

## **WIGSTON THE LANES CONSERVATION AREA APPRAISAL**

### **1.0 Introduction**

1.1 Wigston The Lanes Conservation Area was first designated in 1981. This document aims to fulfill 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 Wigston The Lanes Conservation Area' which has been produced to accompany this appraisal.

1.2 This section to describe the public consultation which has been carried out.

### **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 '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.

3.2 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.

3.3 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).

3.4 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 C19 housing.

3.5 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-C20 Police and Fire Stations.

3.6 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.

#### **4.0 Brief History / Archaeology**

4.1 According to legend, the name Wigston originated from Crown Prince Wigstan, heir to the Kingdom of Mercia who was murdered in 849AD by Berhtwulf, the Regent King. Shortly after his death, he was declared a saint and a church has been dedicated to St Wistan or (Wystan) ever since.

4.2 Some relics from Roman times have been discovered within the modern Borough of Oadby and Wigston and evidence of an Iron Age farmstead has been found approximately 5 miles from Wigston at Enderby. Evidence of mankind's habitation of the local area from further back in time has also been found, however, the village of Wigston appears to be Anglo-Saxon in origin. Anglo-Saxon archaeological findings dated to c550AD trace mankind's habitation of the Wigston area to at least the C6. These discoveries of Anglo-Saxon invaders include human bones, smashed skulls, a broken sword, pieces of armour and jewellery.

4.3 At the centre of modern Wigston are 'The Lanes' which may well have been the site of the original Anglo-Saxon settlement until it was abandoned when the Vikings invaded towards the end of the C9. Two settlements became established with two churches - eventually becoming known as the Wigston Magna District of Two Steeples in 1529.

4.4 The Anglo-Saxon community was centred around St Wistan's Church and the Viking community centred around All Saints' Church. The Vikings were originally pagan, but converted to Christianity and founded the church dedicated to All Saints as they had no close historical liaison to any particular saint.

4.5 The Viking settlement grew around Newgate End where the land was slightly higher, giving the Vikings strategic views over their conquered territory. The settlement expanded along what is now Moat Street towards Cross Street which used to 'cross' the village green. The Anglo-Saxon settlement grew along Bull Head Street. Eventually the two settlements amalgamated forming the rectangular village centre bounded by Moat Street, Bull Head Street, Bell Street and Long Street.

4.6 'The Lanes' may have been highly populated with the amalgamation of the two settlements; however, growth was centred on the four perimeter streets. This may have been because when the Black Death epidemic hit in the C14, the highest populated areas would have been worst affected and the villagers would have moved away. The 'infected' area was not then repopulated until recent times.

4.7 After both communities combined, the agricultural land of the settlement was extended in a joint venture between the descendents of both Anglo-Saxons and Vikings. This involved clearing surrounding wood and scrubland in strips resulting in 3 Medieval fields called Goldhill, Mucklow and Thythornhill.

4.8 In 1381 Wigston was the largest place in Leicestershire outside the County Town. The total area of the Medieval fields and the inhabited village encompassed an area of approximately 3000 acres and Magna (meaning 'great') was added to the village name in 1453.

4.9 As the population increased, communications and markets increased too. Roads were improved and as they developed, farming practices changed. The open communal field methods of subsistence farming were brought to an end by The Wigston Enclosure Act which was passed in 1764 and field enclosures were completed in 1766.

4.10 With enclosure, smallholders could not afford to buy land and smallholders of subsistence farming became almost non-existent as peasant farmers diminished and framework knitting became their full-time occupation instead of the part-time income supplementation it had been before. However, with increased mechanisation and the establishment of the many hosiery factories that characterised the area throughout the C19, the framework knitters' society eventually perished too.

4.11 In the C19 canal and railway developments occurred in the original Medieval fields bringing other people to live in what had been a predominately agricultural society. This industrialisation also opened up the choice of employment and resulted in the expansion of building to meet industrial and housing needs. From the early 1900s until the beginning of World War II, building development continued in several locations within the old Medieval fields area.

4.12 The growth of the Wigston Magna local district resulted in the development of South Wigston, East Wigston, Wigston Fields and, more recently, the modern Wigston Harcourt. The Urban District of Wigston was formed in 1930, but by 1974 the Oadby and Wigston Borough had been created and Wigston had become a borough of Leicester.

