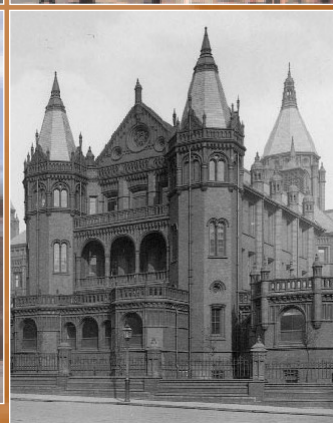
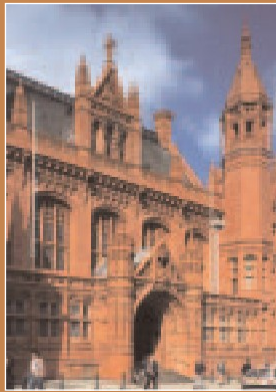
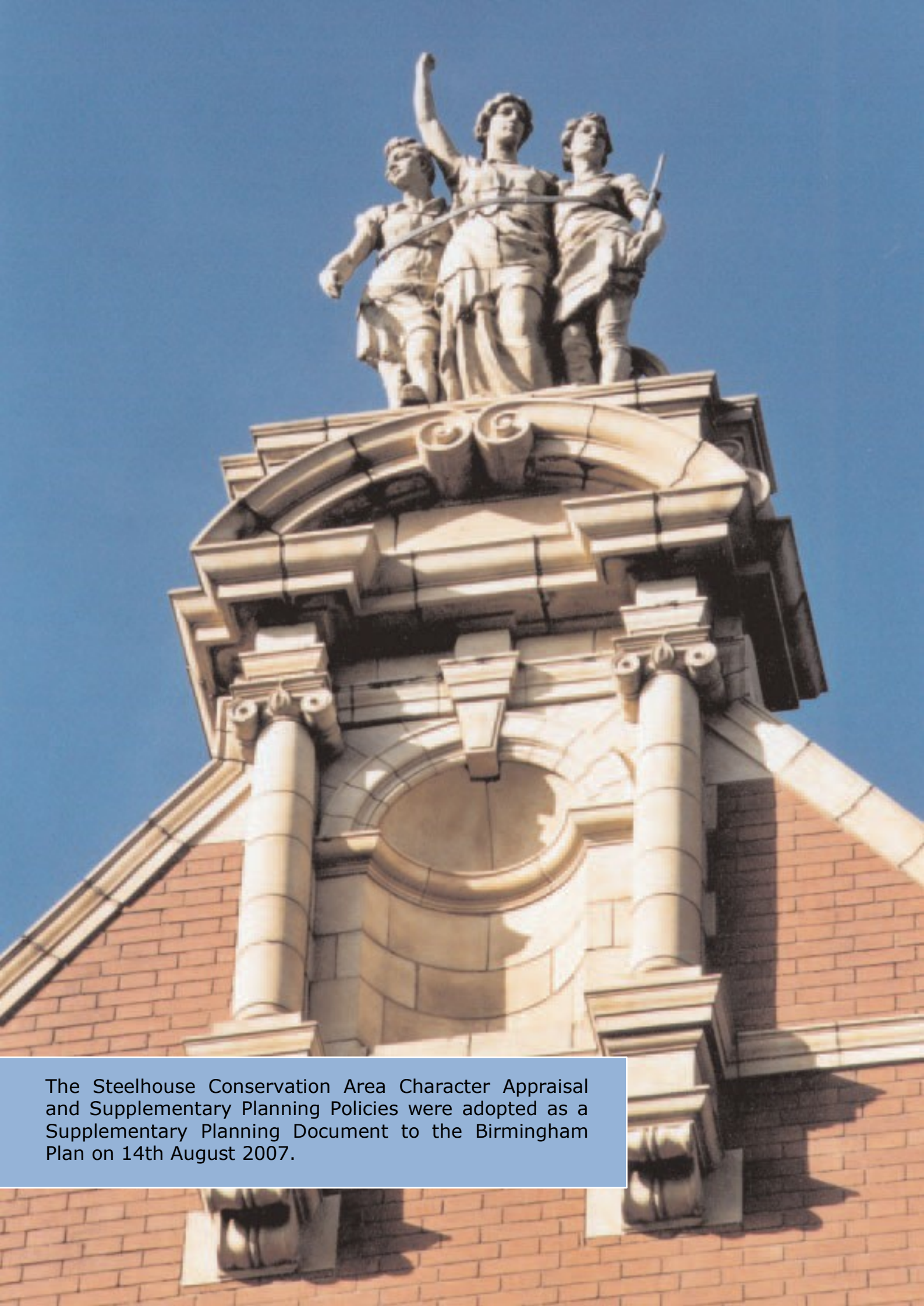


Steelhouse Conservation Area

Character Appraisal and Supplementary Planning Policies



August 2007



The Steelhouse Conservation Area Character Appraisal and Supplementary Planning Policies were adopted as a Supplementary Planning Document to the Birmingham Plan on 14th August 2007.

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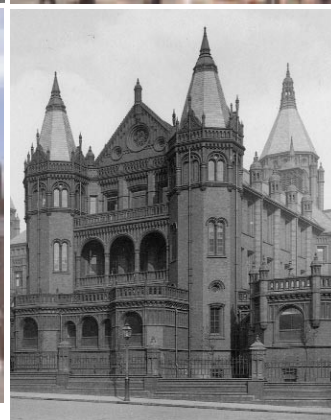


Part A

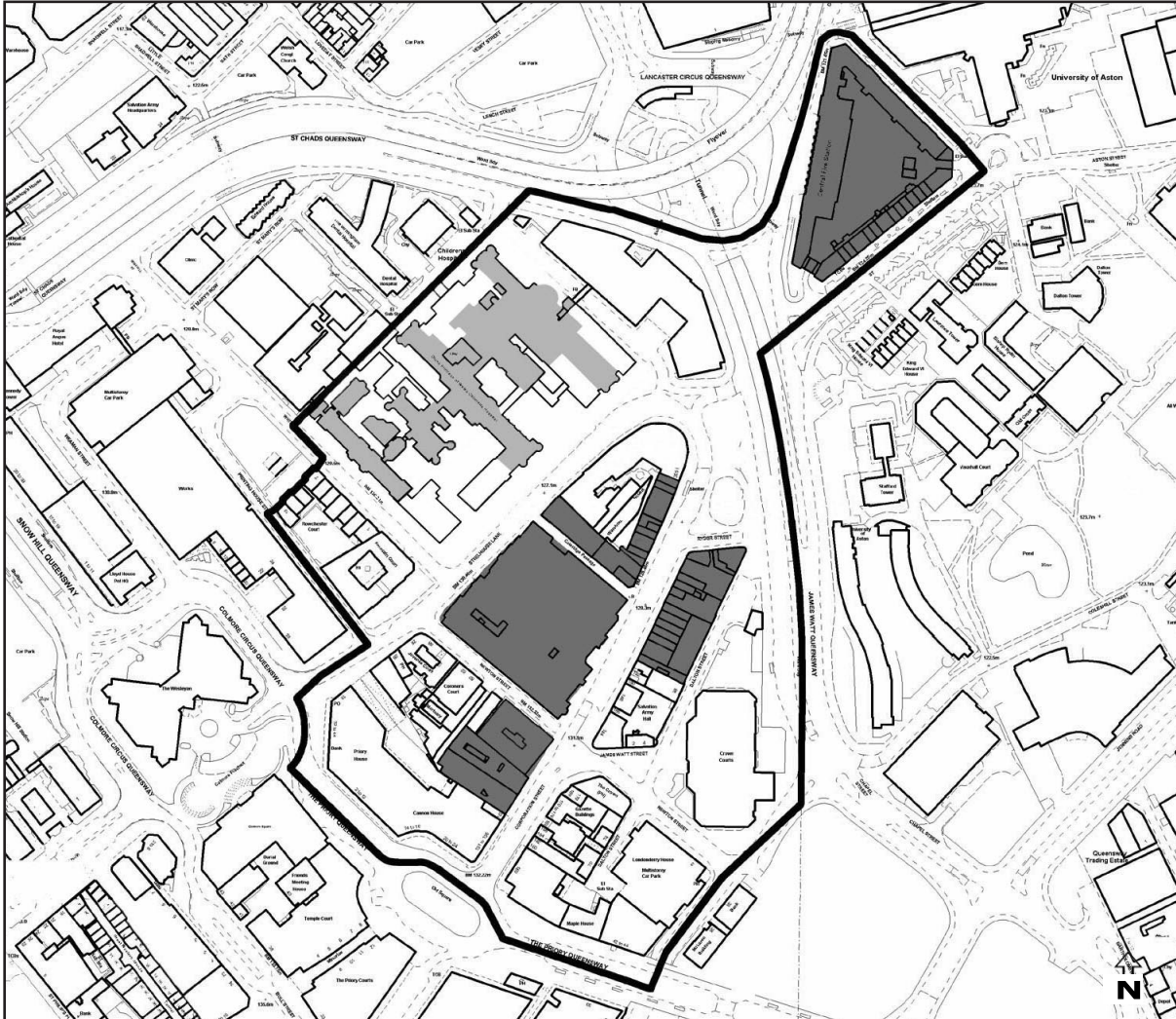
Steelhouse Lane

Conservation Area

Character Appraisal



Map 1 Steelhouse Conservation Area Statutorily and Locally Listed Buildings



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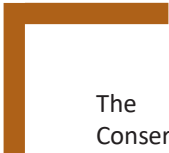
-  Boundary of Conservation Area
-  Statutorily Listed Buildings
-  Locally Listed Buildings

