

RANMOOR CONSERVATION AREA
**STATEMENT OF
SPECIAL INTEREST**



HEAD OF PLANNING TRANSPORT AND HIGHWAYS
DIRECTORATE OF DEVELOPMENT, ENVIRONMENT AND LEISURE
SHEFFIELD CITY COUNCIL



RANMOOR CONSERVATION AREA

STATEMENT OF SPECIAL INTEREST

INTRODUCTION

This statement was written using guidance contained within PPG15 and English Heritage's guidance on conservation area appraisals. Its purpose is to confirm and explain the special architectural and historic interest of Ranmoor Conservation Area, as protected by the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. Ranmoor Conservation Area was first designated in November 1973. This statement, endorsed by the City Centre and West Planning and Highways Area Board on 8 February 1999, represents the first formal review of the area since 1973. The 1999 review has resulted in boundary amendments, including three extensions.

LOCATION AND SETTING

Ranmoor is located on the south-facing slope of the valley of the Porter Brook, a tributary of the River Sheaf, two and a half miles west of Sheffield city centre. The main road to Ranmoor is Fulwood Road, which contours along the valley side from Broomhill to Fulwood. The historic heart of Ranmoor is centred around Ranmoor Road and its junction with Fulwood Road. The conservation area lies on sloping land, rising from around 420 feet above sea level on Riverdale Road to around 814 feet at the top of Ivy Park Road. This hillside forms part of the ridge which extends from the city centre in the east, to Redmires Moor in the west. The underlying geology is sandstone, overlaid with clay.

HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

Origins

The earliest available maps of the area, dating from the 18th century, name the settlement as Rand Moor. This place name simply means "edge of the moor", referring to the geographical location of the settlement. Up until the mid 19th century Rand Moor was no more than a cluster of cottages along Ranmoor Road. Evidence for the agricultural origins of the area is found on early maps which show the pattern of small fields, woodland and thinly scattered cottages and farms. This landscape would have been similar to the existing farmland of the Mayfield Valley. There are no records of archaeological finds or sites within the area, although future development may present opportunities for archaeologists to find out more about the early origins of Ranmoor.

Mid-19th century to early 20th century

As well as agriculture, and in common with other outlying areas of Sheffield, there was some small-scale industry in the area. The 1850 O.S. map shows several sandstone quarries and a cutlery works called Rand Moor Works, the latter near the top of the present Storth Lane. Several place names have survived from the early history of the area including Storth, Snaithing Lane and Smiths Wood. Some of the roads and lanes run along the route of early tracks and lanes; the 1850 O.S. map marks Darwin Lane, Ranmoor Road, part of Fulwood Road, Snaithing Lane, Ranmoor Cliffe Road (formerly called Cross Pool Road) and Hangingwater Lane (formerly called Jenkin Lane). The earliest evidence for planned residential development in Rand Moor is Cliff Terrace, which is shown on the 1850 map.

By the second half of the 19th century, Sheffield's importance as a centre for steel production and the expansion of edge tool and cutlery manufacturing had generated sufficient wealth to support a growing number of successful entrepreneurs and industrialists. This affluent class chose to use their wealth to move to the cleaner air of west Sheffield, away from the increasingly crowded and polluted city centre and industrial east end. The 1890 OS map shows the fields of Rand Moor replaced by residential development. A pattern of new streets of generous width had been developed, the fields subdivided into building plots and these developed for generous-sized detached and semi-detached villas. Land societies played an important part in Ranmoor's development during the late 19th century; Carsick Hill Land Society and Storth Land Society laid out estates of regular-sized plots and regulated the boundaries and the size of houses and gardens. Many plots were not immediately built upon, some remained undeveloped until the mid 20th century and others were assembled to create larger plots for one owner.

The place name Rand Moor was replaced by the present name Ranmoor during the late 19th century. By 1890 the small community at the bottom of Ranmoor Road had grown into a suburban centre. To meet the needs of the growing population, new services and facilities were developed. St John's Church was built in 1879. On Fulwood Road, a parade of shops and the Ranmoor Inn first appear on the 1890 O.S.map, the latter to supplement the services offered by the early 19th century Bull's Head Inn (formerly the Highland Lad). The terraced housing of Marr Terrace dates from the 1880s, when it was called Market Place. These houses were occupied by a working population, providing services for the middle classes, and including gardeners, coachmen and dressmakers. Some major public buildings from this period have been demolished; further up Ranmoor Road, the site of the Wesleyan Methodist Church and School is now occupied by housing and blocks of flats have been built on the site of the Methodist Ranmoor College, on Fulwood Road.

