

Wolverton Conservation Area Review

April 2009



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Contents

1 General Context	3
1.1 Introduction	3
1.2 Location	5
1.3 Hinterland	7
1.4 Geology	8
1.5 Topography	9
1.6 Historic Development	9
1.7 Planning Framework	9
2 The Character Assessment	11
2.1 Defining Special Interest and the Management of Conservation Areas	11
2.2 The Definition of Special Interest for Wolverton Conservation Area	12
2.3 Wolverton - General Description	13
2.4 Character Areas	25
2.5 Individual Buildings	48
2.6 The Setting of the Conservation Area	51
2.7 Boundary Amendments	54
2.8 Conclusions	57
3 Management Proposals	59
3.1 Introduction	59
3.2 Wolverton Conservation Area Management Plan	60
Bibliography	65
Annex	67
A Short History of Wolverton Railway Town	67

1 General Context

1.1 Introduction

1.1.1 The Wolverton Conservation Area (shown in Map 1.1 'Wolverton Conservation Area') was designated in December 2001 and incorporated:

- The buildings of the London and Birmingham Railway Company carriage works;
- The Victorian suburb, a portion of which is a remnant of housing developed directly by the railway company;
- The Grand Union Canal where it runs adjacent to the northern flank of the Wolverton Conservation Area;
- The Wolverton Park recreation ground, Bushfield Middle School and grounds and the Woburn Avenue cemetery.

1.1.2 To prevent the uncontrolled, piecemeal loss of the conservation area's distinctive features an Article 4(2) direction was placed on the Wolverton Conservation Area in July 2003. The Article 4(2) direction brought certain types of development under planning control. It included:

- The enlargement, improvement or other alteration of a dwelling house including changes to windows, doors, door surrounds and terracotta mouldings;
- Changes to roof coverings and demolition or alterations to chimneys;
- The addition or alteration of a porch on the front elevation;
- Provision of hard standing;
- Installation, alteration or replacement of a satellite antenna;

- Erection or demolition of a gate, fence wall or other means of enclosure within the front garden (or side boundary facing the road);
- The painting of previously unpainted stone or brickwork of a dwelling house or building or enclosure within its curtilage.

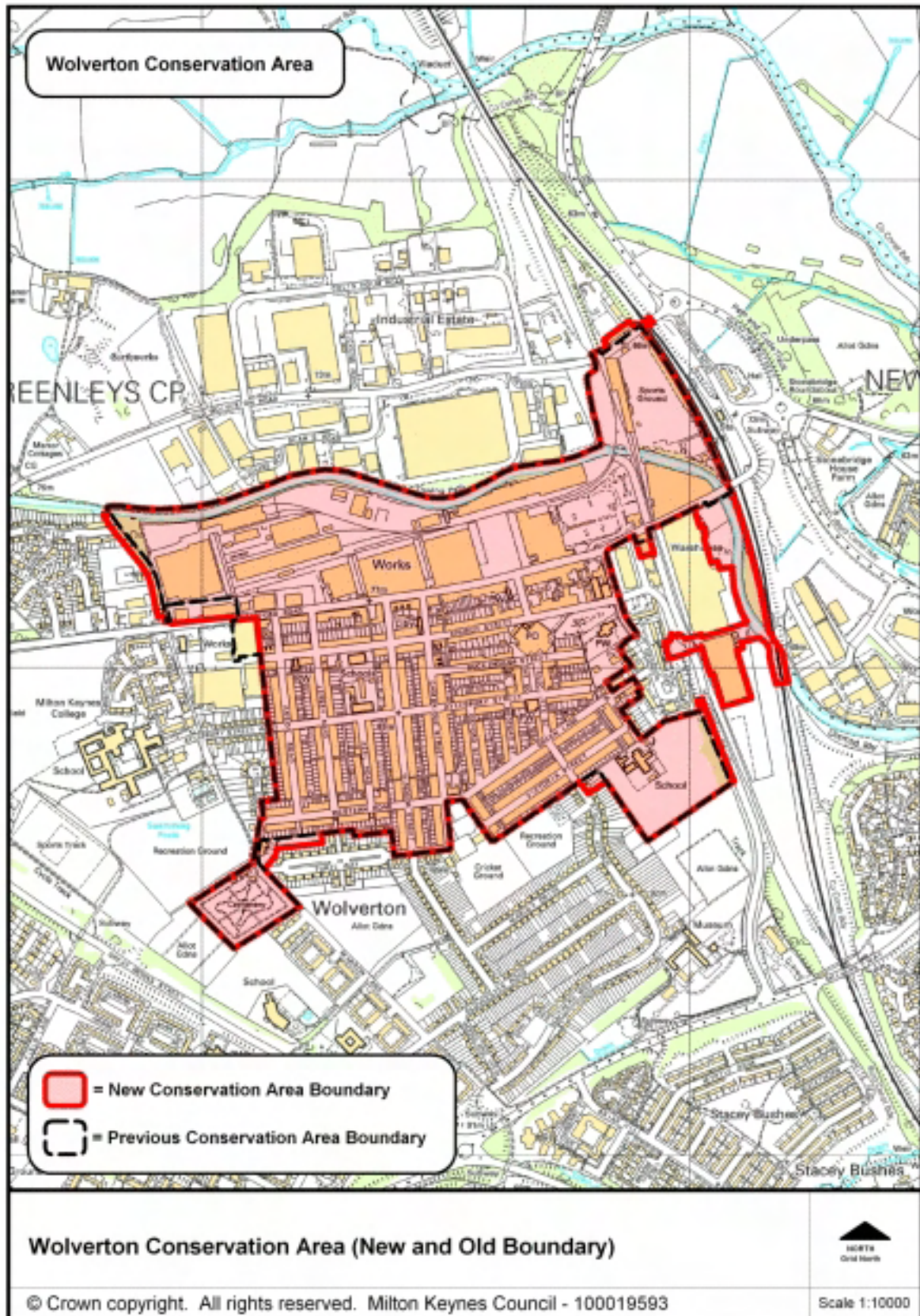
1.1.3 Within the conservation area, planning permission is required for the above works where the front or side of a property looks onto a public road. A leaflet is available from the council's planning office which contains more advice and information about the Article 4 controls.

1.1.4 Since the Wolverton Conservation Area was first designated, the town's circumstances have changed and new challenges have arisen. For example the McCorquodale site and Wolverton Park recreation ground have now been developed whilst other development sites are being discussed. The pressure for development within and around Wolverton made it important to review the conservation area boundary.

1.1.5 The conservation area review examined the designated area and neighbouring areas in order to affirm or redefine the special character or appearance of the conservation area as necessary. In doing so the aim has been to recognise the contribution made by groups of buildings and the quality of spaces between them rather than describing features item by item.

1.1.6 The extent of the 2001 and revised 2008 conservation area boundaries are shown in Map 1.1

1. General Context



Map 1.1 Wolverton Conservation Area

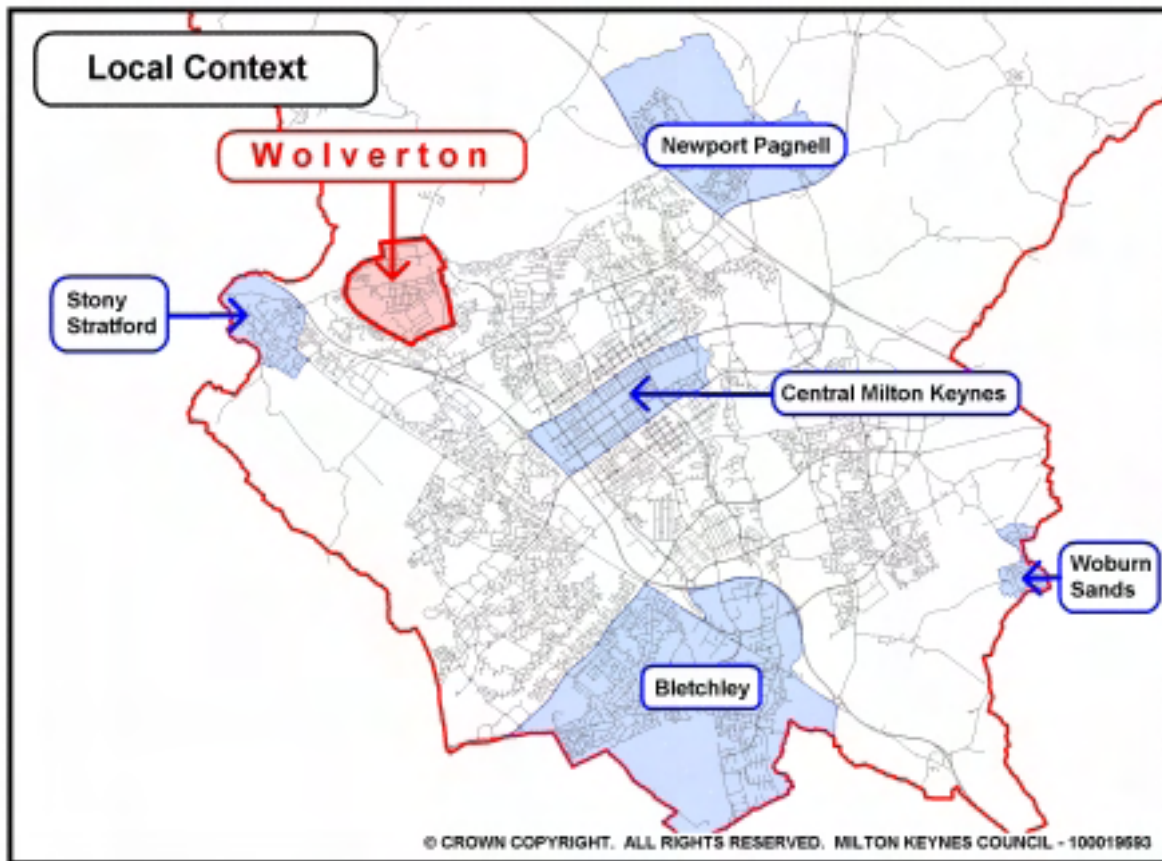
1.2 Location

1.2.1 The regional and local context of Wolverton is illustrated in Map 1.2 'Wolverton Regional Context' and Map 1.3 'Wolverton Local Context'.



Map 1.2 Wolverton Regional Context

1. General Context



Map 1.3 Wolverton Local Context

1.2.2 Wolverton is located towards the north western fringe of Milton Keynes and although it might arguably now be called a suburb of the new town it retains its own distinct, individual identity.

1.2.3 Factors such as the layout of principal roads, some large peripheral open spaces, the industrial areas and the railway help to create a sense of physical detachment from the newer developments that border Wolverton.



Picture 1.1 Wolverton's terraces make an important contribution to the town's character



Picture 1.2 The canal and railway define the eastern edge of the conservation area and provide important definitions of the town's eastern extent.

1.3 Hinterland

1.3.1 To the north and west of Wolverton lies open countryside. By using local footpaths, the canal towpath and cycle routes, it is generally easy to access significant green space, such as the Ouse Valley Park, quite quickly.

1.3.2 Principal Roads close to Wolverton include the A5, the A422 to Buckingham and the A508 to Northampton. The M1 is also within easy reach.

1.3.3 Local distributor roads provide access to the full range of services available in Milton Keynes as well as the towns of Stony Stratford to the west and Newport Pagnell to the east. A network of country lanes permeates the nearby countryside allowing vehicular access to a number of small but very characterful villages to the north.



Picture 1.3 Haversham Church

1.3.4 The London to Birmingham main line, which is intertwined with the town's history, still runs through Wolverton. The railway provides access to important towns including Coventry, Northampton and Bedford. The railway's London terminal is Euston Station.

1.3.5 Leisure and tourism connections to Wolverton's surroundings include pleasure boating on the Grand Union Canal, the North Buckinghamshire Way and the Grand Union Canal Walk, which are both long distance footpaths. The North Buckinghamshire Way commences in Wolverton at Bridge 69 on the Grand Union Canal, an attractive threshold of the conservation area.



Picture 1.4 Bridge 69, Grand Union Canal

1.3.6 At the southern end of McConnell Drive, and only a short distance from the conservation area, is the Milton Keynes Museum which holds collections of social domestic and industrial items from the North Buckinghamshire area.

1.3.7 The points of entry into the conservation area are shown in Map 2.2 'Location of Principal Features'. Whilst Stratford Road is a key route for through traffic, other means of access also exist. By car these include McConnell Drive and Gloucester Road (the latter connecting to Windsor Street and Stacey Avenue).



Picture 1.5 Looking north from Stacey Avenue into the conservation area

1.3.8 Footpaths and cycleways tend to share the redways that form an extensive pedestrian and cycle network around the new town. Further access points also exist from the canal which is an additional source of visitors to the town.

1. General Context

1.3.9 The appearance and condition of places and features at the points of entry into the conservation area are significant because of the potential they have to form first impressions.

1.4 Geology

1.4.1 Examination of the 1:25,000 British Geological Survey sheet ⁽¹⁾ for Milton Keynes shows the local Blisworth limestones overlain by sand and clay.

1.4.2 Blisworth limestone is the local vernacular building stone; it tends to be a fine grained, soft weathering, pale honey or cream coloured stone often laid in random courses or as rubble stone. Nearby sources of this stone included the ancient quarries at Cosgrove in addition to smaller stone pits in Old Wolverton and New Bradwell. Current sources of this Blisworth type limestone include the quarries at Weston Underwood and Pury End in Northamptonshire.

1.4.3 Whilst local limestone is entirely absent from Victorian Wolverton other than for some ornament and detailing, it is present in the historic buildings of Old Wolverton to the west.



Picture 1.6 Brick with stone ornamentation at the Wesleyan Chapel

1.4.4 Nevertheless, just as Blisworth limestone lends a distinctive character to those settlements where it is used, so has the extensive use of orange brick in Victorian Wolverton. Coincidentally, this in turn may have been sourced from works close at hand, most notably the works at Bletchley, although other smaller but closer brickworks utilising the outcrops of Oxford Clay at Two Mile Ash or Great Linford may also have been used. A comment received during the review's consultation period suggested bricks were obtained from Whitwick in Leicestershire. The piecemeal development of the conservation area over a number of years and the presence of the railyards, means that brick, slate and other construction materials came from several sources and not necessarily from the locale.

1.4.5 Timber frame construction which is evident further south, as one moves away from available building stones onto clay uplands, is absent from Wolverton.

1.5 Topography

1.5.1 Wolverton is on the north facing upper scarp of the river Great Ouse valley with, to the east, its minor tributary the Bradwell Brook. The slope of the valley sides thus makes a subtle but nonetheless important contribution to the topography of the conservation area. The canal and the works are located at the bottom of a gentle but lengthy incline. This results in a stepped form to the built landscape, either of entire rows of terraces where their line follows the east – west contours, or as stepped pairs where roads run north to south. At the high points of the longer north - south aligned streets some dramatic views out of the conservation area exist. The change in heights also has the effect of making some buildings more dominant from one vantage point but less so from another.



Picture 1.7 Stepped pairs of terraced housing on a north - south aligned street

1.6 Historic Development

1.6.1 The historic development of Wolverton has been extensively researched and documented by others. It is not the purpose of this document to undertake additional detailed research but to take into account what is known and understood about Wolverton when commenting on the architectural or historic character or appearance of the conservation area.

1.6.2 A short history summarising the development of the town is attached in the 'Annex'.

1.7 Planning Framework

1.7.1 Planning applications within Wolverton conservation area are determined in accordance with national, regional and local policy. The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 establishes a duty for the council to identify those places within its administrative area that are of special architectural or historic character or appearance and designate those places as conservation areas. Once designated the council has a duty to preserve or enhance the character or appearance of those conservation areas.