## **5.0 Setting**

5.1 Wigston lies approximately 4 miles south southeast of Leicester whose southeast edge, it adjoins. It is almost indistinct as a settlement in its own right and only small areas of open land, mostly parks, remain to separate it from Leicester to the north.

5.2 To the south and west, Wigston's outer limits are defined by the railway line, whilst the eastern side is mostly made up of more recent housing developments. The modern centre of Wigston is focussed around The Lanes - a remnant of the old Medieval field system.

5.3 The large central green space with its many trees means that views into the Conservation Area are enveloped by a 'green' backcloth. Views out of the Conservation Area from the central green space are across the canopies of the numerous trees and

are dominated by rooftops and, in particular, the spire of All Saints' Church and less positively by the aerial of the fire station.

5.4 From the junction of Moat Street and Bull Head Street, the land rises northwards and to a lesser degree to the west, creating a strong local feature of the Church of All Saints. Due to the higher ground levels, views east through breaks in the building frontage on Long Street are over and across the central green space. Looking south, the land falls, drawing the eye towards the Church of All Saints again.

5.5 The All Saints Conservation Area adjoins 'The Lanes' to the southwest and the Spa Lane Conservation Area lies east of 'The Lanes', across Bull Head Street.

## **6.0 Townscape Analysis**

### **Bell Street (South side)**

6.1 The most northerly tip of the Conservation Area is taken up by this short stretch of Bell Street. Nos. 41-47 are four C19 properties, now two shops. Both are 2 storeys with painted brickwork and originally slate roofs, although Nos. 45-47 now has a replacement concrete tiled roof and is also marred by ugly metal security shutters. Nos. 41-43 have an inappropriately large modern shop sign and both properties have blocked street-facing windows at first floor level. A small single storey outbuilding of painted brickwork with a slate roof adjoins the flank wall of Nos. 45-47.

### **Paddock Street (north side)**

6.2 Turning the corner into Paddock Street from Long Street, views are towards the busy traffic on Bull Head Street and the vast parking areas of the large commercial units on that street. There is no particular focus to views east and the road opens up at that end beyond the relative constraint of the terraces at the western end.

6.3 The flank wall of No.59 Long Street adjoins Nos. 4-28 Paddock Street, a late C19 / early C20 terrace which sits behind small front gardens bounded by low red brick walls. Originally all the properties would have been of red brick with slate roofs. Many now have replacement concrete tiled roofs and No.8 has had stone cladding applied to the walls. Very few retain their original windows and doors.

6.4 Moving east, a car parking area adjacent to Belvoir House allows views of the unattractive blank elevation of a former hosiery factory behind the main street frontage. Belvoir House, another former hosiery factory, dates from the 1920s / 30s and is of two storeys. It is an attractive seven-bay red brick structure with a slate roof and has a vehicular entrance through its eastern end. Its central entrance bay protrudes slightly.

6.5 The street then opens up and the streetscape is dominated by parked cars and tarmac. This area is bordered by concrete bollards along Paddock Street and by a row of young trees behind a low red brick wall along Bull Head Street.

6.6 The rear of this parking area is mostly taken up by the servicing areas for the Bell Street shops, although adjacent to Belvoir House is Unique Physique, yet another former

hosiery factory dating from the 1920s / 30s. Again, it is a 2 storey red brick building and at its southeastern corner is a curious red brick archway adjoined to a low red brick wall. This may possibly be the remnant of a boundary to one of the properties that once backed onto the lane before redevelopment occurred in the latter part of the C20.

### **Paddock Street (south side)**

6.7 Crossing over to the other side of the road, views west focus on and are effectively blocked by No.34 Long Street. The chimneys on the two terraces either side of the road at the western end, catch the eye and create a strong rhythm at roof-top level. The modern single storey Age Concern building, in contrast, has few features of interest, but a cupola above its entrance enlivens the roofscape.

6.8 Continuing across the entrance to Long Lane, Nos. 3-45 form a C19 terrace which matches the terrace on the opposite side of the road. It runs along the remaining length of the street and, as with its opposite number, many of the properties in this terrace also have replacement concrete tiled roofs. No.13 has been rendered and No. 31 stone-clad.

