



Wyre Forest District Council



Blakebrook Conservation Area Character Appraisal

Blakebrook Conservation Area

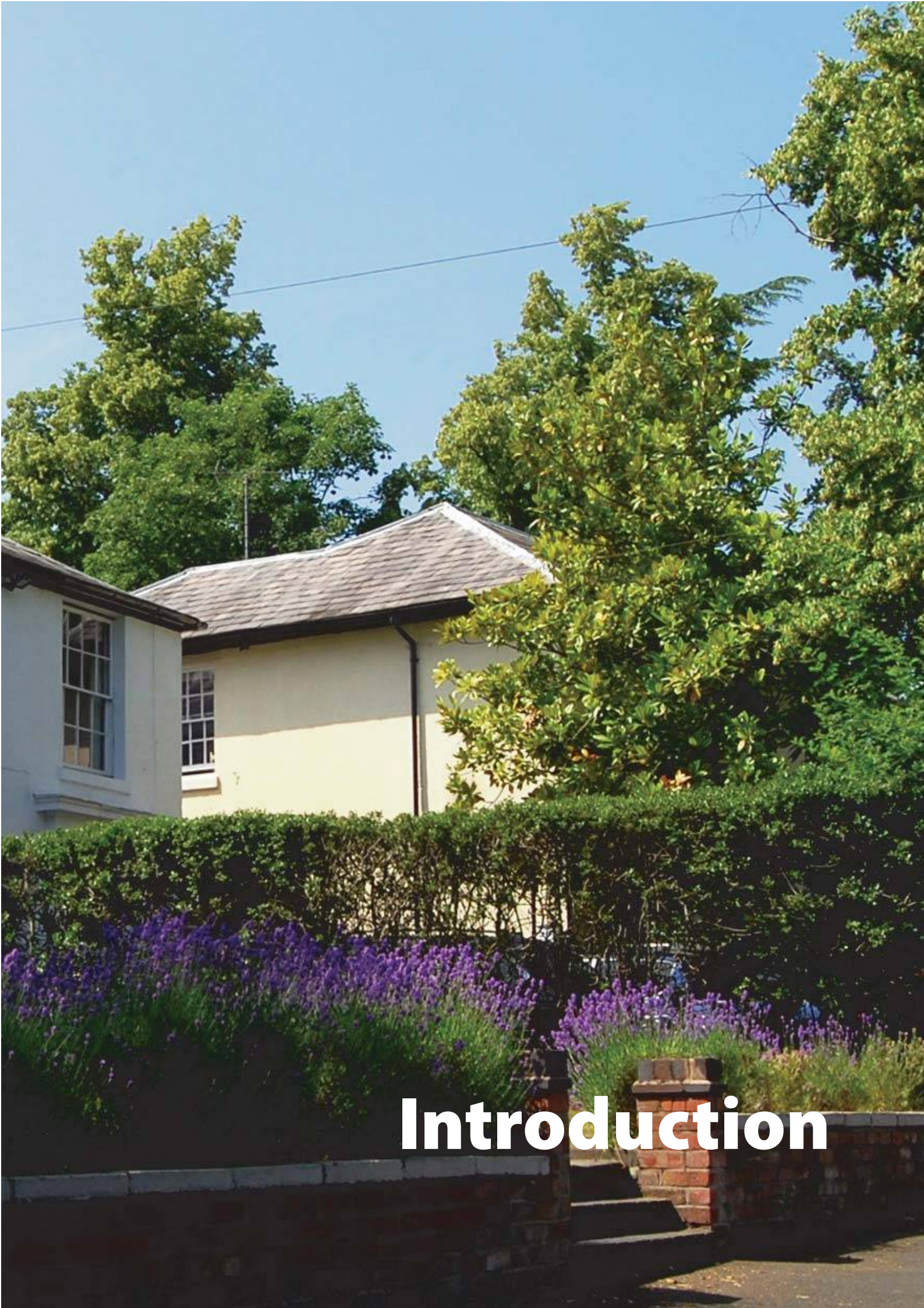
Character Appraisal

March 2014

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Appendix 1 Adopted Wyre Forest District Council Local Plan Policies

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Introduction

1 Introduction

Blakebrook Conservation Area (the Area) was designated by Wyre Forest District Council in 1993. It covers part of the A4535, off the A456 (Bewdley Road), about 1/2 mile west of Kidderminster Town Centre, in the County of Worcestershire.

The Conservation Area is predominantly residential (although part of the site includes school playing fields) and covers 5.9 hectares (14.65 acres).

This document aims to set out the special architectural and historic characteristics of the Conservation Area. The character appraisal will be of interest (and use) to those involved with development and use of the area, and that adjoining it, and will help to preserve and enhance its character.

The Adopted Wyre Forest Site Allocations and Policies Local Plan and the Adopted Kidderminster Central Area Action Plan include policies linked to the Historic Environment. For Blakebrook Conservation Area Policy, SAL.UP6 of the Site Allocations and Policies Local Plan, which is called 'Safeguarding the Historic Environment', is particularly relevant. This Policy ensures that future development within, or adjacent to the Conservation Area, will need to protect, conserve and, where possible, enhance the Area.

A photograph of a residential street scene. In the foreground, there is a dense green hedge and a wooden fence. Behind the fence, a utility pole stands. In the middle ground, there are several white houses with red brick chimneys and a large green tree. The background is filled with more trees and a clear blue sky. The text "Legislative and Policy Framework" is overlaid in white at the bottom of the image.

Legislative and Policy Framework

2 Legislative and Policy Framework

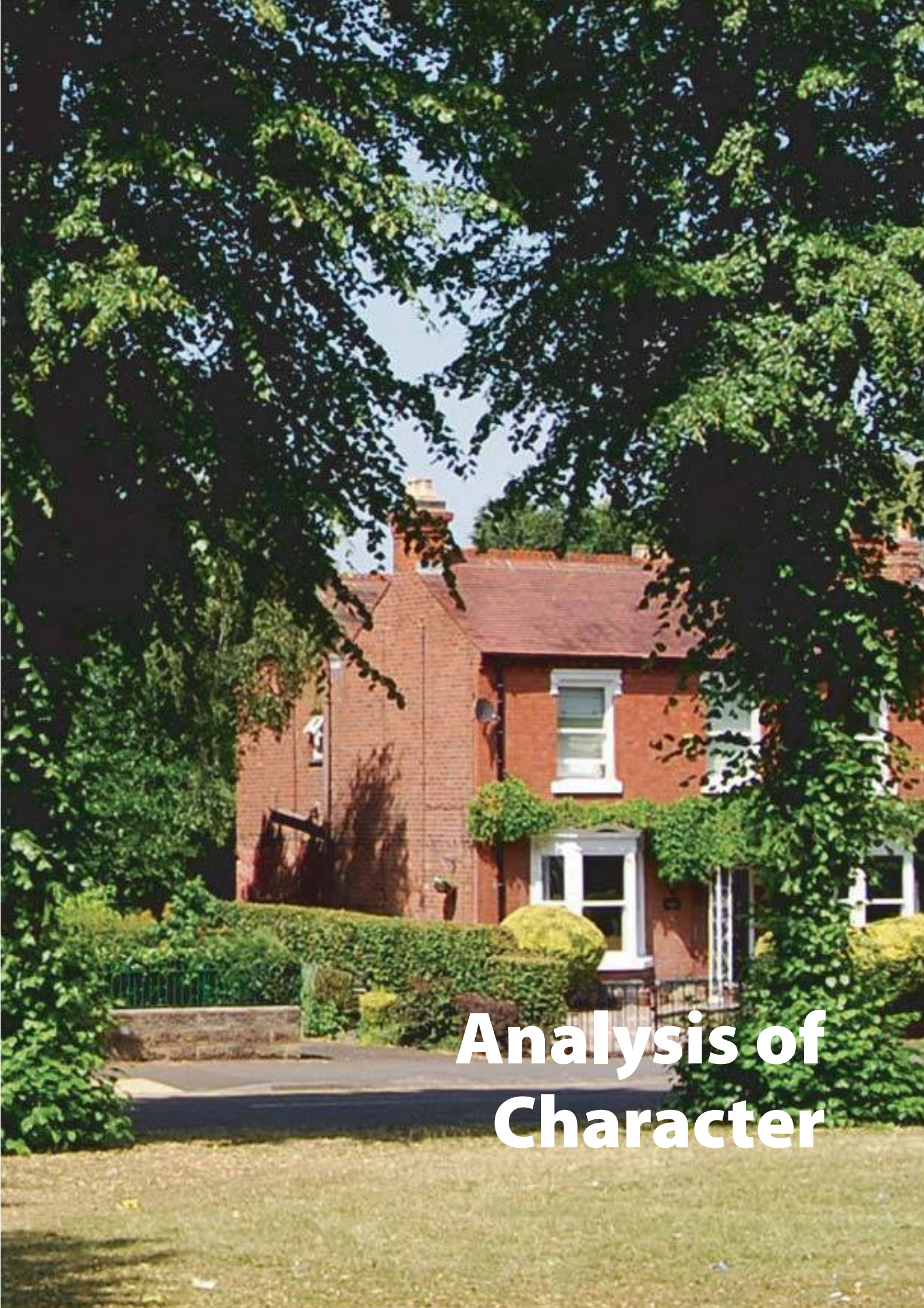
The first Conservation Areas were designated under the Civic Amenities Act (1967). This Act was superseded by the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. Section 69 of this later Act imposes a duty on Local Planning Authorities to identify areas that are of special architectural or historic interest, where it is desirable to preserve and enhance the character and appearance, and to designate them as Conservation Areas.

