

Kenwood

Historical development

12.0 Prior to its development, this area was essentially a collection of fields situated between Psalter Lane, Abbeydale Road and Sharrow Lane. A bridleway existed between Sharrow Lane and Cherry Tree Road, with small clusters of development along Sharrow Lane and at Sharrow Head

12.1 Kenwood developed as a middle class residential suburb during the Mid 19th Century. A key figure in the area's early development was George Wostenholm, a wealthy cutler, whose visits to America, including a visit to Kenwood near the Oneida Lake in New York State. This inspired the development of the area with the desire to "make Sharrow another Boston". He owned almost all the land in this area and built his house, which he named Kenwood, at its heart (see Important Buildings below).



Fig.19 The original Marnock plan for Kenwood.

12.2 In this early example of town planning he set about designing the area for development, enlisting the help of nationally acclaimed landscape gardener Robert Marnock and a local builder called Thomas Steade. Marnock prepared the layout of roads (Fig.19) consisting of tree lined avenues, and the construction of Kenwood Bank, Kenwood Park Rd, Priory Road and Wostenholme Road took place between 1851 and 1853. Houses were then gradually built along each road. In contrast to other character areas, the more comprehensive planning of the Kenwood area meant that the field patterns were not used to structure the layout of the area.

12.3 Rundle Road, Montgomery Road and Kenwood Road soon followed and the development of the area began to attract interest from other speculative developers, who built further houses in the area. Among them was Steade, in his personal ventures, who built many new houses in the south-east of the Kenwood area. Later Victorian and early Edwardian development gradually extended and infilled the residential area almost entirely. Further encroachment of the Kenwood estate led to the development of houses along Rundle Road, and the completion of Montgomery Road and Avenue in the 1920s and 30s. The Blitz, however, caused significant damage to individual properties.

12.4 The Meadow Bank Avenue development, on the site of the demolished Cherry Tree Farm, was developed by the Newbould family in 1896. It is another early example of town planning, houses were formally arranged around a linear central green, with covenants requiring houses be no more than two storeys high, faced with stone and to have no outbuildings visible from the road.

12.5 The Grange development to the north of Sharrow Lane was undertaken in the late 19th Century, prior to the demolition of the nearby large Grange House to enable the widening of Sharrow Lane.

Natural features and topography

12.6 The general topography of the Kenwood area is a gradual incline south to north, though lacking the steeper slopes and variety found elsewhere in the Nether Edge area. There are few original natural features because of the comprehensive

nature of development in the area. However there are many trees as a result of the landscaping of the area in the 19th Century.

Townscape and spatial character

Density and Grain

13.0 The Kenwood area is generally less spacious than Brincliffe but more spacious than parts of Nether Edge Village. The earliest phases of the Victorian development, along Kenwood Road, Kenwood Bank, Kenwood Park Road and Wostenholme Road comprise the more spaciouly laid out properties and probably closer to Wostenholmes original vision (Fig.20a). However, the more speculative nature of later development, such as Steade's own development to the south-east, saw a gradual increase in density (Fig.20b). Nevertheless, the transition in density and grain is smooth, with phases of development flowing from one to another without abrupt changes. However, there are some abrupt changes with the Nether Edge Village area (Fig. 20c). Plot and house sizes therefore tend to be of regular size within individual streets.

13.1 Along Rundle Rd the 1920s and 30s development is more intensive and the plots of land, although still of a good size, are smaller than those developed nearby during Wostenholm's lifetime, though larger than the Victorian speculative development. There has been little intrusion of new development since the 1953 Ordnance survey and this contributes to the integration and coherence of the Kenwood area.

Street and housing layout

13.2 Kenwood is bounded by Sharrow Lane and Psalter Lane to the north, historic routes whose junction forms an important nodal point. Frog Walk is an important pedestrian route from Sharrow Head to Stalker Lees and marks the ancient boundary of Sharrow Moor. Its entrance is marked by a listed gas lamp (formerly sewer). However, very few of the other residential streets have early origins although some bare ancient field names.



a Wostenholme and Marnock influenced development near to Kenwood with spacious streets and plots.



b Steade development at higher density with narrower streets and small plots.



c Meadow Bank Avenue; medium density, development arranged around green.

Fig.20 Kenwood - comparative street layout density of grain.

13.3 From Psalter and Sharrow Lane there are various points of access to the area, along Kenwood Bank, Kenwood Road, Sharrow View, Priory Lane and Wostenholm Road, these being established in the earliest phases of the area's development. The multiple convergence of streets creates a number of key junctions which are highly characteristic of the Kenwood area. From these nodes radiate grand avenues, in particular Kenwood Park Road, Montgomery Road (Fig.21) and Rundle Road which form a triangular grid of key routes providing circulation within the area.

13.4 The considerable width of streets and the regular spacing of houses are also highly characteristic. Many streets possess strong building lines, a regular housing layout and common features such as trees and walls. Houses are generally arranged to form a series of perimeter blocks, set back a regular distance from the street with most having a front garden or forecourt. Plots tend to be long and narrow. Earlier development tends to be on larger plots with less relationship with the road.



Fig.21 Montgomery Road - superb tree lined street adds a dramatic three-dimensional quality to the street scene and enhances the spacious character of the area.

