



## Conservation Area Appraisal & Management Proposals

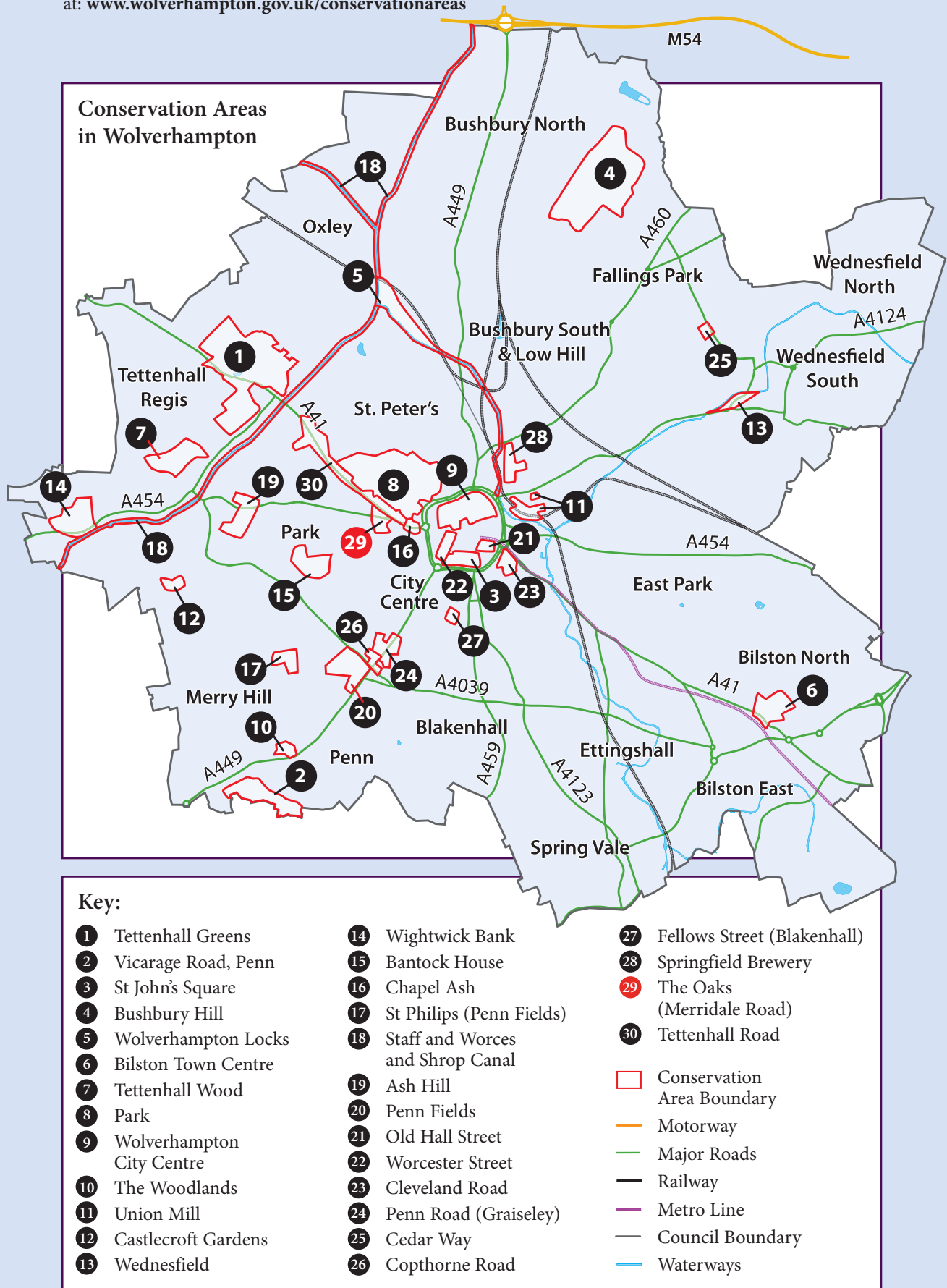
February 2011



# Conservation Area Character Appraisal

This document is the appraisal for the The Oaks (Merridale Road) Conservation Area which the Council approved on 14th February 2011.

To find out more about appraisals for other conservation areas in the City see the Council's website at: [www.wolverhampton.gov.uk/conservationareas](http://www.wolverhampton.gov.uk/conservationareas)



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Above:

*The Oaks, Merridale Road*

## 1. Introduction

The Oaks (Merridale Road) Conservation Area was designated by Wolverhampton City Council on 6th October 2004.

This document defines and records the special architectural and historic interest of The Oaks (Merridale Road) Conservation Area and identifies opportunities for enhancement. The omission of a particular building, feature or space should not be taken to imply that it is of no interest.

Conservation areas are designated under the provisions of Section 69 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. A conservation area is defined as “an area of special architectural or historic interest the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance”.

Section 71 of the same Act requires local planning authorities to formulate and publish proposals for the preservation and enhancement of any parts of their area which are conservation areas.

Section 72 specifies that, in making a decision on an application for development in a conservation area, special attention shall be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of that area.

This appraisal satisfies the requirements of the legislation and provides a firm basis on which applications for development within The Oaks (Merridale Road) Conservation Area can be assessed.



Above:  
*Aerial photograph of the Oaks Conservation Area*

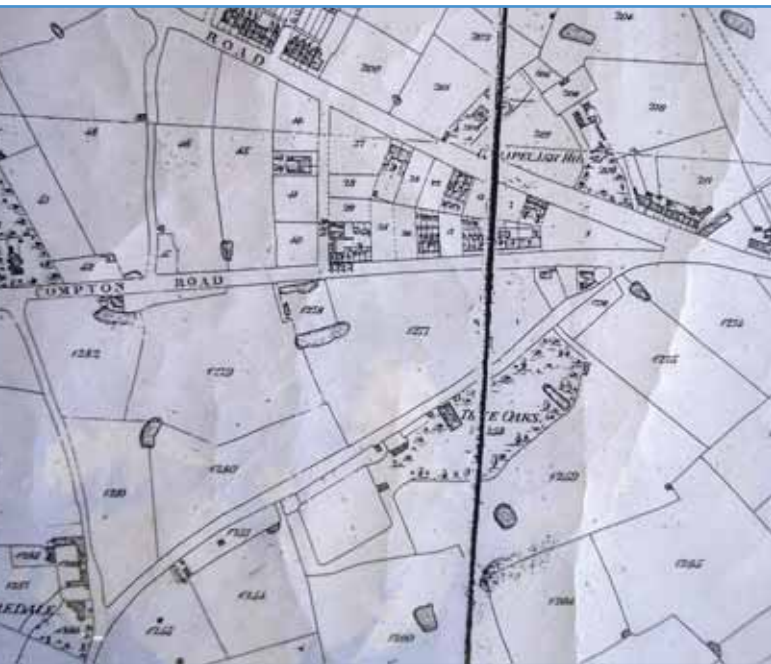
## 2. Location and setting

The Oaks (Merridale Road) Conservation Area is located approximately one kilometre to the west of Wolverhampton City Centre. The conservation area comprises three distinct groups of buildings which developed between the early 19th and mid 20th centuries; the most significant of these is the triangular site containing the Wolverhampton Eye Infirmary and Nurses' Home.

