



Oadby Hill Top & Meadowcourt Conservation Area Appraisal

July 2005

Contents

1.0	Introduction	1
2.0	What are Conservation Areas?	2
3.0	Overview of the area	3
4.0	Brief history / archaeology	6
5.0	Setting	8
6.0	Townscape analysis	9
7.0	Key characteristics	29
8.0	Changes to the Conservation Area boundary in 2005	31
9.0	Enhancement opportunities	32
10.0	References	33

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 Oadby Hill Top was designated a Conservation Area in 1987 with the comparatively much smaller area of Meadowcourt designated in the following year. This document aims to fulfil Oadby and Wigston Borough Council's duty to 'draw up and publish proposals for the preservation and enhancement' of the area as required by the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. It should be read in conjunction with the 'Development Control Guidance for Oadby Hill Top & Meadowcourt' which has been produced alongside this appraisal.
- 1.2 Extensive public consultation was carried out, and the draft documents amended in light of the representations received. In summary, the consultation composed:
 - A full colour leaflet summarising the Conservation Area Appraisal and the associated Development Control Guidance was prepared, and together with a short questionnaire was issued to some 250 properties in the Conservation Area and immediately outside the current boundary.
 - A copy of the leaflet and questionnaire was also distributed to key stakeholders.
 - A public exhibition was staged in The Classroom at the University of Leicester Botanic Garden on Tuesday 10th May 2005.

A 'Report of Consutation' was prepared and is available from the Borough Council.

2.0 What are Conservation Areas?

- 2.1 Conservation Areas are defined as 'areas of special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance'.
- 2.2 When a Conservation Area has been designated, it increases the Council's controls, with planning applications judged by their impact on the character and appearance of the area. Greater controls over the demolition of buildings and structures are imposed whilst the rights which owners have to do works to their properties without planning permission (known as 'permitted development rights') are reduced or taken away. Stricter controls are also exercised over the design of new buildings, and owners must give the Council six weeks' notice of their intention to carry out works to trees. Planning applications affecting a Conservation Area must be advertised on site and in the local press to give people the opportunity to comment.



3.0 Overview of the area

- 3.1 The Oadby Hill Top Conservation Area is an excellent example of an area developed for housing for the rich industrialists of a booming industrial town. Such people sought the space and fresh air which was in short supply in the town, often as a result of their own industrial concerns which manufactured bricks and machinery as well as hosiery and footwear. The availability of the land, mostly as a result of the sale of the Powys Keck estate, allowed the opportunity for the construction of large houses on the very large plots available.
- 3.2 The biggest plots were off Stoughton Drive South and to a lesser extent Glebe Road and Manor Road and it is on these roads that the finest houses with the most impressive gardens can be found. The houses were built by the leading local architects, with the father and son combination of Stockdale and Shirley Harrison pre-eminent, and were constructed in fashionable Arts and Crafts styles. This style which had developed from the Victorian Gothic Revival allowed the use of elements from different periods of particularly vernacular architecture and gave scope for considerable freedom of expression for the owner and architect alike. Many of the earliest designs of the largest houses incorporate elements of Jacobethan architecture. This allowed the wealthy Leicester industrialists to build their own versions of the Elizabethan 'prodigy' houses as each sought to demonstrate his taste, wealth and standing in the town.
- 3.3 On the other streets, there are some equally impressive houses, though the plots tend to be smaller except where they were joined together. The houses show probably more variety than the larger houses and there are elements of Jacobethan, Vernacular-Revival, Art Nouveau and Neo-Georgian - the latter becoming particularly popular in the 1920s even for big houses such as Southmeade. The result is an area of exceptionally strong character. The only discordant notes are struck by the occasional 1960s bungalow or house, or more particularly by the large student accommodation blocks. Whilst many of these are sensitively positioned so as not to impact greatly on the



View along Knighton Grange Road



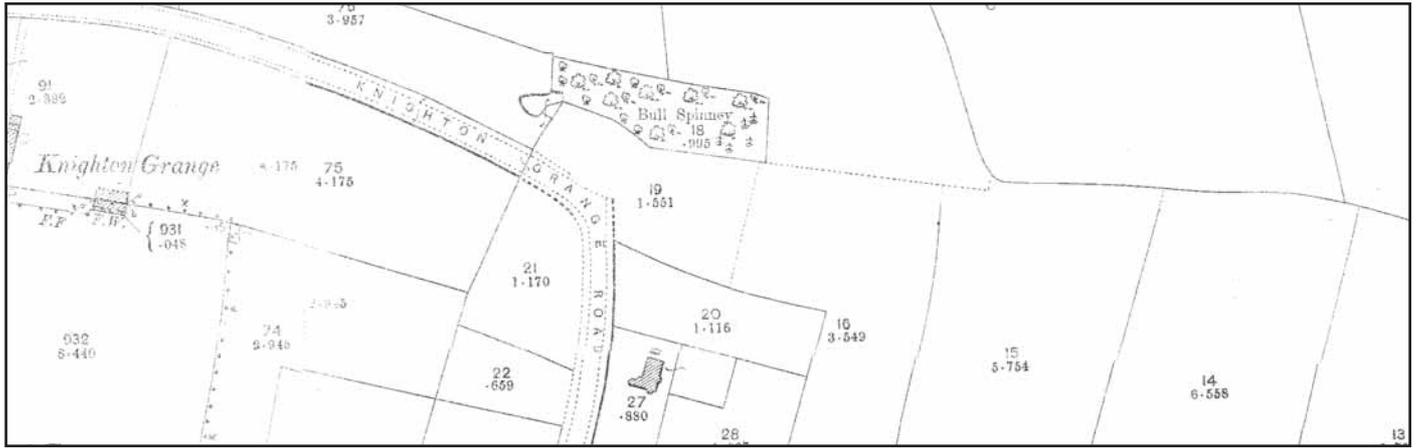
View to Glebe Road from Knighton Rise



streetscene, some are highly visible and their impact is often particularly unfortunate because they turn their backs on the streets and leave car parking areas, plant and refuse storage highly visible.

