

Oadby Court Conservation Area Appraisal & Development Control Guidance

February 2007

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1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 The Oadby Court Conservation Area was first designated in 1997. This document aims to fulfil Oadby and Wigston Borough Council's 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. It should be read in conjunction with the 'Development Control Guidance for the Oadby Court Conservation Area' which has been produced to accompany this appraisal.
- 1.2 Public consultation was carried out, and the draft documents were amended in light of the representations received. In summary, the consultation composed:
 - A copy of the Conservation Area Appraisal and Development Control Guidelines was distributed to all properties within the Conservation Area and those immediately surrounding it.
 - A copy of the documents was also distributed to key stakeholders.
 - A public exhibition was staged in St Peter's Centre in Wigston Road, Oadby on Tuesday 17th October 2006 between 1.00pm -7 .00pm.
- 1.3 A 'Report of Consultation' was prepared and is available from the Borough Council.

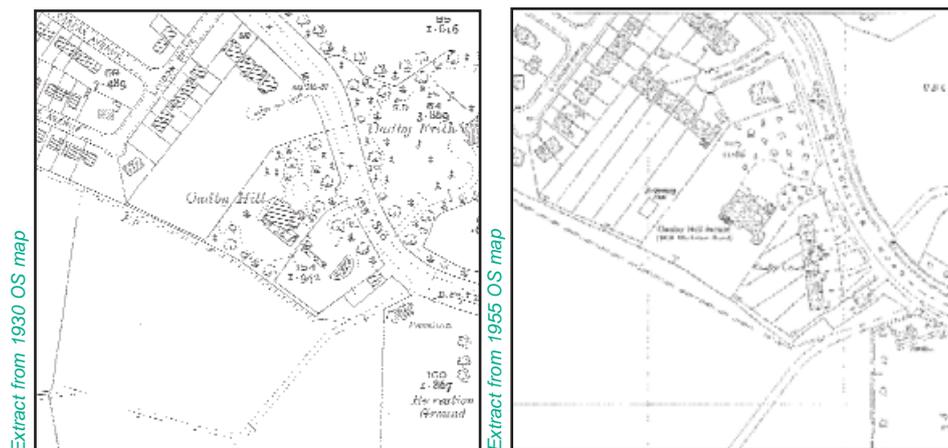
2.0 What are Conservation Areas?

- 2.1 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'.
- 2.2 When a Conservation Area has been designated, it increases the Council's controls, with planning applications judged by their impact on the character and appearance of the area. Greater controls over the demolition of buildings and structures are imposed whilst the rights which owners have to do works to their properties without planning permission (known as 'permitted development rights') are reduced or can be taken away. Stricter controls are also exercised over the design of new buildings, and owners must give the Council six weeks' notice of their intention to carry out works to trees. Planning applications affecting a Conservation Area must be advertised on site and in the local press to give people the opportunity to comment.



3.0 Overview of the area

- 3.1 Oadby Court is a very small Conservation Area which contains a large Victorian house and part of its original extensive grounds on an area on which five 'Modern Movement' style houses were built in 1933.
- 3.2 The 1930s houses (which give the Conservation Area its name) are the most visible of the buildings and despite considerable extensions and alterations maintain their cubed forms and white rendered walls. A number of fine and very mature trees surround the Victorian house which has been in office use for many years. These have considerable value to the amenity of the area and the setting of both this house and the 1930s houses. A handful of similarly mature trees survive in the gardens of Oadby Court; the remnants of the tree screen which originally enclosed the south eastern corner of the Victorian property's extensive grounds.
- 3.3 The Oadby Court houses have lost some of their originally homogenous character. Although sufficient survives to allow them to be understood as a group, it is important that future alterations help restore the character rather than further eroding it.
- 3.4 The Victorian house (built as Oadby Hill and now called Brook's House) is a very attractive mid-C19 villa and externally little altered. However its setting has been significantly diminished due to the construction of Oadby Hill Drive, Granville Avenue and several other streets of C20 houses on land north east of the house. Part of the eastern and western tree belts survive and help buffer the building from the busy A6 road and the newer houses. Although the remaining garden area of the house is now mostly car parking, this does at least give the building some space around it.
- 3.5 Oadby Court is therefore a small enclave, well protected by mature trees and to some extent by the verge and planting left over following the realignment of the road in the late C20.



