

# WIGSTON ALL SAINTS, THE LANES & SPA LANE CONSERVATION AREAS

## REPORT OF CONSULTATION

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## **1. Introduction**

QuBE Planning Ltd were appointed by the Borough of Oadby and Wigston to carry out an appraisal of the Wigston All Saints, The Lanes and Spa Lane Conservation Areas, to produce development control guidelines and then to subject both draft documents to a period of public consultation.

This report describes the public consultation undertaken, summarises the representations received and sets out a response to the principal areas of concern to allow the Borough Council to decide whether to amend the documents prior to final approval and publication.

## **2. Methodology**

The public consultation comprised:

- A full colour leaflet summarising the conservation area appraisal and development control guidelines was prepared and together with a short questionnaire was issued to some 1200 properties in the conservation areas and immediately outside the current boundaries in the week of 10 July 2006.

Copies of the leaflet and questionnaire can be found in Appendix 1.

- A copy of the leaflet and questionnaire was also sent to Ward Councillors, Civic Societies, the Government Office for the East Midlands, Leicestershire County Council, and the East Midlands Regional Assembly.
- A public exhibition was staged in the Wigston Magna Methodist Church on Wednesday 19 July between 12.00 pm and 8.00pm. Staff from the Borough Council were available to deal with comments and questions.

A copy of the exhibition panels can be found in Appendix 2.

- Copies of the documents and an online response form were available on the Borough Council's website.
- A press release was issued and coverage appeared in the Leicester Mercury and the Borough Council's 'Letterbox' publication.

### **3. SUMMARY OF RESPONSES**

#### **Level of response**

A total of 26 questionnaires were returned, but it is not possible to accurately state a percentage response rate as the final number of circulated questionnaires is unknown.

Letters were received from 2 people, the County Council and the East Midlands Regional Assembly.

The exhibition was attended by 26 people.

#### **Overall comments**

The majority of people who completed a questionnaire supported the Conservation Area Appraisals and the Development Control Guidelines. Of those completing a questionnaire:

- 85% thought the All Saints Conservation Area Appraisal accurately described the character and qualities of the area (8% had no view).
- 65% thought The Lanes Conservation Area Appraisal accurately described the character and qualities of the area (31% had no view).
- 62% thought the Spa Lane Conservation Area Appraisal accurately described the character and qualities of the area (31% had no view).
  
- 54% supported the proposed changes to the All Saints Conservation Area boundary (27% had no view).
- 50% supported the proposed changes to The Lanes Conservation Area boundary (38% had no view).
- 60% supported the proposed changes to the Spa Lane Conservation Area boundary (35% had no view).
  
- At least 69% of people supported all of the Development Control Guidelines.

A detailed breakdown of the questionnaire responses and a summary of the comments made can be found as Appendix 3.

#### 4.0 Response to principal and/or most frequently raised issues

As anticipated a number of issues have been raised by people responding to the questionnaire. Some of these were points of accuracy, for example drawing the Conservation Area boundary through a private garden or wrongly labelling a property on the map. These comments have been collated in the following table and it is recommended that the Appraisals and Development Control Guidance documents are modified to incorporate all these changes prior to final publication.

This table sets out the principal comments and gives a response and a recommendation for consideration by the Borough Council. Where similar comments have been made under more than one section of the questionnaire the responses are dealt with under the most appropriate heading to avoid duplication. The proposed text changes to the final documents are tabled in Appendix 4.

