

APPRAISAL

NETHER EDGE CONSERVATION AREA APPRAISAL

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- Visual and perceptual qualities
- Important buildings and building groups

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INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this document

1.0 Nether Edge is a highly attractive residential area of considerable architectural and historic interest. It was designated a Conservation Area in September 2002. This appraisal assesses the characteristics of the Conservation Area outlining the area's development and its formative influences and identifying the resulting qualities. It is intended as a tool to assist in the sensitive management of the area to secure the preservation and enhancement of its character and appearance and is an important element within the hierarchy the City Council policies and guidance.

1.1 This appraisal has been undertaken by Sheffield City Council in consultation with residents, occupiers, local interest groups and the general public during the summer of 2002. The draft of the appraisal formed the basis for discussion and dialogue and was amended partly to reflect the range of opinion emerging through consultation but also to integrate with the emerging Sheffield Local Development Framework, which is being developed to replace the existing Unitary Development Plan.

Location and setting

1.2 The area is located 2-3 miles south-west of the city centre on elevated land between the Porter Brook and Sheaf valleys. It is strongly defined by Psalter Lane and Brincliffe Edge to the north and west which form an escarpment, from which the area slopes to the south and east. The essential image of the area is of a leafy suburb, with fine Victorian and Edwardian buildings, many being located on tree-lined avenues providing an attractive and desirable residential environment. The area is one of a number of residential areas that help to give the City its distinctively green quality.

1.3 The name "Nether Edge" is frequently used to describe the area from Psalter Lane southwards toward, although not quite reaching Abbeydale Road. This area

actually comprises a number of smaller neighbourhoods. These include Brincliffe to the north-west; Kenwood to the centre; and to the south west, the area sloping down from Brincliffe Edge focused around Nether Edge Shops. To the north-east is the fringe of what might equally be described as Sharrow. Given the widespread expanded view of what comprises "Nether Edge" the name shall be used in this document to define the wider area.

Boundaries

1.4 The boundaries of the Nether Edge Conservation Area have been carefully drawn to define distinctive qualities of character and appearance which distinguish it from surrounding areas. The Conservation Area is the city's largest at approximately 128 hectares.

1.5 The Conservation Area shown on Fig.1 is divided into three sub-areas or "Character Areas", each of which have a further range of distinctive characteristics. The areas are shown on Figs 2 to 4. These areas are:

- Brincliffe and Psalter Lane, to the west of the area (see Fig.2)
- Kenwood, to the east of the area (see Fig.3)
- Nether Edge "Village", to the south of the area (see Fig.4)

1.6 Each area represents a phase in the city's development and the historical context for their growth is important in explaining the pattern and form of urban environment which can be found. The use of the term "Village" for the Nether Edge Character Area is used to differentiate it from the area as a whole. These areas are individually discussed in greater depth later in this appraisal.

Methodology

1.7 This appraisal seeks to define the character of the proposed Nether Edge Conservation Area and identify its core qualities as a basis for developing appropriate

conservation policies, guidelines and enhancement proposals. The appraisal integrates the format suggested in English Heritage guidance for Conservation Area Appraisals (English Heritage, 1996) with the broad range of urban design qualities defined in the wealth of published material, including the influential best practice guide "By Design" (UDAL/CABE for the DETR, 2000).

1.8 This appraisal has involved the assessment of qualities that make Nether Edge special and worthy of preservation and enhancement. The approach has focused on the "qualities" of the area to establish why the area is valued in order to provide a clear and rational basis for decision making. Some qualities apply at a broader scale or are more generalized and these are considered for the Conservation Area as whole within the section "Appraisal of General Character". Other more local qualities are considered within the three "Appraisals of Character Areas". Threats, opportunities and challenges impinging on the qualities identified are also examined. The structure of the Appraisal is set out below:

Appraisal of General Character

- Origins, uses and activity
- Archaeology
- Urban structure and movement
- Landscape setting
- Architecture and materials
- Trees, parks and gardens
- Floorscape and boundaries

Appraisal of Character Areas

- Historic development
- Natural features and topography
- Townscape and Spatial Character:
 - Density and grain
 - Street and housing layout
 - Visual and perceptual qualities
 - Important buildings and building groups

Public Consultation

1.9 Public consultation for the proposed Nether Edge Conservation Area was carried out in the summer of 2002 and this revealed very widespread support for the designation. However a major issue of concern was that small "pockets" within the area that had been excluded from the conservation area. There was the view that these areas were also of good quality, needed protection and that development and tree works would inevitably impact on the conservation area and, therefore, should be included within the conservation area. It was accepted that, being enclosed by areas which are designated and strongly associated with these surrounding areas by topography and street layout, that they were important to the coherence, integrity and setting of the conservation area. However, they have generally not been included within the "Character Areas", whose boundaries have been amended since the designation, because they generally lack the distinctive qualities which characterize these sub-areas.

