

# HIGHGATE CONSERVATION AREA

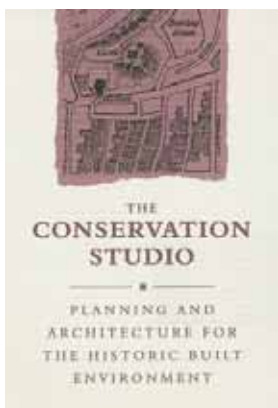
## Character Appraisal and Management Plan

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**Walsall Council**

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## PART 1 INTRODUCTION

### 1 SUMMARY OF THE SPECIAL INTEREST OF THE CONSERVATION AREA

The Highgate Conservation Area encompasses a mainly residential area of just over 10 hectares which developed from the early 19th century on land which once formed part of the rural setting to Walsall. Some of the remaining narrow streets, most notably Highgate Road, are a reminder of the time when the area was still fields crossed by winding country lanes. Of note is the location on a ridge, some 170 metres above sea level, which provided a healthier environment than the centre of Walsall, and led to its eventual development as a prestigious residential suburb. Even today, the area feels slightly 'separate' from the rest of Walsall, with no major roads through it and a more tranquil character which is only disturbed by lorries accessing the brewery or the occasional fast car.

The earliest buildings lie to the west, close to the historic village of Caldmore, and include nos. 1-4 Doveridge Place, an elegant terrace of Georgian townhouses which are listed grade II. To the south, nos. 137 – 143 Sandwell Street form a more modest group of terraced cottages, dating to the 1840s and now locally listed. This lies in the area once known as 'Little London' which until the 1850s was no more than a tiny hamlet, centred on the White Lion Public House and surrounded by fields. Today, the most significant listed buildings are located more centrally within the conservation area, firstly the late 18th century windmill, now vacant and considered to be 'at risk', and Highgate Brewery, dating to the late 19th century and still producing beer. Bath Street, which lies in the northern part of the conservation area and is therefore closer to Walsall town centre, retains a number of very substantial and well detailed 19th century buildings. These were built as factories or for other industrial purposes. Close by, the Church of St Michael and All Angels was built in the 1870s and is now grade II listed.



*Highgate Brewery*

Apart from the listed or locally listed buildings detailed above, most of the other properties are in residential uses and date to the 1860s onwards. Of note are the prestigious family houses in Belvidere Road and the groups of well detailed mid to late 19th century terraced houses in streets such as Sandwell Street and Emery Street. These use the local red brick, often decorated by attractive terracotta details such as decorative corncicing below the eaves. Whilst similar details can be seen in many of the buildings in and around Walsall, the Highgate Conservation Area does provide some very good examples of their use, mainly because the best preserved of the residential properties in the conservation area are protected from unsympathetic alterations by the Article 4 Direction which was served by Walsall Council in 1991.



*Belvidere Road*

*The special interest of the Highgate Conservation Area that justifies its designation includes:*

- Residential suburb to Walsall, located on high ridge, with winding roads punctuated by a variety of historic houses set back from the front boundaries;
- Subtle changes in the topography with long views up or down the streets;
- The mature trees which made an important contribution to the special character of the conservation area and its setting;
- A variety of front boundary treatments, including red brick with blue brick copings, as well as metal railings or hedging;
- Some notable high brick walls, such as the ones in Highgate Road;
- Three listed buildings of importance: Doveridge Place, a well detailed Georgian terrace of c1800; Highgate Brewery, of 1898; and the windmill tower;



*Nos. 1-4, Doveridge Place (listed grade II)*

- High status detached villas along Belvidere Road, with two being locally listed (nos. 6 and 8);
- Fairfield Mount, an interesting development of c1870 houses, set back from Highgate Road in a private setting;
- Rows of well detailed terraced houses of the period 1880 -1910, in Emery Street and Sandy Mount Road, some of them built for brewery workers;

- Use of red brick (sometimes with terracotta eaves corncicing, painted render or blue brick string courses, and other decorative details), slate roofs, sashed windows, flat or canted bay windows, and a variety of panelled front doors;



*No. 79, Highgate Road*

- More occasional use of painted render;
- Generally the properties within the conservation area retain their original details and materials, suggesting that the Article 4 Direction has worked well;
- Highgate Brewery retains a number of curtilage buildings which relate to its original establishment, such as the brewery 'office' at the main entrance to the brewery from Sandy Mount Road;
- Highgate Brewery, with its tall buildings and square chimney, is the focal point of the conservation area, and although the windmill tower is also important it is relatively hidden.

