

# 15. SPA LANE CONSERVATION AREA GUIDANCE

## BACKGROUND

- 15.1 Spa Lane Conservation Area was first designated in 1989. In December 2006 a conservation area appraisal and an associated development control guidance document was adopted. Spa Lane Conservation Area Appraisal must be read in conjunction with this Development Control Guidance. Following the appraisal changes were made to the boundary, which came into effect on 15 January 2007.

## OVERVIEW OF THE AREA

- 15.2 This area of Wigston is part of the original northern core of Wigston Magna village. Only St Wistan's Church, albeit rebuilt, remains from the village's origins, but the area still contains a mixture of residential and industrial uses reflecting a later period of the village's development and is a valuable record of Wigston's working past.
- 15.3 The area is separated from the centre of the modern borough by Bull Head Street, a dual carriageway 'A'-road. This wide expanse of fast moving traffic is a major physical barrier and has had a detrimental effect on the setting of the few remaining traditional buildings along the street by sweeping away their original village context.
- 15.4 There are a number of vacant and / or unsightly areas within the Conservation Area which currently detract from the character of the area. However, they offer scope for appropriate and well-designed development in the future.



## DEVELOPMENT OF VACANT SITES

- 15.5 The vacant land within the Conservation Area forms unsightly areas which detract from its appearance. It is important that any proposed development of these vacant areas should be of a high quality both in terms of design and materials in order to ensure that the Conservation Area is visually enhanced by the scheme. The guidance provided in this document (see paragraph 15.9-15.10) should inform the design of any proposed development on these sites.

15.6 The following sites have long term potential for enhancing the character of the Conservation Area:

**FORMER FILLING STATION SITE, BULL HEAD STREET**

- Currently vacant garage site secured by temporary fencing
- Flanked by two residential Significant Local Buildings (Numbers. 20-22 & 36)
- Potential to significantly improve aspect to Bull Head Street
- Potential housing or commercial site

**MOWSLEY END / SPA LANE**

- Currently contains Kwik Fit garage, various light industrial buildings and vacant plots
- Potential housing or commercial site, possibly linking into Filling Station site
- Identified Significant Local Buildings and buildings of townscape value should be retained and integrated into any new development
- Potential to significantly improve aspect to Mowsley End / Spa Lane & Bull Head Street
- Main vehicle access for any development should be via Mowsley End / Spa Lane

**FORD DEALERSHIP, SPA LANE**

- Currently workshop/garage and showroom with surrounding car parking area
- Adjoining buildings to northeast are Listed Buildings and those to southwest are of townscape value
- Potential to significantly improve aspect to Spa Lane and setting of Listed Buildings
- Possible site for housing and opportunity to establish appropriate building line

**CHANGE OF USE**

15.7 The conversion of former industrial or commercial buildings of townscape value will be considered if the site would make an important contribution towards improving the environment and where their conversion would not result in an unacceptable loss of employment land. A mixed use scheme, which retains employment uses on the site, will be encouraged provided that:

- The appearance of the building will be maintained without the need for disfiguring extensions or alterations;
- The amenity of adjoining residents will not be significantly affected;
- Adequate car and cycle parking and refuse storage can be provided and suitably screened from public view;
- Existing vehicle accesses are adequate, or appropriately sized accesses can be provided without affecting the townscape quality of the area, the setting of the building or involving the loss of any important tree or boundary; and
- Any important 'lost', altered or dilapidated architectural details will be restored.