The conservation area has a suburban location, on level ground, surrounded by mainly residential development and close to a small secondary shopping centre at Chapel Ash.

The northern half of the conservation area lies within Park Ward and the southern half lies within Graiseley Ward.

### 3. History



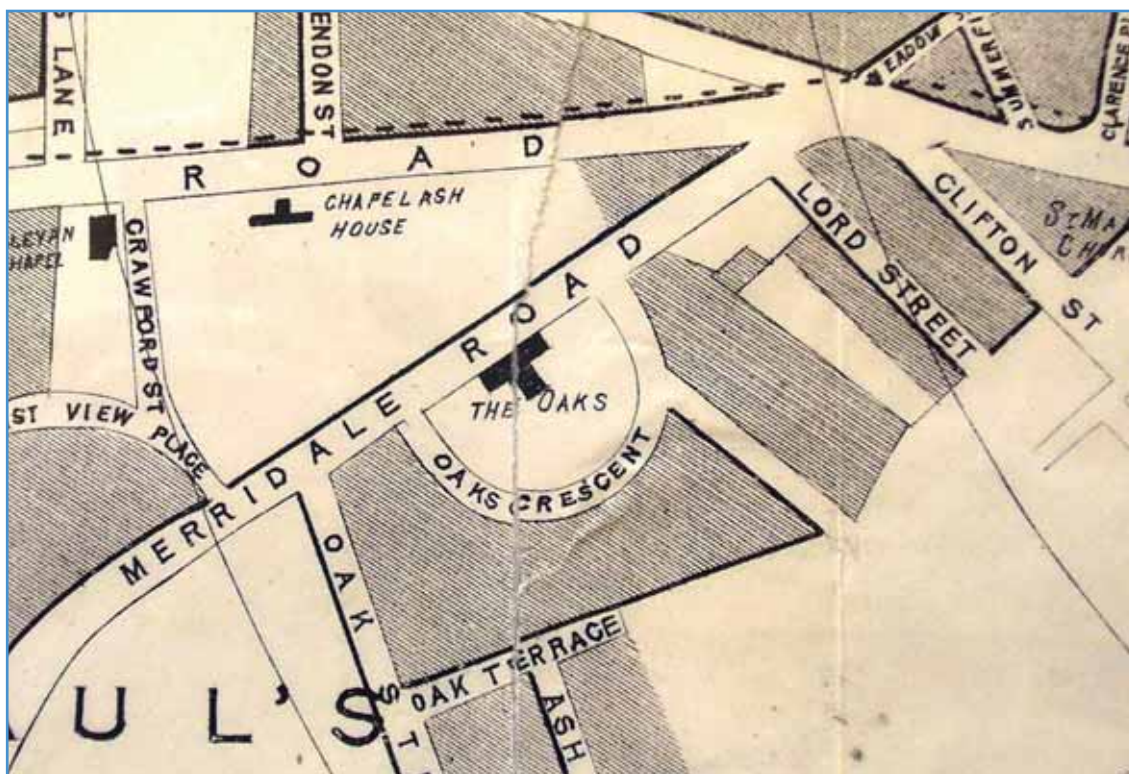
Above:  
Extract from the Wolverhampton Tithe Map of 1842.

The 1842 Tithe Map shows that the two principal roads that traverse the area, Compton Road and Merridale Road, had already been built but Oaks Crescent had not been laid out. The north side of Compton Road had started to be developed (including the present nos. 12-34 (even)) but otherwise the only significant buildings in the area were The Oaks and a large house marked as Chapel Ash House (now demolished) fronting Compton Road immediately to the west of the present Eye Infirmary.



Above:  
Extract from a drainage map of 1854 showing houses and gardens on the east side of Oaks Crescent.

Drainage maps of 1854 show that Oaks Crescent had by then been formed and the present nos. 7, 17-22 (consecutive), 28 and 34 had been built. Development on the north side of Compton Road included the present nos. 42-44 and a public house known as The Royal Oak (but not the present building) on the site of the current public house of the same name on the corner of Compton Road and Clarendon Street.



Above:

*Extract from the map produced by Steen and Blakett in 1871*

By 1871, development on the north side of Compton Road, including the present nos. 2-6 (even) and around Oaks Crescent, including the present number 15, was continuing. However, apart from a collection of very small buildings inside the junction of the Compton and Merridale Roads, the land now occupied by the Eye Infirmary was still entirely undeveloped. The next significant development in the area was the Infirmary itself.

In the second half of the 19th century, industry and rail travel were steadily growing and the resultant air pollution coupled with poor social conditions generally resulted in increasing numbers of eye ailments in the population at large. It soon became apparent that The Royal Hospital,

which had opened its doors in 1845, would not be able to cope in this growing and specialised area. As a result, in 1881 the philanthropists of Wolverhampton gathered to rent a house in St Mark's Road at its junction with Salop Street to provide eye care facilities. Within the first year 2,264 cases had been treated and a larger facility was required. Local benefactor, Philip Horsman, who had already given the Art Gallery to the town, offered £5,000 on condition that a further £8,000 was raised locally. The necessary funds were secured and land in Chapel Ash was acquired from the Duke of Cleveland. Local architect T. H. Fleeming was commissioned to prepare plans for the building and it was opened by the Earl of Dartmouth on 23 October 1888.



*Above:*

*Nurses Home, Merridale Road shortly after construction and today*

In the early years of the 20th century, further land was acquired for the construction of the Nurses' Home. Designed by architect Arthur W Worrall, this opened in 1927 and by the start of the Second World War 142,000 patients were being treated annually. As demand for the services continued to grow, a fund was set up to provide a new outpatients' pharmacy and an accident and emergency facility and these were built by local architects Lavender and Twentyman, and opened in 1937.

The Infirmary was absorbed into the National Health Service in 1948 and became recognised as a centre of excellence, both locally and nationally. In the latter years of the 20th century, improvements in the effectiveness of Health and Safety legislation saw a significant reduction in the numbers of eye injuries and the advent of day case surgery for more minor conditions saw bed numbers sharply diminish. By 2004 the local health care trust made the decision close the old eye infirmary and in March 2007 all eye services were transferred to New Cross Hospital.



## 4. Character and appearance of the Conservation Area

### Summary of special interest

The conservation area is notable for the following:

- Architectural and historic interest of the area's buildings most of which date from the 19th century expansion of the city including two entries in the Government's Statutory List of Buildings of Special Architectural or Historic Interest ('listed buildings'), four locally listed buildings and a large number of 'buildings of townscape merit';
- Wolverhampton Eye Infirmary which, as well as being of considerable architectural interest, has played a pivotal role in the development and provision of health care facilities in Wolverhampton for almost 120 years;
- The ensemble of the original Eye Infirmary of 1888, the Nurses' Home of 1927 and the Outpatients'/Accident and Emergency Extension of 1937 all three of which are locally listed buildings;
- Two listed buildings: The Oaks, a large stucco house c.1830, and nos. 12 – 34 (even) Compton Road, a terrace of 12 houses c.1830;
- The range of 19th century house types (detached, semi-detached and terraced);
- Well treed open space (private) to the rear of The Oaks;
- Mature roadside and garden trees particularly along Merridale Road and within the historic curtilage of The Oaks, many of which were planted as part of the original 19th century development of the area;
- Public open space at the Compton Road/Merridale Road junction;
- Quiet suburban atmosphere of Oaks Crescent.



