

UNION MILL

Conservation Area Appraisal & Management Proposals

March 2007

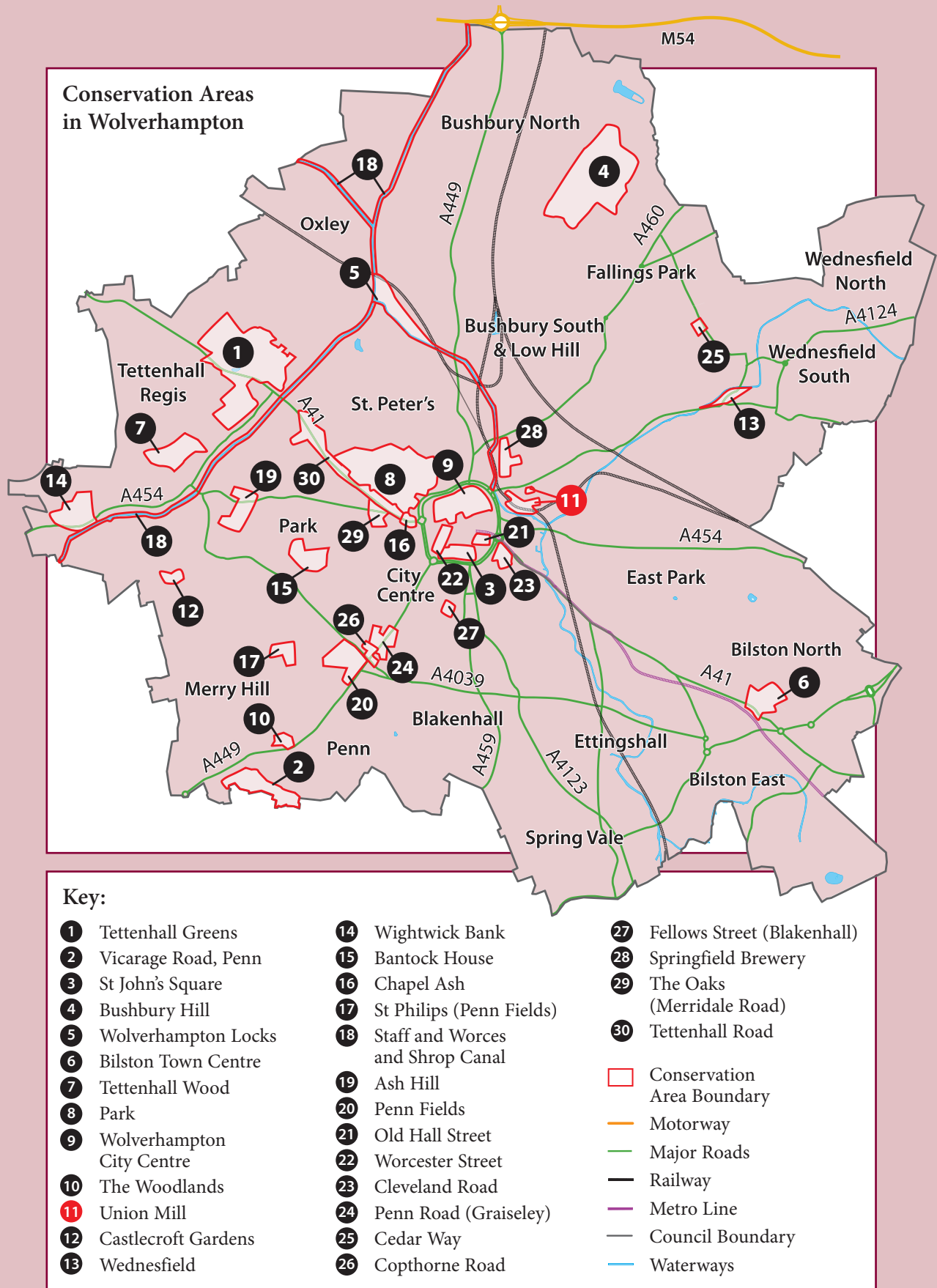
Wolverhampton
City Council



Conservation Area Character Appraisal

This document is the appraisal for the Union Mill Conservation Area which the Council approved on 14th March 2007.

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

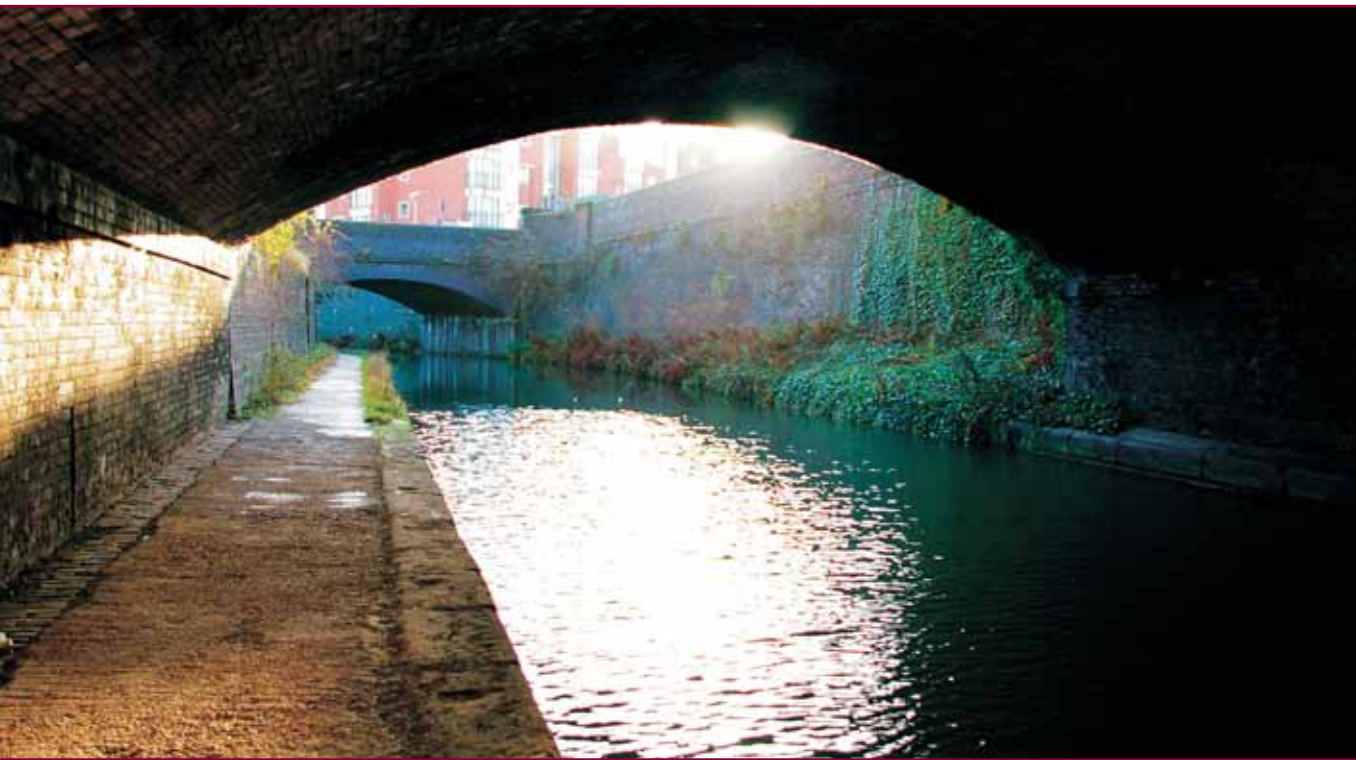


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Above:
*Traditional floor-scape,
Bailey Street*



1. Introduction

The Union Mill Conservation Area was designated by Wolverhampton Borough Council on 21 November 1985.

This document defines and records the special architectural and historic interest of the Union Mill Conservation Area and identifies opportunities for enhancement.

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 Union Mill Conservation Area can be assessed.

Above: View along the Birmingham Canal looking towards Mill Street Bridge

2. Location and Setting

The Union Mill Conservation Area lies east of Wolverhampton city centre in an area of land between two arterial roads that proceed eastwards from the ring-road: Wednesfield Road (A4124) and Horseley Fields (leading to A454). It sits within a wholly urban semi-industrial setting within a few minutes walking distance of the city centre.

The conservation area lies on land that descends eastwards from the low promontory where St Peter's Church stands at the historic core of the city. The descent can be experienced along the aptly named Corn Hill which declines in height by approximately 8 metres between Mill Street Bridge and The Great Western pub.

The area is traversed by short lengths of two canals, the Birmingham Canal and the Wyrley and Essington Canal. Horseley Fields Junction, the meeting place of these two canals, lies in the south-eastern corner of the conservation area. The Birmingham to Wolverhampton mainline railway also passes through the conservation area. The railway is steeply embanked on the east side with the result that the north-eastern part of the area around the former Low Level railway station is significantly lower than the part containing the existing railway station and the Birmingham Canal.

The canals were built to follow a level course along the contours of the hill but, in order to make way for the railway c1850, a section of the Birmingham Canal was re-routed westwards and this required a shallow cutting (part of which was later enclosed in a short tunnel) to be cut into the landscape between Mill Street bridge and Broad Street wharf.

The conservation area lies mainly within Heath Town Ward. A small part located in the angle of the two canals beside Horseley Fields lies in East Park Ward.

3. History

The conservation area is named after Union Mill which once stood beside the Birmingham Canal at the end of Union Mill Street. Unfortunately the mill, which was built in 1813, was mostly demolished after a fire in 1989.



Since Wolverhampton was a focus of major routeways, it is believed that the locality would have been associated with a settlement of some form since prehistoric times. Archaeological evidence for early settlement and human activity in the vicinity of the conservation area is sparse and is likely to have been eroded by the imposition of the canal and railway networks in the 18th and 19th centuries.