## 2 INTRODUCTION AND SUMMARY OF ISSUES

The Highgate Conservation Area was designated on 24th August 1988. It was extended on 12 October 1994 to include land to the west of Highgate Road following the demolition of a substantial 19th century house (Hopelands) which was replaced by a block of flats called Highview. Despite local opposition, further new development has been allowed on appeal between Highgate Road and the listed brewery (Drayman Close).



In 1991 an Article 4 Direction was served by the Council on the majority of the historic buildings in use as family dwellings to control small alterations, such as the insertion of uPVC windows, which would otherwise be 'permitted development'. Whilst this has generally been successful, there appears to be a general lack of publicity about the constraints and several householders may have carried out work without planning permission. For enforcement action to work, however, regular photographic surveys of the conservation area are needed to monitor changes as they occur. Another recurring issue is the matter of satellite dishes, some of which are located on the front elevations of the buildings where they clearly require planning permission.

Today there are a number of industrial uses taking place either within the conservation area (most notably Highgate Brewery) or on its edge, as can be seen in the northern section of Sandwell Street and off Windmill Street, although incrementally these appear to be being replaced by residential development. These uses generate traffic, including the movement of large lorries through the conservation area. Other fast moving cars, and parking on pavements or in front gardens, are also detrimental features.

Pavements and road surfaces within the conservation area use modern materials such as tarmac, although there are precedents for the use of local materials such as Staffordshire blue pavements, which can be seen in Green Hill Walk. Street signage is provided by Walsall Council standard brown signs on small posts, the historic black ceramic nameplates which are fixed to some of the buildings being incrementally lost as private owners fail to maintain or protect them.



*Green Hill Walk*

In streets such as Belvidere Road, the many street trees and planting in residents' gardens contribute to the sylvan character of the conservation area. Some of these trees appear to be in poor condition, and a survey has been undertaken as part of this appraisal to identify the most significant trees where disease or old age means that removal and replanting might be necessary.

Whilst most of the buildings in the conservation area are well cared for, the listed windmill tower is unused and despite the Council ensuring that some remedial work (the removal of ivy) was carried out relatively recently, further repairs may be required. It is now on the Council's Buildings-at-Risk Register.

In Section 9, a large extension to the existing conservation area is proposed, to cover properties in the southern part of Sandwell Street and Highgate Road, as well as Vincent Street.



*Add these well detailed buildings, in Highgate Road, to the conservation area*

The conservation area already includes several listed and several locally listed buildings. Further buildings could be added to the local list and these are described in Section 10.

### **3 BACKGROUND AND PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT**

Section 69 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 places a duty on every local authority to determine which parts of their area are areas of special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance. Such areas can then be designated as conservation areas.

The Act also states that the local planning authorities should, from time to time, review their existing conservation areas and formulate and publish proposals for the preservation and enhancement of these conservation areas.

Essentially, the added planning controls that conservation area designation brings include controls over demolition, strengthened controls over minor development and the protection of trees over a certain size. Within the Walsall Unitary Development Plan (Adopted March 2005) policy ENV29 concerns conservation areas.

The Council has also published the Walsall Local Area Agreement which seeks, amongst other things:

- The creation of vibrant town centres and neighbourhoods whilst maintaining their unique identity.
- The recognition of the Borough's historic environment;
- The sustainable reuse of historic buildings.

A further document, the Walsall Partnership Sustainability Strategy, has a variety of more generalised aims and objectives but includes specific reference to the Borough's historic environment, by including a commitment to continue to revise the existing conservation area appraisals and management plans. All of these documents are available on the Council's website.