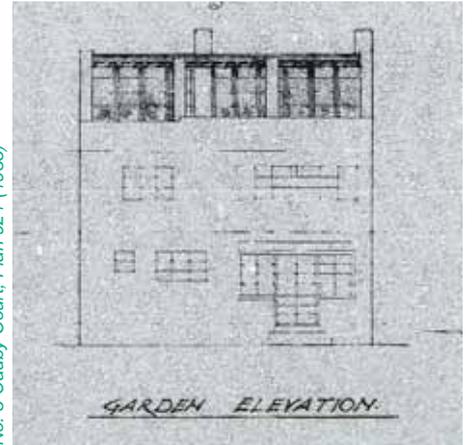
4.0 Brief history / archaeology

- 4.1 Brook's House, No.81 Leicester Road, was built as Oadby Hill, a large house for W E Hutchinson who was a Director of the Midland Railway. William Hutchinson was a great philanthropist who, in addition to providing a village hall for Oadby, frequently allowed village events to be held in the extensive grounds of his house. It is also said that Hutchinson's influence meant that the Leicester to Market Harborough Railway took a wide sweep around Oadby! Hutchinson's daughter, Rachel, married G H Ellis, a mining and railway entrepreneur, and continued her father's good works, providing Oadby with the recreation ground, library and swimming pool which stand south east of the Conservation Area.
- 4.2 By the time of the first Ordnance Survey Map in 1884, Oadby Hill House occupied large grounds running down to the current racecourse and had a stable wing to the south east of the main house. The current entrance, then directly from Leicester Road was supplemented by another with a lodge to the north of the house. Extensive tree belts lined Leicester Road and the south and southwest boundaries of the house whilst extensive parkland stretched north west from the house. Little had changed by the time of the 1904 Ordnance Survey though extensive greenhouses had been added to the south west side of the house linking it to the stable range with a free-standing block south east of the stables. Alterations were made in 1927 to the designs of the architect Ralph W Bedingfield, and the 1930 Ordnance Survey begins to hint at the separation of the land on which the Oadby Court Houses would be built.
- 4.3 The five Oadby Court houses were built in 1933 within the grounds to the south and east of Oadby Hill House. When built, their architecture must have been considered striking and avant garde compared to the mostly Victorian houses around them. The architect was A S Phipps of 39 London Road, Leicester and the name of the client, Edelin de la Proudiere, may give a clue to the choice of the 'International' style for the buildings.

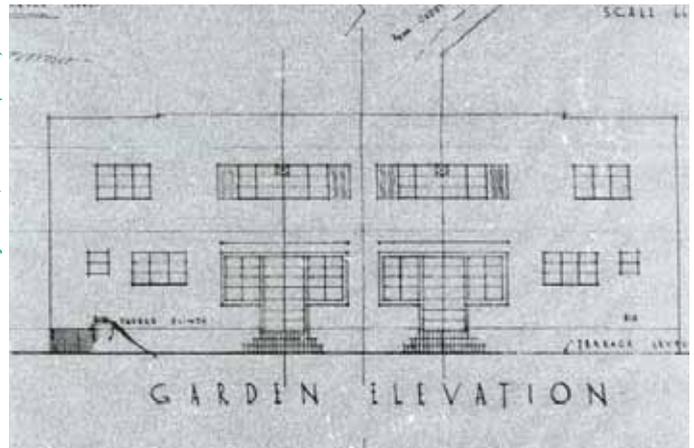
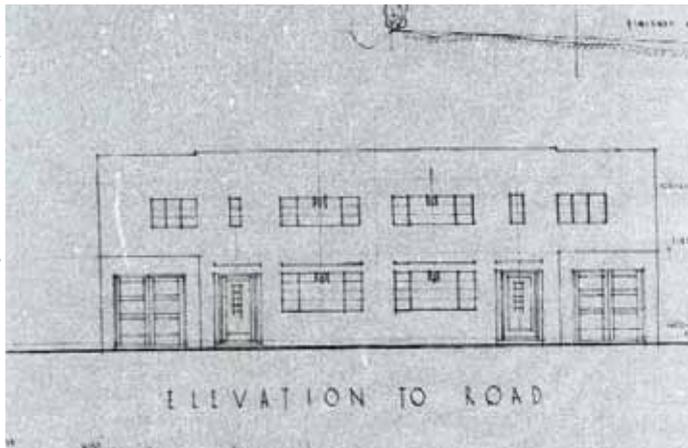
No. 3 Oadby Court, Plan 921 (1935)



