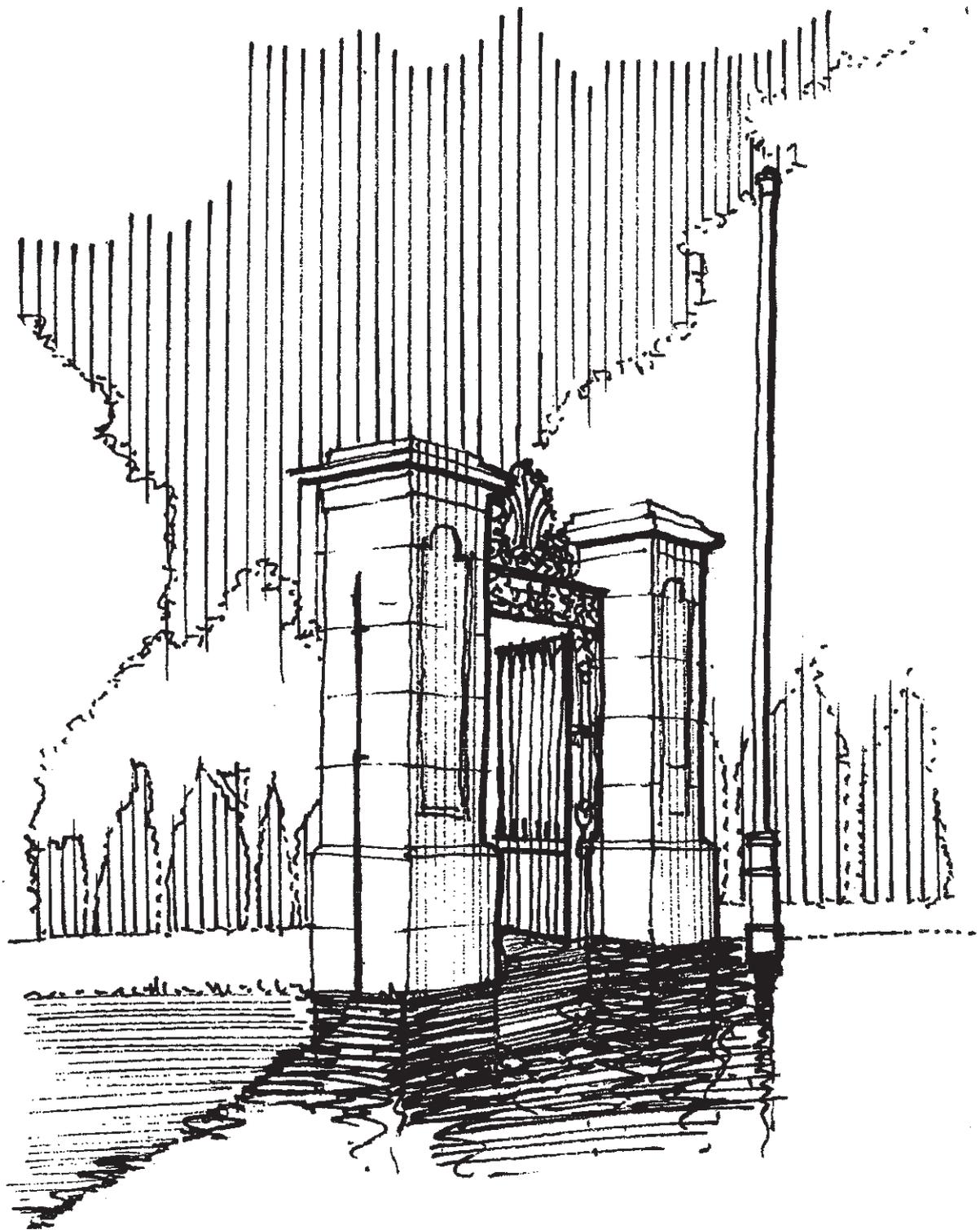


Love Lane Conservation Area Character Study



Love Lane Conservation Area Character Study

Love Lane Conservation Area was first designated in October 1976. This finalised Love Lane Conservation Area Character Study was produced following the publication of a draft study (publication agreed in December 1997) which was subject to Public Consultation. Residents' views and comments were taken into account and incorporated into this Study as appropriate. The Character Study was approved for publication by Dudley Council's Planning Committee on 8th January 1998.

INFORMATIVE, March 2011

Following publication of this study and in line with the results of the public consultation, the Conservation Area was formally extended on 5th March 1998, to the north-east to include the gates and entrance to Mary Stevens Park in Love Lane, to the south to include Nos. 47 to 53 Love Lane, and to the east to include Nos. 41 to 43 Corser Street.

1) Introduction

What is the purpose of the study?

- i To raise awareness of the character, both good and bad, that the Love Lane Conservation Area possesses.
- ii To suggest how that character can be maintained and enhanced.
- iii To review the boundaries of the Conservation Area, designated in 1976.
- iv To put forward proposals for the extension and future management of the Conservation Area after public consultation.

