

PLANNING CONTROL

Document Title: Edgbaston Conservation Area
Character Appraisal



*“Securing a **Better** environment for all the people of **Birmingham**”*

INTRODUCTION

The 1990 Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act defines a conservation area as ".....an area of architectural or historic interest the character and appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance" The act places a duty on local authorities to designate conservation areas where appropriate and from time to time to review the extent of conservation area designation within their districts. It also requires the local authority to formulate and publish proposals for the preservation and enhancement of these areas.

This appraisal of Edgbaston Conservation Area has been prepared according to English Heritage guidelines. It is intended as a guide upon which to base the form and style of future development in the area. The document aims to identify the special interest of the conservation area, to give a definition of its character and to outline proposals for enhancement. It has been produced in three volumes; the first contains the general appraisal of the conservation area, the second detailed street descriptions and the third the landscape survey of Edgbaston Conservation Area commissioned by the City Council, and completed by the Warwickshire Gardens Trust in September 1997.

The Edgbaston Conservation Area Character Appraisal has the status of Supplementary Planning Guidance and was subject to public consultation during May 1998. The character appraisal was approved by Planning Committee on 3rd December 1998.

Edgbaston Conservation Area was designated in September 1975, extended in December 1984 and again in September and December 1992. The conservation area is bounded by Harborne Road, the northern part of Highfield Road and Hagley Road to the north and Bristol Road to the south. On the east the boundary runs from Harborne Road across Calthorpe Road to St. James Road then along the rear of the properties on the east side of Frederick Road behind Calthorpe Mansions onto Calthorpe Road. From here it runs south along Islington Row and Islington Row Middleway, west of Lee Crescent Conservation Area and Ryland Road Conservation Area onto Charlotte Road, then along Wellington Road onto Bristol Road. To the west the conservation area boundary follows a line from Hagley Road along Chad Road, Richmond Hill Road and Pritchatt's Road, taking in a number of properties on the western sides of these roads, as far as the Worcester and Birmingham Canal where it cuts across the campus of the University of Birmingham to Edgbaston Park Road and from there runs onto the Bristol Road (see Map 1). The Edgbaston Conservation Area lies one and a half kilometres south-west of Birmingham City Centre and covers 396.22 hectares. It is contained within Edgbaston Ward in Birmingham's Edgbaston Constituency.

Geology and Topography

Edgbaston Conservation Area lies on a low but quite distinct ridge of Keuper Sandstone which runs from Northfield in the south of Birmingham to Sutton Coldfield in the north. The so-called Birmingham Fault passes through the extreme south of the conservation area, roughly parallel with the Bristol Road. This separates the Keuper Sandstone of the ridge from the lower lying Keuper Marl of the Rea Valley floor. Both Keuper Sandstone and Keuper Marl belong to the Triassic period of geological formation. Keuper Sandstone in particular yields a fertile loamy soil.

The conservation area lies on the lee of a south-east facing slope between Hagley Road in the north and Bristol Road in the south. Hagley Road runs along a flat ridge at the height of the slope. In the west of the area the valley of the Chad Brook crosses in a south-easterly direction emphasising a small ridge which runs southwards from Hagley Road to the junction of Church Road and Priory Road and on which Edgbaston Hall and St Bartholomew's Church stand.

Archaeology

The Sites and Monuments Record for Birmingham lists a number of sites in Edgbaston Conservation Area which are of archaeological significance (see Appendix III). These range from Roman sites and finds through mediaeval and post-mediaeval landscape features to the remains left by industry and transport.

The Roman road from Alcester to Wall, known as Ryknield or Icknield Street, must have passed through Edgbaston for Metchley Fort, Birmingham's principal Roman site, lies just south-west of the conservation area. There are two theories as to the route the road took. The first assumes a continuation of the known line from Stirchley to the south-west of Edgbaston. This enters the conservation area across the Worcester and Birmingham Canal above Pritchatt's Road, runs west of the junction of Somerset and Farquhar Road and continues towards Harborne Road. The line then crosses Chad Road and Vicarage Road onto Hagley Road and beyond the conservation area. There is some archaeological evidence to support this theory - Roman road finds in the vicinity of Chad Road, (SMR nos. 20410-3), traces of a gravel roadway found in Farquhar Road in 1955 (SMR no. 20267) and surviving boundaries in the playing fields alongside Richmond Hill Road and towards Harborne Road.

The alternative theory assumes a change of direction in Selly Park below the conservation area to make a straight line with the known alignment of Icknield Street through Sutton Park in the north of Birmingham. This route would cross the site of Edgbaston Pool, run through the site of St Bartholomew's Church and then follow the line of Wheeley's Road crossing the conservation area boundary on Islington Row Middleway. Apart from the lack of any firm archaeological evidence to support this theory it takes no account of the position of Metchley Fort and the important part it must have played in determining the evolution of the Roman road network in the Birmingham area.

Edgbaston Park lies between Priory Road and Edgbaston Park Road in the south-west of the conservation area and is now used as a golf course. Below and to the west of Edgbaston Hall, which stands in the northern tip of the park and is now the golf course clubhouse, there are remnants of ridge and furrow (SMR no. 20394), their shape and size indicating a mediaeval origin and, to the east of these, a series of lynchets (ridges resulting from the movement of soil down a slope caused by ploughing) (SMR no. 20395) probably of a similar date. Early map evidence shows a number of fishponds or stews (SMR no. 20396) along the eastern boundary of the park. The outlines of these are visible in the modern landscape and, together with Edgbaston Pool to the west (SMR no. 20590) they are again probably mediaeval in origin.

The landscape of Edgbaston Park itself (SMR no. 03951) dates largely from the late eighteenth century. There are however indications of an earlier planned landscape surrounding the Hall, probably that depicted in Beighton's view of Edgbaston Hall first published in 1730 (see fig). The ha-ha (SMR no. 03951) shown to the west of the building can still be seen, although it is now somewhat eroded, to the north-west there are the remains of a kitchen garden (SMR no. 20399), while a significant depression to the south-east contains earthworks (SMR no. 20398) which are all that remains of the sunken parterre in the foreground of the engraving.