1.7.2 Essentially conservation area designation introduces controls over demolition, greater control over certain minor development and the protection of trees. In Wolverton greater powers of control have been introduced through the implementation of an Article 4(2) direction which introduces wider controls over minor development (see paragraph 1.1.2)

1.7.3 In practice, all proposals within the conservation area that require planning permission are subject to the duty to preserve or enhance the area's character or appearance. Where authentic details survive their replacement will thus only be allowed in exceptional circumstances because of the contribution they make to the authentic character or appearance of the locality. Where planning permission is not required, perhaps because of a retained permitted development right (that is, development not controlled under the standard conservation area provisions or the Article 4(2) direction), the council has no powers of control.

1. General Context



Picture 1.8 Timber sash being repaired

1.7.4 Following the consultation for this review, it is acknowledged that the range of circumstances and details encountered has created a situation where a consistent rationale on the part of the council has become hard for some residents to discern. This perceived inconsistency has implications regarding public support for the way in which the conservation area is managed. However, the duty to preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the conservation area has constantly guided the council's approach and, unless there are genuine reasons for doing otherwise, or because the council has no power to act, those proposals that do not complement or improve the locale will be refused planning permission.

1.7.5 Whilst on occasion the involvement of the council in minor matters has been called into question, it is clear that the cohesion and perpetuation of the town's architectural and historic character would have been eroded by ill advised alterations if the conservation area and Article 4(2) direction had not come into being.

1.7.6 The evidence for this assertion is provided by a number of appeals against refusal to grant planning permission. For example, the council has successfully defended its position regarding plastic replacement windows at appeal on several occasions by making reference to its duty to preserve or enhance the special character of the

conservation area. The appeal decisions that have arbitrated debates in this respect are available upon request from the council.



Picture 1.9 Ornamental lintel, Church Street

1.7.7 Further information on supporting guidance and local policy can be found by following the link to conservation areas on the Design and Conservation Team webpage⁽²⁾.

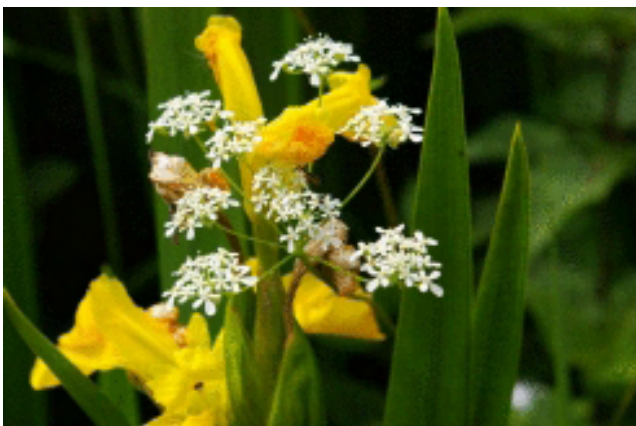
1.7.8 A guidance leaflet on the Article 4(2) provisions for Wolverton is available upon request, by contacting the Design and Conservation Team.

2 The Character Assessment

2.1 Defining Special Interest and the Management of Conservation Areas

2.1.1 The definition of special interest is a succinct summary of the reasons for designating a conservation area. The definition, in combination with adopted local plan policies, forms the basis of the management strategy for the Wolverton conservation area and guides the decision making process on applications for planning permission in the conservation area received by the Local Planning Authority (Milton Keynes Council).

2.1.2 This conservation area review subdivides Wolverton into seven character areas (shown in Map 2.1 'Wolverton Character Areas') some of which occur more than once (the town's green spaces for example). Whilst it is evident that these areas have a character of their own, they are still constituent elements of the whole conservation area which is more than just the sum of several parts. The individual character areas are identified and appraised in 2.5 'Individual Buildings' below. The character statement and general description below examine and define the special architectural or historic interest of the conservation area as a whole.



Picture 2.1 Flag iris and cow parsley growing beside the Grand Union Canal

2. The Character Assessment

2.2 The Definition of Special Interest for Wolverton Conservation Area

Wolverton is characterised by its diverse mix of late nineteenth and early twentieth century terraced housing, industrial quarters, commercial areas and functional open spaces. There are active shopping and commercial frontages, busy with traffic and people, that contrast with the quieter residential streets and their distinctive, narrow, interconnecting back ways.

Whereas the streets are open to exploration, the industrial quarter is closed off and isolated from the town. Built on a much larger scale, the works built by the London and Birmingham Railway underpinned the economy and development of Wolverton from the middle of the nineteenth century until being significantly scaled down during the late 1970's and 1980's. In their heyday the works were nationally renowned in a similar way to those of Crewe and Swindon. A collection of important buildings and structures from this period still survives in sufficient numbers to convey the historic scale and cohesiveness of the site's functions, processes and purpose.

The railway works are abruptly divided from the commercial and residential areas by an imposing boundary wall that runs along Stratford Road. The effect is to emphasise the separation of industrial activity from domestic life. This abrupt division of function contrasts with other types of industry where the gradual growth of a specialist trade mixed factories and houses together (shoemaking in Northampton or Birmingham's Jewellery Quarter for example) .

Throughout the conservation area, the almost exclusive use of brick and (until piecemeal replacement in the late twentieth century) Welsh slate, creates blocks of colour in orange, red and dark grey. Other common materials include:

- wrought or cast iron for railings, gates, gutters and down pipes;
- timber, often painted, for sliding sash windows, doors, gates or, sometimes left bare, for fences;
- stone, for walling, building details (such as door and window surrounds etc.) and paths;
- Terracotta for roof ridge and fancy detailing;
- lead for flashings and occasionally as a roof covering.

The town's residential areas are arranged in a pattern of rectangular blocks, creating continuous frontages and enclosed, linear views. Together the repetition of forms, spaces and materials lend much of the conservation area a powerful and harmonious regularity. However, the general consistency of the built environment is balanced by a variety of uses and details which impart an often subtle diversity to both individual buildings and groupings of buildings.

2. The Character Assessment

Trees and areas of greenery tend to have only a marginal, peripheral presence in the conservation area. Where they occur the amenity and pleasure derived is usually disproportionate to the sometimes very modest amounts encountered. The Community Orchard and Secret Garden (both now within the conservation area) are two community based projects that have each delivered a significant asset to the town. From the back ways, neat and colourful rear gardens can be glimpsed over the walls and gates. Elsewhere there are occasional trees, shrubs, hedges and window boxes which help to soften the austerity of the terraces. To the north and east of the town the Grand Union Canal provides an important multi-purpose green space.

The contrasting layout, density, variety, scale and appearance of Wolverton's constituent areas creates a strong individual identity for the town. This is enhanced by the extent and the quality of the surviving Victorian / Edwardian domestic streets and the industrial railway works buildings.

By understanding the significance and value of all the attributes that lend the conservation area its special character and appearance, development can be managed positively. This process allows the town scope to adapt and change whilst retaining or enhancing its distinct character.

2.2.1 The character statement is expanded upon in 2.4 'Character Areas' which assesses and analyses the features that combine to create the conservation area's special character or appearance.

2.3 Wolverton - General Description

2.3.1 At first the town is not easy to fathom. Undoubtedly many pass through Wolverton by car on the Stratford Road, only perhaps turning off for the Tesco store at the eastern end.

2.3.2 Whilst the quaint, rather eclectic row of shops, takeaways and commercial offices on the south side of Stratford Road probably attracts some attention from the occupants of passing vehicles, it is the high and uncompromising carriage works boundary wall on the north side that forms the town's most immediately visible and memorable feature. The wall's impermeable, imposing and rather ominous presence does not indicate at first whether it is to prevent intrusion into or escape from whatever lies beyond.



Picture 2.2 The works boundary wall

2.3.3 The wall is, however, arguably the first key to understanding the town. To the north of the wall lies the extensive carriage works of the former London to Birmingham Railway Company. To the south of the wall lies the domestic and commercial quarters with attendant community buildings (library, churches, chapels, community centres, schools etc.) interspersed somewhat randomly throughout, but nevertheless all laid out on a Victorian grid pattern, or near grid pattern, of streets and occasional squares. It is these commercial and domestic areas that the works

2. The Character Assessment

first directly instigated and then, indirectly, sustained from the mid nineteenth century into the post war era of the twentieth century.



Picture 2.3 Commercial premises on the south side of Stratford Road

2.3.4 It is also these areas on the south side of Stratford Road which unfold themselves gradually to the more determined visitor and which have to be explored in detail on foot if a proper insight is to be gained. Such exploration is highly rewarding, for there is an array of architectural styles and details, unexpected views and almost secret passageways to be discovered.



Picture 2.4 The backways form an intricate network away from the main streets and frontages

2.3.5 To the north of Stratford Road lie the more unknown and inaccessible carriage works of which only a few breaks in the wall and occasional vantage points offer intriguing but incomplete views of huge and looming works'

buildings. Although it lies within the conservation area, many peoples' experience of the town's historic works is only fragmentary.



Picture 2.5 Occasional vantage points allow views of the works

2.3.6 The wall itself, whilst providing an imposing boundary that isolates the works from the residential areas, also forms a sinuous, unifying link across the town. Where it has been destroyed it has been to allow somewhat uninspiring development, including modern car show rooms and a Tesco supermarket, to be built. This has had the effect of undermining the wall's contribution to the authentic historic character and completeness of the Victorian townscape.

South of the Stratford Road

2.3.7 A large area made up almost entirely from blocks of terraced housing arranged on grid streets forms the southern half of the town, views of which are visible from the western end of Stratford Road as one looks southwards and upwards into streets that stretch as far as the eye can see. Although the urban structure is chiefly defined by terraced blocks, their variety (in terms of scale, detailing and use) and the interconnecting network of back ways creates a diverse and highly permeable built environment.

2. The Character Assessment



Picture 2.6 Large ornate terrace houses on Stratford Road

2.3.8 Between the Cambridge Street and Windsor Street junctions with Stratford Road are some striking, ornate terraced houses that are amongst some of the finest and largest to be found in the conservation area with an equally fine public house, the Craufurd Arms, and the Wolverton Working Men's Club at each end. Also located in this row is the former Barber's Electric Picture Palace⁽³⁾. This building is prominent because of its bulk and its comprehensive finishing in blue paint. It is also an important remnant from the age of cinema with an early build date of 1911 (no other purpose built cinemas were confirmed during the review). From here, better than usual terraces continue as far west as Jersey Road before finally tailing off into more modest terraced housing.



Picture 2.7 The Craufurd Arms

2.3.9 The McCorquodale site would, until recently, have been a much more obvious final flourish (albeit one tempered by the modern, car show rooms opposite) but the site occupied by the works is being redeveloped and the retained façade was shrouded in scaffold during the appraisal site visits. The approach to the conservation area is rather undermined by the current state of the former print works site and the long term impact of redevelopment at one of the conservation area's key access points, remains to be seen.

2.3.10 At the eastern end of Stratford Road, however, the southern half of the town is less visible and less accessible, with Creed Street providing the principal access onto Church Street with its eponymous church, the shops, a market place and the definitive, if controversial, Agora Centre.

2.3.11 At the junction of Stratford Road with Radcliffe Street stands one of the town's more curious remnants in the form of a Second World War defensive position set in a wall. Loopholes once meant for rifles have now been glazed but the original purpose remains clear.

2. The Character Assessment



Picture 2.8 Wartime defensive position at the northern entrance to Radcliffe Street

2.3.12 Moving away from Stratford Road into the eastern end of Church Street, leaving behind the commercial activity and traffic of Stratford Road, the grouping of shops, church, market area / car park and the Agora Centre form a calmer, more open and low key space with good views of some of the town's landmark buildings. These include the church of St George the Martyr, the former St George's Institute, (MADCAP building) and the Wesleyan Chapel, all of which are grade II listed. Other key buildings include the Queen Victoria Pub, the Agora Centre and the row of shops on the north side of Church Street that echo those of Stratford Road in scale and appearance. Individually and collectively these buildings help to define a key open space within the conservation area.



Picture 2.9 North side of the Market Place

2.3.13 Also of note are the trees that stand in the Market Place car park. Apart from relieving an unrewarding bleak space, the trees assist in

defining the car park's boundary with the church yard. Trees are generally absent from the streets in Wolverton and their presence here helps soften the sometimes unrelenting red brick of the conservation area.



Picture 2.10 Trees in the Market Place car park

2.3.14 South and east of the Market Place is a tightly packed area of terraced housing dating from the 1850's and including the oldest terracing to survive in Wolverton. Those on the north side of Buckingham Street are part of a direct investment in housing stock by the railway company. The area is characterised by a maze-like collection of narrow streets and back ways for those on foot.



Picture 2.11 Buckingham Street, high density terraced housing dating from the 1850's

2.3.15 At its heart is The Square, another attractive grouping of shops and commercial services arranged around a neat but perhaps rather cluttered open space. The effect is diminished by the overtly late twentieth century

2. The Character Assessment

design of the upper part of the Agora Centre and its attendant security fencing at the north end of the square and the Foundation Hall to the south.



Picture 2.12 East side of The Square

2.3.16 Three key 'horizontal' streets link this tightly developed, modestly sized, older terracing with the slightly newer, more generously proportioned and laid out terraces to the west. They are Church Street, Aylesbury Street and Green Lane / Western Road. A particularly dramatic impression of the conservation area is provided by the view along Aylesbury Street from the church end to the teaching blocks of the Radcliffe School almost a kilometre away.



Picture 2.13 The view along Aylesbury Street

2.3.17 The houses in this newer westward area, and the terraces of Green Lane, Victoria Street, Moon Street and Osborne Street, demonstrate a diversity in approach to the adornment of Victorian terraced housing that is emulated nowhere else in the Milton Keynes area on such a scale.



Picture 2.14 Ornately detailed doorways on Green Lane

2.3.18 Within this grouping stands the imposing Wyvern School which contains some splendid grade II listed educational buildings dating from the late Nineteenth Century that, in collection, form a remarkable survival.

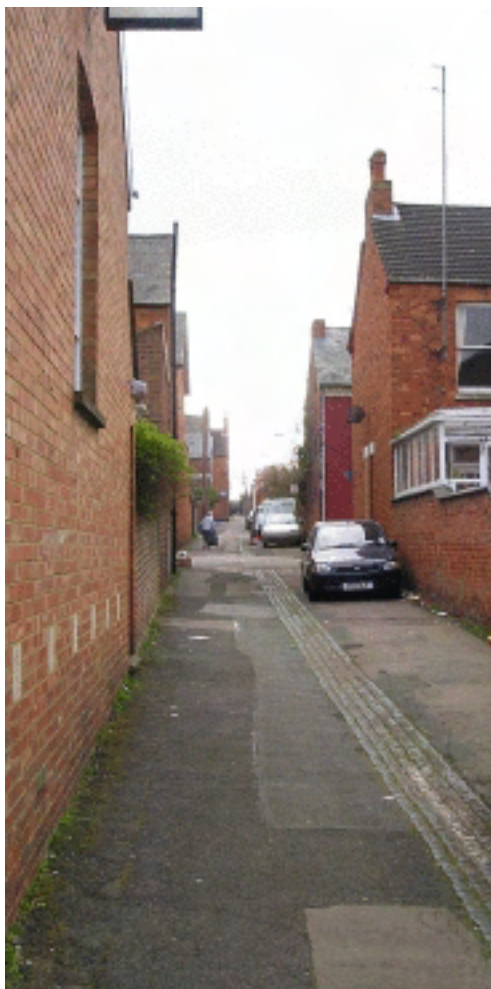


Picture 2.15 Wyvern School - South Block

2.3.19 Like the older terracing to the east, the western grid is made up of treeless streets almost clogged by parked cars. The back ways to the rear are quieter, more verdant and often deserted yet, as in the older terraces, offer an alternative means for those on foot to move about in relative peace and solitude. Principal back ways include the north - south path that lies to the east of, and runs

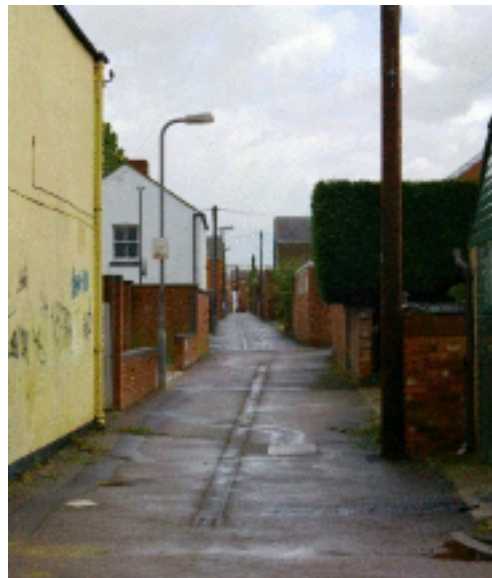
2. The Character Assessment

parallel with, Cambridge Street from Stratford Road, past the former Drum and Monkey, all the way to the Water Tower at the top of the gentle southward rise.