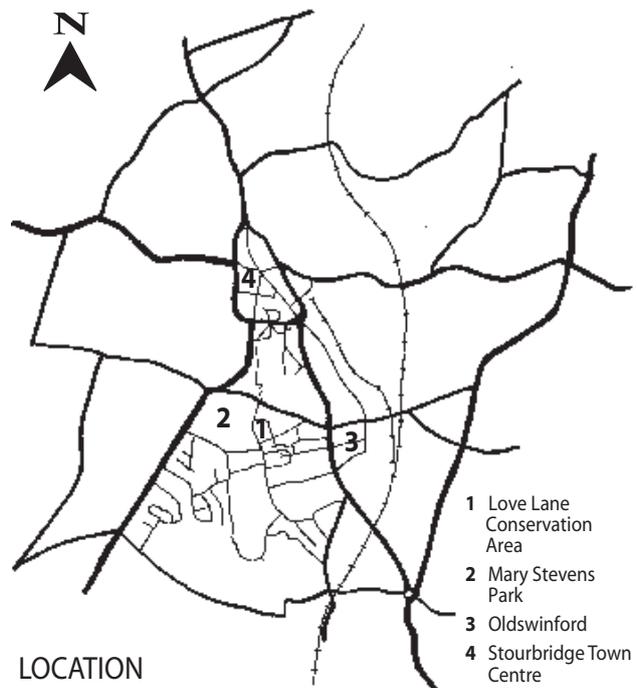
Why is the Study needed?

Love Lane is an important area of residential character within our Borough. Only by auditing in detail the character of the area, can the continued quality of the Conservation Area be guaranteed.

Government policy requires that Local Authorities, from time to time, review their existing Conservation Areas, and make recommendations for their retention, expansion, or deletion.

How is the Study organised?

This study is based on a survey of the following elements which are recognised to have a major impact upon character: context, topography, open space, historic evolution, density, types, features, and styles of buildings, views and landmarks, and uses and activities. This critical basis is vital if meaningful and legitimate conclusions are to be drawn.



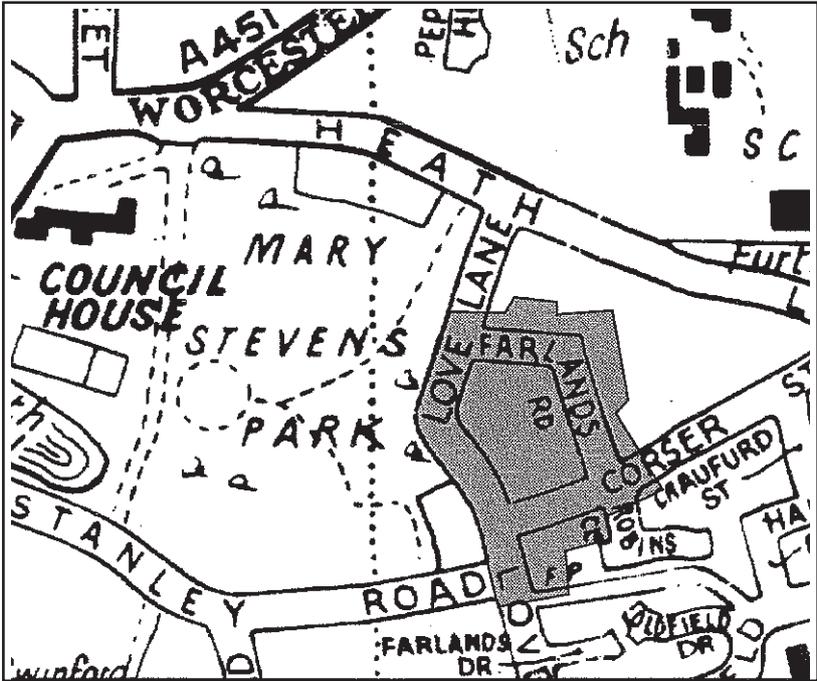
The study distils the major elements which are important in assessing character. It provides a positive context for the control of development, and offers direction for the protection, enhancement and wellbeing of the area.

2) Background

The Love Lane Conservation Area is located approximately two kilometres to the south of Stourbridge town centre, and half a kilometre to the west of Oldswinford cross. The area lies on a bed of harder sandstone, sandwiched between two softer areas, one to the west which is defined by the slope down from Love Lane into Mary Stevens Park, and the other to the east, defined by the slope of Glasshouse Hill from the Cross, at Oldswinford. Love Lane is orientated on a north-south axis, thus making the residences arranged along it accessible to both morning and afternoon sun, to the rear, and evening sun to the fronts facing Love Lane. Corser Street is arranged along an east-west axis, thus properties to the south side of the street have the greatest exposure to sunshine, in the back garden. This axis is also likely to have the effect of funnelling the prevailing south-westerly wind. The presence of mature street trees at the western end may play an important role in mitigating this effect.

The Love Lane Conservation Area was designated in September 1976 to preserve the well kept Victorian terraces and villas, and to ensure that new development would make a positive contribution to the character of the area.

An Article 4 Direction was made by the Council in 1978 under the Town and Country Planning General Development Order 1977, and this was subsequently confirmed by the Secretary of State for the Environment. Where an Article 4 Direction is in force, all alterations and extensions, to the property or its boundaries, require a planning application to be made to the Local Authority. Planning applications normally attract a fee but, if the development without the Direction would not require planning permission, for example a small extension, no fee is payable.



The purpose of an Article 4 Direction is to give the Local Authority control over the detail of proposed work to ensure that it is in keeping with the character of the conservation area. The decision on what should be allowed is based on the architectural features of the property, and those of properties immediately adjacent. The effect of the change on the street scene and whether approval would set a poor precedent for other properties wishing to make similar changes are also considerations.

Issues of safety and security are important, not just in terms of individual homes but also within the neighbourhood, most commonly through the perceived dangers of vehicles, particularly to parents of young children and the elderly. For these reasons, amongst others, it is important to maintain a clear distinction

between what is public in this case the park, the street and the route to the front door, and that which is private, the rooms of the house and its private back garden. This character study will concentrate on the street and what can be visually seen from it, as this is of proper public concern.

3) Historical Development

The area was originally part of a medieval open field west of Oldswinford. After the 1780 Inclosure it was divided into individual fields. Love Lane was built as an access to these fields. It was probably a quiet route frequented by local courting couples. The name was first recorded in 1799.