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Not to scale

Int

Introduction



The 1990 Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act defines a conservation area as ‘...an area of special architectural or historic interest the character and appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance.’ The Act places a duty on local authorities to designate conservation areas where appropriate and from time to time to review the extent of conservation area designation within their districts. It also requires them to formulate and publish proposals for the preservation and enhancement of these areas.

Designation allows the local authority general control over demolition and minor development and the protection of trees. In addition to these powers the authority has a duty to pay special attention in the exercise of its planning functions to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of its designated areas.

Planning Policy Guidance Note 15: Planning and the Historic Environment (1994) stresses the value of a clear and comprehensive appraisal of the special character which justifies the designation of a conservation area, as a sound basis for development control decisions within the area and the formulation of proposals for its designation and enhancement. As a matter of policy therefore Birmingham City Council has undertaken to produce character appraisals for all the conservation areas within its district (The Birmingham Plan Birmingham Unitary Development Plan 2005 2005 para.3.27).

The Steelhouse Conservation Area Character Appraisal has been prepared in accordance with the national guidance contained in PPG15: Planning and the Historic Environment (1994). It follows the advice set out in Guidance on conservation area appraisals (2005) and in Guidance on the management of conservation areas (2005) produced by English Heritage and the Planning Advisory Service.

The appraisal aims to:

- Identify the special interest of Steelhouse Conservation Area and provide a definition of its character.
- Provide a sound basis for the development control process within the conservation area and the formulation of policies and proposals for its preservation and enhancement.

The character appraisal will be kept up to date through periodic review and modification. A dated photographic record of the conservation area taken during the process of appraisal will help in monitoring any change in condition and/or appearance and aid enforcement action. This will be regularly updated.

Part A

1

Designation, Location and Boundaries

Steelhouse Conservation Area was designated in October 1993. It covers 11.07 hectares (27.36 acres) in Birmingham City Centre and is contained within the Ladywood and Nechells Wards in Ladywood Constituency. On the north the boundary runs east on St Chad's Queensway and Lancaster Circus Queensway turning north along Corporation Street and south-east behind the Central Fire Station. From here it runs south-west along Aston Street, south on James Watt Queensway and south-west along Dale End. Priory Queensway forms the boundary to the south-west. On the west the

conservation area boundary runs from Priory Queensway along Colmore Circus Queensway to the junction with Steelhouse Lane and from here down to Printing House Street. It continues along Printing House Street crossing to Whittall Street behind Rowchester Court and then follows the line of the former Weaman's Row behind the nineteenth century General (Children's) Hospital complex to join St Chad's Queensway (Map 1).

Geology and Topography

The geology of the conservation area belongs to the Triassic period. The underlying rock formation is Bromsgrove sandstone. This is covered by glacio-fluvial deposits of undifferentiated gravel. The ground falls gently away from the south-west boundary of the area down to the north east.

Part A

3

Archaeology

The conservation area is on the edge of the mediaeval town. The Priory or Hospital of St. Thomas (Birmingham Sites and Monuments Record 02995) was in existence by 1286. It extended from Bull Street to Old Square and included a chapel and a graveyard. There are unlikely to be any surviving remains. James Watt Queensway follows the line of a ditch (SMR20698) marked on Westley's 1731 plan of Birmingham. Kettle's Steelhouse (SMR20694) and Shakespeare's Glasshouse (SMR20497) reflect eighteenth century industrial development in the area. Kettle's Steelhouse was in existence by 1708 but had disappeared by 1736. Its site on the north side of Steelhouse Lane is unlikely to contain any significant surviving remains. Shakespeare's Glasshouse was established in 1798 in the area now occupied by Lancaster Circus. Its exact site is unknown. Dale End Mill House (SMR03246) in the Priory Queensway area was documented in the eighteenth century but it is not known whether there actually was a windmill on the site. A Roman coin was found in St. Mary's Churchyard (now the site of the Children's and Dental Hospitals).



The rapid growth in the population of Birmingham, which began during the latter half of the seventeenth century and continued throughout most of the eighteenth can be linked to the expansion and localisation of the metalware trades in the surrounding area, particularly among the coalfields of the South Staffordshire plateau. Metalworking had begun to play an increasingly significant part in the local economy of this region during the sixteenth century and by 1600 the area was already well known for the production of a wide range of metal goods, including locks, nails, edge tools and saddlers' ironmongery. In mid-seventeenth century Birmingham ironmongers were beginning to appear among the town's elite and the metal trades had replaced older industries related to tanning and textiles in economic importance. From the 1690s the smiths and cutlers were themselves surpassed in economic significance by the 'new' trades, guns, brass, buttons and the manufacture of small ornamental metal items known as toys. These goods were not only sold at home but for export to Europe and the colonies. Industrial growth was linked to an expanding role as a market and service centre. By 1800 Birmingham was firmly established as a significant regional capital.

New development following the increase in population, which resulted from this expansion of industrial and commercial activity, was confined at first to the higher ground within the 'old' town, which had as its focus the mediaeval parish church of St. Martin. Demand for housing was such however that it soon spread beyond this area on to the hillsides to the north and north west away from the flood plain of the River Rea. The land up here

was well drained, yet yielded a plentiful supply of ground water, and commanded extensive views over the surrounding countryside.

Much of the land to the north developed during this period and now largely contained within Steelhouse Conservation Area had belonged to the Augustinian Priory of St Thomas, founded c1285, and lay to the east of Bull Street or Chapel Street and on the north side of Whitehalls Lane (now Steelhouse Lane). After its dissolution in 1547 the Priory's property passed to the Holte family, lords of the neighbouring manor of Aston, who, over the following century or so, gradually disposed of the Birmingham lands. Urban development in the area began when John Pemberton, a prominent local ironmonger, staked out the Square (Old Square) in Priory Close off Bull Street in 1697. The Pembertons acquired the close in 1670 with other property bought from the Holtes. The Square, laid out in the new formal style with the access road from Bull Street (later known as the Minories) on the west side and Upper and Lower Priory on the north and south, was finally completed about 1718. Its fashionable brick houses were occupied by professional men and wealthy merchants.

The division of the Priory Close into building plots was quickly followed by further urban development. The three closes lying north east of Pemberton's property had been sold by the Holtes in the sixteenth century and by the early 1700s had been acquired for development by Stephen Newton, a Birmingham baker. He laid out Lichfield Street, from the east side of the Square to the road to Aston (later Aston Street), and Newton Street, from Whitehalls Lane (Steelhouse Lane) to Lichfield Street, between 1707 and 1710. In 1721



Westley's Row (London Prentice Street, part Dalton Street) was laid out south east of the Square over land sold for the purpose by George Birch, a wealthy landowner. At the same time John Pemberton cut John Street, a continuation of Newton Street down to Dale End, and Thomas Street, from Lichfield Street down to the junction of Coleshill Street and Stafford Street, across a close of land known as the Scitewells. Pemberton had bought the property in 1701 from the Smalbros, an important family in sixteenth and early seventeenth century Birmingham.