Picture 2.16 The back way from Stratford Road to the water tower on Green Lane

2.3.20 This back way also broadly divides the housing of the older eastern quarter from the newer terraces to the west. A principal east - west back way also runs south of, and parallel to, Stratford Road from the rear of the town hall on Creed Street to the former McCorquodale site.



Picture 2.17 The backway between Stratford Road and Church Street

2.3.21 From the top of the principal north - south orientated streets, which include Anson Road, Jersey Road, Windsor Street and Cambridge Street are significant views out of the conservation area northwards, over countryside, towards Hanslope, the church spire of which forms a distant landmark.

North of the Stratford Road (The Works)

2.3.22 The works buildings that lie between the Stratford Road and the Canal, whilst not generally accessible to the public, nonetheless contribute significantly to the town's character. Their huge extent, combined with the high perimeter wall that runs along much of Stratford Road, and the unmanaged vegetation along the canal (which might otherwise offer some further limited inward views) means that only fragmentary perspectives are available from just a few vantage points. These views are often of buildings with a similar general form making it difficult to discern the purpose of one building from another.

2. The Character Assessment



Picture 2.18 Wolverton works stop abruptly along the line of the Stratford Road boundary wall

2.3.23 It is the huge, isolated, low density / coarsely grained, single use 'footprint' of the works and its abrupt division from the finer grain, permeable and diverse commercial and residential quarters of Wolverton that creates a striking contrast in the town's urban landscapes. The nature of the works' operations dictated that it should be divided from the commercial and domestic quarters of the town. This separation remains a key characteristic of the town and the conservation area.

2.3.24 The works site is entirely treeless, the only greenery being patches of grass or occasional thickets of weeds and shrubs on site boundaries.



Picture 2.19 The areas between works buildings are hard surfaced and lack trees or other greenery

2.3.25 Although from outside the works are largely hidden from view, once inside, their size and complexity is impressive. Whilst this vastness once again prevents the whole site being seen from a single vantage point, even from within the site, there are long east – west linear views,

enhanced by the receding perspectives of the railway tracks, that very effectively convey an impression of the works' extent. As such the buildings that survive remain noteworthy statements of Victorian industrial endeavour.



Picture 2.20 Former works buildings

2.3.26 Towards the east of the site the derelict or semi derelict buildings and their environs evoke a sense of functional, harsh, unkempt, bleakness. These cavernous structures are comparatively low in height in relation to their length. Whilst unadorned architecturally, their scale nonetheless imbues them with a monumental quality; a quality accentuated by the rhythmic regularity of large window openings and their pier and panel construction. The roofs are now generally of grey roofing felt laid over timber (exposed in places) that complements the muted orange of the bricks.

2.3.27 Some of the buildings retain the faint remnants of the black, brown and greens of Second World War camouflage, indicating the significance of the site well into the Twentieth Century and its involvement in the war effort. The patterns still discernible mark out terraced houses along the length of at least part of one of the buildings. The presence of the faded camouflage, and the attendant history that its presence evokes underlines further the immense cultural value of these venerable structures.

2. The Character Assessment



Picture 2.21 Faded camouflage on works buildings

2.3.28 The much busier, western end, where new carriages are still built and repaired, provides some insight into the atmosphere that would once undoubtedly have been present throughout the works.

2.3.29 A single skeletal branch line, that enters from the east, fans out to create a complicated set of sidings at the western end, upon which a shunter draws carriages backwards and forwards from one shed to another.



Picture 2.22 The works shunter moving rolling stock around the yards

2.3.30 The railway line is a key unifying feature of the site as well as a principal means of transporting the works' products and materials. Here the noises and smells are not of abandonment but of industry; various intermittent hammerings, clangs and occasional shouts ring out across this end of the site.



Picture 2.23 The western end of the works site

2.3.31 A further unusual and defining feature of the works are the 'traversers' which move carriages between various bays of the sheds in which they are being worked on. Some are still in operational use at the western end whilst only the concrete bases of others survive to the east. The sedate backwards and forwards motion of the traversers when in operation is a memorable sight.



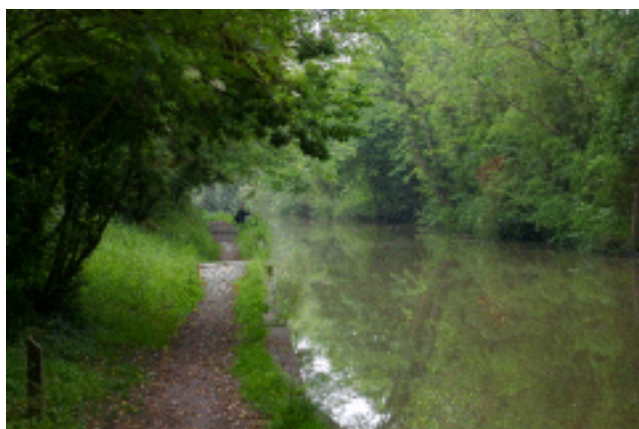
Picture 2.24 A works traverser

2.3.32 Whilst the buildings here are in much better repair, they retain an uncompromisingly functional quality. The exteriors of the buildings display a wider range of materials, including modern corrugated plastic and metals. Metal lighting and pipe gantries are more frequent features. Despite the modifications the general scale and position of the buildings still convey a strong industrial character and retain much of their early appearance.

2. The Character Assessment

Green Spaces

2.3.33 Dotted around the conservation area are important green spaces, some of which lie within the conservation area whilst others lie adjacent. Those within the conservation area include the cemetery, the canal and towpath, Bushfield School's playing fields and the church grounds. The Rectory grounds also lie within the conservation area but are only visible, and not accessible, to the general public. Also within the conservation area is the former Wolverton Park sports ground and bowls club but this area is now being redeveloped for housing.



Picture 2.25 The Grand Union Canal

2.3.34 Lying adjacent to the conservation area are the Wolverton recreation ground and sports field, the Western Road recreation ground, Radcliffe School's playing fields and the Secret Garden, formerly the site of the semi detached villas for the Works' Superintendent and the Stationmaster⁽⁴⁾. Also a feature of Wolverton's environs are the areas of allotments which are all, it seems, well kept and productive.

2.3.35 Following the public consultation for the review, a question arose about including a triangle of recreation space that lies between the southern end of Cambridge Street and Osbourne Street.



Picture 2.26 The tennis courts seen from Osbourne Street

2.3.36 This space contains tennis courts and bowling greens and a facilities building. It also provides a finger of open land which maintains an open aspect in front of 2 - 4 Western Road that appears to have been set out intentionally for the benefit of these larger houses.

2.3.37 However, this land and adjoining playing fields are already protected by recreation and open space policies; it is in use for sport activity and not under any threat of redevelopment. Contained within the space are a series of courts and manicured greens but the character of this space is modern and functional.

2.3.38 Whilst the space lends important foreground to this corner of the conservation area and the connection with the town's social history is not disputed, on balance it was concluded that the boundary should remain as drawn. Nonetheless the value of this parcel of land and its contribution to the setting and foreground of the conservation area is acknowledged.

2. The Character Assessment



Picture 2.27 The Secret Garden

2.3.39 Green space both within and adjacent to the Conservation Area has an important role not only because of the relief it offers from the resolutely urban character of the Victorian backstreets but because of the context it provides (see paragraph 2.50: The setting of the Conservation Area). Some of the open spaces available, particularly those to the west of Wolverton, are extensive. However, it should be noted that some of this land is earmarked for housing development and new community facilities.



Picture 2.28 The Community Orchard

2.3.40 Other attractive green spaces within the revised conservation area boundary include the Secret Garden, which lies beside the canal on the eastern edge of the town and the Community Orchard which lies behind Western Road. The attractive churchyard, where benches have been

placed alongside the path that leads from Buckingham Street to St George's Way lay inside the original boundary but, as with the cemetery, chiefly provides a formal, contemplative space.



Picture 2.29 The churchyard

2.3.41 Green space also plays an important part in defining Wolverton's boundaries to the west and south, lending the town a discernible, albeit subtle, degree of detachment from the Milton Keynes conurbation.

2.3.42 Perhaps the most understated green space is the canal and towpath which meanders quietly around the north side of the works and forms the northern boundary of the conservation area. Although somewhat understated by virtue of being mostly hidden from view, this is, nonetheless, a popular, multipurpose space. There are boaters, hikers, anglers and local dog walkers to be found enjoying a stretch of waterway that in summer is rich with leafy trees, bird song and wild flowers, belying its proximity to the nearby industrial developments.

2. The Character Assessment



Picture 2.30 The canalside environment

2.3.43 Near the Stratford Road, the canal's quietude is interrupted by the newly built Wolverton Park site. However, as one passes by the development site there are, on the other side of the canal, good views of the Wolverton works sheds some of which are grade II listed, such as the Triangular Building. Also listed is the low broad and flat iron span of the Stephenson Bridge that once carried the main London to Birmingham railway line but now only carries the branch line access to the works.



Picture 2.31 Redevelopment taking place opposite The Triangular Building. Stephenson's Bridge can be seen in the background behind the new footbridge

2.3.44 Moving further on, one comes to the large, blue brick Stratford Road bridge that, by separate arches, spans both the railway and the canal and marks a return to a greener canalside environment with views into the Secret Garden beyond.



Picture 2.32 The Stratford Road bridge

2.3.45 On the north side of the Stratford Road Bridge it is possible to take a functional iron stairway up from the towpath to the road side. From here the newly built flats are a looming presence obscuring the view of the works once available from this vantage point.

2.3.46 From here it is possible to walk back into Wolverton. However, the environment is rather confined on both sides by high blue brick walls, bridge parapets and the white painted brick of the former indoor market building on the south side of the road. This is not a pleasant approach to Wolverton for those walking between the town and the station or waiting at the bus stops located here.



Picture 2.33 The approach to the station and secret garden is harsh and unpleasant for pedestrians

2. The Character Assessment

2.3.47 Apart from those arriving by boat or towpath, this harsh environment has to be endured first before reaching the Secret Garden, which is a pleasant oasis of greenery and calm, open to the public and the closest thing to an ornamental park in Wolverton.

Skew Bridge Area

2.3.48 A final key grouping of buildings, structures and features coincide around the Skew Bridge / Royal Train Shed / Park Keepers Lodge Area of the Old Stratford Road. The area is at present affected by the same development that borders the canal, and a lot of noise dirt and activity is being generated by the construction process. Notwithstanding this, the Royal Train Shed and the Skew Bridge are important Grade II listed industrial monuments and well known local landmarks. The Skew Bridge is narrow and restricts vehicle movement to and from the modern industrial estate that lies to the north of Wolverton. The traffic lights force vehicles to stop at this location which, whilst merely creating a bottle neck for many, also gives time to allow the bridge's presence to be registered by some.



Picture 2.34 The eastern approach to Skew Bridge with the Keepers Lodge in the foreground and the Royal Train Shed above

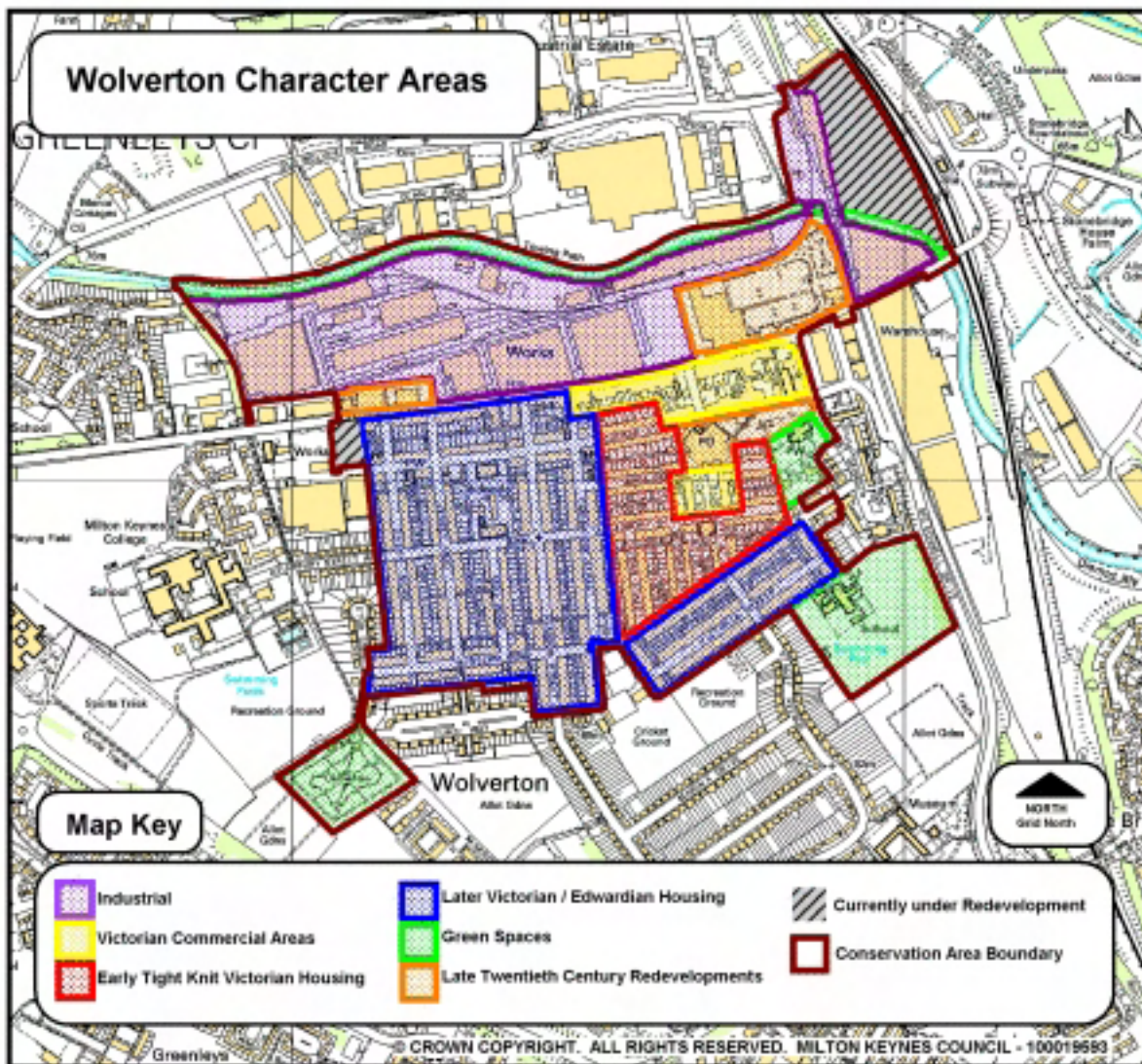
emphasises its presence from vantage points on the Old Stratford Road and to passengers on trains passing by on the modern main line.

2.3.50 Whilst the paragraphs above describe and interpret the character and features of the conservation area generally, there are also within Wolverton seven discernibly different types of character with differing qualities. The following section thus makes a closer examination of the individual component character areas.