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By the 1830s the fields had come into the ownership of Sir John Evans. The earliest development was a house and grounds south of the Conservation Area called The Farlands. Others followed: Swinford House, Parkhead (now Elmfield School), Thornhill, Clifton House and Oakleigh (1870), all large houses built and lived in by Stourbridge industrialists and professionals.

To the west was The Heath Glassworks estate, now Mary Stevens Park. The actual works lay near the site of the present Council House and was a small group of buildings within a large area of open land.

The Conservation Area itself was a second stage development arising from the sub-division of land from the initial large estate phase. What is remarkable is the comparative speed with which this development occurred. It began, and as far as Love Lane is concerned, was virtually completed, in the 1840s. In 1850 the Evan's property north of Farlands and east of Love Lane was sold to a local solicitor, Henry Corser, who seems to have reorganised it essentially for development. Corser put in two roads, Corser Street and Farlands Terrace, now Road, and divided the rest of the area into building plots. There is evidence that some of these were sold by auction at The Talbot Hotel, in High Street, Stourbridge, but not all were sold straight away.

Most of the pre-1850 buildings were sited along Love Lane itself affording views over the countryside. The higher status houses consisting of villas in their own grounds lay to the north of Corser Street with the lower status south of it. The largest house in the north was Alban Villa. To the north were two smaller detached villas. South of Corser Street the pattern was different, two semi-detached houses followed by artisans terraced 'cottages'.

The second phase (1851-1871) was primarily around Farlands Road and the Corser Street junction. Farlands Road began to be developed with architecturally polite detached villas along its west-east arm and artisan terraced structures along its north-south arm. A group of terraced villas were built along the north-western end of Corser Street reinforcing the status and character of that street.

The third phase (1871-1919) saw a number of mainly semi-detached and terraced houses, gradually occupying the remaining plots of land. Most of these appear to have been constructed between 1900 and 1910. This generally was the final phase, the four later buildings in the Conservation Area being, in contrast, levered into subdivisions of earlier plots.

4) First Impressions

The major impression of the Love Lane Conservation Area is one of high quality residential streets, containing a wealth of period styles, details and elements, dating from the 19th to the early 20th Centuries, the whole being set between Oldswinford and Mary Stevens Park.

The major landscape element defining the character of the Conservation Area is Mary Stevens Park which forms its western boundary. This pre-existing open space has helped define the layout and movement patterns within the area including roads and access points. The park represents not only a landmark in relation to the space it occupies but is also important in terms of the public affinity it attracts. The main building landmark for the area west of Love Lane, is Elmfield School, formerly Parkhill. The residential areas, defined by Heath Lane, Love Lane and Corser Street have no identifiable landmark buildings but are important in terms of their overall composition and relationship to one another.

Moving around

Pedestrians, cyclists and drivers share the street. This is the best solution as it creates the maximum use and activity of the street in the most efficient effective and sustainable way. The introduction of traffic calming measures is a very important component in reducing the domination of our streets by unrestricted vehicles moving at speed through residential areas. They create a friendlier and safer environment for the pedestrian and cyclist, a paramount concern in a residential neighbourhood, particularly one which is used heavily to access a public park.



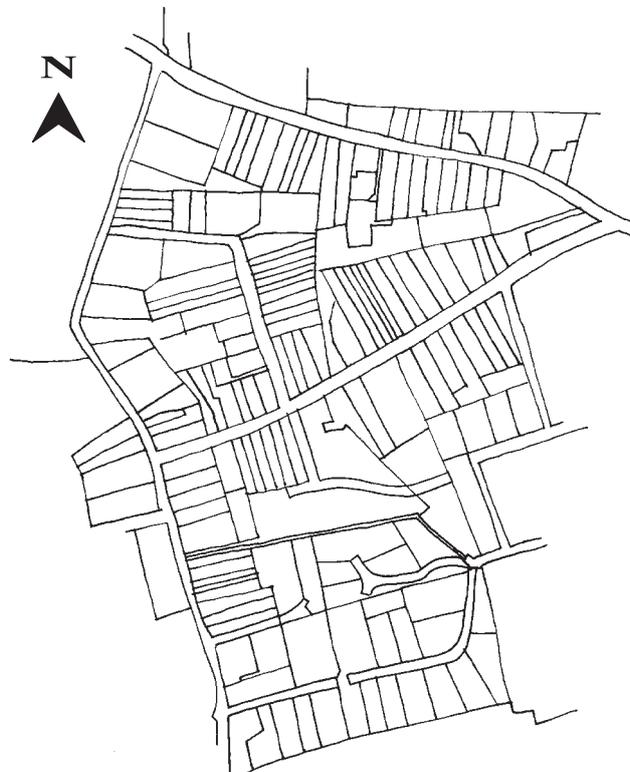
Nos 3-9 Love Lane

5) Street Pattern

The overriding character of the study area is defined by its connected street pattern. Within this, during the major development period, is superimposed the simple and clear logic of buildings fronting the street of a scale, predominantly two storey, which generates the enclosure which we identify with a street. This is exemplified by Corser Street.

Exceptions do however exist. Love Lane is predominantly made up of large detached residences in substantial grounds which allow the provision of imposing facades on more than one side of the building. This indicates the property of substantial citizens, able to display their individual wealth by creating the most impressive view of their home both from the street, and from neighbouring properties.

A clear example of this is Alban Villa with its bay windows to Love Lane and to the south facing side of the building, in order to maximise access to daylight. Typically, development at no. 27/29 was set far enough away to allow opposing bays at a respectful distance from the main house. This influence was disrupted by the infill property at no. 25a, which created a poor relationship by means of the long setback from Love Lane, presumably in order to prevent obscuring light from Alban Villa. This development predates the Town and Country Planning Act of 1947, and today would be unacceptable within the conservation area.