The line of the ancient road from Birmingham to Bromsgrove and Worcester, turnpiked in 1726, runs south-west through the south of Edgbaston Park from Priory Road to Bristol Road; part of a holloway (SMR no. 20043) is still visible to the north-east of 261 Bristol Road. An historic landscape feature of uncertain date lies behind 14-70 Sir Harry's Road. Map evidence indicates that this was at first a clay pit, later used as an osier bed before being enlarged and converted to form a garden feature in the nineteenth century (SMR no. 02979).

There is evidence for one or possibly two watermill sites within the conservation area. The remains of Over Mill (SMR no. 03041), possibly used as a fulling mill in the sixteenth century but converted to blade grinding mill in the early seventeenth to support Birmingham's growing edge tool industry, can be seen at the southern end of Edgbaston Pool above the Bristol Road. The foundations of the mill and millhouse are still visible. The mill pool, now silted up, lies below the dam of Edgbaston Pool and the remnants of the tail race channel follow the line of Chad Brook south beyond the conservation area boundary. A grinding stone found in Chad Brook where it runs through allotment gardens east of Richmond Hill Road together with the old name Grindlestone Lane for that part of the modern Hagley Road may indicate that the so-called Grindlestone or Grindstone Mill (SMR no. 20036) otherwise known as Chad Mill, stood somewhere in this area.

Development History

Domesday Book to 1717

The first reference to Edgbaston (Celboldestone) occurs in the Domesday Book where it is recorded among the lands awarded after the Conquest to William Fitz-Ansculf, the first Lord of Dudley. The Manor was held by the de Edgbaston's up to the end of the fourteenth century when it became the property of the Middlemore family through the marriage of Isobel, the only child of Richard of Edgbaston, to Thomas Middlemore, a London merchant.

The last of the male line of the Middlemores of Edgbaston died in 1660 and in 1663 Mary, the sole heiress to their property, was married to Sir John Gage of Fyrlle in Sussex. On Mary's death the property was divided between her two surviving children, Bridget Lady Fauconberg, wife of Thomas, Viscount Fauconberg and Dame Mary Shelley, wife of Sir John Shelley. The Edgbaston estate passed to Bridget and in 1717 was sold to Richard Gough. It has remained the property of the Gough family to the present day.

Two plans of Edgbaston survive from this period. The first, by William Deeley, dates from 1701 and shows the Middlemore property, the second, by Humphrey Sparry, dates from 1718 and records the whole of Edgbaston Parish. Both plans show a landscape of irregular fields enclosed by hedgerows and of narrow winding roads, but without the quantity of woodland and wasteland typical of the Arden landscapes of North Worcestershire and Warwickshire. The concentration of large fields around St. Bartholomew's Church is interesting and, together with the remains of ridge and furrow below Edgbaston Hall, may indicate the presence of an earlier open field system but there is at present no other evidence for this. Settlement is dispersed among isolated farms or in hamlets. The most significant buildings are Edgbaston Hall and St Bartholomew's Church (see Appendix V). These might once have formed the focus of a larger settlement although again no evidence for this has yet been discovered.

1717 - 1810

Born in 1659, the second son of a Staffordshire gentry family, Sir Richard Gough made his fortune as a merchant. He became a director of the East India Company in 1715 and was knighted in the same year. He bought the Edgbaston estate on his retirement from trade in 1717, rebuilt Edgbaston Hall and in 1719 laid out the surrounding fields as a deer park.

On Sir Richard's death in 1727 he was succeeded by his eldest son Henry who was made a baronet in 1728. This first Sir Henry married Barbara Calthorpe, heiress to estates in Norfolk, Suffolk, Wiltshire and Hampshire. The second Sir Henry, Barbara's son, inherited these estates in 1788, becoming Sir Henry Gough-Calthorpe and, on his ennoblement in 1796, the first Lord Calthorpe. He left Edgbaston in 1783 on his marriage to Frances Carpenter and Edgbaston Hall has since been let to a succession of tenants.

Sir Henry's marriage settlement in 1783 gave life tenants of the estate the power to grant building leases, a right confirmed in his will, so that it was clearly the family's intention to

allow Edgbaston's development as a building estate. The first building lease was granted in 1786 on land at Five Ways and was followed by several others. The outbreak of the French Wars in 1793 however, and the consequent slump in the building trade, delayed any further development until, from about 1809, the local economy began to recover.

Edgbaston changed very little during the eighteenth century. The landscape around Edgbaston Hall, laid out as a deer park about 1719, was redesigned after the style of Capability Brown in the late 1770s. The large fields shown surrounding the hall and the church on the two early eighteenth century plans were taken into the park or sub-divided into smaller plots. About 1772 the route of the Birmingham to Bristol turnpike road was altered to run along the line of the present Bristol Road directly from the town centre to join the old road at a point near the present junction with Edgbaston Park Road. It replaced part of the ancient route to Worcester, turnpiked in 1726, which ran south west from the boundary with Birmingham Parish along Wheeley's Lane (now Road) past St. Bartholomew's Church, along part of what is now Priory Road and through Edgbaston Park.

At the end of the century building development began at Five Ways between what are now Hagley and Harborne Roads. The most radical change in the landscape however, came with the passing of an Act of Parliament in 1791 for the construction of a canal from Birmingham to Worcester. The only direct route was through the centre of Edgbaston but Sir Henry Gough-Calthorpe managed nonetheless to protect the quality of his estate by ensuring that the Act forbade the erection of any industrial buildings alongside the canal as it passed through Calthorpe land.

1810-1945

George, the third Lord Calthorpe, succeeded to the title in 1807 and from 1810, with his agent John Harris, undertook the deliberate development of the Edgbaston property as a high-class residential estate. Edgbaston was ideally located for the pursuance of such a scheme. Situated on the south-west periphery of Birmingham it was readily accessible yet removed from the industry concentrated towards the north of the town. The area was well drained with a good supply of water, the prevailing winds blew smoke and other pollution back north and north-eastwards and its warm south-facing slopes offered clean air and fine views.

Lord Calthorpe and his agent aimed to attract the elite of Birmingham to Edgbaston - prosperous businessmen most of whom had made their money in the town's manufacturing trades and who wished to provide themselves with a substantial house and garden in a quasi-rural setting. From its inception therefore the quality of the estate was rigorously safeguarded. Speculative building of the type common elsewhere in the town was discouraged and building plots were let on detailed and restrictive leases which prohibited industrial or commercial development - nursery or horticultural gardens were the one commercial activity allowed on the estate.