No. 3 Oadby Court, Plan 921 (1935)



- 4.4 The Arts and Crafts Movement in Britain had long-promoted such principles as truth to materials and 'form follows function'. The 'Modern Movement', with its minimalist designs, therefore effectively emerged from the Arts and Crafts movement as designers sought to escape the shackles of the Victorian era.
- 4.5 Adoption of the Modern Movement was, however, comparatively slow in Britain as memories of the Great War were fresh and the style was widely associated with continental Europe where it has been adopted with greater verve. However the founding of the *Congres Internationaux d'Architecture Moderne* in 1928 gave it both international legitimacy and fashionable credibility.
- 4.6 The fascination with the 'machine age' therefore spread to the UK and many early Modern Movement buildings were manufacturing or servicing buildings associated with the cars, aeroplanes and liners which were characteristic of the age.
- 4.7 The most fashionable however also sought 'machines' to live in and the vision of an ordered uncluttered lifestyle was epitomised by the Modern Movement. Large houses, often designed by émigré architects were built for wealthy individuals, but schemes such as Kensal House in London, the De La Warr Pavilion in Bexhill-on-Sea and the Finsbury Health Centre allowed everyone to appreciate this clean, modern style.
- 4.8 When built, the Oadby Court houses were virtually identical on plan. Nos. 1 & 2 and 3 & 4 were handed pairs of semis, whilst No.3 in the middle was detached. On the ground floor of each property was a slightly projecting single storey garage wing. Next to this was the slightly recessed and canopied front door which gave access to a central hall with the stairs leading off it. Behind this was a kitchen with separate larder. The main room, facing to the rear and with large French windows was the lounge, and leading off it, with its main



window to the front elevation, was a dining recess. On the garage side, was a side door which accessed a coal store and WC. On the first floor was a generous landing, three bedrooms, a bathroom, separate WC and airing and storage cupboard; the latter accessed from bedroom 2. The buildings were described on the Building Plans, approved by Oadby Urban District Council on 11 September 1933, as being built of bricks and covered with lime mortar.

- 4.9 Despite the modern architecture of the buildings, the plan form, with the exception of the integral garage and the 'open-plan' living and dining area is not markedly different from that of a Victorian house. Even the materials of construction were traditional, although the lime rendered finish seems to have subsequently been replaced with cement render.
- 4.10 Within a matter of months, the detached No.3 was slightly extended by building above the garage on the front elevation to extend bedroom 2. The architect and client were the same as for the 1933 application. In 1935, the house was extended again for the same client when a sun room and roof terrace were added as a second floor. This had sliding doors and a small terrace to the rear elevation with French doors and windows to the larger terrace at the front. The architect for these alterations was Ernest A Dakin of 109 Ashby Road, Loughborough.

5.0 Setting

- 5.1 The Oadby Court Conservation Area is a small area just to the west of the main A6 around 3.5 miles south of central Leicester. A grass verge with extensive tree planting helps shield Oadby Court from the busy dual carriageway and is an important aspect of the area's setting.
- 5.2 From the south, the distinctive architecture of 1-5 Oadby Court increases their prominence even though they are below the new road level, They face across the new junction which gives access to the supermarket on the west side of the road. To the south is the recreation ground and swimming pool. To the north and west are C20 housing developments much of them built within the former grounds of Oadby Hill.
- 5.3 From the north, the Conservation Area is barely noticeable. Only the trees within the grounds of No.81 are readily visible from the main road when heading south.
- 5.4 This stretch of the A6 is generally lined with houses, mostly dating from the late C19 onwards. Although there are other individual 'Modern Movement' houses in the area, Oadby Court is the most significant group. Their setting is enhanced by the presence of the main house in the grounds of which they are built and the surviving mature trees.