Street pattern and building plots



Passageway connecting Love Lane and Field Lane

It is important to realise that development within a conservation area needs to be contextually correct, in addition to being of a high aesthetic value. This contextual question is vividly exposed by the infill development which created Robin's Close and Oldfield Drive, which generated a cul de sac design which is totally at odds with the historic street context. The appropriate form of sub-division is clearly demonstrated by the excellent arrangement of Farlands Road, with its connection between Love Lane and Corser Street. Love Lane Drive and its connection through to Field Lane is a good example of maintaining a link for pedestrians, along streets which are fronted by housing and this would have been the preferable solution from Hall Street to Robin's Close.

6) Street Frontages

Although an open and connected street structure is important for ease of movement within the area, it is the dwellings themselves, their height, proportion and arrangement to the street that generate the enclosure which we recognise as creating a street. The more cohesive the arrangement of these elements the stronger the street is likely to appear to the observer. Corser Street has the most consistent and recognisable building line and street width. This, in common with the two storey building height prevalent within the conservation area, generates a strong visual enclosure. Love Lane has a more open character than Corser Street because of the size of a number of the individual dwellings, although they are set on a strong and consistent building line. These individual dwellings enhance their presence by the scale and embellishment of the architectural form and, in a number of cases, by the use of devices such as boundary walling, gates, hedging and, over time, a number of imposing specimen trees. Farlands Road contains opposing terraces which create a very intimate street scale because of the narrow width and the combination with fine front walls, pillars and copings. Love Lane Drive, although one sided, sets up a strong relationship between the consistent holly hedges, some of which have been allowed to grow into small trees, and the dwellings themselves.



Nos 47/49 Corser Street

7) Individual Street Facades

The overall collective quality is at its greatest where the individual elements previously outlined combine with high quality buildings. This combination can be found in the block created by Love Lane, Corser Street and Farlands Road and it is this which defines the area as being particularly special and worthy of conservation.

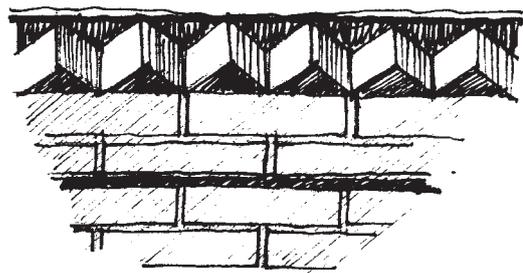
A range of architectural themes and materials are used along Love Lane, Corser Street and Farlands Road.



No 19 Love Lane

Main elevational walls

Walls are constructed in brick to terraced properties, semi-detached and detached houses. There is no apparent use of stone with the exception of Elmfield School on Love Lane where there are stone dressings and stone mullioned windows. Render has been used as an original material, notably in one stuccoed terrace and on two detached properties. Other render seems to have been applied at a later date. Original render occurs on the terrace numbered 55-63 Corser Street in a stucco and on Love Lane on the 'cottage orne' style Addenbrooke Villa (No.19) and Alban Villa (No.25). Modified houses which have been rendered this century are Old Farm Cottage, Corser Street and the abutting properties 1-7 odds and 2 Farlands Road. Brick finished walls exist in several types and bonds with smooth red brick the most commonly used. Flemish bond brickwork occurs on properties which date from 1851 to 1884. There is a strong correlation between houses of Flemish bond brick construction and documentary evidence dating those properties to 1851. Flemish bond walls are notable features of semidetached and detached properties such as 11/13, 59/61, 63/65, 15, and 17 Love Lane, 47/49 Corser Street and 4 Farlands Road. English Garden Wall bond, varying in numbers of stretcher courses, accounts for all other properties visibly built of brick. Red terracotta appears as a below eaves detail, and as string courses on main elevations. Dog tooth and dentil cornices in red brick are used below eaves in a few properties. Blue brick is used in two ways on elevations: the more dramatic is as a header in polychrome Flemish bond walls and it is also used as a decorative string course. Refractory buff coloured brick is seen as a decorative feature in string courses on some elevations. Decorative features to elevational walls such as dog tooth cornices are seen at 47/49 Corser Street, dentil courses at 9-17 Farlands Road, blue brick string courses at 7/9 Love Lane and 41/ 43 Corser Street, refractory brick at 23 Farlands Road along with moulded terracotta cornices at 3/5 Love Lane and 46-48 Corser Street.



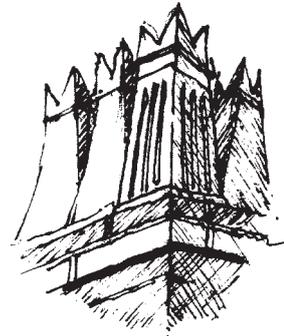
Roofs

Roofs are covered in either small red clay tiles or Welsh slate, the slate being most common. Pitches vary from shallow 30° usually slated with hips such as at 19 Farlands Road, 27/29 Love Lane, and 45° pitch on clay tiled roofs at 46-56 Corser Street. Ridge treatments range from simple clay ridge tiles, such as at 9-17 Farlands Road, decorated versions such as 46-48 Corser Street, and extravagant finials at 3/5 Love Lane. Some leaded ridges occur on slate roofs such as at 29 Love Lane. Verge treatments such as the decorated barge boards at

19 Love Lane, Addenbrooke Villa, 25 Love Lane, Alban Villa and 7/9 Love Lane are rare in the area. There are hipped dormer windows on 3/5 Love Lane and gable dormers on an extension to Leedons on the corner of Farlands Road.