Although the wider expansion of Wolverhampton had started in the 18th century, Isaac Taylor's Plan of Wolverhampton in 1750 shows that the conservation area at that time was largely un-developed open fields. After this the development of the area was influenced by the creation of canal and railway infrastructure due to the expansion of the town as an industrial, agricultural and market centre.

Above: Union Mill in the 1980s

The Birmingham Canal was surveyed by James Brindley and completed in 1772. It was intended to give Birmingham access to the Black Country coalfields and runs from Birmingham via Smethwick, Bilston and Wolverhampton to join the Staffordshire and Worcestershire Canal at Aldersley.

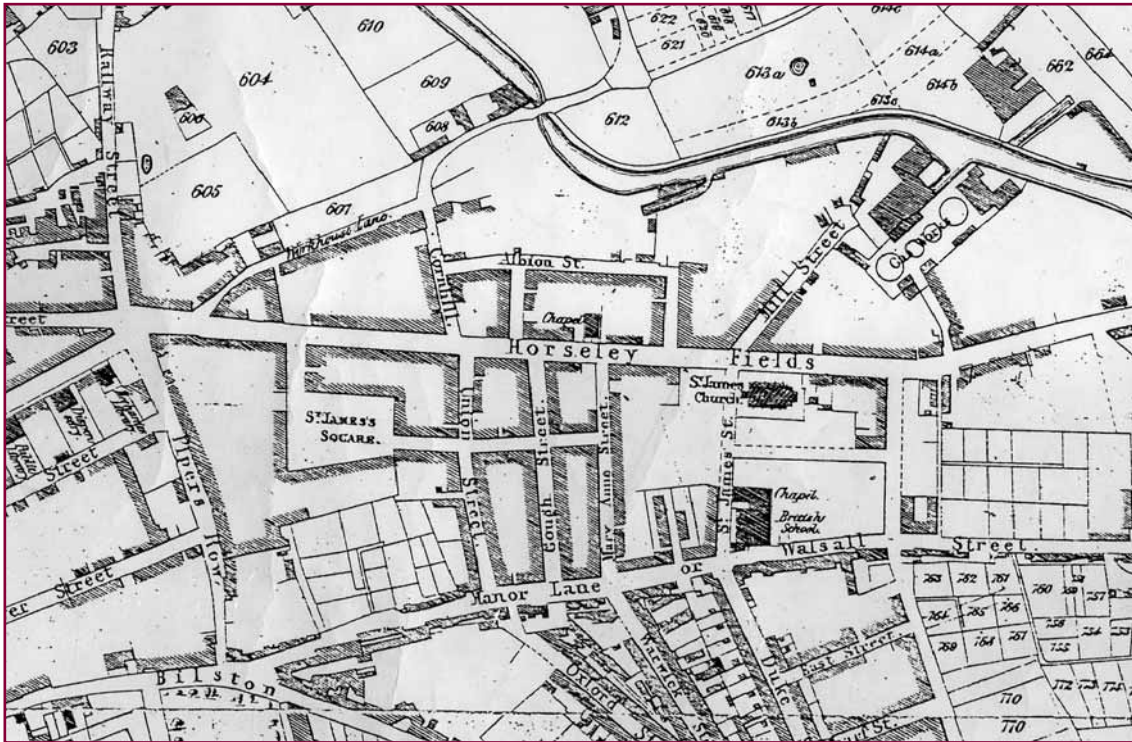
In 1792 work began on the Wyrley and Essington Canal from its junction with the Birmingham Canal (in the eastern part of the conservation area) where extensive wharves were built. Completed in 1797, its primary function was to carry coal and other raw materials necessary for the development of the Black Country. The two canals encouraged the development of the locality as mills and warehouses took advantage of the proximity of Wolverhampton and the expanding West Midlands canal network.

The early years of the railway in Wolverhampton were competitive and complex and in the 1850s resulted in two separate but parallel systems between Birmingham and Wolverhampton - and two railway stations. The Shrewsbury & Birmingham Railway Company (S.B.R.) completed the line from Shrewsbury to Wolverhampton by 1849, to a temporary station in Willenhall Road (outside the conservation area). By 1851 a new, permanent central station had been completed (the 'high-level' and forerunner of today's mainline station) but the London & North Western Railway Company (L.N.W.R.) would not let its rivals use it. Court procedures followed and it was not until the following year that a through route was enabled.

Meanwhile, the mixed broad and narrow gauge Oxford, Worcester & Wolverhampton Railway (O.W.W.), authorised in 1845, was making slow progress to a new station, whose location had been determined by 1852, below the existing S.B.R. and L.N.W.R. 'high-level' station. The new station became known as the 'low-level' station which, after various railway company take-overs, became the Great Western Railway's (G.W.R.) terminus in the town. Wolverhampton's two railway stations (high-level and low-level) were connected by an underpass and pedestrian colonnade. The original high-level station has been replaced with today's mainline station from the 1960s onwards. The low level station closed to passengers in 1972 and goods in 1981.

An indication of the importance given to railway travel, and perhaps an early sign of the railways' coming supremacy, was the re-routing of the Birmingham Canal to enable the building of the high level station. At first the canals and railways co-existed, the railways concentrating on passengers and light goods and the canals on bulk goods. But by the middle of the 19th century railways formed a national network, forcing canal tolls down and sending them into a decline that lasted for over a hundred years.

The conservation area lies outside the main historic core of Wolverhampton. In the 19th century it was still something of a novelty for industry to occupy former agricultural land on the periphery of the town: It was written of Horseley Fields that '...the noise of the forge and steam hammer is heard, when formerly the lowing of cattle and bleating of sheep were the prevailing sounds'.



Above: Extract from Tithe map 1842

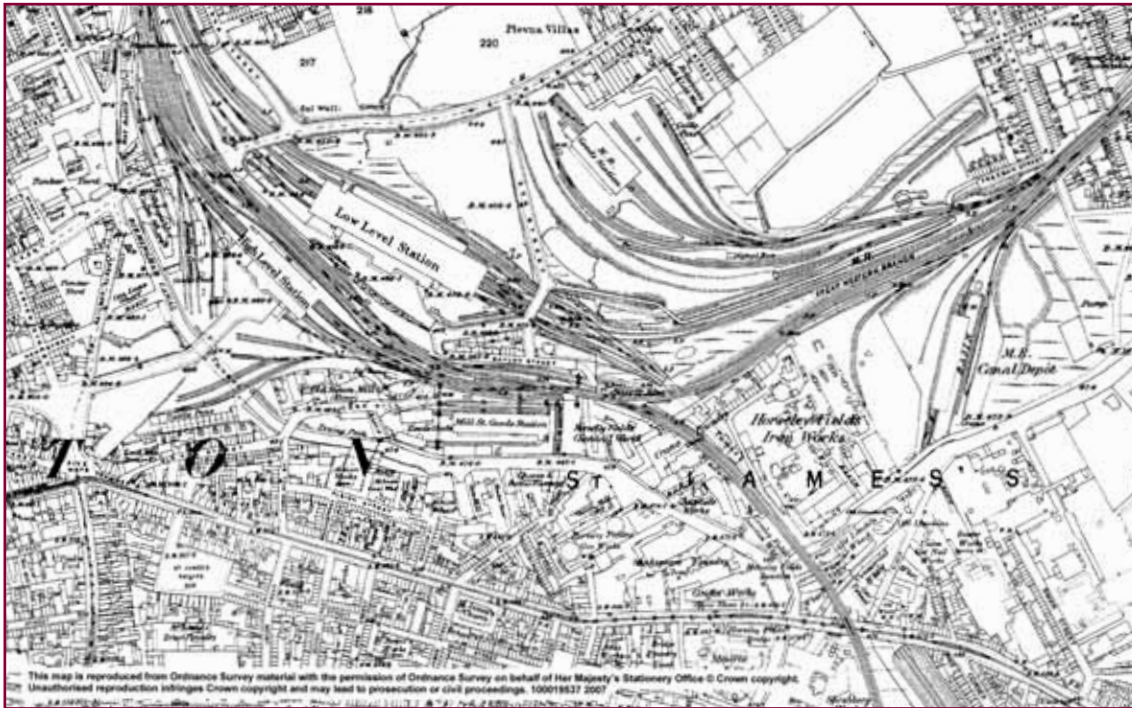
The Tithe Map of 1842 shows the assessment area bounded by Stafford Road, the major north/south route to the east, Berry Street and Horseley Fields to the south, Canal Street (later Wednesfield Road) to the north and Birmingham Old Canal (1772), Wyrley and Essington Canal (1797) and New Mill Street to the east. A new street pattern is evident which includes streets such as Corn Hill, Albion Street and Mill Street, but large areas of undeveloped land still remain.



Above: Extract from Steen & Blckett map 1871

By the time of Peel and Cobbett's Map of Wolverhampton of 1864, the Great Western Railway with Low Level Station and the Stour Valley London and North Western Railway with High Level Station are shown. Various new roads had been laid to the east of the stations including Sun Street and Bailey Street. Intensive

industrial development is evident in the prolific numbers of maps produced from the 1870s, such as the residential and industrial development to the south of the railway lines and particularly along the Birmingham Canal shown in Steen and Blckett's Map of 1871.



Above: Extract from 1884 Ordnance Survey map

The O.S. First Edition of 1884 identifies the great variety of industries which had sprung up around the stations including: Old Steam Mill (flour) in Corn Hill; Mill Street Goods Station; Horseley Fields Chemical and Iron Works, Crane Foundry, cattle pens adjacent to sidings north of Old Mill Street, Albion Iron Works and Coal Wharf, Saw Mills and Cheese and Butter Factory; Horseley Fields Gas Works, Shakespeare Iron Foundry, Griffin Horse Shoe Works and old limekilns.

One of the most significant factors affecting the area in the 20th century was the construction of the ring road in the 1960s, which effectively severed it from the town. However the survival of the canal, railways and large scale industrial premises have preserved the landscape integrity of the core of the area, despite the loss of small scale workshops and early residential areas.