6.9 No.1 Paddock Street forms part of a terrace that fronts onto Long Street and views of the rears of these properties are gained between the end of the previous terrace and the rear gardens of the Long Street terrace. The entrance to No.1 Paddock Street is on what is technically its side elevation. It is mainly of red brick, but has some rendered panels. It has a slate roof and a chimneystack on its 'rear' wing.

### **Leicester Road**

6.10 No.2 Leicester Road, W H Cox Fruiterers, and its adjacent archway, which gives access to a rear cobbled yard, is a Significant Local Building. It is one half of a pair of semi-detached properties (with No. 4) and is brick built with a very good traditional unaltered shopfront from the 1940s.

### **Long Street (west side)**

6.11 The row of surviving Victorian shops, Nos. 42-50, at the northern end of the street is an attractive reminder of the street's original character. All the properties are of red brick, although some have been painted, and have slate roofs. Many still retain their sash windows at first floor.

6.12 The Leicestershire Records Office is housed in a former school which was built in 1881 as a result of an Education Act which led to the creation of Board Schools. It is a tall single storey, red brick building with a red tiled roof and is a Significant Local Building. It is a charming building with an unusual example of pargetting for Leicestershire and has a varied and interesting roofscape; the decorative turret is a particular eyecatcher. It sits behind a small landscaped area which is bordered by railings.

6.13 Adjacent is the Wigston Conservative Club built at the end of the C19 / beginning of the C20. It is a two storey red brick building with a rather austere appearance. It sits hard on the back of the footpath and to the south of its blank flank wall is an open tarmac car parking area.

6.14 The next building south is No.34, a Grade II Listed early C19 house. It is a tall 3 storey building of stucco clad brick with a low-pitched Swithland slate roof. It has an attractive Tuscan architrave framing the central front door. It sits just back from the street behind a low red brick wall which on its return rises to c2m and is rendered. A large red outbuilding in the rear garden of No.34 is visible from across the car parking area at the entrance to Elizabeth Court. This outbuilding forms part of the rear boundary of No.34 before the red brick wall returns and forms the eastern wall of the back garden.

6.15 An access road runs along the rear of the garden of No.34 and leads to the rear of the Leicestershire Records Office. Returning to the entrance to Elizabeth Court, views west are of mature trees that are all that remain of the extensive grounds of Wigston Hall which was demolished in 1961. The Church of All Saints, visible in all views south, becomes more prominent from this point onwards.

6.16 On the boundary between the three storey 1960s Elizabeth Court flats (outside the Conservation Area boundary) and the Royal Mail Wigston Delivery Office is another group of large mature trees. These serve to soften the open tarmac parking and delivery area in front of the Royal Mail building which is itself rather unappealing.

6.17 There is then a modern single storey doctors' surgery building of red brick set back slightly from the road. Next south is Nos. 22 & 22A which is a red brick and slate roofed building of 2 storeys plus attics from the late C19 / early C20. It is now occupied as two dwellings and the northern portion is used as a shop.

6.18 A good red brick wall borders the garden of No.1 Central Avenue and mature trees are visible. Across the junction with Central Avenue is No.14 Long Street and the Winchester Snooker Club building, a Significant Local Building. It is a grand 2 storey commercial building of painted brick with a Swithland slate roof and dated 1910. It fronts both Long Street and Central Avenue and its imposing gable is a feature of views south down Long Street.

6.19 Next south is an adapted former hosiery factory with a flat-roofed 3 storey extension which continues the street elevation southwards. The original range of the building is of 2 storeys, but both old and modern ranges have red brick and concrete walls with large windows.

6.20 The last building within this part of the Conservation Area is No.6, a small 2 storey house with white rendered walls and a slate roof. It sits on the back of the footways and is C19 in origin, but is now sadly boarded up and its future use uncertain.

### **Long Street (east side)**

6.21 Starting from the southern end, the first buildings are Nos. 19 & 21, two bungalows built, along with 7 others along Blunt's Lane, in 1964 to replace a hospital that was built in 1781. To the north is the associated Magna Care Centre which was built on the site of the Magna Cinema (demolished in 1992). It is of two storeys and is constructed of a rather incongruous buff brick and in an overly-elaborate style. Looking north at this point, the mature trees in Elizabeth Court frame views along the street and soften the built frontage.