William Westley's 1731 plan of Birmingham shows the area between Steelhouse Lane and Dale End almost completely developed, although some land still lies vacant on Lichfield Street. Urban development has also begun on the Weaman estate north of Steelhouse Lane. Gregory Weaman, a cutler, had bought the land here, which included the former Priory conigre or rabbit warren, from the yeoman Robert Whittall, probably in the 1670s or early 1680s. Steelhouse Lane, formerly Priors Conigre Lane then Whitehalls (Whittalls) Lane, takes its present name from Kettle's steelhouse, which was established about 1708 on the site of a farmhouse which lay on the opposite side of the lane from Newton Street. In 1714 William Kettle, an ironmonger by trade, extended his premises farther east along Steelhouse Lane. The steelhouses ceased production in the early 1730s although the Kettles maintained a warehouse and steelyard on part of the site up to the 1770s. In 1734 the parish workhouse was erected on the north side of Lichfield Street. Buckle Row (Silver Street) and the Gullet, which followed the line of an ancient ditch, were developed on the Scitewells east of Thomas Street during the 1740s.

Weaman Street, on the Weaman estate, had been cut by 1731 and Sand Street by 1750. Whittall Street (Catherine Street), which ran between Steelhouse Lane and Bath Street to the north, was laid out in 1764. In 1688 Lench's Trust, a charity established in the sixteenth century, which owned land adjacent to the Weaman's property and extending as far as Walmer Lane (Lancaster Street), had built a set of almshouses on the corner of Whitehalls Lane (Steelhouse Lane) and Walmer Lane. These were demolished in 1764 and a new set built farther west on part of the site now covered by the Children's Hospital (formerly the General Hospital). The Trustees granted the first leases on their land, now more conveniently arranged for development, the following year.

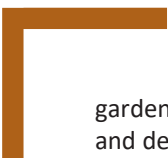
In 1772 Dorothy Weaman and her daughter Mary gave part of the site for a new church, St Mary's, built in 1774. Mary Weaman also subscribed £1000 towards the building costs. These gifts were not entirely due to piety since proximity to a church increased the value of building land and plots were more easily sold. Weaman Row and St. Mary's Row were cut south and then north of the church in the mid-1770s. Lench's Trust gave some ground to provide a graveyard for the new church and, capitalising on the enhanced value of its property, joined with the Weamans to open Loveday Street northwards from Steelhouse Lane. By the end of the century the Trust's estate here was wholly built over.

The land between Walmer Lane and Aston Street was part of an earlier holding called Cross Fields, acquired by the Holtes in the late sixteenth century and sold by Sir Robert Holte, the second baronet, to Robert Whittall in 1668. It was quickly sold on and in the eighteenth century it belonged to the Wilson and Fisher families. Urban development in this area began in the 1770s with the opening of Potter Street and by 1810 extended a considerable distance north east beyond the Birmingham and Fazeley Canal.

The airy new streets above the crowded 'old' town were rapidly filled with the houses, workshops and warehouses occupied by prosperous tradesmen and artisans. In the area south of Steelhouse Lane a wide variety of crafts and trades was soon established. The area north of the lane witnessed the growth of Birmingham's gun trade and the development of the town's earliest industrial quarter. From the 1740s the concentration of gunsmiths moving into the newly laid out streets was such that by 1800 the Gun Quarter covered an area from Snow Hill to Lancaster Street and from Steelhouse Lane to the Birmingham and Fazeley Canal with its focus around St. Mary's Square. Such intense localisation derived from the industry's structure in which the many highly specialised processes were each carried out by individual craftsmen and co-ordinated by merchants or factors.

The rapid increase in population so evident in 18th century Birmingham slowed considerably during the wars with France (1793-1815). Nonetheless between 1800 and 1840 the number of the town's inhabitants multiplied by two and half times. As urban development continued to spread the poor began to colonise the streets to the east of Old

Square. Workshops were abandoned, yards and



gardens were lined with cramped insanitary housing and decayed frontage dwellings occupied as lodging houses. By the 1840s the area was notorious for its slums and St Mary's Ward the poorest and most insanitary in the town. In 1850 a new workhouse was built on Dudley Road and the earlier buildings on Lichfield Street abandoned.

North of Steelhouse Lane the gun industry expanded rapidly during the French wars. From the 1820s however, while the military trade tended to prosper, reaching its peak during the period of the Crimean War (1854-1856), the trade in sporting guns declined in the face of growing foreign competition. In 1854 the Government established a factory at Enfield for the machine production of military small arms. The Birmingham gun merchants responded to this challenge by joining together in 1862 to erect their own works, the BSA factory at Small Heath, and arms production began to move away from the Quarter.

In the mid-nineteenth century, in common with other growing towns and cities, Birmingham experienced a rising demand for commercial accommodation, particularly for retail shops. The town's centre, and especially the shopping area which was largely confined to High Street and New Street, was small, congested with traffic and increasingly inadequate to meet the needs of a regional capital. Little could be done to ameliorate this situation until in 1875 Parliament passed the Artisans' Dwellings Act. This gave local authorities in towns with a population of more than 25,000 the right to acquire slum property for improvement purposes. Joseph Chamberlain, Birmingham's progressive mayor from 1873 to 1876, immediately perceived that the Act could provide a dual benefit. It could be used both to improve conditions in the insanitary area east of Bull Street and to provide the town with a wide new street allowing the expansion of the commercial centre. He seized the opportunity to propose an improvement scheme which

...might run a great street, as broad as a Parisian boulevard, from New Street to the Aston Road; it might open up a street such as Birmingham had not got, and was almost stifling for the want of - for all the best streets in the town were too narrow.

The scheme adopted by the Council under the terms of the 1875 Act covered almost 93 acres, including the whole of the area now contained within Steelhouse Conservation Area. The

Birmingham Improvement Act was passed in 1876,

giving the Council the right to purchase forty-three and a half acres of land and buildings and to sell or lease any surplus land once the improvements had been made.

Work on the grand new street proposed in the Improvement Scheme began in 1878. Corporation Street had been laid out from New Street to Bull Street by 1881. It was continued from Bull Street to Lancaster Street in 1882, removing the north east angle of Old Square and obliterating Lichfield Street. Thomas Street was removed and James Watt Street cut to provide an approach from Dale End to Corporation Street. John Street (Newton Street) and Steelhouse Lane were widened. London Prentice Street (Westley's Row) was extended along the line of Silver Street to join a new street (later known as Ryder Street) running between Stafford Street (subsumed into James Watt Queensway) and Corporation Street. It was renamed Dalton Street. Ashley Passage followed the old line of the Gullet.

At the upper end of Corporation Street, farthest from the retail centre of the town, sites were made available for the erection of purpose-built law courts. A county court had been established in Birmingham in 1846 and, with the magistrates' and coroner's courts, was held in the cramped Public Office on Moor Street. The borough was not granted an assize until 1884. The principal reason for the refusal of several earlier applications was the lack of suitable accommodation. In 1879 the Council let a plot on the corner of Newton Street and Corporation Street for the erection of a county court which opened in 1883. The adjacent site fronting Old Square and Corporation Street was reserved for assize courts but was then set aside for a post office and eventually leased instead to a private developer. A large plot farther east along Corporation Street, which had the advantage of a frontage onto Steelhouse Lane, was finally selected. The Victoria Law Courts, built to accommodate not only the assizes but also the magistrates' and coroner's courts, were opened in 1891. Coleridge Passage, running between Corporation Street and Steelhouse Lane, allowed access into the east side of the building. A police station was built adjacent to the law courts on Corporation Street/Newton Street and police cells on Steelhouse Lane/Coleridge Passage in 1892.

The Council was careful not to flood the property market with surplus land from the Improvement Scheme and the last building plot on the length of Corporation Street laid out by 1882 was not let until

1900. Nonetheless development here was complete by 1911. Aside from the law courts the street was filled with substantial privately developed buildings, which accommodated a range of uses including offices, shops, a theatre and the Central Methodist Hall.

The Council was reluctant to extend its new thoroughfare beyond the junction with Lancaster Street as had originally been intended. In 1903 however, it was instructed to carry out the work in order to complete the sanitary reform, which had been the ostensible purpose of the 1876 Improvement Act. The new length of Corporation Street up to Aston Road was laid out in 1904 and, as the Council had feared, the building plots proved difficult to let. There was no demand so far from the city centre for the large commercial buildings for which the street was designed.

