

TOWNSCAPE ANALYSIS: MIDLAND COTTAGES

> Overview of the area

The Midland Railway Cottages Conservation Area is a small area containing a row of twenty former railway workers cottages together with the former railway hotel. The buildings were all built between 1871 and 1881 and are of virtually identical materials. Although the railway hotel is a much more imposing building, like the cottages it is of two storeys and sits on what was the road which crossed the railway line at a level crossing.

The cottages and former hotel have considerable architectural and historic interest and the former hotel is remarkably well preserved and continues to serve local people as a public house. The setting of the conservation area is very urban and there is little greenery other than that which has colonised the railway line and embankment and the occasional garden tree.

The embankment effectively defines the southern boundary of the Conservation Area, whilst the railway line demarcates the western boundary. To the east are houses whilst to the north stand modern houses and industrial concerns. The erection of a new road bridge in the first years of the C20 means that today the buildings sit at the bottom of the embankment carrying the new road.

> Key characteristics

The key characteristic of the area is the homogenous character of the traditional buildings. None of the more recent alterations to the cottages have benefited their character and the uniformity of such things as the original building materials, architectural detailing, fenestration, rhythm of window openings and chimney stacks are all characteristics to be enhanced not further eroded by incremental changes.

The presence of the former railway hotel adds considerably to the character of the area. It shares its historical origins with the cottages, serves as a reminder of the original position of the road, complements the architecture of the cottages particularly in the brickwork detailing, and continues to add vitality to the area through its use as a public house.

The over-riding feel of the area is very urban with little greenery (other than self-set scrub and trees) whilst even garden areas are largely hidden from public view. Whilst it would be a mistake to introduce significant amounts of soft landscaping to the area, some judicious planting, appropriate hard landscaping and attention to details could massively enhance the character of the area.



Chimney detail



Detail on cottages



Public house (former Railway hotel)



Rear of public house



Nos. 9 & 10



Front of cottages

DEVELOPMENT CONTROL GUIDANCE: MIDLAND COTTAGES

> 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.

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:

Control of Minor Alterations to the Railway Cottages

In addition to promoting the restoration of lost features of the cottages, it is important to ensure that features do not continue to be lost. Article 4 Directions will therefore be considered which will mean that Planning Permission will be required for the most types of work which affect the external walls, windows, doors, roof and chimneys of the properties. Planning Permission will also be required for the erection of satellite dishes and porches.

The Borough Council will promote the reinstatement of lost features. This will include new windows to the original designs (3 over 3 sashes to the first floor window over the front door and plate glass sash windows elsewhere), a standardised front door design and the reinstatement of front door canopies to match that on Nos. 17 & 18.

Rear Extensions to the Railway Cottages

The backs of the cottages are very visible from the main road and the replacement of the single storey pitched roofed service wings with flat-roofed extensions has damaged the unified character of the terrace. The Borough Council will consider having a design prepared for a replacement rear wing with suitable brick walls and pitched slate roof. This will be used as the template for future rear extensions to the cottages to restore their character. Applications for alterations to the rear wings will only be considered if they conform to this template or the applicant can justify why a slightly different design is required.

Retention of Community Facility

The change of use of the public house will be resisted unless it can be proved that the use is economically unviable, it will be converted to some other acceptable form of community use and the appearance of the building will be retained or enhanced.

If it can be proved that the use as a public house is not viable, conversion to a suitable new community use will be considered provided that some form of interpretation material which chronicles the previous use of the building and its associations with the railway is provided in a publicly accessible part of the building.

Demolition and redevelopment

This section sets out the strict criteria which apply when considering the demolition of buildings in the Conservation Area and the design criteria which will need to be fulfilled before a proposed new building in the area will be acceptable.

The demolition of any significant local building will not be approved unless it can be clearly demonstrated that the building is structurally unsound, it cannot continue in its current use and it cannot be converted to another acceptable use or there are major public benefits from demolition which would outweigh the architectural and historic interest of the building and its contribution to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area.



Canopy to nos 17 & 18



Rear view of the cottages



Public house (former Railway hotel)

WHAT NEXT?

> Your views count

Your comments are welcome on the draft Conservation Area Appraisals and the accompanying draft Development Control Guidance. These two documents are intended to preserve and enhance the Conservation 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 Appraisals

- Do you agree with the suggested enhancement opportunities in the Midland Cottages Conservation Area, such as the repair and replacement of boundary walls, and road and pavement surfacing?
- Do you agree with the suggested enhancement opportunities in the South Wigston Conservation Area, i.e. reinstatement of lost features, retention of shopfronts, road and pavement surfacing, upgrading of street furniture and replacement of overhead telegraph wires?
- Do you agree with the suggested site specific opportunities in the South Wigston Conservation Area?
- 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 Appraisals

The responses to this consultation will be considered by the Borough Council and revised versions of the appraisals will then be approved and published.

Development Control Guidance

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

> For more information

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