

## APPRAISAL OF GENERAL CHARACTER

### Uses And Activity

3.0 Nether Edge evolved primarily as a Victorian and Edwardian residential suburb. The main use of the area remains residential, although a number of non-residential uses can also be found. These include shops, hotels, care homes, offices, schools, university buildings, pubs and restaurants, many of which (such as the shops in Nether Edge Village) developed as the surrounding residential areas grew. Non residential uses can be found on many streets although most are concentrated on Psalter Lane, Montgomery Road and around Machon Bank. Properties such as Kenwood and Brincliffe Towers have been converted to hotel and care homes respectively, due to their large size. There are very few vacant sites or premises.

### Archaeology

4.0 There are no recorded sites indicating significant archaeological potential. Given the age of the development in the area any deposits may have been destroyed or overbuilt.

### Urban Structure And Movement

5.0 There are many routes, junctions and access points of local importance and this reflects the area's permeable street layout. Key routes are Psalter Lane and Sharrow Lane. Their junction at Sharrow Head is a significant nodal point which distributes traffic to and from the City Centre and London Road. The Psalter Lane junction with Cowlshaw Road, the latter linking with Hunter's Bar, is also a significant node and point of access. Montgomery Road and Wostenholme Road also act as an important route through the area linking it with the City Centre. The cross roads at Nether Edge shops is another key focal point and node in the area.

5.1 The escarpment of Brincliffe Edge/Psalter Lane marks a clear and distinctive boundary to the area. Psalter Lane, as the main route through the area and because of its straightness (which affords a vista along its length), reinforces the legibility



**Fig.7** *Psalter Lane is an important route through the area, especially at rush hour.*

of the escarpment edge. The superb avenue of lime trees on Psalter Lane makes it one of the finest approaches to the city centre. Frog Walk, which emerges at Sharrow Head, links the area with Ecclesall Road and the Porter Brook footpath. The footpaths through the steep woodland of Brincliffe Edge are also important for both leisure and access.

5.2 Because the area is so close to the city centre its location is well served by public transport. There are regular bus services along Montgomery Road and Psalter Lane and the city centre is within easy reach for pedestrians and cyclists. Such inner areas are now sought after residential environments because of their easy access to facilities and employment and the increase popularity of "city" as opposed to suburban lifestyles.

5.3 Away from the main roads, orientation and legibility is more problematic. The area has no true perceptible centre apart from the shops at Nether Edge, although the former hospital and Marriot Hotel act as important local landmarks and points of reference. There are few other major landmarks, although many buildings possess



**Fig.8** Brincliffe Edge from Chesterfield Road - the wooded escarpment edge is a significant topographical feature in the landscape, important for the legibility of Nether Edge and the wider area.

visually distinctive and arresting architectural character, with minor landmark features such as towers, gables and double height bays. Orientation is particularly difficult in Kenwood, because of the similar appearance of its Victorian streets and the informality of the street layout. This is exacerbated by the prevalence of junctions of five or more streets, a distinctive feature of the area. However, the more regular street pattern in the vicinity of Brincliffe and Nether Edge is more readily perceived.

5.4 The “rat running” of vehicles through residential areas of Nether Edge, particularly on Nether Edge Road, is a particular problem during peak times of the day. This problem is of localised importance which diminishes the character, appearance and amenity of the area.



**Fig.9** View of Nether Edge from Meersbrook Park - the sloping topography and abundance of trees is the main feature of the area's landscape setting. Note that no building breaks the tree canopy.

### Landscape Setting

6.0 The Brincliffe/Psalter Lane area, as the name suggests, is situated upon a major escarpment. This forms Brincliffe Edge, which defines the south-west side of the area before turning north-eastwards, close to its highest point, on the line of Psalter Lane. The steep wooded south-west slopes of Brincliffe Edge forms a significant feature in the landscape (Fig.8). The former quarry to the extreme west is also highly visible, especially from Ecclesall Road. To the north-east of the escarpment edge the land slopes away to the east, abruptly at first before becoming more gentle when Nether Edge Hospital and shops are reached.