Above:

*Grade II Listed terrace of houses in Compton Road.*

**Present character: activities and uses**

Until the opening of the Eye Infirmary in the late 1880s, the area was primarily residential. It developed as part of the western expansion of Wolverhampton serviced by shops and services in Chapel Ash, then linked by tram to the city centre. Excluding the site of the Eye Hospital, the area still remains primarily residential although other uses are present in Compton Road. There is a service and repair garage at number 38/40 Compton Road and offices in premises (formerly dwellings) between

nos. 2-10 (even) Compton Road. The Royal Oak Public House (1905) in Compton Road replaces an earlier pub of the same name.

Oaks Crescent is exclusively residential although number 7 and number 28 have been converted from family dwellings into a residential nursing home ('The Squirrels') and flats ('Withymoor Court') respectively. The Oaks, a large private house of the 1830s, has been converted into flats and new residential blocks have been built within its curtilage.



*Above:  
7 Oaks Crescent at the end of the 19th century and today.*

Today, Compton Road and Merridale Road continue to be two of the three principal approach roads to the City from the west, meeting the third (Tettenhall Road) towards the eastern boundary of the conservation area. All three routes carry significant volumes of traffic, particularly during peak periods, and this clearly has an effect on the environment here. However, the constituent parts of the conservation area have sufficient integrity and intrinsic quality and the townscape and extensive tree cover in general are sufficiently robust to withstand these adverse impacts.

### Development of street pattern

William Yates' 1775 map of the County of Stafford illustrates Compton Road as one of the two most prominent routes from Wales and the west leading to the south-west of the city – the other route being Tettenhall Road. Fifty years later, Smart's Trade Directory for 1827 shows, at the western limit of the city, 'CHAPEL ASH GATES' written across Tettenhall Road and Compton Road (marked 'From Shrewsbury' and 'From Bridgnorth' respectively) and, written along the course of today's Merridale Road, 'From Merridale'.

The layout of the conservation area's streets was thus substantially in place at the start of the 19th century.



Above:  
*Chapel Ash Gates in c1899*

### Architectural and historic character

The architectural and historic character of the conservation area is assessed first with regard to the Infirmary site, the focus of the conservation area, followed by a general overview:

#### 1. The Infirmary site

The Wolverhampton and Midland Counties Eye Infirmary of 1888 stands in a self-contained site bounded by Compton Road and Merridale Road. Together with its 20th century modernist extension and the Nurses' Home, it is the dominant architectural composition within the conservation area.

The original Eye infirmary was designed by the architect T.H. Fleeming (1849-1935) whose works in Wolverhampton also include Barclays Bank, Lichfield Street (1876), the College of Adult Education, Old Hall Street (1899) and the late 19th century spire of St Jude's Church, Tettenhall Road (itself built in 1867-9), all of which are grade II listed buildings, and the former Higher Grade School, Newhampton Road which is on the Council's Local List.

The Infirmary was built by Wolverhampton builders Henry Willcock & Co. at a cost of £13,000 (see photo on page 23). It opened in 1888 providing three men's and three women's wards with thirty beds and five children's cots. A significant part of the cost was met by local philanthropist, Philip Horsman, whose benefaction is commemorated in the Fountain in St Peter's Gardens. The Infirmary is constructed of red brick with elaborate brick details and stone dressings. It is built to an irregular plan in a simple Gothic style under a plain clay tiled roof with crested ridge tiles and two spired turrets, one of which has an inscribed stone plaque bearing the legend: 'EYE INFIRMARY AD 1887'. Some of the original sash windows have been replaced and late 20th century extensions to the original west front have detracted from the character and appearance of the original building.

The architect for the Nurses' Home was Arthur W. Worrall who was born in Heath Town in 1868. His other works include the Nurses' Home of 1907 at the Royal Hospital and, also at the Royal Hospital, the Edward VII Memorial Wing that was designed in 1911 and is now statutorily listed (grade II) as an integral part of the principal Wolverhampton Royal Hospital building.

The Nurses' Home is of three storeys, built of brick with stone dressings under steeply pitched, plain clay tiled roofs. The principal (south) elevation is of nine bays and the two bays at either end project forward under gabled roofs, with splayed bay windows at ground floor level. The central entrance door has leaded-light stained glass upper panels with an elaborate stone doorcase surmounted by a stone panel incised with the date 1928. Original six pane vertically sliding sash windows survive throughout the building. The rear (north) elevation of the building is of a more utilitarian, but entirely complementary, style but it has been disfigured by an unsightly array of pipe work and other service installations. There is an inappropriate flat roofed, single-storey extension attached to the northwest corner of the building but otherwise it survives externally in its original condition.

The Outpatients'/Accident and Emergency Extension was built in 1937, just ten years after the Nurses' Home, but it belongs to an entirely different architectural world. The architect was Richard Twentyman (1903-79) of Lavender and Twentyman which was probably the most important architectural practice working in Wolverhampton in the middle of the 20th century. Other important buildings by Twentyman include St Martin's Church, Dixon Street that, despite its recent date (1938-39), is statutorily listed (grade II) and St Andrew's Church, St Andrew's Close and Bushbury Crematorium, Bushbury Lane, both of which are included in the Council's Local List.

His building followed the principles of the International Modern Movement that rejected historic precedent as a source of architectural inspiration and considered function as the prime generator of form, using materials and technology in an entirely honest way. It is made up of a series of one and two-storey red brick boxes surmounted by flat roofs with projecting concrete parapets. The north and south elevations are parallel with the Compton and Merridale Roads respectively and these are connected at their east ends by a two-storey, concave brick wall facing towards Chapel Ash. Windows are square or rectangular and set into deep concrete reveals, some with concrete mullions. Internally, an intervening mezzanine level provides impressive, light and airy double height spaces for the waiting hall and consulting room.



Above:  
*The Outpatients' and Accident and Emergency Extension of 1937.*

# The Oaks Conservation Area Appraisal (consultation draft)



## THE OAKS (MERRIDALE ROAD) CONSERVATION AREA TOWNSCAPE APPRAISAL MAP

### 2. General overview

Most development within the conservation area was part of the 19th century expansion of Wolverhampton and, broadly speaking, contains three distinct phases of development: early, mid and late 19th century. Oaks Crescent contains a number of detached and semi-detached dwellings from the 1920s but these, though typical of suburban domestic house building of the period, do not contribute greatly to the special architectural interest of the conservation area.

#### Early 19th century

Numbers 12-34 (even) Compton Road and The Oaks in Merridale Road (both grade II listed buildings) are the principal buildings from the early 19th century. They were probably built to take advantage of the construction of Darlington Street, completed in 1823, which greatly improved access from Chapel Ash to the city centre thereby stimulating the development of the western approaches to Wolverhampton.

