

## Nether Edge Village

### Historical development

14.0 The development of the Nether Edge village area is more complex than the other character areas. Of the roads in the area, Cherry Tree Road, Machon Bank and Bincliffe Edge Road are ancient routes from time immemorial. A number of farms still operated in the area prior to its development, namely Machon Bank, Nether Edge and Upper Edge Farms. These formed the main centres in the area with the surrounding land mainly in agricultural use. There was a further concentration of buildings in the vicinity of the future site of the Union Hotel and a number of country residences. This situation existed until about 1840 when three influential phases of development followed, which are discussed below:



*Fig.26 The former Union workhouse and later Nether Edge Hospital, now converted into residential apartments.*

### 1841-1904 Former Nether Edge Workhouse/Hospital

14.1 Development began with the building of the workhouse, (formerly the hospital

but now residential) (see Fig.26) the Union Hotel and a number of new roads. Originally the Ecclesall Bierlow Workhouse, the new workhouse was built in 1841 to 1844, with later phases of development adding to its size. By the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century it had developed a comprehensive range of facilities, including a school, hospital, asylum and Tramps Ward.

### 1853-1883 Montgomery Land Society and other development

14.2 In 1853 the Nether Edge Estate, comprising land of Nether Edge Farm, was purchased by the Reform Freehold Building Society, which was a "Land Society" whose trustees purchased land and divided it up into building plots. The members of the society could then purchase a plot and pay by installments (instead of a large lump sum) and consequently this enabled less well off artisans to acquire their own home.

14.3 A plan for laying out the area was prepared and roads, footpaths, sewers and pumps were laid out in 1854. The Montgomery Land Society took over the estate in 1861 and the work of selling plots was continued until 1883 when the society was closed. Plots were developed either by individuals building their own homes or by speculators for rent. While mostly builders, speculators also included a range of local Victorian Society. Nevertheless the quality of development was high and the involvement in the Society of George Wostenholm and Thomas Steade, the developers of the Kenwood area, may have been influential in this.

14.4 Nearby, while not part of the Society development, houses of similar character were established during the same period to the west of Union Road, Adelaide Road and the western end of Oakdale Road. More substantial houses were also built with the establishment of Edgebrook Road, at this time a cul-de-sac leading to Upper Edge Farm.

### 1880-1905 The Edge and Violet Bank Development

14.5 The majority of this area was formerly part of the grounds of two substantial country houses and a farm. In the south of this area working class housing was

built initially in the former grounds of Violet Bank house between 1880 and 1905. Violet Bank Road was the first to be developed, followed gradually by Briar Road, with Raven Road being added when Violet Bank House was vacated and demolished in the early 1900s. To the immediate north of this, Ladysmith Avenue, Barker's Road and Edgebrook Road were developed from 1897-1900 in the grounds of The Edge, a house which still stands on Ladysmith Avenue. Edgebrook Road was completed with the building on the site of Upper Edge Farm. Nearby, terraces were also laid out on the upper part of Machon Bank Road near to the Union Hotel. The shops at Nether Edge Market, to the south of the houses, were developed in 1880 (see Fig.27).



*Fig. 27 Nether Edge Shops - an important junction at Nether Edge's only shopping area. The attractively curved corner is a memorable feature.*

### Post First World War

14.6 The areas of Victorian villas has been significantly affected by the ever increasing need for housing. Many of its larger villas have been converted into flats often resulting in the extension of properties and infilling within their generous grounds or on the remaining undeveloped land, particularly flat development during 1960s

to 1980s. Nether Edge Market has remained the only retail centre. In the 1930s the workhouse became Nether Edge Hospital, which continued to expand eastwards until recently, when part of the site comprising the older buildings has been re-developed for residential use.

### Natural Features and Topography

14.7 The area has a very distinctive topography. Brincliffe Edge is, as its name suggests, a steeply sloping escarpment edge and a significant topographical feature in the area, from which Nether Edge also derives its name. Its steep southerly wooded slopes provide an important habitat for flora and fauna. To the north-east the land slopes down before the gradient lessens, when it reaches the stream, now culverted, to the east of Oakdale Road (also to rear of "Edgebrook" Road). The land also has a general inclination to the east. Other than the wooded slopes of Brincliffe Edge there are few other surviving natural features, although the area is still rich in greenery from the many large residential gardens.

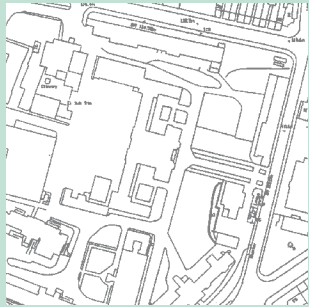
### Townscape and spatial character

#### Density and Grain

14.8 The area is the most intensive of the three character areas in the Conservation Area, although it is a mixed area whose density and grain strongly reflects the different phases of development.