15.8 The change of use of residential dwellings to non residential uses will not normally be permitted.

## THE DESIGN OF NEW BUILDINGS

- 15.9 The Spa Lane Conservation Area Appraisal describes the area's 'grain', i.e. how the area's existing buildings relate to the street. Section 7 'Key Characteristics' summarises information such as boundary treatments, building heights and line, materials, detailing, etc. Paying particular attention to the street in which the new building(s) will sit will establish appropriate design principles and ensure that the new buildings will respect the Conservation Area's existing character.
- 15.10 In order to be acceptable, the design of any new building will need to respect the character and appearance of the Conservation Area by:
- Being of an appropriate mass and scale to avoid dominating the two storey residential properties and to maintain an appropriate juxtaposition of scales;
  - Being of an appropriate form to sit comfortably with the mix of residential, industrial and commercial styles of the buildings in the area;
  - Having interesting roof forms and producing an interesting silhouette;
  - Use materials and detailing which follow on from the design principles which influenced the basic form of the building, i.e. which either reflect those found on traditional buildings in the area or, as part of a very high quality design approach, produce a successful contrast;
  - Providing a Design Access Statement as part of a Planning Application which sets out the rationale behind the design of the building;
  - Responding to the differences in detailing where a development covers more than one street; and
  - Creating positive street corners with active frontages on all elevations.



## **ENHANCEMENT OPPORTUNITIES**

- 15.11 The vacant land along Spa Lane and Bull Head Street forms unsightly areas which detract from the Conservation Areas appearance. It is important that any proposed development of these vacant areas should be of a high quality, both in terms of design and materials in order to ensure that the Conservation Area is visually enhanced by the scheme.
- 15.12 The unattractive car parking area to the front of the Kwik Fit garage and the adjacent gravelled space erode the character of the Conservation Area. An appropriate screening or improved landscaping of such areas would improve the setting of the Conservation Area.
- 15.13 Similarly the Ford dealership garage on Spa Lane has a negative visual impact upon the Conservation Area. Relocation to a more appropriate location would aesthetically be the most satisfactory solution. However, a good landscaping scheme may be able to 'soften' the impact of all the vehicles, the utilitarian buildings and the proliferation of signage.
- 15.14 The churchyard of St Wistans Church is very much overgrown, almost obscuring the church from view. The churchyard should be reclaimed, with much of the vegetation cleared away, leaving key shrubs and trees. Such a scheme would enable appropriate use and would provide a viable green space in a predominately urban industrial area.
- 15.15 The Borough Council may seek to use 'Article 4 Directions' in order to retain traditional detailing on the exterior of non-listed buildings within the conservation area boundaries where such detail has not already been lost.
- 15.16 Grants in the form of 'Shire Historic Building Grants' and specialist technical advice are available from Leicestershire County Council for essential repairs or the restoration of original architectural features on dwellings within the conservation area.

# 16. THE LANES CONSERVATION AREA GUIDANCE

## BACKGROUND

- 16.1 'The Lanes' Conservation Area was first designated in 1981. In December 2006 a Conservation Area Appraisal was adopted. 'The Lanes' Conservation Area Appraisal must be read in conjunction with this Development Control Guidance. Following the appraisal changes were made to the boundary, which came into effect on 15 January 2007.

## OVERVIEW OF THE AREA

- 16.2 'The Lanes' Conservation Area is characterised by the contrast between the 'hidden' green open space of the Manchester Gardens (a Significant Urban Open Space) and the urban built development that surrounds it.
- 16.3 The Lanes themselves are a throwback to the village's origins and probably served to link the two cores of the original settlement. Today they are a series of quiet routes away from traffic in the middle of an urban environment and are of great value in creating the feeling of a quiet backwater in the town centre.
- 16.4 The survival of the Manchester Gardens (now allotments) at the heart of 'The Lanes' as an area of open space in such an urban environment is hugely beneficial. Today it acts as a 'green lung' providing a respite from the urbanity of the surrounding streets with their continuous built frontage (except where this is broken by the Peace Memorial Park).
- 16.5 The four perimeter streets of the rectangular 'village' centre are characterised by their commercial character with small clusters of residential properties. This is reversed in the streets that run west from this central rectangle which are dominated by 19<sup>th</sup> Century housing. The northern and eastern sides of the built frontage to the central green area are mainly comprised of commercial buildings and form part of the centre of the modern Wigston Magna. A large area of the Conservation Area is taken up by the vast concrete mid 20<sup>th</sup> Century Police and Fire Stations.
- 16.6 The southern and western sides of the built frontage to the central green space are much more residential in character and contain many terraces with subtle variations between them in their architectural detailing.