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) has replaced previous Government guidance which was detailed in Planning Policy Statement 5: Planning for the Historic Environment. The NPPF does, however, maintain the importance placed on conserving and enhancing the Historic Environment as well as providing specific advice for Conservation Areas, most notably in Paragraphs 127, 137 and 138.

The General Permitted Development Order 1995 (GPDO) classes a Conservation Area as being “Article 1(5) land”. Whilst planning permission is not required for many types of works outside such areas, control is given to Local Authorities for works being undertaken within Conservation Areas, including, but not exclusively, the enlargement of a dwelling-house, the rendering of such properties, and the installation of antennae and satellite dishes.

The Adopted Wyre Forest Site Allocations and Policies Local Plan and the Adopted Kidderminster Central Area Action Plan contain various policies describing the aims and objectives of the Local Authority in relation to the wider historic environment, and in particular to the preservation and enhancement of the conservation areas within the District. These policies are contained within Appendix 1 of this Appraisal.

It should be noted here that it is not only buildings that are protected when a Conservation Area is designated – trees are also given some protection.

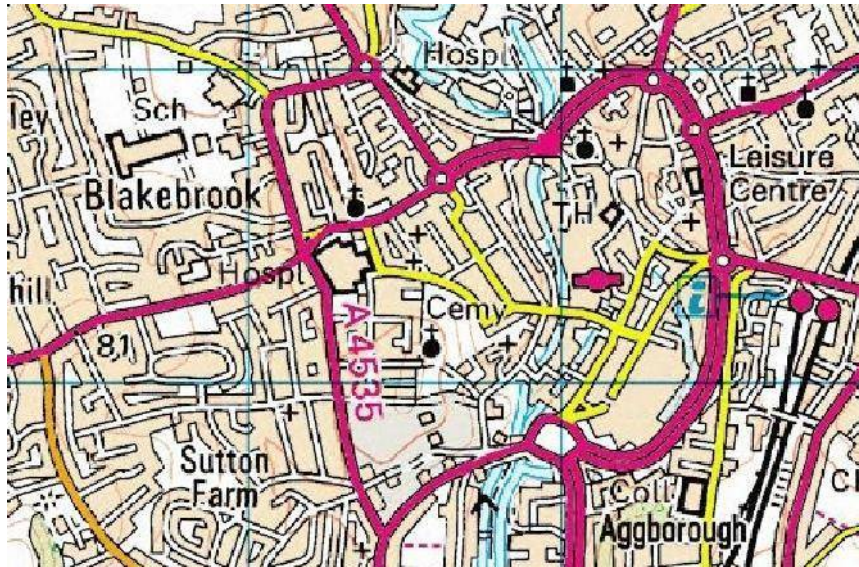


Analysis of Character

3 Analysis of Character

3.1 Setting and topography

Blakebrook is a suburb of Kidderminster in Worcestershire and is located on the western side of the town. The Blakebrook Conservation Area essentially comprises the remains of the Nineteenth Century villa development. It is compact and consists of two distinctly different areas.



General location of Blakebrook relative to Kidderminster town centre

The first is linear development built along both sides of the A4535 road (“Blakebrook”) running north to south and characterised by large houses, some with extensive landscaped grounds.

The second is at the southern end of “Blakebrook” near to its junction with the A456 Kidderminster to Bewdley road and is a large area of grass set within a triangular road junction. Known as “The Green” this area is bordered on two sides by residential development – to the north by detached houses and to the west by a row of terraced houses (“Summer Place”). On the third side, across the busy A456 road, outside the Conservation Area, lies Kidderminster Hospital which was built on the site of the 1836 Union Workhouse.

The Area is surrounded by residential development to the west, north and east, whilst to the north-west are the grounds of Baxter College. To the south is the Kidderminster Hospital site.

The datum of the Conservation Area falls from west to east (towards the valley of the Blake Brook) and from north to south. Thus the lowest point of the Area is “The Green”. The Blake Brook which now flows in a culvert for much of its length, runs from north to south immediately to the east of the Conservation Area.

The Conservation Area sits within a number of larger areas, designated by various agencies including:

| | |
|---------------------------------|------------------------------|
| Natural England Landscape Area: | Mid Severn Sandstone Plateau |
| Natural England Natural Area: | Midlands Plateau |
| Regional Character Area: | Kinver Sandlands |

The bedrock geology is part of the Wildmoor Sandstone formation.

3.2 Historic evolution

The Blakebrook Conservation Area takes its name from the Black Brook, a small stream, now largely diverted through a culvert, which runs due south from a marshy area near Mason Road, and continues behind the houses to the east side of Blakebrook, under the Bewdley Road and (originally via a series of pools) eventually joins the River Stour to the south of Kidderminster town centre.

The Black Brook formed the old borough boundary, to the west of which common grazing land had stretched for centuries. It was gradually enclosed, and this process continued with an Act of Parliament in 1774 and the award of land in the following year. This included the enclosure of Black Brook Common. Most of the land went to the Lord of the Manor, Thomas Foley. The award lists all the roads and one is described as a 'private wagon and drift road of the breadth of 60 feet out of the public road from the end of Proud Cross Lane into the turnpike from Kidderminster to Bewdley'. This was probably the track which became Blakebrook

Immediately to the north of the Conservation Area was Blakebrook House, constructed sometime prior to 1795. This was demolished around 1950 and replaced by the present police station and associated housing estate, which opened in 1955. It was, for a time, owned by the industrialist Sir Herbert Smith who had purchased Witley Court from the Foley family, and in whose ownership it was at the time of the disastrous fire in 1937.

Opposite the police station, and also outside the Conservation Area boundary, The Cedars, now Kemp Hospice, was built in 1732 as Blakebrook Cottage, for John Broom I, one of the pioneers of the town's carpet industry. John Broom I is credited with bringing the secrets of weaving Brussels carpets to Kidderminster. A mound in the garden is reputed to be the site of Blakebrook Windmill, long since demolished.

Development along Blakebrook appears to have commenced more or less simultaneously at both its northern and southern extremities.