6.22 A minor road provides access to the Cedar Court Care Centre, and Nos. 31-33 are modern 2 storey commercial units. Adjacent is The Great Wigston Working Men's Club which was formed in 1876 and is one of the earliest in the UK. It is a large single storey building with a rendered street façade and a slate roof. Along its northern side is a vacant site which is currently used as the Club's car park. It is the site of Wigston's first school which was built in 1839. Although the site is rather uninviting in itself, it does, however, allow views over the allotments and The Lanes to the east.

6.23 The next pair of buildings, Nos. 41 & 43 were built at approximately the same time as 'The Devils House', No.45 Long Street, at the turn of the C19. No.41 sits gable end onto the street and has decorative timber patterning around the attic window. It is rendered at first floor and above with a canted window. The ground floor is of red brick and the roof is of alternating bands of fish-scale and normal slates with decorative ridge-tiles. The adjoining No.43 is plainer in detail and sits parallel to the street. It has a modern box-type dormer window and a bay window at ground level.

6.24 'The Devil's House' is a 3 storey dwelling with a contemporary matching coach house to the rear. This Significant Local Building has a red brick ground floor and chimneystack whilst the first floor and above is rendered with decorative timber beaming. A red painted devil sits on the apex of the gable roof overlooking Long Street. It is a striking building and its northern flank wall with the gable stack is a feature of views south along the street because of a combination of the angle at which the building sits on the street and the slight curve in the road at this point.

6.25 To the north is No.47 which is a C19 house of 2 storeys and, originally, brick walls and slate roof. Today it is rendered and painted a conspicuous mint green colour and the roof covered with concrete tiles. It also has replacement uPVC windows, but its decorative eaves detailing remains.

6.26 The Wigston United Reformed Church and its boundary railings are Grade II Listed. The 2 storey Chapel is an 1841 rebuilding of the original 1731 structure and is of red brick with a concrete tiled roof. A pedimented gable forms the entrance front on Long Street with a recessed entry behind Doric columns. The spear head cast-iron railings continue around the building along its park elevation.

6.27 The Peace Memorial Park has been open ground for centuries, but gained its present name when it was opened in 1921 as a recreation ground to commemorate the fallen of World War I. Although, the gardens were once a paddock within the grounds of the now demolished Wigston Hall, this part of Wigston was known as Gaol Close because a temporary gaol had been set up in the area during the Civil War. Today the park is an open area of lawn and flower beds, enclosed by railings and large mature trees which are visible in long views from many points around Wigston. To the rear of the park is an interesting contemporary building, the Sheila Mitchell Pavilion.

6.28 Flanking the other side of the Park is an early C20 terrace, Nos. 49-57. These are all of red brick and rendered panels with slate roofs. They have bay windows at ground floor beneath red tiled canopies which run the length of the ground floors. The most northerly property fronts onto Paddock Street, whilst the most southerly, No.49 is a later addition dating from the 1920s.

6.29 Across the junction with Paddock Street, No.57-59 is a 2 storey 1960s commercial unit which is surrounded by an open tarmac area. To the north is a semi-detached pair of c1920s houses, Nos. 61 & 65. They are of 2 storeys and constructed of red brick with two half-timbered bays and a slate roof. They are now in use as one shop.

### **Central Avenue (north side)**

6.30 Before the construction of Central Avenue began just before the end of the C19, its route was just a cart track which crossed farm land. By the publication of the 1914 OS Map, the section within the Conservation Area boundary was more or less complete. The road was extended in the 1940s and this is evident in the distinct change in character at the Conservation Area boundary.

6.31 Beginning at the junction with Long Street and looking west, views are curtailed by the bend in the road, but the rhythm of the chimneystacks draws the eye on. This eastern end of the road is very much commercial in character, but this gives way after only a handful of buildings to the predominant residential typology.

6.32 No.1 Avenue House is a Grade II Listed house dating largely from the early C19 so it pre-dates the Avenue's construction. It is a 2.5 storey property of brick with a Welsh slate roof and actually fronts onto Long Street. Its Central Avenue elevation is actually the lower rear wing which has evidence of C18 brickwork and it sits hard on the back of the footway.

6.33 To the west are two modernised c1920s coach houses now converted to commercial garage workshops. These Significant Local Buildings are of red brick with slate roofs and sit gable end onto the street. Although they now have large ground floor garage doors, they retain attractive windows above. Beyond, the street is predominantly terraced housing. Nos. 5-23 form the first red brick terrace on this side of the street and date from the first phase of the Avenue's development. The last property, No.25, is a 1920s addition.