## **PROTECTION OF OPEN SPACE**

- 16.7 Few towns possess such an intricate system of footpaths as Wigston. These 'Lanes' link across the town centre extending from Junction Road to the Little Hill Estate and provide a series of quiet routes across the town centre away from traffic. Improvements to enhance the footpath network have been carried out by the Local Planning Authority and further schemes will be carried out as funding is available.
- 16.8 The Local Planning Authority will preserve and enhance 'The Lanes' system of footpaths and use development control powers to ensure the character and appearance of the area is not prejudiced by unsympathetic development on land adjoining the footpaths.
- 16.9 The survival of the Manchester Gardens as an area of open space at the heart of 'The Lanes' Conservation Area is of great value in creating a feeling of a quiet backwater in the town centre. The Borough Council has been concerned to increase the ecological diversity of hedges and verges in the vicinity of the Gardens in order to enhance the quality of the environment. Subject to public funding, the Council will consider the purchase of plots which fall vacant in order to ensure their retention as open space. The Local Planning Authority will resist proposals for the development of the Manchester Gardens, which form a significant urban open space within 'The Lanes' Conservation Area.
- 16.10 Although the Manchester Gardens are surrounded by built development, except on the Chapel Lane frontage where they adjoin the Memorial Park, these buildings are largely set back from the Gardens boundary, to which they turn their backs. This factor also contributes to the sense of space felt by people who use 'The Lanes'.
- The special character of the Manchester Gardens urban open space will comprise a material consideration when the Local Planning Authority determines planning applications on adjacent land within 'The Lanes' Conservation Area.

## **CHANGE OF USE**

- 16.11 The conversion of former industrial or commercial buildings of townscape value will be considered if the site would make an important contribution towards improving the environment and where their conversion would not result in an unacceptable loss of employment land. A mixed use scheme, which retains employment use on the site, will be encouraged provided that:
- The appearance of the building will be maintained without the need for disfiguring extensions or alterations;
  - Where the property was purpose-built as a shop and elements of an original or appropriate shopfront survive, these will be retained in any conversion unless they are completely beyond repair;
  - The amenity of adjoining residents will not be significantly affected;
  - Adequate car and cycle parking and refuse storage can be provided and suitably screened from public view;

- Existing vehicle accesses are adequate, or appropriately sized accesses can be provided without affecting the overall townscape quality of the area, the setting of the building or involving the loss of any important trees or boundaries; and
  - Any important 'lost', altered or dilapidated architectural details will be restored.
- 16.12 Where retail uses remain viable on only the ground floors of properties, 'Living over the Shop' will be actively encouraged to bring vacant upper floors back into use and generate activity at different times of the day. Such uses will be supported provided that:
- Appropriate noise insulation between the living accommodation and the shop below can be provided.
  - Where the living accommodation is to be accessed separately from the shop, an appropriate separate entrance can be provided without damaging the character of the building and any original or appropriately-designed shopfront.
  - Adequate waste storage and car and cycle parking can be provided for the occupants.
- 16.13 The change of use of residential dwellings to non residential uses will not normally be permitted.
- 16.14 Planning permission for proposals, such as restaurants and cafes, drinking establishments or hot food takeaways (Use Classes A3, A4 and A5 respectively) will only be approved when it can be demonstrated that there will be no harm to residential amenity or local environmental quality as a result of smells, noise, increased late-night activity and disturbance, or increased parking and traffic. Adequate parking must be provided and considered as part of the overall design. Unsightly plant such as air conditioning units, ducting, flues, etc. should be appropriately screened.

## **THE DESIGN OF NEW BUILDINGS**

- 16.15 In order to be acceptable, the design of any new building will need to respect the character and appearance of the Conservation Area by:
- Being of an appropriate mass and scale to avoid dominating the mainly two-storey residential properties and/or, in the case of mixed small commercial and residential streets, to maintain an appropriate juxtaposition of scales;
  - Being of an appropriate form to sit comfortably with the mix of residential, industrial and commercial styles of the buildings in the area;
  - Respecting any well-defined building lines;
  - Having interesting roof forms and producing an interesting silhouette;
  - Using materials which either reflects those found on the traditional buildings in the area or producing an acceptable and exciting contrast;
  - Providing a Design Access Statement as part of a Planning Application which sets out the rationale behind the design of the building; and
  - Respecting prevalent architectural detailing.