13.5 It is possible that the layout of houses was designed to exploit southerly views of the Sheaf Valley which would have existed at that time (eg Kenwood Road, Priory Road, Kenwood Park Road and Crescent Road). In the Meadow Bank development there are semi-detached houses formally arranged around a central green, or "Pleasure Ground" as noted on the 1896 plans for the sale of plots (Fig.20C). Like the development of Kenwood it is an early piece of town planning, which was completed during the inter-war period the later housing follows the earlier plans for the development in terms of layout.

Visual and perceptual qualities

13.6 Kenwood has a rich blend of qualities that combine to give the area a highly attractive visual character. The vast majority of the streets date from the mid 19th century and their tree-lined character and fine villas are similar to boulevards on the continent and avenues Wostenholm no doubt observed in the United States. The houses were intentionally designed as substantial gentlemen's residences in a select and leafy estate.

13.7 The environment we therefore see today is the product of careful design and a clear sense of the desirable residential qualities and is a significant early example of town planning. A particular feature is a subtle counterpoint of formal qualities (consistent architectural style, housing layout, tree layout, street geometry, avenues) and informal qualities (asymmetrical architecture; varied house design, curving streets, greenery). The role of Robert Marnock in the landscaping of the Kenwood area in particular may explain its coherent and picturesque qualities. The Meadow Bank development, with its greater formal design, is an exception to this.

13.8 Although the area has different periods of development, individual streets have considerable unity, reinforced by common style, form, scale and/or materials. Nevertheless, notwithstanding the common style, individual buildings are often subtly varied in design, even where clearly built by the same builder.

13.9 A defining characteristic of the area is the vistas framed by trees along a number of its streets. Montgomery Road and Rundle Road possess particularly impressive long vistas almost along their entire length. The oblique curving views along Kenwood Park, Priory, Thornsett, Moncrieffe and Crescent Roads generate visual interest and serial vision with the effect of reinforcing the group interest of villas. However there are few prominent landmarks buildings in the area, especially as most are partly obscured by mature landscaping. The entrance into Meadow Bank Avenue, with its gate-post features, is a notable exception. Also, the eastern gatehouse of Kenwood House and No.1, Rundle Road (Fig 22), both listed, (Fig.22 form a memorable gateway to Rundle Road.

13.10 It is also notable that houses are designed with features to help them “turn corners”, such as towers, turrets and bays, with elevations adjusted to face each street at junctions. While not landmarks, these features give emphasis and character to junctions (Fig.22) in the area.



Fig.22 Junction of Kenwood Park Road and Rundle Road - finely articulated buildings which “turn corners” are a feature in the area.



Fig.23 Kenwood Park Road - Attractive rhythm of gables, bay windows and trees contribute to the coherent character of the Kenwood area.

13.11 Except in the earlier, more spacious development, the considerable height of villas and their regular layout provides continuous spatial enclosure, counterbalancing the considerable width of the streets. Trees and walls give the area further coherence, spatial definition and enclosure and assist in the integration of later development (eg along Rundle Road). The scale of villas, tree canopies and vistas combine to generate dramatic and expansive three-dimensional quality, especially in summer months when the trees are in leaf. Moreover, many properties have substantial back gardens and, with the abundant planting, this gives the area a heightened sense of space and greenery. The expansive setting and greenery of villas in more spacious areas is a particularly important element of the area's character, with villas designed to relate to their landscaped grounds. The more densely laid out streets, developed by Stead on the other hand, have greater intimacy. However, the greater density (and possibly because Robert Marnock was not involved in the landscaping works) meant that many of the original street trees died soon after the houses were built.

Important buildings and building groups

13.12 Buildings of historic interest are identified on Fig.3 and mainly relate to the Victorian and Edwardian buildings in the area, although some earlier structures are also included.

13.13 **Kenwood House**, on Kenwood Road, was built for George Wolstenholm's in 1844 by a leading Sheffield Architect, William Flockton. The architectural style chosen was the fashionable Tudor gothic and constructed in 'grey Derbyshire marble' a type of limestone (oolitic) quarried at Stanton in Derbyshire. It was also used in the construction of the eastern gatehouse of Kenwood, which is listed at grade II. This stone was usually used for making mantelpieces. Wostenholm's residence was known as the only 'marble' house in Kenwood. Robert Marnock, laid out the grounds. Kenwood House is now used as a hotel and has been considerably extended (Fig.24).



Fig.24 Kenwood - the residence of George Wostenholme dating from 1844-45 who was responsible for much of the development of the surrounding area.



Fig.25 Springleigh - is a substantial villa constructed in the Kenwood estates on Rundle Road and whose grounds were landscaped by Robert Marnock.

13.14 **The Lantern Theatre** on Kenwood Park Road is a curiosity within this suburban residential area. It was built by William Webster, a cutlery manufacturer, in 1886 for private domestic use. The building was a chalet which contained a stage and seating. It was not until 1957 that the theatre was opened for public performances and is still in use. It was so named due the cupola feature upon the roof. Subsequently it has been listed Grade II.

13.15 **Springleigh** on Rundle Road is another substantial gentleman's villa, built on land formerly part of the Kenwood Estate, with large landscaped grounds designed by Marnock (Fig.25).

13.16 There are very many important building groups in the area, indeed too many to mention them all. Of particular note, however, are the ensemble of Victorian houses on Kenwood Park Road, Crescent Road and Montgomery Road.