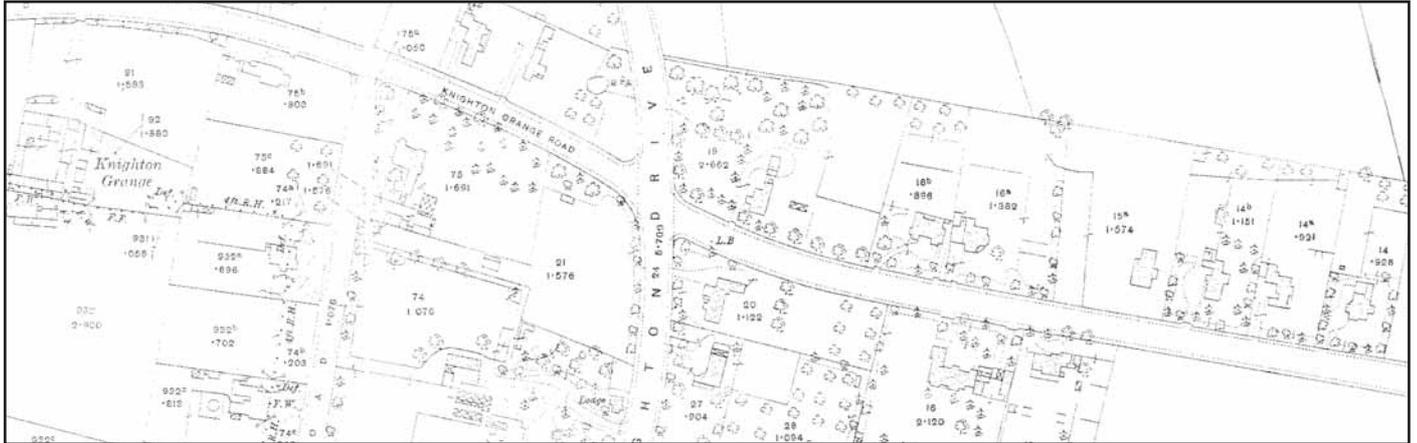
- 3.4 In terms of building materials, the traditional houses in the area draw from a remarkably small palette. Walls are invariably of red brick or render, with architectural embellishment through the use of half timbering, brick noggin or tile hanging. Roofs are generally of brown clay tile, sometimes red or Swithland slate. Welsh slate is infrequently used and there is a single house which uses Collyweston slate. This limited palette of materials gives the area an even stronger sense of place.
- 3.5 In addition to this overall character, some groups of houses were clearly built at the same time, or by the same architect, or were part of a mini development. This produces small sub-groups which further enhance the character of certain streets.
- 3.6 Whilst the buildings are the strongest elements in defining the character of the area, the trees and landscape are almost as important. One hundred years of growth has meant that the trees and hedges surrounding and within the gardens of the houses have developed to produce a very rich townscape. Similarly the street trees, which line all but Knighton Rise, are also now mature and impressive. Whereas when built, all the houses would have been easily visible from the road, today only sneak glimpses can be gained. This has added another layer of richness to the townscape quality rather than diminished it.
- 3.7 Another striking feature of the area is the width of the roads. However, unlike some streets which become characterised by signs, road markings and parked cars, those in Oadby Hill Top remain remarkably free from the paraphernalia which often disfigures attractive streets. The uncluttered streets and the general lack of parked cars, means that the leafy, spacious quality of the roads remains almost the same today as it was when they were first laid out.

- 3.8 After the Second World War, Leicester University began to purchase the larger properties in the area and use many of them for student accommodation. This has ensured that these important houses, now too large for single families, have continued to be occupied and enjoyed. However, the need to adequately house students has also led to the erection of a number of purpose-built blocks usually to the rear of the main houses. Some of these are conspicuous either as a result of their positioning or their architectural style, whilst the surfacing over of gardens to provide car parking has damaged the setting of some outstanding individual houses.
- 3.9 The university was already well established in the area when the Conservation Area was designated and its continued presence adds a distinctive ingredient to the area.
- 3.10 To maintain the character of the area, demolition of the key buildings must be resisted and great care taken over their change of use, extension or intensified development. This appraisal seeks to confirm what is important about the area, and its sister volume sets out development control policies to safeguard and enhance the area.



4.0 Brief history / archaeology

- 4.1 No archaeological remains have been found within the Conservation Area, though finds from elsewhere in the vicinity are evidence of prehistoric and Roman activity. The earliest discovery was just south of the A6 at Lyndon Drive where a Neolithic or Bronze Age flint scraper was found. There is evidence of Roman occupation at Ringers Spinney which lies to the north of Manor Road. Here Roman pottery was found in the 1960s. A Roman coin was also found off Sycamore Close just to the north of the Conservation Area.
- 4.2 The earliest records of land ownership refer to Earl Ralph during the reign of Edward the Confessor (1042-1066). In 1739 Anne Busby married Anthony Keck and a long family association began which only ended when some 93 lots totalling 6,700 acres were offered for sale in June 1913.
- 4.3 By this time the construction of large family housing for Leicester businessmen was already taking place. The Powys Keck Estate Map shows Knighton Grange in existence accessed via a track from the London Road, south of the Knighton Grange Road. The first major housing developments began in 1902 when Kent House (One Oak), Hastings House and Rocklands were built. Manor Road (previously called Oadby Hill Top) was laid out in 1904 and a number of houses were built along all the roads up to the outbreak of the First World War.
- 4.4 By 1915 at least a dozen more large houses had been built on Stoughton Drive South and Manor Road, including, Digby House, Inglewood, Highgrove House, Rosenfels, Stamford House, The Gable, The Coppice, The Spinneys and Wighton. Houses are also shown on Knighton Grange Road. At the same time a piece of land down to Meadowcourt Road was sold and now included the university playing fields. By 1915 Meadowcourt Road was laid out with 8 houses constructed on the northern side and 13 on the southern.



