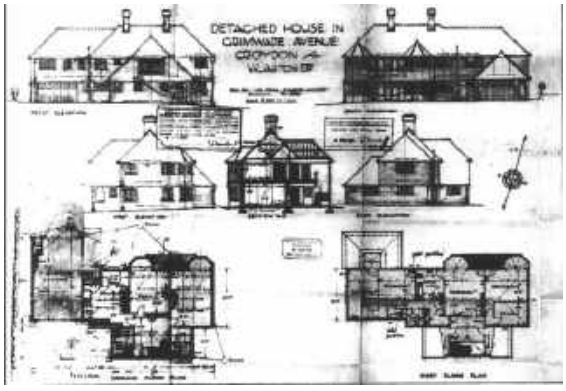




Figure 3 November 1936 Plan for 35 Grimwade Avenue, by architect Hugh Macintosh

Figure 4 35 Grimwade Avenue, photo taken January 2026

4.12 Another notable example is **20 Fitzjames Avenue** (named "Milestone"), sold in May 1938. Sales particulars described it as standing on the 'favourite Whitgift Foundation Estate', built 'under the supervision of a well-known architect' with 'an attractive elevation in brick wholly rendered in white cement with boarded and felted roof, swept valleys, and English hand-made sand-faced tiles.' The house was featured in both Ideal Home magazine and The Architects Journal of the time.

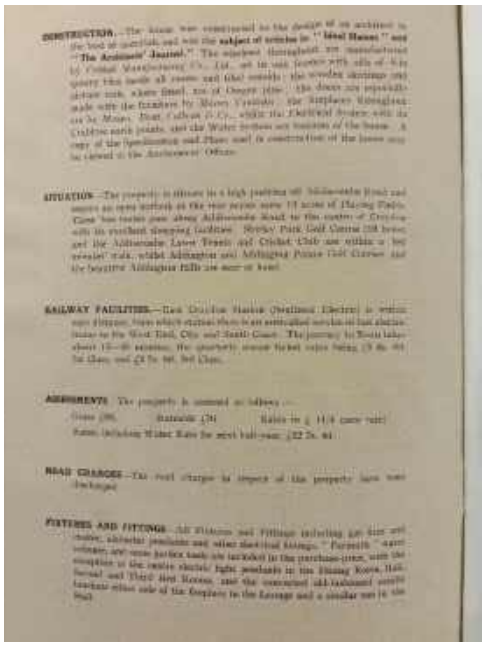




Figure 5 Sales Particulars, "Milestone", 20 Fitzjames Avenue, 1938 (Croydon Local Studies Library)

Figure 6 20 Fitzjames Avenue, photo taken January 2026

4.13 **No.46 Sandilands** was originally designed by Charles H Ridge in 1935 in a streamlined Modern style with a flat roof, Ridge's practice was in Croydon and he was a Fellow of the Architectural Association. The flat roof, if built according to the plans, may have given trouble resulting in a pitched glazed tiled roof being added plus an infill extension at first floor level. The building still has a pleasing appearance on a prominent corner plot and is a marked contrast to the majority of houses on the estate.

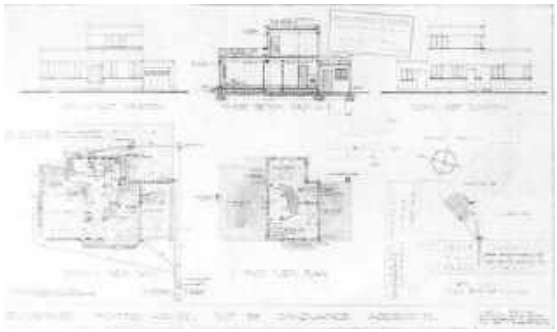




Figure 7 1935 plan by Charles Ridge

Figure 8 46 Sandilands, photo taken January 2026

4.14 During the Second World War, the house at **34 Grimwade Avenue**, known as "Squerrys," was occupied by Geoffrey and Peggy Gowlland and their family. Letters exchanged with relatives document preparations for air raids, the impact of bombing, and the challenges of maintaining family life under wartime conditions, while also reflecting the contribution of local residents to the war effort through nearby industrial employment. This demonstrates the estates significance as a well-preserved example of interwar suburban living with enduring communal and historical value.