Comment	Response	Recommendation
<b>ALL SAINTS CONSERVATION AREA APPRAISAL</b>		
<b>Accuracy of the appraisal in describing the character and qualities of the area</b>		
The description of Gas Lane's character was questioned.	The opportunity for enhancement at Gas Lane is noted.	Improving Gas Lane should be included as an Enhancement Opportunity (Section 9.0) and Para 6.32 will be amended.
Greater emphasis should be given to the importance of the framework knitters' properties and details such as long windows in the area.	The importance of the framework knitting industry is acknowledged within the text of the appraisal document.	No change.
<b>Proposed Exclusions – Removal of Pochin's Close; modern eastern end of Newgate End &amp; Nos. 17-21 (odds) Moat Street.</b>		
The top end of Pochin's Close should be kept in the Conservation Area because the houses have uniform windows and there are mature trees that need protection from felling.	The modern houses of Pochin's Close do not have the character of the traditional properties in the All Saints Conservation Area, (i.e. their design does not follow the Key Characteristics of the All Saints Conservation Area as defined in Section 7.0). If the mature trees are of townscape value, they can be protected by Tree Preservation Orders instead of by Conservation Area designation.	Pochin's Close will be removed from the Conservation Area as per the Townscape Appraisal Map, subject to the note below.
The bungalow at the southern end of Gas Lane should remain in the Conservation Area as it is the former gasworks offices.	The bungalow is an important remnant of Newgate End's history and should be retained within the Conservation Area.	The boundary will be amended to retain the whole of Gas Lane and the bungalow within the Conservation Area. Section 8.0 of the Appraisal document will also be amended.

<b>Enhancement opportunities</b>		
<p><b>Removal of portacabins and parking from Newgate End entrance to Birkett House School</b></p> <p>General agreement that this would improve the setting of All Saints' Church, although there were some reservations that the removal of the parking might affect the functions of the church and/or school.</p>	<p>This is a suggested enhancement which should be undertaken if the opportunity to remove the portacabins and parking arises. The school and/or church are not obliged to undertake this work, but should they decide to, it will be discussed with the Council.</p>	<p>No action required.</p>
<p><b>Redevelopment of British Legion's single storey (corner) wing</b></p> <p>Generally supported (comments about it being an eyesore), although there were queries about who would pay for any such redevelopment.</p>	<p>Again, this is a suggested enhancement – if the opportunity to redevelop this wing arises, the Council will work with the British Legion (who will be fully responsible for the funding and construction of the building) and encourage a more sympathetic design which better defines this street corner.</p>	<p>No action required.</p>
<p><b>Landscaping of the parking/garden areas of the public houses</b></p> <p>Generally supported, as long as no public funds were used.</p>	<p>The landscaping of these areas would improve the appearance of the Conservation Area – the Council will encourage this work, but it will be the public houses' responsibility to undertake this work.</p>	<p>No action required.</p>
<p><b>Other improvements</b></p> <p>The enhancement of Gas Lane was cited as a priority.</p>	<p>The potential for the enhancement of Gas Lane is acknowledged and the appraisal document will be amended accordingly – see above.</p>	<p>See above.</p>
<b>Comment</b>	<b>Response</b>	<b>Action</b>
<b>THE LANES CONSERVATION AREA APPRAISAL</b>		
<b>Factual Errors or Omissions</b>		
<p>The western boundary of the conservation area should include The Black Pad and area to Willow Park as per the original designation.</p>	<p>The current boundary used for the purposes of the appraisal is as per the 1999 Local Plan. However, on inspection of historic maps, The Black Pad and the area to Willow Park do appear to have been included within the original Conservation Area boundary.</p>	<p>The conservation area boundary on the Townscape Appraisal Map will be amended to include The Black Pad and the area to Willow Park on the western boundary.</p>
<p>There are 3 trees in the garden of No.69 Central Avenue, but the Townscape Appraisal Map only shows one – to which tree does the map refer?</p>	<p>The 'Important Trees' noted on the appraisal map is an indicative symbol and is not intended to be an accurate representative of the precise number of trees in that location – it merely denotes that there is/are tree(s) of townscape value at that approximate location.</p>	<p>No action required.</p>
<p>There are 2 trees shown in Willow Park which do not exist, but there are 4 mature trees in the garden of No.67 Central Avenue – should these be noted as important trees instead?</p>	<p>The trees in the garden of No.67 Central Avenue have probably been mistakenly noted as being in Willow Park. The 4 trees in the garden of No.67 should be noted instead.</p>	<p>The Townscape Appraisal Map will be amended.</p>