6.1 To the south of Psalter Lane is an undulating plateau which reaches its highest point at the site of the former St. Andrew's Church, before the land eventually slopes away to the east. This slope is in fact a series of small valleys which increase in size toward Brincliffe Edge. The varied form and inclination of the plateau are important to the local residential character, providing a distinctive and diverse physical

environment. The enclosing escarpment edge and the easterly aspect of the land are the key influences on the shaded character of the area, particularly during the winter months and in the late afternoon and early evening during the summer.

6.2 Unlike many other elevated areas of the city the skyline of the area is relatively unbroken by development (especially following the demolition of St. Andrews parish church), and this is an important feature of its landscape character. The dominance of trees and the wooded appearance of the area within the landscape, particularly when the trees are in full leaf, softens the urban form of the area and provides a seasonally varied backdrop to the city. The changing colour of the tree canopy from spring to autumn is a vital component of the landscape character. During the winter months the area's urban character is more apparent. More detailed clarification of natural features and topography at a local scale is provided within the character areas sections below.

## Page 29 Architecture And Building Materials

7.0 While Nether Edge is characterised by a range of building forms from various periods it is the Victorian and Edwardian villa development which gives the area its special character. Buildings of historic interest are identified on the Character Area Maps (Figs.2-4) for the Conservation area and include both listed and unlisted properties.

7.1 Villa development tended to adopt the 19th Century Gothic Revival style popular in this period, although the more restrained Georgian influence is also seen in a number of earlier properties (Fig.10). The gothic style is boldly expressive and richly detailed, with a solid appearance, often asymmetrical in form and commonly with a highly ordered arrangement of gables, dormers, bay window and towers balanced by regular openings or other rhythmic features. The villas possess impressive verticality, modelling and three-dimensional quality, with steep roof pitches, dormers and varied roof forms providing attractive skylines. The more classical, Georgian influence to some houses leads to a more restrained building form, with shallower hipped roofs, simpler and more symmetrical elevations and roof forms, commonly with tall chimneys on either gable.



**Fig.10** The complex asymmetrical gabled form of the gothic style villa (left) strongly contrasts with the more symmetrical and restrained classical (or Georgian) influenced villas (right).

7.2 Many villas are built on a grand scale and these tend to be the more richly detailed (eg Brincliffe Towers, Springleigh, villas on Brincliffe Crescent). Some of the typical architectural features are illustrated in Figure 11. Nevertheless, even the smaller villas possess similar vertical scale and style. In the more spacious earlier areas the space around villas is expansive and dominated by planting, with the villas designed (in their three-dimensional form and position of bay windows) to relate to their landscaped setting. On many streets the design of individual houses is subtly varied within the common architectural vocabulary outlined above (eg. Montgomery Road, Kenwood Park Road) whereas in other areas there is a more marked variation in form and materials (Brincliffe). On other streets there is a more uniform design of houses, with the regular pattern of repeated features generating strong rhythms and skyline interest (eg. Psalter Lane, Albany Road, The Edge and Violet Bank developments).

7.3 There is also a range of early 20<sup>th</sup> Century houses in the area often mixed with earlier Victorian villa, from Queen Anne influenced half timbered Edwardian Villas to Arts and Crafts style houses, particularly along Kingfield Road and Meadow Bank Avenue. Although the inter-war semis and detached houses are less finely detailed and of a smaller scale than the Victorian and Edwardian villas, they repeat some of the typical forms and features found in Nether Edge, such as hipped roofs and bay windows.



(a) Varied roofing and architectural forms.



(b) Towers.