Figure 9 'Squerrys' from the front, late 1937

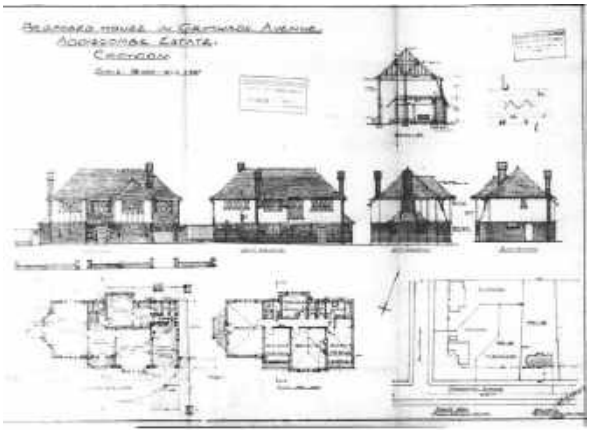


Figure 10 Plan of 34 Grimwade Avenue, 1936

5. Townscape

5.1 The Whitgift estate represents a good quality and attractive interwar planned suburban residential development which both surrounds and is surrounded by generous green space.

5.2 The proximity to Shirley Park Golf Club (established 1914), and the Addiscombe Cricket and Lawn Tennis Club at Sandilands (1925) influenced the upscale character of this garden suburb-style development.

5.3 Building covenants at the outset established minimum plot sizes and restricted development to single detached houses on each. This represented a deliberate planning approach to create a high-quality, low-density residential environment and the plot-by-plot development is reflected in the varied appearance of the estate.

5.4 The plots are laid out on a fairly regular grid which is somewhat denser in some eastern sections of the estate.

5.5 The undulating landscape and curved tree-lined roads with grass verges provide a street pattern which is generous in appearance, with wide crossroads punctuating at intervals along their length. Corner plots have curved boundaries which add to the feeling of openness. Cul de sacs within the estate end in green space which is a marked contrast to the houses lining the busy Addiscombe Road.

5.6 The equally generously proportioned houses are mostly set back from the roads behind front drives and gardens, with mixed low front boundary walls, gates, hedges and grass verges. Some houses which are situated on sloping plots are accessed via

steps and terraced front gardens, resulting in a more elevated appearance in the streetscape.

5.7 Radcliffe Road has extra wide grass verges with houses well set back from the road behind front gardens and low boundary walls and hedges.

5.8 The presence of integrated garages and driveways is a recurrent element within the townscape and distinguishes the area from earlier Victorian and Edwardian housing estates.

5.9 House names are proudly displayed in positions on houses and gates in a variety of materials and designs which are easily visible from the street. Some original cast iron street signs also remain which add character to entries of some roads on the estate.

6. Landscape

6.1 Besides most houses being set in generous gardens, many face directly onto open space, with more distant views through between houses to wider open landscape and trees beyond. This borrowed landscape lends an additional feeling of openness to the estate as a whole.

6.2 The area feels verdant, with hedge planting bordering streets and pedestrian-friendly grass verges which are planted with predominantly mature trees. This street design, along with planting in front gardens, also helps to soften the overall appearance of the estate, even though the area was designed for motor cars and many of the houses have garages and driveways

6.3 The area also features a large gated private open space with sports field at the centre of the block bounded by Sandilands and Grimwade, Fitzjames and Mapledale Avenues. Besides houses built directly around this field many other houses across the estate look out onto other green space which surrounds the estate beyond the individual back gardens.

6.4 There is a pond surrounded by trees and a timber picket fence, with a small outbuilding of a contemporary with the houses, on the corner of Mapledale Avenue and Upfield. This appears to be private and in the ownership of Croydon Council, although it may originally have been part of the landscape before the estate was built.

7. Issues and threats

- Original windows replaced with inappropriate materials such as uPVC and loss of original front doors and decorative coloured glass
- Loss of original bay and oriel windows, porches, door and window surrounds and other decorative features
- Unsympathetic side extensions
- Changes to original roof pitches and addition of large dormers
- Extensive alteration leading to loss of character

- Substantial or total demolition and redevelopment
- Introduction of unsympathetic materials
- Photovoltaic panels (PVs) on front roof slopes
- Loss of boundary walls and hedges
- Imposing new boundary walls and gates
- Landscaping and planting at the front of buildings replaced with paving
- Changes to original pairs of double garage doors with small pane upperlights
- Loss of original house names and street signs

8. Opportunities for enhancement

- Retention and re-instatement of original features
- Alterations and additions which are sympathetic to original aesthetic of buildings and subservient to the main house, maintaining roof forms and generous gaps between buildings
- Use of appropriate materials for alterations and additions which match originals as closely as possible
- PVs to be sited sympathetically so as not to be directly visible from the street
- Retention and re-instatement of original front boundary walls and gates
- Retaining well-planted front gardens and boundaries
- Any changes to original windows, doors and garage doors should match the originals as closely as possible and retain any original coloured glass
- Retention of original house names and street signs