On the north side of Steelhouse Lane the General Hospital moved from the buildings on Summer Lane it had occupied since 1779 to a large plot between Whittall and Loveday Streets and extending as far back as Weaman Row. The clearance of houses and workshops for the new building marked the first step in the destruction of the Gun Quarter, a process completed by the construction of the Inner Ring Road some sixty years later. The hospital opened in 1897. Behind the General Hospital St Mary's Church survived until 1927 when the building was demolished and the western half of the graveyard, laid out as a public garden in 1881, was sold for the extension of the hospital. Weaman Row was lost to this development.

As early as 1923 it had been intended to extend the Victoria Law Courts and a site had been acquired for this purpose on Steelhouse Lane opposite the General Hospital. A police station was built instead however, in response to pressure from the police to improve working conditions. The new Central Police Station was opened in 1933. Works to extend the law courts were eventually begun in 1939 and completed in 1954. As part of this scheme a new building for the coroner's court was provided on Newton Street next to the juvenile court, which had been opened on the corner with Steelhouse Lane in 1927.

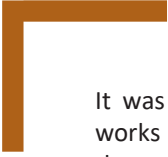
Following the separation of the town's fire service from its police force, a fire station was built in 1881 on Upper Priory. Despite an extension in 1897 the building soon proved inadequate and the site traffic bound. In 1927 the City Council approved a

scheme for a new fire station to be built on a triangular site between Corporation Street and Aston Street. The Central Fire Station on Lancaster Place was opened in 1935.

Despite the addition of Corporation Street and the almost total displacement of residential and industrial uses by commercial, civic and recreational functions Birmingham's centre was still relatively small in relation to the expanding city's size. Traffic congestion grew steadily worse and as early as 1917 a Council report suggested that a 'loop' or ring of roads should be constructed around the city centre linking the radial roads and diverting through traffic. The realisation of such a radical vision proved impossible during the following decades and it was not until 1944 that the Council approved a plan very similar to that proposed in 1917. The route still followed the lines of existing streets to form a tight girdle around the city centre but there were some additions. These included a new cross route from Snow Hill to Moor Street. The Inner Ring Road Scheme was given Parliamentary approval in 1946.

Work on the scheme began in 1957 and by 1964 the cross route from Snow Hill (Snow Hill Queensway, Priory Queensway) to Moor Street (Masshouse Circus) had been constructed. This involved the demolition of part of Weaman Street on the north side of Steelhouse Lane, Upper and Lower Priory and Old Square. The spur (James Watt Queensway) from Moor Street (Masshouse Circus) to Lancaster Place (later Lancaster Circus) joining the Ring Road to Aston and Lancaster Streets was complete by 1968. Parts of Dale End, and of James Watt Street, the whole of Ashley Passage and almost the whole of Stafford Street were obliterated in the process. By 1970 a second spur (St Chads Queensway) was in place, Loveday Street was closed to become a service road for the General Hospital and the streets beyond were cleared for the construction of Lancaster Circus. The completed Inner Ring Road was opened in 1971.

Post war development in the Steelhouse area has largely been on or near the Ring Road. Redevelopment along Priory Queensway began with the construction of Priory House from 1957 and was complete by 1975. The Council was keen to clear the area of industrial buildings, particularly between Weaman and Whittall Streets, and replace them with office blocks to enhance Birmingham's standing as a commercial centre. In 1965 Printing House Street, newly cut between Whittall Street and Weaman Street/Colmore Circus, was adopted.



It was named after the large newspaper printing works built along its western side and attached to the new Post and Mail building on Colmore Circus (now demolished). Fountain Court was purpose-built to provide chambers for local members of the Bar on the east side of Printing House Street in 1963. The site was allocated by the Council. A new Dental Hospital, constructed on the eastern half of the former burial ground of St. Mary's, was opened in 1965. In 1989 the Crown Courts, built partly on land cleared for the purpose, partly on a site left vacant by the construction of the Inner Ring Road, were opened on Newton Street. A further length of James Watt Street, from Dalton Street to the Inner Ring Road, was lost in this process.

Steelhouse Conservation Area was designated in October 1993 to conserve the setting of the fine terracotta buildings on Corporation Street and to protect the General Hospital (now the Children's Hospital) and the Central Fire Station from unconsidered development. The post-war properties along Priory Queensway were included within the conservation area primarily to form a logical and defensible boundary but also to ensure that any future redevelopment here would be in sympathy with the character of the earlier built fabric.

In 1995 the City Council secured a Conservation Area Partnership Scheme for the Steelhouse area with grant aid directed at the restoration of terracotta detail and of original shopfront designs at Ruskin Chambers and the Central Methodist Hall both on Corporation Street. The partnership programme was continued from 1998 to 2001 with financial support from the Heritage Lottery Fund.

The Inner Ring Road has been regarded almost since its completion as the principal constraint on the natural outward growth of the city centre and the major cause of low investment in the areas immediately beyond. A programme of improvements designed to remove or mitigate the severance caused by this 'concrete collar' was instigated in 1989. On the south and south-west boundaries of Steelhouse Conservation Area the reconstruction of Old Square and of the lower part of Priory Queensway to form part of a ground level road system was completed in 2001 and Colmore Square on the site of Colmore Circus in 2004. The lowering of James Watt Queensway, on the eastern boundary, began in March 2002 and was

completed in 2003. These works, with the redevelopment of Masshouse Circus, are seen as essential to the regeneration of the Eastside area of the city and to the revitalisation of the city centre.

Buildings

The character of the conservation area is most clearly defined by the quality of its architecture, the preservation of the fine townscape surrounding the Victoria Law Courts remaining the principal justification for its designation. Many of the buildings are of exceptional interest (Map 1) and represent the work of architects of national reputation, such as Aston Webb, or more local renown, such as Crouch and Butler or E. and J. A. Harper. The area contains the five separate buildings which house the city's law courts; the former General Hospital, now the Children's Hospital; the former Central Police Station, now a divisional headquarters, and the Central Fire Station. Most of the remaining properties are commercial developments dating from the late nineteenth to the mid-twentieth century and reflect Birmingham's growth as a service and retail centre during this period. The Central Methodist Hall and the Salvation Army Citadel, although built for worship and other related activities, were both designed to include retail premises. These were intended to integrate the buildings into the street scene while providing a rental income.

Building Styles

Late Victorian architectural styles are especially characteristic of the area. These range from the Classical designs applied to buildings such as the County Court to the Free or mixed styles employed in the Victoria Law Courts, the General Hospital (Children's Hospital) and the Central Methodist Hall. Architectural display is used to express civic pride, religious certitude and commercial status and architectural decoration and sculpture, particularly on Corporation Street, contribute significantly to local character. Richness and

complexity of detail is extended to characteristically prominent and vigorous roofscapes.

The Newton Street extensions to the Victoria Law Courts, designed in 1935, follow the simple treatment of the original secondary facades on Steelhouse Lane and in Coleridge Passage. Major interwar developments in the area, the Juvenile and Coroner's Courts and the Police and Fire Stations, are otherwise built in the Neo-Georgian styles commonly used for municipal buildings at this time.

The post war buildings beside the Inner Ring Road (Queensway) are contemporary in style with horizontal rooflines and flat roofs. Fountain Court on Steelhouse Lane, designed in the same period, was modelled on the London Inns of Court. The two late twentieth century buildings in the area, the Crown Courts on Newton Street and Rowchester Court on Whittall Street, exhibit a mix of stylistic influences and are simply detailed. The design of the Crown Courts displays a marked lack of the vertical emphasis characteristic of the area.

Building Materials

Building materials are traditional, - stone, brick and terracotta, and are commonly used in a range of combinations to provide contrast in colour or texture. The use of red or buff terracotta, supremely exemplified in the Victoria Law Courts, is one of the most definitive characteristics of the conservation area. Other than in the extensions to the Law Courts however, terracotta is not employed in the area after the First World War and interwar development is of brick with stone details or features. There is some use of reconstituted stone and concrete in the post war period.



Traditional roofing materials are slate and clay tile. Windows are wood or metal. Ironwork, including railings, is traditionally painted black.

The richest use of building materials is confined to primary frontages and public display. Red or, in the case of the post war buildings, buff brickwork with little or no detailing generally defines secondary frontages and private space.

The weathering of traditional materials and the patina these develop through age contribute significantly to the sense of continuity in the conservation area.

Building Height and Scale

Building heights within the conservation area rise to between three and five storeys with a consistency which lends coherence to the townscape. Priory/Cannon House on Priory Queensway, seven storeys high with a large setback storey, provides an exception as does Londonderry House, an eight storey slab block above the multi storey car park on Newton Street/Dalton Street. The uncharacteristic height of both these buildings is accentuated by the topography of the area which falls away from Priory Queensway.