In May 1821, Lord Foley sold a plot of land at the north-eastern end of Blakebrook to Blankley Perrins Willis for £180. Willis was later to be responsible for the development of Oxford Street in the town centre. By

December 1821 he was building two houses (now no's. 18 and 19 Blakebrook) and was mortgaging the property for £350. In April 1824 he sold the completed houses to Abel Lea for £1060. Abel Lea was a manufacturer who formed a partnership with his brother Henry and Robert Carmichael in August 1807. They made silk and worsted stuffs, including bombazine, a very fine material. By the 1820s this industry was in decline and Lea was diversifying into property. Ultimately he owned a row of seven houses on the east side of Blakebrook, which today are no's. 16-22.

At about the same time that the houses at the northern end of Blakebrook were being built, land was purchased to the west of "The Green" and a row of 16 three-storey terraced houses, Summer Place, had been constructed by 1822. Summer Place is important as an early land club and it is certainly the earliest club in Kidderminster known to have completed its building. The terrace survives for the most part, but three houses on the north end of the row were lost to make way for Pineridge Drive in the late 1960's.

Development continued steadily throughout the 1820's. Abel Lea built no's. 16 and 17 in 1824. Next, on the opposite side of Blakebrook was no. 9, The Grove, built in 1826 by Samuel Beddoes. The Grove sat well back from the road in its own grounds (and in which no's. 8 and 10 were built rather more conventionally aligned to the road in 1849). These grounds have now largely been incorporated into Jelleyman Close.

In 1827 John Hooman built The Oaks, now no. 5 Blakebrook. Also in that year, the poor rate records show that William Knight erected no's. 13 and 14 (now White Lodge and Hampton House respectively), a pair of semi-detached houses. Knight was a notable Kidderminster architect, who had for a time been in partnership with John Nettleship. Among the buildings designed by Knight and Nettleship were the Kidderminster Union Workhouse and Greatfield Hall. Knight did not live in either house. Instead he rented them out. The poor rate list of May 1831 shows that Knight subsequently built the neighbouring house, which he did occupy. This is now no. 12, Ravenslea.

It appears that a several houses in Blakebrook were tenanted by wealthy citizens of the town and the census records from 1841 onwards identify many as being of independent means. Interestingly the 1841 census refers to the road as Blakebrook Common rather than Black Brook Common.

Samuel Lewis in his 1848 book, "A Topographical History of England" refers to:

BLACKBROOK, or Blakebrook, a hamlet, in that part of the parish of Kidderminster which is called the Foreign, union of Kidderminster, Lower division of the hundred of Halfshire, Kidderminster and W. divisions of the county of Worcester, ½ a mile (W.) from Kidderminster. Several new houses have been erected in this agreeable part of the environs of Kidderminster.

Development continued into the 1850's; however, it slowed dramatically in the latter half of the 19th century with the Ordnance Survey map of 1903 indicating

that only three properties: 28, 31 and 32 Blakebrook, had been built since 1884.

St. John's Avenue was the next major development to the west of the Area, and this had largely been laid out by the outbreak of the Second World War. Also by this time, two pairs of semi-detached houses, of the familiar 1930's type with bay windows, had been built on the vacant plot to the north of Summer Place.

Right up to the Second World War, open fields bordered the area to the west and more large houses and their grounds lay to the north, but housing estates and a large police station have radically changed this character since the 1950's.

The school bungalow was built in 1962. Further development was then largely confined to infilling gardens – 28b in 1965, 28c in 1972.

The three northernmost properties in Summer Place were demolished to provide a better visibility splay for Pineridge Drive constructed in the early 1970's.

Jelleyman Close was built in the grounds of 9 Blakebrook in the 1980's followed by 25a in 1993, and 26a and 26b in the late 1990's.

3.3 Land-uses

Land uses in the Area are as follows:

- a) Residential - the predominant land-use in the Area and the majority of which is in historic properties and their gardens.
- b) Education - a small proportion of the area lies within the grounds of St. John's Primary School.
- c) Public space - The Green, surrounded by historic residential properties is a small but important public space at the southern end of the Area.

3.4 Colours

The principal colours within the Area are as follows:

- Greens – of trees, shrubs and grassed areas;
- White, and off-white of painted and rendered buildings of the Regency period;
- Reddish-brown brickwork and creamy white mortar of Victorian and later buildings;
- Lighter reddish-brown bricks and pale-buff cement of modern buildings;
- Dark blue of blue engineering bricks used for copings and boundary walls;
- Dark blue-grey of roofing slate

- White paint-work of window and door frames;
- Dark red of roof-tiles;
- Black of tarmacadam;
- Black of railings and rainwater goods.

3.5 Climate

Climate exerts a number of influences over the Area, including design of buildings, and views within, into and out of the Area.

Roof pitches vary between 20 degrees and 40 degrees, the shallower pitches generally being found on the hipped roofs of the early 19th century houses. Later Victorian properties appear to have adopted the steeper pitches associated with the use of red clay tiles. Overhanging eaves are employed to protect elevations from the weather. Wall copings are rounded, chamfered, or angled, allowing the discharge of water away from these structures.

Much of the area has substantial tree-cover and hedgerows, which alter through the seasons, in colour, texture and depth. During the autumn and winter, these allow glimpses through, expanding the depth of vision within and outside the Area.

3.6 Public and Private Spaces

Public Spaces

Much of the character of the Area is derived from its green and open public spaces. Trees and shrubs add considerable value to the established and wooded suburban character. Surrounded by more densely populated suburbs for the most part, the Area is situated close to grassy school playing fields to the north-west. The principal open space within the Area is The Green, a triangular grassed area lined with mature lime trees, situated at the cross-roads of the A456 Bewdley Hill and A4535 Blakebrook and Sutton Road.



This aerial view of Blakebrook Conservation Area illustrates the predominance of green spaces

Private Spaces

Private gardens vary in size from expansive landscaped grounds surrounding detached villas to more commonly, narrower plots dictated by the width of individual properties in terraced or semi-detached combinations. The very narrow, shallow front gardens and narrow long rear gardens of the houses in 'Summer Place' are uncharacteristic of the area as a whole.

A feature common to both large and small private grounds is the number of trees and shrubs which contributes enormously to the "green" nature of the Area.

3.7 Trees and wildlife

One Tree Preservation Order overlaps into the Area, No. 82, an area-based Preservation Order. Whilst some trees have historically been removed, after the land was developed, most of the trees remain, and are considered as important elements in the local landscape.

All other trees within the Conservation Area enjoy some degree of protection through the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.

Trees form a very significant part of the character of this conservation area, and many are of exotic, coniferous varieties, favoured for their picturesque shapes by 19th century landscape gardeners, although native Oaks and Limes are to be found as well.

The most notable trees in the area are to be found at:

- 14 Blakebrook: (Common lime, Common oak, Common beech). All are mature and situated in the front garden;
- Land between Blakebrook and Blakebrook Close: (Holm oak, Common beech, Common ash, Silver birch);
- Brookdale Nursing Home: Atlas cedar, (the huge tree in the front garden), Hybrid black poplar (in rear of garden);
- 21 Blakebrook: Copper beech (in front garden);
- Jelleyman Close: Common lime, Wellingtonia (a fine specimen), Common beech, Atlas cedar;
- The Grove: Douglas fir, Common beech, Common lime (All to the side of the property), Common lime to the front of the property;
- Blakebrook: a wonderful common oak;
- The Green: 16 pollarded limes.



Pollarded Limes at The Green

Because of the number of mature trees, the changes of the seasons affect the area considerably. It is arguably at its best in autumn, when the colour range is greatest, with yellows and golden browns of the deciduous trees contrasting with the deep green of coniferous varieties and the red berries of the holly bushes, all set against the backdrop of a steely blue-grey sky.

Wildlife

There are at least two European protected species to be found within the Area:

Bats are frequently seen in this Area due to there being a good quality feeding habitat, and many of the older buildings have roost opportunities.