2.3.49 Standing away from the bridge to the south on a huge stone sided embankment is the imposing Royal Train Shed, another local landmark. This austere looking building occupies the site of the station at the time when the main line still ran over the Skew Bridge and the embankment. The train shed's elevated position

2. The Character Assessment

2.4 Character Areas



Map 2.1 Wolverton Character Areas

2.4.1 Within Wolverton there are discernible areas with their own type of character, illustrated on Map 2.1 'Wolverton Character Areas'. These character areas have been identified as follows:

INDUSTRIAL

Development Form:

2.4.2 Layout: Coarse grain, consisting of large linear sheds lying on an east – west orientation. Around and between the sheds are large areas of open space.

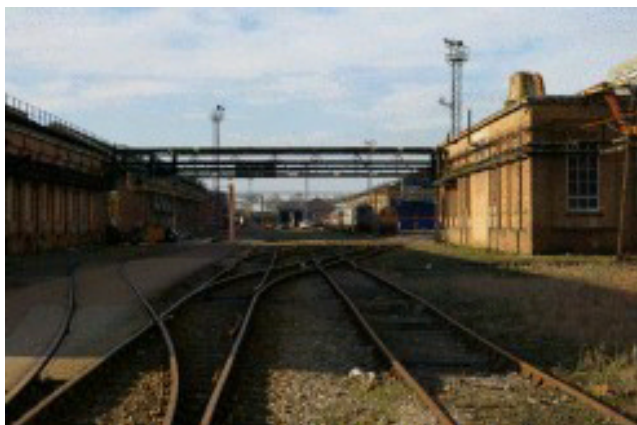
2.4.3 Landscape: Spaces between buildings are flat and barren, mostly covered in concrete or tarmac hard standing. Vistas are created between buildings and emphasised by the rail lines

2.4.4 Density: Low, particularly to the east where redundancy has resulted in the loss of some sheds and the intensity of use is lower.

2.4.5 Height and Mass: The works buildings contain large floor spaces but are comparatively low in height. From beyond the site the presence

2. The Character Assessment

of the buildings is muted because they are largely hidden, but within the site they appear impressively large.



Picture 2.35 Wolverton works

Detailing and Materials:

2.4.6 Facades: Soft orange brickwork to earlier buildings, slightly harder, paler brickwork to later buildings. Predominantly in English Bond with coarse lime mortar. Pier and panel construction.

2.4.7 Roofs: Pitched with some areas of flat roof behind parapet. Internal structure uses complex network of cast components and metal tie rods under tension. Externally - felt over boarding, which has replaced the original Welsh slate roof sections, long runs of glazing, lead and slate. Some roofs now corrugated metal sheeting.

2.4.8 Windows: Large, multi-paned, cast metal windows to large sheds. Mostly five panes wide, by six or seven high. Opening light on central pivot usually of 6 panes. The majority have shallow arched heads though some have semi-circular heads. Sliding, single glazed timber sash windows to smaller non-industrial buildings. A small number of circular windows. Installation of plastic windows has begun to erode the character of the western end.

2.4.9 Window Arrangements: Evenly spaced windows, mostly one per 'panel'. Groups of three, louvred openings in gables, central window taller following apex of the roof.



Picture 2.36 Iron windows set in pier and panel construction

2.4.10 Doors: Original doors are typically vertically boarded, ledged and braced timber doors. Some doors have wide, external metal strap hinges. Many doors have been replaced with functional but historically inappropriate roller shutters at the western end.



Picture 2.37 Three light detail in gable ends and ledged and braced doors

2.4.11 Rainwater Goods: Originally cast iron, often replaced with cheaper, less robust plastic.

2.4.12 Boundary Walls: The Stratford Road wall uses blue/purple engineering bricks (at the east) and varying red/brown towards the western end. Laid in both English and Flemish bonds using a coarse lime mortar. Copings vary between stone and angle blue clay copings. Mostly plain walls without piers.

2. The Character Assessment

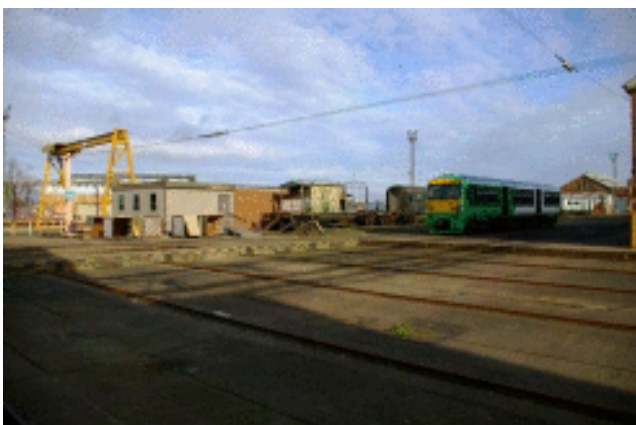


Picture 2.38 Works boundary wall

2.4.13 Detail Courses: Some buildings are simpler than others. Most have some brick corbelling under the eaves. Corbelling is also seen on the Stratford Road wall. A number of buildings have corbelling to the top of the brick panels. Some have a chamfered special brick detail.

2.4.14 Lintels: Timber and metal where over large carriage entry doors. Brick arches elsewhere. Some segmental arches, many arches formed from three courses of headers, some rendered flat arches with keystone (Reading Room).

2.4.15 Sills: Natural stone.



Picture 2.39 The works contain a number of functional spaces and equipment. The locomotive is awaiting inspection

2.4.16 Other: Almost completely hard surfaced. Sleepers, rails and traversers remain. Huge amount of gantries, handrails and general industrial paraphernalia.

VICTORIAN COMMERCIAL AREAS

Development Form:

2.4.17 Layout: Fine grain with a highly permeable grid type pattern of terrace shopping streets, squares and back ways. All premises uniformly face the street with rear yards leading onto the back ways. The back ways act as a service access to the various units, they also provide intriguing glimpses of an assortment of built forms. Some premises have storage barns, workshops or garages adjacent to the back ways; occasionally these have been converted to domestic accommodation.



Picture 2.40 Stores and workshops are located behind many commercial premises

2.4.18 Landscape: Mostly defined by the functional road space with attendant street furniture in front of the shops; the back ways to the rear are generally confined, hard surfaced and leafless. In a few places, the quantity of bollards, signs, railings, etc now noticeably intrudes upon the authentic historic character of the commercial areas.

2. The Character Assessment



Picture 2.41 Arbitrary arrangements of street furniture can distract the eye from the town's Historic character

2.4.19 Density and Mix: high density with a good selection of shops, offices, restaurants, take-aways and public houses. The mix creates an engaging and lively environment. Although shops predominate in the commercial areas, the library, council offices, a mosque, two chapels, a Christian centre, community hall, Masonic lodge, hotel, domestic houses and a small block of flats are also located here. This perhaps surprising mix creates a strong impetus for people to visit the area. Taken in combination with other facilities that lie close by, such as St George's Church, Tesco, The Agora Centre and the market square, it is perhaps unsurprising that the commercial area is often bustling during business hours and beyond.



Picture 2.42 A small but busy market on Church Street

2.4.20 Height and mass: Throughout the commercial areas the heights and widths and detailing of the buildings vary (although there is an obvious rhythm to street frontages), creating a sense of piecemeal development. Generally, however, there is sufficient uniformity to prevent single buildings dominating.



Picture 2.43 Shops on Church Street

2.4.21 The exceptions to this are the modern intrusions into the commercial townscape, in particular the Agora Centre. The Wesleyan Chapel, the Meeting Hall and The Queen Victoria, whilst more architectural and of greater scale than other buildings in the area, do not conflict through overstatement.



Picture 2.44 The Wesleyan Chapel, Church Street

2.4.22 This, in part, is down to neat detailing and high build quality and because the sites are on or near corner plots which tend to justify greater architectural expression.

2. The Character Assessment

Detailing and Materials:

2.4.23 Facades: All originally red/orange brickwork, although many unfortunately have been painted or rendered. Some moulded stone detailing. Some (timber) bracketed eaves (particularly in The Square). Some cream brickwork to Church Street. Some encaustic and faience tiles.



Picture 2.45 Bracketed eaves detailing, Market Square

2.4.24 Roofs: All originally slate (with the exception of the 1930's infill sites), many replaced with concrete. Pitched, with ridge parallel to road. Plain with no dormers (one only to Stratford Road). Ridges predominantly plain, though a few examples of fancy detailing.

2.4.25 Windows: Painted timber sliding sashes are used unless replaced by aluminium, later wooden or bulkier plastic items. Common arrangements are 3 panes over 3 or 2 panes over 2, some with margin lights. Some semi circular heads to Stratford Road. Some examples of two storey and first floor only bay windows.



Picture 2.46 The Queen Victoria has retained many original features

2.4.26 Window Arrangements: Typically two sash windows at first floor. In Church Street, a number of bay windows appear to have been removed and replaced with casement windows. Domestic buildings have a door and window at ground floor.

2.4.27 Shopfronts: A large number of original / traditional shopfronts remain. Constructed predominantly of timber. Based around the classical system of cornice, fascia, consoles/capitals, pilasters and stallriser. Many have recessed central doorways with tiled floors. Original retractable awnings remain. Small pane glazing above transom. Fascias of narrow, elegant proportion, some canted. Numerous modern shopfronts appear heavy and clumsy using inappropriate materials.

2. The Character Assessment



Picture 2.47 A well maintained shop front on The Square

2.4.28 Doors: Timber, although some unsympathetic replacements exist. Mixture of panelled and glazed.



Picture 2.48 Surviving panelled door on The Square (east side), the door is further distinguished by a large transom light and stone detailing (now painted) on the porch entrance

2.4.29 Doors are recessed by half a brick's width unless housed within a porch. Sometimes reached by stone steps.



Picture 2.49 Refurbished shop front, Church Street

2.4.30 Rainwater Goods: Cast iron unless replaced with plastic.

2.4.31 Boundary Treatments: Generally absent along rows of shops but otherwise generally of red/orange brick walls, in Flemish, English and garden wall bonds. Normally with blue clay coping. A variety of materials define public and private spaces to the rear, including timber panel fences, metal gates and brick walls.



Picture 2.50 Rear view of shops on Church Street

2.4.32 Lintels: Stone, often moulded, segmental arches, stucco to replicate stone with voussoirs and keystones, semi circular rubbed, gauged brick arches.

2. The Character Assessment

2.4.33 Sills: Stone of varying profiles.

2.4.34 Chimneys: A variety of chimney forms exist throughout the conservation area, either on the ridge or stepped forward. Square or oblong in plan with simple corbel adornment. Taller examples stand 25 to 30 courses above the roof ridge.



Picture 2.51 Chimneys take a variety of forms

EARLY TIGHTLY KNIT VICTORIAN HOUSING

Development Form:

2.4.35 Layout: Very fine grain, highly permeable but narrow, grid type street patterns, often with good views along their length. The houses are consistently arranged in rows with fronts overlooking the roads whilst gardens are accessed from back ways.



Picture 2.52 Terraced houses with a larger end house, Buckingham Street (south side)

2.4.36 Landscape: Intensively developed terraced suburbs. The lack of street side front gardens creates a harsh and cramped public environment. From the back ways there are important glimpses of often small but neat back gardens; foliage is more frequent with occasional trees.



Picture 2.53 Views of gardens on the back ways add visual interest to the conservation area

2.4.38 Density and Mix: tightly knit and predominantly smaller terraced houses with little variety of use and no industrial buildings. Interlaced by the back ways which create intriguing views, often framing an individual terrace or other feature as a visual stop.

2. The Character Assessment



Picture 2.54 A terraced house framed by a back way

2.4.39 Height and mass: There is a general consistency in the scale of the buildings. Most houses are modestly proportioned and mostly of two stories, although some larger examples exist along Church St.

2.4.40



Picture 2.55 Subtle changes in height, window and door designs and chimney position lend visual interest and texture to many linear views along the town's street (note the lack of street furniture)

Detailing and Materials:

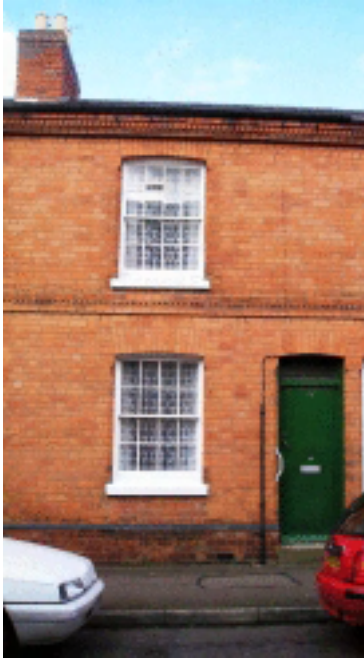
2.4.41 Facades: Orange/red brick, many with smoother face brick, some with darker red, in Flemish bond. Some cream/buff bricks for eaves detail on Buckingham St. (south side) and chamfered blue bricks for plinth copings. All houses are placed hard up against the back of the pavement.



Picture 2.56 House, south side Buckingham Street

2.4.42 Buildings on the south side of east-west streets have stone steps to front doors, often with blue brick plinth.

2. The Character Assessment



Picture 2.57 Individual house on the north side of Buckingham Street

2.4.43 There are moulded/carved brick details to Buckingham St, north side, at eaves level and string course. 1-11 Bedford St. are rendered with stucco to ground floor, v-jointed to replicate stone.



Picture 2.58 Stuccoed house, Bedford Street

2.4.44 4-28 Oxford St. form a different and distinct group using stepped gables to street, pediments over paired doorways, stepped grouping of three windows at ground floor with stone lintels all under single header curved relieving arch, darker red used for carved/moulded bricks.



Picture 2.59 Stepped gable, Oxford Street

2.4.45 Some houses are particularly plain and devoid of decoration (e.g. Radcliffe St; on these simple house types the sash windows were frequently the only feature that were given any kind of flourish. Their replacement by windows in rather less elegant plastic and metal, sometimes fitted flush with the exterior wall rather than recessed, has significantly undermined their historic character).

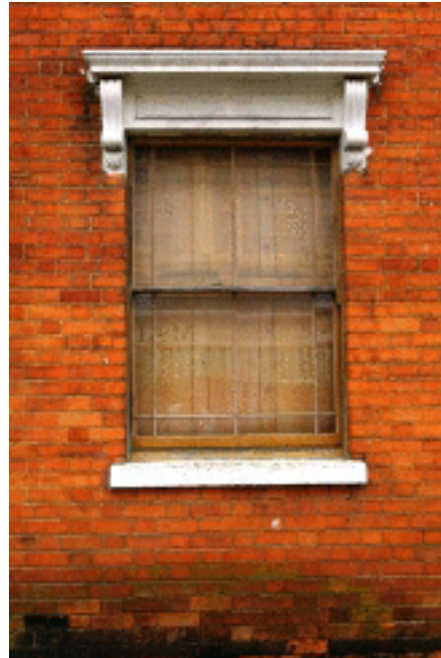
2. The Character Assessment



Picture 2.60 A plain terrace on Radcliffe Street. This design relies on windows for its architectural voice. Elsewhere, however, windows have been replaced with much less eloquent alternatives however.

2.4.46 Roofs: Pitched, running parallel with streets. Originally Welsh slate, many now have concrete tiles undermining the historic uniformity.

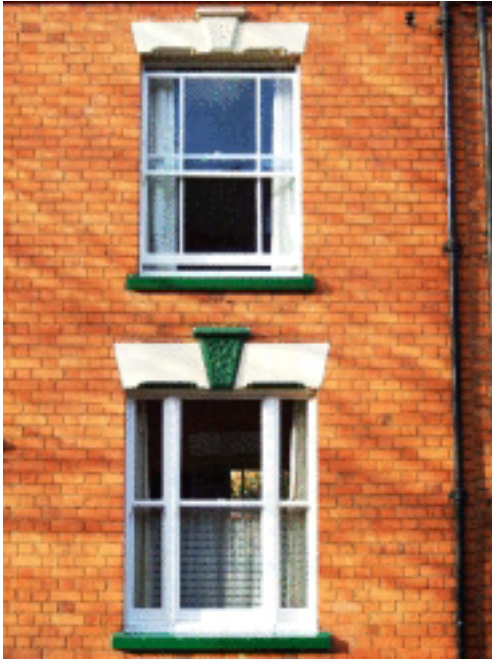
2.4.47 Windows: Originally timber sliding sash, many still survive.



