

> What are Conservation Areas?

Conservation Areas are defined as 'areas of special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance'. Oadby Hill Top was designated as a Conservation Area in 1987 and Meadowcourt was designated in the following year. The Borough Council has a duty to 'draw up and publish proposals for the preservation and enhancement' of the area as required by the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.

> Your views

This exhibition sets out a summary of the Conservation Area Appraisal prepared for this area and summarises the contents of the new 'Development Control Guidance'. These two documents have been prepared to ensure that the qualities and character of the Conservation Area can be preserved and enhanced. Your views are important and this exhibition has been arranged to give further information about these two documents, to allow you the opportunity to talk to council staff and to let us have your comments on them. Copies of the draft Conservation Area Appraisal and the draft Development Control Guidance are available at the exhibition, the Borough Council Offices on Station Road, Wigston. Tel: 0116 257 2645

> Brief history / archaeology

The earliest records of land ownership refer to Earl Ralph during the reign of Edward the Confessor (1042-1066). In 1739 Anne Busby married Anthony Keck and a long family association began which only ended when some 93 lots totalling 6700 acres were offered for sale in June 1913. By this time the construction of large family housing for Leicester businessmen was already taking place. The Powys Keck Estate Map shows Knighton Grange in existence accessed via a track from the London Road, south of the Knighton Grange Road. The first major housing developments began in 1902 when Kent House (One Oak), Hastings House and Rocklands were built. Manor Road (previously called Oadby Hill Top) was laid out in 1904 and a number of houses were built along all the roads up to the outbreak of the First World War. By 1915 at least a dozen more large houses had been built on Stoughton Drive South and Manor Road, including, Digby House, Inglewood, Highgrove House, Rosenfels, Stamford House, The Gable, The Coppice, The Spinneys and Wighton. Houses are also shown on Knighton Grange Road. At the same time a piece of land down to Meadowcourt Road was sold and now included the university playing fields. By 1915 Meadowcourt Road was laid out with 8 houses constructed on the northern side and 13 on the southern. The 1930 Ordnance Survey map shows further development of large detached houses in substantial plots along Manor Road, including Howard House, Ashcroft, Aigburth, Trerose, The Beeches, Gilbert Murray House, Fields House, Bredon and Stoughton Leys. Southmeads Road is shown with two houses; though by 1938 several more houses had been built. After the Second World War, the university began to acquire houses for student accommodation. When the Knoll was purchased by the university in 1964, the gardens of the four houses (Beaumont Hall, The Knoll, Hastings House and Southmeade) were combined to create the University Botanical Gardens. The last 40 years have seen the construction of small groups of housing such as Eynsford Close, which was built in the 1960s following the demolition of no 5 Glebe Road, and the erection of new student blocks for the university. Today the area continues to be a popular residential area though some of the larger houses are coming under pressure for other uses or subdivision. The challenge for the future is to allow the area to adapt whilst ensuring that its sense of place is maintained.

> Proposed changes to the boundary

The proposed minor changes are intended to help reinforce the special architectural or historic interest of the area. Meadowcourt should no longer be considered to be a separate Conservation Area but be included within the Oadby Hill Top area. Although the modern houses are not of the same quality of the older houses, the backcloth of mature trees is an important aspect of the eastern part of Meadowcourt Road and to views from Southmeads Road.

Additions

It is proposed to include the large houses known as Stoughton Leys, Bredon and Fields House together with the university playing fields and athletics track and the avenue of trees along the continuation of Southmeads Road. The houses are of similar character and age to those already within the Conservation Area whilst the open land, which was farmed by a previous owner of Fields House is an important aspect of the character of the area. The avenue of trees is an important entrance to the Conservation Area.

Removals

It is proposed to remove 24-6 Stoughton Drive South, the modern houses on St David's Crescent, the modern houses on Sycamore Close and a single house on Powys Avenue as these are of a different character to the traditional buildings in the area.

> Enhancement opportunities

> Street by street

Stoughton Drive South

A gently curving, tree-lined road with some exceptional early C20 formerly residential properties many of them in an eclectic 'arts and craft' and 'Jacobethan' style.

Manor Road

Manor Road contains large, high-quality buildings, many of which are now used as student accommodation. The architectural styles vary, but are harmonised by fairly consistent use of red brick.

Glebe Road

A very wide street with little vehicular traffic and a mixture of early C20 houses and later C20 accommodation. It is defined on the east side by the trees and fencing of the Botanic Gardens.

Southmeads Road and Close

Southmeads Road has the feel of a rural avenue with grass verges, rhythmically spaced trees and good hedges, all but hiding the buildings. Southmeads Close, a 1960s development, leads off the eastern end of the street.

Meadowcourt Road

A narrower street containing smaller buildings, which has an attractively consistent character as it was developed over a much shorter period of time.

Meadowcourt

A small 1990s housing estate at the end of Meadowcourt Road which has attempted to reflect the design of the earlier properties. The streetscape lacks the richness of the earlier streets, but its character will develop as the planting matures.

Knighton Grange Road

Knighton Grange Road is relatively wide with excellent mature trees along the footway. The fine, mostly early C20 houses are hidden behind tall hedges and garden trees, cast-iron fences and brick boundary walls.

Knighton Rise

Knighton Rise retains a very strong character despite having more modern infill than some other streets. Stylistically the extremely attractive early C20 detached houses are similar to the other streets' buildings, but the materials are used with greater freedom.

> Key characteristics

Scale

Traditional houses within the area are almost universally of two storeys occasionally with an additional storey within the gable ends or the roof. There are a small number of more modern single storey buildings.

