Brincliffe and Psalter Lane

Historical development

11.0 The Brincliffe and Psalter Lane area was still predominantly rural at the time of the enclosure of land. Apart from Psalter Lane, Brincliffe Edge Road and Cherry Tree Lane, which are ancient routes, the street pattern we see today is essentially the product of suburban residential development which commenced in earnest during the mid to late 19th Century. The first streets were laid out near to Psalter Lane in the 1840s (Kingfield Rd, Brincliffe Crescent, Osborne Road (formerly Workhouse Lane) and Union Road). Other streets such as Chelsea and Lyndhurst Roads were laid out two decades later.



***Fig.14 Psalter Lane** - one of the finest tree lined streets in the city. A former turnpike, it was the main route into the city until Ecclesall Road was constructed. The width of the street at 60 feet was to allow grass verges for horsemen.*

11.1 Houses were built only gradually, generally on an individual basis, in contrast to the larger estates built be speculative developers at Kenwood and Nether Edge, and some areas remained undeveloped for many years. One of the earliest and grandest country residence in the area was Brincliffe Tower (1852) and its associated estate now forms Chelsea Park. The lodge for the estate is in fact an original farmhouse predating the main house. Clusters of villas developed around Brincliffe Crescent, Osborne Road and Williamson Road where it joins Psalter Lane.

11.2 Remarkably, while other areas of Nether Edge were well developed by the turn of the Century there was still a considerable amount of open land adjoining Psalter Lane. In 1898 the Brincliffe Estates Company was established by local residents to try to develop Kingfield Road and Brincliffe Crescent, largely to prevent poorer quality speculative housing. However, during the Edwardian period many of the gaps were filled in, particularly when the fine semi-detached houses were built along Psalter Lane. Significant further development continued thereafter during the inter war and post-war period, infilling the remaining areas of open land on Chelsea Road, Lyndhurst Road, Cherry Tree Road and Kingfield Road.

Natural features and topography

11.3 The area sits upon a plateau, which to the north is relatively flat, whereas to the south there is a shallow incline toward the east. Beyond the plateau, the land falls away abruptly to the north and west. Few original natural features survive the suburban development except possibly some hedgerow trees, particularly those in Chelsea Park and some within larger gardens.

Townscape and spatial character

Density and grain

11.4 The density and grain of much of the development in the Brincliffe area is very spacious, with large detached "villas" set in landscaped grounds, constructed during the late 19th Century (Fig. 15a). While the spaciousness of the Victorian development has been retained, elsewhere development during the 20th Century has been at a somewhat finer grain. The development on Psalter Lane and Kingfield Road and (Fig. 15b) is characterised by houses more densely laid out on smaller plots (although





a *Spacious development within the Brincliffe Area with many villas invisible in street.*





b *Medium density development around Psalter Lane*

Fig.15 ***Brincliffe and Psalter Lane - Comparative street layout, density of grain***

still of medium density) and closer to the road, increasingly with the use of semi-detached properties.

11.5 Within the inter-war and post-war areas densities have generally been compatible with the surrounding earlier development. The generous plot size has been maintained on some streets (eg Lyndhurst Road) while reduced on others (eg Chelsea Road). Occasionally the largest Victorian villa plots have been sub-divided, often changing the apparent density and harming the spacious character of the area (eg. development on Brincliffe Crescent). The characteristic densities, plot layout and size are illustrated in Figure 15.

Street and housing layout

11.6 In the less dense areas of Brincliffe to the north and west, the pattern of Victorian development closely follows the layout of fields created by enclosure. Most streets run north-west/south east, either gaining access from Psalter Lane or running parrallel to Brincliffe Edge. Within these areas the relationship between villas and roads is often informal. Most of the larger plots are situated on higher ground, no doubt to exploit potential views which may have existed at their time of construction (Fig.15a). Later development along Psalter Lane and to the east is more formally related to the road, (Fig.15b) houses having front gardens or forecourts, large rear gardens, with a more consistent building line at a regular distance from the road. The elongated shape of blocks to the south of Psalter Lane is a particular characteristic.