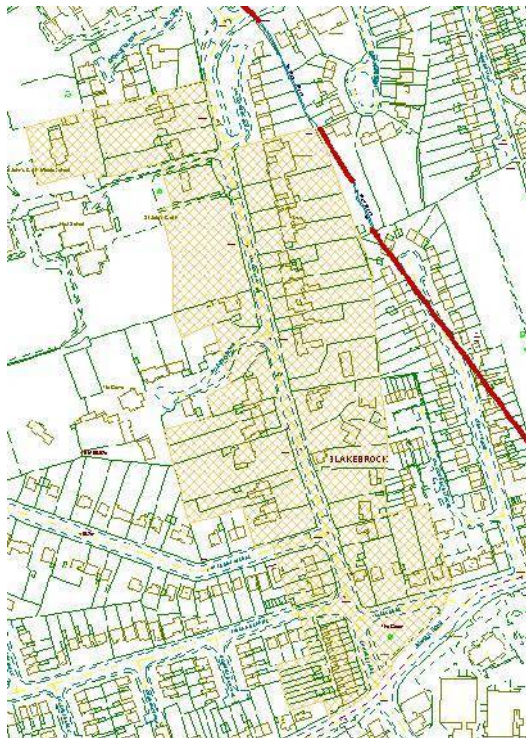
Urban badgers are also a common sight; there is a large sett just outside the area and there may well be outlier setts within the area itself.

Reptiles and amphibians may also be present in places where there are ponds and where the brook is exposed. There is a large breeding grass snake population on the fringe of the area and individuals from this may well migrate to garden pools etc. The same can be said for both frogs and toads. To date, there have been no records of Great Crested Newt but their presence should not be ruled out in larger garden ponds. Smooth newt would be a more likely species.

Other notable species that may also be found include Hornet which is a U.K. priority species.

3.8 Watercourses

The Blake Brook runs south south-east about 20 metres to the east of the eastern-most boundary of the Area. Although the common land on which the area was developed falls towards this brook, there are no defined water courses running through the Conservation Area itself.



Route of Blakebrook Culvert marked red

3.9 Historic pattern and movement

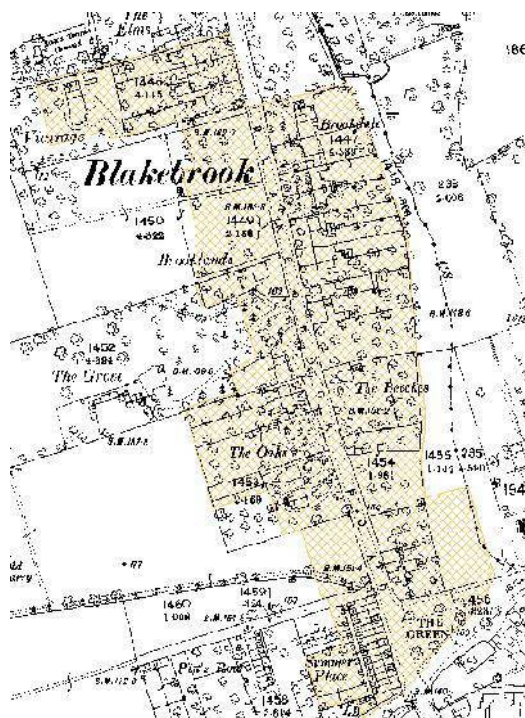
Historically, the land to the north of the turnpike road was common land, and the track which became Blakebrook was described in the 1775 enclosure award as a 'private wagon and drift road of the breadth of 60 feet out of the public road from the end of Proud Cross Lane into the turnpike from Kidderminster to Bewdley'.

The layout of the Area today has altered little since the Nineteenth Century, primarily featuring the development of large residential properties lining Blakebrook to the east and, to a certain extent, to the west.

By 1884 a road had been constructed leading due west towards a group of cottages: Pitts Row, (later renamed rather more romantically Summer View and now demolished) situated to the west of Summer Place. This road has now been considerably extended and was renamed Pineridge Drive around 1970. At that time, the junction with Blakebrook was widened with the loss of three houses in Summer Place. Another track, slightly to the north of the road to Pitts Row, led past an old quarry towards Summerhill, a large house (now also demolished).

Leaving Blakebrook, slightly to the north and almost parallel to Pineridge Drive, St. John's Avenue was laid out in the 1930's.

The Grove, a large detached residence set in its own grounds, was approached from Blakebrook by a carriage-drive which has now been largely incorporated into Jelleyman Close.



Map of Blakebrook in 1884



Map of Blakebrook in 1903

Whilst the A456 Bewdley road remains the principal road through the Area with heavy traffic for much of the day, the A4535 Blakebrook has also become very busy at certain times as vehicles use it as a short-cut to the A442 Bridgnorth road.

3.10 Illumination and night-time appearance

Street-lighting in the area is mainly of the high-pressure sodium type, giving a warm orange-yellow lighting to the Area during hours of darkness. The main drawbacks of this type of lighting include poor colour rendering at night. Another consequence is that on cloudy nights the sky appears orange as the light reflects off the clouds above.

The lamp posts are modern simple neutral forms which are necessary to provide the height and level of illumination required for highway safety. There are no historic lamps remaining in situ.

Many properties have security lights which shed a bright yellow-white light on the front gardens and driveways as vehicles and pedestrians approach.

3.11 Views

Important views into, out of and within the Area are as follows:

Within the Conservation Area



View north along Blakebrook



View south along Blakebrook

In summer the most significant view is southwards along the A4535 Blakebrook from a point opposite the school playing field looking through the tree canopy overhanging the road which begins at its junction with Jelleyman Close. Although the road is invariably busy, during gaps in the traffic flow, the canopy creates a wooded enclosure with restricted outward views. The secluded feel is heightened by the slight bend and dip in the road which prevents a view along the full length of the road towards its junction with the A456.

The view northwards from this point is more open, with a lighter, more spacious outlook, the result of a gap in the building line where the school

playing fields border Blakebrook. There are also fewer trees here, although a very tall specimen pine tree in the grounds of number 16 provides a landmark in this direction.

Blakebrook lacks any real landmark buildings as the large houses are generally set well-back from the road and mostly behind hedges or trees.

The most prominent building group within the Area is Summer Place which stands out because it faces 'The Green' and is thus visible for some distance looking westwards along the Bewdley Road.

Looking out of the Conservation Area

Views out of the Conservation Area are difficult owing to its low elevation compared to its surroundings, and the main thoroughfare, Blakebrook, being lined by trees and houses. The west front and spire of the church of St. John the Baptist to the east does form a significant landmark when viewed from across The Green, and from the end of St. John's Avenue where there is an absence of tree cover. The row of tall trees lining the avenue through St. John's churchyard forms a backdrop to the view stretching off to the north. To the south and south-east the view is mainly filled with the late 20th century hospital buildings, although somewhat screened by the hedge. Various 19th century buildings can be seen lining Sutton Road, including the last surviving part of the Victorian Workhouse complex which was demolished to make way for the hospital.



View towards St. John's church



View towards the Police Station

The only other long distance view is across the school playing fields, although the many trees effectively screen views further towards Trimpley.

The 1950's police station (which lies just outside the Conservation Area) forms a landmark looking along Blakebrook Road to the north. Looking north-east, the view encompasses the 1970's housing along Blakebrook Close which is mostly well screened by trees.

Looking into the Conservation Area

Due to a combination of it being surrounded for the most part by residential development and the wooded nature of much of the gardens and grounds of the housing within the Area, there are few significant views into the Area.

Views tend to be along the roads: looking south from the Police Station, looking north from the junction of A4535 Sutton Road and A456 Bewdley Hill, and westwards along A456 Bewdley Road from outside St. John's church. These are generally restricted by the lack of elevation; however the views east towards the Area from St. John's Avenue and Pineridge Drive provide some context for the Area, with a backdrop of St. John's church and other 19th century development.