Picture 2.61 Finely detailed window, Church Street, south side

2.4.48 Window Arrangements: Majority of the properties in this area have one window per floor to the front. However there are a number of other arrangements, usually based on two upstairs windows with one downstairs alongside the door. Common window constructions are two over two panes, three over three, tripartite sashes (ground floor only) and sashes with narrower margin windows. Usually recessed by at least half a brick.

2. The Character Assessment



Picture 2.62 A typical neatly composed window arrangement in Bedford Street. The lower window is a tripartite sash

2.4.49 The ground floor window is usually given stronger emphasis through size, complexity and adornment than those on the upper storeys. Upper floor windows are rarely, if ever, given greater emphasis than the ground floor window.



Picture 2.63 A simple terrace (Radcliffe Street) with large windows allowing just enough room for the ceiling joists between ground and first floor.

2.4.50 On the plainer smaller terraces, windows and doors are often used to create and heighten their architectural quality and uniformity. Even minor changes here cause significant harm to the special character and appearance.



Picture 2.64 Collections of windows and doors create consistency in appearance and, in collection, emphasise the architectural statement made by two or more houses within a row.

2.4.51 Bay Windows: Single storey bay windows to Aylesbury Street (south side) past Bedford Street. Mixture of timber and stone, hipped and lead roofs.

2. The Character Assessment



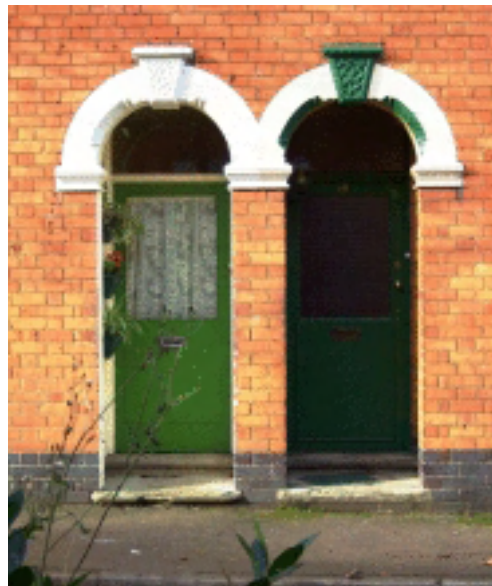
Picture 2.65 Surviving timber canted bay window, Aylesbury Street

2.4.52 Doors: Timber panelled doors, some with glazing, normally recessed by half a brick.



Picture 2.66 Door and window detail showing both recessed from the front of the property by about the width of a brick (note also the blue brick plinth and cast iron drain pipe)

2.4.53 Porches: recessed under semicircular stone arches (e.g. Bedford St, Oxford St.). Frequently arranged in pairs.



Picture 2.67 Simple but elegant door arrangement on Bedford Street

2.4.54 On slightly later houses (the Western end of Church Street for example) porch floors are often embellished with Victorian encaustic tile in geometric patterns.



Picture 2.68 Doors, Church Street, north side

2.4.55 Lintels: Rubbed, gauged, flat brick arches, stucco flat arches, sometimes with keystone, normally v-jointed incised or rusticated. Stone

2. The Character Assessment

hoods supported on scroll brackets over ground floor windows (Church Street, south side). Semi circular arches to Church St and Oxford St.

2.4.56 Rainwater Goods: Originally cast iron, many replaced with plastic.



Picture 2.69 Iron down pipe, Buckingham Street

2.4.57 Boundary Treatments: Brick walls to rear, very occasionally these are augmented by characterful iron railings.



Picture 2.70 Finial detail on railing fronting Green Lane

2.4.58 Garden gates, usually of timber set into blue clay coped walls. This arrangement has frequently given way to random collections of garage buildings.



Picture 2.71 Simple rear boundary treatment behind Aylesbury Street

2.4.59 To the rear of Buckingham Street some back gardens are still subdivided by original or early iron railings.

2. The Character Assessment



Picture 2.72 Surviving iron railings dividing gardens on Buckingham Street. Note the unusual roof construction on the rear outshots that the fall in land permits

2.4.60 Shop fronts: A small number of traditional timber shopfronts remain on Church Street.



Picture 2.73 Shop front with canted bay windows above

2.4.61 They are typified by large shop windows on the ground floor, sometimes with a canted bay window above.



Picture 2.74 Shop with awnings and timber canted bay window to upper floor

2.4.62 Retractable awnings are a shared characteristic.

2.4.63 Chimneys: Those serving a pair of properties appear to be narrow but substantial in depth. Chimneys serving individual properties are frequently squarer in plan.

2.4.64 Bootscrapes: Although rare a number of these details still survive and the council's preference will be for their retention.

LATER VICTORIAN / EDWARDIAN HOUSING

Development Form:

2.4.65 Layout: Although the difference between the older and newer suburbs is subtle, the layout is discernibly more spacious with bigger blocks of terracing, hence the grain of development is not as fine or as permeable as the older terracing but still shares many layout characteristics. Long bisecting views along streets and back ways are a major feature of this area.

2. The Character Assessment



Picture 2.75 View along Western Road

2.4.66 Landscape: Intensively developed terraced suburbs but more spaciouly set out and with front gardens which add an important touch of greenery. There is a less cramped feel to the newer terraces. A gentle upward slope from north to south adds interest to some streets.



Picture 2.76 Bay windows set behind small front gardens, Cambridge Street

2.4.67 Density and Mix: Still densely developed but with more variety of uses, including corner shops, chapels, schools and working men's clubs.

2.4.68 Height and Mass: There is a general consistency in the scale of the buildings. Most houses are modestly proportioned and mostly of two stories although some larger and very fine examples exist along Stratford Road and elsewhere. Many of the terraces are 'book ended' by a slightly larger end house type.



Picture 2.77 Larger and more generously proportioned houses stand on the corner plots of the newer terrace rows

Detailing and Materials:

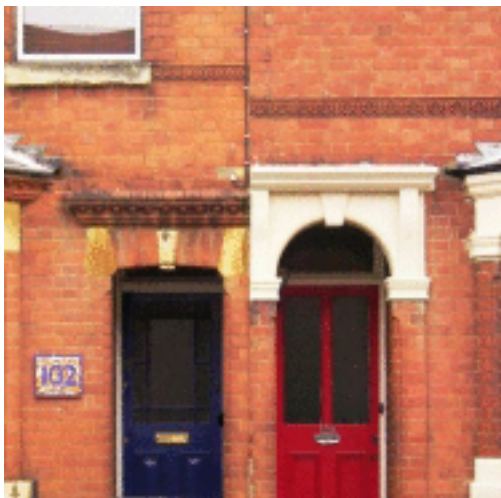
2.4.69 Facades: More of the darker, harder and smoother red brick. Flemish bond again predominant. Soft red rubbers used for detail courses. Mid brown brick in Cambridge Street combined with red (orange) rubber for detail and blue brick for base.



Picture 2.78 Houses on Cambridge Street

2. The Character Assessment

2.4.70 The detailing on the front of many of the houses, where it survives, is generally much fancier than in the older Victorian terraces, and reaches a crescendo on some of the very large houses. The level of adornment sometimes gives rise to characterful, if rather clumsy, collisions in designs where one terraced house abuts another of contrasting detail.



Picture 2.79 Contrasting details in Victoria Road

2.4.71 Some corner shops with original, altered and modern shopfronts. Stone door surrounds and semi circular arches commonplace, originally left unpainted. Some examples of fluted pilasters to door surrounds (Cambridge Street).



Picture 2.80 Entrance detail, Cambridge Street

2.4.72 Roofs: Ridges run parallel to the road except Western part of Aylesbury street which has the gable ends of the terraces and other individual buildings. Originally slate although many replaced with heavy and uncharacteristic profiled interlocking concrete tile. Some detailed terracotta ridge tiles. Bay windows have flat, gabled (e.g. Western Rd) or hipped (clay tile or lead) roofs. Linked porch roofs in Western Rd and Church St.



Picture 2.81 Houses on Western Road.

2.4.73 Lead for flashings. Large shared chimneys to the outside edge of each 'pair' of houses within a terrace. No dormer windows to front elevations.

2.4.74 Windows: All originally timber sliding sash windows, many replaced over the last 30 years. Larger paned windows than much of the smaller, earlier housing, the most frequently occurring pane arrangements being one over one and two over two. Tripartite windows also used. Shallow arched heads prevalent. Original glass survives in the many retained original windows.

2. The Character Assessment



Picture 2.82 Tripartite window above lead roofed canted bay window, Cambridge Street

2.4.75 Window Arrangements: Often only one window to first floor, although when two, they are frequently paired with stone or brick mullion in between, which in turn may have decorative mouldings.



Picture 2.83 Houses on Anson Road

2.4.76 Bay Windows: Predominantly canted bays, mostly stone lintels (originally unpainted) with stone or brick columns/mullions and detailed mouldings. Both single and two storey. Square bays in Jersey Road (timber with three sash

windows to front) and Western Road (brick). Bay windows have flat, gabled (e.g. Western Rd) or hipped (clay tile or lead) roofs. Lead for flashings.



Picture 2.84 Victorian sashes in a simple but elegantly detailed canted bay

2.4.77 Lintels: Also see 'Porches' (paragraph 2.4.84). Variety of natural stone lintels and cut brick arches. Often have some form of hood or drip mould.

2.4.78 Doors: Timber, often panelled (raised and fielded) often with tall glazed lights in the upper part instead of glazed panels. doors are often topped by a clear glazed 'fanlight' window placed over a transom.

2. The Character Assessment



Picture 2.85 Doors, Victoria Street. Note the ornamental gate on the left side

2.4.79 On the finer houses the principal entrances were eye-catchingly decorated, and a key part of the frontage's role in conveying its position in the hierarchy of terraced housing. The elaborate level of ornamentation may also indicate the level of rivalry between speculative builders eager to entice prospective purchasers.



Picture 2.86 Doors on Church Street. The door on the left belongs to a larger end of terrace property. The glazing has Art Nouveau flourishes

2.4.80 Rainwater Goods: Originally cast iron, much of which survives though many replaced with plastic.

2.4.81 Boundary Treatments: Low, brick front garden walls in nine inch bond with clay coping. A number of walls constructed entirely in the blue semi engineering brick. Occasionally fancy iron gates or ornamental railings survive.



Picture 2.87 Original railings on a boundary wall in Cambridge Street

2.4.82 To the rear, walls are of brick with timber gates. Often these are characterised by hinges and latches set into stone.

2. The Character Assessment



Picture 2.88 Typical rear gate arrangement.

2.4.83 Shop fronts: Some original shop fronts survive. Usually placed on the corner of a terrace, and on occasions, the corner of the building which is chamfered and houses the entrance (e.g. Stratford Rd.).

2.4.84 Porches: Paired and recessed with tiled floors under (most commonly) a semi circular stone arch, flat moulded stone lintel or brick arch with drip detail.



Picture 2.89 A more unusual, yet nonetheless elegant paired entrance, Church Street

2.4.85 On some porches, outer opening doors were fitted. Occasionally these survive in their entirety, sometimes they have been removed leaving only a decorative upper detail or other parts of the frame:



Picture 2.90 Surviving outer doors on Cambridge Street

2. The Character Assessment

2.4.86 Detailing: Often cogged, dentilled, or corbelled courses under eaves (including bays). A vast range between simplistic and fine terracotta string bands and courses exist (good examples in Victoria St).



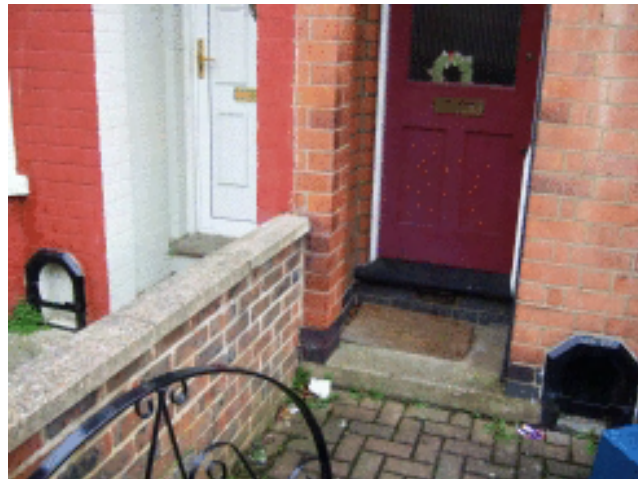
Picture 2.91 Detailing on later terraced housing

2.4.87 Other: Nos. 1&2 Western Road are a substantial pair and stand apart in form and appearance from the terraced houses.



Picture 2.92 1&2 Western Road

2.4.88 Bootscrapes: A number of these items still survive in a variety of forms and the council's preference is for their retention.



Picture 2.93 Bootscrapes in Windsor Street

GREEN SPACES

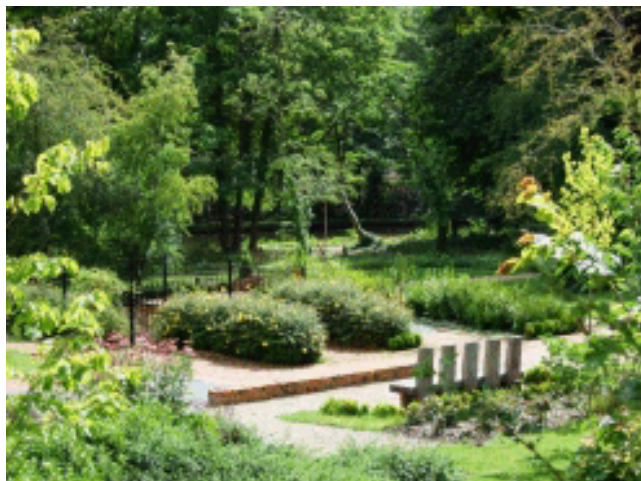
2.4.89 Landscape: there are a variety of landscape types. The school grounds are flat and open for recreation, although they also form the setting for the school buildings. The graveyard is more ornamental in line with the formal function it serves. Similarly the church yard is also neatly kept and provides context for St George's Church.



Picture 2.94 The grounds of St George's Church

2.4.90 Contrasting with this, the canal is a much less closely managed and functional space but is still attractive with bridges forming good focal points. The Secret Garden and Community Orchard, developed on spare land once occupied by villas for senior works and railway staff, have also been included in the conservation area following the review.

2. The Character Assessment



Picture 2.95 The Secret Garden

PUBLIC REALM

2.4.91 The public realm is made up of those parts of the town that are accessible without charge to the public, whether publicly or privately owned. In Wolverton this includes the streets and open spaces, such as the canal and churchyard. However, it excludes the railway works.

2.4.92 The public realm plays an often unappreciated role in establishing the character and appearance of a place. It is, however, important to ensure that public spaces are understood and well managed. Public spaces often contain historic features which should be retained whenever possible. New street furniture should be used sparingly in historic areas so that it remains subordinate or even contributes to the overall character of the locale.

2.4.93 By acting judiciously, individual features and characteristics that contribute the historic character can be retained and opportunities for enhancement will not be overlooked.

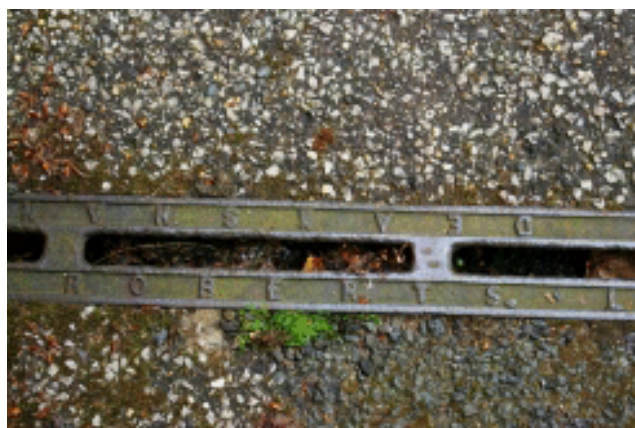
2.4.94 Features and details made from cast and wrought iron are a particularly positive feature of the public realm. Some examples are illustrated below.