6.34 Beyond a modern garage are Nos. 27 & 29, a c1920s semi-detached pair of 2 storey houses adjacent to which is a pedestrian access to All Saints Primary School. No.31 is a detached mid-C20 2 storey house with a hipped slate roof. There is then a gap in the building frontage which gives access to some workshop buildings, set back from the road behind a small lawned area bordered by a low brick wall and railings and which belongs to No.31. The western workshop building dates from the Avenue's first development phase and is a 2 storey brick building with a slate roof. The eastern ranges are single storey later additions from the 1920s, although much altered. Two mature trees are visible behind the earlier workshop building.

6.35 No.35 is the first building of the next terrace of housing. It is a 1950s addition to the turn of the C19 and C20 terrace that it adjoins to its west. It is very plain in comparison to the adjoining properties which although all of red brick, all have slightly varying details reflecting their different construction dates. Most of the houses from this point onwards tend to have individual names inscribed in stone plaques. For example, Nos. 43 & 45 are named Brooklyn and Roseleigh respectively.

6.36 The next properties are No.47, a 1920s house with a rendered first floor, and the adjoining No.49, a red brick property from the end of the C19 with decorative eaves detailing. The following pair are No.51, Linford House (1899) which has a gabled first floor window, and No.53, Burwell House (1900) which has been altered and now has a rendered ground floor.

6.37 The next terrace of properties again date from one of the Avenue's earliest construction phases although No.55 has been extended and altered from the 1920s onwards with stone cladding added to the ground floor. The others date from c1904-08 and display slightly different detailing from one another, reflecting their differing construction periods.

6.38 The final property within the Conservation Area boundary is No.69, a c1920s detached brick house with a hipped slate roof. Looking west out of the Conservation Area, the road opens up with the change in building type; from the relative confinement of the original terraces to the set-back 1940s semi-detached houses.

### **Central Avenue (south side)**

6.39 Returning to the Long Street junction, the first property is the Winchester Snooker Club, a Significant Local Building. Its Central Avenue range is lower than the Long Street range and the detailing differs, but it is still of 2 storeys and of white painted brick. A decorative turret provides skyline interest.

6.40 Metal gates with 'Winchester' cut into the overthrow separate this range from another which is much plainer and sits gable end onto the street. This adjoins the first stretch of terraced housing on this side of the road.

6.41 Nos. 6-24 form one terrace and match the opposite terrace in terms of detailing and construction period. The next range of 4 dwellings was built as two matching pairs with the part-rendered Nos. 32 & 34 the later of the two pairs, built c1920s. Nos. 38 & 40 are another pair from the Avenue's earlier construction phases and are of red brick with bay windows and replacement concrete tiled roofs.

6.42 The remainder of the street is taken up by one long continuous built frontage of terraced properties, most with individual name plaques. The often small variations in architectural detailing and materials have resulted from their different construction dates and add interest to the street scene. Most date from 1898-99 until Nos. 90-100 which all date from between 1900 & 1903.

6.43 The Central Avenue Christian Church is a modern single storey building of brick whose plainness is relieved by an abstract sculpture on the flat roofed protrusion at the front. A public footpath along its western boundary connects Central Avenue to Bushloe End. The backs of the Central Avenue properties are visible through the vegetation that lines the length of the footpath.

### **Bushloe End (North side)**

6.44 Nos. 2A-2C are three mid C20 bungalows set well back from the road behind open front gardens. Nos. 2-14 form a 2 storey terrace, although No.2 is of a later build (early C20) to Nos. 4-14 which are Significant Local Buildings from the late C19. No.2

has a rendered upper floor and bay window at ground floor, whilst Nos. 4-14 are of red brick with gauged arches and moulded details.

6.45 No.18 is a double-fronted Victorian villa from c1880. It is a Significant Local Building of red brick with a slate roof and sits hard on the back of the footway. It has decorative segmental heads above the ground floor windows. The adjacent Nos. 24, 26, 36 & 38 are modern link detached houses of two construction periods.