Building scale is generally broken down through the architectural treatment of the facades and the range of materials employed. The overall vertical emphasis is augmented by the vigorous rooflines of the nineteenth and early twentieth century buildings.

Street Pattern and Streetscape

Although Steelhouse Lane is an ancient road and fragments of the eighteenth century layout remain, the street pattern in the conservation area largely derives from the development of Corporation Street in the late nineteenth century, a plan itself later modified by the construction of the Inner Ring Road. The principal routes, Corporation Street and Steelhouse Lane, and the secondary route followed by Dalton Street run north-east south-west and are connected by streets and passages, providing a coherent and legible urban framework. On the periphery of the area however, where the development of the Inner Ring Road (Queensway) resulted in the loss of the nineteenth century street pattern, there is a marked lack of containment and legibility. This is particularly evident where James Watt Queensway crosses the area to join Lancaster Circus Queensway. King Edward (VII) House, sweeping round the corner from Corporation Street

into Steelhouse Lane, and the Central Fire Station opposite, both originally designed to address the now vanished Lancaster Circus/Place, are all that remains of a once coherent townscape. On Newton Street and Dalton Street the footprint of the Crown Courts (1989) relates to the post war construction of the Inner Ring Road rather than to the traditional street pattern and the building sits at odds with the characteristic grain of the conservation area.

Street blocks in the area are compact and closely built over. Most are composed of a series of individual buildings set in plots of various sizes which generally reflect the civic and commercial scale of the late nineteenth century city centre. The blocks are articulated through architectural rhythm and variety. Characteristically varied rooflines and lively roofscapes punctuated by domes, turrets, pinnacles and chimneys add further definition and vertical emphasis. Buildings generally turn or address street corners and some have corner entrances. Cannon House on Priory Queensway echoes the curve of the former Lewis's department store opposite, shaping the street block to frame Old Square.

The building line is traditionally set at back of pavement and its occasional definition by balustrades, as at the County Court, or by piers and railings, as at the General (now Children's) Hospital, adds rhythm and interest to the street scene. The irregular line followed by the Victoria Law Courts on Corporation Street accommodated a carriage sweep, now removed, in the footpath. A gentle outward curve is expressed in the facade of the interwar police station on Steelhouse Lane, reflecting an early property boundary. A more perceptible curve in the Priory Queensway frontages below Corporation Street gave shape and interest to the post war streetscape while providing space for a pedestrian subway access through Old Square. Priory/Cannon House on Colmore Circus/Priory Queensway is set back to accord with postwar council policy for the relief of pedestrian congestion and the building line is marked by a structural canopy carried through into Corporation Street. The canopy which originally ran above the ground floor of 150 Corporation Street opposite has been removed. Fountain Court on Steelhouse Lane, uncharacteristically set behind an open forecourt, reflects the imposition of a new building line in the postwar period.

The range of architectural styles and variety of building materials employed in the conservation area create a varied and exuberant townscape,

particularly on Corporation Street. This is augmented by a lively roofscape, full of visual incident. Throughout the area traditional buildings are highly legible, their use and ownership frequently expressed through architectural detail. Human scale is achieved through active and transparent street level frontages which include a large number of shopfronts.

Views

There are some good views from, into and within the conservation area. These are frequently formed or enhanced by the local topography which falls from south west to north east. The relief north and east from the area boundary is largely obscured by development but the important vista eastwards along Priory Queensway will be protected during the regeneration of Eastside. The construction of the Inner Ring Road created significant views into the area, both from the Aston Expressway which skirts the northern boundary and from James Watt Queensway on the east. The coincidental exposure of fine townscape to open view must however be balanced against a substantial loss of urban enclosure and of legibility. This is particularly so in the case of Ruskin Buildings and the adjacent properties on the west side of Corporation Street, visible across the gap site (laid out as a pocket park) created by the post war demolition of the street block north of Ryder Street. Following the recent downgrading works the frontage of the Central Methodist Hall on Dalton Street, originally designed to address an enclosed secondary route, is also now entirely exposed to view from the Queensway.

Views within and through the area are generally closed or terminated by buildings, as, for example, on Steelhouse Lane/Colmore Row where the clock tower of the Central Fire Station provides closure to the north and Alpha Tower on Suffolk Street Queensway terminates the view to the south. The fire station hose tower, viewed westwards along Aston Street, makes a distinctive addition to the street scene and marks both the building and the conservation area from this direction.

Landmark Buildings

The original visual significance of landmark buildings within the conservation area has been eroded by the height and bulk of later development lying on and beyond the boundary and by the loss of the characteristic nineteenth century street pattern. The Victoria Law Courts, the General (now Children's) Hospital and the Central Fire Station still remain distinctive landmarks however,

enhancing legibility and reinforcing local identity and sense of place. The striking design and functional significance of the Victoria Law Courts in particular, make a powerful contribution to townscape quality and confirm the civic status of the area. The tall red brick and terracotta tower and spire of the Central Methodist Hall on Corporation Street marks the conservation area, and the city centre, from a distance and provides a potent reminder of the architectural confidence of late Victorian and Edwardian Birmingham.

Open Space

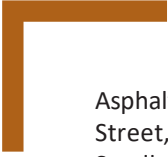
Historically there was no public open space within the conservation area. As part of the works to the Inner Ring Road (Queensway) however, the gap site on the east side of Corporation Street, created by the demolition of the nineteenth century street block above Ryder Street, has been laid out as a pocket park. Underground services and the ventilation of the vehicular subway on James Watt Queensway make the site difficult to redevelop. The park is one of a series of urban spaces throughout the city centre, part of the 'streets and squares' approach recommended by the 1988 Highbury Initiative. The bronze figure of Hebe (1966) by the sculptor RJ Thomas, commissioned by the Council to commemorate the start of the Inner Ring Road in 1957, has been relocated here from Holloway Circus on the south side of the city centre.

A small area of open space was created with the closure of James Watt Street. There are seats outside the Crown Courts nearby and a statue, Wattleisk by Vincent Woropay (1988), stands at the corner of Dalton Street with Newton Street.

Both these well-used spaces are incidental. The pocket park especially is related to the construction of the Inner Ring Road and the open site is uncharacteristic of the traditionally enclosed nineteenth century townscape of the conservation area.

Groundscape

From the middle of the nineteenth century footpaths in the conservation area were paved with stone flags, surfaced with asphalt or laid with stone squares or blue bricks. Kerbstones were granite and crossovers, gutters and drainage channels laid in granite setts. Carriageways were laid at first with wooden or granite setts and later surfaced with asphalt.



Asphalt footpath surfaces remain on Corporation Street, Newton Street, Dalton Street and Steelhouse Lane and a very few cobbled crossovers survive. More recently footpaths in the area have been laid in block pavements in red, buff and grey or in buff or grey concrete paving slabs of various sizes. Block paving in a range of colours is used for crossovers and guttering and to mark footpath edges and parking bays. Textured or tactile paving in a variety of sizes and colours is laid at street corners and at pedestrian crossings and crossovers and bus stops.

The pedestrian subways which once led from Colmore Circus and from Old Square have been filled in as part of the downgrading of the Inner Ring Road and the pavements in these areas are now much wider than elsewhere in the conservation area. Under the same scheme the Ryder Street and Hospital subways on James Watt Queensway have also been infilled. Footpaths along the Queensway have been surfaced in granite or concrete flags.

Street Furniture

Street furniture in the area consists almost entirely of standard catalogue designs. The slender steel street lighting columns, installed from the 1960s onwards, are functional and unobtrusive, although some could be positioned with greater regard for the surrounding buildings. New street lighting put in place as part of the works to the Inner Ring Road is simply designed and suited to its location. Cast iron street name signs mounted on walls or posts promote local distinctiveness and a sense of continuity. Some of these have been replaced by standard aluminium plates.

Street Trees

Street trees are not a traditional feature of the area. The trees planted on the forecourt of Fountain Court on Steelhouse Lane in the 1960s make a pleasant addition to the townscape and help restore the enclosure lost through the imposition of a new building line in the post war period. Those by the Crown Courts on Newton Street, although attractive in themselves, only add to the clutter in this area. Planting on the central reservation on James Watt Queensway softens the impact of the road but isolates the Central Fire Station still further, obscuring the view into Corporation Street and towards Steelhouse Lane and the General (Children's) Hospital.