There have been a number of changes in the Union Mill Conservation Area during the 20 years since designation in 1985 most notably the loss of Union Mill itself, demolished in 1989 after a fire. Other notable losses include the demolition of the grade II listed former Midland Railways Goods Depot (1882) in Wednesfield Road (replaced by a large warehouse) and the demolition of Edmund Vaughan Stampings (also known as the Griffin Works) (c1845) in Horseley Fields (currently an empty site). Albion Mill has been converted to residential use as part of the redevelopment of the area between Horseley Fields and the Birmingham Canal with three or four storey blocks of apartments. Both Low Level railway station and the Old Steam Mill have been empty since designation of the conservation area.

The Black Country Development Corporation carried out works in Sun Street in 1996 including road widening and removal of a bridge over the disused railway. A number of historic buildings (including Lincoln Street works) were repaired as part of a Heritage Economic Regeneration Scheme (HERS) in the late 1990s.

4. Character and Appearance of the Conservation Area

General description and summary

The special interest of the Union Mill Conservation Area lies in the buildings, structures and sites of the vibrant historic working environment that grew up around the junctions of two late 18th century canals and three 19th century railways. Wolverhampton had a relatively large group of canal to train transshipment facilities and the conservation area's significance lies in the canals and railways and associated buildings and facilities through which goods and, to a lesser extent, people, were passed.

Whilst the extent of the area in which this activity took place was once much larger, re-development in the second half of the 20th century resulted in the demolition of many historic buildings. The original 1985 boundaries of the conservation area were drawn to omit areas where historic character and appearance had already been lost. For example, Wolverhampton High Level Station, which was virtually rebuilt in the 1960s, was not included.

The conservation area, therefore, covers the most significant remaining elements of a wider area that once contained a more extensive and diverse range of mills, works and depots set beside a more complex pattern of canal basins, wharfs and railway sidings. In the light of this, it will be seen that the conservation area contains an important and diminishing record of the growth of Wolverhampton.



*Above left: Looking North towards the entrance to Broad Street basin.
The road bridge over the canal is now an exhibit at the Black Country Museum.
Above right: The same view today.*

The conservation area is notable for the following:

- Historic railway and canal buildings;
- A place of transhipment between canal and railway;
- The Birmingham Canal;
- The Wyrley and Essington Canal;
- Horseley Fields Junction;
- Broad Street Wharf including warehouse, depot, footbridge and basin;
- Birmingham to Wolverhampton mainline railway;
- Architectural unity of the area's industrial buildings;
- Bridges, tunnels, viaduct and other railway structures of the 19th century;
- Former G.W.R. Low Level Railway Station;
- Landmark quality of The Old Steam Mill and Mill Street Goods Depot;
- A strong sense of enclosure arising from high retaining and supporting walls beside canal and railway;
- Dramatic changes in level and a varied interplay between road, rail and canal;
- Wildlife and greenery beside Wyrley and Essington Canal;
- Public realm improvements in Sun Street, Bailey Street and Lincoln Street;
- Stoplock, basin bridges, canal basin and other canal structures;
- Important group of inter-related industrial buildings at Corn Hill;
- Historic floorscape of stone cobbles and kerbs with blue engineering brick paving;
- Features of local interest e.g. bridge signs, street name signs and canal fingerpost.

The omission of any particular building, feature or space should not be taken to imply that it is of no interest.

Present character: activities and uses

Development and activity arising from the linkages between canal, railway and road is one of the defining characteristics of the conservation area. Transport along canal, railway and road remains the most significant activity in the area but because of the decline in the commercial and industrial uses, the conservation area contains a high proportion of derelict and disused sites and buildings that await re-development.

Next to canal and railway, the conservation area's current regular activities take place in three of the area's listed buildings: The Great Western, an isolated but popular urban pub; Albion Mill, converted to residential apartments; and the former Mill Street Goods Depot which is now offices and workshops for Network Rail and the biggest source of employment in the conservation area. There is an office at 16a Union Mill Street and an insignificant number of small-scale workshops and businesses operating from premises in Union Mill Street and beside Old Limekiln Wharf.

Trains pass through the heart of the conservation area night and day and can be noisy. Amplified travel announcements from Wolverhampton Railway Station can be heard in the vicinity of Bailey Street and Sun Street.



Above: The Great Western public House and Corn Hill Railway Bridge

The canals are used by pleasure boats, though very few cruise the Wyrley and Essington. Canal towpaths are popular with walkers and cyclists, all year round, but more commonly in summer. The towpath is part of the Birmingham and Black Country Canal Cycleway and the Sustrans National Cycle Route 81.

The only vehicular route through the area (Corn Hill/Sun Street) carries local traffic between Horseley Fields and Wednesfield Road and to the pub, Network Rail depot and Mail Centre. Large vehicles are prohibited by the low height of Corn Hill bridge. The sound of heavy traffic on Horseley Fields permeates the southern quarter of the conservation area particularly around Horseley Fields Junction.

Street pattern

The layout of the conservation area has been principally determined by the course of the 18th century canals and, about 50 years later, the mid-19th century railways. Canal and railway follow a roughly parallel course along what was formerly the eastern fringe of the town, trying to get as close to the town centre as the hill's contours and existing development would allow. The area's buildings relate primarily to canal and railway although some buildings' original relationship may have been lost as many canal basins have been infilled and railway tracks and sidings removed.

In comparison, roads play a relatively minor role in the conservation area's layout, subservient to canal and rail corridors. The main vehicular route through the area (Corn Hill) is narrow with tight bends as it weaves between, over and under railway and canal.

The first road into the area, a precursor of Corn Hill, is likely to have been to a steam mill built in the 1790s beside the Birmingham Canal. A lane is marked on OS survey drawings of 1816 leading from the town to this mill (the site of today's Old Steam Mill). The Wolverhampton tithe map of 1842 identifies Corn Hill, joined by Workhouse Lane to the west, leading to the mill and continuing across the canal to a new road, New Mill Street. New Mill Street was later (c 1850) moved eastward, and renamed Sun Street, to make way for the GWR railway line to the Low Level station.

Sun Street (south side) and Bailey Street (North side) were formerly two rows of mid 19th century terraced houses of which only The Great Western pub remains, its large rear car park and seating area being the site of the terraced houses.

Union Mill Street is devoid of historic interest and lies for the most part outside the conservation area. From a central 'hub' outside no. 16a (within the conservation area) there is a radial fan-like alignment of the buildings and boundaries between the Cheese and Butter Warehouse, Union Wharf, and the Union Mill site. Nos. 16a and 16b were formerly wharf manager's houses (a third manager's house at the end of Union Mill Street was demolished after the fire at Union Mill in 1989). This historic pattern should be preserved as an interesting example of a single road providing access to several canalside sites.



Above: 16a and 16 Union Mill Street - the gap to the right is the site of the former Union Mill wharf manager's house.



Architectural and historic character

The architectural and historic character of the conservation area derives from a small number of key canal and railway buildings and structures. The majority are tall industrial buildings, built in brick, with a simple plan form designed to meet the requirements of canal and railway transhipment. They have a plain appearance and most have a minimum of architectural detail or decoration reflecting their working function as mill, warehouse or depot. In addition there are many structures, including bridges, walls, tunnels, and items of historic floorscape that further contribute to the area's industrial character and appearance.

Ancillary industrial buildings such as the Sack Warehouse in Corn Hill and the two remaining buildings on the Union Mill site are no more than two storeys. Elsewhere, tall buildings are the norm i.e. three, four or five storeys (Cheese and Butter Warehouse, Old Steam Mill, Albion Mill) or buildings with high internal space to accommodate machinery and goods (Hydraulic Engine House, Mill Street Goods Depot).

Industrial buildings are commonly built in regular bays with recessed arches and small regularly spaced windows and loading bays to either canal or railway. Buildings such as the Mill Street Goods Depot and the Old Steam Mill loaded to and from both railway and canal.

The principal exception to the general industrial built form of the area is the former Low Level railway station. It is built in an Italianate style to emphasise the importance and status given to railway travel and has a domestic, human scale befitting the interchange of people rather than goods. The station is a good example of a medium sized mid 19th century provincial main line railway station.

The Great Western pub and No. 16a Union Mill Street are the only examples of domestic architecture in the conservation area. Both are detached two storey buildings with the scale, form and outward appearance of a dwelling.

Above left: Cheese and Butter Warehouse in the foreground with Albion Mill beyond and new canalside apartments between.

Generally speaking, buildings relating to the canal date from the first half of the 19th century and buildings relating to the railways date from the second half of the 19th century. These two periods of construction reflect the arrival of the canals (Birmingham 1772; Wyrley and Essington 1792) and the railways (Shrewsbury and Birmingham 1849; London & North Western 1851; Oxford, Worcester & Wolverhampton 1854) respectively.



Wolverhampton lies on a hill. Construction of a railway close to the town centre was a feat of engineering requiring the re-alignment of the Birmingham Canal, significant embankment of the track and construction of several bridges and both tunnel and viaduct. Remaining canal and railway structures are visible reminders of the area's past and an intrinsic part of the conservation area's character and appearance, giving the area a local identity and sense of place. The most noteworthy are the grade II listed retaining wall and arcaded pedestrian gallery to the south-west of the station ('The Colonnade'), the cobbled ramp and wall leading to Wednesfield Road, the portals of the GWR railway tunnel and the mainline railway viaduct beside the foundry. They should be preserved.

These and other bridges, walls, gate piers and gates of note are marked on the Townscape Appraisal map as 'Buildings of Townscape Merit'. They are all recorded in the Black Country Sites and Monuments Record.

Building materials

The area's buildings are constructed from a limited palette of building materials consisting predominantly of brick, slate, timber and cast-iron with some use of natural stone.

The most common walling material is red and blue brick. Early canalside buildings such as Albion Mill and the Cheese and Butter Warehouse are constructed with hand made red bricks and post-railway buildings such as the Mill Street Goods Depot and Hydraulic Engine House are constructed with darker mass-produced red bricks with a wider range of tones. The use of blue bricks is common

especially blue engineering bricks used for bridges, retaining walls and tunnels. The Great Western uses a mix of the two colours to decorative effect. The Low Level Station is constructed with blue or grey bricks with ashlar stone features and dressings.