14.9 The former Nether Edge Hospital consists of a complex of former workhouse buildings. The arrangement of buildings is relatively spacious consisting of larger buildings within landscaped grounds (Fig.28a). The site has recently undergone residential re-development, with existing buildings converted into apartments with parking. The building of new houses on smaller plots within the site, following demolition of part of the hospital complex, has introduced a closer grain of development.

14.10 The Montgomery Land Society area, and the area to its immediate west,



**a** The former Nether Edge Hospital - large axial building forms.



**b** Montgomery Land Society. Generous plots on narrow sloping streets.



**c** The Edge and Violet Bank - Denser areas of terraced housing.



comprises regularly spaced medium and large single houses, on relatively large plots of regular size (Fig. 28b). Houses are closely laid out on the street frontage, the streets being quite narrow in places, yet spacious to the rear. There is a sharp transition in density on the northern edge of this area, where it meets the Violet Bank/The Edge Area (Fig.28c). This latter area consists of closely spaced terraces built in regimented rows with small rear yards.

### Street and housing layout

14.11 Nether Edge Hospital is effectively a complex of larger 19<sup>th</sup> Century buildings of axial form and formal open spaces. The layout of the site is relatively spacious, with the main early complex situated in the centre of the site with later buildings within the grounds, many arranged to the periphery.

14.12 The Montgomery Land Society development has a distinctively formal street pattern consisting of parallel roads typically aligned north/south running down from Brincliffe Edge, with little apparent regard for the steeply sloping character of the land. The area was built on the land of the Nether Edge Farm following much of the field boundaries. Consequently, like the fields they replaced, the blocks of housing are long and narrow. Brincliffe Edge Road and Union Road were unaffected by the area's development but Charley Lane, where the farm was situated, was lost. The farmhouse, which has little impact on the pattern of the area, is now the Brincliffe Oaks Hotel.

14.13 Houses, mostly detached, are closely spaced along a strong building line with small forecourts. Although some plots are divided into narrower "half" plots with semi detached houses, the spatial layout is very uniform. While most plots were developed a few remained vacant shortly after the Society closed and most of these were developed at a later date. Later development reflects the same spatial qualities and, significantly, the elongated shape of blocks mean there has not been development to the rear of houses. However, each house has an outbuilding or shed constructed at the end of the garden and some have greenhouses and many of these structures still survive. They possibly reflect the more humble status of the original owners, who may have cultivated part of their plots.

**Fig.28** Nether Edge Village - comparative street layout density of grain.

14.14 Outside the Land Society area to the east, the development on Union Road and Adelaide Road shares many similar qualities, although forecourts tend to be more generous. Plot sizes are more varied, however, and there has been considerable infilling of the Victorian context with 20<sup>th</sup> Century development at similar density to its surroundings. The Victorian terraces on Brincliffe Edge Road have a strong building line and more closely related to the road with smaller, narrower plots. The terraced character of the Violet Bank development also results in a formal layout of 3 parallel streets, with strong building lines and yards to the rear arranged back to back. While Violet Bank was demolished, The Edge nearby was incorporated as a building within Ladysmith Avenue. Here terraces were developed around a triangular block with rear yards. Development on lower Osborne Road and upper Machon Bank is of similar character.

#### Visual and Perceptual qualities

14.15 Although varied in character the phases of development Nether Edge Village area have resulted in separate areas of coherent townscape. The regular pattern of street, plots and houses within each phase gives each considerable uniformity of character. With narrower streets than those in Brincliffe and Kenwood and generally smaller forecourt space, the area as a whole has greater intimacy and sense of enclosure and fewer trees in the streetscape (though Brincliffe Edge Road, Union Road and Adelaide Road are notable exceptions with respect to trees). There are few significant landmarks in the area, other than the former workhouse/hospital and to a lesser extent the curving form of the Nether Edge Market and the Methodist Chapel on the junction of Union and Oakdale Roads.

14.16 The most significant feature influencing the townscape of area is the sloping topography. The layout of streets and the common two storey building height means that buildings step up the hill and the resulting view of houses nestling within the green hillside, especially from Nether Edge Road, is highly distinctive and attractive. From Brincliffe Edge there are panoramic views to the south over the attractive slopes of Ecclesall, the Sheaf Valley and toward hills beyond. To the north-west there are similar long views down the parallel roads leading down from Brincliffe Edge and also glimpses between houses. The tree'd character of the wider area is particularly in evidence.