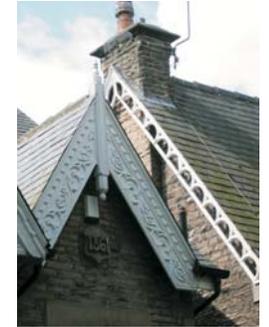
(c) Gables in asymmetrical design.



(d) Hipped roofs.



(e) Chimneys with pots.



(f) Bargeboards in elaborately carved timber.



(g) Vertical emphasis & heirarchy of window sizes and forms.



(h) Bay windows, both single and double height.



(i) Sliding sash windows constructed in timber.



(j) Carved stone, including window/door surrounds, mullion, quoins and hood moulds.



(k) Dormers are characteristic of some Victorian properties. Note the glazed cheeks.



(l) Stone sills and lintels.



(m) Entrances in elaborately carved wood or stone in classical style.



(n) Decorative timber porches, common in high Victorian Tudor Gothic architecture



(o) Ironwork as decoration.



(p) Finials to the apex of roofs.



(q) Uncoursed squared rubble - common to side elevations and some inter war houses.



(r) Coursed stone typical to main elevations often in diminishing courses.

Figure 11 - Typical architectural features in Nether Edge

7.4 Masonry is typically squared rough sandstone, usually laid in regular courses to main elevations and occasionally upon a plinth often with quoins to corners. Brindle brick is used on some areas, such as the Grange development off Sharrow Lane and some houses within Nether Edge village, often for the side and rear. Dressed stone heads and cills are common and some windows incorporate stone mullions. The stone has a characteristically warm yellow colouring and was quarried locally. In some Edwardian and inter-war development exposed timber and painted render in the mock Tudor style is employed on front gables. Roofs are predominantly of welsh slate, although there are clay tiles on some later 20th Century development.

7.5 Many villas remain in good original condition, with the retention of typical joinery features and decoration. Elaborately carved barge boards, doors, windows, frames and mouldings are of painted timber construction, with the common use of two and four pane vertical sliding sash windows (with horns) on earlier houses. Some later Edwardian houses, such as the semi-detached houses on Psalter Lane have original casement windows, occasionally incorporating leaded lights and curved glass. Cast iron is also decoratively employed in railing, gateways and other detailing. The quality of local craftsmanship in building construction and techniques is high.



**Fig.12** *Brincliffe Towers is a fine crenallated villa which was once the hub of local Victorian society. Its former grounds now comprise Chelsea Park.*

7.6 The poor quality of much more recent architecture, ranging from 1960s infill development, standardised housing styles and pastiche architecture are generally insensitive to the characteristic form and appearance of historic development within the local area. A particular ugly and insensitive building to the setting of the conservation area is the modern extension to Sheffield Hallam University Campus on Psalter Lane, which envelops the attractive original Edwardian building. Many of the slab-like apartment building constructed during the 1960s and 70s are also unsympathetic to the character of the area.

7.7 Some inter and post war development within the area introduces other materials and details, such as brick, concrete tiled roofs and softwood window frames which lack the character and quality of the Victorian buildings nearby. The installation of UPVC windows and doors which lack the detailing and profile of the original sash windows, have seriously damaged the character and integrity of those properties where they have been installed. The widespread use of "strap" re-pointing of masonry with hard cement-rich mortars has also been visually and physically damaging to stonework.

#### Trees, Parks And Gardens

8.0 Trees are a defining feature of the area. The leafy character is most prevalent on the older Victorian streets. Commonly trees, such as those on Psalter Lane and Montgomery Road, are arranged as avenues either within the highway or within adjoining front gardens. The trees add to the formal and planned character of such streets. Indeed, trees on Lyndhurst Road were laid out prior to the development of adjoining plots, reflecting the desire of the original Victorian developers to create a picturesque environment in contrast to the industrial landscapes nearby (Fig.13). Typical species are ash, sycamore and limes, beech and horse chestnut and those planted in Victorian times are now fully mature. They provide impressive verticality and spatial definition to the area. In some areas they form an extensive canopy and tree groups provide important backdrop to views and vistas. During the summer months the extensive tree canopy contributes to the distinctively shaded character of the area.