These buildings have unadorned stucco facades, a typical early 19th century treatment (red brick becomes the more prevalent material after c.1850), and a rigorous symmetry. All windows are sashes, second floor windows are less tall than first and ground floor windows. Numbers 12-34 (even) Compton Road is a terrace of twelve three-storey houses built c.1830 consisting of a 14-window range, the central four of which project forward and are slightly higher. The first floor cast iron balconies to nos. 12-20 and 26-34 complement the plain cast iron railings and gates that run the full length of the terrace on the back edge of the footway and are another characteristic early 19th century architectural feature.



#### Above:

*Balcony and window details on listed houses in Compton Road.*

The Oaks was built as a private house in c.1830. The building is of three storeys and the elevations are stuccoed under a hipped slate roof. The front elevation (to Merridale Road) comprises a symmetrical three-window range with a central, first floor Venetian window over a projecting 20th century principal entrance porch (see photo on page 2).

### Mid 19th Century

Of particular note are nos. 7, 17-22 (consecutive), 28 and 34 Oaks Crescent which date from c.1850, and number 15 Oaks Crescent, which dates from c.1865.

Numbers 7 and 15 Oaks Crescent are both large detached houses. Number 7 has rendered elevations under steeply pitched roofs (now covered in inappropriate concrete tiles) and elaborate shaped gables with stone copings and ball finials (see photo on page 8). Number 15 is of brick under a natural Welsh slate roof with substantial brick chimneys. Much original external joinery survives on both properties.



Above:  
*No 15 Oaks Crescent.*

Numbers 17-22 (consecutive) comprise three pairs of substantial semi-detached houses, constructed of red brick with buff brick quoins. They have steeply pitched roofs with elaborate pierced bargeboards, although original roofing materials have been replaced in a mixture of concrete tiles and synthetic slate. Much original external joinery (which comprises a mixture of sashes and casements) still survives.



Above:  
*21-22 Oaks Crescent*

Number 34 Oaks Crescent dates from c.1850 and is in Tudor Revival style. It has rendered elevations under steeply pitched clay tiled roofs. Three courses in plain tiles alternate with three courses of fish-scale tiles, running the full height of the roof slopes and there are crested ridge tiles (some missing). The front elevation incorporates a two-storey projecting gabled porch and the porch, end gables and dormer windows have mock timber framing and elaborate, pierced bargeboards. A contemporary, two-storey coach-house in matching materials and details adjoins to the north (see photo on page 15).

### Late 19th century

On the south side of Compton Road, to the west of the Eye Infirmary, is a small group of five properties dating from c.1905. Numbers 21-29 (odd) are of two storeys and constructed of red brick under slate roofs, although that to number 21 has been replaced in concrete tiles. The casement windows retain original leaded-light stained glass as do the panels in the main entrance doors and side screens, which are set back in open porches.



Above:  
*23-31 Compton Road*

### 20th century

With the exception of Twentyman's Modernist extension to the Eye Infirmary, the 20th century is not well represented in the conservation area. The Royal Oak (c.1905) is an exuberant red brick public house that has been designed to take advantage of its location on the corner of Clarendon Street and Compton Road. Number 31 Compton Road (c.1930) is constructed of brick, with the first floor elevations rendered, also under a slate roof with leaded light casement windows and fine quality Art Nouveau wall tiling in the open porch.

### Building types, prevalent building form and plot sizes

The most significant buildings in the conservation area are the purpose-built Infirmary buildings including an adjacent Nurses' Home. Elsewhere, the most prevalent building form is the detached and semi-detached house and a single example of a terrace (nos. 12-34 Compton Road).

Also of note are an early 20th century public house, The Royal Oak (see photo on page 24) and a 1930s showroom (nos. 38/40 Compton Road).



Above:  
*1930s car showroom on Compton Road*

There is a mix of house types, sizes and designs, reflecting the 100 year period of development of the area. Two storeys is the norm but some properties, particularly in Compton Road, rise to three storeys.

Oaks Crescent's 19th century houses are well set back in long linear plots whilst early 20th century houses, notably nos. 1 to 5 Oaks Crescent are laid out less sparsely, squeezed into a formerly vacant plot. Development along Compton Road holds to



a well defined back-of-pavement line with small front 'gardens' enclosed with railings or wall – although means of enclosure around many front areas has now been removed.

### Building materials

The conservation area's early 19th century buildings are built of stuccoed brick, a characteristic of that period. Red brick is the most common building material of the late 19th century buildings, sometimes with stucco dressings for windows and doors.

Welsh slate or plain clay tile is the prevalent roofing material although many slate and tile roofs have unfortunately been replaced with concrete tiles to the detriment of the historic building. There is a wide variety of window openings and glazing patterns. Vertical sliding sashes are common but large late 19th century brick villas often have a multi-paned upper sash above a single-paned lower sash. Windows would have been almost exclusively timber but many have been replaced with uPVC or aluminium.

### Listed buildings

A listed building is one that is included on the Government's Statutory List of Buildings of Special Architectural or Historic Interest. These buildings are protected by law and consent is required from the City Council before any works of alteration, extension or demolition can be carried out.

The Statutory List includes the following two entries within The Oaks (Merridale Road) Conservation Area, both grade II:

- Nos. 13-34 (even) Compton Road and attached gates and railings
- The Oaks, Merridale Road

### Locally listed buildings

As well as listed buildings, Government guidance on the protection of the historic environment (Planning Policy Guidance 15) makes provision for planning authorities "to draw up lists of locally important buildings, and to formulate local plan policies for their protection, through normal development control procedures". Works that require planning permission to a building included in the City of Wolverhampton Local List will be expected to take into account the special architectural and historic interest of the property.

The following four buildings are included in Wolverhampton's local list:

- The Wolverhampton and Midland Counties Eye Infirmary, Compton Road (the original building of 1888);
- The Nurses' Home to the Eye Infirmary, Merridale Road;
- The Outpatients'/Accident and Emergency Extension to the Eye Infirmary, Compton Road (1937 Extension);
- Number 34 Oaks Crescent and adjoining coach house.



Above:  
*34 Oaks Crescent*

### Buildings of Townscape Merit

In addition to listed and locally buildings there are a number of unlisted buildings which have been judged as making a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the conservation area. This follows advice provided in the English Heritage guidance on conservation area character appraisals, and within Planning Policy Guidance Note 15 (PPG15), both of which stress the importance of identifying and protecting such buildings.

The buildings, which are shown on the Townscape Appraisal map (see page 11), are considered to be good, relatively unaltered examples, of their type where some original materials and details, and the basic, historic form of the building, has survived. Where a building has been adversely affected by modern changes and restoration is either impractical or indeed, not possible, they are excluded. There is a general presumption in favour of retaining all Buildings of Townscape Merit, as set out in PPG15.

### Focal points, vistas and views

The conservation area is flat and views are restricted by trees, high walls and roadside development. Within the conservation area, the two turrets of the Infirmary (one on its west elevation and one on its north elevation) are tall landmarks best viewed from the immediate vicinity of the Infirmary or from the east along Compton Road.



Above:

*Turrets on the hospital building are local landmarks.*

Looking out from the conservation area, views are unremarkable but the spire of St. Mark's in Chapel Ash can be glimpsed from Merridale Road and the tall brick chimney of the brewery in Chapel Ash can be spied from Compton Road. Though neither view is distinguished, each helps to locate the conservation area within its wider context.