### **Moat Street (North side)**

6.46 Nos. 64, 64A & 64B were once one dwelling with its origins in the C19. It is of 3 storeys with a double pile form that gives a distinctive "M" shaped gable end. No.64 still has its original Flemish bond brickwork visible whilst No.64A has been painted and No.64B rendered. All have replacement concrete tiled roofs and have been much altered, in particular the window and door openings.

6.47 Next east are three pairs of mid C20 semi-detached 2 storey houses which are named (from west to east): Cedarholme, Newbury, Kasauli House, Newhaven, Lyndhurst and Lindale. Two pairs are of brown brick with rendered bays and hipped tiled roofs; the other pair is rendered with applied timber beams stained black.

6.48 No.82 is an early C20 detached 2 storey house which sits narrow gable end onto the street at the back of the footway. It is of red brick with a slate roof and a decorative string detail between ground and first floor and a cornice detail at first floor. It breaks up views east along the street because it sits forward of the more modern buildings. A gap in the building frontage to the east allows long views of the mature trees in the Park.

6.49 The following six properties are three pairs of mid C20 semi-detached houses of buff brick. Between these and the slightly earlier No.102 (named 'One Ash' on the 1955 OS Map) are two large trees which are visible above the rooftops of Nos. 94-100. After the mixed development of the previous buildings, Nos. 106-134, an early C20 terrace restores rhythm to the street with its prominent chimneystacks creating a strong roofscape.

6.50 Continuing east, Nos. 136-138 are a c1940s pair of semi-detached houses. No.140, a bungalow, dates from a similar period. Across the junction with Cross Street is the Methodist Church and Sunday School Annex. This sits on a triangular 'island' that is bounded by Moat Street to the south, Bull's Head Street to the east, and Cross Street (which it faces) to the northwest. The Chapel was built in 1886 and the Sunday School extension is a 2 storey brick building of an interesting 1912 design with the decorative brick-working to the upper storey and arched windows to the ground floor showing Art Nouveau influences.

### **Bull Head Street (West side)**

6.51 The Police and Fire Stations were constructed in the 1970s on land that had previously seen little development. The monolithic grey concrete structures are very evocative of their building period, but contribute very little in townscape terms, although the fire station aerial is a landmark of sorts.

### **Cross Street (South-eastern side)**

6.52 This street gained its name as it used to 'cross' the village green part of which was the triangular 'island' that is now built upon. It is a very short street which connects Bull's Head Street and Moat Street and gives access to The Lanes. It is dominated by the Methodist Church and Sunday School Annex.

6.53 North of the church and school, Nos. 2-8 Cross Street form a small C19 terrace of 2 storey red brick and slate roofed properties that sit at the edge of the road. Nos. 10 & 12, although similar in detailing to the earlier four properties, date from the early C20 and are of a slightly larger scale.

### **Cross Street (North-western side)**

6.54 This side of the road is comprised of a mixture of buildings. No.140 Moat Street sits on the corner of Moat Street and Cross Street and to the north is a C20 single storey former shop. Continuing north is a pair of c1940s semi-detached houses named 'Springfield' and 'Winfield'.

6.55 Across the access to Blunt's Lane is the Constitutional Hall, a c1920s single storey building with mock-timber-framed walls. It is surrounded by white painted railings. Adjacent to the east is a former knitwear factory from the mid C20. It is of brick construction and 1.5 storeys and is bordered by a utilitarian concrete post and wire fence.

6.56 Heading towards Bull's Head Street, the street is very narrow and the view is of a single storey flat-roofed section of the Fire Station. West of this is an electricity sub-station that is protected by a chain-link fence.

### **Blunt's Lane**

6.57 Blunt's Lane is one of four lanes that criss-cross the original rectangular 'village centre'. These lanes which have existed in one form or another, since at least Medieval times, were modified in the 1800s, and in the 1970s, some were eradicated or changed in style by building developments. Blunt's Lane is the only one that today has some vehicular access, although its central section is still only accessible to pedestrians. It is named after Mr Blunt who ran a lunatic asylum once situated down Gas Lane in the All Saints Conservation Area.

6.58 Starting from the eastern end, a row of bungalows or 1.5 storey 'chalet-style' properties built from the 1960s onwards fill the north side of the street until the junction with Long Lane and the allotments are reached. The exceptions are Nos. 46 & 48, 'Pontypridd' and 'Greenville' which were built slightly earlier, probably in the 1940s. The south side of the street is rather 'dead' with just the rear boundary walls and fences of the Moat Street properties facing the lane. However, the rear building of No.116 Moat Street which sits adjacent to the lane is of interest because it is a former framework knitters' building and is a Significant Local Building.