Picture 2.96 Distinctive cellar cover, Buckingham Street



Picture 2.97 Glazed cellar cover, Church Street



Picture 2.98 Iron channel by Roberts of Deanshanger (these channels carried water from drainpipes on the front of houses, across the pavement to the gutter)

2. The Character Assessment



Picture 2.99 Intricate wrought iron open-work on the church yard gates on Aylesbury Street

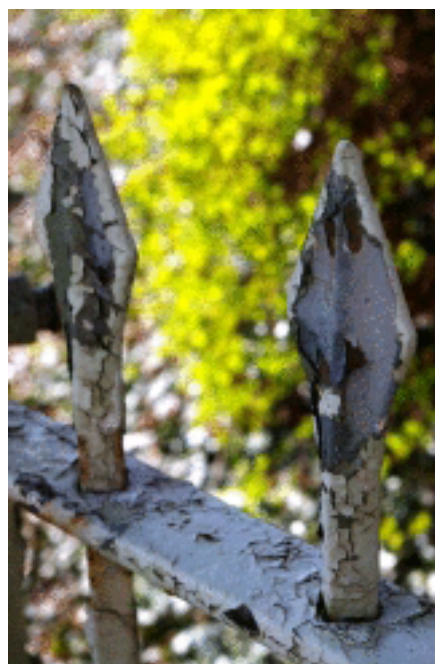


Picture 2.101 A lengthy run of iron railings commences at the entrance to Bushfields Middle School



Picture 2.100 There is an Art Nouveau appearance to the wrought decorative work on the gates to the Wesleyan chapel on Church Street

2.4.95 Railings are found throughout the conservation area; they tend to vary subtly in their design. In particular, Wyvern and Bushfield Schools (both public buildings) have retained their early or original iron railings.



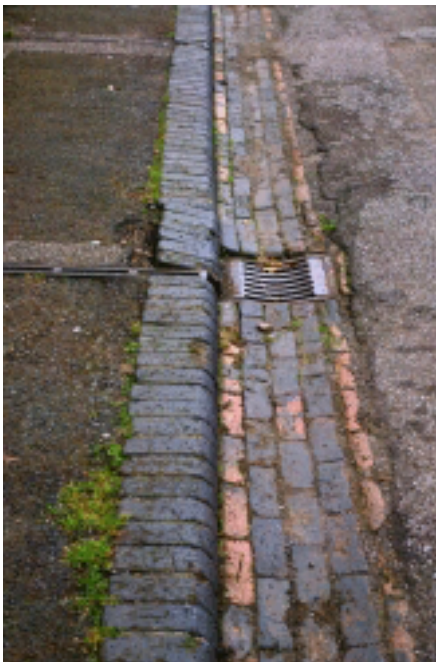
Picture 2.102 Detail of railings outside Wyvern School, Church Street entrance

2. The Character Assessment



Picture 2.103 Finial detail, Wyvern School, Aylesbury Street

2.4.96 Surviving historic surfaces and pavement edgings are rare but add to character where they occur.

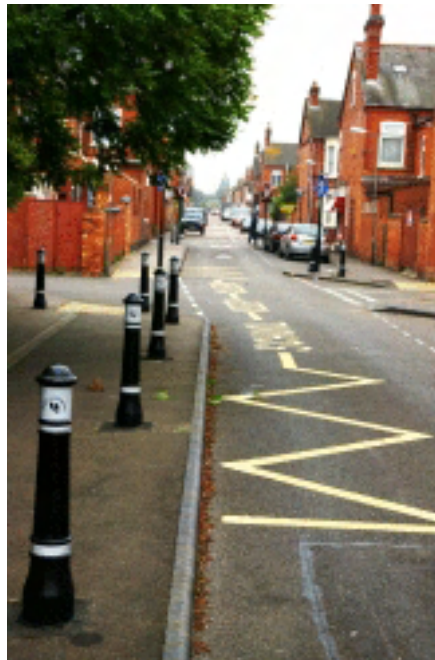


Picture 2.104 Pavement edging and gutter detail, Buckingham Street



Picture 2.105 Despite its longevity, cobble has become rare in the conservation area

2.4.97 Installing new street furniture (bins, benches, bollards, bike stands, bus shelters etc), surfaces, signing and road markings can have significant implications for historic areas. Poor choice and over use can create clutter, distracting the eye from the authentic character of an area.



Picture 2.106 The need to install equipment to improve road safety has outweighed the impact the presence of visual clutter has on the character of the conservation area

2. The Character Assessment



Picture 2.107 Viewed from an oblique angle the street lighting on Stratford Road seems intrusive. However, from most vantage points the number and design do not detract from the area's general character.

LATE TWENTIETH CENTURY REDEVELOPMENTS

2.4.98 Landscape and layout: Imposed and discordant.

2.4.99 Height and Mass: Much of the scale and appearance of the late twentieth development has had scant regard for the context in which it is located. This has had the effect of eroding local distinctiveness and authentic character. Its arbitrary deployment within the Victorian conservation area effectively over-emphasises its presence but fortunately, despite everything, it is still subordinate overall.



Picture 2.108 The Agora Centre, Church Street

CURRENTLY UNDER DEVELOPMENT

2.4.100 The character of the Wolverton Park sports ground, Royal Train Shed and Triangular Building redevelopment and the Bong McCorquodale site is in a state of change. At present these locations are busy building sites but will develop into areas with their own traits. There is currently an application for the comprehensive redevelopment of the Tesco site which, if built, would effect quite a change on the appearance of this area of Wolverton.

2.5 Individual Buildings

2.5.1 Throughout the conservation area there are buildings that contribute individually or collectively to the special character and appearance for different reasons. Although some sixteen buildings are listed because of their importance in a national context, a good number of other buildings are also arguably of local or regional interest. Appendix B of the Wolverton Characterisation and Streetscape Analysis, Philips J and Brushe J (undated), published by the Wolverton Society for Arts and Heritage lists, forty nine significant buildings and terraces across the town, not just within the conservation area.

2. The Character Assessment



Picture 2.109 Various materials used in skilful and harmonious combination on the Methodist Chapel in Church Street. The building is not listed.

2.5.2 Although the council is in broad agreement with this schedule, there are some important omissions such as the canal bridge at the north western boundary of the conservation area and the local headquarters of the Buckinghamshire Battalion adjacent to the new bowling green and pavilion. Also omitted are the individual industrial buildings of the works and the wall that so dramatically subdivides the town. Individual items such as the wrought iron gates at the entrance to the church yard from Aylesbury Street are also of note.

2.5.3 However, the absence of a building (or item) from the schedule in the Wolverton Characterisation and Streetscape Analysis, or indeed from this review, does not necessarily mean that it is of no significance. The council will appraise the significance of individual buildings, structures and other features on a case by case basis and shall, where appropriate and reasonable, ask for independent assessments to be submitted with planning applications to ensure that the significance of a building or group of buildings has been properly understood prior to determining applications.

2.5.4 In addition to, and within, the buildings and terraces noted by Philips and Brushe are numerous individual terraced houses and other buildings that survive with original doors and windows intact. Occasionally there are those that

also retain their slate roofs and other details such as garden gates (19 Cambridge Street) or, very rarely, ornate garden railings (144 Cambridge Street). These are all mixed in with houses that have lost many, if not all, of their original external details. Discovering houses and other buildings that have retained their authentic appearance and, as a result, their attendant charm is one of the pleasures of exploring the conservation area.

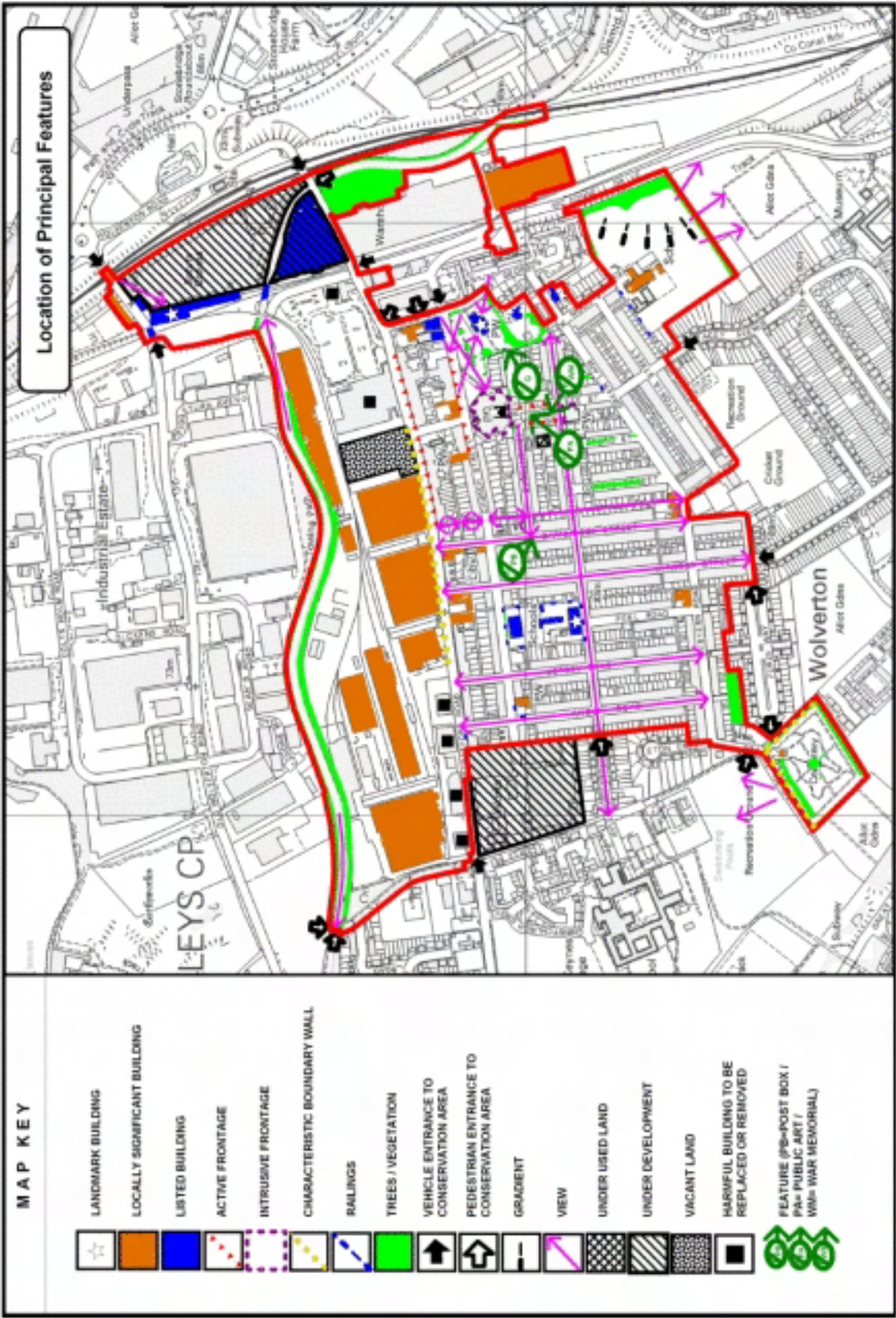


Picture 2.110 Neatly detailed domestic window arrangement

2.5.5 By acknowledging individual buildings, either those which stand alone or within a row, the overall character of groups of buildings should not be overlooked. For example, the frontages of almost all the terraces (even where few examples of intact houses survive) combine to create a pleasing regularity of form and detail derived from a similarity in their general built styles. In this regard it could be argued that the individual terraced 'blocks' also form important architectural units. Philips and Brushe recognised this and included a number of examples in Appendix 3 of their study.

2.5.6 The principal buildings which contribute to the character of the conservation area are shown on Map 2.2 'Location of Principal Features'.

2. The Character Assessment



Map 2.2 Location of Principal Features

2.6 The Setting of the Conservation Area

2.6.1 As part of the review the land immediately surrounding the original conservation area was appraised.

2.6.2 These areas divided into four zones to the north, south, east and west of Wolverton. The four zones are shown in Map 2.3 'Wolverton Hinterland Zones' and, in the draft review document, were described as follows:

Zone 1

East

- This complex area is largely taken up by redundant industrial land. There are, however, two significant operational industrial sheds, one of which is of a similar age, scale and appearance to the sheds within the works site;
- At the southern tip of the industrial land stands the grade II listed blue bridge;
- McConnell Drive links both Wolverton town centre and the Tesco site to Millers Way (H2). McConnell drive is a bleak environment for most of its length but is shielded from the conservation area by trees and buildings along its western flank;
- Sandwiched between McConnell Drive and the eastern boundary of the conservation area is a small area of late Twentieth century housing blocks of mostly two and four storeys. The area also contains a key landmark building; 'The Gables', an intrusive monolithic structure that towers over the eastern end of the conservation area;
- East of the industrial sheds lies the canal and railway. Despite the presence of the rail line, the area is nonetheless quite secluded and pleasant. There is an intriguing foot tunnel under the railway for the foot path that follows the western side of the canal at this point. The 'Secret Garden' where the works senior managers' houses once stood is also located here;
- Further north and east lies the neatly designed Wolverton Bowls Club's new building and grounds and the former Buckinghamshire Battalion local headquarters (Mill Mead Hall) now used by Cadets. Although part of Wolverton these buildings feel remote from it, surrounded by roads and difficult to access by foot;
- New Bradwell, which lies further east, is still well connected by footpaths to Wolverton and although bisected by Grafton Street (V6) the area between the two towns is characterised by park-like spacious greenery.

Zone 2

South

- In zone two mid twentieth century housing predominates. There are, however, some important open green spaces including allotments and the cricket ground that abut the conservation area boundary.

2. The Character Assessment

Zone 3

West

- Zone three contains large areas of green, well treed, open space easily accessible from the west side of Wolverton. This is a pleasant area for recreation and, although not ornamental, has a park-like quality;
- Important footpath links exist across the western green spaces to Greenleys;
- The school playing fields combine with the general public spaces to further emphasise the open nature of the conservation area's western flank. The present level of openness is, however, temporary pending major investments in local community facilities and housing developments along the eastern side of Great Monks Street (V5).

Zone 4

North

- A rather plain and unremarkable 1960's housing estate stands at the eastern end of this area;
- The rest of the zone is taken up by bleak, disused land awaiting development and a large modern industrial estate;
- The old Wolverton Road forms a spine road that acts as a bypass to the north of Wolverton;
- Apart from the canal, there is nothing of any architectural or historic merit or of any positive character within this zone.