Activities

Activities are largely centred on the law courts, the police station and the hospital so that the area is busy during the day. Other uses include offices (many of these occupied by the legal profession), the provision of food and drink and convenience retailing.

Traffic and Pedestrian Movement

There is considerable traffic movement in and through the conservation area. On Steelhouse Lane this is largely generated by the Children's Hospital. The heavy traffic on the former Inner Ring Road (Queensway) helps to define the boundaries on the north, south and east. Bus routes run along Queensway and on Corporation and Newton Streets.

Pedestrian flow is heaviest on Steelhouse Lane and Corporation Street, much of it related to the hospital, the police station and the law courts, and lightest on Printing House and Whittall Streets. There is considerable pedestrian traffic between Aston University and the city centre, mostly along Corporation Street but also on Dalton Street which would otherwise be quieter. Ryder Street, next to the pocket park, has been pedestrianised as part of the downgrading of the Inner Ring Road. The at grade crossing from Ryder Street over James Watt Queensway, which has replaced the subway system here, has enhanced the pedestrian link between Aston University and the city centre.

There is extensive on-street parking in the area, a multi-storey public car park on Dalton Street/ Dale End and private car parks on Steelhouse Lane, Dalton Street and Printing House Street.

Conservation Area Setting

With the exception of the former Lewis's department store on Priory Queensway, the conservation area is closely surrounded by post war and later development largely associated with the Inner Ring Road (Queensway). This serves to emphasise the historic character of the area, the quality of its architecture and, in particular, the vibrant colours and variety of the traditional building materials.

Two urban spaces have been created in the city centre core as part of the downgrading of the Inner Ring Road and in line with council strategy to promote pedestrian priority. Both lie just south west of the boundary of the conservation area and



reintegrate it with the southern part of the city core. The recreation of Old Square at surface level restores the historic link along Corporation Street severed by the Ring Road (Priory Queensway) while Colmore Square on the site formerly occupied by Colmore Circus reunites Colmore Row with Steelhouse Lane.

A number of buildings provide visual references which mark the boundary of the area. These include the McLaren Building on Dale End and the buildings of Aston University which provide the backdrop to the Central Fire Station.

New development in the setting of the conservation area includes the redevelopment of the former Post and Mail site on Steelhouse Lane/Colmore Square. The new building, to be known as Colmore Plaza, will be complete in mid- 2007 and is intended for office use with scope for retail on the ground floor. A new pedestrian route from Colmore Square through to Printing House Street will increase permeability in this area. Redevelopment of the entire street block bounded by Priory Queensway, Corporation Street, Bull Street and Dale End is proposed as part of Martineau Galleries, a retail-led mixed use scheme which also includes office, residential and leisure uses and possibly a hotel. High Street will be linked to Priory Queensway on the conservation area boundary via a pedestrian route through the new development. Work on the project is expected to begin in 2008 and is due for completion in 2011. Aston University Masterplan provides informal guidance on the continuing development of the university campus to the northeast of the conservation area. An Estates Strategy and associated Masterplan has recently been produced for the Children's (General) Hospital. These set out the Trust's aims for new development in the immediate setting of the hospital beyond the conservation area boundary.

Local and National Significance

The conservation area contains a superb example of unbroken late Victorian and Edwardian townscape, extending along practically the whole of Corporation Street. This includes 'one of the most striking groups of terracotta buildings in the country', where the Victoria Law Courts provide the unique centrepiece, and is augmented by the General (Children's) Hospital on Steelhouse Lane. The Law Courts have been described as 'perhaps the outstanding civic structure of the 1880s', and are of national significance in terms of the nineteenth century Terracotta Revival. The building's influential design was the work of Aston Webb and Ingress Bell and demonstrates an adept and sophisticated use of architectural ceramics.

The design competitions for the Law Courts and the General Hospital were judged by Alfred Waterhouse, the architect of Manchester Town Hall and the Natural History Museum in Kensington. Waterhouse was one of the principal and earliest exponents of the use of terracotta as a building material, recognising both its decorative potential and its resistance to pollution. In selecting Webb and Bell's design for the Law Courts he was in no doubt that brick and terracotta were the 'best materials' for Birmingham.

A bold and important example of nineteenth century town planning, Corporation Street was the major outward expression of Joseph Chamberlain's civic gospel, which set new standards for local government. It exemplifies the pride in municipal achievement and the commercial prosperity which underlay Birmingham's development into one of the great Victorian cities.

The recovery of Birmingham's manufacturing industry from recession in the mid-1980s stimulated a rapid growth in the service sector. The Council, seeking greater diversity in the local economy with less reliance on manufacturing, was now keen to promote the city as a major centre for service industry and business and leisure tourism. The City Centre Strategy, produced in 1987, aimed to encourage a balanced mix of uses and redefined the city centre as the area within the Middle Ring Road, dividing it into seven distinct 'quarters'. In this context the Inner Ring Road, constructed largely to meet the demands of manufacturing industry and the specific needs of through traffic, was recognised as forming the major obstacle to the growth of the business district, severing the city core from the areas immediately around it.

In 1988 a City Centre Symposium, known as the Highbury Initiative and attended by representatives from a wide range of disciplines, met to consider the future direction of the city centre. The Symposium endorsed the policies contained in the City Centre Strategy and went further to conclude that the Inner Ring Road should be downgraded and that a 'streets and squares' approach should be adopted to improve the pedestrian environment.

The City Council has acted on the conclusions of the Highbury Initiative. From the end of the 1980s public funding in the central area has been very largely directed towards remodelling the Inner Ring Road (Queensway) and promoting investment and mixed use development in the areas surrounding the city core. These initiatives are seen as vital to the outward growth and vitality of the city centre, where there is considerable demand for high quality office and residential space. The

downgrading of the Inner Ring Road on Priory Queensway and at Colmore Circus (Colmore Square) has restored the connection between the northern and southern sections of the city core.

Steelhouse Conservation Area lies in the north of the city core. It contains Birmingham's law courts, one of the two divisional police headquarters in the city, the Central Fire Station and the Children's Hospital. Office use and retail are the other major uses. There is a concentration of law firms, both barristers' chambers and solicitors' practices, in the area. The provision of legal services is a key sector in the economy of the city itself and of the surrounding region, generating a considerable income. There has been some conversion of ground floor space to bars and restaurants and, on Newton Street, Londonderry House, built in the 1970s for use as offices, has been converted to student accommodation for Aston University. The City Council retains a substantial property portfolio in the area.

The lowering of James Watt Queensway and the demolition of Masshouse Circus in 2002/3 removed the barrier between the city core and Eastside, directly east of the conservation area and currently the focus of an ambitious regeneration programme established by the City Council in 1999. The Eastside Regeneration Initiative is intended to bring about the sustained regeneration of the east side of the city centre and is based on the themes of heritage, learning and technology. Since the establishment of the Initiative considerable progress has been made in promoting new development on the conservation area boundary.

Loss, Attrition and Intrusion

Inappropriate alterations and additions to existing buildings in unsympathetic and poor quality materials have had an adverse effect on their character and that of the conservation area.

Some buildings are neglected and/or poorly maintained. This detracts from the quality and interest both of the building and the local street scene.

Architectural detail, a definitive characteristic of the conservation area, is sometimes decayed, masked or lost, eroding visual interest and local identity.

Despite recent improvement schemes and the publication of the Shopfront Design Guide (adopted as SPG in 1995), unsympathetic shopfronts continue to erode the character of the townscape. These fail to respect the buildings which contain them in design, proportion and/or materials, disrupting the integrity of the original façade and detracting from the architectural quality of the building.

A number of car park and service area entrances are closed by metal shutters or doors, eroding local interest and vitality.

The height and scale of development in the south of the conservation area related to the construction of the Inner Ring Road (Queensway) reduce the visual impact of the historic roofscape and block views.

Exposed secondary elevations and service areas on the south side of Newton Street and at the south end of Dalton Street present private space to public view, reducing the legibility and characteristic containment of the townscape.

The multi-storey car park below Londonderry House is especially alien to the character of the area and has a particularly negative effect on Dalton Street. Its dark colour and horizontal form dominate the local street scene, eroding quality, vitality and interest.

The surface car park on Printing House Street belonging to Rowchester Court is uncharacteristic of the area, reflecting neither the traditional continuity of street frontage lines nor the generally clear division between primary and secondary space.