The largest of Ranmoor's Victorian villas had mostly been built by 1890, among them some of Sheffield's grandest homes. Oakbrook, Storth Oaks, Thornbury, Tapton Park and Moordale are among the best examples, built for leading figures in the city's industrial and business establishment. Medium-sized detached or semi-detached villas were built for the middle classes; vacant plots continued to be developed during the early 1900s. A particular feature of Ranmoor is the development of spacious, well-planted grounds, usually in proportion to the size of the house, to protect the privacy and express the status of the owners. The transformation of the area from a landscape of fields and woodland, to a sought-after residential suburb, was largely complete by the First World War.

Post First World War.

During the 20th century, the residential character of Ranmoor has been slightly changed by the conversion of the largest villas to non-residential uses. Ranmoor is no longer an exclusively residential suburb. Of the largest villas, Oakbrook is part of Notre Dame School, Storth Oaks is a drug rehabilitation centre, Ranmoor Hall is in office use, Moordale has been offices and is due to be converted to a public house and Thornbury is a private hospital. Some of the medium-sized villas have been converted to nursing homes, offices or divided into flats. Ranmoor still supports a parade of shops and two pubs, as well as several restaurants.

TOWNSCAPE

Grain and density

Ranmoor is notable for the low density of its built development. This is reflected in a pattern of medium or large houses, most set in spacious grounds. The grain of the area is fairly homogenous, with evenly spaced houses built on a network of residential streets. This is largely due to the Land Society influence. There are a few exceptions to this; notably the triangular area between Marr Terrace, Ranmoor Road and Fulwood Road. Here, the earlier 19th century housing on the old Ranmoor Road is denser and the houses smaller than typical turn-of-the-century development elsewhere. Also of a high density is later 19th century terraced housing along the south side of Riverdale Road and on the north side of Fulwood Road, between the Bull's Head and the Ranmoor Road junction, built-up with terraced houses and the shops.

The early 20th century low-density villa development gave way to higher density semi-detached housing during the inter-war period, as along Hangingwater Road. Speculative housing developers have exploited the potential of some sites in Ranmoor during the post-war era, particularly by infill development of flats and houses built within the grounds of large villas or cleared sites. Recent new housing has generally been at a higher density than historic development in Ranmoor. In particular, the grain of the Conservation Area has been disrupted by infill housing on Gladstone Road, Tapton Park Road and Storth Lane.

Recent new housing which has fitted the historic pattern and grain of Ranmoor's character includes the five detached houses on Riverdale Drive, off Riverdale Road. There is limited scope for new housing development in Ranmoor, provided this does not harm the historic character of the area by increasing the density and disrupting the grain of the area or by poor quality design. There is also scope for quality contemporary design, following the historic pattern of architect-designed homes for private clients which has helped give Ranmoor its distinctive character.

Street pattern

The key road through the area is Fulwood Road, with Gladstone Road, Snaithing Lane and Graham Road the most important secondary streets. Historically, Ranmoor Road is one of the earliest key roads, but this is now partly one-way because of its narrowness. Few of Ranmoor's streets have early origins; the majority date from 19th century planned developments. Historic footpaths, shown on the 1850 O.S. map following field boundaries, have now mostly been replaced by roads. An important survival is the setted gennell or alley running from Ranmoor Cliffe Road to Ranmoor Road and continuing down to Fulwood Road, to the west of Marr Terrace. This footway is evocative of an age when working people walked from home to work and is still used as a pedestrian shortcut.

The line of the 1830s conduit is also an important linear feature in the historic townscape. Constructed by the Sheffield Corporation Water Works, the conduit carried water from the Redmires Reservoirs to the reservoir at Crookes. Originally open, it was piped and mostly covered in 1909, but the line is still evident where it follows the contours and has been incorporated into property boundaries, for example between Clumber Road and Ivy Park Road. An open section remains along the south side of Tetney Road.

Building materials

The most common facing material in Ranmoor is sandstone, normally roughly dressed and laid in regular courses. Sandstone was locally quarried and is the prevailing vernacular

building material in the upland area of Sheffield, but it was also used throughout the 19th century for prestige buildings, such as villas and churches. The use of finely cut ashlar stone is generally restricted to architectural details. Up until around 1900, Welsh slate was the prevailing roof material on most housing in Ranmoor, a building material transported by canal and rail. Earlier vernacular buildings would have used locally produced riven stone slates, but this material is now rare in Ranmoor. Snaithing Farm is an important example of a stone-roofed building.

During the early 1900s, national architectural styles included the fashionable Arts and Crafts, often interpreted as mock Tudor, in which the use of half-timbered gables, rendering and clay roof tiles was popular. Good examples of villas using these materials can be seen in Tylecote at 7 Gladstone Road and the Canton Orchard at 337 Fulwood Road. Red brick is unusual in Ranmoor, but being cheaper than stone was used for the late 19th century workers housing on Marr Terrace and for the terrace on Riverdale Road and at numbers 7 to 25 Ranmoor Road. Brick was in more general use during the inter-war years, and for the later post-war infill developments.