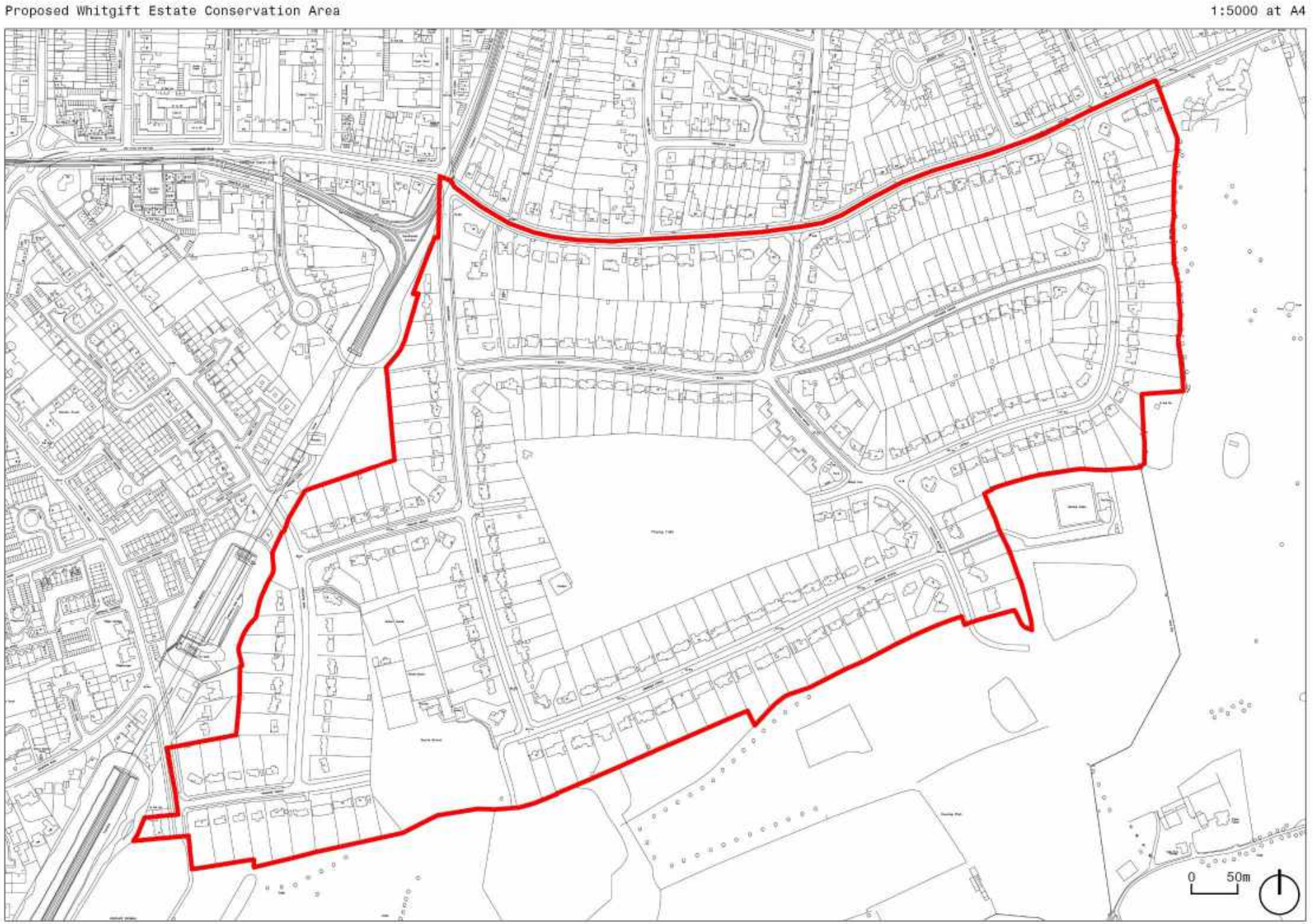


Figure 11 Proposed Whitgift Estate Conservation Area



Figure 12 Aerial image of Whitgift Estate, Croydon. With CA lines added. Source: Google Street View (accessed February 2026). © Google.



Figure 13 Survey 1894-1895 (Croydon Local Studies Library)



Figure 14 Original Estate Map 1926 (Croydon Local Studies Library)



Figure 15 Historical Map 1940, accessed via Cadcorp, February 2026



Figures 16 & 17 Postcard of Fitzjames Avenue, 1930s (Croydon Local Studies Library), and similar view today (below)





Figures 18 & 19 Postcard of Mapledale Avenue, 1930s (Croydon Local Studies Library), and similar view today (below)





Figures 20 & 21 Postcard of Upfield, 1930s (Croydon Local Studies Library) and similar view today (below)



































HARLAND
AVENUE



