6.59 After the junction with Long Lane, no properties front the lane again until the western end is reached. This middle portion is lined with hedges and trees that border the allotments and allow only glimpses of this open area behind. Again the other side of

the lane comprises the rear boundary treatments of the properties facing Moat Street. This section is narrow and more in keeping with the character of the other three lanes.

6.60 A row of trees to the north signals the start of the built frontage again with the rear elevation of the Cedar Court Care Centre overlooking the allotments. The bungalows that follow were built in 1964 to replace a hospital built in 1781.

### **Long Lane**

6.61 Long Lane links the other three lanes and is appropriately named as it runs north-south, the whole length of the 'The Lanes' area, across Paddock Street and through to Bell Street. Its route is an old one as it connected the original Viking and Anglo-Saxon settlements of Wigston.

6.62 Long Lane has no building frontage of its own and for the most part is relatively rural in character as it is lined with hedges and trees. This changes as soon as it emerges out of the 'The Lanes' area however, where it becomes little more than a tarmac footpath as it runs between Paddock Street and Bell Street.

6.63 Starting from the southern end, the lane is very constricted as the approach from Moat Street is hemmed in by the brick boundary walls of the flanking properties. Once the junction with Blunt's Lane is reached, the lane's aspect is more open, although the footpath remains narrow. The lane has lantern-like streetlights that run the length of it and continue into the other lanes.

6.64 Continuing north, the lane passes through the allotments area with the steeple of All Saints' Church visible in views west. Past the junction with Chapel Lane, Long Lane runs along the eastern boundary of the Peace Memorial Park with its large trees forming a strong boundary on the lane's western side. Moving past the access to Ross's Lane on the eastern side of Long Lane, the large commercial units of Bull's Head Street are visible through the hedge boundary.

6.65 The lane emerges onto Paddock Street by the side of the red brick terrace. Looking back south into the lane, the trees of the park create a lush green backcloth. Crossing over the street, the lane dog-legs around Unique Physique, past a service yard and ends adjacent to the Bell Street shops.

### **Chapel Lane**

6.66 Chapel Lane, appropriately enough, links the United Reformed Church on Long Street to Long Lane. Its northern boundary is defined by the Peace Memorial Park and its large trees, whilst the southern boundary runs along the northern edge of the allotments area and then follows the boundary of the Church's Sunday School, before emerging onto Long Street adjacent to the United Reformed Church.

### **Ross's Lane**

6.67 Ross's Lane is the most urban of the lanes in character as it runs between the large commercial units and the Fire Station that front onto Bull's Head Street. Vegetation helps to screen these buildings slightly and the good traditional streetlights of the other lanes continue along this lane too.

## **7.0 Key Characteristics**

7.1 *Scale* - Most domestic properties are of 2 storeys, sometimes with a third storey in the gables or the roof. Only grander properties such as No. 34 Long Street are of 3 full storeys. Commercial buildings are generally of 2 storeys, but are higher because of their greater floor to ceiling heights.

7.2 *Materials* - The earlier properties are of local red brick with render becoming more common from the early C20 onwards. Later properties are built of modern bricks and tend to be buff or brown in colour.

7.3 *Location on Plot* - Although the majority of buildings within the Conservation Area sit on the back of the footpath and parallel to the street, the occasional gable end on property adds incident to the streetscene. This is particularly true of Long Street where several properties sit gable end onto the street, the most prominent being the 'Devil's House' and the Winchester Snooker Club.

7.4 *Detailing* - Chimneys are a feature of many of the traditional properties and create a strong skyline rhythm along the terraces. Turrets and cupolas provide skyline interest on the Leicestershire Records Office and the substantial Long Street / Central Avenue corner building.

7.5 *Trees & Open Space* - The Peace Memorial Park breaks up the otherwise continuous built frontage of the streets and is the only visible open space from the street. However, the Manchester Gardens (allotments) within 'The Lanes' are an important open space in the heart of the Conservation Area. The trees within the Peace Memorial Park are a significant group.