11.7 Inter war and post-war layout of housing has generally continued the existing pattern of development in the area. Importantly, it has respected original boundaries and retained building lines and set-backs which give the streets their spacious character. Houses commonly face the road although some “backland” development has occurred to the rear of some larger plots.

Visual and perceptual qualities

11.8 The area has a wide range of residential environments including large Victorian and Edwardian villas on spacious plots, medium sized terraced and semi-detached Edwardian villas, inter-war semis, post-war bungalows and detached housing. Significant unifying features are the spacious geometry of the streets and the dominance of trees, planting and boundary walls within the streetscene. This is especially true of Psalter Lane and Lyndhurst Road, where there are impressive vistas along roads framed by roadside trees. The straightness of many roads combined with sloping topography enhance their dramatic quality.



Fig.16 *The attractive rhythm, with the repitition in form of semi-detached villas is one of the key features of the more densely laid out properties. on* ***Psalter Lane.***



Fig.17 ***Villas on Clifford Road*** *- an important group of buildings, with the nearest property turning the corner onto* ***St. Andrew's Road.***

11.9 The regular spatial layout and geometry of streets in the area means that there is little sequential variation of spaces as one moves around the area. However, this uniformity is relieved by the varied topography, greenery views and vistas. The transition from one character area to another, such as into the more dense Nether Edge or Kenwood environments is gradual rather than sharply defined. There are also surprisingly few landmarks or other focal features within the area.

11.10 The denser areas, such as Psalter Lane and Clifford Road have a number of fine closely grouped detached and semi-detached villas terraces, with attractive detailing, rhythm and skyline interest (Figs.16 &17). On Psalter Lane, the more closely spaced semi-detached villas and trees also creates greater continuity of enclosure. These spatial characteristics emphasise the linearity of the road, particularly the straighter eastern end where trees and buildings define possibly the finest vista along any road in the city (Fig.14).

11.11 Elsewhere, in the more spacious areas of Brincliffe, the dominance of trees and planting combined with the spacious character of the area means that building groups are less common (Fig.15a). Villas sit within large landscaped plots and are sometimes hidden from the road. Buildings are generally of two or two and a half storeys, although they provide little physical enclosure and definition of the space because most are set well back from the road. Instead, this is provided by



Fig.18 *A typically substantial Victorian villa within the Brincliffe area.*

boundary walls and trees adjacent to the road or within the footway (Fig.18).

11.12 There are also significant views from Brincliffe hillside of the area and city beyond, particularly from Chelsea Park. From Psalter Lane there are glimpses toward Endcliffe, Broomhall and Broomhill to the north. Elsewhere, the leafy character of the area, especially during the summer, means that there are surprisingly few views toward surrounding areas.

11.13 The area is generally very quiet with few cars, cyclists or pedestrians away from Psalter Lane and upper Kingfield Road. These roads are reasonably busy throughout the day and evening. The residential nature of the area and its location away from main local facilities such as shops adds to this peaceful character. The only exception to this is during the morning and evening rush hours when there is a significant increase in the number of vehicles. Much of this is relatively fast moving given the wide streets and permeable nature of the road network and much is associated with "rat running" to avoid busier main routes to and from the city centre.

Important buildings and building groups

11.14 Buildings of historic interest are identified on Fig.2 and mainly relate to the Victorian and Edwardian buildings in the area, although some earlier structures are also included. A small number of these buildings are listed.

11.15 One of the grandest of the unlisted buildings is **Brincliffe Towers** (1852), the original building of which was the forerunner of the highly characteristic gothic style adopted in the wider area and particularly notable for its impressive tower and crenellated form (Fig.12).

11.16 **The Towers** (1872) on Brincliffe Crescent is a later villa with lodge, both of which are grade II Listed Buildings. The house retains large grounds.

11.17 **Argyll House** and **Beckford Lodge** on Williamson Road are a pair of fine villas with highly distinctive building and roof forms.

11.18 The most significant building groups are the Edwardian villas on Psalter Lane which are described above. They help to contribute to the distinctive character of this impressive route into the city. Coherent villa groupings can also be found on the southern end of Clifford Road.