Stone is uncommon as a building material and is mainly used for architectural details or dressings as, for example, keystones above window arches (Cheese and Butter Warehouse), corbels (Albion Mill) and a ground floor stone band course (Old Steam Mill). Welsh slate roofs are prevalent.

Stone cobbles and kerbs in the carriageway and blue engineering brick paving in the footway are part of the historic floorscape of Corn Hill and Bailey Street. A small percentage of stone cobbles were replaced after modern tarmac was removed (c2001).

Below: Historic floorscape in Corn Hill



Small-paned cast-iron windows are characteristic of the industrial buildings but domestic buildings such as the former Low Level station, The Great Western and no 16a Union Mill Street have timber vertical sliding sash windows. Of particular note is the use of fire-proof cast-iron in the Old Steam Mill.

Listed buildings

There are nine listed buildings in Union Mill Conservation Area. 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.



Above: *Lincoln Street buildings*

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

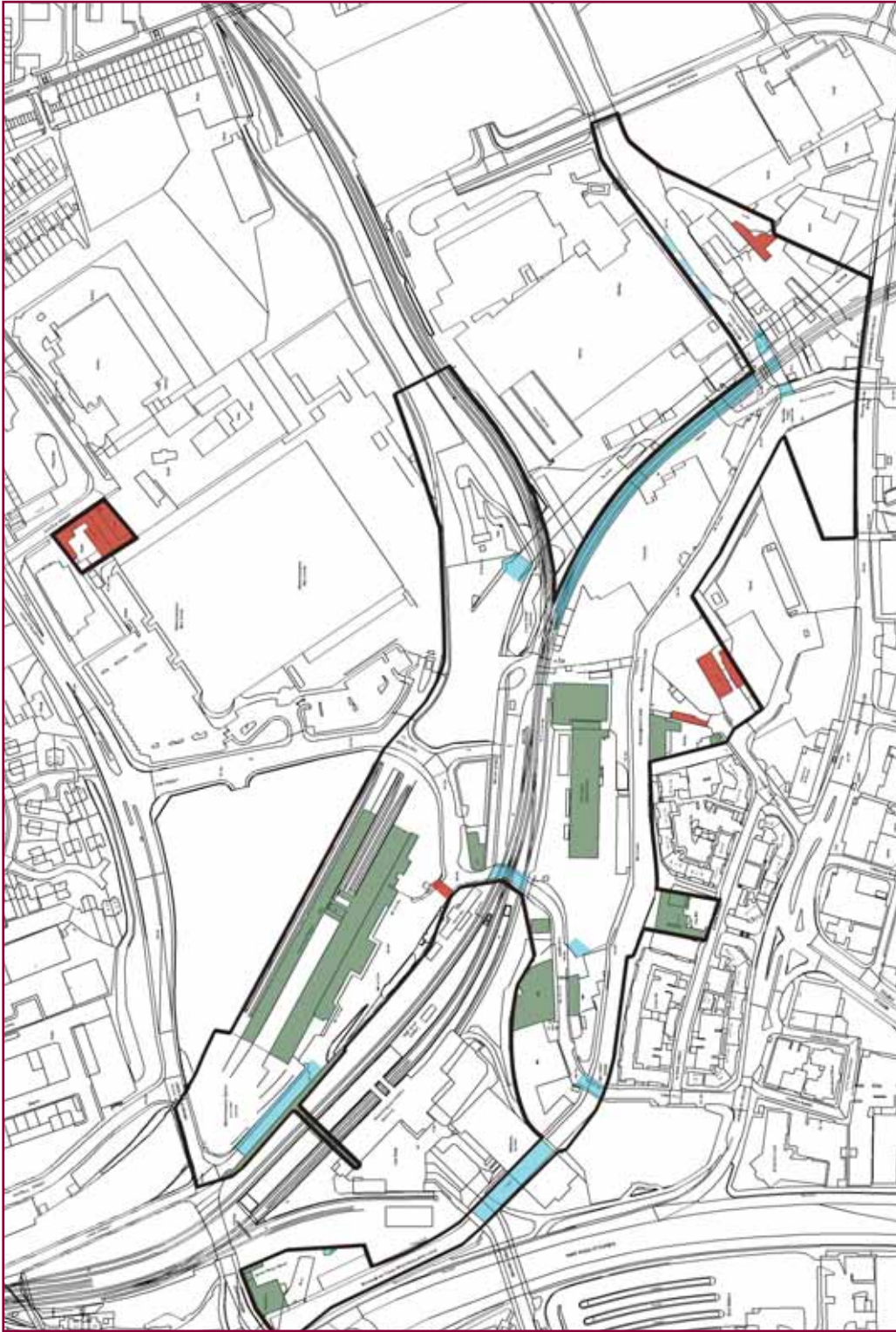
planning permission to a building included in the City of Wolverhampton Local List will be expected to take into account the special architectural and historic interest of the property.

The re-located gates and gate piers to Low Level station is the only building in the conservation area on the Council's Local List. Four further buildings are recommended for local listing: Lincoln Street buildings; Union Mill warehouses: 16b Union Mill Street and the slip dock. These are identified on the accompanying Townscape Appraisal map.

Buildings of Townscape Merit

Buildings identified as having 'townscape merit' will vary, but commonly they will be good examples of relatively unaltered historic buildings or structures where their style, detailing and building materials provide the streetscape with interest and variety. Most importantly, they make a positive contribution to the special interest of the conservation area. Where a building has been heavily altered, and restoration would be impracticable, they are excluded.

With listed and locally listed buildings, Buildings of Townscape Merit help create the conservation area's distinctive and interesting historic townscape. As recommended in Planning Policy Guidance 15: Planning and the Historic Environment, the general presumption should be in favour of retaining buildings which make a positive contribution to the character or appearance of a conservation area. Buildings of Townscape Merit, mostly canal and railway structures, are marked on the Townscape Appraisal map.



Townscape Appraisal Map

Key:

-  Current conservation area boundary
-  Listed building
-  Building on local list
-  Buildings of townscape merit/
canal or railway feature of special interest



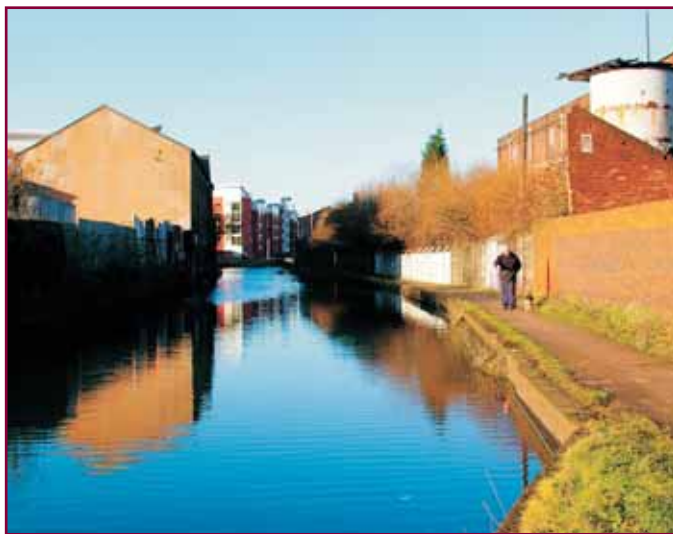
Focal points, vistas and views

The conservation area is on two levels: north-east and south-west of the mainline railway.

North-east of the mainline railway, the land is almost level but rising slightly from the flat expanse of the Low Level railway station site to the steep embankment and vertical retaining walls of the railway tracks. From this area the railway is a looming presence above which the top storeys of the Mill Street Goods Depot and the Old Steam Mill protrude.

From the gates in Sun Street and Wednesfield Road there are oblique views of the Italianate façade of the former Low Level station but its impressive façade is not easily visible from elsewhere.

In Sun Street, where the former route of the Great Western Railway is commemorated by the setting of railway lines within the paving design, there is a good view of the disused tracks and arched platforms of the Low Level station. The tall brick chimney stacks and ceramic pots are a homely feature in an otherwise industrial townscape.



Above left: View along the Birmingham Canal with gable end of the Cheese and Butter Warehouse on the left. Two cast-iron bridges on the right passed over basins serving the Mill Street Depot building which can be seen at top right.

Above right: The same view today.

South of the railway, the Mill Street Goods Depot and the Old Steam Mill are the main landmark buildings, set above the level course of the canal which has been slightly dug into the landscape. The tall buildings, old and new, on the south side of the Birmingham Canal between Mill Street bridge and the Cheese and Butter Warehouse dominate this length of the towpath and can occasionally be glimpsed from points further north and west. Corn Hill follows a tortuous route through the area, opening up sudden, new and often very dramatic views at each turn.

Proceeding eastwards from Broad Street, views from the Birmingham Canal towpath are restricted by the buildings on either side until the vacant site opposite the foundry. On the Wyrley and Essington Canal, beyond the bridges at Horseley Fields Junction, there are more expansive views eastwards.

Trees and natural/cultivated landscape

There is a row of trees beneath the retaining wall opposite the former Low Level station but trees are not a feature of this former industrial townscape. Most trees in the conservation area have self-seeded on neglected spots. Nevertheless, they make a valuable contribution to the area especially on derelict sites besides the canal.

The canal network provides an important wildlife corridor through Wolverhampton, supporting aquatic habitats and enabling the movement of species through and into the region. Within the conservation area, the Birmingham Canal passes through a cutting and tunnel and is mostly built up on either side so canalside greenery is not common. The Wyrley

and Essington Canal is less enclosed with a broader towpath and aquatic and canalside vegetation is much more conspicuous.