Artisan housing was confined to a small area south of the Birmingham and Worcester Canal on the boundary with Birmingham Parish. The establishment of churches, schools and other institutions within the estate was encouraged however, as part of a deliberate policy to enhance its standing. Land was given for St George's Church in 1833 and for St. James' Church in 1852 and leased to the school for the Deaf and Dumb in 1814, the Botanical

Gardens in 1831 and the Institution for the Blind in 1851. In 1875, Edgbaston High School for Girls was established in premises on the junction between Hagley and Harborne Roads.

Development began in the north-east of the estate south of the Hagley Road and to the north of the Bristol Road. Agricultural tenants here were moved to holdings elsewhere on the property, roads were cut and building plots laid out across the fields. In the fifteen years from 1810 to 1825 Calthorpe, Frederick and George Roads were cut from Five Ways and Islington Row and Wellington Road was laid out north of the Bristol Road. Sir Harry's Road, cut in the eighteenth century, probably to link Edgbaston Church and Hall to the Bristol turnpike road was laid out for building at the same time. Church Road, incorporating a treelined landscape feature associated with Edgbaston Hall and dating at least from the late seventeenth century, was cut to meet Calthorpe Road at the canal. The Calthorpes extended their Edgbaston estate throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Their most important purchase in the early nineteenth century was the Curzon property south of the Hagley Road and lying roughly between Highfield and Chad Roads down to the line of Westbourne Road. This area was fully laid out for development by 1838.

Up to the 1840s development on the estate mirrored the peaks and troughs of the local economy but was relatively slow overall. When Edgbaston was taken into Birmingham in 1838, despite the best efforts of Lord Calthorpe and his agent, it still contained half the undeveloped land in the borough. From the 1840s through to the 1880s however the building plots on the earlier streets were filled up and development on the estate extended steadily westwards. Old roads, Wheeley's Lane and Ampton Road for example were widened and paved and new roads such as Charlotte Road and Carpenter Road were cut, so that by 1880 the street pattern was all but complete. The steady growth of the Calthorpe building estate during these years reflected a period of rising prosperity in the Birmingham trades. Wealthy manufacturers sought to escape the noise and smoke of the industrial quarters in the rural tranquillity of the growing suburbs. Many chose to move to Edgbaston.

Improved transport provision made the Edgbaston estate increasingly accessible. In 1840 those living locally were exempted from the payment of turnpike tolls at Five Ways and by the middle of the decade regular omnibus services ran through the district. Railway stations were opened in 1854 on Monument Road, (outside the present conservation area), in 1876 on Church Road and on Somerset Road and in 1885 at Five Ways. As with the canal in the 1790s no industrial buildings were allowed along the railway line.

In the early 1880s the mid-century boom, which had risen to a peak in the 1870s, collapsed, heralding a period of decline for the Calthorpe estate. For while in Birmingham as a whole the depression was short-lived and residential building activity was soon vigorously resumed, it was largely concentrated in the expanding outer suburbs. Edgbaston was surrounded by dense suburban development as the city, spreading outwards to Harborne and Bearwood, closed around it. This, and the resulting rise in commuter traffic through the estate, which the Calthorpes were unable to prevent or control, did much to reduce its rural aspect and tranquil atmosphere. The more prosperous manufacturers now preferred to live beyond the spreading suburbs on their own small estate or where there was no ground landlord to impose constraints on the size, development or use of their property. Some moved out of the city altogether, to Sutton Coldfield for example, or to Solihull.

The Calthorpe Estate nonetheless continued its plans for expansion, including, in 1899, a scheme to develop Edgbaston Park, later abandoned. In 1900 land was given for the University of Birmingham, partly in the hope that an area of ground previously inaccessible, would thereby be opened for building. By 1918 however, a large part of the estate was still undeveloped and Edgbaston's population, in contrast to other city suburbs, had declined. In addition from 1910 the early leases began to expire and a particular problem arose in the north-east corner of the estate where, because of their proximity to the city centre, the properties, many of them out of repair, proved impossible to relet as high quality residences. The Calthorpes though, were unable to lease the land for commercial development because of resistance from residents elsewhere on the estate who wished to retain its residential exclusivity. This problem was overcome to some extent by the sale of land at Five Ways to the Council in 1914. Similarly in 1918 an area below the Birmingham and Worcester Canal towards the Bristol Road was sold, land which had earlier been set aside and developed as an artisan quarter and which would have proved costly to the estate on reversion.

In 1910 meanwhile the descent of the estate through the male line had ended with the death of Augustus, the sixth Lord Calthorpe. Edgbaston passed to Rachel, his eldest daughter who had married Fitzroy Lloyd - Anstruther in 1908. The family name was changed to Anstruther-Gough-Calthorpe and remains such today.

There was little demolition and rebuilding on the Calthorpe Estate between the wars despite the large number of leases which expired during the period. This may have been due, in part at least, to the much shorter terms at which properties were relet. During the 1930s two rows of shops were built, the first allowed on the building estate, one on Islington Row, the other on Bristol Road and some blocks of mansion flats, again on the periphery of the estate, on Islington Row, Calthorpe Road and Frederick Road, George Road, Bristol Road and Hagley Road.

The sale of land, begun in 1914, continued and, during the 1930s especially, large tracts of land were sold on the south side of the estate. The buyers included the University of Birmingham, the Queen Elizabeth Medical Centre and the Schools of King Edward VI. The sales continued after the Second World War and throughout the 1950s and 1960s further reducing the size of the Calthorpe landholding in Birmingham.

1945 to the Present Day

In 1947 Birmingham began the preparation of a development plan, required by the Town and Country Planning Act which had been passed that same year. Although it was faced with both a growing demand for housing and a shortage of building land within the inner city the Council recognised the amenity value of Edgbaston as a green oasis close to the city centre. The Calthorpe building estate was therefore spared the high density redevelopment carried out in other areas such as Highgate, Lea Bank and Nechells. In fact, in 1950, the Council asked the estate to prepare its own development plan, which was drawn up in outline by the Bournville Village Trust and approved by the City in 1955. One hundred acres of land on the fringes of the Calthorpe property were sold to the Council for redevelopment with municipal housing while the minimum population density for the remainder of the estate was set at thirty people or nine houses an acre. In 1957 the architect John Madin was

appointed to prepare detailed proposals for redevelopment which would meet the Council's population density requirements, while at the same time preserving the character of the area.