Chimneys

Chimneys are present on almost all properties within the Conservation Area. They are generally red brick and vary from basic square shapes with simple round pots to ornately corbelled chimneys with courses of blue or buff brick with crown pots. Dentil work is used to echo elevational decoration on 47/49 Corser Street. 19 Love Lane (Addenbrooke Villa) has bulky blue brick chimneys with a raised buff band and square pots. Terraces and semi-detached houses are dominated by central shared and often paired chimneys, most commonly these are found on the forward slope e.g. 9-17 Farlands Road. Gable ridge mounted chimneys occur on the buildings which appear on the earliest documents: 17 and 63/65 Love Lane. Ridge mounted chimneys towards the core of the house appear at 19, 25 and 27/29 Love Lane.

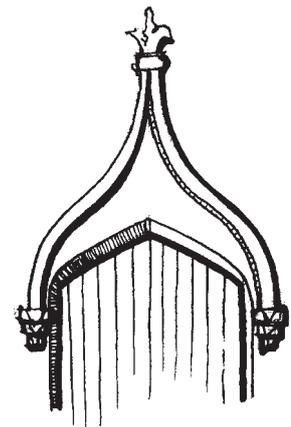


Windows

There is much variation in the window styles and glazing patterns used. Most are, or were, vertically sliding sash windows with some notable exceptions such as the side hung casements at 12, 14 Farlands Road. Window heads are moulded units including those properties built in 1851. The exceptions to this are windows to the rear of buildings, where simple wooden lintels are seen such as at 27/29 Love Lane. Sills vary from shaped brick to moulded units unless dating from the later 20th century. Moulded sills appear to occur on the main elevation of properties, including 51-63 Corser Street. Bays are a recurrent theme. If an individual property does not have a bay window feature it is part of a terrace which does, such as 51-63 Corser Street. Bays are three sided apsidal and hip roofed in slate or a modern replacement material. 12 and 14 Farlands Road are unusual in that they have no bays between them. The bays have timber sash windows, where original, and some moulded timber to the eaves. There is one oriel window above the central doorway at 67 Love Lane and a jettied upper floor to Oak Lodge between 57, 59 Love Lane. Glazing patterns on the sashes range from the later single pane per sash to 8 panes per sash. The smaller panes are found on properties dated from 1851 and 1862. Larger panes of glass provide evidence of the local industry's ability to more easily manufacture sheets of plate glass at later periods.

Doors and Doorways

Doorways are recessed e.g. 3/5 Love Lane and 51-55 Corser Street, or shelter beneath a porch e.g. 27, 29 Love Lane's central shared porch or 19 Love Lane's and 46/48 Corser Street's gabled porch and 17 Love Lane's cantilevered monopitch porch. There are a number of modern porches which do not enhance the properties to which they are attached. Some of the recessed doorways are arched such as those at 9-17 Farlands Road. The doors are predominantly of the 4 panelled pattern some with the upper panels occupied by coloured, leaded or plain glass. Many doors have been replaced in the area although enough originals survive to serve as a pattern for appropriate replacements.



Future Change

It is important that new development within the Conservation Area takes the opportunity to contribute to not only the preservation but also the continuing evolution of the area. Put simply, it is only by rigorous

attention to quality in the execution of extensions, in particular those visible to the street, that the quality of the area can be maintained and enhanced. It is also important to note that it is those properties that have been changed over time in a manner respectful of the scale and proportions of the original buildings that retain and increase their property values. That is why, in part, the Conservation Area remains a place people wish to live in or be associated with. Parts of Corser Street, Love Lane and Heath Lane have been poorly modified and have weakened the character of adjacent properties of high quality that have become sandwiched between poorer facades.

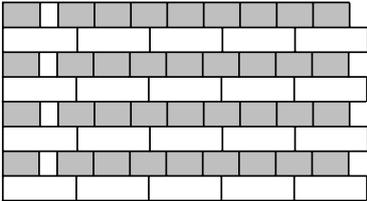
Glossary

BRICK BOND

The order or arrangement in which bricks are laid so that no vertical joint of one course is exactly over the one in the next course below it.

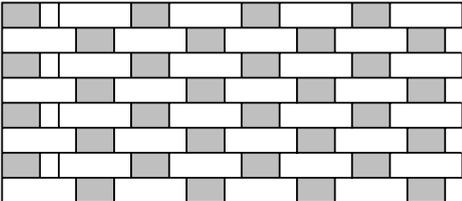
English Bond :

Consists of one course of headers and one course of stretchers alternatively.



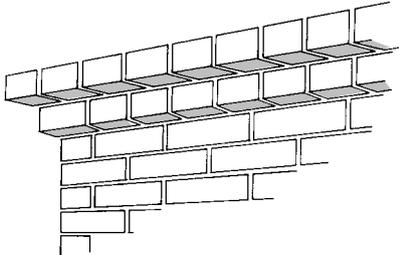
Flemish Bond:

Each course of bricks contains both header and stretcher bricks.



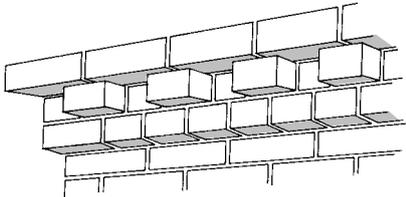
CORBEL

Courses of brickwork that progressively cantilever out beyond the course below.



DENTIL

Classical ornamentation resembling teeth. In the case of brickwork, usually achieved by projecting outward alternative header bricks.