Open spaces

Currently the only notable open space in the conservation area is the private securely enclosed grassed area east of The Great Western pub between the railway and the Wolverhampton Mail Centre. This area was the site of a junction of railway tracks belonging to the Great Western Railway some of which came out of a tunnel in the south-eastern corner. The brick entrance to the blocked railway tunnel remains.

Other open spaces which were formerly crossed by railway tracks provide an important setting and context for the buildings to which they are related, for example, land west of the former Low Level station and around Mill Street Goods Depot. Similarly the southern forecourt of the former Low Level station is vital to that building's setting.

Immediately to the east of the Horseley Fields Junction on the Wyrley and Essington Canal, there is a small area of grassed public open space where the canal narrows beside the stoplock.

Public realm

The public realm is mainly confined to the roads of Sun Street, Bailey Street and Corn Hill and the two canals. Pedestrian connection between the two is only possible from Sun Street to Wednesfield Road via The Colonnade in front of the Low Level station. Beside Horseley Fields Junction there is a vehicular lane giving pedestrian access to the canal towpaths.

There are few pedestrians and, with the exception of modern street lighting columns, no roadside street furniture. The floorscape, where historic stone cobbles and blue brick paving remains, is coldly practical but part of the industrial character of the area. Beside the canals, the towpaths are clear and well maintained. There are areas of historic paving on the towpath around the Horseley Fields Junction.

Areas of historic paving are a vital part of the character and appearance of the Union Mill Conservation Area and should be retained. Other local features such as the canalside finger post at Horseley Fields Junction, bridge signs on Mill Street Bridge and Horseley Fields Bridge and tiled street names of Sun Street and Bailey Street make a valuable contribution to the area's distinctive identity and sense of place.

Identification of character areas

The Union Mill Conservation Area divides into four distinct character areas. These are:

- Area 1:** Low Level station and area north of mainline railway;
- Area 2:** Land between mainline railway and Birmingham Canal, Corn Hill;
- Area 3:** The Birmingham Canal;
- Area 4:** The Wyrley and Essington Canal.

Area 1. Low Level station and area north of mainline railway

Principal features

- Low Level Station;
- The Great Western;
- Retaining wall and arcaded gallery known as 'The Colonnade';
- Cobbled ramp and retaining wall to Wednesfield Road;
- Western portal of G.W.R. tunnel;
- Historic floorscape of Sun Street and Bailey Street;
- Open space east of The Great Western.

Townscape

This area lies below the mainline Birmingham to Wolverhampton railway whose retaining walls block any southward views into the northern part of the conservation area. The vacant site north of the former Low Level station and the open space to the east give the area a spacious character albeit dominated by the overbearing presence of the mainline railway and its electrical gantries.



Above: *Low level Station (2006)*

The principal feature of the area is the former Low Level station but, because this building has been sited to greet passengers arriving from the town, its grandeur is stifled by its location directly facing the imposing tall retaining wall of the mainline railway. The station, and the nearby Great Western pub, are two-storey buildings with a domestic scale quite different to the industrial-scale four- and five- storey warehouses found elsewhere in the conservation area.

Because the station is disused and most of the railway tracks have been removed, the area has lost much of its former railway character although this is countered by Bailey Street's and Sun Street's robust floorscape of stone cobbles and blue engineering brick paving. In addition, the grade II listed retaining wall and arcaded pedestrian gallery south-west of the station ('The Colonnade'), the cobbled ramp and wall leading to Wednesfield Road and the western portal of the GWR railway tunnel make a positive contribution to the area's historic appearance.

Buildings and structures of interest

The former Great Western Railway Low Level Station (grade II listed) was built by three railway companies which became part of the Great Western Railway (GWR). It opened, unfinished, in 1854 and the main station buildings were probably finished by 1855. It had an overall roof (removed in 1934) and was built to accommodate mixed broad and narrow gauge tracks. It was enlarged in 1869 after the broad gauge was lifted. A length of broad gauge track is visible at the north end of the platform.

The station buildings, containing offices and passenger facilities, are on the south side facing the town. The façade is Italianate composed of a long and symmetrical two-storey central main block flanked by two-storey pavilions. The principal internal feature is the double height booking hall in the central block. The late 19th century cast iron gates and gate piers at the Sun Street entrance are 'locally listed'. They were relocated to the present site from the former Electric Construction Company, Bushbury, in 1987.



Above: Pedestrian gallery and underpass link between high and low level stations. 'The Colonnade'.

From c1880 a long, tiled and arcaded pedestrian gallery and underpass (grade II listed) provided access from the low level station to the high level station, incorporated into a retaining wall and passing under the mainline railway. This unusual feature, constructed with blue engineering brick and ashlar and cast-iron details with white glazed brick lining to gallery and underpass, was intended to create a prestigious link between the two competing stations.

A cobbled, ramped access, with blue brick retaining wall, connects Wednesfield Road to the north-west side of the station forecourt. It also dates from the 1880s.

The Great Western (grade II listed) is a public house dating from the 1850s, the sole remaining building of a demolished terrace of houses and an interesting survival in a group of railway buildings. It is a two-storey building built of red brick with decorative blue brick patterning and ashlar dressings. Tiled street names (Bailey Street, Sun Street) are set into the brickwork at first floor.

In an area of open space east of The Great Western is the western portal of the GWR railway tunnel that passed under the Wyrley and Essington Canal and foundry in parallel single-bore tunnels built 1852-54. This portal, and a similar eastern portal south of Horseley Fields, is faced with blue engineering brick. The tunnel was built sufficiently large to accommodate broad gauge track.

Area 2. Land between mainline railway and Birmingham Canal including Corn Hill

Principal features:

- Old Steam Mill;
- Sack Warehouse;
- Hydraulic Engine House;
- Mill Street Goods Depot;
- Historic floorscape of Corn Hill;
- Mainline railway and Corn Hill bridge;
- Historic railway viaduct;
- Landmark quality of The Old Steam Mill and Mill Street Goods Depot.

Townscape

The area between railway and canal is dominated by two tall buildings constructed to take advantage of both modes of transport: Mill Street Goods Depot and the Old Steam Mill.

The Birmingham Canal runs to the south, at a lower level, glimpsed through openings in the wall along the upper part of Corn Hill. Proceeding uphill from The Great Western, the strong sense of enclosure under the Corn Hill railway bridge gradually gives way to a more open character overshadowed by the four-storey Old Steam Mill and, looking northwards, the Hydraulic Engine House. Opposite, the low Sack Warehouse is an important foil to the main mill opposite. The Old Steam Mill and Sack Warehouse, together with the Mill Street Goods Depot and Hydraulic Engine House, form an important group of inter-related industrial buildings.

Mill Street Goods Depot stands in a large private area that was formerly the site of railway sidings and small depots but is now occupied by car parking and storage. A historic floorscape of stone cobbles and blue engineering brick paving accentuates the former industrial character of the area.

From Mill Street bridge there are views along the Birmingham Canal and the new residential canalside development. Unremarkable 20th century buildings west of the Old Steam Mill and south of Sack Warehouse have no architectural interest.

Today's foundry site is built upon the site of earlier industrial works, most notably the Horseley Fields Chemical Works. This was opened in 1828 by William Bailey who gave his name to Bailey Street and in the 1870s was reported to be 'a world wide celebrity for... medical, chemical and photographic preparations'. The area, which includes the original railway viaduct to the high level station, occupies a prominent canalside site between the Birmingham Canal and mainline railway and has vehicular access from Bailey Street and off Horsesley Fields (there is currently no through route).

Buildings and structures of interest

The Old Steam Mill (grade II listed) was built on the site of an earlier steam mill of the 1790s which burned down in 1851. The new building was designed by William Fairbairn, the renowned Manchester-based engineer, using the latest fireproof construction techniques. It is a tall structure with an asymmetric plan that reflects the position of the course of the Birmingham Canal before its re-routing in c1850 - a dry canal basin survives beneath the east





Left: *The Old Steam Mill*

end of the mill building. Though not now directly linked to the canal, the 1889 O.S. map shows the building had access to a canal basin that ran up to the building from the south and a railway siding to the north.

The building is built of red brick with stone keystones and parapetted Welsh slate roof. The elevation to Corn Hill is of three storeys with basement and is of eleven bays. The façade is composed of recessed bays articulated by piers rising to stepped course and dentilled cornice. It has a degree of proportion and symmetry that sets it above the functional architecture of the conservation area's other industrial buildings and might be regarded as one of the finest examples of a large scale industrial building of its date in the city. The interior has a cast-iron framework and a mixture of wrought and cast iron roof trusses and is a pioneering example of a 19th century fireproof building. Opposite the Old Steam Mill is a low red brick single storey ancillary building, known as the Sack Warehouse, built in a similar style and connected by a tunnel. The Sack Warehouse is an interesting and relatively unaltered industrial warehouse building of the 1840s, associated with the immediate predecessor of the Old Steam Mill. It was built to be served by road and canal and seems to have been primarily a warehouse for sacks of unprocessed and processed grain with possibly an office at one end.

The Mill Street Goods Depot is a good and well preserved example of an early railway goods depot. It was built 1849-52 by the Shrewsbury & Birmingham Railway, possibly designed by local architect Edward Banks. In 1859, when the SBR built a new depot at Victoria Basin, it was taken over by the London and North Western Railway who also built the hydraulic engine shed on the opposite side of Corn Hill.

The building is a landmark within the area and is still in use. The entrance to the site is through two large 19th century brick and stone gate piers with a pedestrian cast-iron side gate.

The single storey hydraulic engine house c1890 is constructed in red brick with cast-iron multi-paned windows. It has a double gabled Welsh slate roof with rooflights. The power produced in the building powered the cranes and ramps in the Mill Street Goods Depot.

From the south-east, the mainline railway approaches Wolverhampton along a long, low curving brick viaduct from Horseley Fields to the east end of Bailey Street. The viaduct, part of the original 1852 line built over Crane Foundry, is constructed with blue engineering bricks and has a series of segmental arches, some of which have been adapted to form workshops.