Mention should be made of the allotments in Section 7.0	Reference to the allotments should be made.	Section 7.0 will be amended to include the allotments.
A visitor to the exhibition commented that the description of 3 pairs of houses in Para 6.47 was inaccurate.	The error is noted and the text will be amended.	Para 6.47 will be amended with the correct description of the houses in question.
<b>Proposed Inclusions – Nos. 61 &amp; 65 Long Street, Nos. 42-50 (evens) Long Street and Nos. 2 &amp; 4 Leicester Road</b>		
The centre of Wigston is the priority – these properties are too far away from the core of the Conservation Area.	Only 8 buildings are suggested for inclusion and they are a logical extension to the group of good quality buildings along Long Street that are already within the Conservation Area boundary.	No change to the Townscape Appraisal Map.
<b>Proposed Removals – Area bounded by Bell Street, Bull Head Street, Long Lane and Ross' Lane</b>		
It is important to keep the whole area within the Conservation Area otherwise The Lanes will lose their unique character. The area is very ill kept now – if removed from the Conservation Area, it will become more unsightly. Ross' Lane especially should be kept within the Conservation Area.	Respondents were split 50/50 on the proposed removal of this area. After careful consideration it is proposed to retain the area bounded by Paddock Street, Bull Head Street, Long Lane and Ross' Lane, but exclude the area to the north of Paddock Street, bounded to the north by Bell Street. Although the townscape quality of both areas is poor, it is felt that the area south of Paddock Street is of historical importance and should be retained within the boundary to ensure the quality of future redevelopment. Ross' Lane and Long Lane will remain within the boundary, but The Bell Fountain PH and adjacent car park will be excluded. Section 8.0 of the Appraisal document can be amended to explain how development in the excluded area will still be subject to strict control and attention will be drawn to DC Guidance Section 13.0 'Proposals Affecting the Setting of the Conservation Area.'	Townscape Appraisal Map will be amended. Section 8.0 of the Appraisal document will be amended to explain how development in the excluded area will still be subject to strict control.
<b>Enhancement Opportunities</b>		
<b>Redevelopment/landscaping of vacant site/car park adjacent to Great Wigston Working Men's Club</b> Generally supported, but was not considered to be essential or a high priority. The retention of car parking on this site was considered, by some, to be important and one respondent implied that the car park had already been resurfaced.	The car park has been resurfaced, then this site has already been improved and this should therefore be removed as an enhancement opportunity. The longer term potential for its redevelopment, however, remains and this enhancement opportunity should remain in the Appraisal.	Remove Para 9.3 from Section 9.0.
<b>Landscaping of building forecourts</b>	This is a suggested enhancement	No action required.