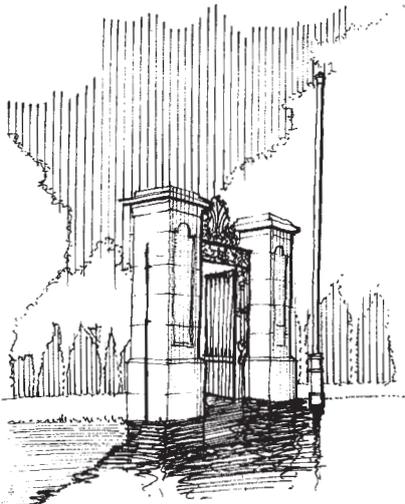
EAVES

The lower edge of a sloping roof which overhangs the face of a wall.

GABLE

The wall of a building, the top of which follows the slope of the roof above it. The term is often applied only to the upper triangular part of the wall above the eaves line.

8) Individual Street Details



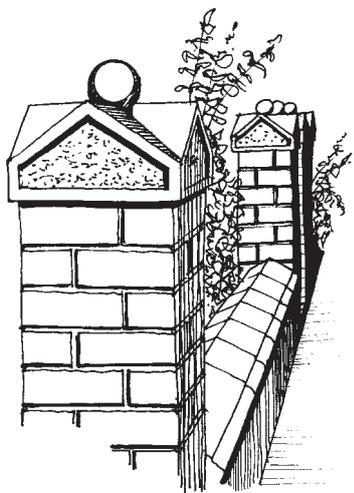
Mary Stevens Park
Love Lane Entrance Gate

The strength of the Conservation Area is the wealth of detailed touches that have been used to create a strong relationship between properties and the street. A garden wall incorporating a post box at no. 31 Love Lane is a fast disappearing detail. The entrance gate to Mary Stevens Park along Love Lane, remains an imposing element, despite the effects of an inappropriate chain link fence, poorly arranged signage and litter bin.

Although functional, the visual impression of the roads and footpaths within the Conservation Area is poor. The traffic calming measures, although effective and welcome in slowing traffic, could be of more sensitive design. A balance needs to be found between the functional requirements of the pedestrian and vehicle, and the necessary respect for the integrity of the Conservation Area.

The Conservation Area as a whole would benefit from an audit of signage to reorganise some of the more visually poor elements. The boundary wall to the public footpath between Field Lane and Love Lane, is visually impressive, although the same cannot be said for the exposed back fences of the properties to Robin's Close. The footpath surface itself could stand improvement to allow greater convenience to residents and pedestrians alike. Because of the presence of high back fences, restricted view, and a lack of illumination, it is doubtful that this path is seen as a desirable route at night. The potential exposure of back garden areas is also likely to be of concern to residents

Garden walls front the majority of properties. In some cases a garden wall has been taken down to accommodate off street parking such as at 7 and 54 Love Lane. On Corser Street the street begins with a high garden wall to the rear of 29 Love Lane abutting a low mock stone castellated wall which becomes an uncapped brick wall at 61 and 59. By 55 the pavement is level with the front garden area and a line of half-round blue brick copings marks the beginning of walls to the back of pavement, continuing as red brick walls coped in blue half-round bricks. Further down the street, beyond nos. 41 to 49, the continuity of garden walls is quite complete for some distance although the heights and capping and the presence of hedges varies. There are some openings which



Front Garden walls, pillars
and copings, Farlands Road

allow access for cars. Elaborate red brick and terracotta capped walls and pillars are a feature along the opposite side of the street broken only for pedestrian gateways, except where access for a car has been created at 54 and a newer garden wall at 58. There is a more open feel to the front gardens of the houses opposite where walls have been removed to the back of pavement. Farlands Road has red brick and terracotta capped walls in front of Hillcrest Terrace nos. 9-17, and simpler walls in front of the remainder of this side of the street. The even side of the street retains most of its garden walls with one or two exceptions. Love Lane has some elaborate back of pavement garden walls such as those at 3/5 Love Lane which have mock stone capped pillars and blue brick cappings and terracotta cornice detail. There are a range of copings used throughout the street: half-round red or blue bricks, mock stone and foundry slag. All walls are red brick and occasionally in front of terraces the wall has been taken away. Garden walls to the back of pavement still predominate within the area.

9) Uses and Activities

Ninety five percent of property within the area is owner occupied compared with only sixty eight percent for the Borough as a whole. Thirty four percent of houses have seven rooms or more whereas Borough wide only eleven percent do. In Norton Ward fifty percent of the Heads of Households work in professional or managerial jobs whereas for the Borough as a whole only thirty percent work in these areas.

Uses not only relate to the obvious, in this case residential, but also to the way in which the area is used. The streets are used to provide access to the houses, park, shops and nearby schools, but it is noticeable that they are also used for parking cars and as a through-route. The installation of traffic calming measures has hopefully reduced the number of people using these roads as a short cut. It is, however, not surprising that there is much car movement between eight o'clock and nine thirty in the morning, but very little during the remainder of the day, until schools finish and the evening commuter peak begins.