Corn Hill railway bridge carries the mainline railway over Corn Hill. The western part consists of a skew arched bridge of blue engineering brick and the eastern part is a relatively modern concrete girder bridge. In the brickwork is a ceramic tile street sign for Corn Hill. The bridge and viaduct are probably part of the original 1854 approach to High Level Station.

Area 3. Birmingham Canal

Principal features

- Broad Street Warehouse, Albion Mill and the Cheese and Butter Warehouse;
- Canal, towpath and iron footbridge;
- Horseley Fields Junction;
- Tunnel and Mill Street Bridge on the course of the 1850 re-routing;
- Site of original course of Birmingham Canal (infilled);
- Modern development on south side;
- Widening of canal to serve Union Mill (Union Wharf);
- Courtyard of buildings composed of 16a, 16b and Cheese and Butter Warehouse;
- Radial access to canal buildings at end of Union Mill Street;
- Clinker wall.

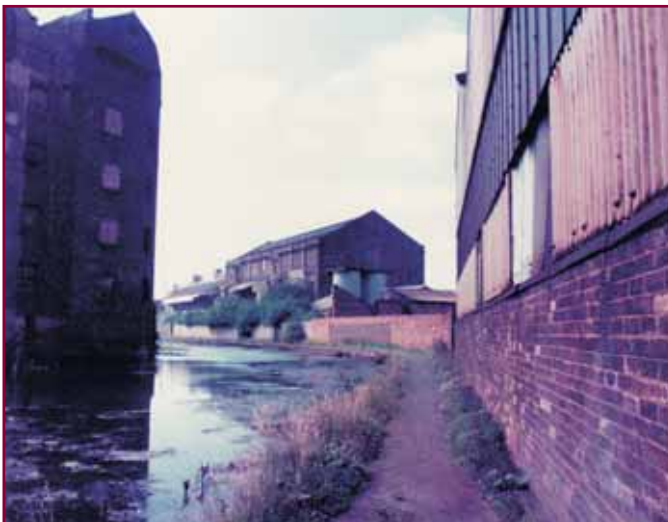
Townscape

The Birmingham Canal follows an east-west course through the conservation area but bends in its length prevent long vistas. The towpath follows the north side but there is an area of accessible frontage on the south side in front of Albion Mill.

Broad Street Warehouse, Albion Mill, recently converted, and the Cheese and Butter Warehouse, with an unkempt appearance, are the canal's principal historic features as well as the blue brick tunnel and bridges. North of the canal, the foundry and Mill Street Goods Depot have a dominant presence.

Below left: Old picture of Birmingham Canal before the demolition of the Union Mill by the Black Country Development Corporation

Below right: The same view today.



At its western end the canal enters the conservation area beside Broad Street Warehouse where there is an iron footbridge over the entrance to a working canal basin. Proceeding eastwards, the canal passes through a cutting and a short tunnel and there is a feeling of enclosure until beyond Mill Street bridge where new residential canalside development lines the south bank. The modern appearance of the new development, with large areas of glazing overlooking the water, contrasts markedly with the neglected industrial buildings on the north side which have their backs turned to the canal.

Because of tall development close to the water on either side of the canal beyond the tunnel, the feeling of enclosure does not recede until past the Cheese and Butter Warehouse beyond which there are neglected vacant sites on the south side and the canal widens to serve the demolished Union Mill. Apart from an area of rushes in this widening of the canal, there is little greenery or wildlife and this part of the canal has an urban and slightly hostile atmosphere arising from solid concrete fencing topped with barbed wire and the rusting, dirty apparatus of the foundry.

The canal widens at Horseley Fields Junction where there is a comparatively wide expanse of water between a high wall and the bridge over the Wyrley and Essington Canal. Proceeding eastwards, the scale and intensity of development diminishes.

Buildings and structures of interest

The Cheese and Butter Warehouse, Union Mill Street rises directly from the bank of the canal. It is a good example of an early 19th century canalside warehouse with three storeys and eight bays - though it may have been longer.

Beneath an off-centre pediment there are three loading doors, the lowest one opening directly from the water level of the canal.

The south elevation faces a small courtyard entered through a pair of decorative gates and bounded on the east side by a narrow rendered three storey building, 16b Union Mill Street, which, though much altered, contributes to the character of the conservation area. 16a Union Mill Street also forms part of this group. It is an early 19th century building with the appearance of a town house and stands out amongst the generally functional appearance of nearby warehouse and industrial buildings, now used as offices.

East of this group, and also served by Union Mill Street, is the site of Union Mill which was demolished after a fire in 1989. Two parallel brick buildings associated with Union Mill survived the demolition. They are mid 19th century, constructed of red brick with slate roofs. The windows of each have segmental heads and some retain cast-iron glazing bars. Their characteristic building materials, historic link to Union Mill and relationship to both canal and Union Mill Street contribute to the conservation area's special interest.

Albion Mill was built in the 1830s, with later alterations, and had its own canal basin. It is another good example of an early 19th century corn mill integrated with the West Midlands canal system. The principal building is constructed of red brick under a tiled roof and is of three storeys with basement, gable end to canal. Window openings follow a regular pattern with small paned iron glazing.



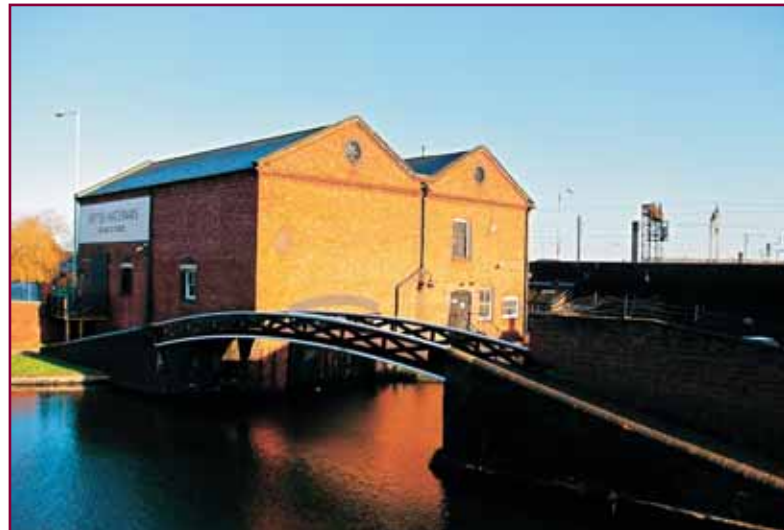
Above: The recently refurbished Albion Mill.

At the western end of the canal, the Railway Drive tunnel, now beneath the multi-storey car park and Station Drive, was originally built c1850 to take the canal under the formally laid out approach road between a grand entrance (Queens Building, grade II listed) and the newly opened high level railway station. It was later extended in the 1880s when the station approach road was skewed away from Queen Street to meet up with newly created Lichfield Street. The tunnel is brick-lined throughout and approached in a deep brick-walled cutting and its portals are faced with blue engineering bricks.

Continuing eastwards, Mill Street Bridge, which carries Corn Hill over the canal, is faced with blue engineering bricks laid in English bond. On the north side is a 'Mill Street Bridge' cast-iron Birmingham Canal Navigation name plaque. The bridge is noted in the Black Country Sites and Monument Record as a 'canal bridge of local importance' and is a good, unaltered example of the conservation area's characteristic interplay between road and canal.

The section of the canal with tunnel and bridge is part of the short diversion begun c1850 to accommodate the new High Level Railway Station. Both tunnel and bridge are original features of the canal's new course. Their architectural and structural style suggests that they were built by the railway companies.

Broad Street warehouse (1869-71) is a large two-storey brick warehouse with direct access to the canal via a barge hole and is an important and little altered example of canal architecture. Map evidence shows that there was a railway siding linked to the basin and canal. The grade II listed iron footbridge (c1850) and a two-storey red brick canal depot office add to the group value of the Broad Street wharf and depot complex.



Above: Broad Street warehouse and cast iron footbridge bridge.

Area 4: Wyrley and Essington Canal

Principal features

- Wide canal towpath;
- Canal basin bridges (basins infilled);
- Railway and towpath bridge;
- Stoplock and slipdock ;
- Disused canal basin on east side;
- Dereliction of former Lime Kiln and Commercial Wharfs;
- Gate piers and wall beside towpath (west side);
- Greenery and wildlife beside canal.

Townscape

The conservation area contains a short length of the Wyrley and Essington Canal. The Wyrley and Essington Canal begins its course eastwards from the Horseley Fields Junction where it is bridged by the Birmingham Canal towpath and the mainline railway. On leaving the shadows of the parallel bridges, there is an expanse of grass where the canal narrows at the stoplock providing an open semi-rural feeling in complete contrast to the enclosed urban atmosphere of the Birmingham Canal (in the conservation area).



Above: Stoplock on Wyrley and Essington Canal

Much of the site of the former Lime Kiln Wharf and Commercial Wharf is neglected and derelict but there is one building of interest: the slipdock marked on the townscape appraisal map. Access is via a narrow road under the railway off Horseley Fields Road. Buildings do not exceed two storeys.

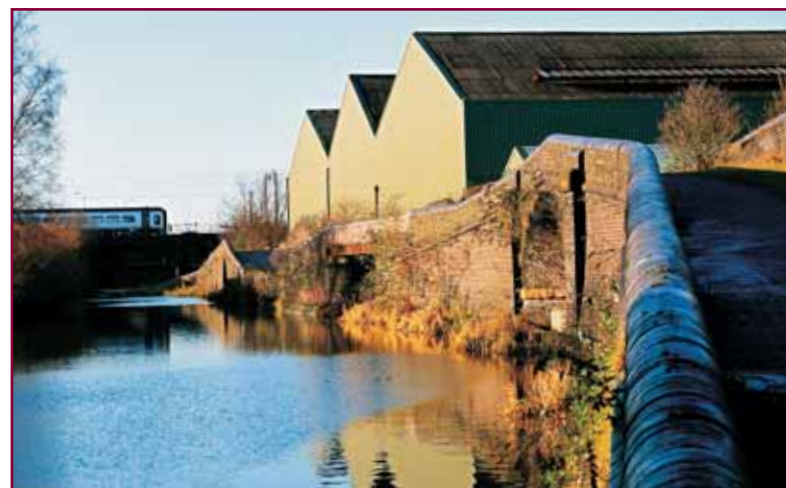
Looking north-eastwards, out of the conservation area, the canal towpath rises and falls over two wide brick bridges beneath which were the entrances to canal basins, now infilled. There are water reeds and canalside trees on the derelict Lime Kiln Wharf and the area has a pleasant rural feel.