Clearly, redevelopment at nine houses to the acre would have used up all the open space within the estate and destroyed its distinctive character completely. Madin therefore proposed to rebuild at varying densities with a mixture of houses, low rise flats of three or four storeys and high rise flats of eight to seventeen storeys. He planned to set these new buildings within existing landscapes wherever possible to achieve the least destruction of the tree cover and to open these sites to public view. The north east corner of the estate was designated a business area to relieve the pressure on office space within the city centre. Some of the properties here had in any case been converted to office use largely because of bomb damage to city centre premises during the War and two office blocks had already been built. Part of Harborne Road, contiguous with the business zone, was additionally set aside for the establishment of medical consulting rooms, again continuing a process which had already begun.

Two neighbourhood shopping centres were planned, one in the so-called eastern heart of the estate at the junction of Wheeley's and Carpenter Roads, the other in the western heart near the junction at the bottom of Chad Road, where playing fields were to act as a village green or focus for the local community. The whole redevelopment programme was to have been completed by the year 2000 (see fig).

The City approved Madin's plan in 1958 and the Artizans and General Property Company Ltd., with Sir Richard Anstruther-Gough-Calthorpe Bart. as Chairman, was established to carry out the proposed residential development. The leasehold ownership of the estate meant that redevelopment would necessarily be piecemeal as property could only be re-acquired as leases expired. Richmond Hill Road for example, on the western boundary of the present conservation area, was one of the first areas in which Madin's proposals were carried out as the large mid-Victorian properties there reverted to the estate in the early 1960s. The high rise flats which replaced these substantial dwelling houses proved unpopular with purchasers so, after 1964, no more were built.

The 1967 Leasehold Reform Act, which allowed certain categories of occupiers to buy the freeholds of their properties, had obvious implications for the execution of the Madin Plan. The Calthorpe Estate foresaw difficulties in carrying through the scheme and some areas previously set aside for mixed development were leased to private contractors and built up with small uniform houses, resulting in a greater loss of tree cover and open space than Madin had intended. Freehold ownership however does encourage the refurbishment of many of the older properties and the estate still exercises some control over development through the Calthorpe Management Plan, approved by the High Court in July 1974. The Madin Plan itself has now been superseded by later planning guidance and planning policy, more particularly the Birmingham Plan, adopted by the City Council in July 1993.

The establishment of educational and medical institutions on the Calthorpe estate has always been encouraged, especially perhaps during the post-war period when many of the large nineteenth century dwelling houses proved difficult to let to residential occupants. As the result of a development policy instigated in 1967 Westbourne Road is now almost wholly occupied by educational establishments, including the Westbourne Training College, now part of the University of Central England, built on the former site of five large detached villa residences.

Educational and medical use, together with the commercial usage allowed within the designated business zone has considerably diminished the original residential character of the estate although school grounds and playing fields have done much to preserve the green spaces and open views which have always been such a feature of Edgbaston.

In 1975, after extensive consultation, the Council designated a conservation area in Edgbaston. The designation included much of the nineteenth century residential development on the Calthorpe building estate and was considered to have 'crystallised the essential vernacular of Edgbaston without producing an area too extensive to administer'. The conservation area was extended in 1984 and twice again in 1992 (see Appendix VI) either to preserve its setting, to rationalise its boundary or to include and protect characteristic buildings and landscapes which had previously been excluded. It is the largest conservation area in the city of Birmingham.

Significance In The National Context

The early nineteenth century saw the beginnings of true suburban development as a means of escape - for those who could afford it - from the close and squalid conditions of much of the urban environment. Early suburbia was in essence an idealised return to country living, to pure air and green and open surroundings. Thus from Regent's Park at the opening of the century to the Garden City Movement at its close the defining characteristic of the suburb was the relationship between house and garden and of both with the wider landscape beyond.

Most nineteenth century suburban developments comparable with the Calthorpe Estate in Edgbaston, Princes Park in Liverpool, designed by Paxton in 1842, for example, or Bedford Park in London, designed during the 1880s by Norman Shaw and other London architects, were more rigorously planned and developed over a shorter period. Despite the piecemeal and chronologically extended development of the Edgbaston estate however, the strict and deliberate control exercised by successive generations of a single landowning family has ensured first the creation and then the preservation of the area's green, spacious and essentially suburban exclusivity. Its quasi-rural character was clearly defined by the 1840s well before the advent of the railways and other forms of public and private transport brought about the great suburban expansion of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Built up according to a consistent policy from 1810, its beginnings contemporary with the highly influential Regent's Park designed by John Nash and laid out from 1811, the Calthorpe Estate can be described as one of the earliest examples of planned suburban development in the country.

Significance in the local context

The long period of tightly controlled and consistent development which distinguishes the Calthorpe Estate and its almost exclusively residential character make it unique in Birmingham. Other eighteenth and nineteenth century building estates within the town, those which belonged to the Colmore and Gooch families around the present city centre or that of the Holte family at Aston, were all sooner or later taken up by industry and commerce and the speculative development of close and crowded workers' housing. Other residential estates such as the Four Oaks Estate in Sutton Coldfield, developed along similar lines to that of the Calthorpe's from the late nineteenth century, are much smaller in size and have neither the range of building styles nor the variety of landscapes which are to be found in Edgbaston.

Townscape Character

Edgbaston Conservation Area is characteristically green, exclusive and suburban, the nature of its development primarily, though not now wholly, residential. There are however certain shifts in the physical pattern of the area as it extends from its north-eastern limit at Five Ways near to the city centre towards the boundaries on its west and south west. Some of these differences are quite clearly part of the general plan for the residential estate but others are the result of its extended period of development and hence its prolonged exposure to varying socio-economic conditions and to changing fashions in urban and building design.

Building Types

The long period over which the Calthorpe's Edgbaston estate was developed has resulted in a great diversity of building styles and scales within the area although the range of building types is relatively narrow. The conservation area covers the heart of the residential estate, including what remains of the exclusive nineteenth century residential development, and thus contains examples of the work of many well known local architects. For most of the nineteenth century, up to 1875 when building plans registers are first available for Birmingham, house designs are difficult to attribute. Architects known to have worked in the area during this period include Thomas Fallows, Charles Edge, JJ Bateman, FW Fiddian and JH Chamberlain. Architects active during the later periods of development include Frederick Martin, WH Bidlake, Buckland and Farmer and John Madin. The conservation area has the highest number of statutorily listed buildings of any district in the city (see Appendix II (a)).