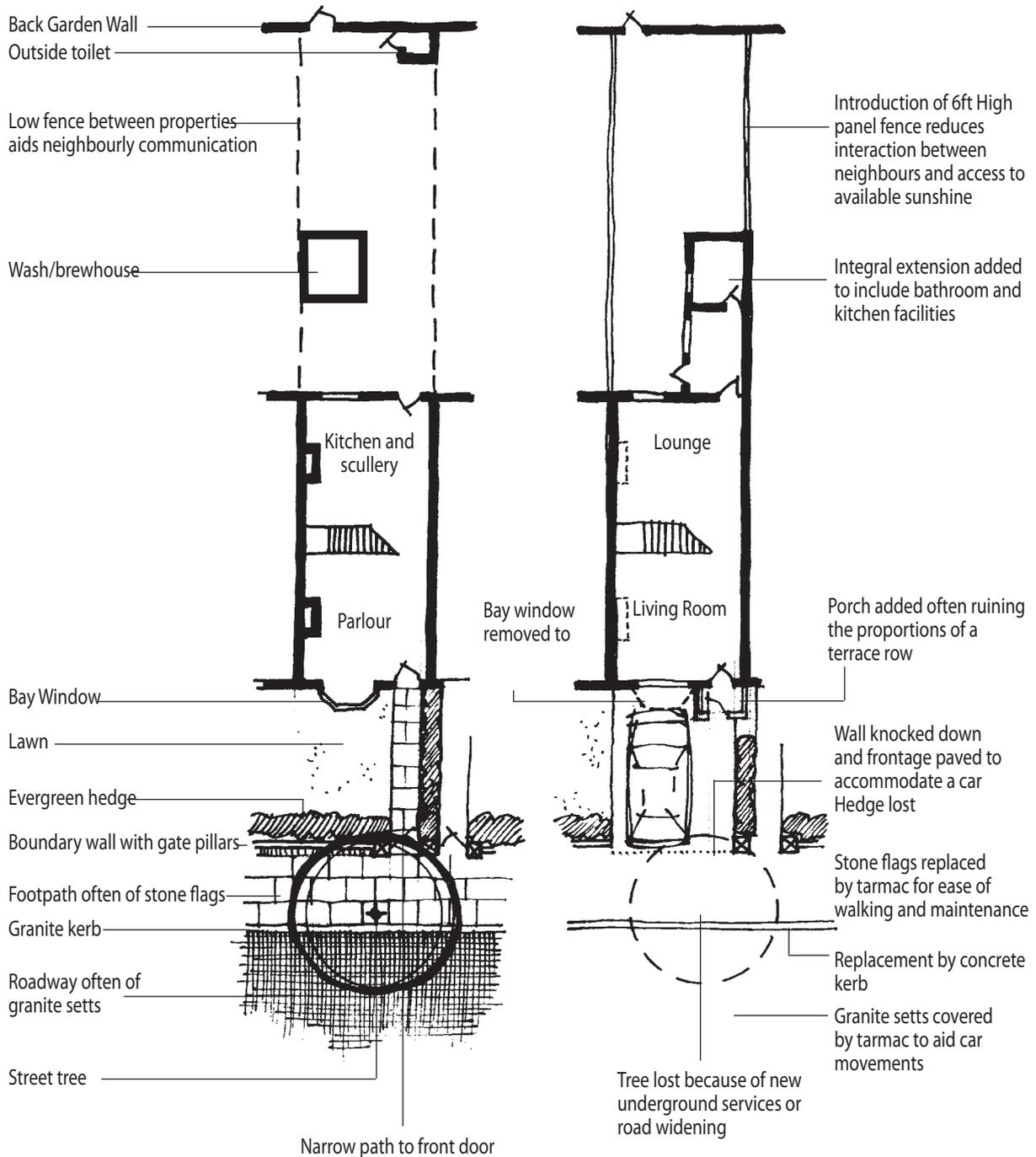
On street parking is common simply because the majority of these houses were built before the use of the motor car and therefore no garages or off-street parking spaces were provided. The number of cars parking on the street can be attributed to the high car ownership in the area. Thirty seven percent of households have two or more cars in this area where as in the Borough as a whole only twenty six percent have two cars or more.

On street parking sets up a conflict between owners, who perceive the street as belonging to them, and those who are passing through. The beauty of the street is that it belongs to both no one and everyone at the same time, and the level of activity which is taking place is an indicator of the health of our society. The important factor is that a particular activity does not come to dominate at the expense of others.

Many of the off street parking spaces, particularly on the older properties along Love Lane, Corser Street and Farlands Road, have been built on what were relatively small front gardens and therefore the whole of the front garden is now given over to hardstanding. This helps reduce on-street parking, but does mean that the front gardens begin to appear as an extension to the public highway, especially where boundary walls have also disappeared.

During early morning and again in the early evening many pedestrians pass through the area. People appear to use Mary Stevens Park as a short cut along their journey, and as a result also use Love Lane. Many are children attending local schools. In between times the number of pedestrians falls off rapidly, and it is noticeable how few people there are and how quiet and inactive the area becomes.

Uses also evolve through time as the diagram opposite shows. Of course change is inevitable but within the Conservation Area the Council (and residents) have a duty to ensure change is positive and that it either preserves or enhances the area's historic character. The negative effects of change illustrated opposite - such as the removal of windows; mutilation of boundary walls and hedges and unsympathetic additions will therefore be resisted and the aim will be to manage change so that it is in sympathy with its surroundings.



Original 19th century two up, two down terrace

Adaptations during the 20th century

10) Conclusions

Following the publication of a draft character study and consultation with local residents it is possible to arrive at a number of conclusions in this finalised Love Lane Conservation Area Character Study viz. :