**Fig.13 Lyndhurst Road** - one of the finest tree lined streets in Brincliffe laid out in 1868. The trees which frame the vista down the road, were laid out prior to houses being built to create a leafy environment.

8.1 Chelsea Park is the most significant area of greenspace. Formerly part of the grounds of the Brincliffe Towers this attractively sloping area of parkland, with its mature trees, is well used by local people. The parkland itself is largely invisible from the outside, being obscured either by high walls or trees, although the latter do contribute significantly to the visual quality of adjoining areas. Public art within the park is an additional attraction.

8.2 Elsewhere, generally well maintained and planted private gardens and forecourts and roadside trees provide an attractive setting for residential properties, a perfect foil to the often formal layout of houses in the area and their assertive Victorian and Edwardian architecture. A number of the larger gardens were landscaped to a high standard and the most important are included on the Local List of Parks and Gardens.

8.3 Due to their age, many houses within the area were built without parking spaces. The construction of parking spaces and other hard surfaces in front gardens has often diminished the characteristic greenness in the street and has resulted in

a harsher setting for houses and the street as a whole. This problem is an increasing trend given the rising levels of car ownership.

### Floorscape & Boundaries

9.0 Stone walls are a very significant feature within the area and are largely continuous. Most are well constructed in rough sandstone or gritstone, generally in regular courses and of variable size, some with dressed coping stones, although some original random stone agricultural boundary walls still exist. Wall heights vary and many are topped by well maintained native hedges, although intrusive conifers, such as leylandii, exist in some areas. Original points of access, such as paths or driveways, often retain decorative stone entrance pillars and, occasionally, wrought iron gates. Railings are much rarer. Where previously in existence they have frequently been removed, in most cases during the wartime acquisition of metals for weapons.

9.1 The gradual loss and poor maintenance of original boundary walls and the creation of driveways and forecourt parking using non-traditional paving materials has been a serious concern. The cumulative loss of wall frontage and other boundary features, coupled with the parking of cars in the forecourt area, has seriously eroded the original character of the area. Where they do exist walls are frequently in poor condition, with structural problems often caused by adjacent trees and shrubs, requiring re-pointing or having been re-pointed with intrusive “strap” pointing in cement rich mortar which is damaging to the stone.

9.2 Surfacing materials are largely tarmac, often laid over original cobbles. Original stone curbs still exist on a number of streets, although some have been replaced with modern concrete alternatives. Most surfaces are in poor condition and in need of re-surfacing, particularly suffering from the “patchwork” of tarmac as a result of the installation of services. In addition, some new residential driveways and paths have been created with fake “riven” slabs and harsh new brick paviers.

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## APPRAISAL OF CHARACTER AREAS

10.0 As mentioned above the Nether Edge Conservation area can be divided into at least three areas, each of which have a range of distinctive characteristics. These are:

**Brincliffe and Psalter Lane:** This peaceful sub-area is to the north and west of the wider area and is characterised by generally more formal road layouts very large Victorian and Edwardian villas on substantial plots, with landscaped grounds and a number of tree-line roads. Psalter Lane marks the boundary of the area to the north and many houses along this road are more intensively developed.

**Kenwood:** The area to the east is a planned picturesque residential environment characterised by contrasting formal and informal qualities, with Victorian villas and roadside trees, developed at a higher density than Brincliffe. It is the most “leafy” and unified of the three areas.

**Nether Edge Village:** A highly varied area to the south with more regular street and housing layout with steeply sloping topography and generally more densely laid out than the other areas, although many Victorian and Edwardian development still have sizable gardens. The area possesses the two key landmarks and focal points in the area in the form of the former Nether Edge Hospital and shops on Machon Bank.

The following examines the characteristics that distinguish each area.

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