### Open spaces, green areas and trees

The conservation area lies within the tightly-knit urban landscape of western Wolverhampton and the only public open space is a triangle of land in the angle of the junction of Compton Road and Merridale Road. The area is paved and contains a central flower bed and Ginkgo trees but the constant sound of passing traffic spoils the atmosphere of the area and counteracts well-meaning attempts to enhance it.

Parking and modern extensions have encroached upon former open space around the Infirmary but a small grassed area with trees remains between the hospital and the Nurses' Home. This space aids the setting of such a large institutional building and once served as a welcome green garden for patients and visitors.

The largest open space in the area lies within the semi-circular loop of Oaks Crescent and was formerly the garden of The Oaks. Though much of the former garden, especially close to Merridale Road, now contains late 20th century residential buildings, the southern half remains undeveloped and contains a fine collection of mature trees, many dating from the 19th century (see aerial photo on page 3).

Despite its urban location, trees make a significant and positive contribution to the conservation area. In particular, there is a line of mature trees along the north side of Merridale Road and along the western boundary of the Eye Infirmary. As mentioned above, trees to the south of The Oaks are also important and enhance the tranquillity of

Oaks Crescent. This area contains a wide variety of attractive mature trees including sycamore, oak, yew, lime, beech and holly. The maintenance of this open, well treed area is essential to the setting of the statutorily listed building and to the character and appearance of the conservation area. Together with mature trees on the south side of Merridale Road, in the grounds of The Oaks, these trees also help to soften the impact of the traffic on the environment of Merridale Road itself.



Above:

*Important mature trees in Merridale Road*

Significant trees or tree groups are marked on the Townscape Appraisal map. Many of these trees located on private land are covered by Tree Preservation Orders. Lack of a specific reference does not imply that a tree or group is not of value.

**Public realm**

The public realm is modern. There are no instances of historic floorscape and, with the exception of some 19th century boundary walls, railings and gate piers, few items of historic interest.

An awkwardly shaped and traffic-dominated open space at the junction of Compton Road and Merridale Road, in front of a disused and vacant public convenience, has been carefully landscaped in recent years.

Iron railings, bollards and young trees in front of nos. 12-34 Compton Road add some grandeur to the well-restored grade II listed terrace.



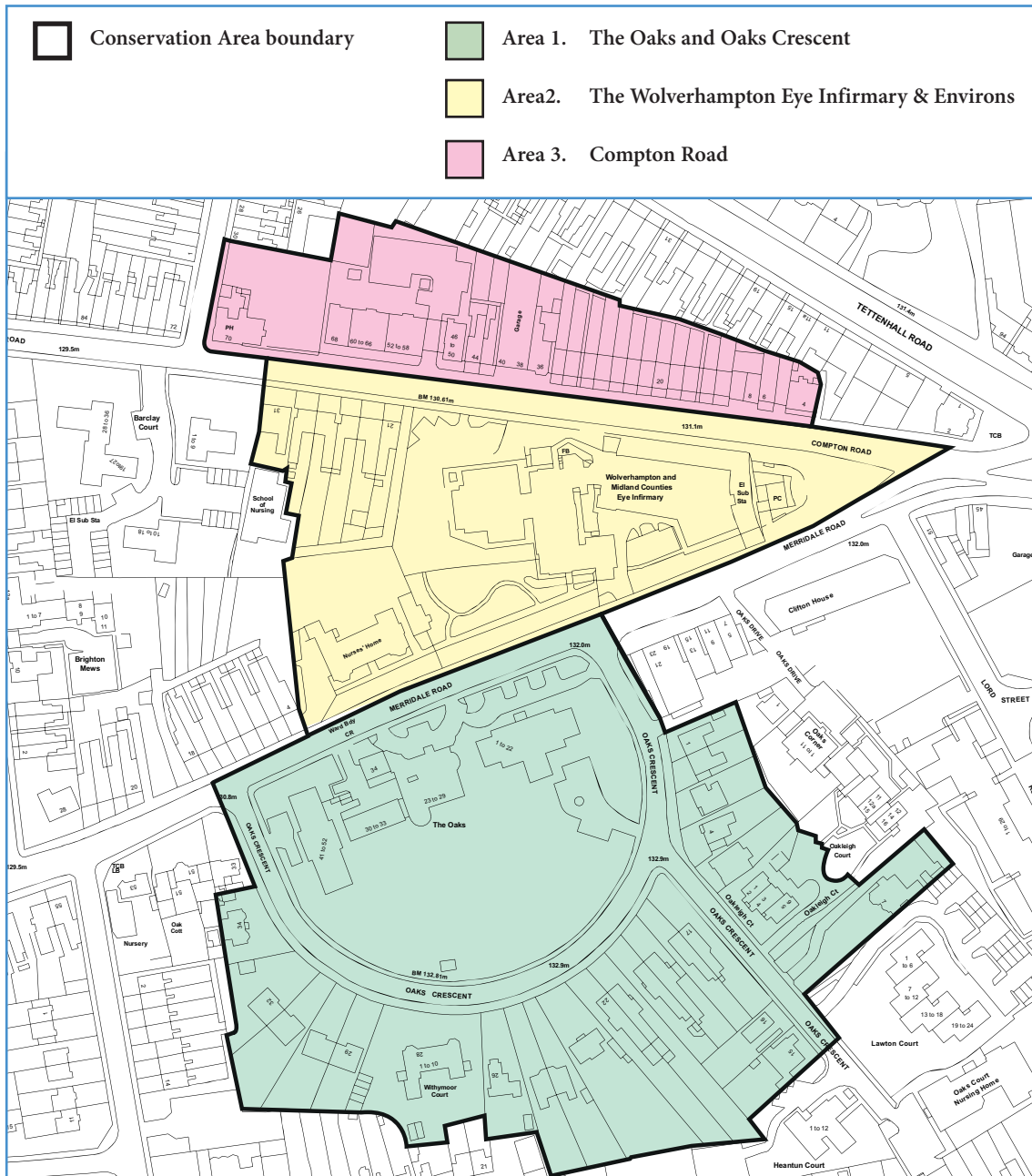
Above:

*Landscaped area at the junction of Merridale Road and Compton Road.*

## Introduction to Character Areas

The townscape of The Oaks (Merridale Road) Conservation Area varies according to building type and its period of development. The conservation area can be divided into three separate character areas each with its own characteristics. These are:

- **Area 1:** The Oaks and Oaks Crescent;
- **Area 2:** The Wolverhampton and Midland Counties Eye Infirmary and environs;
- **Area 3:** Compton Road.



## THE OAKS (MERRIDALE ROAD) CONSERVATION AREA CHARACTER AREAS

## Area 1: The Oaks and Oaks Crescent

### Principal features

- The Oaks, c.1830, listed grade II;
- Number 34 Oaks Crescent, c.1850, a house, with contemporary coach house, in a Tudor Revival style included on Wolverhampton's Local List;
- Mid 19th century houses notably nos. 7, 15, 17-22 (consecutive) and 28 Oaks Crescent;
- Interwar suburban houses e.g. nos. 1-5 and nos. 23-26 Oaks Crescent.
- Open space (private) to the rear (south) of The Oaks;
- Mature trees, most dating from the 19th century, within the curtilage of The Oaks and in other lesser private gardens;
- Boundary walls.