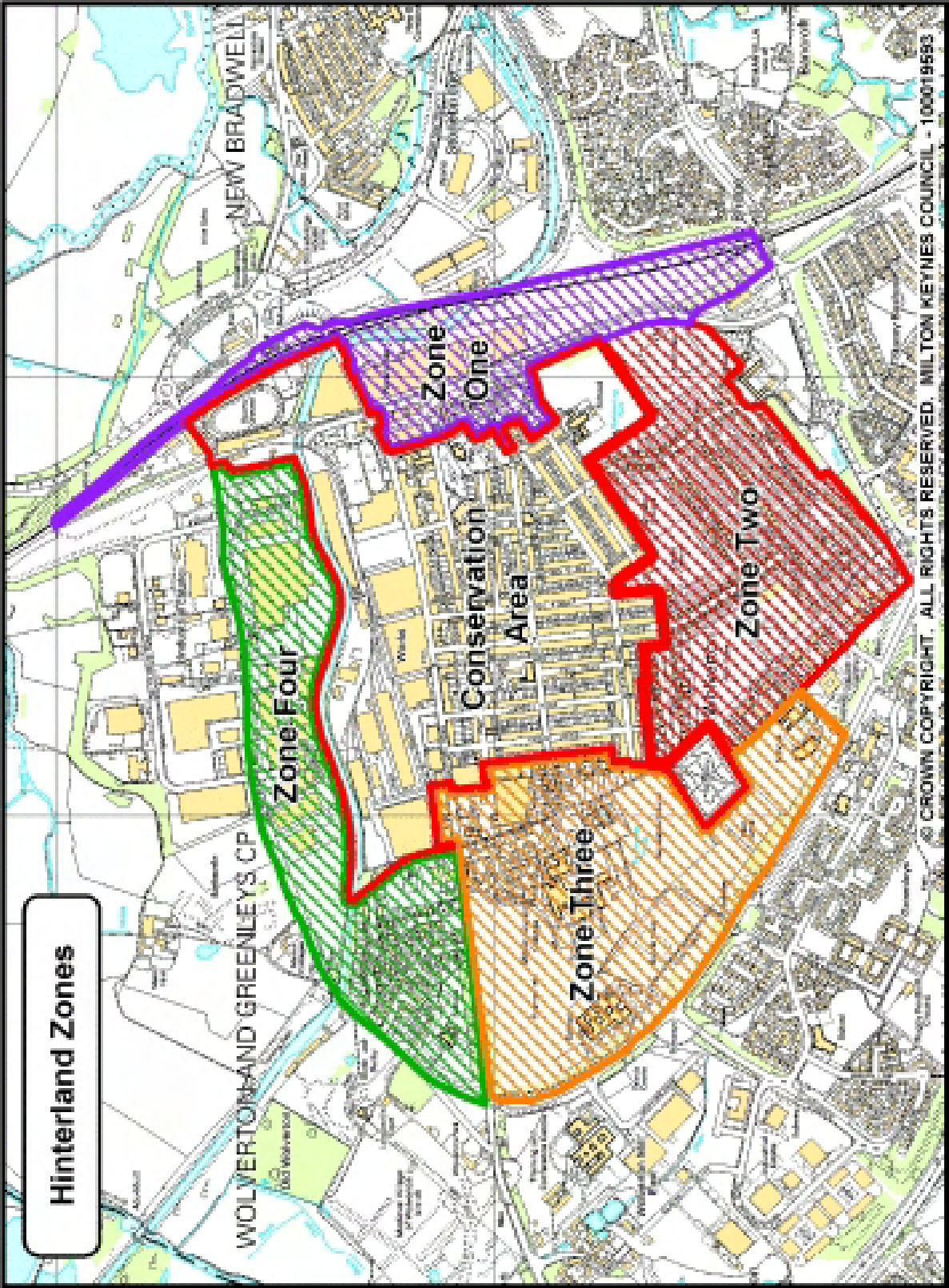
2.6.3 Due to the topography, the areas around Wolverton only contribute marginally to the conservation area's setting. The only general views are out of the conservation area from Western Road where junctions with other roads allow views northwards towards Hanslope.

2.6.4 In summary the land to the north offers little in terms of quality or attractiveness and is quite inaccessible and remote. The eastern zone was found to be a more intriguing and complex mix of uses, although sharing the inaccessibility of the land to the north. South and west of the conservation area important, accessible open spaces that contribute significantly to the quality of life in the town were found.



Picture 2.111 At the southern periphery of the conservation area are important open spaces

2.6.5 The outcome of these findings are described in 2.8 'Conclusions'.



Map 2.3 Wolverton Hinterland Zones

2. The Character Assessment

2.7 Boundary Amendments

2.7.1 The boundary amendments are shown in Map 2.4 'Proposed Amendments to the

Conservation Area Boundary'; the proposed buildings and areas options that have now been included in the conservation area are described below:

Option 1

A: Area East of Skew Bridge

- A grouping of buildings that includes the former gas works site, the park keepers lodge, two bridges and an important view of the Royal Train Shed. Although compromised by the intrusive road and attendant traffic the area is predominantly late Victorian in character;
- The bridge that carries the current London to Birmingham rail line would become a key entry point into the conservation area.

Option 2

B: Former Laundry Building

- The former laundry building, latterly used as the drawing offices and for training draughtsmen was once an integral part of the works and is recommended for inclusion.

Option 3

C: Grand Union Canal and Buildings East of McConnell Drive

- This area includes attractive waterside environments and the Secret Garden. The southerly rail bridge that carries the main London to Birmingham rail line would be included as an important industrial monument and also form an important entry point by foot and narrow boat into the conservation area;
- Also brought into the conservation area would be former rail sheds and a ruinous weighbridge office that once formed part of an extensive marshalling yard on the east side of Wolverton.

Option 4

D: Former Railside Retaining Wall

- This unobtrusive feature marks the westward extent of the historic main line and would be brought under protection by a simple adjustment of the existing boundary eastwards.

2. The Character Assessment

Option 5

E: House, Stacey Avenue

- Believed to be a lodge for Stacey Hill Farm, this building is a neatly designed property with a number of details, including some windows, surviving intact.

Option 6

F: Woburn Road and Community Orchard

- The omission of this area appears to have been an oversight as Woburn Road shares many of the characteristics of other areas of Victorian housing in Wolverton. The amendment to the boundary also brings the Community Orchard under conservation area protection.

Option 7

G: Car Sales Show Rooms – Stratford Road, North Side

- These sites would not be included for any direct historic character but because of the potential their inclusion within the boundary offers should their redevelopment come forward. There are no such proposals under discussion at present however. The site that would be included occupies part of the now demolished McCorquodale buildings and also stands on an important entrance point into the current conservation area.

Option 8

H: Footpath Adjacent to the Western Extremity of Wolverton Works

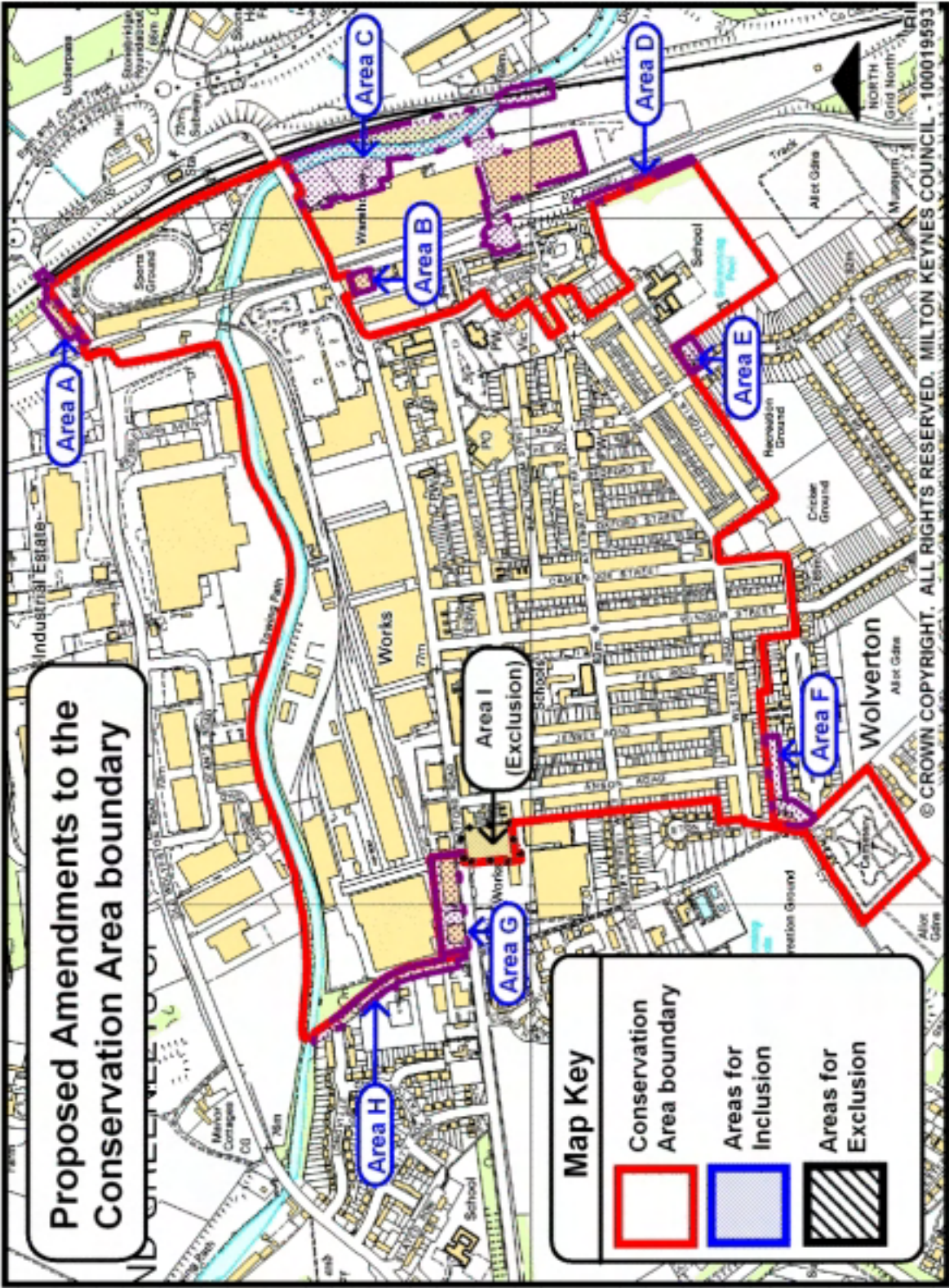
- This path leads to the Grand union Canal and the Grand Union Long Distance footpath. The North Bucks Way also follows this footpath. The area is pleasant and leafy and offers views of the western end of the rail sheds.

Option 9

I: Proposed Exclusions from The Conservation Area

- The site of the former Bong McCorquodale Site identified as area 'I' on map 2.4 would be recommended for removal from the conservation area; the new boundary would run along the front of the factory facade that remains, which overlooks the Stratford Road.

2. The Character Assessment



Map 2.4 Proposed Amendments to the Conservation Area Boundary

2. The Character Assessment

2.8 Conclusions

2.8.1 Since the designation of the conservation area in 2001, Wolverton has continued to change and grow. In some places change has been dramatic whilst in others it has been more subtle. Whenever applications for planning permission have been submitted, the special historic character of the town has been an important consideration when assessing their merits and ensuring that inappropriate change and development is minimised.



Picture 2.112 Work underway on the Wolverton Park site

2.8.2 The appraisal of the conservation area confirmed that the special character of the town that was evident in 2001 has been retained. Whilst it is unlikely that the town's character would have declined dramatically in the course of seven years, the conservation area provisions are also making a contribution to retaining details on individual properties as well as guiding the design of new buildings in the town.



Picture 2.113 A well maintained, retained shop front on Stratford Road

2.8.3 By confirming that the town's special historic character remains very much in evidence, the review effectively justifies the retention of the conservation area designation.

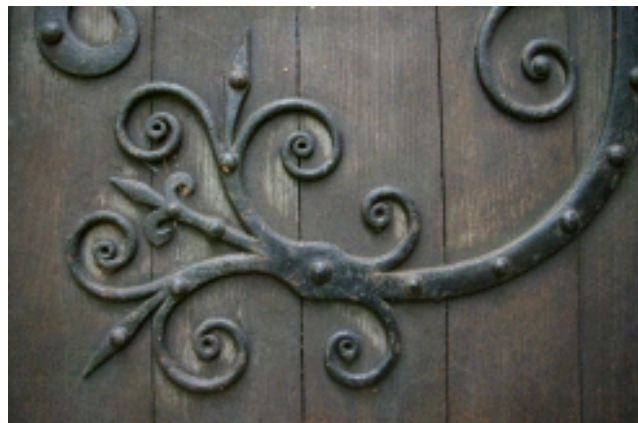
2.8.4 The examination of the conservation area's boundaries raised the issue of extending the perimeter to include the areas identified in Map 2.4 'Proposed Amendments to the Conservation Area Boundary'. The conservation area boundary has been amended to include these areas.

2.8.5 In addition to examining the line of the original boundary the council has also updated the definition of special interest for the conservation area. This is supported by a general analytical description of the town (2.3 'Wolverton - General Description' and 2.4 'Character Areas'). As part of this process, individual zones within the town have also been identified and described.(2.5 'Individual Buildings').

2. The Character Assessment



Picture 2.114 Produce for sale, Stratford Road



Picture 2.115 Door detail, St George's Church

2.8.6 This analysis of the town and areas within has clarified those elements that contribute to (or detract from) its character and thus helps to guide planning decisions. To supplement both national policy and guidance and the local plan policies for Milton Keynes a management plan, tailored to Wolverton, taking into account the findings of the review, has been drafted. Development in Wolverton should now broadly accord with the guidance in the management plan.

2.8.7 It has also been recognised that those with maintenance responsibility for premises in Wolverton require practical advice on what work is permissible and where further advice might be sought. As resources permit, guidance on maintaining property located in a conservation area will be published.

2.8.8 Greater effort will also be directed at sharing changes in planning regulations, legal decisions or the outcomes of planning appeals with those who may be affected by such changes and the council's amended position on conservation area management which may arise as a result.

3 Management Proposals

3.1 Introduction

3.1.1 Section 72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 sets out the council's duty in respect of conservation areas which is to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of those areas. It is therefore not only a question of ensuring that the existing historic character of the town is preserved but also that new development makes a positive contribution to the area.

3.1.2 Designating and reaffirming the conservation area's significance also presented an opportunity to look back at the success of the existing controls, and the manner in which they have been implemented.



Picture 3.1 Door detail

3.1.3 Wolverton has the extra controls of the Article 4(2) direction, which removes certain 'permitted development' rights such as replacing doors and windows without the need for planning permission (full details of the implications of the

Article 4(2) designation are set out in a separate leaflet available from the council. See also paragraph 1.1.2 of this document).

3.1.4 For example the use of the Article 4(2) direction to control the loss of windows has been very successful. However, it was hampered at first by the lack of evidence to support assertions that windows had been changed without contacting the planning office. This has been rectified by the creation of photographic records of the streets in Wolverton. As a result the control of the appearance of the frontages as intended can now be implemented more effectively.



Picture 3.2 The Article 4(2) Direction protects individual features ensuring houses retain original character

3.1.5 This management plan identifies other ways in which the council's duty can be implemented more effectively. Perhaps in areas relating to the public realm, or by offering advice through further guidance leaflets for residents, and relaying appeal decisions and their implications to the Town Council and local interest groups.

3.1.6 The community's support is crucial if the management of the conservation area is to be successful; the future management of the

3. Management Proposals

conservation area will therefore seek to take greater account of those parts of the town's appearance that people value most. However, the council will not permit, without good reason (ie, judged to be in the wider public interest), harm to be done to the historic character or appearance of the conservation area. Nor will opportunities for enhancement be knowingly overlooked.

3.1.7 The principles and advice contained in this management plan accord with the broad advice contained within: Government Planning Policy Statement 1(PPS1)⁽⁵⁾; Planning Policy Guidance Notes (PPG's)15 & 16 ⁽⁶⁾; the policies contained within the adopted Milton Keynes Local Plan⁽⁷⁾; and have taken into account the objectives of the draft Wolverton Area Action Plan.

3.2 Wolverton Conservation Area Management Plan

3.2.1 Within the conservation area the council shall continue to fulfil its statutory duty to preserve or enhance the character of the conservation area whenever opportunities to do so arise. The principal areas where such opportunities arise and the council's duties or intended response are set out below.



Picture 3.3 The Square

Listed Buildings

3.2.2 The council will continue to fulfil its duty to protect nationally important buildings of special architectural or historic interest. Wherever an unlisted building comes to the attention of the council that may be of special architectural or historic interest, notification will be made to the body managing the statutory list on behalf of the government (at present this body is English Heritage) to assess suitability for inclusion.