7.6 *Boundaries* - Most traditional properties which are set back from the road have their front boundaries enclosed by either low red brick walls or, in the case of the United Reformed Church, railings. The Lanes' have a much more rural feel, enhanced by the hedges and trees that line their routes. It is important that this more natural treatment is maintained.

7.7 *Views* - All Saints Church (outside the Conservation Area) is highly visible in vistas along Moat Street, Blunt's Lane and Long Street. The large mature trees of Peace Memorial Park are visible from many points around the Conservation Area and are important in long views.

7.8 *Street Hierarchy* - There are distinct differences between streets depending upon their uses. The commercial (mixed) streets are, as would be expected, busier and more formal in character, compared to the residential streets which are quieter with smaller scale buildings and are softened by small front gardens. The Lanes are little more than footpaths which are very informal in character as they pass through allotments and along the rear of the Peace Memorial Park and private gardens.

## **8.0 Proposed Changes to the Conservation Area Boundary**

### **Additions**

8.1 Nos. 61&65 Long Street and the Victorian shops, Nos. 42-50 Long Street together with Nos. 2-4 Leicester Road, reflect an earlier period of Wigston's history when the town centre was more of a village centre. They are all attractive buildings, but No. 2 Leicester Road in particular retains a good early C20 shopfront. It is therefore proposed that Nos. 61&65 & 42-50 Long Street and Nos. 2-4 Leicester Road be brought within the Conservation Area boundary.

## **Removals**

8.2 The area bounded by Bell Street, Bull Head Street, Long Lane and Ross' Lane, and which encompasses modern commercial development such as B&Q, Hi-Qi, Aldi, the Paddock Street car park and the Bell Fountain PH, has lost any traces of the area's past. Although this area originally formed part of the 'ring-fenced' village of Wigston Magna and was little developed until the latter part of the C20, the C20 developments have completely altered the historic landscape to such a degree that nothing has survived. Its character has now been so significantly altered by changes to the original street pattern and the demolition of historic buildings, particularly through the widening of Bull Head Street, that it no longer contributes to the character or setting of the Conversation Area. It is therefore proposed that the area described above be removed from the Conservation Area.

8.3 Development in the excluded area will, however, remain subject to strict controls as it will potentially have a significant impact upon the setting of the remaining Conservation Area. Section 13.0 of the accompanying Development Control Guidance provides further details about how development which would affect the special character or interest of the Conservation Area will be controlled.

## **9.0 Enhancement Opportunities**

9.1 Views from Paddock Street into the service yards of the Bell Street commercial units are unattractive and create an unpleasant pedestrian environment for users of Long Lane. Appropriate screening of these servicing areas would enhance this part of the Conservation Area.

9.2 Some forecourts to properties such as the Wigston Conservative Club and Nos. 61 & 65 Long Street would benefit from more attractive landscaping, thereby enhancing the setting of the buildings and the streetscene.

9.3 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. Other potential sites are the negative buildings identified in section 6 of this appraisal. All these sites detract from the appearance of the Conservation Area and have the potential for enhancing the character. Any proposed redevelopment of these sites should refer to the 'Wigston The Lanes: Development Control Guidance'.

9.4 The quiet backwater character of The Lanes is reinforced by the informal nature of the footpaths which criss-cross this area. Their regular maintenance and appropriate surfacing is necessary to ensure they continue to be well used by the local community and their traditional character is retained. Similarly, the traditional lampposts found

along The Lanes are attractive features which contribute to the historic character of the area. These should also be retained and repaired, and where necessary replaced with matching designs.

9.5 The vacant factory and shop on Long Street are negative features in the streetscape in their present condition. These properties should be redeveloped and the surrounding area tidied up. Their re-use or redevelopment will be subject to the policies contained within the accompanying Development Control Guidance for The Lanes Conservation Area.

9.6 The Borough Council may seek to make 'Article 4 Directions' to retain traditional detailing on the exterior of non-listed buildings within the Conservation Area, where such details have not already been lost.

9.7 'Shire Historic Buildings Grants' and specialist technical advice are available from Leicestershire County Council for essential repairs or the restoration of original architectural features to certain historic buildings and structures. Applications are currently assessed against the following criteria:

- Ownership and property type
- Status of building
- Types of repairs
- Community benefit

Contact: The Conservation Officer, Heritage and Resources Team,  
tel: 0116 2657082, [www.leics.gov.uk/shire](http://www.leics.gov.uk/shire)

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