Sandstone is also the most characteristic material for garden boundaries. Stone garden walls are one of Ranmoor's most important features and partly define the streetscene. Constructed of coursed, roughly dressed stone with weathered copings and interrupted by stone gate piers of varying and sometimes elaborate design, garden walls are a key part of the local vernacular. They also announce the residents' social standing. Boulders of local stone, cleared during building construction, have been characteristically used in Ranmoor for rockeries, to define drives and terraces.

Gardens and open spaces

Due to the large average size of plots in Ranmoor, the landscape design and historic planting of private gardens makes an important contribution to the special character of the Conservation Area. Some of the best examples of late Victorian villa gardens in Sheffield are to be found in Ranmoor; the most unaltered historic gardens are included in the City Council's Gazeteer of Historic Parks and Gardens. Thornbury Hospital has one of the best examples of a private Victorian garden in Sheffield; it was designed by Robert Marnock for the cutler Frederick Mappin.

The short period of Ranmoor's development from the late 19th century and the historic affluence of the area has resulted in a very distinctive pattern of gardens and planting. Late Victorian and Edwardian garden design in the western suburbs used plants resistant to pollution, which afforded privacy and were suited to local acidic soil conditions. This has produced a distinctive mix of shrub and tree planting with evergreens such as holly, yew, laurel and conifer most often used. A typical late Victorian streetscene in Ranmoor, for example on Gladstone Road, is dominated by good quality stone walls and gate piers with evergreen planting behind.

Views of the villas themselves are framed by trees and glimpsed up curving drives bounded by gritstone rockeries and more evergreen shrubs. The largest villas, such as Oakbrook, were designed to face south, overlooking terraces and lawns bounded by shrubs and trees. Some gardens contain well-designed garden buildings and other features, such as terraces, steps and ponds, which contribute to the character of the area. This landscape of historic gardens has survived well in Ranmoor and has been little altered.

Ranmoor has very little public open space. It is predominately an area of privately owned plots. Important semi-public open spaces in the townscape include the churchyard around St John's Church and the grounds of Notre Dame School. The area contains no public parks. There is very little undeveloped land in the conservation area. There are important pockets of woodland including at the junction of Belgrave Road and Snaithing Park Road, Ranmoor Cliff and woodland along the course of Oak Brook within the grounds of Notre Dame and west of Thornbury. These woodlands are significant ecologically and as informal landscape elements are reminders of the rural origins of this part of Sheffield. They contribute positively to the character of the conservation area. Highway trees are an important part of Ranmoor's townscape and are particularly associated with planned streets such as Whitworth Road, Ranmoor Crescent and Ranmoor Park Road.

Topography and views

The hilly topography of Sheffield adds to the interest and character of the conservation area by giving distant views across the Porter Valley. These views visually connect Ranmoor to the surrounding area. Particularly attractive views of Ranmoor can be enjoyed from the south side of the valley, from parts of Greystones and Ecclesall. From a distance Ranmoor appears as a heavily wooded area, punctuated by only a few prominent buildings, including St John's Church, the largest villas and some infill development.

ARCHITECTURAL QUALITY

Buildings that contribute to the character of Ranmoor

Ranmoor developed as Sheffield's most affluent western suburb. The houses built for the middle classes and the villas of some of the City's most influential Victorian figures are the key elements in Ranmoor's special architectural and historic interest. Sheffield's key architectural practices were commissioned to work in the area. The resultant range of architectural styles and forms expresses the period, wealth and fashions which shaped Ranmoor. The earliest buildings in the area are those that pre-date its development as a residential suburb; some cottages and small houses on Ranmoor Road and Snaithing Farm. Most of the buildings that make a positive contribution to the area's character date from a fairly narrow timespan between 1860 and 1914.

The key buildings in the area are the Grade II* listed St John's Church and the largest villas, but there are many medium-sized houses which whilst not outstanding, are typical of Ranmoor and important to its overall character.

The attached plan shows listed buildings and also those unlisted buildings which make a positive contribution to the special character of the conservation area. This document refers to some examples of particular periods or types of building, but does not mention all buildings of interest, marked on the plan.