- 4.5 In the early 1920s land, including on Stoughton Drive South and Manor Road was surveyed for one acre plots with houses costing not less than £1,000 on Manor Road and for half acre plots for houses costing £750 elsewhere. Land cost the equivalent of 12½p a square yard plus a survey fee.
- 4.6 The 1930 Ordnance Survey map shows further development of large detached houses in substantial plots along Manor Road, including Howard House, Ashcroft, Aigburth, Trerose, The Beeches, Gilbert Murray house, Fields House, Bredon and Stoughton Leys. Southmeads Road is shown with two houses; though by 1938 several more houses had been built.
- 4.7 After the Second World War, the university began to acquire houses for student accommodation. When the Knoll was purchased by the university in 1964, the gardens of the four houses (Beaumont Hall, The Knoll, Hastings House and Southmeade) were combined to create the University Botanical Gardens. The last 40 years have seen the construction of small groups of housing such as Eynsford Close, which was built in the 1960s following the demolition of no 5 Glebe Road, and the erection of new student blocks for the university.
- 4.8 Today the area continues to be a popular residential area though some of the larger houses are coming under pressure for other uses or subdivision. The challenge for the future is to allow the area to adapt whilst ensuring that its sense of place is maintained.

5.0 Setting

- 5.1 The Conservation Area stands around three miles to the southeast of Leicester City Centre. The land rises from the main A6, originally the Leicester - London Road in the south, hence the name Oadby Hill Top. The main centre of the town of Oadby lies immediately to the southeast of the Conservation Area on the opposite side of the A6.
- 5.2 The borough boundary forms the western edge of the Conservation Area. Beyond is mostly residential development of higher density. To the north is more residential development some of it at quite low density though the buildings lack the architectural quality of those within the Conservation Area. St Andrew's Drive was developed in 1956 whilst The Broadway and The Fairway were developed from the late 1920s though the surroundings remained semi-rural until the 1950s and 1960s. Outside the borough boundary to the north is the Leicester Golf Course and the village of Evington.
- 5.3 Although to the east of the Conservation Area is more housing, much of it quite modern, the approach into the area from that direction has an attractive quite open feel due to the presence of the sports grounds. The entrance into the Conservation Area along Southmeads Road, with its fine avenue of trees, is particularly attractive and leads gently into the low-density housing within the area.



6.0 Townscape analysis

Stoughton Drive South

- 6.1 Stoughton Drive South, is a gently curving road which runs up hill northwards from the A6. Despite the volume of traffic using it, it remains an attractive tree-lined road with some exceptional early C20 formerly residential buildings sat beside it. Beyond the Knighton Grange Road / Manor Road junction, the road becomes flatter and the character changes though it remains within the Conservation Area up to the junction with The Broadway.
- 6.2 Moving north from the A6 junction, the west side of the road is defined by a modern but appropriate metal fence (similar fences bound virtually all the university-owned property in the area) and very fine mature trees both within the Botanic Gardens and on the grass roadside verge. These give an exceptionally strong, avenue-like feel to the street. Views of four large former houses, now part of Leicester University and set within the Botanic Garden, can be gained through the extensive belt of trees.
- 6.3 The most southerly of these properties is Hastings House. This large house, which was one of the first in the area, was designed by the local architects Harrison & sons for the hosiery manufacturer W H Stevens in 1902. It is a large house in an eclectic Arts and Crafts style which mixes vernacular features such as steep gables and dormers with Jacobethan canted bays and mullioned windows and a Classical Doric loggia. The building materials which include brick, stone, render and half-timbering with a clay tiled roof are equally varied. The lodge directly addresses the street. This has a prominent side gable of half-timbering.
- 6.4 The most northerly house is Beaumont House (built as Middlemeade). This was also designed by the Harrisons and built in 1908 for another hosier F S Brice. This house is a purer Arts and Crafts design with numerous vernacular features such as asymmetrical paired gables,



cat-slide dormers and sweeping tiled roofs. The building materials which are similar to Hastings House also include the use of vertical tile-hanging. The lodge to Beaumont House, which stands next to the road, copies the materials and vernacular-revival style of the main house and has a very attractive jettied wing facing the street.

- 6.5 Between these two large houses is the Knoll, which fronts Glebe Road and Southmeade. Both are by the Harrisons. Southmeade was built for Francis Strange Brice presumably in the garden of his father's house in 1928. It is in a restrained Neo-Georgian style with brown / red brick with stone detailing and a clay pantile roof. At the corner of Knighton Grange Road are the two phases of the Beaumont Hall flats by Shirley and Worthington. Phase I was built in 1952 and is in a restrained Neo-Georgian style. Phase II, completed in 1962 is far plainer and unfortunately more visible from Knighton Grange Road. Both have red brick walls.
- 6.6 The east side of the street also contains a number of very fine houses. The first visible building is No. 2a Meadowcourt Road, a restored rendered and brick early C20 property with a tiled roof. This is partly screened by trees. On the opposite corner of Meadowcourt Road are the Digby Halls, two-storey flat roofed buildings by Sheppard, Robson and Partners which stand in the garden of Digby House. This was built in 1908 as Meadowcourt for T J Thurnloe. This is a Jacobethan style house not dissimilar to Hastings House and may therefore also have been by the Harrisons.
- 6.7 Moving north the next house is Inglewood. This was built in 1904 for J A Sabin, a footwear manufacturer. It is of brick and render with a tiled roof and has a mixture of 6/1 sashes and 6-light casements. Although a substantial building, this is one of the smaller houses on Stoughton Drive South. Next to it, and again on a comparatively small plot is Highgrove. This is another red brick Jacobethan style house built for T S Grieve, a manufacturer of knitting machines, needles and bicycle



parts in c1905. It has a stone entrance door and canopy, transom and mullion windows and a red clay tile roof. The gatepiers to the road survive though the railing is modern. To the rear are extensive garden buildings and greenhouses, visible from Southmeads Road, which are in poor condition. The long gardens contained waterfalls and pools, the outlines of which can still be traced.

- 6.8 Beyond No. 1 Southmeads Road is Rosenfels. This is one of the simpler houses of brick and render with a tiled roof. It lacks the architectural detailing of the grander houses and was built in 1907 for T E Meakin a hosier. Next door is a further Jacobethan style house (originally called Cartmel Close, now Stamford House) built the same year for P L Barker, a tobacco dealer. Like Highgrove, this may be another Harrisons design. The 1915 Ordnance Survey map shows it enjoying extensive grounds south and east of the house. Behind is the long range of Stamford Halls, the 4-storey dining hall building with its monopitch roof is most visible from the road and behind it is a long three-storey range of student accommodation in brick and concrete and with a flat roof. This was designed by Denys Lasdun in 1964; the design is very similar to the contemporary Fitzwilliam College in Cambridge.
- 6.9 The penultimate house along this stretch is Kent House (originally One Oak). This was one of the first houses to be built in the area in 1902 for Arthur Whitmore a wholesale grocer. It is a simple design with a faceted bay and loggia and rendered walls and a tiled roof. This house and Gable House on the corner of Manor Road may both again be by the Harrisons. The latter was built in 1907.
- 6.10 Beyond the junction with Knighton Grange Road / Manor Road, the character of Stoughton Drive South changes. The road becomes flatter and more dominated by road markings etc, the number and quality of the trees declines and the houses which are less grand sit in much smaller plots.