6.0 Townscape analysis

- 6.1 The five 'Modern Movement' houses of Oadby Court stand to the south of No.81 Leicester Road on the site of the stables and outbuildings of the larger house. The houses have an unusual building line at an angle to both the original and new line of the A6. Although the houses were originally all of the same dimensions, this consistency of character has been diminished by subsequent alterations and extensions to the properties. The rectangular forms and white painted render finish does however still give them some consistency of character.
- 6.2 When built, each property was a simple rectangle with a projecting garage block. The windows were probably 'Crittall' windows. The front elevation had large windows to the dining area at ground floor and bedroom 2 at first floor; the ground floor window being slightly taller. A 3x3 light window was provided to the bathroom, whilst curiously the original drawings show a slim window to the airing cupboard but no window to the separate WC!
- 6.3 No.1 is the southernmost of the group and is visible from Seagrave Drive, the slip road to Oadby Hill Drive and Leicester Road. The house has a two storey extension to the south in the same plane as the main block with a projecting single storey garage wing. The windows are modern double glazed units without glazing bars. The southern boundary is formed by a boarded fence and hedgeline and there is a mature tree on the south east corner of the plot. A grass verge stands to the south of No.1 and from here there are views of the mature yew and sycamore trees south of No.81 Leicester Road.
- 6.4 No.2 has been extended to the north in similar fashion to No.1. However the two storey element projects forward of the main house wall over part of the garage block. A timber fence separates Nos. 1 & 2; the former has a drive of concrete paviors and gravel; the latter of setts with a grass verge. There are two fine mature horse

Nos. 4 & 5 Oadby Court



No. 81 Leicester Road



chestnut trees on the boundary between Nos. 2 & 3 whilst an ornamental tree has been planted in front of No.1.

- 6.5 No.3 is a three storey property with a recessive second floor opening onto the roof terrace. Again, this had a projecting garage extension (built over in 1935), though the door of this has been replaced by glass blocks and the accommodation incorporated into the main house. The windows, although modern are good representations of the original 'Crittall' patterns. The front garden has not yet been re-landscaped. The boundary to No.2 is a timber fence, whilst shrubs divide the property from No.4.
- 6.6 No.4 has been extended in similar fashion to No.1 although a small porch has been built at the angle of the main house and garage wing. The replacement windows, with their 'Georgian' glazing bars are not particularly appropriate to the age and style of the property.
- 6.7 No. 5 has been the most extensively extended. Presumably, originally it was extended to the north with the single storey garage wing like all the other properties. This has been added to further with another 'bay' of two storey extension to the north, whilst the garage block has been extended also giving effectively three 'bays' of single storey extension (the northern one being the garage) all forward of the original building line of the main house. The single storey element has yet to be painted. The front garden is mostly a tarmac parking area with a wide entrance though there is a substantial privet hedge to the south.
- 6.8 The modern brick wall and piers of the boundary to No.81 Leicester Road commence at the boundary with No.5 Oadby Court. In townscape terms, this is a relatively insignificant feature however as the belt of mature trees behind completely overshadows the low wall.
- 6.9 The relatively wide vehicle entrance splay of No.81 allows a view through to the large parking area to the north and east of the house.

The north-east front of the house is the only elevation which is readily visible. This is a symmetrical two storey, three bay façade of gault brick with a hipped Welsh slate roof. There is an imposing central porch with pairs of Doric pilasters and columns supporting a frieze of metopes with a balustrade above. The ground floor windows have slightly prominent and gently arched stone surrounds with a large central window flanked by slimmer windows. Above these, the first floor windows have squared surrounds and a recessed panel beneath, whilst above the porch is a similar window recessed within an opening with a stone lintel supported on moulded corbels. All the windows are plate glass sash windows. The wide eaves are supported on a stone dentil course. There is a pair of brick ridge stacks with ornamental brick detailing. Despite the extent of car parking, the surviving mature trees give this substantial mid-C19 villa an attractive setting.

7.0 Key characteristics

7.1 *General*

- Small area accessed via a slip-road well hidden from A6 by mature trees and grass verge.
- Impressive mature trees are the remains of the parkland setting of Oadby Hill House.

7.2 *1-5 Oadby Court*

- White-painted Modern Movement houses with flat roofs.
- Two pairs of houses with detached house between, originally with consistent building line, now less consistent due to modern extensions.
- Houses set down slightly from road level with quite open front gardens and secluded rear gardens.
- Windows originally with strong horizontal emphasis.
- A variety of boundary treatments and drive surface treatments.

7.3 *81 Leicester Road*

- Large, symmetrical, detached, brick and slated mid-C19 house relatively unaltered externally despite now being offices.
- Building set down from road and largely hidden from road and surrounding houses by mature tree belt.
- Former gardens now largely given over to car parking.

8.0 Changes to the Conservation Area Boundary in March 2007

- 8.1 The following change to the Conservation Area boundary was made following this appraisal to help reinforce the special architectural or historic interest of the area. This change is effective from 12 March 2007.
- 8.2 The verge and planting which separates Oadby Court from Leicester Road has been included in the Conservation Area. Although it is a relatively recent feature, it serves to 'shield' the Conservation Area from the busy A6 and adds to the green setting of Oadby Court and Brook's House.