### General character and townscape

The Oaks is a small mansion whose presence on the street is restricted by trees and walls – and parked cars. It was the family home of John Marston J.P. (1836-1918), founder of the Sunbeam Company, Mayor and Freeman and his son, Sir Charles Marston (1867-1946), industrialist and author, but has now been converted to flats. There are substantial late 20th century blocks to the east and west of The Oaks. The forecourt directly to the north of The Oaks is enclosed to the east and west by curved walls which spring from the north-east and north-west corners of the principal building and terminate on the back edge of the footway in substantial rendered piers with stone copings. To the rear of The Oaks is a notable copse of trees.

Much of the Merridale Road frontage within the conservation area is marked by tall, red brick walls, which help to soften the impact of the modern blocks and screen parking areas most of which are generally well integrated into the fine landscaped setting of the house.

The full length of the boundary to Oaks Crescent was once marked by a brick wall with stone copings approximately one metre high, surmounted by railings. The vast majority of this wall survives, although some of the copings have been replaced in concrete and all of the original railings have been lost. Nevertheless the wall still provides an important sense of enclosure of the rear gardens.



Above:  
*John Marston in c1889*

The front gardens of properties in Oaks Crescent contain a large number of important mature trees including beech, chestnut, lime, silver birch, yew, mountain ash, holly and flowering cherry. These trees enhance the settings of the properties concerned and the character and appearance of the crescent generally, but they also complement the extensive tree cover in the grounds of The Oaks and, therefore, help to preserve and enhance this part of the conservation area.

### Local features

- Low brick wall with stone coping around the southern boundary of The Oaks;
- Stone boundary in front of nos. 23 -25 Oaks Crescent;
- Wolverhampton Civic Society blue plaque commemorating John Marston (1836-1918), industrialist and author, who lived at The Oaks;



Above:  
Civic Society blue plaque.



Above:  
*Trees make an important contribution to the character of the conservation area.*

### Negative features

- The Oaks' eastern residential block has inappropriate, bottom-hinged and inward-opening uPVC windows, which detract from the overall appearance of the site;
- Part of the front boundary wall at The Oaks has been lowered virtually to ground level and the railings lost, which undermines the sense of enclosure of the forecourt – similarly, railings and other alterations to the boundary wall around The Oaks, fronting Oaks Crescent;
- The setting of The Oaks is adversely affected by ad hoc car parking immediately in front of the building;
- Loss of architectural detail;
- Insensitive alterations to historic buildings;
- Some front gardens have been replaced with hard standing for car parking.

## Area 2: The Wolverhampton and Midland Counties Eye Infirmary and Environs

### Principal features

- The original Infirmary of 1888 with its two landmark spired turrets (Local List);
- The Nurses' Home of 1927 (Local List);
- The Outpatients'/Accident and Emergency extension of 1937 (Local List);
- Brick boundary walls;
- Line of trees on north side of Merridale Road and along western boundary of the Infirmary;
- Secluded garden between Nurses' Home and Infirmary;
- Paved open space within the angle of the Merridale Road/Compton Road junction;
- Flat roofed former public convenience building.



### Above:

*Secluded garden at the Infirmary site  
(picture taken in 2007)*

### General character and townscape

There are three principal buildings on the site: the original Infirmary of 1888; the Nurses' Home of 1927; and the Outpatients'/Accident and Emergency Extension of 1937. These buildings are quite different in style but all are of definite architectural and historic interest and all were designed by significant local architects.



### Above:

*Boundary walls, railings and gateways are important features of the Infirmary site.*



On the Merridale Road frontage, an original red brick wall with heavy stone copings, set between substantial stone piers survives although the two piers at the entrance to the west of the Nurses' Home have been rebuilt in brick (with the original stone pier caps reinstated). The full length of the wall was originally surmounted by railings, though only around half remains and much of that is in poor condition.

A line of substantial and mature lime trees, runs close to and parallel with Merridale Road (within the curtilage of the Infirmary). The row forms a very important element in the landscaped setting of the site, providing a very strong definition of the southern boundary of the site and screening the buildings and their grounds very effectively from the activity and traffic noise outside.

Immediately to the east of the Infirmary site is a single-storey public convenience that also contains an electricity substation block. Like the 1937 Twentyman building, but on a much smaller scale, the building comprises a series of flat-roofed blocks in a complementary brick. There is a concave, timber canopy covering an external seating area which echoes the two-storey, concave east elevation of the 1937 building. The building is currently disused.

### Local features

- Brick wall bounding the site of the Infirmary;
- Pleasant garden to west of main Infirmary (now enclosed with hoarding);
- Bollards with Wolverhampton crest at junction of Merridale Road and Compton Road;
- Trees and circular flower bed in front of former public convenience.

### Negative features

- Western extensions to the Infirmary, especially the three-storey external staircase, have spoiled the setting of the building and upset the composition of its western façade;
- Much of the curtilage of the Infirmary site has been enclosed by hoardings since the site became surplus to requirements but there is still informal car parking on the Compton Road side both of which detract from the settings of the principal buildings and from the character and appearance of the conservation area.
- The Nurses' Home is also currently vacant;
- The public convenience is boarded up and vacant;
- Loss of original railings;
- Traffic noise and fumes.



Above:

*The Eye Infirmary Building in its heyday (left) and today (right).*

## Area 3: Compton Road

### Principal features

- Numbers 12-34 Compton Road, grade II listed;
- The Royal Oak Public House (c.1905);
- Mid/late 19th century buildings;

### General character and townscape

The most notable building in Compton Road is nos. 12-34, an early 19th century terrace of houses. Numbers 4-10 Compton Road (even) date from the late 19th century. They have stuccoed elevations under slate roofs (some artificial) and are of three storeys, largely complementing the listed terrace in terms of scale, proportion and materials. To the west of the listed terrace, number 36 and nos. 42-44 are again of three storeys and are entirely complementary to adjoining buildings, although both have brick elevations (with nos. 42-44 painted). Numbers 38-40 comprise a two-storey garage, dating from the 1930s. It has rendered elevations with large display windows.



Above:

*New development in Compton Road*

To the west of number 44 the former site of Coopers Hotel has been redeveloped to provide 24 apartments in a Regency style three storey development with parking areas to the rear.

To the west of this new development, and punctuating the corner of Compton Road and Clarendon Street, is the Royal Oak Public House. It is of two storeys, constructed of brick with elaborate brick details under a plain clay tiled roof with crested ridges.



Above:

*The Royal Oak Public House*

On the opposite (south) side is a small group of five properties dating from c.1905 (nos. 21-29 (odd)) and single detached house of c.1930 (no 31).

### Local features

- Iron railings outside nos. 12-34 Compton Road;
- Street trees and bollards with Wolverhampton crest on north side of Compton Road;

### Negative features

- Numbers 38/40 Compton Road, where the windows at ground and first floor level have been replaced in uPVC and an extensive array of advertising and parked cars on the forecourt currently detract from the street scene;
- Loss of architectural detail;
- Insensitive alterations to historic buildings;
- Untidy and unkempt front gardens of some properties on Compton Road.