- 6.11 The first two properties on the west side are mid C20 single storey houses with quite open frontage. Beyond the junction with Knighton Rise, No. 34 is a 1970s red brick house. No. 30 was designed in 1922 by H H Thompson and is of grey and red brick with a plain tiled roof though it has a large modern annex and garage block. No. 26 is another 1970s two storey house whilst No. 24, the last in the Conservation Area on this side has a modern garage block and replacement windows. Nos. 24-6 are proposed to be removed from the Conservation Area.
- 6.12 Crossing the road, No. 73 Broadway is a 1930s house of brown brick with tile hanging and a clay tiled roof and stone door surround. It sits behind a low brick wall with evergreen trees.
- 6.13 Returning to Stoughton Drive South, No. 17 is a 1920s Neo-Georgian house of buff brick with red brick detailing, sash windows and a pantiled roof. There is a separate modern garage and a modern wall to the road with a hedge behind. No. 19 was built in 1924 as Quenby by Lawton and Jones. It has random red and grey bricks, arched heads and a hipped slate roof. The frontage is quite open in contrast to the more modern No. 21 next door which is well screened from the road by evergreen trees.
- 6.14 No. 23 is a very substantial property again in a Georgian revival style, highly prominent from the end of Knighton Rise. This is of red brick with a stone doorcase and a hipped clay tiled roof. Unusually, the windows are casements rather than sashes. The house which is very wide on its plot sits behind a substantial hedge. It was originally called Walden and was designed by Moore and Morely in 1924. No. 29 (originally Ashfield) is an equally substantial building on a large plot. This too is in a Neo-Georgian style but is of painted brick and with multi-paned sash windows and a hipped pantile roof. It was designed by the Harrisons. No. 27 appears to have originally been a lodge or outbuilding and is of similar materials.



- 6.15 The final house is a small, simple single storey lodge-type building with a pyramidal plain tile roof and central chimney stack. It was built between 1915-30, apparently for the chauffeur of The Coppice on Manor Road. A low hedge encloses the corner.

The Botanic Garden

- 6.16 The Botanic Garden could be considered to be the heart of the Oadby Hill Top Conservation Area. It contains four of the most impressive houses in the area (three of them Grade II Listed) and the gardens and mature trees contribute hugely to the attractive character of the area with views in through the trees on Glebe Road and Stoughton Drive South.
- 6.17 Although the Botanic Garden was not moved to Oadby until 1947, the features of the gardens have earlier origins. Hedgerow Walk which runs north-south in the centre of the garden follows the line of the hedge planted during the enclosure of the open fields in 1760. Some of the maple and ash trees probably date from that era and occasionally evidence of the Medieval ridge and furrow can still be seen within the meadow. An oak tree on the lawn of the Knoll is probably the one remaining tree from a copse which covered part of the land prior to the development of the area.
- 6.18 Whilst the Botanic Garden has removed the boundaries which separated the gardens of the four houses, much of the garden form including three sandstone and limestone gardens and some of the terraced gardens were laid out by the original owners of the houses.

Manor Road

- 6.19 Manor Road was one of the most affluent roads in the area during the 1920s and this is reflected in the quality of the buildings. It was laid out in 1904, with the sewer laid the following year. The original covenant on the land stipulated just one house could be built per acre. Many of the houses have now become student halls of residence and this has meant that some gardens have been lost to car parking and large extensions constructed.
- 6.20 The first house on the north side is The Coppice. This is a large twin-gabled house built c1907 to the designs of Everard and Pick. It is of brick and render with a tiled roof and stands in extensive grounds. It was substantially extended to the east in the 1950s to provide student accommodation for what is now Leicester University. The extensions are two storey and red brick.
- 6.21 The next house is The Spinney. This is quite a plain Tudor Gothic house with prominent gables. It was built in 1905 by Lawton Brown for F M Waite a bank manager. It is of red brick with slate roofs and took its name from Bull Spinney, the trees of which survive in the garden of this house and The Coppice. Howard House was built remarkably close to this property, considering the size of the plots, just before the First World War. It is taller than most of the surrounding properties and in a late Arts and Crafts style. The style of Ashcroft next door is similar and was built at around the same time for Councillor J Leeson, a hosier.
- 6.22 Behind Howard House and Ashcroft is a combination of the remaining elements of Viliers Hall, three storey, flat roofed student accommodation blocks built in 1967 by Castle Park and Dean Hook. Some of the original buildings have been replaced by modern red brick buildings by Goddard Manton. Next along is Aigburth. This was built in 1908 and is of red brick with tiled roofs and tile-hung gables. It was built for another hosier, J G Pickard and has some very poor quality extensions.



Several trees have recently been removed which has opened up the frontage and made these extensions, and the modern accommodation blocks all the more apparent.

- 6.23 Treroose, the next house east, was built for yet another hosier, W B Jarvis in 1922. It is an odd broadly Neo-Georgian design with hipped slate roofs and prominent three-storey gables. The corners of the rendered walls are expressed as quoins. Wighton is much earlier. This was completed in 1908 for F G Langmore, a brewer. The style is similar to The Coppice. The last house within the Conservation Area on the north side is The Beeches. This is a very substantial house built in 1920 by the Harrisons for another hosier, Colonel H J Burnham. This is quite a plain L-shaped Neo-Georgian house in two colours of brick and with a hipped tiled roof with overhanging eaves. Colonel Burnham bought up all the land east of the house and north to the Fairway and sold it off for building plots.
- 6.24 Further east and outside the Conservation Area, the houses generally lack the architectural quality of those previously described and there are several modern houses. The exception is Melbury House, No. 55, which is a fine property of red brick and half timbering with a tiled roof. It was designed by Norman Read as Sothoron Lodge.
- 6.25 On the south side are a group of good 1920s houses which are to be included within the Conservation Area following this appraisal. The most easterly is Stoughton Leys, built in 1924. This is quite a plain L-shaped house of red and dark brick with a slate roof. Next along is Bredon. Although this was built the same year it is in a completely different late Arts and Crafts style with a high prominent shaped gable and sweeping tiled roof. This wide house was built for another hosier J R Potts by Nott and Cope. Its setting from the road is now a large car park. Four years later, Fields House was built to the designs of HH Thompson. The second owner, John Bolton acquired huge areas of land to the east and south which included a model farm and



lake. The house has paired gables with tile hung gables, rendered walls and a tiled roof. Architecturally, these houses warrant inclusion within the Conservation Area, whilst historically, the land associated with Fields House has been very important in determining the lack of development in this part of the area. Consequently these houses and the sports field, on the former Fields House land have been included within the Conservation Area.