Picture 3.4 The Reading Room, Wolverton Works was not listed until 2004. It has been rescued from dilapidation through redevelopment works on the site

Buildings at Risk

3.2.3 The council does not presently maintain a register of buildings at risk. Nevertheless, it is inevitable that in reviewing a conservation area, valuable buildings in poor condition and / or with uncertain futures are detected. In light of the council's duty to preserve and enhance the character of the conservation area the council will take steps wherever possible to ensure that buildings that are at risk of being harmed or lost to the detriment of the historic character or appearance of the conservation area, are secured.

- 5 Available to view at <http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/planningandbuilding/planningpolicystatement>
- 6 Available to view at: <http://www.communities.gov.uk/planningandbuilding/planning/pplanningpolicyguidance/planningpolicystatements/planningpolicyguidance/>
- 7 Available to view by following the link on the Council's website at: http://www.milton-keynes.gov.uk/local_plan_review/

3. Management Proposals

Local Lists

3.2.4 At present the council does not maintain a list of buildings that are of architectural or historic value in the local context. This is because placing buildings on a local list does not confer any level of protection for them other than a general planning consideration that their alteration or loss may be detrimental to local character. There is a general acknowledgement that numerous buildings within Wolverton could be placed on a local list but many of these are already protected from demolition by the presence of the conservation area, the Article 4(2) direction and the requirement for conservation area consent.

Demolition

3.2.5 Demolition of historic buildings and structures in the conservation area will only be permitted in exceptional circumstances.

Change of Use

3.2.6 The council will not normally permit changes of use to a building where the new use would adversely affect the historic character or appearance of the conservation area. For example, the clear distinction between housing, commerce and industrial areas is a feature of the conservation area and so a blurring or loss of uses that perpetuate this distinction would normally be resisted. Equally, each character area has its own distinctive quality derived from scale, materials, layout and use. The retention of existing uses contributes to the character, quality, interest and individuality of these areas. These qualities have been recognised, are highly valued, and will be given careful consideration before a change of use is permitted.



Picture 3.5 Change of use from commercial to domestic has not harmed the external character of this former bakery. The building might also be worthy of inclusion on a local list

Alterations to Property

3.2.7 Only a very small number of buildings in Wolverton are protected by listing, yet the great majority of buildings contribute to the interest of the town, both individually or as part of a group. Many individual houses have architectural flourishes that are only exactly shared by a small number of other houses, such as the diverse range of ornament available to the Victorian / Edwardian builder.

3. Management Proposals



Picture 3.6 Decorative console detail, Buckingham Street. Originally this detail would probably have been left unpainted.

3.2.8 Many of the individual touches are built in, for example the moulded / carved brick eaves details, or decorative arches for porches. Other features, such as timber doors and windows have proved more vulnerable to change, not just in the domestic quarters but also in the commercial and industrial zones of the conservation area.



Picture 3.7 Ungainly plastic windows with protruding casements, mitred joints and polythene finish are a conspicuous and discordant alternative to timber. Their medium to long term benefits are increasingly called into question

3.2.9 Conversely, damage may also be caused by adding ornament to stylistically plain houses that exist in parts of Buckingham Street, Radcliffe Street and elsewhere, particularly through the addition of stone cladding or render which obscures the quality of the brickwork and disrupts consistency of appearance along a terrace.



Picture 3.8 Stone cladding is harmful to the appearance and fabric of individual terraces. It causes the eye to be drawn to a discordant alteration at the expense of authentic character

3. Management Proposals

3.2.10 To prevent the loss of these details and their contribution to the character of the town, the council has introduced an Article 4(2) direction (see paragraph 1.1.2) so that alterations that would normally have been permitted even after designation can be controlled by requiring applications for planning permission.

3.2.11 Significant harm can be done to the special historic character of conservation areas by the cumulative effect of many minor alterations. Hence the council will not support alterations to, or loss of, authentic historic exterior detail (in Wolverton this applies to the front or side of domestic property where visible from public land). The rationale behind the approach to the stewardship of conservation areas is set out in section 1.7 Planning Framework.

3.2.12 The need for guidance on the alteration of property in the conservation area is acknowledged. The timing and production of guidance documents by the council will depend on the availability of resources but, in the interim, the Wolverton Society for Arts and Heritage Publication Chimney Pots to Bootscrapers provides helpful guidance on a range of matters.



Picture 3.9 Substantial investment for maintaining property is evident. However, poor advice and selection has led to numerous mismatched alterations. Across the conservation area this process has fractured the shared architectural language of the terraces

Archaeology

3.2.13 In certain cases redevelopment of sites will only be permitted after the provision of a full archaeological survey, submitted as part of the application process, and with planning conditions where necessary to allow for archaeological recording, or to ensure the preservation in situ of important remains. Note that in accordance with the broad advice contained in PPG's 15 and 16 assessments may also be required of standing buildings. The provision of archaeological and buildings assessments is sought to ensure that planning decisions take proper account of a site's archaeological potential. Early consultation with the council's Archaeological Officer is advised and welcomed.

External Advertising

3.2.14 The council will control external advertising to ensure that the regulations on the display of signs are followed, to ensure the preservation or enhancement of the special historic character of the conservation area.

The Public Realm

3.2.15 Within the public realm the council will ensure that surviving original surfaces and street furniture are retained. Where new items are to be introduced – such as light fittings, bollards, paving etc. - they will be chosen or designed so that the unique character of the conservation area is preserved or enhanced. New road markings shall be kept to a minimum and, in the longer term, the council is committed to removing the existing standard yellow lines and replacing them with a narrower gauge line in paler 'primrose yellow', a permitted option in conservation areas.

3. Management Proposals



Picture 3.10 Traffic management features can sometimes distract the eye from the character of the conservation area. Where circumstances permit the council will minimise the prominence of posts, bollards and street markings

3.2.16 Whenever possible within the public realm other features such as bus stops or crossing points will be designed in such a way that alterations to kerb lines, surfacing materials and associated hardware will take account of the historic context in which they are located.



Picture 3.11 New surfacing in The Square

3.2.17 During the production of the current review document, additional standard yellow lines were painted at a number of road junctions contrary to the approach set out above. This was done so that the new lining was consistent in width and colour with the existing. In due course, as road surfaces are renewed, the new lines will be narrower and paler than the existing to reduce the impact of their presence.

3.2.18 Throughout the conservation area vigilance will be required to ensure that public spaces are not inadvertently harmed. This is because a number of utility companies, as well as the council, have development rights within the highway. Where works are to take place historic features in the public realm should be reinstated using materials to match the existing and retaining items of historic value. Utility companies should be aware of, or check for, the existence of planning constraints, such as the conservation area, prior to the commencement of works.

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Planning Policy Statement 1: Delivering Sustainable Development (2005), HMSO ⁽¹¹⁾

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Design and Access Statements, How to Read Write and Use Them (2006) CABE ⁽¹³⁾

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Milton Keynes Council Historic Environment Record: Various Texts

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8 Available to view at: http://www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts1990/Ukpga_19900009_en_1.htm

9 Available to view at: <http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/planningandbuilding/planningpolicyguidance8>

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Annex

A Short History of Wolverton Railway Town

In September 1830 The London & Birmingham Railway Company was established, employing father and son George and Robert Stephenson as engineers for a route between the two cities. As locomotives of the time could only travel for about 30 miles without overhaul, it was essential that an engineering works was established halfway along the route. A site in Wolverton parish, to the south of the proposed embankment and viaduct crossing the Great Ouse Valley was selected by Stephenson. The site had the benefits of good existing transport links plus it enabled six elements of the scheme to be built together – the viaduct/embankment, engineering works, a wharf, a temporary railway station, workers housing and a substantial water supply for the engines.

Parliamentary assent for the railway was given in 1833, with work starting in December 1834. The line finally opened to traffic in 1838. The temporary station was situated at the southern end of the embankment adjacent to the canal and had an inclined access road leading down to the turnpike road to the north of the site. Immediately east of the station was 'The Radcliffe Arms' erected on the site to serve the large number of navvies employed in the construction works. The architect George Aitchison designed the Engine Depot, a series of workshops surrounding an internal courtyard with three rail entrances. This lay west of the mainline on a site that sloped steeply down to the canal and was flanked by terraced workers housing, offices and a gas works. East of the mainline a large canal wharf building and a 'wharf' for road carriages were built.

In 1840 14 acres of land south of the Engine Depot was purchased from the Radcliffe Trustees for the construction of a much-needed permanent station, capable of handling the now larger trains. In addition the land was used for railway company terraced housing on the new roads of Creed Street, Bury Street, Ledsam Street and Glyn

Square and for the construction of a school, market hall, and reading room. Access to this new settlement was across the canal bridge on the west of the site. It was not until 1844 that Stratford Road was constructed providing more direct access from Stony Stratford.

The increased population put a strain on Holy Trinity Church, Old Wolverton. It was the Radcliffe Trustees' generosity that provided the site for the new church of St George the Martyr and its parsonage, both completed in 1844, with the railway company contributing part of an endowment to pay the Ministers salary.

The first locomotive was built on the site in 1845 and in the following year the LBRC amalgamated with two other railways to form the London & North Western Railway, leading to a significant increase in the amount of work undertaken at Wolverton. Site constraints meant that by the end of 1850 all the wharf buildings had been demolished to make way for the workshops now known as 'The Triangular Building'.

By 1854 the workforce had increased requiring more housing but the Radcliffe Trustees were unwilling to release any more land and the company resorted to purchasing land in the adjacent parish of Bradwell. Here the Company constructed 116 dwellings and a public house. Further negotiations with the Radcliffe Trustees concluded with the 1858/9 purchase of 20 acres of land north of Stratford Road. This enabled the Works to further expand westwards and it is probably at this time that most of the original 1830s workers housing north of Stratford Road was demolished.

Radcliffe Street and Church Street were laid out south of Stratford Road in 1860, with plots of various sizes sold by the Railway Company. Many of these were developed for commercial and retail purposes and it is at this stage that the settlement became a town. By 1864 there was a hairdresser, chemist, milliner, draper, grocer & tea dealer, hotel, china dealer, clothier and public house in Stratford Road; and a grocer, hotel, butcher, tailor

and shoe warehouse in Church Street. This growth of the commercial sector in Wolverton was unplanned and was driven purely by the success of the station and the demands of the growing working population.

In 1862 the Works lost its independence and came under the control of the main railway works at Crewe. In 1865 the carriage department at Saltley, Birmingham was transferred to Wolverton. Contemporary with this was the construction of a second railway bridge over the canal to make access to the western area of the depot easier. Also an additional 20 acres of land was purchased for the future expansion of the Works. More staff arrived in 1870 when the paint and trimming shops were relocated from London. In 1877 the manufacture and repair of locomotives ceased and the redundant locomotive workshops were converted to carriage production. For the next 25 years large carriage workshops linked to a central spine of tracks and traversers continued to be built as the site expanded westwards. In 1898 the last piece of railway workshop land was purchased and in 1902 the last large railway workshop, the New Paint Shop, erected.

The development of Works buildings on both sides of the main line restricted the expansion of the line to accommodate more traffic. Rather than demolish the buildings it was decided to re-route the line to the east. This involved the construction of a new bridge across the canal, new roads and a new larger station. Planning started in 1878 and work was completed by 1882. The newly isolated area of land between the old and new lines to the north of the canal was used for the construction of a sports ground which was opened in 1885, and a gas works supplying Wolverton town and all stations between Euston and Stafford. The distinctive 12-foot high brick perimeter wall isolating the Works from the town was also constructed at this time.

Although the Works was still the principal employer in the town it was not the sole major employer. In the 1870's Sir Richard Moon, chairman of the L&NWR suggested to George McCorquodale that a printing works would provide much needed work

for the daughters of railway employees. McCorquodale's Registered Envelope Factory was opened in 1878 and was an immediate success, later diversifying into printing books, forms and commercial stationery.

Until 1890 the housing demands were met by the L&NWR land purchased in 1858 and 1866. The roads were set out by the railway company with rear access lanes provided for coal deliveries and the use of night soil carts to empty earth closets at the end of the 'rear-addition' of most houses. Some plots were sold to individuals but many were sold to small building firms who erected houses for sale or as investments to let. These houses fronted directly onto the street and formed a similar pattern of two storey brick houses with slated roofs. The work of the different builders can be recognised by the different styles of window and door detailing. In 1878 the railway company built 53 terraced houses in Buckingham Street following the format of the other houses built at that time. This was the last major railway housing development in the town apart from three houses for management staff built in the 1890's. The Congregational Church purchased a large plot on the south side of The Square in 1878 but it was not until the late 1880's that shops and houses were built around the remainder of The Square.

The period between 1890 and the beginning of WWI was characterised by considerable growth and prosperity, during which the town more than doubled in size. More land was purchased by the railway company in 1892, 1896 and 1904. Parallel new 'by-law' roads were constructed and the land sold to small builders and individuals. During this period houses were set back from the road to create small front gardens.

With the growth of the town came a significant increase in the number of schoolchildren. The railway company with the assistance of Radcliffe Trust built an elementary school for boys in Church Street which was opened in 1896. A scheme for secondary education was prepared in 1901 which led to the establishment of Wolverton County Day School. The school ran classes at the Science & Arts Institute until a new building in Moon Street

was opened in 1906. Contemporary with this was the construction of the County Council Elementary School for infants and girls in Aylesbury Street.

The 1920's were a period of inflation and unemployment in Wolverton, as elsewhere. The Works fared badly under the 1921 Railways Act as control was transferred from Euston to Derby, where the management favoured former depots of the Midland Railway network. All apprentices who had completed their training after 1914 were dismissed reducing the workforce from 4,600 to 3,500. Some were re-employed in 1924/5 but the Works was placed on short time. A normal working week was restored in April 1926, however the reintroduction of short time was threatened shortly after. In May 1926 the majority of the Works staff joined the General Strike.

The 1926 construction of an office building on Stratford Road for McCorquodales heralded an improvement in the economy of the town. In 1928 the construction of housing in Stacey Avenue ended more than a decade of house-building inactivity. This was followed by additional housing in Gloucester Road, Marina Drive and Windsor Street. The 1930's saw some closures at the Works, with the loss of the laundry, rolling mill and forge. Never again would the Works employ as many staff as they did immediately before WWI.

During WWII both the Works and the town escaped bomb damage. Ordinary carriage construction ceased, being replaced by war effort works including the construction of special carriages, armoured vehicles, Horsa Gliders, and assault boats. Many of the Works buildings were camouflaged to make them look like terraced housing and it was probably the Wolverton Works platoon that constructed the two pill boxes in the garden wall of St Francis de Sales Church close to the Works entrance. On cessation of hostilities the Works returned to Carriage construction and 59 much-needed additional houses were constructed on Furze Way.

Threatened by closure in 1962 the Works survived, only to be relegated to a repair centre by the Beeching report of 1963, leading to the loss of 2000 jobs. At this time a new industrial estate had

begun development on the Old Wolverton Road with plastics firm R. Daleman opening the first factory in 1962. Shortly after this Wolverton Urban District Council began the clearance of all the 1840 railway housing in Creed Street, Ledsam Street, Young Street and Glyn Square which were replaced with flats, and retail units in 1965. With the closure of Wolverton Goods Yard in 1966 all rail traffic ceased on the Wolverton to Newport Pagnell branch line.

The 1970's saw the Works become part of British Rail Engineering and in 1986 part of the British Rail Maintenance Group. Milton Keynes Development Corporation's construction of the Agora shopping centre to improve the facilities of the town proved controversial and did not achieve the desired effects. With the development of Milton Keynes New Town, Wolverton lost the majority of the surrounding agricultural and allotment land to housing development. The 1990's development of the Tesco Supermarket resulted in the destruction of the original 1830's Aitchison Engine Depot and created a new retail centre to the north of Stratford Road. The reduction of maintenance work has led to a number of railway workshops becoming redundant and at the time of writing both the Triangular Building and Royal Train shed are being converted into flats.

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