On the periphery of the conservation area the development of the Inner Ring Road (Queensway) has resulted in a considerable loss of the characteristic urban grain, leading to a lack of both containment and legibility. The wide carriageway and heavy traffic on the Queensway combine to sever the area from the districts to the north and east and effectively isolate the Central Fire Station from what remains of its historic context.

The many additions and accretions to the General (Children's) Hospital and the removal of original features detract from the quality of the building and compromise the integrity of its nineteenth century plan. The loss of its historic setting to the Dental Hospital and the Inner Ring Road further diminishes its visual status and significance. The frequency of vehicle movement and the volume of car parking within and around the extended hospital precinct add to the lack of visual coherence here and degrade the local street scene.

Two gap sites on Steelhouse Lane, between the police station and King Edward (VII) House and on the north-east corner with Whittall Street, breakup



the urban grain and reduce enclosure. Both are used as car parks. The parking on the exposed corner site is visually intrusive, cluttering the streetscape and detracting from the setting of the General (Children's) Hospital.

On street parking at the lower end of Steelhouse Lane dominates the street scene and detracts considerably from the coherence of the townscape and the setting of the surrounding buildings. Echelon parking here and at the lower end of Corporation Street is particularly intrusive.

The unco-ordinated variety of paving and surfacing materials in the area detracts from the visual unity of the townscape. The patchwork of shapes, sizes, colours and textures does not reflect the quality of the buildings or provide them with the quiet, ordered and subordinate foreground they require. Some of the older surfaces, notably the asphalt pavement outside the Victoria Law Courts, are in poor condition.

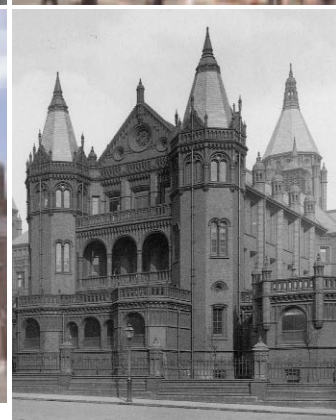
The clutter of street furniture detracts from the character and interest of the conservation area. Standard designs are sited without reference to the surrounding buildings or the context of the wider street scene, disrupting the visual unity of the streetscape and obscuring views. Traffic and parking signs are especially obtrusive. The junction of Newton Street with Corporation Street is particularly poor in this respect.

The townscape beyond the conservation area boundary on Whittall Street and St Mary's Row is lacking in quality and visual coherence. It provides a poor local setting for the area and in particular the General (Children's) Hospital. McLaren House on the south-east boundary of the area intrudes on the view east along Newton Street and contributes to the hostile environment on Dale End.

Part B

Steelhouse
Conservation Area

Supplementary Planning Policies







The extent and importance of the office and service sector in Birmingham's central core has grown significantly in recent years as the city has assumed its rightful place as a regional, national and international centre. The increasing quality of the city centre environment has played a major part in the growth of this new economic activity. Steelhouse Conservation Area, with its superb late Victorian townscape, makes a powerful contribution to the quality and distinctiveness of the city core and the preservation and enhancement of its special character is essential to the ongoing highly successful regeneration of Birmingham's city centre.

An attractive central area with a clear local identity also provides a focus for the promotion of Birmingham as a great international city, one of the key corporate priorities set out in the Council Plan (2006).

The purpose of the supplementary planning policies set out in this document is to preserve or enhance the character or appearance of Steelhouse Conservation Area as defined in the Steelhouse Conservation Area Character Appraisal. In order to maintain and reinforce this special character, the policies are intended to guide and manage change through the promotion of good design which responds sensitively to historic context. New development will be encouraged to complement the established character of the conservation area while clearly reflecting its own time and function.

The Steelhouse Conservation Area Supplementary Planning Policies have been prepared in accordance with the national guidance contained in Planning Policy Guidance Note 15: Planning and the Historic Environment (1994) and in Guidance on conservation area appraisals (2005) and Guidance on the management of conservation areas (2005) produced by English Heritage and the Planning Advisory Service.

The policies should be read in conjunction with the local and national guidance contained in the Birmingham Unitary Development Plan 2005 (2005), Regeneration through Conservation Birmingham Conservation Strategy 1999 (1999, reviewed 2004) and PPG15: Planning and the Historic Environment (1994).

In forming their proposals applicants for planning permission should have regard to the information contained in the Steelhouse Conservation Area Character Appraisal.

New Development in the Historic Environment

1.1 The Design of New Development

The Council will expect all new development to achieve a satisfactory relationship with its surroundings, demonstrating a regard for the character of the immediate street scene and the wider conservation area. Permission for new development will only be granted where it preserves **or** enhances the character of the conservation area as a whole.

Existing buildings which are unsympathetic to the character of the conservation area will not be regarded as valid precedents for further uncharacteristic development.

The Council will require a detailed design statement for all significant new development. This should include an analysis of the contribution which will be made by the proposed new building to the character of the immediate streetscape and the wider conservation area as defined in the character appraisal.

1.2 Key Design Principles

(a) All new buildings must follow the street frontage line at back of pavement. Dominant architectural elements or features which project beyond the building line will not be permitted.

(b) New buildings must not appear to be significantly higher or lower than their neighbours. Where setback storeys are employed to reduce apparent height these must be in proportion to the street frontage elevation and should be carefully designed to minimise bulk and mass.

(c) The roof forms and rooflines of new buildings must complement the roof forms and rooflines of the adjoining and/or surrounding buildings,

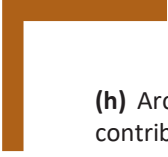
preserving or, where appropriate, enhancing vertical emphasis. Space for plant should be treated as integral to the design of any new building and must be included in all design statements. It should normally be provided at basement level. Where rooftop plant/service equipment is unavoidable it must be designed and sited to minimise any adverse visual impact.

(d) The street frontage elevations of new buildings should achieve a satisfactory visual relationship with the street frontage elevations of their neighbours. In particular the ground storey of any proposed new building must relate to the height and scale of the ground storeys of the buildings adjoining and/or surrounding it. Principal entrances can be used to provide a focus at street level but should not be visually dominant. Where car park or service entrances are proposed they should be carefully designed to mitigate any adverse visual impact on the local street scene.

(e) Window openings in new buildings should be regularly spaced. Windows must be set within reveals of sufficient depth to add definition and interest to the façade.

(f) The guidelines set out in the City Council's Shopfronts Design Guide (1995) must be followed when designing shopfronts for new buildings.

(g) The palette of building materials traditionally employed in the conservation area, brick, stone and terracotta, must be the principal materials used in new buildings. All buildings materials should be of high quality.



(h) Architectural detail of high quality and which contributes to scale, proportion and legibility will be encouraged. Indiscriminate and arbitrary use of applied features or detail will be resisted.

(i) New buildings must preserve views and vistas characteristic of the conservation area and respect the setting of key historic landmarks.

(j) New buildings should be accessible to all users, including people with disabilities. Where specialised access is required it must be treated as integral to the design and should be included in any design statement.

1.1 Development in the Conservation Area Setting

New development in the setting of the conservation area must respect and preserve characteristic views within, from and into the area. The Council will not permit new buildings or additions to existing buildings beyond the conservation area boundary to intrude on or block key views and important sightlines.

Protecting the Existing Historic Environment

2.1 Additions and Alterations

Developers should ensure that alterations or additions to existing buildings have a positive effect on their character or appearance and that of the conservation area. The Council will ensure that all alterations and additions are sympathetic to the existing building in scale, proportion, materials and detailing.

The removal or masking of traditional architectural detail will not be permitted and, where appropriate, the Council will expect hidden or damaged detail to be accurately reinstated.

Where significant alterations or additions are proposed the Council will require a detailed design statement. This should include an analysis of the contribution made by the existing building to the character of the immediate streetscape and the wider conservation area and of the preservation or enhancement of that character by the proposed alterations and/or additions.

2.2 Conservation Area Consent

There will be a presumption in favour of retaining buildings which make a positive contribution to the character or appearance of the conservation area.

Where the demolition of a building which makes little or no contribution to the character of the conservation area is proposed the Council will expect the submission of detailed plans for redevelopment. These should preserve or enhance the character of the conservation area (see 1.1 above). In the absence of satisfactory proposals consent for demolition will not be granted.

2.3 Recording

Where consent has been granted for significant demolition the Council will require an accurate

archive record to be made prior to the commencement of any works. This will include photographs and/or where appropriate, measured survey drawings and will be provided at the expense of the applicant.