A small number of buildings predate the establishment of the building estate proper around 1810. The most obvious of these are St. Bartholomew's Church and Edgbaston Hall, both on Church Road but others include the former Masshouse Farm, now 6 Pritchatt's Road and, on Harborne Road, five tenements incorporated nowadays into the White Swan public house (see Appendix VI).

Residential Property

Dwelling houses within the conservation area are built in a range of architectural styles dating from the early nineteenth century to the late twentieth. The earliest are classical, detached and semi-detached, of brick or stucco with slate roofs. From the mid-nineteenth century onwards when JH Chamberlain built the Venetian Gothic Shenstone House (12 Ampton Road) styles and materials became more various and the conservation area now provides perhaps the most complete history of changing fashions in domestic architectural design in Birmingham.

During the twentieth century there has been a greater variety of residential property types. In 1905 the University of Birmingham built its first hall of residence, University House, on Edgbaston Park Road and in the 1930s blocks of mansion flats were constructed on the periphery of the building estate. Post war development includes tightly grouped blocks of flats such as those built on Vicarage Road in 1972 with their rows of lock-up garages, the high rise student accommodation built on the Vale during the 1960s and the cul de sac developments of four or more houses on plots once occupied by a single house which can be found throughout the conservation area.

Educational and other institutions

From its inception educational institutions were encouraged onto the building estate. The earliest, the Institution for the Deaf and Dumb, now Sense, opened on Calthorpe Road in 1814, has remained on the same building plot but redeveloped its property in 1958 so that none of the original building survives. Some schools such as the Church of England College for Girls on Church Road, established in 1886, and Holy Child School, established in 1910, on Sir Harry's Road, occupy what was originally residential property but have adapted these buildings and surrounded them with purpose-built classroom blocks and gymnasias. The University of Birmingham occupies several large properties which were built as dwelling houses including Winterbourne on Edgbaston Park Road, now the School of Continuing Studies. Below Winterbourne lie the two schools of King Edward VI designed by Holland Hobbiss, begun in 1938 and completed over the years up to 1952. Hospital property in the conservation area includes the Nuffield Hospital on Somerset Road, which occupies an early twentieth century dwelling house, altered and extended, and the Priory Hospital on Priory Road, largely purpose built.

Office and Commercial Property

Office accommodation within the conservation area is again a mixture of old and new. The designation of a business zone in the north-east of the estate has led to some of the earliest properties now included within the conservation area being converted to office use. Most have been extended and many now share their plot with much later development. Gardens have usually made way for parking space. Where a plot or more generally plots have been entirely redeveloped as office accommodation, buildings can vary in style and scale from St. James' House on Frederick Road, built in 1957 and designed to match the scale of the surrounding property, to Royston House on George Road, built in 1962 and developed across a number of narrow house plots, and again to Belmont House at the apex of Vicarage and Chad Roads, built in 1976 on the site of two dwelling houses and set carefully within what survives of their gardens. The few retail premises within the conservation area are integrated with twentieth century residential development, on Islington Row and Calthorpe Road, in Templefield Square off Wheeley's Road and on Bristol Road.

Places of Worship

There are three Anglican churches in the conservation area. St. Bartholomew's, on Church Road, is a mediaeval foundation, originally a chapel of ease of Harborne Church. Its fabric though dates largely from the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries. St. George's, on Church Road, was built in 1836 and twice enlarged, in 1856 and then in 1885. St James', on Elvetham Road, designed by SS Teulon, was constructed in 1852. The Friends Meeting House on George Road was erected in 1893 to replace an earlier building on Bath Row.

Street pattern and streetscape

In the north-east corner of the conservation area, part of the first phase of building development after 1810, the plan is essentially urban. In fact one of the surviving designs for the area shows the streets laid out around a partial square with a building, probably intended as a church, in the centre. Apart from a short length of the old road north from

St. Bartholomew's Church (incorporated into Calthorpe Road) there were no existing lanes or footpaths here which could be widened or extended nor were there any property boundaries to follow. The new roads were cut straight across the fields above the Worcester Canal from Five Ways and from Islington Row; Calthorpe Road to join the old road north, Frederick and George Roads to end at Calthorpe Fields and Cross Road, now St. James' Road, from the canal to Calthorpe Road. The regularity of the grid pattern thus formed made it easy to lay out the new streets in building plots. So, while the width of the roads, the garden plots at the front of the houses and above all the tree cover give an undeniably suburban feel to this area, the street pattern looks back towards the formal town plans of the eighteenth century.

Another feature places the townscape here in an eighteenth century context. The streets in this part of the conservation area were lined with trees when first laid out. This must have narrowed and concentrated the vistas along their lengths effectively separating the dwelling houses behind their railed-off front plots from the streetscape and giving the roads the appearance of avenues or walks. While Calthorpe Road leads farther into the building estate, Frederick and George Roads run down into Calthorpe Fields, once a series of paddocks formed at the same time as the roads were laid out by dividing up the remaining south sloping farmland between the canal and Calthorpe Road. The avenue or walk terminating in a green and open space belongs to the eighteenth century urban plan rather than to nineteenth century suburbia.

Elsewhere in the conservation area the townscape conforms more closely to the nineteenth century ideal of the villa estate or 'rus in urbe' - the countryside within the town. The street pattern is irregular. As the estate was developed ancient lanes, field roads and footpaths were widened, straightened where necessary and laid out for building but still meandered through the landscape. Wheeley's Road for example, was part of the old Worcester to Birmingham Road before the new route was cut around 1772; Elvetham Road incorporates part of Speaking Stile Walk, a footpath which crossed over the fields from Birmingham to St. Bartholomew's Church and Harborne Road runs along the line of the former Long or Green Lane which led from Five Ways towards Harborne. New roads were cut either straight across the landscape like Yew Tree Road and Highfield Road, laid out in the 1830s or in a gentle curve like Carpenter Road, cut in the 1830s and 1840s.