Building forms and details

Most houses in the area are two to three storeys high, with the upper storey partly in the roof. The vertical scale of most villas is emphasised by the use of raised plinths, tall sash windows and high floor-to-ceiling heights. The latter generally increase with the status of the villa. Victorian architectural devices were used to express different parts of the villa; the principal rooms are often given bay windows and dominate elevations. Kitchens and service rooms are always on rear elevations and often under lower roofs. Staircases are expressed by large windows, sometimes decorated with stained glass. Over-scaled porches, door surrounds and stone steps emphasise the entrances. Victorian and

Edwardian elevations in Ranmoor are rich in modelling, using deep reveals, projecting features and carved stone details.

Up until the mid-19th century, all houses were built of coursed local sandstone, under slated pitched roofs and these houses, such as those on Ranmoor Road and Cliff Terrace are simply detailed in the Georgian tradition. Later in the century, red brick is used for workers' terraced housing and render, timber-framing and clay tiles appear on villas. Although some villas are partially hidden by trees, their roofs are often visible from the street. Ranmoor's lively roofscape results from the use of articulated roofs, steep gables and dormer windows, tall chimneys, crested ridges and finials, elaborate timber barge boards or stone-coped verges and bracketed eaves.

Architectural styles

Gothic was the preferred style for churches and some mansions during the second half of the 19th century. St John's is Sheffield's finest example of a suburban Victorian church, built between 1879 and 1887, to designs by E.M.Gibbs. Riverdale House and its lodge, built for C.H.Firth in 1873, are the best examples of domestic gothic in Ranmoor. Many smaller villas in Ranmoor adopted a loosely gothic style using steep roofs with barge boards, tall chimneys and stone mullioned sashes. Streets with good examples of typical villas include Gladstone Road.

Classical and Italianate architectural styles are also evident in Ranmoor. The best example is Oakbrook, built around 1860 for Mark Firth the steel magnate, to designs by Flockton and Son. Designed in a rich Italianate style, the villa amply expresses Firth's social standing and wealth. Other villas which use classical details include Thornbury, designed by M.E.Hadfield in 1864. The later 19th and early 20th century brought the influence of Arts and Crafts architecture and design to Ranmoor. In particular, the local architect W.J.Hale designed two attractive stone houses in the area; Tainby on Snaithing Lane for himself in 1909 and Rydal on Snaithing Park Road. There are also good examples of houses using render, timber-framing, stone and clay tiles, in an Arts and Crafts tradition, such as Pembury on Ivy Park Road, built in 1927 for a managing director of Mappin and Webb. Smaller examples include 7 Gladstone Road and 45 Ranmoor Cliffe Road.

Minor buildings

Whilst villas and houses are the main building type in Ranmoor, many smaller ancillary buildings are also important in the townscape and contribute to the area's architectural interest. Amongst these, entrance lodges are the most prominent and visible. The largest villas are sited in the midst of large gardens and approached via long drives. Lodges guarded and announced the entrance to these mini estates, together with often elaborate gates. Good examples of lodges include those at Riverdale House, Thornbury and Carsick Grange. Lodges are of historic interest where the main house has been demolished; for example the lodge to the now lost Tapton Grange on Tapton Park Road. Coach houses, stable blocks and garden buildings also contribute to the architectural interest and character of the area and reflect the original residents' means and life style.

Some items of street furniture are of interest, such as the listed cast-iron electricity transformer on the corner of Belgrave Road and Storth Lane. The late 19th century bridge carrying Stumperlowe Crescent Road over Storth Lane is a listed structure. This attractive cast-iron bridge, with stone steps, is best appreciated from Storth Lane.

Recent development

Although most of late Victorian Ranmoor remains largely intact, some 20th century infill development has been harmful to its character. Some villas have been demolished, for example Tapton Grange - to make way for student flats. Others have been surrounded by new housing, for example at Stortholme on Gladstone Road. In some cases the harmful effects of unsympathetic development have been offset by the retention of some original landscaping, as at Riverdale House. The original 23 acres of Mark Firth's Oakbrook estate have been eroded by new school buildings, playing fields and new housing in the walled garden. Change of use of many villas to office, nursing home or to multiple occupancy use has also taken its toll on the settings of the houses and their gardens. Late Victorian Ranmoor Hall survives, but the grounds have been badly affected by car parks and new offices. Small-scale infill has often been more successful in retaining the character of the area. This has been possible where new houses are of a similar scale to those adjacent and where plots have been developed at the prevailing density, as on Whitworth Road and Clumber Road since the last war.

SUMMARY

Ranmoor's special architectural and historic interest is principally derived from its significance as the city's foremost Victorian residential suburb. The high quality of buildings and townscape in Ranmoor expresses the considerable wealth of its early residents, who moved here in search of clean air and space. The suburb is historically associated with some of Sheffield's greatest industrialists, such as Mark Firth. Ranmoor is therefore a lasting legacy of the heyday of the city's steel industry, during the late 19th and early 20th century.

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March 2000.