2.4 Change of Use

The Council will not permit changes of use to buildings where the new use would adversely affect their character and appearance and that of the conservation area.

2.5 Roofscape

In order to protect the integrity of the existing roofscape the Council will not permit additional storeys on existing buildings where these would prove detrimental to the character of the immediate and/or surrounding roof forms and rooflines.

The Council will have particular regard for the maintenance of the vertical emphasis characteristic of the conservation area. In this context the introduction of dominant horizontal elements such as brise-soleils will be resisted.

2.6 Shopfronts

The removal of shopfronts which form part of the original design of a building will not be permitted.

New shopfronts should be sensitively designed to respect the buildings which contain them in terms of proportion, material and detail. They should enhance the traditional character of the street scene and of the wider conservation area.

Where there are two or more shop units in a single building, owners and developers will be encouraged to ensure the co-ordination of



shopfront proportion, design and detail. Tenants' handbooks which include an agreed shopfront strategy will be promoted as a means of achieving this objective.

The guidelines set out in the City Council's Shopfronts Design Guide (1995) must be followed when designing new shopfronts for an existing building or where older shopfronts are restored and reused.

2.7 Signage

Signage must be designed to suit the proportions, design and materials of the host building and the immediate streetscape. Unsympathetic, over-scaled and visually intrusive signage will not be allowed.

2.8 Repair and Maintenance

The Council will use its statutory powers to secure the preservation of threatened buildings in the conservation area. In the case of a statutorily listed building these powers include Urgent Works and Repairs Notices and as a last resort compulsory acquisition. The Council also has the power to secure the preservation of unlisted buildings where it is important for maintaining the character or appearance of the conservation area.

The Council will provide guidance on the repair and maintenance of traditional buildings in the conservation area.

2.9 New Uses for Vacant Buildings

The Council will actively encourage beneficial and creative new uses for vacant buildings, where these respect the character of the building and the conservation area.

The West Midlands Fire Service Headquarters on Lancaster Circus is no longer required for operational purposes and will shortly be vacated. The Council will expect its future to be secured through a mix of active and viable new uses which will additionally benefit the area. A sensitive and imaginative scheme for reuse should retain the architectural and historic interest of the Grade II listed building and preserve its positive contribution to the character of the conservation area.

3.1 Groundscape

A unified groundscape scheme should be designed for the area and introduced where the opportunity arises. It should provide a simple, neutral and subordinate foreground which relates well to the surrounding buildings and enhances their setting.

Traditional natural stone paving is attractive, durable and sustainable and should be used wherever possible. Where this cannot be justified, large reconstituted stone slabs or asphalt manufactured to a high specification can provide acceptable alternatives. Drainage channels and vehicle crossovers should be marked with stone setts and kerbstones should be of granite. Work should always be carried out to the highest standards.

Where it survives historic paving should be maintained and restored.

Improvements to the footway surface on Corporation Street in front of the Victoria Law Courts should be a priority.

3.2 Street Furniture

New street furniture, including street lighting columns, should be carefully designed or selected to enhance the character of the conservation area. It should provide a unifying element, reinforcing local identity and distinctiveness.

3.3 Clutter

A co-ordinated effort must be made to eliminate street clutter. Inessential, superfluous or redundant items should be removed and the numbers of essential items reduced through good design and careful siting. Where possible signs and equipment

should be fixed to lighting columns, buildings or other existing structures. Larger items such as telephone kiosks and pay and display machines should be sited at the back of footway.

The design and siting of essential new equipment must be co-ordinated by the Council.

3.4 Developers' Contributions

Where appropriate, developers will be expected to contribute to the improvement of the public realm. This may include the elimination of street clutter.

3.5 New Structures and Features

The siting of new structures or features in the public realm must have regard for significant views and respect the settings of buildings.

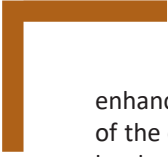
3.6 The General (Children's) Hospital

Future development opportunities in the area around the Birmingham Children's Hospital should be used to improve the setting of the original hospital complex and restore legibility to its surroundings.

3.7 Public Realm Strategy

The Council will publish a public realm strategy for the city centre. This will include a detailed streetscape manual based on the principles set out by English Heritage for the management of the public realm in Streets for All West Midlands (2005).

The manual will take note of existing council strategies for the management of the public realm in the city centre, including the lighting of buildings and spaces. The Draft Lighting Strategy (2006) promotes lighting as a contribution to local distinctiveness. The preservation and



enhancement of the special character and interest of the city centre conservation areas must however be the principal concern.

Public art can play an important part in the enhancement of the public realm and help with orientation and understanding. The city centre already contains a sequence of fountains or water features which runs from Brindley Place through Centenary, Chamberlain and Victoria Squares down to St. Martin's Square and the pocket park on Corporation Street beside the Queensway. The public realm strategy will aim to amplify and extend this sequence in order to provide a unifying element across the central area, reinforcing local identity and sense of place.



SOLICITORS

JOHN

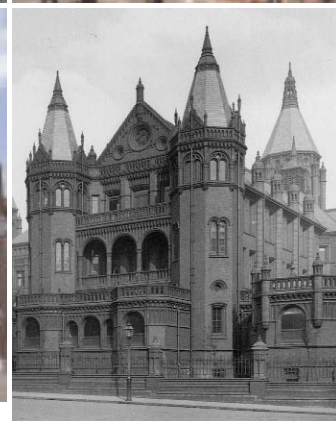
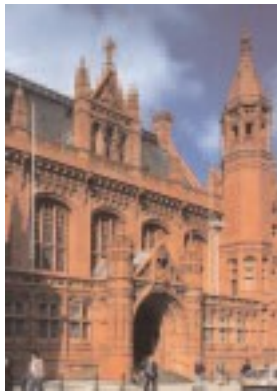
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Appendices

Steelhouse Conservation Area





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Associated Reading

Legislation and Guidance Notes

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- ▶ Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979
- ▶ National Heritage Act 1983
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- ▶ *The Birmingham Plan Birmingham Unitary Development Plan 2005* 2005
- ▶ *Regeneration through Conservation Birmingham Conservation Strategy* 1999 1999
- ▶ *Conservation Areas & Listed Buildings A guide for owners and occupiers* 2003
- ▶ *Shopfronts Design Guide* 1995
- ▶ *Places for All* 2001

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References Quoted

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- ▶ Stratton Michael The Terracotta Revival, 1993 p.86
- ▶ Dixon Roger and Muthesius Stefan Victorian Architecture, 1978 p.176



Appendix: Listed Buildings

Statutorily Listed Buildings

STREET	NUMBER and/or NAME	GRADE	CROSS REFERENCE
Coleridge Passage	Cell Block - Police Station	II	Steelhouse Lane
Corporation Street	153a to 161 (odd) (Murdoch Chambers and Pitman Chambers)	II*	
Corporation Street	County Court	II	Newton Street
Corporation Street	Victoria Law Courts	I	
Corporation Street	175 and 177 (Coleridge Passage)	II	
Corporation Street	179 to 203 (odd) (Ruskin Buildings)	II	
Corporation Street	196 to 224 (even) (Methodist Central Hall)	II*	Dalton Street, Ryder Street
Dalton Street	Rear of Central Methodist Hall	II*	Corporation Street, Ryder Street
Lancaster Circus	West Midlands Fire Service Headquarters	II	Corporation Street, Aston Street
Newton Street	County Court	II	Corporation Street
Ryder Street	1, 3 and 5	II*	Corporation Street
Steelhouse Lane	Cell Block, Police Station	II	Coleridge Passage

Locally Listed Building

STREET	NUMBER and/or NAME	GRADE	CROSS REFERENCE
Steelhouse Lane	Children's Hospital (Former General Hospital)	A	

Contact and Further Information

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Further Information

For further copies and guidance about conservation and listed buildings visit our website:

Conversation webpages

Most Birmingham City Council publications can be made available in alternative formats or languages.

If you have difficulty reading this document please call us on (0121) 303 1115 to ask if a full or summary version can be made available in large print.

If you have hearing difficulties please call us via Typetalk 18001 0121 303 3030.

Or e-mail us at:
planning.conservations@birmingham.gov.uk



The General (Children's) Hospital, Steelhouse Lane.

Steelhouse Conservation Area

Character Appraisal
and
Supplementary Planning Policies

August 2007