Building plots vary in size, although as a general rule they get progressively larger as the townscape moves towards the heart of the building estate at Edgbaston Hall and Church and then westwards to the conservation area boundary. This was part of a deliberate policy and is illustrated particularly well by the range of plot sizes along Wellington Road, part of the same phase of development as Calthorpe, George and Frederick Roads and cut directly across the fields from the Bristol Road towards the Hall and Church. The plots at the bottom of this road on the eastern fringe of the building estate are comparatively small, about a quarter of an acre in extent, and built over with semi-detached dwelling houses while the large detached villas built towards the top of the road in the 1830s are in plots of an acre or more. Hallfield, built in 1828 for Thomas Messenger, a prosperous lamp manufacturer, now Holy Child School, lies just beyond Wellington Road between Sir Harry's and Priory Roads in a plot of sixteen acres, one of the largest on the building estate. Variations in plot size such as these and the subtle shifts in the building line throughout the area lend the townscape an attractive irregularity, vital to its semi-rural character.

The diversity too in the ways in which the buildings are set within their plots, their differing sizes, orientations, footprints and variety of architectural styles banish uniformity and successfully reinforce the rural feel.

The variety of boundary walls, railing and fences throughout the conservation area, against which trees and shrubs were traditionally planted and which divide the building plots from the street, is one of its most distinctive characteristics. The containment of the plots which results from this and the concomitant enclosure of the streetscape emphasises the separation between public and private space and contributes significantly to an air of exclusivity which, in Birmingham, is shared only by the Four Oaks Estate. In some cases earth is banked against the boundary walls so that the planting just inside the garden is raised, sometimes by as much as several feet above the street as, for example, in a number of properties on Harborne Road. Throughout the conservation area high garden walls in brick, stone or slag turn the corners from road to road.

In almost every case primary boundary gates have been removed or replaced but a considerable number of gate piers remain. These are especially characteristic of Edgbaston, the generosity of their proportions and the variety of their detailing adding to the grandeur of the area. Where they have been retained in sufficient numbers, as in Chad Road, they impart a rhythm to the street.

In contrast to the enclosure so essential to the character of pre-war development on the Calthorpe estate, post-war building follows a different tradition. Madin's designs and more particularly the cul-de-sac and other developments of the 1970s and 1980s scattered throughout the conservation area generally have front plots which are open to the street and which are often combined in a single lawn. Here the earlier characteristic separation between public and private space is at least compromised if not entirely lost.

Tree Cover

The tree cover in Edgbaston Conservation Area is perhaps its most definitive characteristic, drawing the diversity of building types and of architectural styles within its boundaries into a unified whole. The abundance of its tree cover also serves to distinguish the area from the surrounding districts and in this context it is particularly evident when the conservation area is approached and entered from the north-east.

Except in the earliest phase of development within the Edgbaston estate trees were not generally planted in the street but were deliberately set in the front of the building plots, where these were large enough, often just behind the front boundary wall. On the fringes of the area therefore, especially its eastern edge where the boundary of the current conservation area runs along or against the major roads and where the original front plots tend to be shallower, few trees were set along the frontages. As development moved westwards however and towards Edgbaston Hall and Church, the building plots grew larger and trees were planted on the forecourts. Deciduous forest trees were usually chosen, chiefly beech and sweet chestnut which are well suited to the light free-draining soil of the area, although a variety of other large trees were planted including oak, lime, planes and Scots pines, these latter coniferous, but again forest trees suited to the local soil conditions. As they matured these large and stately trees enclosed the views along the streets, separating them from the house plots and lending the townscape that air of exclusivity which is so typical of the area. The verdant aspect created by this careful planting is enhanced by

the considerable variety of tree types established throughout the private gardens and other green spaces within the conservation area and by the range of hedging and specimen shrubs these contain.

Public Views

Public views within the conservation area heighten and sustain its characteristic air of exclusivity. Along the roadways the prospect is traditionally contained by trees. Where the roads are straight this enclosure narrows the vista and directs the eye into the distance creating a powerful sense of perspective. Where the roads curve their containment confers a sense of privacy and opulence. Since the tree cover which creates the enclosure is largely deciduous these roadway views change with the seasons. During the winter the diversity of building types and architectural styles within the area can be more readily appreciated as leaf loss broadens the street scene, although containment is often maintained at pavement level through the abundance of holly, laurel and other evergreen hedging planted on the property boundaries.

Post war redevelopment within the conservation area tends to break through the traditional enclosure and allows views from the street into once hidden private landscapes. In some cases this is carefully contrived, as in, for example, John Madin's sensitive designs which sought to retain as much of the original planting as possible on the redeveloped plots while opening them to public view. Elsewhere the open front greens and smaller and more closely built properties typical of post war urban design expose private space to the street.

The green spaciousness so characteristic of the conservation area is immediately apparent where, rarely, public views are allowed across open landscape. The most significant of these open views is gained from the Worcester and Birmingham Canal which runs through the conservation area and from the main railway line to Bristol and the south-west which runs beside it. Between Church Road and Somerset Road their route curves and rises, commanding a wide green view to the north over playing fields and tennis courts towards Edgbaston High School for Girls on Westbourne Road. During the winter when the trees along the route have shed their leaves there are views - which can only be glimpsed in the summer - into Westbourne Road Town Gardens and towards the properties on Farquhar Road and to the south into the Vale. Between Church Road and the conservation area boundary on Islington Row Middleway there is a narrower prospect across Calthorpe Fields towards Calthorpe Road and George and Frederick Roads. These open green views seen just before the canal and, more particularly nowadays, the railway approach the densely developed city centre have a visual impact which resonates beyond the conservation area boundary. The canal and the railway themselves are largely hidden from public view, passing through the conservation area in cuttings or along the valley floor, and so do not provide a significant visual reference.

The views north and north-east from the valley floor today provide the best demonstration of the function of the 'eyecatcher' plots laid out in the early years of estate development at the south end of George and Frederick Roads, on the west side of Church Road, the south side of Westbourne Road and on Sir Harry's Road, at Hallfield, now Holy Child School. High on the south and west facing slopes they were intended not only to command a view but to

provide one. Seen from a distance, the houses half-hidden among the trees which surrounded them, each formed a prospect, a view of sylvan rusticity to match the picturesque ideal of the villa estate.