Buildings and structures of interest

There are no remaining canalside buildings of interest in this area but, at its junction with the Birmingham Canal, the Wyrley and Essington Canal passes beneath two historic bridges; a brick arched railway bridge dating from 1852 and a bridge carrying the Birmingham Canal towpath which is probably of the same date, replacing an earlier structure. The towpath of the Wyrley and Essington, passing beneath, is of brick with ridges to prevent slippage of the tow horses. On the corner of the abutments is a worn iron rubbing strip.

Immediately north of Horseley Fields Junction is a very narrow section of canal that could be a remodelled stoplock capable of being closed quickly in case of a breach in either canal or for maintenance reasons. On the 1889 O.S. map there are two parallel narrow sections separated by a thin central island so it is possible that these had different functions, perhaps to do with loading checks or tolls.

To the east of the stoplock there were three basins connecting with the canal's north side serving yards and premises (now demolished) to the north and west. The towpath is taken across each of these basins by a bridge and the remains of all three basin bridges survive even though the basins have been infilled. The brick arched bridges appear to have been built to take not just a path but a road running parallel to the canal. They are built of blue engineering brick suggesting that they were not built at the same time as the canal but in the mid 19th century contemporary with the railway bridges. The northern bridge crossed a basin serving a railway yard that could not have been developed until the 1850s at the earliest. Together with a pair of brick gate piers west of the towpath they form an attractive composition and are of historical interest within the larger group of canal related features.



Opposite these bridges a narrow arm leaves the canal southwards. Originally twice its current length, this canal basin served Commercial Wharf and extended to Horseley Fields with wharfs on either side. It is one of only two surviving canal basins in the conservation area. An old covered slipdock lies on the west side.

Above: Three brick arched bridges over entrances to former canal basins.

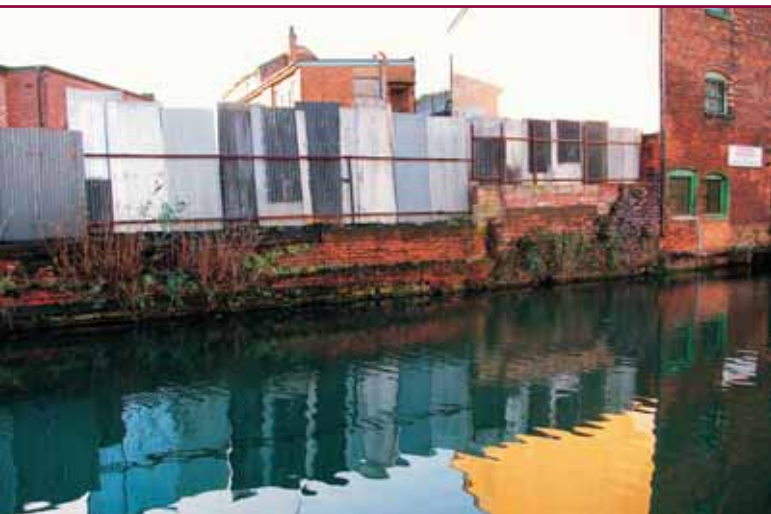
5. Issues: positives and negatives

Positives:

- Architectural quality of the area's buildings;
- Historic railway and canal environment;
- Part of Canalside Quarter;
- Canal links to West Midlands;
- Recent repairs and other works carried out under the Heritage Economic Regeneration Scheme (HERS);
- Waterside location;
- Leisure opportunities of canal (boats) and towpath (walkers, cyclists);
- Location of popular pub;
- Wildlife corridor.

Negatives:

- Neglected sites beside Birmingham Canal (Union Mill, adjacent to Sack Warehouse, former Griffin works);
- Neglected site on south side of Wyrley and Essington Canal (Lime Kiln Wharf, Commercial Wharf);
- An atmosphere of dereliction arising from poor state of repair of key historic buildings (Low Level Station, Old Steam Mill);
- Poor access between canal towpath and road;
- Unsightly canalside walls and fences;
- Noise of traffic spoils ambience of canal towpath;
- Foundry site no longer appropriate in an area of developing residential use;
- Adverse visual impact of tall multi-storey car park overbearing the Birmingham Canal;
- Poor state of repair of canalside brick wall north of Horseley Fields Bridge, west side;
- Graffiti defaces some walls in the public realm;
- Poor road surface of Corn Hill between Mill Street bridge and Old Steam Mill;
- Ugly, hostile security fencing.



Above: Negatives - unsightly canalside walls and fences

6. Management Proposals

Conservation area boundary review

Two additional areas of land were recommended for inclusion and three areas were recommended for deletion in the 2006 review of the area.

The revised boundary is indicated on the Townscape Appraisal map of the conservation area on page 15.

It is also recommended that consideration be given to the designation of a further length of Birmingham Canal south of Horseley Fields Junction, including (at least) Minerva Wharf, as a conservation area.

Opportunities for enhancement

The conservation area forms part of the Wolverhampton Canalside Quarter which has considerable potential with opportunities for a wide range of regeneration initiatives, building on its historic industrial and transportation character and its location on the edge of the City Centre. The following sites, some of which are identified in the Wolverhampton Unitary Development Plan (2006), would benefit from specific design briefs to guide sensitive re-development:

- Site of former Union Mill;
- Canalside site south of Corn Hill, below Sack Warehouse;
- Old Steam Mill;
- Site adjacent to south side of Wyrley and Essington Canal (Lime Kiln Wharf, Commercial Wharf);
- Former Griffin Works, Horseley Fields.

In addition, the following initiatives would assist the preservation and enhancement of the conservation area:

- Improvement of links between towpath and pedestrian routes;
- Enhance pedestrian routes generally through the conservation area;
- Promotion and encouragement of the structural and external repair, and routine maintenance, of key historic buildings;
- Grant aid to assist in the continued regeneration of the area. (Conservation area status gives the potential for external funding from English Heritage or the Heritage Lottery Fund);
- Additional interpretation in the area to explain the history of the canals and railways in the development of the area.



Use of Article 4(1) and 4(2) Directions

Due to the nature and uses of buildings in this conservation area, it is not considered that there is a role for Article 4 Directions.

Above: Albion Mill and new apartment development

Archaeology

Recommendations made in the Wolverhampton Canalside Quarter Archaeological Assessment (November 1998) are still valid and pertinent. In short, where large scale development is proposed, an assessment should be made of the impact of that development on below ground deposits. If significant ones are likely to be found then a programme of archaeological recording should be built into any proposals.

Local List

Several new sites were added to the Local List in 2007 following public consultation

- **Lincoln Street buildings**

To the east of the Low Level station, and alongside the demolished Midland Railway Goods depot, lies a complex of mid 19th century industrial buildings constructed around a courtyard off Lincoln Street. These buildings have considerable local interest being the site of the Britannia Safe and Lock Works, one of the characteristic manufacturers of Wolverhampton.

- **Union Mill buildings**

Two parallel mid 19th century brick buildings survived the demolition of Union Mill. The western building is the wider of the two. Though not of great architectural merit, and altered, they are reminders of a grander building once on site. Their use of characteristic building materials (red brick, slate, cast-iron glazing bars), historic link to Union Mill and relationship to both canal and Union Mill Street contribute to the special interest of the Birmingham Canal and the Union Mill Conservation Area.



Above: *Union Mill buildings*

- **No. 16b Union Mill Street**

No. 16b Union Mill Street, though much altered, is a rendered three-storey building that was formerly the Union Wharf Manager's house. Its unusual narrow plan form reflects the necessarily small triangular piece of land (narrow road entrance, wide canal side wharf) on which it stands. The building forms part of a good group of historic canal buildings around the courtyard 'behind' the Cheese and Butter Warehouse. No. 16a (grade II) was also a manager's house. A third manager's house was demolished after the fire at Union Mill in 1989.

- **Slip dock at Horseley Fields Junction**

The former slip dock close to Horseley Fields Junction forms part of the complex of canal related features at the western end of the Wyrley and Essington Canal, opened in 1797. It lies on the west side of a narrow basin (now half its original length) that branches southwards just before the canal junction. The slip dock is a dock with a slipway which led into the canal basin. It was primarily for the construction or repair of boats. Although the slip dock is earlier, map evidence suggests that the single storey structure which covers the dock dates from c.1890.

Other

Further assessment of the significance of buildings in Lime Kiln Wharf and Commercial Wharf should be undertaken. Consideration should be given to proposing this building for inclusion on the Statutory List.

7. Issues for the future

Midland Metro

The Union Mill conservation area will be affected by the route of proposed extensions to the Midland Metro network in the medium term future.

Centro, the promoter of Midland Metro, has been working in partnership with Wolverhampton City Council and other Black Country authorities to develop a route known as the 5 Ws between Wolverhampton, Wednesfield, Willenhall, Walsall, Darlaston and Wednesbury which will pass through the area. Following consultation in 2003/2004 a route has been approved for further development. Preservation or enhancement of the character and appearance of the conservation area will be a material consideration during the formulation of proposals for the extended route.

In order to proceed with the route an application has to be made under the Transport and Works Act. This process will include further consultation. It is therefore unlikely the proposals will have an impact on this conservation area within the five year period, after which this appraisal will be reviewed. Anyone wishing to know more about the Metro proposals should visit the following web site www.centro.org.uk/metrofuture

The Wolverhampton Interchange

Proposals for a £176 million comprehensive office led scheme at Wolverhampton Interchange, immediately to the west of the conservation area, are also being developed by the Council in partnership with a developer. The scheme also includes Network Rail, Virgin Trains, British Waterways Board and Centro as partners, and Advantage West Midlands.