## 5. Issues

### Positives

- Special historic character and appearance (see summary);
- Well treed urban environment;
- Good public transport connection to city centre.

### Negatives

- Traffic noise and fumes in Compton Road and Merridale Road;
- Loss of original architectural details such as doors, windows, chimney stacks and roof material;
- Many of the historic buildings in the conservation area have been adversely affected by the use of inappropriate modern materials such as the replacement of original timber sash windows with uPVC;

- Alterations and extensions that adversely affect original historic character and appearance;
- Car parking that spoils the setting of the area's historic buildings e.g. at The Oaks;
- Loss of original boundary railings and alterations to historic boundary walls;
- Vacant buildings e.g. Eye Infirmary building, Nurses' Home, public convenience;

### Threats

- Continuing loss of original architectural details (see above);
- Potential decline and loss of trees;
- Pressure for parking space leading to further loss of garden and green open space;
- Deteriorating condition of the locally listed buildings on the Eye Infirmary site



Above:

*Unsympathetic changes in buildings can have a cumulative adverse effect.*

## 6. Management Proposals

### Conservation area review 2010

The Oaks (Merridale Road) Conservation Area was reviewed in 2010 and a new appraisal and management proposals went out to public consultation between 22nd February and 2nd April that year. The results of the consultation were reported back to members in February 2011 and approval was given to the management proposals. No changes were made to the boundary of the conservation area and no further additions were made to the Local List.



Above:

*The Article 4(1) direction can protect against unsympathetic changes to traditional features like this front door.*

### Use of Article 4 directions

The incremental loss of original building materials, boundary walls and architectural detailing and the replacement of painted timber windows and doors with uPVC has been noted as a 'negative' in relation to The Oaks (Merridale Road) Conservation Area. For family houses, such changes are called "permitted development" as set out in the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 1995 (amended 2008), and owners do not need permission from Wolverhampton City Council as the local planning authority. However, powers exist to the Council, known as an Article 4 (1) Direction to which Article 6 applies <sup>1</sup>, to withdraw some of these permitted development rights in the interests of preserving and enhancing the special character and appearance of the Conservation Area.

An Article 4(1) Direction was made in the conservation area on 15th December 2010 and later confirmed following consultation since no objections were received for properties affected. This direction withdraws permitted development rights for the unlisted dwelling houses identified as buildings of townscape merit in the conservation area. This means that potentially harmful alterations to houses are given due consideration through the planning process to help ensure the preservation of unique architectural features and traditional materials.

<sup>1</sup> Note – prior to Amendments made to the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development Order) 1995 that came into force on 6th April 2010 this type of Article 4 Direction used to be known as an Article 4(2) Direction.

The following properties are covered by the The Oaks (Merridale Road) Conservation Area Article 4(1) Direction:

- Compton Road – Nos 27,31 and 44
- Oaks Crescent – Nos 1,2,3,4,5,15,17,20, 21,22,23, 24, 26 and 34

In detail, the Article 4 (1) Direction requires that house owners or tenants obtain planning permission for a prescribed range of development which materially affects aspects of the external appearance of dwelling houses in the conservation area. This includes various kinds of development fronting the highway such as the enlargement, improvement, or other alteration of a dwelling house; alterations to the roof, the construction of an external porch; and the painting of a dwelling house, or of a building or enclosure within its curtilage. The Article 4 (1) Direction also brings under planning control the demolition of gates, fences, walls or other means of enclosure, if it is within the curtilage of a dwelling house and fronts a highway.

Commercial properties or buildings that are divided into flats (i.e. in “multiple occupation”), are already controlled more rigorously as they have far fewer “permitted development” rights than dwelling houses.

### Opportunities for enhancement

#### The council should also:

- Encourage restoration of architectural detail/reversal of unsympathetic alterations where there is sound evidence of the originals, which is essential to the design and character of key historic buildings, especially timber windows, chimney stacks and original roof covering;
- Promote awareness of the value and importance of the conservation area amongst residents with a view to highlighting the importance of carefully considering any alteration or demolition (particularly that which does not require planning permission) and encouraging high standards of maintenance;



#### Above:

*Historic boundary treatments are an important feature of the conservation area.*

- Produce advisory guidance and 'best practice' notes which would assist in retaining the area's prevalent historic character and appearance e.g. written advice regarding (a) alterations to historic buildings, (b) development within conservation areas, (c) the use of materials, (d) tree management and (e) residential parking in front gardens;
- Promote, in association with the relevant property owners, tree management and re-planting programmes in relation to the Eye Infirmary and The Oaks respectively, in order to protect and enhance the significant contribution made by the trees to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area;
- Seek to promote the removal of car parking from the area immediately to the north of The Oaks;
- Encourage retention, reinstatement and repair of historic boundary treatments where there is documentary or physical evidence to determine original form or detailing, in particular the replacement of missing railings to the Merridale Road frontage of the Eye Infirmary and reinstatement of the front boundary wall and railings at The Oaks;
- Seek to restore and bring back into use the Eye Infirmary and Nurses' Home buildings on Merridale Road and the public convenience block at the junction of Compton and Merridale Roads;
- In the context of development proposals seek to secure the removal of the late 20th century extensions from the west front of the original Eye Infirmary and the north-west corner of the Nurses' Home and the re-instatement of the elevations to their original form (see photos on page 23).

### Monitoring and review

This document should be reviewed every five years in the light of the Local Development Framework and emerging government policy. A review should include the following:

- A survey of the conservation area;
- Photographic record of the conservation area;
- An assessment of whether the various recommendations detailed in this document have been acted upon, including proposed enhancements;
- A building condition survey;
- The production of a short report detailing the findings of the survey and any necessary action;
- Publicity and advertising.

## 7. Implications of conservation area designation

### Statutory provisions

Designation as a conservation area brings a number of specific statutory provisions aimed at assisting the “preservation and enhancement” of the area. These are as follows:

- The local authority is under a general duty to ensure the preservation and enhancement of the conservation area, and has a particular duty to prepare proposals (such as conservation area appraisals or grant schemes) to that end;
- In the exercise of any powers under the Planning Acts with respect to any buildings or other land in a conservation area, the Council must take into consideration the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of that area;
- Extra publicity is given to planning applications affecting conservation areas. This is usually achieved through the use of advertising in the local newspaper;
- Conservation Area Consent is required for the demolition of most unlisted buildings and boundary walls in a conservation area and the local authority or the Secretary of State may take enforcement action or institute a criminal prosecution if consent is not obtained.
- Written notice must be given to the Council before works are carried out to any tree in the area;
- The display of advertisements may be somewhat more restricted than elsewhere;
- The Council or the Secretary of State may be able to take steps to ensure that a building in a conservation area is kept in good repair (similar to the powers which protect listed buildings);
- Limited financial assistance may be available for the upkeep of a building in the conservation area through grant schemes with English Heritage or the Heritage Lottery Fund, (though these are usually targeted to areas of economic deprivation).



Above:

*The council has additional controls over works to trees in the conservation area.*

### The requirements for planning permission in a conservation area:

#### Dwelling houses

Certain works to family houses within a conservation area, which are normally considered to be “permitted development”, require planning approval from the Council. The overall effect of these additional controls is that the amount of building works which can be carried out to a family house or within its grounds without needing to submit a planning application is more restricted in a conservation area than elsewhere.