3.12 Pattern and density of buildings

a) In summary the general characteristics of the buildings in the Area are as follows:-

Setting: Set well back from the road and parallel to it, those furthest back reached by a drive. Larger detached houses are surrounded by landscaped grounds planted with many specimen trees and most houses are separated from the road by a boundary wall.

Size: Two storeys in height. Semi-detached and detached houses of moderate to large scale.

Form: Mainly of classical proportions: symmetrical, low pitched roofs, many of them hipped. The two storey buildings are wider than they are high. The semi-detached houses are built to look like one large house, not having divisions of any sort externally.

Materials: White painted render over brick, or red brick. Stone lintels, cills, porches and other dressings. Slate roofs.

Style: Regency/Georgian classical (characterised by plain wall surfaces, usually rendered and painted white, gauged brick flat window arches), Italianate classical (characterised by low pitched hipped roofs with deeply projecting eaves, arched windows surrounded by stone architraves), late Victorian (characterised by moulded brickwork, decorative stone lintels over windows)

Windows: Vertically sliding timber sash windows, early 19th C ones having many glazing bars and small panes, later 19th C ones either with quarter panes or plate glass with no glazing bars.

The main exceptions to the prevalent size and form are, firstly, Summer Place, which is a row of narrower, three storey terraced houses. In other respects they have similar features to the larger detached and semi-detached

houses; brick walls, slate roofs, classical style arched doors with stone jambs, sash windows and they are set back from the road behind small gardens. The other exceptions are numbers 22 and 23, which are separately built three storey buildings, abutting one another.

Apart from the inclusion of part of the grounds of St. John's primary school, the Area is exclusively residential. Whilst development has continued apace outside the Area, within it, the overall pattern and density of building has remained largely unaltered since the turn of the 20th century. Most houses of 19th century origin are individual designs set within large plots well back from the road. Many houses remain in single family occupancy although other patterns of occupancy include flats and a nursing home. In more recent years there has been a gradual development of some of the larger gardens to accommodate individual modern detached houses. The infill development of the 1930's resulted in the construction of semi-detached houses typical of that era.

The majority of the houses are large, and being relatively few in number, the density of development is low, except at Summer Place adjacent to The Green, which is a terrace, and completely atypical of the building pattern of the Area as a whole. Built by a land trust, it reflects the relatively lower income levels of its original inhabitants, yet nonetheless these houses represent a very considerable step-up from other pre-1875 Housing Act terraces built nearer the town centre. The individual front gardens and proximity to open space and allotments would have mitigated to a large extent the small footprint of each individual plot in Summer Place.

3.13 Type of buildings

The majority of the buildings in the Area are residential or are related to residential uses. Perhaps, surprisingly, these are almost equally divided between detached, semi-detached and terraced properties. Apart from the thirteen houses in Summer Place, most are generously proportioned buildings set within large plots.

3.14 Style of buildings

No single architectural style is predominant within the area which reflects the relatively gradual development throughout the 19th century. The rather discontinuous pattern of development during the 20th century is also thus reflected in the varied styles of the buildings dating from that period.



Listed Regency house



1930's semi-detached houses

3.15 Size and morphology of buildings

The buildings within the Area can be divided into three categories, relating to their age and their use. The first houses were generally built in pairs – 16 & 17 and 18 & 19 for example. These were followed by a series of individual residential buildings which tend to be larger, and set in their own grounds, although some were linked to adjacent properties: 22 & 21 Blakebrook being examples. The more modern residential properties are detached, but smaller and generally set within the historic grounds of the larger buildings. The exceptions are Summer Place (a terrace of three storey houses) and the neighbouring 1930's semi-detached houses.

Most buildings are of either 2 storeys with attic or 3-storeys, although as buildings appear to have been individually designed there is a general lack of consistency in terms of eaves and ridge heights. This lack of standardisation imparts the Area with a good deal of architectural interest.

Whilst some modern buildings reflect the design styles and materials fashionable when they were constructed, others have employed classical or gothic-influenced designs and details. All the buildings within the Area contribute to its overall character, although some more modern materials perhaps contribute less positively to the historic setting than others.

3.16 Materials and construction

There is a variety of types of materials and styles of construction throughout the Area, showing the evolution of the settlement through time.

a) Walls and construction methods

Red brick is the most common building material within the Area. The brick colour in the more historic properties is a mix of dark orange/red and a more burnt plum-colour. Sizes vary from Victorian standard imperial (9") to modern (65mm).

The mortar used in the jointing is a traditional lime mortar, with a creamy white colour, although a substantial amount of re-pointing with a buff cement-

containing mortar has been undertaken on many of the properties, which could over time lead to the deterioration of the historic brickwork.

A number of properties have been rendered – in the main this is fine lime-based rendering, but one property in particular has received what appears to be cement-based pebble-dash render. A common feature is that the render has been painted white.

Modern properties within the Area, and those abutting the Area, also utilise red brick for elevations, again with some rendered panel infilling.

b) Windows

Windows are generally rectangular in shape, mainly vertically orientated. A variety of materials are used, mainly timber, but also upvc and aluminium profile.

Most buildings of the Regency and Victorian periods incorporate vertically-sliding, 3/4 light, sash windows with timber glazing bars and are often present on all elevations of the buildings. The lack of glazing bars on later Victorian buildings reflects the technological advances of that era which permitted the use of larger single panes of glass.



Historic windows at 166 Bewdley Hill before and after replacement in 2014

The inter-war housing on the corner of St John's Avenue and Blakebrook features casement bay windows. Earlier bay windows can be found on two properties in Summer Place, and at 6 Blakebrook.

Some more modern properties within the Area feature UPVC or metal windows. Whilst these are not generally permitted on listed buildings there is currently no control on the alteration of windows on unlisted dwelling houses within the Area. Such control could be achieved in future by the imposition of an Article 4(2) Direction, which would have the effect of removing certain specified permitted development rights.

UPVC windows have generally, since their introduction some 30 years ago, featured simple, often heavy, frame designs and this is reflected in the styles of frames currently employed. Nowadays, however, a much wider range of styles with finer detailing is available, in both powder coated aluminium and UPVC, so it is anticipated, as these windows reach the end of their useful life, replacements may be obtained which sit more comfortably amongst the various historic designs within the Conservation Area.

c) Doors

Many historic properties within the Area retain original or replica replacement Regency and Victorian raised-and-fielded 6-panel doors, and particularly good examples can be seen at 166 Bewdley Hill (which is set at right angles to the remainder of Summer Place) and 22 Blakebrook. The door surrounds of these are also generally retained, and tend to be elegant, simple canopied timber door surrounds, with some fluting on the pilasters.



Early 19th century doorcase before (left) and after repairs (right)

d) Roofs

The roofs of earlier properties tend to be covered in Welsh slate , for example 9 Summer Place, but the later Victorian roofs feature hand-made red plain clay roof-tiles and some have decorative ridge tiles.

Properties which have their original slates or handmade clay tiles retain more character, whilst those which have been re-roofed in modern machine-made clay tiles have a more uniform appearance. Some historic properties have had their slates replaced in concrete interlocking tiles which generally appear heavy and inelegant. Modern processes can now better replicate the profile of historic roof slates and thus this issue should be avoided in the future.

Roof slopes vary considerably from the relatively shallow pitched and hipped slate roofs of the late Regency period to much steeper tiled pitches found on buildings constructed from the mid-19th century onwards.