Above: *Midland Metro*

As well as a new railway and re-modelled bus station, the Interchange project, which links those two major transport hubs, will also enable the future incorporation of the proposed '5W's Midland Metro line' linking Wolverhampton with Wednesfield, Willenhall, Walsall and Wednesbury. It will feature a four star hotel, restaurants, cafes and bars at the canal basin and some limited retail space. The scheme incorporates 413,000 square feet of office space, 215 residential units, of which 20 per cent will be 'affordable housing', together with 160,000 square feet of public realm. A total of 1,400 car parking spaces, double the current number, will also be available in the scheme, following the demolition of the existing multi storey.

The scheme represents an investment of £176 million, of which £17 million is to be provided by the public sector. A Masterplan for the Interchange will be available for public consultation during 2007 and it is expected that work will start on site in 2008 and that the development will be completed in 2012. See http://www.wolverhampton.gov.uk/transport_streets/planning/consultation.htm for the latest information on the Interchange project.

Monitoring and review

This document will 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;
- A 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.

8. Implications of conservation area status

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;
- Extra publicity is given to planning applications affecting conservation areas and the Council must take into consideration the desirability of preserving and enhancing the character of the conservation when determining such applications. 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).

The requirements for planning permission in a conservation area.

Certain works to family houses within a conservation area, which are normally considered to be 'permitted development', will now 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 a planning application is substantially smaller in a conservation area than elsewhere.

These are:

- Planning permission is needed for extensions to family houses in conservation areas where they add more than 10 % or 50 cubic metres in volume to the property (whichever is greater). This is a slightly smaller amount than the usual requirement for planning permission which is limited to 15% or 70 cubic metres, except for terraced houses which are also limited to 10% or 50 cubic metres, wherever they are located;
- Planning permission is needed for external cladding to family houses in conservation areas, using stone, artificial stone, timber, plastic or tiles. However, cement and pebble dashing is still permitted development following a court case in 1995;

- Planning permission is needed for any alteration to the roof of a family house resulting in a material alteration to its shape, most notably the addition of dormer windows;
- Planning permission is needed for the erection of any structure within the curtilage of a family house whose cubic capacity exceeds 10 cubic metres. This is especially important for sheds, garages, and other outbuildings in gardens within conservation areas.

Please note that that commercial properties (such as shops and public houses), and houses which are in multiple occupation (flats) have far fewer permitted development rights and therefore planning permission is already required for many alterations to these buildings.

It is recommended that any proposals for new development or alteration to 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.

The Unitary Development Plan

The Wolverhampton Unitary Development Plan (UPD) 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 UPD contains policies for the historic environment including conservation areas.

The adopted UPD can be viewed at the following locations:

- Online by visiting the following website: 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 Areas Plans team (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 website at: www.wolverhampton.gov.uk/environment/planning/policy/ldf/introduction.htm

Satellite dishes

The rules governing satellite dishes in conservation areas are significantly tighter than outside such areas. The number, size and location of proposed installations will be taken into account. Before buying or renting an antenna or satellite dish it is advisable to check with a planning officer at the Council whether planning permission is required. Permission from the owner or landlord of a property may also be required.

Telecommunications masts

The law governing the erection of masts and antennae is complex and whilst some companies have licences which allow some structures to be put up in conservation areas without planning permission, the legislation does allow for consultation with the local authority concerned before the work is put in hand. Further information can be found in the second edition of PPG8 Telecommunications.

Article 4 Directions

Designation as a conservation area also means that the Council can consider whether serving an Article 4 Direction is appropriate. This brings under planning control a number of changes to unlisted family houses which would normally be considered 'permitted development' including the insertion of plastic windows, new front doors, and changing roof materials. There are no Article 4 Directions in the Union Mill conservation area as most buildings are in commercial use.

Trees

Within conservation areas, anyone intending lopping or felling a tree greater than 100 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.

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.

Bibliography and maps

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- Wolverhampton History and Heritage Society (WHHS) website 2005:
- www.localhistory.scit.wlv.ac.uk/home.htm
- Eighth List of Buildings of Special Architectural or Historic Interest, DoE, 1992
- Smart's Trade Directory Map of the Town of Wolverhampton 1827
- Wolverhampton Tithe Map 1842
- Joseph Bridgen's Plan of the Township of Wolverhampton - c1850
- Harris's Railway Map of The Midlands Counties 1853
- Peel & Cobbett's Map of the Borough of Wolverhampton 1864
- Steen and Blakett's Map of Wolverhampton 1871
- John Steen & Co. map of 1884
- Ordnance Survey Map 1889, 1919, 1938
- Conservation Areas: A Brief Guide and List of Conservation Areas in the City of Wolverhampton (copies available from the Conservation & Urban Design Section at the City Council – see above)

Sources of further information

Wolverhampton City Council
Conservation & Urban Design
Regeneration and Environment
Civic Centre, St. Peter's Square
Wolverhampton WV1 1RP
Tel: 01902 556625 / 555617 / 555622
For information about conservation areas and historic sites and buildings in Wolverhampton

English Heritage
112 Colmore Row
Birmingham B3 3AG
General enquiries: 0121 625 6820
For further information relating to listed buildings and conservation areas

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

British Waterways
West Midlands Office
Peel's Wharf
Lichfield Street
Fazeley
Staffordshire
B78 3QZ
Tel: 01827 252000
For information about management and care of canals

Old photographs are from the Wolverhampton Archives and Local Studies collection.



Far left: *Birmingham Canal*

Middle: *Great Western Pub*

Left: *Lincoln Works*

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 be replaced in 2008 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.

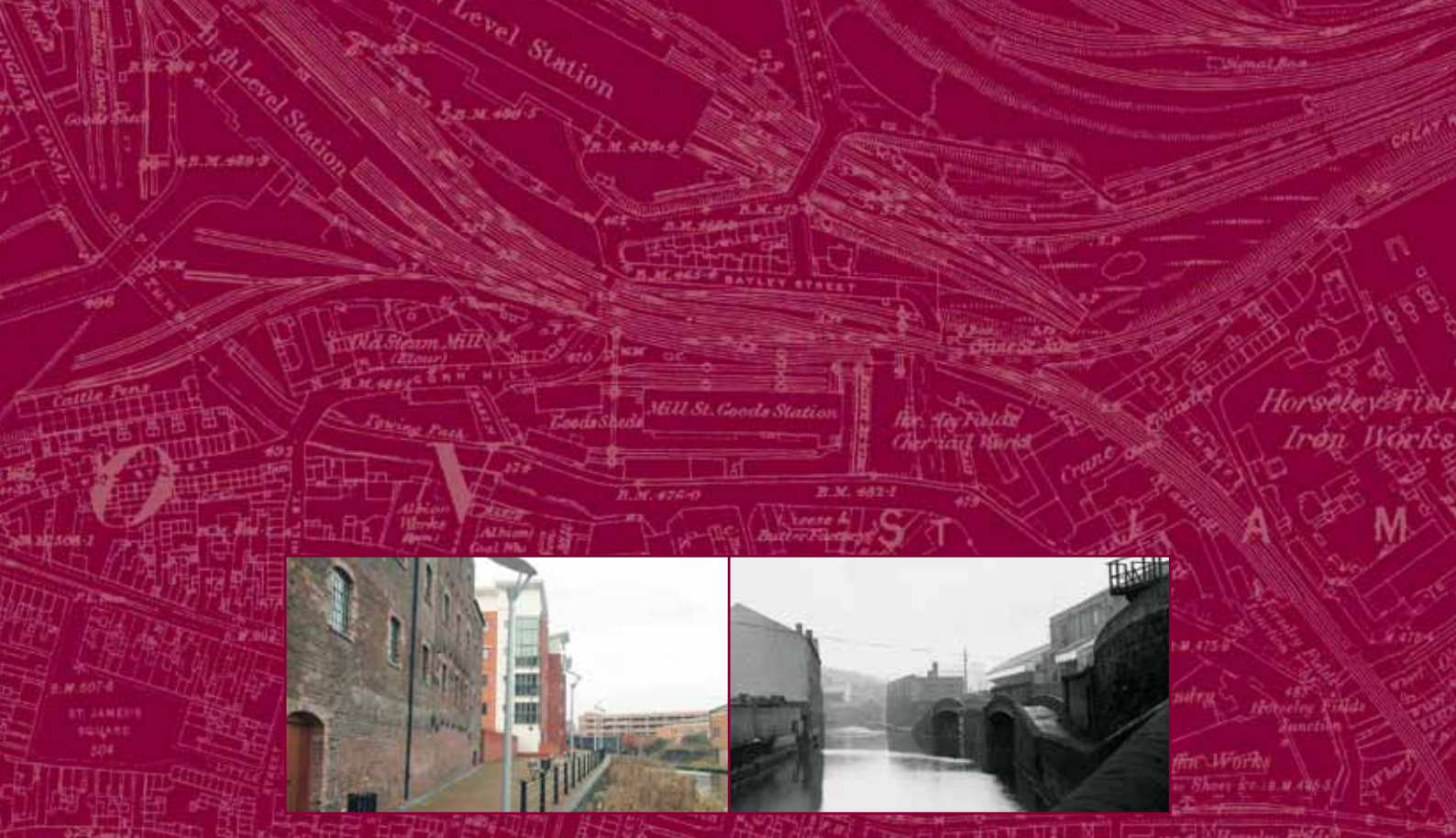
Recent guidance from the (Office of the Deputy Prime Minister) ODPM and English Heritage (2005) indicates that Conservation Area Appraisals (CAAs) should not be adopted by local authorities as SPD and therefore do not require sustainability appraisal. CAAs will however be used to support forthcoming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



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