## **ALTERATIONS AND EXTENSIONS**

### **REAR EXTENSIONS**

- 16.16 These are the most common type of extension as they usually offer the greatest degree of flexibility and privacy. Care is needed, however, to ensure that the effect upon neighbouring

properties is kept to a minimum. Particular care should be taken in the design of rear extensions to the terraces along Central Avenue as these are visible from public footpaths.

- An extension should not dominate the neighbour's house or garden or affect their light quality;
- Two storey extensions on common boundaries are unlikely to be approved;
- The eaves level of a rear extension should be kept as low as possible and particular care should be taken to ensure the ridgeline of the new roof does not interfere with the existing roof; and
- It should not be visible from the front of the building.

### **ROOF EXTENSIONS**

16.17 These are a popular way of extending houses, but can pose considerable challenges in order to avoid damaging alterations to the character of the property. On terraces and groups of similar properties such as those along Central Avenue and Paddock Street, they can also be highly intrusive because of the relative uniformity of the houses and so their impact on the street must be carefully considered.

- Roof extensions should relate well to the local roof form and should reflect or complement the character of the property and the area;
- Ridgelines and chimneystacks, in particular, are often a key part of a building's character and they should not be altered unless it can be demonstrated that this would create a positive feature;
- The potential for overlooking should be addressed in the design;
- The size and number of dormer windows should be kept to a minimum and they should generally not be placed on the front elevation (or the elevation most visible from the public realm) unless it is appropriate to the design;
- The style of windows should be influenced by the design, proportion and arrangement of existing windows in the building; and
- Roof lights should be of the traditional 'Conservation' type which lies flush with the roof slope and should also be kept off the front roof slope, particularly on formal buildings.

## **SHOPFRONTS, SIGNAGE, BLINDS AND SECURITY MEASURES**

### **INTRODUCTION**

16.18 Leicester Road and the northern end of Long Street fall within Wigston's primary shopping area, whilst the southern end of Long Street falls within the secondary shopping area. The shopping proposals in section 8 of the Local Plan are therefore applicable.

16.19 Although many of the retail units in these shopping areas are housed in older 19<sup>th</sup> Century/early 20<sup>th</sup> Century properties, most appear to have lost their traditional shopfronts and have been much altered in the later 20<sup>th</sup> Century. The following guidance aims to enhance the appearance of the Conservation Area by providing detailed design principles for designers to follow to ensure that new and refurbished shopfronts fit into their context.

### **SHOPFRONTS**

16.20 Number 2 Leicester Road, a Significant Local Building, retains a good quality 1940s shopfront. Planning Permission will not be approved to remove this shopfront or any element of it.

- 16.21 Where some elements of an original shopfront survive, the existing elements should be retained and used as the basis for the restoration of the original frontage or incorporated into an appropriate new shopfront design. Removal of original features will only be permitted if they are completely beyond repair or are incapable of being successfully incorporated into a new shopfront.
- 16.22 The replacement of inappropriate shopfronts will be encouraged provided that the replacement respects the character of the building, adjacent buildings if part of a group or terrace, or the area as a whole. To be acceptable, new designs should:
- Have a clear structural logic with a clearly defined frame of pilasters, fascia and, where appropriate, stallrisers.
  - Relate to the character and proportions of the original building
  - Maintain or improve the ease of access to the building for those with disabilities.
  - Be of appropriate materials.
  - Not stretch across the frontage of more than one building.
  - Provide an appropriately designed separate access where separate living accommodation is to be provided within the upper storeys.
- 16.23 Planning permission for change of use of existing retail premises to other non-retail uses will be refused where non-retail uses are overrepresented. Where change of use is not thought to be detrimental to the area and elements of a good shopfront survive, these will be retained in any conversion unless they are completely beyond repair.