- 6.26 The open views over the playing fields are generally attractive and are complemented by the avenue of trees along the grass verges. West of these is Manorcroft. This was built in 1928 and is of render with herringbone brickwork 'nogging' to the bays and a slate roof. The architect was W Beddingfield and his client the webbing manufacturer Ernest Lillie. In the grounds is the 1970s flat roofed warden's lodge close to the playing fields.
- 6.27 Villiers House was designed by Henry Bowles for the shoe manufacturer C Roberts in 1921. It is of red brick with a slate roof and arched window heads and is similar in style to Stoughton Leys. The last houses on the south side are earlier. Clivedon was built in 1907 and is of red brick with hipped slate roofs and some half timbering and was for an eminent plumber, F H Rowlett. Adjacent, Shirley House was built as Sorrento in 1906 for a footwear manufacturer Robert Hyslop. It is a fine red brick house with prominent gables, sweeping tiled roofs and transom and mullioned windows. The house also has a fine gate lodge and garage block to the road. Visible between Sorrento and Clivedon are the uncompromising rear elevations of the three-storey student accommodation blocks of Bowder Court. These were designed in 1993 by Jonathan Smith and partners. However, there is a fine view into the gardens to the east of Stamford Halls nearer to Gable House which is surrounded by a good hedge. It is a shame that the phone kiosk here is modern rather than a more traditional K6 box.



Glebe Road

- 6.28 Glebe Road was laid out in 1902 and the land developed by the Powys Keck Estate. It is a very wide road with relatively little vehicular traffic. The east side is dominated by the trees and fencing of the Botanic Gardens, with attractive views though of Beaumont House and the Knoll with less attractive views of Beaumont Hall from the north part of the street.
- 6.29 The Knoll is an exceptional red brick house with a Swithland slate roof. It was built in 1907 for the brick manufacturer W H Winterton to the designs of W H Bidlake. It is a magnificent Jacobethan design with a striking silhouette produced by the pinnacled gables and tall clustered chimneys. The only other house with an access from the east side of the street is Rocklands. This was one of the first houses in the area and was built for another brickmaker, William Barrow. The house is of red brick with half-timbering and a tiled roof. The setting of the house has been compromised by the building of the rather pedestrian later phase of Beaumont Hall to the rear whilst the house itself has lost character with the removal of its chimney stacks.
- 6.30 The first house to be built on Glebe Road was Glebe Mount. This was built for Marshall Pearson a footwear manufacturer in 1903. Everard and Pick were the architects and the Neo-Georgian house is of red brick and stone with a Swithland slate roof. To the rear is an attractive service wing which forms a courtyard. The building has a very open frontage to Glebe Close with a low red brick wall and hedges to Glebe Road. No. 3 Glebe Road was built in 1925 of red brick and stone with Swithland slate roofs. It is a relatively modest but attractive Jacobethan house with an open frontage behind a low hedge. In the original garden, No. 3a, a 1970s red brick house has been built with the virtually hidden No. 3b behind.



- 6.31 Eynesford Close was built in the 1960s, Wilmington Court probably slightly later. Beyond, No. 7 is a fine red brick house with slate roofs and a mixture of architectural motifs. The chimney above a crow-stepped gable is particularly unusual. There are fine evergreen trees behind simple cast-iron railings. Beyond is a 1970s house before No. 11 which is another early C20 house or red brick, render and tile hanging. It again has good frontage trees. Beyond, Glebe Gardens is a modern residential development. A hedge with cast-iron fence within turns the corner into Knighton Grange Road. At the southern end of the street, Glebe Close is a 1960s development whilst facing Glebe Road are modern buff brick houses with concrete tiled roofs.

Southmeads Road and Close

- 6.32 Southmeads Road was laid out between 1915 and 1930. It is an extremely pleasant tree-lined lane with grass verges and regular trees planted within the grass verges. The northeastern leg gradually becomes little more than a track as it dissects the university playing fields. Here the rhythmically spaced trees give the impression of a rural avenue rather than a suburban lane on the edge of a big city. Southmeads Close, which is a 1960s development outside the Conservation Area, leads off the southeastern leg of the street.
- 6.33 No. 1 is the oldest house, being built in 1904 as Ash Lodge and fronting Stoughton Drive South. By 1930, Nos. 11 and 26 had been built and these were joined by Nos. 5, 13, 15, 30 and 34 by 1938. The majority of these were built with rendered brick walls and brown clay tiled roofs. No. 34 has a good 'bell-cast' gable with windows with herringbone brick noggin between the windows. This detail is quite typical of the later Arts and Crafts period.
- 6.34 Invariably these early properties now sit behind good hedges with mature trees in the gardens. This often makes the houses very

Southmeads Close



Rear of Gilbert Murray Hall



Meadowcroft Road



difficult to see. No. 5 in particular is set very well back from the road. In contrast, later houses such as No. 16, which have open frontages give a very different impression and illustrate the width of the buildings within the plot.