Comparison between concrete tiles (left) and slates (right)

Chimneys have generally survived and feature on some modern buildings too. They are of varied designs and several, particularly those at Summer Place, feature multiple flues. Historic pots have largely been retained although some loss of traditional historic pots is noticeable, often being replaced with gas flue terminals. Decorative pots are still present on some buildings.

e) Rainwater goods

Rainwater goods were traditionally in cast iron, predominantly in half-round or ogee profile for guttering, and supported on rise and fall brackets. In several instances this has been replaced in non-metal upvc guttering which is prone to deflection and fading which can detract from the appearance of more traditional properties. With the increase in metal thefts in recent years

aluminium has become a popular substitute for cast-iron and this can provide an aesthetically acceptable alternative to upvc.

f) Boundary walls, copings and railings

Boundary walls are a feature of many properties within the Area, and assist in defining, both physically and visually, the boundary of the individual property. The materials tend to reflect the period of property, mostly of either a deep red, smooth-faced, regular coloured brick, with creamy white lime mortar, or a more irregular coloured brick, similar to those of the buildings, although sandstone is also used. Copings may be of stone, red brick or blue bull-nose or semi-circular brick.



Historic dwarf brick wall



Historic sandstone wall – note decay caused in part by cement pointing

In Blakebrook boundary walls are important features, since most houses are set back from the road. Materials vary from red brick with stone copings at 'The Oaks' (with a modern version at 22) to sandstone employed at 16 and 17. Some sandstone walls (in particular at 26, The Beeches) are exhibiting significant deterioration in part attributable to the use of cement mortar in past repairs, but also due to splashing from passing vehicles. Number 24 has a modern blue engineering brick wall built in a traditional style. The outright demolition of boundary walls to provide easier access for cars has not happened yet and if permitted would radically change the character of the Area. Minor adjustments can probably be made in a sympathetic way to accommodate this need in the future.



New wall built using traditional materials

Gate piers and gates are of particular interest where these have survived in their original form. Of particular interest are the gate piers to 'The Oaks' which are surmounted by stone caps with acorns, obviously a reference to the name of the villa. The gate to 18 Blakebrook is of interest, with its chamfered wooden framing and wrought iron decoration, evocative of the High Victorian gothic style, but also slightly rustic in character.



Historic driveway gate

Railings are also found within the Area, again in varying types and sizes. Although most historic railings were removed during the Second World War for scrap, some modern railings can be found sitting on the wall at 30 Blakebrook. Modern spear-top railings are used to delineate the garden boundary at the junction of Blakebrook and Jelleyman Close: these are not typical of the area, being full height and set into the ground.

Other elements of enclosure include timber fencing, ranging from the more historic three-bar fencing to more modern feather-edged fencing panels, which has been used at the back of pavement in one instance, and which again is atypical of the area.

Remnants of earlier boundaries survive within and adjacent to the Area – these being the hedged town boundary and early enclosure hedges – the mature hedged boundary to the school gives this part of Blakebrook a semi-rural feel.



Hedged boundary to school playing fields

3.17 Survival of architectural features

The controls over the listed buildings within the Area have regulated indiscriminate losses and, together with the care and attention to detail by local residents keen to preserve the character of the Area, many original architectural features survive including:

- Railings, gates and boundary walls – various types are present throughout the Area, including estate fencing, decorative wrought iron railings, brick walls, and timber bar fencing;
- Outbuildings, some of which are used as garaging or stores;
- Traditional windows and doors – both in traditional materials and designs;
- Traditional door-casings, some with classical features, generally of painted timber, but occasionally stone;
- Traditional roofs and dormers –traditional clay tiles, and Welsh blue slate;
- Non-painted or rendered brickwork – showing the dark red of the local brick, with the fine jointed, creamy white mortar joints;
- Pointing – a mix of fine, narrow jointing and wider jointing is present. The majority of the pointing is in a creamy-white lime mortar;

- Terracotta details and decoration



- Decorative corbel brickwork at eaves



- Traditional steps – due to many of the houses being constructed slightly higher than the principal road, steps were often incorporated into the front entrance of the property;

- Benchmarks were used to establish levels for construction – of those shown on the 1884 map only that on the wall at 19 Blakebrook is still in good condition and readily identifiable.



Noticeable losses of, or damage to, original architectural features include the following:

- The installation of UPVC in some properties, for windows/doors and/or rainwater goods;
- The use of cement in pointing and render, together with inappropriate pointing techniques;
- Front doors of a style alien to the building they serve;
- Installation of ground and first floor bay windows into properties in Summer Place, although these were probably introduced in the Victorian Era.

3.18 Landmarks, focal points and special features

a) Landmarks

Landmarks are buildings, structures, or other features that are important because of their size, design or position makes them particularly noticeable. Special care is needed in the treatment of landmarks.

Landmarks in the Area are as follows:

- 166 Bewdley Hill – this double-fronted property terminates the row at Summer Place and is set on the junction of Blakebrook and Bewdley Hill at the southern-most extremity of the Conservation Area.



166 Bewdley Hill, a local landmark

b) Focal points

Focal points are buildings, structures or areas that are important because of their position in view lines, or because they are the centre of well-frequented public activity. Special care is needed in the treatment of focal points because they are particularly noticeable to the public. Due to the extent of trees and green cover within the Area, together with several of the larger buildings being set in their own grounds and set back from the main routes, there are few visual focal points in the Area. However, the following are considered as both visual and/or social focal points:

- The Green



- Summer Place

c) **Special Features**

There are six entries on the National Heritage List for England within the Area, equating to ten Listed Buildings; there are also three entries on the Kidderminster Local Heritage List, covering fifteen individual dwellings.