It is difficult to summarise all of the rules so it is always best to check in advance with a planning officer at the Council to find out if permission is required for any of the following:

- Building any kind of extension or out building;
- Verandas, balconies or raised platforms of any kind;
- Any change to the roof including inserting new windows;
- External cladding;
- Installation of satellite dishes and microgeneration equipment.

#### Commercial properties and buildings divided into flats

It should be noted that that commercial properties (such as shops and public houses), houses which are in multiple occupation (flats) and apartment blocks have far fewer permitted development rights than individual houses. Planning permission is required for many alterations to these buildings including replacement windows and installing new shop fronts.

It is recommended that any proposals for new development or alterations of existing buildings in a conservation area should be discussed with a planning officer at the Council before commencing work on site. Telephone enquiries should be made to City Direct (01902) 551155. Wolverhampton City Council will consider the merits of individual planning applications and their impact on the character and appearance of the conservation area. Where there is a detrimental impact on the character and appearance of a conservation area, it is unlikely that planning permission would be given.

#### Works to trees

Within conservation areas, anyone intending lopping or felling a tree greater than 75 mm. diameter at 1.5 metres above the ground must give the Council six weeks written notice before starting the work. This provides the Council with an opportunity of assessing the tree to see if it makes a positive contribution to the character or appearance of the conservation area, in which case a Tree Preservation Order may be served. This protects the tree from felling or inappropriate lopping. Fruit trees are no longer exempt.

#### Advertisements

Advertisement controls are tighter in a conservation area. Certain categories of ‘deemed consent’ advertisements which may have a significant visual impact are not permitted for display without the Council’s specific consent.



### The Unitary Development Plan

The Wolverhampton Unitary Development Plan (UDP) 2001-2011 is a planning document which contains policies and proposals for the physical development and use of land, including measures for the protection and improvement of the environment. The UDP is used by the Council in reaching decisions on planning applications and proposals, which should be in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Chapter 6 of the UDP contains policies for the historic environment including conservation areas.

The adopted UDP can be viewed at the following locations:

- Online by visiting the following website:  
[www.cartoplus.co.uk/wolverhampton\\_2](http://www.cartoplus.co.uk/wolverhampton_2)
- Wolverhampton City Council, Regeneration and Environment (Reception 24, Second Floor), Civic Centre, St Peter's Square, Wolverhampton
- Wolverhampton Central Library and branch libraries across Wolverhampton

Copies can also be purchased from the Planning Policy and Area Plans team on 01902 555636.

These policies will eventually be superseded by new policies contained in the Local Development Framework work on which is in progress. To keep up to date with the current situation see the Council's web site at:

<http://www.wolverhampton.gov.uk/environment/planning/policy/ldf/introduction.htm>

## 8. Bibliography and maps

C. Upton, A History of Wolverhampton,  
Phillimore, 1998

M. Mills, Mapping the Past: Wolverhampton  
1577-1986, 1993

The Oaks (Merridale Road) Conservation Area  
Appraisal, WCC Cabinet Report, Oct 2004

Wolverhampton History and Heritage website  
([www.localhistory.scit.wlv.ac.uk](http://www.localhistory.scit.wlv.ac.uk))

Wolverhampton Tithe Map 1842

Steen and Blakett Plan of the Town  
of Wolverhampton 1871

Ordnance Survey Map 1889, 1902, 1938

### Sources of further information

Conservation Areas: A Brief Guide and List of  
Conservation Areas in the City of Wolverhampton  
(copies available from the Historic Environment  
Service at the City Council).

Wolverhampton City Council  
Historic Environment Service  
Regeneration and Environment  
Civic Centre,  
St. Peter's Square  
Wolverhampton WV1 1RP  
Tel: 01902 555625 / 555622 / 555617  
[www.wolverhampton.gov.uk/conservation](http://www.wolverhampton.gov.uk/conservation)  
*For information about conservation areas in  
Wolverhampton.*

English Heritage – West Midlands Region  
The Axis

10 Holliday Street  
Birmingham B1 1TG  
Telephone: 0121 625 6820

*For further information relating to listed buildings  
and conservation areas.*

The Georgian Group  
6 Fitzroy Square,  
London  
W1T 5DX

*Promotes the protection and preservation  
of buildings of the Georgian period.*

The Victorian Society  
1 Priory Gardens  
Bedford Park  
London W4 1TT  
Tel: 020 8994 1019

*Promotes the protection and preservation of  
buildings of the Victorian and Edwardian periods  
(1837-1915) and produces a useful set of leaflets on  
the care of houses from this period.*

The Twentieth Century Society,  
70 Cowcross Street,  
London  
EC1M 6EJ

*Promotes the protection and preservation  
of buildings of the 20th Century.*

The Society for the Protection of Ancient  
Buildings (SPAB)  
37 Spital Square  
London E1 6DY  
Tel: 020 7377 1644

*For an excellent range of technical advice leaflets.*

Old photographs are from the Wolverhampton  
Archives and Local Studies collection based at  
the Molineux Hotel Building.



## Sustainability Statement

The Wolverhampton Revised Unitary Development Plan (UDP) sets out the Council's policies which are used for development control purposes. This plan will eventually be replaced by a new kind of policy document called a Local Development Framework (LDF) comprising a number of documents including Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD) which will provide detailed policies on specific issues. These documents will require sustainability appraisal.

Recent guidance from the (Office of the Deputy Prime Minister) ODPM and English Heritage (2005) indicates that Conservation Area Appraisals (CAAs) should not be adopted by local authorities as SPD and therefore do not require sustainability appraisal. CAAs will however be used to support forthcoming SPD on the Historic Environment which will require sustainability appraisal.

By their very nature, conservation area appraisals focus on the environmental aspects of a historic area but can also acknowledge social or economic problems which have links to environmental conditions. CAAs can highlight issues but cannot guarantee the timing or implementation of solutions. For example highway issues may depend upon programmes within the West Midlands Transport Plan or the identification of need for significant investment in buildings may rely on securing funding from external sources, the availability of which may be restricted. The identification of the need for investment in the context of a CAA can however be beneficial when bidding for resources or reviewing programmes.

Preparing CAAs can have social and economic benefits. They can renew the interest of local people in heritage and local history and raise awareness of conservation issues. In turn this can help to enhance community identity and encourage participation in the planning process.

Designation or extension of a conservation area can provide an impetus for environmental improvements which in turn can improve the satisfaction of local people with their neighbourhood as a place to live. However, a potentially negative aspect may be the upward influence on house prices in conservation areas which could affect affordability of houses in an area. Economic benefits are likely to accrue in particular where the image of an area is improved as a business location or as a visitor destination, generating local income and employment.

Appraisals help focus attention on the need to maintain and enhance the quality of local landscapes and townscapes and conserve and protect the local historic environment. Protection of trees and green landscapes may protect or provide biodiversity habitats and provide opportunities for people to appreciate wildlife, which is of particular value in metropolitan areas.



**Wolverhampton**  
City Council



Historic Environment Service  
Regeneration and Environment  
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