Greater tree cover and the redevelopment of a number of the plots have tended to lessen the visual impact of these prospects since they were first conceived and laid out. The most significant of those on Church Road overlooking the Vale for example, have been redeveloped with student accommodation for the University of Birmingham, providing, where it can be seen from below, a different yet still characteristically exclusive prospect.

Landmarks within the conservation area are now provided by Eden Wing (High Hall), part of Chamberlain Halls, the student accommodation on Church Road, and Warwick Court, a block of flats on Arthur Road. Beyond the boundary the tower blocks of the city centre and the University clock tower provide visual references.

Private Views

There is a striking contrast between the characteristically secluded and generally enclosed atmosphere of the streets in the conservation area and the open and semi-pastoral aspect from the rear of many of the properties - essentially between what can be viewed publicly and what privately. The quasi-rural private impression is created by the extensive garden ground which traditionally lay behind the dwelling houses and is heightened where the houses stand on a slope or the gardens back onto open land; as in Farquhar Road where the properties look down across the gardens at the rear and over open ground towards the Chad Brook. Historically the Calthorpes protected the pastoral aspect by placing restrictions on building types, fencing and even cultivation within the gardens.

The best of these private views were originally gained from the 'eyecatcher' plots referred to above, which were purposely laid out to 'borrow' the landscape beyond, providing an extensive open prospect - from George and Frederick Roads over Calthorpe Fields to St. Bartholomew's Church, from Church Road over the Vale and to where the University now stands, from Westbourne Road over the Chad Valley and from Hallfield, high above the Bristol Road, across the Rea Valley. Even where the original dwelling houses have been replaced or surrounded by later and more extensive development these views can still be enjoyed. Although it predates the nineteenth century development of the Calthorpe estate Edgbaston Hall enjoys perhaps the best private prospect of all, over Edgbaston Park and Pool and across the valley of the Rea beyond the Bristol Road.

Open Space

The open green space around and beyond its buildings is one of the characteristics which most closely define Edgbaston Conservation Area yet it has no public open space aside from a small plot on Priory Road. Given the substantial private gardens within the area, the provision of land for public recreation here would have been considered unnecessary especially since it would have intruded on the carefully contrived exclusivity of the building estate. Two public parks in fact lie close to the southern boundary of the conservation area; Calthorpe Park on Pershore Road, given to the town by the Calthorpes and opened in 1857 and Cannon Hill Park on Edgbaston Road, given by Louisa Ryland in 1873.

The extensive tracts of open land contained within the conservation area boundary are now largely given over for use as sports grounds for private clubs such as the Edgbaston Priory Club off Sir Harry's Road and as playing fields such as those belonging to Hallfield School on Church Road which lie beside the railway line and extend as far as Westbourne Road Town Gardens. Edgbaston Hall and Park are occupied by Edgbaston Golf Club. On the south side of the canal the Vale now provides a parkland setting for student accommodation belonging to the University of Birmingham.

Private Gardens

Edgbaston Conservation Area contains the widest range of historic garden styles in Birmingham, the result of the long-standing and consistent policy of the Calthorpe family to develop their estate as an exclusive residential suburb.

Edgbaston Park, laid out in the eighteenth century landscape style, is the earliest example of garden design within the conservation area and predates the building estate. The earliest garden plans after 1810 are Regency, formal designs with geometrically shaped lawns bounded by symmetrical gravel paths. There is a range of Victorian garden styles, the gardenesque, in which winding paths lead up to a point of interest, a water feature or specimen shrub; the Elizabethan, with intricate parterres and the Italianate, laid out in symmetrical beds with urns or fountains at the junctions of the paths. Later in the period rock gardens became popular and from the 1880s gardens often had a tennis lawn.

From the late nineteenth century and into the twentieth houses built in the Arts and Crafts style had gardens which complemented their design and materials. The rear garden is often divided into a formal area and a wild garden planted with native species. There are two later common garden types, the design popular from the 1930s with 'Art Deco' features set within a formal layout of crazy-paved terraces and paths in stone or concrete and the open landscapes of the post-war period.

The conservation area contains two botanical gardens. The Birmingham Botanical Gardens, opened in 1832 are situated on Westbourne Road and overlook the Chad Valley. These are semi-private, open to the public on payment of a fee. The University's Botanical Gardens are located on Edgbaston Park Road at Winterbourne, built as a private house and garden in 1903 and taken over by the University in 1944. Westbourne Road Town Gardens, the earliest surviving allotment gardens in the city, laid out c.1844, lie beyond the Birmingham Botanical Gardens and fringe the railway line.

Edgbaston Park, the Birmingham Botanical Gardens and Westbourne Road Leisure Gardens are all listed in the English Heritage Register of Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest (see Appendix II (c)).

The diversity and historical significance of the gardens within Edgbaston Conservation Area make an important contribution to its character. Recognising an assessment of the survival and condition of the various designs to be essential in any study of the area the City Council commissioned a landscape survey which was undertaken by Warwickshire Gardens Trust and completed in September 1997. Although it can be used as an entirely separate document, the Edgbaston Conservation Area Historic Landscape Survey is intended to complement the conservation area appraisal.

Conservation Area Boundary and Setting

To the north-east and east from Five Ways down towards the Bristol Road the boundary of Edgbaston Conservation Area takes in what remains here of the residential properties on the Calthorpe building estate. In order to produce a logical boundary however, the designated area includes Lloyd's Bank, built in 1880 at 1 Calthorpe Road, Five Ways Station, re-opened in 1978 and Eanwulf, Leofric and Alfryth Courts, built in 1980, all on Islington Row Middleway. It then turns westwards to skirt two small contiguous conservation areas. Lee Crescent, a terrace of early Victorian houses, built on land belonging to Thomas Lee and designated in 1974 and Ryland Road, designated in 1969, the City's first conservation area, a group of modest mid-Victorian properties developed on land belonging to the Houghton family. The boundary then runs west of an estate of social housing and onto the Bristol Road, one of the original confines of the villa estate.

The western boundary of the conservation area from Bristol Road north to Hagley Road is drawn along Edgbaston Park Road, Pritchatt's Road, Richmond Hill Road and Chad Road to include characteristic properties in this area. Off Hagley Road, again one of the original limits of the residential estate, the boundary turns down Highfield Road and along Harborne Road to Calthorpe Road, excluding the post war high rise office blocks on the redeveloped plots around Five Ways.