#### **SIGNAGE**

- 16.24 Several buildings in Wigston have been disfigured by inappropriate and clumsy signage. In future, to be acceptable, new signage must:
- Not obliterate, hide or destroy the proportions of the building or any of its architectural features.
  - Have lettering of appropriate size, materials and font type for the building.
  - Be clear and simple to read and not incorporate garish or unsuitable colours.
  - Have only one appropriately designed and located hanging sign for each shop frontage.



### **ILLUMINATION**

16.25 Advertisement Consent is required for most forms of illuminated signage in the Conservation Area. Clumsy, internally illuminated 'box' signs will not be permitted. To be acceptable, illuminated signs must:

- Have a discrete light source which does not interfere with the proportions of the building or frontage or damage any architectural features.
- Not affect the amenity of nearby residential uses.
- Have a subdued and consistent light level.

### **BLINDS AND CANOPIES**

16.26 Blinds and awnings will only be permitted in the Conservation Area when there is a historical precedent and the existing blind box survives, where they can be accommodated without damaging the character of the building or shop frontage and will relate successfully to existing features and detailing of the building.

### **SHOPFRONT SECURITY**

16.27 When designing a new shopfront, consider the likely security needs of the occupier. It is much easier to design in suitable security measures at the outset than attempt to add them to existing frontages.

16.28 Solid external shutters will only be permitted in the Conservation Area where it can be clearly demonstrated that they are the only viable means of security to enable the shopkeeper to retain his livelihood.

16.29 External shutters, of the solid or grille type, will only be permitted when they respect the features and proportions of the shopfront, do not cover the pilasters and fascia and are of an appropriate colour and finish.

### **ENHANCEMENT OPPORTUNITIES**

16.30 Views from Paddock Street into the service yards of the Bell Street commercial units are unattractive, thus creating an unpleasant pedestrian environment for users of Long Lane. Appropriate screening of these servicing areas would dramatically enhance the Conservation Area.

16.31 Some forecourts to properties such as the Wigston Conservative Club and numbers 61 and 65 Long Street would benefit from more attractive landscaping, thus not only enhancing the setting of the buildings but also the street scene.

16.32 If the vacant site adjacent to the Working Men's Club is not to remain a car park, the redevelopment of this site should be considered, as well as other sites that have such a negative impact. All such sites detract from the appearance of the Conservation Area and have the potential for significantly enhancing its character.

16.33 The quiet backwater character of The Lanes is reinforced by the informal nature of its footpaths which criss-cross the area. However, their regular maintenance is necessary to ensure they continue to be well used by the local community and their traditional character is retained. Similarly, traditional street furniture that contributes to the area's historic character should be maintained and replaced where necessary with matching designs.

16.34 In their present condition the vacant factory and shop situated on Long Street are negative features to the surrounding streetscape. Such properties should be redeveloped and tidied, to 'add to' the surrounding area.

- 16.35 The Borough Council may seek to use 'Article 4 Directions' in order to retain traditional detailing on the exterior of non-listed buildings within the conservation area boundaries where such detail has not already been lost.
- 16.36 Grants in the form of 'Shire Historic Building Grants' and specialist technical advice are available from Leicestershire County Council for essential repairs or the restoration of original architectural features on dwellings within the conservation area.

## **IMPLEMENTATION AND MONITORING OF THE SPD**

- 17.1 The nine designated Conservation Areas within the Borough of Oadby and Wigston play an important role in safeguarding its heritage.
- 17.2 Once adopted, the SPD will be implemented through the Development Control process, being taken into account and applied when determining planning applications for development within Conservation Areas. In addition, applicants will be encouraged to consider the enhancement opportunities and to take these into account when preparing proposals for development. The Borough Council will also seek to work with potential applicants to assist them in ensuring that development enhances the character of the Conservation Area, for example through pre-application meetings.
- 17.3 The SPD will be monitored by considering the impact of the proposals when considering planning applications and the number of enhancement opportunities taken forward over time. In addition, there will be period reviews of the Conservation Area Appraisals and the SPD.