<b>Landscaping of building forecourts</b> Generally supported, although again there was concern that the cost be met by the owners of buildings.	This is a suggested enhancement which will be encouraged when the opportunity arises, e.g. if the property is being refurbished.	No action required.
<b>Screening of service yards at rear of Bell Street commercial units from Paddock Street</b> Generally supported, but concerns that screening would look worse than the current situation and that the area would need to be policed.	Any screening would need to be appropriate to the area and not create public safety problems. Planning permission may well be needed for any proposals and the Police will be consulted. No proposals have been drawn up yet.	No action required.
<b>Other improvements</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Maintenance of the lamp posts in The Lanes.</li> <li>○ Resurfacing/maintenance of The Lanes footpaths.</li> <li>○ Redevelopment of (and tidying of surrounding area) of vacant factory and vacant shop on Long Street.</li> </ul>	All three of these suggested improvements are reasonable suggestions and will be added to Section 9.0 of the Appraisal. In addition, a paragraph about the maintenance of The Lanes will be added to Section 5.0 of the Development Control Guidance, and a new section about street furniture will be added.	Section 9.0 of the appraisal and the Development Control Guidance will be amended.
<b>Comment</b>	<b>Response</b>	<b>Action</b>
<b>SPA LANE CONSERVATION AREA APPRAISAL</b>		
<b>Accuracy of the appraisal in describing the character and qualities of the area</b>		
Area dominated/ruined by industrial buildings, parking problems and lorries.	The character of the area is indeed predominantly industrial, but this is not a negative feature. Parking problems and lorries were not noted on the site visits which were undertaken on a weekday.	No action required.
Section 7.0 refers to weaving; this should be framework knitting.	The <i>character</i> paragraph could be more specific in its reference.	Section 7.0 will be amended.
<b>Proposed Inclusions – site of former Queen’s Head PH &amp; No.2 Bull Head Street, St Wolstan’s House, Church of St Wistan and Nos. 14-18 (evens) Glebe Close</b>		
The Queen’s Head PH site has already been redeveloped – the new buildings do not enhance the area.	The arguable quality of the new development on this site is unfortunate, but should not restrict bringing St Wolstan’s House, St Wistan’s Church and Nos. 14-18 (evens) Glebe Close which are all good quality buildings, worthy of inclusion in the Conservation Area and an important part of the history of the area.	No change to the Townscape Appraisal Map.
The owners of St Wolstan’s House object to the inclusion of their property as they do not want to be subject to ‘severe planning restrictions’. The inclusion of their property also requires the inclusion of the new buildings on The Queen’s Head PH site which they do not feel are fit for inclusion.	The owners wish to improve the appearance of St Wolstan’s House and its grounds. Conservation Area designation will ensure that their work is appropriate to the building’s character, and will improve the building’s setting which has been eroded by surrounding modern development.	No change to the Townscape Appraisal Map.
<b>Proposed Exclusions – No.2 Shearsby Close</b>		
Over half the respondents supported the removal of this property. No comments were received by those that did not support the proposal.	No.2 Shearsby Close is a modern building that does not have the character of the traditional properties in the area.	No change to the Townscape Appraisal Map.

<b>Enhancement Opportunities</b>		
<p><b>Redevelopment of vacant sites</b> General agreement that this would improve the appearance of the conservation area. However, landscaping was mentioned by several respondents as an alternative to redevelopment.</p>	<p>Landscaping these sites is a possibility, but is probably more appropriate to currently used sites which have unattractive, but long-term uses (see below). The sites in question here are those which have no current use and are likely to be redeveloped in the near future. The Council will encourage the development of high quality schemes on these sites, adding to and restoring the character of the Conservation Area.</p>	<p>No action required.</p>
<p><b>Screening of the Kwik Fit car park and adjacent gravelled area, and the Ford dealership garage</b> Generally supported – ‘green’ or ‘soft’ screening was preferred. Some concern (presumably from the premises in question) that customers might not be able to find the businesses.</p>	<p>More attractive business premises could presumably increase the number of customers and is therefore of benefit to both residents and businesses.</p>	<p>No action required.</p>
<p><b>Other improvements</b> Improvement of St Wistan’s churchyard.</p>	<p>The churchyard is noted as being unkempt in the appraisal and its enhancement would benefit the setting of this listed building and the appearance of the Conservation Area.</p>	<p>Section 9.0 will be amended.</p>
<b>Comment</b>	<b>Response</b>	<b>Action</b>
<b>DEVELOPMENT CONTROL GUIDANCE</b>		
<b><i>The following were suggested for inclusion in the guidance:</i></b>		
<p>Control of refuse bags which are dumped outside every week.</p>	<p>Outside the control of these documents.</p>	<p>No change – refer to appropriate Council department.</p>
<p>The creation of facilities for young people.</p>	<p>Outside the direct control of these documents. Any structures, buildings, etc. erected in the Conservation Area must, however, have regard to the relevant Conservation Area Appraisal and Development Control Guidance.</p>	<p>No change.</p>
<p>Repair sign at entrance of Bell Street and enforce traffic restrictions.</p>	<p>Outside the control of these documents.</p>	<p>No change – refer to Highways Authority, Borough Council and/or Police.</p>
<p>Development of industrial and commercial buildings within residential areas should be considered inappropriate.</p>	<p>Land use planning is outside the control of these documents. Any new development, however, must have regard to the relevant Conservation Area Appraisal and Development Control Guidance; it must preserve or enhance the Conservation Area.</p>	<p>No change.</p>