To the north and east the conservation area is set against the office blocks and closely built housing which fringe the city centre, to the south and again to the north and east by major highways through the city. This setting amplifies the spacious exclusivity of the area, which forms a green enclave between the crowded city centre and the more densely developed suburbs beyond. Only to the west where the conservation area lies against the landscaped grounds of the University and the townscape of Harborne does its characteristic air of green spaciousness extend beyond the boundary. (See Appendix V).

Street Furniture, Paving and Highways

There are very few street trees in the conservation area; most of those planted in the early years of estate development have been removed, though a row of plane trees planted in the mid nineteenth century survives on Gough Road and a number of lime trees established in the 1920s still stand at the south end of George Road. Lighting standards vary; in some roads they date from the conversion of the city's street lamps to electricity in the early 1950s, in the culs de sac and areas of infill developed since the last war they are obviously later. Along other roads particularly on the fringes of the area, increased traffic has forced lighting replacement to a higher specification. A considerable number of cast-iron street signs remain and following an agreement made with Technical Services Committee in 1984 will be replaced, where necessary, to the same specification. A stone bollard of c1830 survives on the south-east corner of Frederick Road with St James' Road.

Footpaths and footway crossings throughout the area are tarmacadam with granite or sometimes concrete kerbstones. There are two proposed highway improvement lines within the conservation area.

- i) On Hagley Road - from Kenilworth Court on the corner with Chad Road to the north-west corner with Highfield Road
- ii) On Bristol Road - the south-east corner with Edgbaston Park Road

Loss, Attrition and Intrusion

There is a continuing loss of tree and shrub cover within the conservation area where plots are redeveloped and, particularly within the business zone, for car parking. Where cover is replaced there is a reluctance to plant the forest tree types and the large evergreen shrubs or hawthorn hedges characteristic of the area and ground cover plantings of shrubs and perennials, ornamental tree species and coloured conifers are preferred. There is also an increasing tendency to plant hedges of fast growing Leyland cypress which lack the form and texture characteristic of the traditional planting within the conservation area. Since the passing of the Leasehold Reform Act in 1967 moreover, the Calthorpe Estate has been unable to control tree care and planting to the same extent as previously. The abundance of its tree cover draws the variety of architectural design and of building types within the conservation area into a unified whole. Loss or attrition detract from this unity and the area loses coherence, its diversity becomes more apparent and it ceases to be distinct from the surrounding suburbs.

Post war fashions in urban design and increased pressure for car parking space have led to a considerable loss of boundary treatments within the area, including railings, walls, gate piers and gates. Reinstatements of the boundaries, where these are undertaken, are frequently inappropriate in form, scale and materials. The movement towards open frontages combined with the gradual erosion of the tree cover also leads to a loss of enclosure and thus of the barrier between private and public space, diluting the sense of exclusivity so characteristic of the area. The removal of entrance gates allows views into the building plots which not only compromises enclosure but, because of the manner in which the houses are traditionally set, places an inappropriate visual emphasis on coach houses, garages and other service or subsidiary buildings.

The green spaciousness of the conservation area is frequently compromised by the blurring of the original plot definitions, as, for example, in the post war cul de sac developments where several closely spaced houses occupy sites where formerly just one or two larger residences stood or where commercial property covers two or more of the original building plots. Where office or infill housing development occupies former garden ground and where the fringes of open spaces such as Calthorpe Fields have been built over the semi-pastoral aspect is diminished or lost.

The architectural detail and the materials of much of the later postwar speculative development within the conservation area lacks quality and interest in comparison with the earlier housing. This is particularly evident where a loss of tree cover reveals the often featureless roofscapes. Inappropriate additions and alterations to earlier properties are also evident where tree or shrub cover has been eroded or lost and this again detracts from the architectural quality of the area.

There is little intrusion by way of building scale or mass within the conservation area, although some office development in the north east appears out of scale where there is insufficient tree cover to draw it in. The commercial properties beyond the boundary here provide a startling contrast of scale especially when directly juxtaposed with the nineteenth century villa properties on the periphery of the conservation area. It could be argued however that such a contrast more clearly defines the area's boundary and signals its unusual proximity to the city centre.

Traffic has an immense and adverse effect on the conservation area and detracts considerably from its traditional character. Both Hagley and Bristol Roads are part of Birmingham's strategic highway network and Islington Row and Islington Row/Lea Bank Middleway form part of the Middle Ring Road. The character of the streetscape where these roads are included within the conservation area is greatly eroded by the visual intrusion caused by constant traffic and through air and noise pollution. Major through-routes from the city centre to the outer suburbs, such as Church and Priory Roads are subject to constant heavy traffic and the facilities within and just beyond the Conservation Area - office premises, hospitals and clinics, schools, colleges and the universities - increase traffic flow and congestion. In some areas the traffic system dominates the townscape as, for example, around St. George's Church on Westbourne Crescent. In and around the business zone on street parking intrudes upon the street scene and throughout the conservation area car parking degrades the historic landscape.

Competition from other office locations, particularly in the city centre, and concern about security has resulted in a slump in office lettings in Edgbaston. Consequently some of the converted office properties within the conservation area are void and somewhat dilapidated. Poorly maintained and altered or uncharacteristic and intrusive properties on the eastern and southern fringes of the conservation area detract from its character here.

There is considerable erosion and loss of character on the conservation area boundary, particularly where it runs along the major roads.

Enhancement Opportunities

City policies, set out in the Birmingham Plan and the Conservation Strategy, provide for the preservation and enhancement of the conservation area. There are however additional enhancement opportunities and it is intended to identify priorities and establish guidelines in the form of a design guide for Edgbaston Conservation Area.

Elements might include:-

- Boundary reinstatements, including gate piers and gates, of appropriate type and materials
- Restoration of enclosed front plots including tree planting
- Rationalisation of car parking
- Repair of period properties

A tree management and planting strategy based on a thorough survey of the existing tree and shrub cover within the conservation area should also be established.

Visual Record and Streets Survey

As advised by English Heritage a photographic survey of the Edgbaston Conservation Area was undertaken in July and August 1996. This record is kept by the Conservation Group. A collection of visual images of the area (WK/EI/I-1099) is held in Birmingham Central Library. Surveys of individual streets in the area are contained in volume II of this document. Volume III contains the historic landscape survey of the area.