- 6.35 The southwest side of the street has seen the construction of more modern houses. No. 6 is set well down below the level of the road which means that this new house in a Neo-Georgian style is very unobtrusive.
- 6.36 Looking east from Stoughton Drive South, the trees and verges dominate, and only the dry stone wall to No. 3, the occasional gatepier and sporadically placed street lights remind you that there are any houses on the road at all. On the bend in the road where Southmeads Close splits from the road, is a particularly fine tree right on the west side of the bend with a tall well maintained hedge behind. This together with the mature trees in the grounds means that No. 11 is totally hidden from view.
- 6.37 The rear of the university's Gilbert Murray Hall is the most negative aspect on the road. The brown brick flat-roofed blocks of student accommodation, built in 1966 are very visible from the road due to the lack of landscaping and open hooped railings. The buildings are bland and repetitive and rather than addressing the street in a positive way, display their end gables replete with fire escapes.
- 6.38 The Conservation Area has been extended to include the northern university playing fields. The avenue of trees to the south of these, which mark the continuation of Southmeads Road should also be included. From this avenue, looking south, the trees surrounding the Meadowcourt development are extremely important.



Meadowcourt Road

- 6.39 Although Meadowcourt Road contains smaller houses than the main Stoughton Drive South, Manor Road or Glebe Road, and the street itself is a little narrower, it is still a road of great character containing some fine houses. Indeed as the development along the road took place over a much shorter period of time, this means that there is greater consistency of form and materials, some identical groups and pairs of houses and that there are fewer modern pieces of 'infill'.
- 6.40 Looking down the road from Stoughton Drive South, the initial impression is of a slightly rising, tree lined street with houses standing behind neat gardens and privet hedges. Some young trees have been planted along the footpaths to gradually begin to take the place of trees which over-mature. Just like the streets with larger houses, there are relatively few parked cars along the street as the majority of houses have garages or parking spaces within their curtilages. The new houses in Meadowcourt, with the mature trees beyond effectively close the vista looking east.
- 6.41 Beginning at the west end, the buildings of the University's Digby Hall are apparent along the north side of the street. The buildings are two storeys, of red brick and are generally screened by a high brick wall. Views into the college court can be gained through the gateway in the middle of the south range. The impact of the flat roofed buildings, designed by Sheppard, Robson and Partners and completed in 1962 is softened by the creeper growing up the boundary walls and entranceway. Looking southwest at this point the A6 road junction is very apparent.
- 6.42 Moving east, the true character of the street begins to unfold. On the north side, the majority of the houses are detached, though Nos. 3 & 5, 13 & 15, 23 & 5 and 27/9 and 31/3 are pairs of semis. The bulk of all the buildings are two storey, though some have 1.5 and some 2.5

No. 19 Meadowcourt Road



No. 2 Meadowcourt Road



No. 12 Meadowcourt Road



storey elements. Some (for example Nos. 3-9) were clearly built as groups and all the houses up to No. 19 are predominantly rendered. However several have red brick plinths or quoins and vertical tile hanging, whilst Nos. 27-33 also have elements of half-timbering. No. 19 and 27-33 are predominantly red brick, though these all also have rendered elements. All the houses have clay tiled roofs with the exception of part of No. 19 which has a parapet and No. 33 where concrete pantiles have replaced the original covering.

- 6.43 The form of many of the buildings is also remarkably consistent. The plots are relatively narrow which means most properties are quite deep with side gables and windows. Nos. 1, 9 and 11 are L-shaped buildings with an expressed entrance on the internal corner. Other familiar motifs of the Arts and Crafts period which can be seen on properties in Meadowcourt Road include twin gables (seen to good effect on Nos. 3 & 5) and complex sweeping roof forms (eg No. 21). Most properties have prominent gables, occasionally in a stripped Tudor Gothic form (eg No. 17) and projecting bays and oriels are also common (eg Nos. 27-31).
- 6.44 Although some of the properties appear to have been built later and are beginning to lose some of the finesse of detailing, the properties stand together as a group. The main exception is No. 19, which although of a similar period to its neighbours, and displaying a prominent gable, the return wing is in a 1930s Georgian revival style with a low pitched roof behind a parapet. The quirkiness of this particular building adds further character to the street however.
- 6.45 The south side of the street is almost as characterful though it has some more recent properties at the east end of the street and in the curtilage of No. 2b. The latter and Nos. 30, 34 and 36 are bungalows. The building forms and materials are also more varied. Nos. 4 & 6 have significant 1.5 storey elements for example, whilst again there are houses with corner entrances (eg Nos. 8, 10 and 16). There is much more use of



red brick on the south side of the street, though again render is common and Nos. 2 and 24 have some half-timbering.

- 6.46 The styles of the buildings are just as varied as on the north side with again various common Arts and Crafts details employed. The impression is of more variety on the south side because of the greater use of brickwork allied to the differences in detail within the buildings.
- 6.47 The character of the road is enhanced by the greenery produced by the numerous privet hedges and shrubs and garden trees. Whilst other forms of boundary are also found, the character of the houses and the street as a whole is diminished where the front garden is turned over to parking.
- 6.48 Meadowcourt Road is a street of great character. Although the individual buildings are less grand than their neighbours on some other streets, this is more than compensated for in the value of the houses as a group. This homogeneity is more obvious on Meadowcourt Road because the plots are smaller, the houses closer together, nearer the road and there is less mature garden planting. It is important that this character is not eroded through incremental changes to properties and their boundaries.

Meadowcourt

- 6.49 At the end of Meadowcourt Road is Meadowcourt. It comprises a small estate of houses, built in the 1990s, which runs at an angle from the end of the older road. The design of the houses has attempted to reflect that of the earlier properties though there is less variation in detailing. This has been compensated for in the variety of materials used, which although appropriate in themselves, have been too consciously mixed to be entirely convincing.



- 6.50 The planting is beginning to mature and will add greatly to the character of the development. However the relative narrowness of the street, which perversely seems to attract parked vehicles allied to the lack of interest in the pavement and carriageway surfacing means that the streetscape lacks the richness of the older street. The view east is however framed by a marvellous backcloth of mature trees.
- 6.51 Now that the estate has been built, the area lacks the special architectural and historic interest to be a Conservation Area in its own right. However it does have a part to play in the overall character of the wider Conservation Area and especially the character of Meadowcourt Road. Meadowcourt and Oadby Hill Top Conservation Area have therefore been combined into a single Conservation Area.