1.10 The following section provides a brief historical overview of the Conservation Area, dealing with the wider influences leading to the development of the area. Further historical background and how it influenced the development of the environment we see today is provided in the more detailed assessment of each Character Area.

HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE NETHER EDGE AREA

General

2.0 Prior to industrialisation Nether Edge area was an array of small hamlets and farms. Sharrow Moor was one of two commons in the Parish, Cherry Tree Common being the other. Most of the important farms in Sharrow and Nether Edge were founded in medieval times. Since the 15th Century the Brincliffe area was quarried for grindstone and buildings stone. The majority of early routes, such as Psalter Lane, Brincliffe Edge Road and Cherry Tree have existed since time immemorial. Psalter Lane, an ancient track, was the historic route between Derbyshire and the city, which was turnpiked in 1758.

2.1 Following the Enclosures Act in 1780, commissioners were appointed to enclose common land and formally establish highways. The resulting field pattern is clearly visible on the earliest available map, dated 1795, with hamlets at Machon Bank, Upper Edge, Nether Edge and Cherry Tree Hill (Fig.5). Although various country houses existed before the 19th Century, such as Sharrow Head House, the Edge and Violet Bank House, by 1800 the area was still essentially a rural district. At this time it was fashionable for the affluent to own both a town house and country residence, giving them access to the society of the town and the land and luxury of the country. However, this was generally only the preserve of the wealthy classes.

2.2 Even by 1850, while some country residences had been built, such as Kenwood, Osborne and Gatefield Houses, the first Ordnance Survey map of the that year still shows enclosed fields with dispersed farming settlements connected by a few winding roads (Fig.6). The most prominent landmark at this time is the newly constructed Ecclesall Union Workhouse built by the Guardians of the Poor. Its construction brought the first signs of commercial development into the area in the form of the Union Inn, built in 1840, providing for builders of the Workhouse.

2.3 Figure 6 overleaf illustrates the development of Nether Edge as a middle class suburb which occurred from the mid to late 19th Century onwards. It was a direct consequence of the urbanisation and increased wealth associated with industrialisation

from the late 18th Century onwards. Living away from the dirt, grime and overcrowded city continued to be fashionable and an increasingly a realistic aspiration amongst an emerging class of entrepreneur, including successful cutlers, manufacturers and other businessmen. The improved roads and the desirable location to the south west of the city centre, well away from the burgeoning industrial areas, would have influenced this development. The impact of this phase of development had the most profound effect on the character and appearance of the area and is discussed in greater detail in the relevant sections below.

2.4 There now follows the appraisal of general character which applies to the area as a whole.

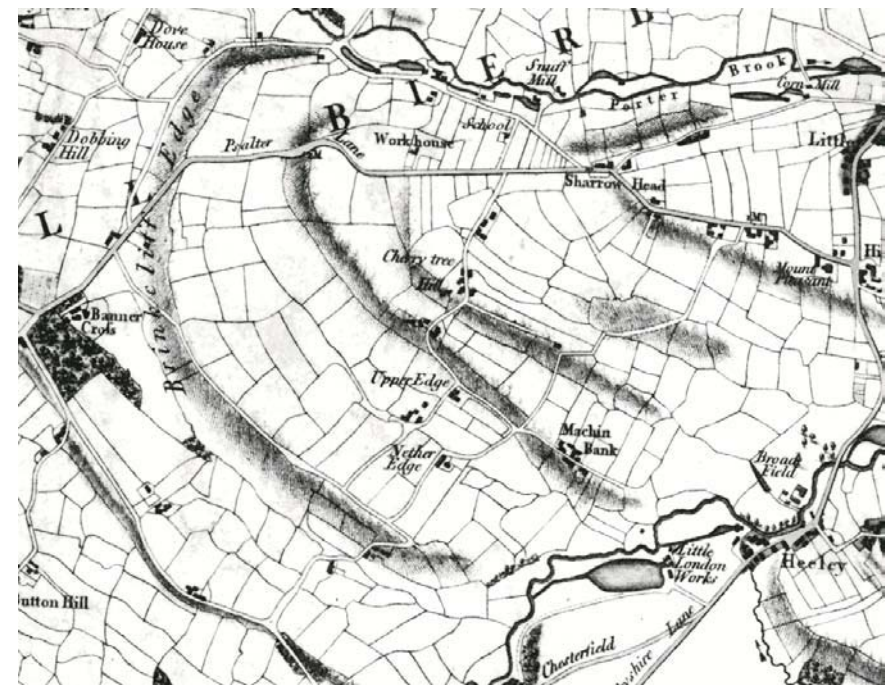


Fig.5 1795 Fairbank Map