Style

Houses within the Conservation Area are generally in an 'Arts and Crafts' style which encompasses 'Jacobethan', vernacular and Gothic Revival features with several of the later buildings developing into a Neo-Georgian style. Key characteristics include prominent gables, often paired, complex roof forms including long sweeping roofs and hips, half hips and gambrel roofs. Tall chimneys are also a feature of many houses and this adds to the roofline interest and silhouette.

Materials

Houses are mostly of red brick or render with half timbering, brick noggin, and vertically hung tiles all used to enliven facades. Brown clay tiles are the most common roofing material, with red used in some streets. Some of the houses, especially the grandest, have Swithland Slate roofs.

Position on the plot

Although the area is characterised by large houses, these sit on big plots. Most houses are located parallel with the street, except those set in their own very spacious grounds and those at right angles to the street to allow the sun into northfacing gardens. Most of the streets containing the relatively more modest houses have a roughly consistent building line (particularly Meadowcourt Road).

Property boundaries

Most of the original houses in the area have quite solid front boundaries allowing only glimpsed views of the houses behind. These are often formed by hedges supplemented by trees. Some houses have original or new boundary walls and railings and gates. Where boundaries have been removed to give open frontage, this has weakened the character of the street.

Trees

The area has a wealth of mature trees within the Botanic Garden, the gardens of houses and along the roadside of all but Knighton Rise. These are vital to the character of the area and are complemented by large mature hedges and shrubs.

Highways

Although Stoughton Drive South in particular is quite a busy road, the roads in the area are not dominated by signs, road markings and other traffic-related 'street furniture'. Similarly as most properties have off-street parking, the wide roads are relatively free from parked vehicles. The exception is Meadowcourt where the road is narrower and the off-street parking provision less generous.

The Botanic Garden

This is a major amenity to the area. Whilst its attractive grounds are open to local residents and visitors, the contribution of its magnificent trees adds much to the character of the streets around it.

The university

The presence of around 1900 students in the converted houses and purpose-built residential blocks of the university adds vitality and activity to the otherwise quiet streets. The old houses themselves are generally well-maintained. The major negative impact of these buildings is where they present their backs to the streets or where gardens have been surfaced over for parking and solid boundaries removed.

> Purpose of guidance

Conservation Area designation is not intended to 'pickle' an area by preventing all new development. The Development Control Guidance has been produced to help home-owners and prospective developers by clearly setting out the key issues which will influence the Local Planning Authority's decision on any application. This guidance seeks to ensure that the area continues to thrive, but without prejudicing the key features which define the character and appearance of the area. Once approved by the Borough Council, this will replace the previous Supplementary Planning Guidance for the area. The guidance should be read in conjunction with the Conservation Area Appraisal for the area and the supporting policies in the adopted Local Plan / Local Development Framework.

> Summary of guidance

The guidance covers the following topics:

Submission of applications

This section sets out what information people will need to include when making planning and other applications in the area. Outline planning applications will generally not be accepted as they do not contain sufficient information by which their impact on the area can be judged.

Demolition

This section sets out the strict criteria which apply when considering the demolition of buildings in the Conservation Area and confirms the presumption against the demolition of Listed Buildings or other important local buildings.

Change of use

This section sets out the strict criteria by which applications for changing the use of dwelling houses to other more intensive residential uses will be judged.

Subdivision of plots

This section sets out the requirements which will need to be satisfied before an application for building within the garden of an existing property will be approved.

The design of new buildings

This section sets out the design criteria which will need to be fulfilled before a proposed new building in the area will be acceptable.

Alterations and extensions

This section defines the criteria which need to be met before a proposed extension or alteration of an existing building in the area will be acceptable.

Works to Listed Buildings

This section gives advice on works to Listed Buildings including the consideration of fire precaution works, inserting new kitchens and bathrooms and providing disabled access in an acceptable way.

Significant Local Buildings

This section proposes using Article 4 Directions to control certain minor works to Significant Local Buildings in the area. These would include painting, cladding or rendering facades, changing windows, doors and roofs and altering boundary walls and fences.

Trees and landscaping

This section seeks to protect important trees and spaces and sets out the requirement for new landscaping on developments.

Setting of the Conservation Area

This section seeks to protect the character and appearance of the Conservation Area from inappropriate development on sites outside the Conservation Area boundary.

> Your views count

Your comments are welcome on the draft Conservation Area Appraisal and the accompanying draft Development Control Guidance. These two documents are intended to preserve and enhance the area and your views are important as these will help ensure the final versions are as accurate as possible and have local support.

> Key issues

Conservation Area Appraisal

- Do you support the inclusion within the Conservation Area of the houses known as Stoughton Leys, Bredon, and Fields House, together with the university athletics track and the avenue of trees along Southmeads?
- Do you support the removal from the Conservation Area of 24 and 25 Stoughton Drive South and the modern houses on St David's Crescent, Sycamore Close and Powys Avenue?
- Do you agree with the suggested enhancement opportunities at the rear of Highgrove, and the screening of Gilbert Murray Hall and Beaumont Hall?
- Are there any other opportunities for enhancing the Conservation Area?

Development Control Guidance

- Do you support the policies to ensure the character of the Conservation Area is protected?
- Do you think there are any other matters that should be covered by the Development Control Guidance?

> What next?

Conservation Area Appraisal

The responses to this consultation will be considered by the Borough Council and a revised version of the appraisal will then be approved and published. Any agreed changes to the Conservation Area boundary must be advertised nationally and locally.

Development Control Guidance

The Borough Council will consider responses to this consultation and a revised version will eventually be adopted as Supplementary Planning Document.

> For more information

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