Knighton Grange Road

- 6.52 Knighton Grange Road was laid out at the end of the C19 as an L-shaped road running north and then west from the London Road. In 1904, Manor Road was built and Stoughton Drive South created. This included the old north-south leg of Knighton Grange Road plus a new stretch built north of the Manor Road junction.
- 6.53 Today the road is relatively wide with excellent mature trees along the footway. Hidden behind tall hedges and garden trees, cast-iron fences and brick boundary walls are a series of very fine houses the majority of which were built in the early years of the C20.
- 6.54 Beginning on the south side, the first house which occupies the area between Stoughton Drive South and Glebe Road is Rocklands. This was one of the earliest houses in the area built in 1902 for the brickmaker W Barrow. It is a red brick house with a tiled roof and half-timbered gables. Next to it are the Beaumont Hall accommodation blocks built in two phases from 1949-62. The first phase (to the east)



is in a pleasant Neo-Georgian style; the later phase is rather bland. From Knighton Grange Road the views of the open car park and later buildings are disappointing in an area of such excellent townscape.

- 6.55 Continuing west beyond Glebe Road, the first house is No. 37. This is an exceptionally fine, large property built in 1922 to the designs of AE and TT Sawday. It is a long range of red brick with vertically-hung Collyweston slate with the same material used for the roofs. Although the building is a long block parallel with the road, part of the east range is slightly recessed and the entrance is in the join of the two wings. On the west side is the lodge (No. 35), as big as a substantial house itself. This striking property is sat behind a railing with high hedge behind. The tall chimney stacks and gables give the building an interesting silhouette complimented by the tall garden and roadside trees.
- 6.56 No. 33 is also a very fine house with Arts and Crafts influences. This is of 2.5 storeys and rendered with an attractive brick door surround which supports a hipped bay with mullioned windows. Although the house is very fine, the attached lodge and original garage on the west side are perhaps the most striking part of the building. The tall building which jetties at the side has a canted first floor bay with a tiled roof wrapping around the sides and a further hipped gable above. The resultant building is very 'Voysey-esque'.
- 6.57 Heading west, No. 29 is a huge brick and stone house which covers two plots and is set a long way back from the road. Only the entrance gates with their triple piers and an avenue of mature trees are easily visible from the road. The old railing, which continues round the front of Nos. 33-7 presumably originally enclosed the large plot of the original house.
- 6.58 The rest of the houses are also all of great quality. The majority are of red brick, though No. 25 is largely of gault brick, and Nos. 21, 23 and 27 also have render, the latter including some half timbering.



The predominant roofing material is plain tile, though Nos. 19, 25 and 29 are of slate and 15a has brown pantiles. With the exception of No. 25 which turns its back to the road and is in a late-Victorian style, all the buildings have Arts and Crafts, in some cases mixed with Neo-Georgian influences.

- 6.59 Several houses have privet and other hedges, some modern brick walls and timber fences. Many have good mature trees in their gardens (many of them evergreens) and only the impressive Nos. 33 & 37 and the houses at the west end of the street have reasonably open frontages. This means that only glimpse views of parts of the properties are often possible.
- 6.60 The houses on the north side of the road are also impressive. Many of the biggest properties are at right angles to the street presumably to allow the sun into their otherwise north facing gardens. In contrast No. 18 is far to the rear of the plot as to be virtually invisible from the road. Some of the properties (including Nos. 16, 20 and 38) rise up to 2.5 or three storeys in places.
- 6.61 The building materials show more variation. Red brick is still the most prevalent, though Nos. 12, 26, 38 and 40 are predominantly of render, Nos. 16, 20, 24 and 28 have half timbering and Nos. 24 and 26 have tile hanging. No. 20 has a pinker brick, whilst 38 has some weatherboarding and No. 40 stone detailing. Whilst most of the properties have clay tiled roofs, there are more red tiles than is common in the other streets where brown tiles predominate. No. 12 has pantiles as has the later C20 No. 36. The adjoining house (No. 34) is the most unusual house in the street being in a 1950s modern movement style with flat roofs and large picture windows. The brown-red brick is more contextual though the windows have heads of 'no-fines' concrete.



- 6.62 Although the boundaries are varied with a mixture of hedges, old iron fences, brick walls and fences, the impression of a green boundary to the street is retained by the hedges and garden trees and the fine mature roadside trees. The high timber fences at the east end of the street are rather austere and inappropriate.

Knighton Rise

- 6.63 Like Knighton Grange Road, Knighton Rise is a street of extremely attractive detached houses built mostly in the early part of the C20. The earliest houses appear to date from c1905, and whilst there has been more modern infill than the majority of other streets within the Conservation Area, the character of the street is very strong.
- 6.64 The south side of the street has some very substantial properties, the majority of which are two storeys, some with lower elements, some with an additional half storey. Nos. 32, 26 and 14a are modern bungalows whilst No. 6 is a 1970s house. No. 28 was built in 1905 with prominent gables and rendered walls. Presumably in 1930s a new corner entrance was added in an Art Nouveau style. Several other properties have features which hint at a similar style.
- 6.65 Most properties are based firmly in the Arts and Crafts era however and display some of the favourite features of that period. No. 20, which is an outstanding house, highly prominent when viewed from Sycamore Close, has windows reminiscent of 'Sparrowes House' in Ipswich. This was much used by R N Shaw the important Gothic revival architect who was a great influence of the Arts and Crafts movement. Otherwise however, No. 20 is staunchly Neo-Georgian in style. No. 12 has the familiar paired gable.

No. 3 Knighton Rise



No. 25 Knighton Rise



Knighton Rise looking west



- 6.66 The building materials are rather more varied along Knighton Rise. Red brick and render are by far the most common elements, though some buildings also use a darker contrasting brick. Weatherboarding, half-timbering, tile hanging and stone all used to add interest; whilst there is greater use of Swithland and Welsh slate for the roofs of the earlier buildings in addition to the plain tiles typical of the area.
- 6.67 Whilst the south side of the street has some more modern buildings, the north side is even more homogenous with all the properties of a similar age. The exception is The Lawns at the west end of the street which has been substantially rebuilt.
- 6.68 Nos. 3-9 form a very strong group at the west end of the street. All are of render with brick plinths, detailing or 'nogging' infilling the half-timbered gables. No. 9 rises to three storeys on its side elevation. To allow sun into the north facing gardens, many of the properties are gable end on to the street, or positioned to the sides of the plots. Only No. 23 is set well back in the plot.
- 6.69 Whilst once more the building materials are from the same palette as the other streets in the Conservation Area, they are used with greater freedom than in most other streets. No. 15, gives the impression of being almost entirely tile-hung with its large paired gables facing the road. The properties either side of it and nearby all exhibit the same material. No. 25, by way of contrast is purely red brick. Stylistically it is different from the majority of its neighbours with its vaguely Tudor Gothic gables and curious curving projecting flat-roofed porch. No. 27 is rendered but has red brick quoins and detailing and an impressive first floor conservatory with leaded glass which was presumably added later. The vast majority of houses have clay tiled roofs, with only The Lawns and No. 27 using slate.