Cladding over brickwork and other alterations should require planning permission.	Section 9.0 explains that the Council may seek to make Article 4 Directions in the Conservation Area. These Directions would require householders to apply for planning permission for minor alterations such as cladding, alterations to windows and doors, etc. It is, however, the Council's decision whether to proceed with these Directions.	No change.
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## Summary of letters received

Two letters were received from private householders during the consultation period; their comments have been dealt with in the above table. The two letters received from the Regional Assembly and the County Council are summarised below:

Comment	Response	Recommendation
<b>East Midlands Regional Assembly</b>		
<i>General Policy Principles</i> The documents make a significant contribution to RSS8 Policy 31 which seeks the protection and enhancement of the regions historic environments.	Noted.	No change.
<i>Re-use and Recycling of Building Materials</i> RWS Policy 7 encourages the sustainable use of buildings and building materials – reference to this policy should be made.	Accepted and reference will be made in the Development Control Guidance documents, in the sections dealing with demolition.	'Demolition' sections of DC Guidance documents will be amended.
<i>Energy (RSS8 Policies 40 &amp; 41)</i> High standards of energy efficiency should be encouraged in both new and historic buildings, whilst balancing the visual impacts on the Conservation Area. The possibility of renewable generation should also be considered in new buildings.	Accepted and reference will be made in the Development Control Guidance documents, in the sections dealing with design of new buildings and alterations to historic buildings.	'Design of New Buildings' and 'Alterations to Historic Buildings' sections of DC Guidance documents will be amended.
<i>Other Environmental Considerations</i> It may be appropriate to consider the balance between the historic environment and other environmental considerations, i.e. SUDs on floorscapes.	Accepted and any sections of the Development Control Guidance dealing with floorscape/surfacing will be amended to take into account environmental considerations.	Development Control Guidance documents will be amended.
<b>Leicestershire County Council</b>		
<i>Highways and Transportation Comments</i> It is referred to on several occasions that change of use will be permitted where adequate car parking can be provided, but there is no mention of what is adequate / appropriate in this predominantly town centre location. It could be argued that low to nil provision may be appropriate.	Car parking should be in accordance with Oadby & Wigston Borough Council's adopted standards. These documents are written in accordance with the adopted Local Plan and reference should always be made to the policies contained in the Plan.	No change.

## **5. Conclusions**

1. There was a reasonable level of interest in the Conservation Area Appraisals and Development Control Guidance documents and both were generally well supported in the responses received.
2. The Conservation Area Appraisals were generally considered to accurately reflect the character and qualities of the areas.
3. There is generally strong support for the suggested boundary changes to the Conservation Areas, with the exception of the removal of The Bungalow (the former Wigston Gasworks offices) at the southern end of Gas Lane and the removal of an area of The Lanes to the north of Ross' Lane. After careful consideration, the suggested removal from The Lanes will remain within the boundary, except for the area north of Paddock Street because the townscape quality of the area is so poor. The Bungalow and the whole length of Gas Lane will, however, remain in the All Saints Conservation Area.
4. The Development Control Guidelines are generally well supported by local residents, the East Midlands Regional Assembly and the County Council.

## **6. Recommendations**

1. The Lanes Conservation Area boundary should be extended to include Nos. 61 & 65 Long Street, Nos. 42-50 (evens) Long Street and Nos. 2 & 4 Leicester Road.
2. The Lanes Conservation Area boundary should be amended to exclude the area bounded by Bell Street, Bull Head Street, Long Lane and Paddock Street.
3. The Spa Lane Conservation Area boundary should be extended to include the site of the former Queens Head PH and No.2 Bull Head Street, St Wolstan's House, St Wistan's Church and Nos. 14-18 (evens) Glebe Close.
4. The Spa Lane Conservation Area boundary should be amended to exclude No.2 Shearsby Close.
5. The draft Conservation Area Appraisals and Development Control Guidance documents should be amended in line with the recommendations set out in Appendix 4 prior to final publication.
6. Upon adoption, the amendments to the Conservation Area boundaries must be advertised in at least one local newspaper and the London Gazette.