*Fig.30 A typical view of the Nether Edge village area with the regular sloping streets layout affording views toward the city centre.*

14.17 The Main Block of Nether Edge Hospital has a formality and symmetrical appearance revealed in the memorable view through the main entrances on Union Road (Fig.26). Elsewhere the former hospital complex relates well to the linearity of adjacent streets and incorporates attractive architectural forms and detailing. Of particular note are the distinctive tower features on Lyndhurst Road and the intimate scale of the single storey tramp wards on Osborne Road. The scale of the main blocks in the development are all significantly greater in height and plan form than the surrounding area.

14.18 The initial and most extensive mid 19th Century housing development of the area, by the Montgomery Land Society, consists mainly of detached or semi-detached houses. The streets are of a regular width and have a coherent feel with a number of the sloping streets being hard to distinguish from one another. Spaces are well enclosed with extensive on-street parking harming the confined character of the street scene.

14.19 Concrete kerbs define narrow footpaths and the occasional sewer gas lamp

still exists, all of which are listed. The front gardens are compact, often with steps up to the front door. Some villas are more classically Georgian in their styling, some more asymmetrically Victorian. Their height is generally smaller than elsewhere in the conservation area and well related to the narrower width of the street.

14.20 The variety of styles is unified by orientation of houses towards the road and common plot width, boundary treatment and architectural form, scale and materials (Fig.31).



*Fig.31 A typical symmetrically designed house characteristic of the Montgomery Land Society Development.*

14.21 The developments on Union Road and Adelaide Road have a generally more spacious and leafy character, with villas of larger scale and the occasional property set within substantial grounds. The green feel of the area and attractive sloping topography mitigates the more varied nature of the historic context in these areas. Contrary to its elevated situation Brincliffe Edge Road is a wonderfully intimate and attractive environment, with trees and closely arranged houses providing considerable

enclosure. The varied alignment of houses along the road provides significant spatial variety and sequence.

14.22 The streets of the Violet Bank development and other nearby terraced streets are narrow with on-street parking making only room for single car passing. The gritstone kerbs define narrow footpaths either side often lined by mature trees. Low stone walls, originally topped by cast iron railings, separate the narrow front garden from the footpath, sometimes having dressed stone gate posts.

14.23 This regular arrangement is further enhanced by the terrace house's common language, despite much alteration in materials. There is a strong rhythm along the gritstone elevations as paired glazed front doors alternate with bay windows and back alley opening to either side. Similar in form but less altered, the intimate scale and attractive detailing of houses on Edgebrook Road and Ladysmith Avenue have considerable character. There are very few later additions within these areas (Fig.32).



*Fig.32 The Edge formerly a farmhouse and now a listed building subsumed into later Victorian development.*

14.24 The shops at Nether Edge shops, particularly the curved “Nether Edge Market” building (Fig.27), are an attractive ensemble of buildings marred only by one or two inappropriate shopfronts and dutch blinds. However, the parking area adjacent to Jackson’s shop on Machon Bank (the former tram terminus site) is a prominent yet unattractive and poorly maintained space which severely detracts from the character of the area.

#### Important buildings and building groups

14.25 Buildings of historic interest are identified on Fig. 4 and mainly relate to the Victorian and Edwardian buildings in the area, although some earlier structures are also included. A small number of these buildings are listed. There are many buildings with group interest in the area, too many for all to be mentioned here.

14.26 **The Workhouse**, Union Road was designed by William Flockton and was constructed between 1841 and 1844 and is a fine early example of Tudor gothic architecture (Fig.26).

14.27 **Audrey Cottage** on corner of Union Rd and Edgebrook Road was designed by William Flockton and with the other nearby villas forms an important ensemble of some the earliest villas constructed in the area.

14.28 **Union Hotel** built in 1842 by Charles & Joseph Boot, is a highly distinctive stone building on the corner of Union Road and Machon Bank which is grade II listed.

14.29 **Edgebrook Road and Ladysmith Avenue** The small terraced house on these streets are some of the most attractive and best preserved houses in the area. The collection of large villas close to the corner with Union Road are also of considerable group interest (Fig.32).

14.30 **The Former Methodist Chapel, Union Road (1865)** A highly attractive chapel in robust classical style.

#### Other Areas in Nether Edge

15.0 Outside the character areas are areas whose qualities are more neutral in relation to the character of the conservation area. Inter war development is often of very good quality with sympathetic materials and detailing and similar layout to much earlier development. However there are small areas of more recent development which lack the architectural and townscape qualities of the majority of the conservation area. These areas have been included within the conservation area because they are enclosed by more characteristic development and to facilitate the designation of a more coherent and simpler boundary for the conservation area. Nevertheless, development and trees within private gardens within such areas remain important to the setting of the adjacent areas.