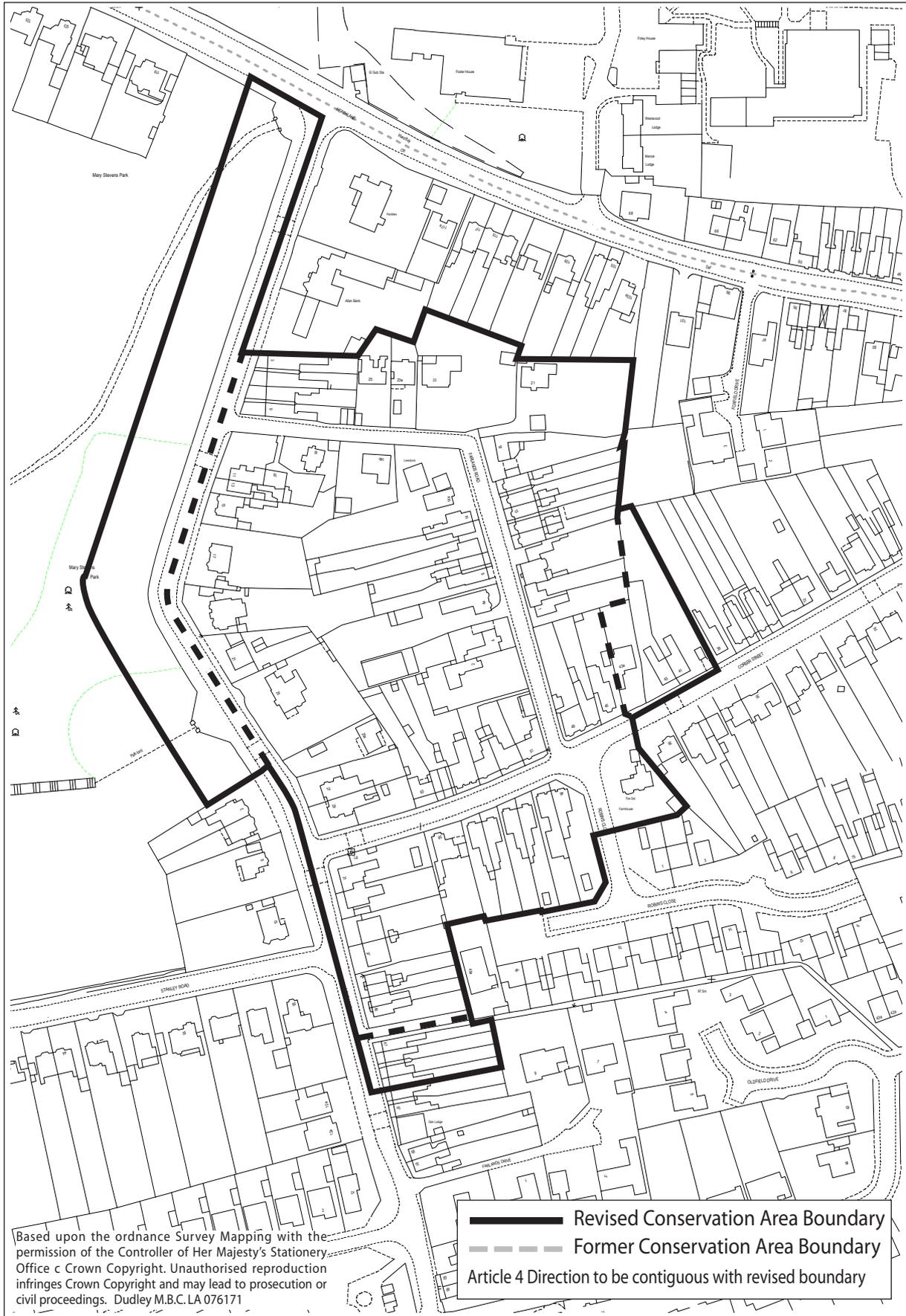
- The character appraisal demonstrates that the Love Lane area does possess a special historic and architectural character worthy of Conservation Area status.
- The special character relates to successive phases of Victorian and Edwardian development, which admirably reflect national and local historic trends towards the steady growth of desirable suburbs on the fringes of industrial towns.
- The present pattern of building plots can now be defined as a series of separate and staged phases of building activity and this evolutionary growth (and so the historic pattern of building plots) constitutes an essential part of the area's current character.
- Residents are particularly concerned over traffic management and the impact of traffic calming measures and the local authority is considering the production of a Streetscape Study to guide the best possible future application of such measures, in keeping with Love Lane's Conservation Area status.
- Those phases of historic growth now identified in the Love Lane area justify the slight extension of the Conservation Area:
 - west to take in the eastern entrance to, and boundary of, Mary Stevens Park;
 - south down Love Lane to include numbers 47-53; and
 - east down Corser Street, taking in numbers 41-43.

The revised Conservation Area is shown on the map opposite. The proposal has the support of local residents.

Such extension is felt to be justified in that the eastern boundary of Mary Stevens Park makes a significant visual contribution to the special character of the existing Conservation Area and additionally is used extensively as an access to and from it. The properties in Love Lane and Corser Street, which the Character Study identifies as being worthy of inclusion, are felt to be of the same age and character as adjoining properties within the existing Conservation Area and, although slightly altered, should therefore be afforded Conservation Area status. Properties beyond those identified for inclusion are felt to be both later in date and more altered.

The continued survival of a wealth of period architectural detailing fully justifies the extra level of protection afforded by the operation of the extant Article 4 Direction in the Love Lane Conservation Area and this protection should be extended to cover the newly incorporated buildings as shown on the map opposite. There were no objections by residents to this extra degree of planning control being applied.

Such directions are felt to be essential and fully justified in that the Character Study identifies that the special character of Love Lane resides largely in detail of boundary treatments, in the architectural detailing of doors, windows and roofscapes and in the more intricate decoration which enhances individual buildings. These are precisely the sort of features most at risk through the operation of permitted development rights.



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Contacts

This study was carried out jointly by Dudley Council's Planning and Urban Design teams.

If you have any enquiries about the study or conservation areas in general please contact us as follows:

Historic Environment Team
Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council
Planning & Environmental Health
3 St. James's Road
Dudley
West Midlands
DY1 1HZ

Tel: 01384 814190

e-mail: historic.environment@dudley.gov.uk

web: www.dudley.gov.uk/environment--planning/planning/historic-environment

24th March 1998

Updated March 2011