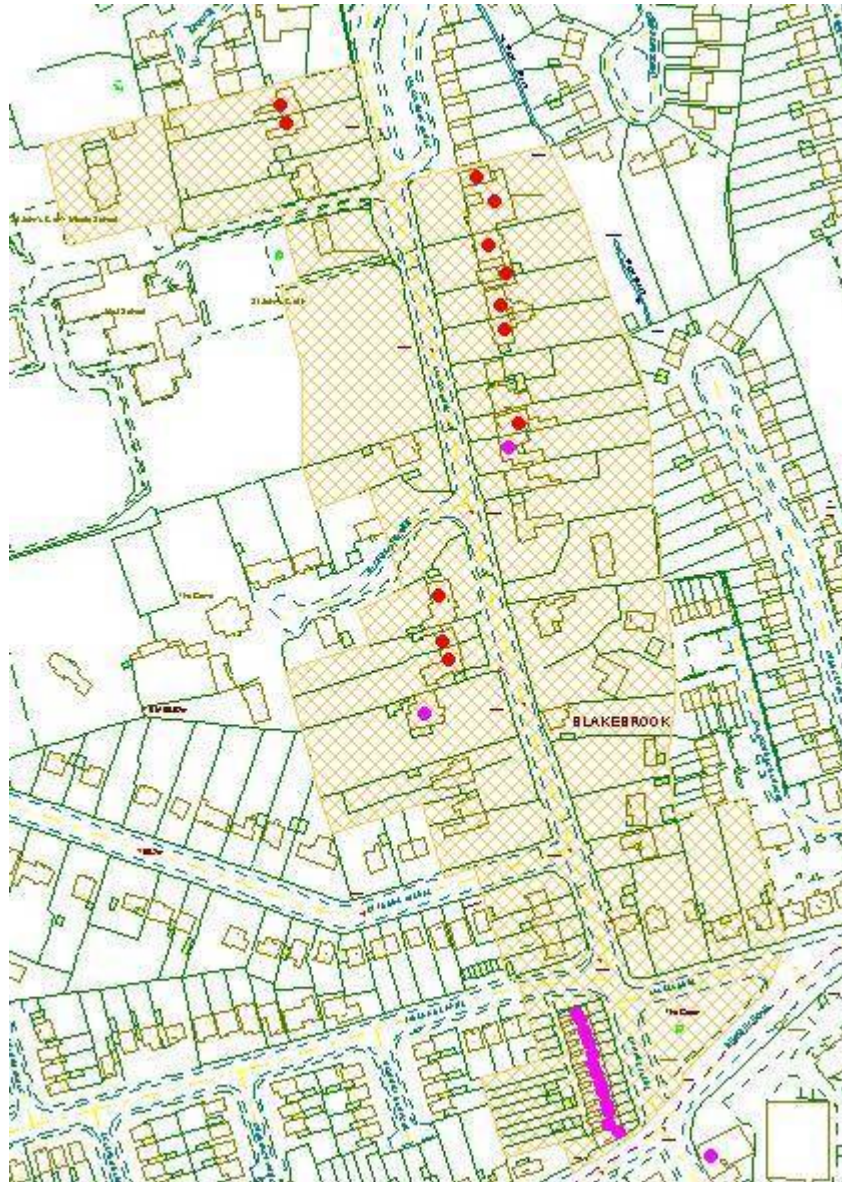
Listed Buildings

All of the listed buildings are Grade II; numbers six to eight, thirteen, fourteen and sixteen to nineteen and twenty-two. These, for the most part, represent the early nineteenth century building phase, influenced by leading Regency architects such as Nash, as displayed by their plain, rendered, classical proportions. They are semi-detached houses built to look like one large house, as was the Regency fashion. Number twenty-two, 'Marlborough House,' is the exception; it is smaller in width and three instead of two storeys in height; it is not rendered, with a parapet concealing its roof. It would have been detached when built, but a later 19th C building is now joined to the south.

Numbers thirteen to nineteen are concentrated to the north of the area and give it a particularly elegant and affluent appearance, particularly sixteen to nineteen which form an unbroken group along the eastern side of the road. These buildings are very well preserved suburban villa residences, having undergone little or no unsympathetic exterior alteration prior to listing. Their listed status should safeguard them from loss of traditional details; a process which has eroded the character of some unlisted buildings.

Buildings included on the Local Heritage List

The most significant of these is the row of terraced houses called Summer Place. Because of its surviving architectural features and its prominent position at the southern end of the conservation area, it sits in contrast to the character of the northern end. The row is somewhat imposing, and this is in part due to its isolation on the western boundary of The Green, and also due to its three storey form with massive chimneys. The architectural features most worthy of protection are the south façade of 166 Bewdley Road with its pedimented porch facing that road and stuccoed street sign with the older name 'Bewdley Street' and the facades of those properties which feature original roofing, wall materials, doors and windows. In recent years some of the quality has been eroded due to the insertion of unsympathetic windows.



Blakebrook Conservation Area (hatched). Listed buildings are represented by red dots, those buildings on the Local Heritage List by pink dots.

23 Blakebrook is an imposing three bay, three storey high Victorian house featuring a lavish display of wealth, with moulded bricks, large plate glass windows without glazing bars, decorative stone lintels and prominent hipped dormers with terracotta finials to each bay breaking through the eaves at second storey level. It is an interesting and unspoilt visual display of the Victorian taste for elaborate decoration, contrasting with the elegance of Blakebrook's Regency architecture. It is the only historic building in the area to depart so significantly from restrained classicism.

Other buildings are significant more for having well preserved details than for being architecturally distinguished. For the Area to maintain its special qualities, it is desirable that they retain as much of their original character as possible.

The Worcestershire Historic Environment Record contains information on these buildings as well as other heritage assets in and adjacent to the Area including Kidderminster Workhouse and the site of a nearby windmill.

Particular special features include the following:

- The range, ages and variety of period architectural detailing and period construction techniques;
- The historic pattern of roads in the Area;
- Railings and walls to the front of many of the properties;
- Trees and hedges.

Many of these are vitally important in retaining the character of the Area, and should ideally remain undeveloped maintaining its character and appearance.



Listed buildings in contrasting styles

3.19 Ground surfaces

Public Realm

Standard black-top tarmacadam, is used both for the principal roads and pavements running through the Area. It is the dominant ground material within the Area. This is a non-traditional material that has been in use for 100 years, and due to the layout of the Area and the traffic volumes using the roads, this is now accepted as being appropriate.

At the junction of St John's Avenue and Blakebrook the road is raised onto a speed-reducing table paved in concrete block. These are a very dark grey colour and do not detract from the overall character of the Area.



Standard tarmac pavement

There are few, if any, verges at the sides of the roads, pavement edges being defined by pre-cast concrete kerbstones.

The Green is the only grassed public space in the Area. Usually this grass is mown short and this enhances the presentation of this part of the Area.

The hard landscape features are considerably softened by the extensive use of hedges as boundary treatments to augment walls and fences.

Private land

There are various surface treatments to be found within the Area. Historically, only the most prestigious of houses would have had cobbled or paved driveways. Other surfaces include tarmacadam, gravel, block paviers and, more recently, imprinted concrete. None of these surfaces dominates and this variety does contribute to the interest of the Area; however a return to gravel or other appropriate permeable surfaces should be encouraged.

3.20 Hard landscaping/ street furniture

There are a good many elements of street furniture within the Area, particularly around The Green and, as these are of functional utilitarian design, unfortunately this does impact negatively on the character and appearance of the Area. Such elements include bus shelters and a telephone kiosk.

The junction of Sutton Road, Bewdley Hill and Summer Place is controlled by traffic signals which have recently received mirrors to provide drivers with a wider field of view. This junction also features a number of road signs, additional posts supporting pedestrian crossing switches, lamp-posts and bollards. All these elements are essential for road safety but appear rather incongruous and intrusive against the backdrop of Summer Place and The Green.

At the junction of Summer Place, Pineridge Drive and The Green, small traffic islands provide refuge for pedestrians crossing the busy road. These in turn

are protected by internally illuminated bollards but being of the standard white plastic variety these do not enhance the Conservation Area.



Telephone Kiosk The Green

Although the lamp-posts are of modern utilitarian design, they are quite unobtrusive as they are tall and widely-spaced. This combination provides the level of illumination necessary for busy wide roads. Shorter, historic pattern lamps would not be feasible on roads such as Blakebrook and Summer Place, and any attempts to better illuminate The Green could have an adverse impact on the wildlife in that part of the Area.

Road markings are a generally unattractive feature of the Area – not only around The Green where the “keep clear” markings appear very intrusive, but also in the vicinity of St. John’s primary school, where there are numerous markings including double yellow lines, both yellow and white “keep clear” and yellow “bus stop” as well as white zig-zags for the pedestrian crossing, white marks for speed humps and white roadway centre lines. Clearly, if there is potential here for some rationalisation of the road markings, this should be investigated as it would improve the appearance of the Area.

A wall-mounted post box with “GR” markings, probably dating from the 1920’s, survives in the wall at 166 Bewdley Hill.



1920's Post Box, Bewdley Hill

3.21 Tranquil areas and active areas

Tranquillity is the peace of a place where the noises and views of human mechanical activity do not intrude to a noticeable degree. It is particularly important to retain the tranquil character of such areas. In the Blakebrook Conservation Area tranquil areas are largely restricted to domestic rear gardens.

The most active part of the Area is The Green which is subject to continuous heavy traffic from early morning till late at night. Further activity, both in terms of pedestrian and vehicular movements, is generated by the proximity of this part of the Area to the hospital site. A number of bus routes converge at The Green and this in turn generates pedestrian activity around the bus stops. These areas can be particularly busy in the morning and afternoon rush-hours.

Although Blakebrook itself is a busy road, it seems relatively quiet after one has experienced the noise and activity around The Green. There are often good breaks in the traffic when birdsong can be heard. Pedestrian movements vary enormously according to the time of day – early morning and mid-afternoon are particularly busy as children and their parents make their way up Blakebrook to and from the local schools.

3.22 Noise

There is generally a high level of background noise experienced within the Conservation Area at its southern end – an almost continual hum of road traffic during the day becomes more sporadic at night. The hospital does not appear to create a significant amount of noise although sirens of emergency services vehicles are often heard on the main road.

During the day, it is possible to hear children playing in the grounds of the schools and church bells may occasionally be heard, either from St. John's or St. Mary's nearer the town centre.