6.70 Although several properties have good hedges and garden trees (especially at the ends of the north side) there is much greater variety in the type of boundary and several properties are much more open to the street. The street, unlike most of those in the area does not have street trees. Despite this, the lack of parked cars and traffic-related paraphernalia (even road centre-lines) means that all appears refreshingly wide and uncluttered. Many of the houses have fine mature garden trees and shrubs with the result that the street still appears to be green and pleasant and most of the high quality houses are either viewed through a partly-enclosing canopy, over a hedge or fence or have a backcloth of garden trees.

7.0 Key characteristics

7.1 *Scale*

Traditional houses within the area are almost universally of two storeys occasionally with an additional storey within the gable ends or the roof. There are a small number of more modern single storey buildings.

7.2 *Style*

Houses within the Conservation Area are generally in an Arts and Crafts style which encompasses Jacobethan, vernacular and Gothic Revival features with several of the later buildings developing into a Neo-Georgian style. Key characteristics include prominent gables, often paired, complex roof forms including long sweeping roofs and hips, half-hips and gambrel roofs. Tall chimneys are also a feature of many houses and this adds to the roofline interest and silhouette.

7.3 *Materials*

Houses are mostly of red brick or render with half-timbering, brick noggin, and vertically hung tiles all used to enliven facades. Brown clay tiles are the most common roofing material, with red used in some streets. Some of the houses, especially the grandest have Swithland slate roofs.

7.4 *Position on the plot*

Although the area is characterised by large houses, these sit on big plots. Most houses are located parallel with the street, except those set in their own very spacious grounds and those at right angles to the street to allow the sun into north-facing gardens. Most of the streets containing the relatively more modest houses have a roughly consistent building line (particularly Meadowcourt Road).

7.5 *Property boundaries*

Most of the original houses in the area have quite solid front boundaries allowing only glimpse views of the houses behind. These are often formed by hedges supplemented by trees. Some houses have original or new boundary walls and railings and gates. Where boundaries have been removed to give open frontage, this has weakened the character of the street.

7.6 *Trees*

The area has a wealth of mature trees within the Botanic Garden, the gardens of houses and along the roadside of all but Knighton Rise. These are vital to the character of the area and are complemented by large mature hedges and shrubs.

7.7 *Highways*

Although Stoughton Drive South in particular is quite a busy road, the roads in the area are not dominated by signs, road markings and other traffic-related 'street furniture'. Similarly as all properties appear to enjoy off-street parking, the wide roads are generally free from parked vehicles. The exception is Meadowcourt where the road is narrower and the off-street parking provision less generous.

7.8 *The Botanic Garden*

This is a major amenity to the area. Whilst its attractive grounds are open to local residents and visitors, the contribution of its magnificent trees adds much to the character of the streets around it.

7.9 *The University*

The presence of around 1900 students in the converted houses and purpose-built residential blocks of the university adds vitality and activity to the otherwise quiet streets. The old houses themselves are generally well maintained. The major negative impact of these buildings is where they present their backs to the streets or where gardens have been surfaced over for parking and solid boundaries removed.

8.0 Changes to the Conservation Area boundary in 2005

- 8.1 The townscape quality of the area is very strong and it is important that this is not diluted by including groups of buildings which do not contribute to this character. The minor changes to the boundary made following the appraisal help reinforce the special architectural or historic interest of the area.
- 8.2 Meadowcourt is no longer to be considered a separate Conservation Area but is included within the Oadby Hill Top area. This is because although the relatively modern houses are not the same quality as the older houses, their design and particularly the backcloth of mature trees is an important aspect of the eastern part of Meadowcourt Road.
- 8.3 The large houses known as Stoughton Leys, Bredon and Fields House, together with the university playing fields and the avenue of trees along the continuation of Southmeads Road have been included. The houses are of similar character and age to those already within the Conservation Area whilst the open land, which was farmed by a previous owner of Fields House is an important aspect of the character of the area. The avenue of trees is an important entrance to the Conservation Area.
- 8.4 Nos. 24-6 Stoughton Drive South have been removed from the Conservation Area as these houses lack the character of the traditional properties in the area. Nos. 36 & 38 are similarly of a lesser character but their position within the heart of the area means that it would be difficult to produce a workable boundary were they to be removed.
- 8.5 The two modern houses on St David's Crescent, which were presumably built in the rear garden of No. 11 Knighton Rise are removed as they are of a different character to the traditional buildings in the area.
- 8.6 An area of land to the rear of The Broadway has been removed as there are private gardens not associated with houses in the Conservation Area.

Greenhouses to rear of Highgrove



9.0 Enhancement opportunities

- 9.1 Use of Article 4 Directions to control incremental changes to Significant Local Buildings.
- 9.2 Repair / restoration of greenhouses etc to rear of Highgrove.
- 9.3 Improve screening to rear of university houses, particularly Gilbert Murray Hall.
- 9.4 Improve screening to Beaumont Hall from Botanic Gardens, Knighton Grange Road and Aigburth.

10.0 References

- Boynton H, 'A prospect of Oadby', Oadby Local History Group, 1993
- Pevsner N, 'The Buildings of England - Leicestershire & Rutland', Penguin, 1960
- Shepherd Epstein Hunter, 'Oadby Hilltop Conservation Area Appraisal (Second draft)', 2004
- Keene RJB, 'Architecture in Leicestershire 1834-1984', Leicestershire & Rutland Society of Architects, 1984
- J M Lee, R A McKinley, 'Victoria County History - Leicestershire (Volume 5)', 1964
- University of Leicester website
- Invaluable help was also received from staff at the Record Office for Leicestershire, Leicester & Rutland