9.0 Enhancement Opportunities

- 9.1 The principal enhancement opportunity relating to the Oadby Court houses would be greater standardisation of the design of extensions and windows and doors. This is considered further in Section 10.0.
- 9.2 The setting of No.81 Leicester Road would be considerably improved if some of the large area of car parking could be returned back to garden area or if the mass of parking could be broken up with some strategically planted trees or landscaping.
- 9.3 The grass verge to the south of No.1 Oadby Court is rather unkempt due to vehicle parking. Preventing vehicle parking and better maintaining the grass would considerably improve the appearance of the corner.

10.0 Development Control Guidance

10.1 *General*

This guidance covers specific issues which are felt to affect the special architectural and historic interest of the Conservation Area. It should be read in conjunction with relevant national planning guidance and local planning policy contained within the Borough Local Plan or Local Development Framework.

10.2 *Alterations and extensions of Oadby Court Houses*

Although they are Significant Local Buildings, the Oadby Court houses have all been altered and extended in some way. However, they do still retain character as a group. This is mostly because of the angular form of the buildings and their white painted render. The restoration of windows with a typical 1930s horizontal emphasis would significantly enhance the appearance of the properties. The Borough Council will therefore consider the use of Article 4 Directions to control the following types of work:

- Repainting the external walls of the houses.
- Replacing windows and doors.

Extensions to the Oadby Court Houses will be permitted when they fulfil all of the following criteria:-

- They maintain or restore the group character of the houses.
- They respect the angular form, proportions, materials and detailing of the original houses.
- They preserve or enhance the setting of the houses and do not adversely affect any significant trees or hedges.

10.3 *Alterations and extension of 81 Leicester Road*

Brook's House is a Significant Local Building. Any alterations which materially affect the external appearance of the building will require Planning Permission. Any alterations which would entail the loss of original architectural features will be resisted unless a convincing justification can be made that the feature is so badly damaged as to be beyond repair, or its removal or alteration will be to the long-term benefit of the building.

Extensions to Brook House will be permitted if they fulfil the following criteria:-

- They will not adversely affect significant elevations of the building.
- They will not destroy important architectural features or damage the proportions of the elevation.
- They will not bring about the loss, now, or in the future, of important trees or landscape features.
- Their design, materials and detailing will match or complement the design of the original building.

10.4 *Change of use of 81 Leicester Road*

The change of use 81 to flats or other more intensive residential uses, hotel, boarding house, guest house or nursing home will only be permitted where it can be demonstrated that:-

- The amenity of adjoining residents will not be significantly affected.
- The amount of car parking and vehicle movements will not increase or, ideally, will be reduced.
- Adequate cycle parking and refuse storage can be provided and suitably screened.
- The appearance of the dwelling will be maintained without the need for disfiguring extensions or alterations.

- The setting of the building will not be adversely affected and appropriate measures are in place for the maintenance and improvement of gardens, trees and hedges.
- Any signage will not adversely affect the residential character of the area and will not be illuminated.

10.5 *Development within the grounds of 81 Leicester Road*

Development within the grounds of Brook's House will be permitted when the following criteria are met:-

- The proposed development will not adversely affect the setting of Brook's House and will not interfere with key views of the principal elevations of that house.
- The design of any new buildings will respect or complement Brook's House in terms of scale and mass, form, materials and detailed design.
- Brook's House will retain an appropriate setting and amenity space and any new buildings will have adequate and suitably landscaped amenity space.
- The amount of open car parking areas will be reduced, though both Brook's House and any new development will retain sufficient levels of car and cycle parking which will be appropriately designed.
- Existing vehicle access is adequate, or can be modified without affecting the setting of the building or involving the loss of any important tree, boundary or hedge.
- No important trees will be lost or unsuitably pruned either as a result of the change of use, any alterations or the likely future needs of occupiers of the building with regard to adequate lighting levels.

11.0 References

- Oadby and Wigston Adopted Local Plan (29th Oct 1999).
- Wills, D. (ED.), 'Oadby 2000' Oadby Local History Group: Leicestershire (1999).
- Oadby Urban District Council Building Plans No 780, 921.
- Thanks to the Leicestershire Record Office for the supply of the 1884, 1930 and 1955 Ordnance Survey Maps of the area.