Within the Conservation Area itself, there is very little noise generated, apart from that of passing traffic. Natural noises include wind in the trees and dogs barking. Other noises include the occasional lawnmower, birdsong, and the conversation of pedestrians.

3.23 Paths

Pavements along the roadside or across The Green generally have tarmacadam surfaces; however, these are of varying colours reflecting the patchwork repairs which have taken place over the years.

A considerable amount of tactile paving has been installed within the Area; in the main, this is restricted to pavement edges at road junctions and defined crossing points. This is of the regulation buff colour, and whilst this is undoubtedly essential for pedestrian safety, it does detract somewhat from the appearance of the pavements, particularly as these paving slabs tend to become damaged after a relatively short time.

The paving at the west end of The Green is discontinuous and uneven featuring concrete "crazy paving" and is in need of renewal.



Uneven pavement at The Green

3.24 Alien features

Whilst the Area is predominantly “traditional” in character, there are elements that are alien to the character and detract from the appearance of the Area.

Perhaps the most significantly alien feature is the modern housing which has been built within the grounds of 26 Blakebrook. These houses, whilst large and set in their own gardens, have little direct relationship to Blakebrook, being accessed off a private driveway. For the special character of the Area to be maintained into the future, it is essential that the remaining large individual plots are retained undeveloped.

Highways signage is of the standard type utilising modern reflective materials and is thus alien to the character of the Area. The extensive use of this signage at The Green does impact negatively on it.

Similarly, the highways road markings, particularly those outside the school and by The Green, create a very urban feel, at odds with the leafy surroundings.

Traditional treated timber telegraph poles are used to support the cabling belonging to various utilities in the Area, particularly around The Green. Elsewhere cabling appears to have been buried and is less obtrusive.

The Area is bordered by modern housing to the east and west; however, this does not impact significantly on the character of the Area, except at Jelleyman Close where the original dwelling is surrounded by modern development and retains little of its private extensive grounds.

Where they have been introduced, Solar PV panels, satellite antennae and upvc doors and windows generally impact on the conservation area, but currently not to such a degree that the fundamental character of the area is seriously compromised.

3.25 Areas that would benefit from enhancement

The Green suffers from heavy traffic and the paraphernalia which accompanies a busy road junction, with conflicting pedestrian and vehicular movements. Rationalisation of both signage and road markings would visually enhance the Area somewhat, although it is unlikely that it will be possible to significantly reduce the noise and fumes from the heavy traffic which creates an environmental nuisance.

To a lesser degree, this also applies to the entrance to the primary school at the opposite end of the Area.

The quality of some pavements is poor, with some general repairs appearing to be overdue. Should the opportunity arise it would be sensible to review the strategy for surfacing these pavements and select a more uniform colour and texture for the majority of the Area.

3.26 Neutral areas

Neutral buildings or spaces are those whose character does not conform to that of its immediate surroundings. These sites do not necessarily detract from an area, but should development proposals be forthcoming, then they should improve the site, in terms of visual and/or social impact on the Area, and relate well to the surroundings, or be designed that the development is confined to spaces within the neutral area that are not visible to the public gaze.

Whilst the 1930's semi-detached houses next to St John's Avenue are of no special architectural merit, they are built from traditional materials and feature traditional details. They are orientated and set in gardens in a similar manner to the older houses surrounding them.

The junctions of Pineridge Drive, St. John's Avenue and Jelleyman Close may all be considered to be neutral areas.

The school playing field is also a neutral area; however, the hedgerow along its boundary with Blakebrook is an important feature and one which should be retained.



Concluding Statement

4 Concluding Statement

Blakebrook Conservation Area covers a suburb which has remained largely unchanged during the past 100 years, with the principal focus being The Green and Summer Place. With its variety and number of trees and hedges, its mainly 19th century buildings and predominantly leafy suburban character, in contrast to the surrounding developments, the Area is widely recognised as having a special character and appearance. Whilst there are some elements within the Conservation Area that detract from the special character and appearance, they are sufficiently few in number to prevent the area from being at risk of losing its special interest.



Appendices

Adopted Wyre Forest Local Plan Policies

Policy SAL.UP6

Safeguarding the Historic Environment

1. Heritage Assets

Any development proposal affecting the District's heritage assets, including their setting, should demonstrate how these assets will be protected, conserved and, where appropriate, enhanced. The District's heritage assets include:

- Conservation Areas, Listed Buildings and Scheduled Monuments.
- Building and Structures on the Local Heritage List.
- Landscape features including ancient woodlands and veteran trees, field patterns, watercourses, and hedgerows of visual, historic or nature conservation value.
- Archaeological remains and non-designated historic structures recorded on the County Historic Environment Record.
- Historic parks and gardens.

Developments that relate to a Heritage Asset should be accompanied by a Heritage Statement. Where proposals are likely to affect the significance of a heritage asset, including its setting, the Heritage Statement should demonstrate an understanding of such significance and in sufficient detail to assess any potential impacts. This should be informed by currently available evidence.

When considering a development proposal which may affect a Heritage Asset, or when preparing a Heritage Statement, applicants should have regard to the following points:

- To ensure that proposals would not have a detrimental impact on the significance of a Heritage Asset or its setting and to identify how proposals make a positive contribution to the character and local distinctiveness of the area.
- Any harm or loss of significance will require clear and convincing justification.
- The re-use of heritage assets will be encouraged where this is consistent with the conservation of the specific heritage asset.
- Proposals which secure the long-term future of a heritage asset at risk will specifically be encouraged.
- That repairs, alterations, extensions and conversions of heritage assets take into account the materials, styles and techniques to be used and the period in which the asset was built.
- The installations of fixtures and fittings should not have a detrimental impact on a heritage asset, should be inconspicuously sited and proportioned and be designed sympathetically.
- In considering new development that may affect a heritage asset, proposals will need to identify how the scale, height and massing of new development in relation to the particular feature, and the materials and design utilised, does not detrimentally affect the asset or its setting.

Development proposals that would have an adverse impact on a heritage asset and/or its setting, or which will result in a reduction or loss of significance, will not be permitted, unless it is clearly demonstrated the following criteria are met:

- a. There are no reasonable alternative means of meeting the need for development appropriate to the level of significance of the Heritage Asset.
- b. The reasons for the development outweigh the individual significance of the Heritage Asset, its importance as part of a group and to the local scene, and the need to safeguard the wider stock of such Heritage Assets.
- c. In the case of demolitions, that the substantial public benefits of the development outweigh the loss of the building or structure; or the nature of the asset prevents all reasonable uses of the site; or the loss of the heritage asset is outweighed by the benefits of bringing the site back into use. Redevelopment proposals should provide design which mitigates appropriately against the loss of the heritage asset in proportion to its significance at a national or local level.

Where material change to a heritage asset has been agreed, recording and interpretation should be undertaken to document and understand the asset's archaeological, architectural, artistic or historic significance. The scope of the recording should be proportionate to the asset's significance and the impact of the development on the asset. The information and understanding gained should be made publicly available, as a minimum, through the relevant Historic Environment Record.

2. Conservation Areas

When development is proposed in, or adjacent to, a Conservation Area, proposals should accord with the existing (or draft) Conservation Area Character Appraisal and seek to enhance or better reveal the significance of the area. Development should not adversely affect views into, within, or out of the Conservation Area.

Proposals for the demolition of a building or structure in a Conservation Area will only be permitted where it has been clearly demonstrated that:

- i. It has no significance in itself or by association, and no value to the significance of the Conservation Area.
- ii. Its demolition or replacement would benefit the character or appearance of the Conservation Area.
- iii. Proposals include detailed and appropriate proposals for redevelopment, together with clear evidence redevelopment will proceed.

Proposals that affect shop fronts within a Conservation Area should have regard to the Council's Shop Front Design Guidance.

Blakebrook Conservation Area Boundary Map