This character appraisal of the Highgate Conservation Area defines its special interest and includes proposals for the enhancement of its character and appearance. The more clearly the special interest that justifies designation is defined and recorded, the sounder will be the basis for development plan policies, development control decisions and proposals for the preservation and enhancement of the character of an area. Two detailed surveys of the existing and proposed area were carried out by staff of The Conservation Studio in April and May 2009, as well as a stakeholder's walkabout in April 2009.

It is intended that this guidance will be useful for residents, developers and the general public in understanding the significance of the

area, and will help to ensure its special interest and character can be preserved and enhanced for future generations. This document follows English Heritage's guidance on the production of conservation areas, produced in 2006, and is intended to:

- Assist in defining what is of 'special' architectural or historic importance';
- Give recommendations on features and characteristics that should be protected;
- Identify possible areas for future enhancement within the designated area;
- Provide guidance on the form, style and location of future change and development within the designated area.

#### 4 STRUCTURE OF THE APPRAISAL AND MANAGEMENT PLAN

Part 1 of this document contains general information, summarising the special interest of the conservation area and the principal issues it faces, and setting out the legislative context and the Council's own policies.

Part 2 contains the Character Appraisal, which also includes the historic background to the conservation area and its wider context. The conservation area has been divided into four separate 'Character Areas' which are described under the following sub-headings:

- General character, spaces, views and uses;
- Architectural and historic quality;
- Contribution of key unlisted buildings;
- Negative or natural features.

Historic mapping is included at the end of Section 6 *Origins and historical development*. Photographs are included throughout the text to illustrate particular points. In addition, a photographic audit of the conservation area has also been carried out – the purpose of creating this resource is explained in the Management Plan.



Part 3 is the final section of the document and contains the Management Plan. This provides an assessment of the issues within each Character Area and suggests ways in which improvements can be made, including priorities for action. In addition, suggestions are made for additional buildings to be added to the local list. The local list consists of buildings that play a part in establishing the character of the area but do not meet the criteria for statutory listing. However, as government guidance contained in PPG 15 – *Planning and the Historic Environment* (1994) makes clear, there is a presumption against the demolition of such buildings, particularly where they make a ‘positive’ contribution to the character and appearance of the conservation area. Further unlisted buildings are also shown

on Map 1 (see below) which whilst not of local list quality, are also considered to be ‘positive’, such as some of the individual Victorian villas and the least altered 19th century terraced houses. Again, there is a presumption that all of these buildings should be retained.

Four maps have been prepared to inform the Character Appraisal and Management Plan. A Townscape Analysis Map (Map 1) has been prepared for the conservation area which shows listed, locally listed, and ‘positive’ buildings, as well as key views, key buildings, significant spaces, trees and important boundaries or walls. An extract from this map has also been dropped into the text to inform the relevant section of the Character Areas.



*Trees are important in the conservation area (Belvidere Road)*

Map 1 also identifies important trees. These are usually highly visible from public places and/or they contribute to the setting of a listed building, the street scene or a building of local note. Important open spaces would also usually be recorded on the Townscape Analysis Map as well but the Highgate Conservation Area is unusual in that it does not contain any formal or even informal open spaces apart from the streets themselves, which are included in the Character Area descriptions.

Important unlisted walls and other forms of boundary enclosure, such as railings or hedges, are recognised. These are usually built of local materials and help to define spaces and frames views. Significant views into, out of and around the conservation area are also identified, and it should be appreciated that a conservation area's character does not necessarily end with a line drawn on a map. Often the character is closely associated with attractive views and vistas out to other areas, sometimes via gaps between buildings, along streets, or across open spaces. Views within

an area, such as to a church, school or other landmark, can also be particularly valuable. However, for Highgate, the principal views are along each street and to the west along Windmill Street/Hope Street over Walsall.

Map 2 sets out the Character Areas, and Map 3 illustrates the Management Proposals, including the identification of sites or buildings for enhancement, and buildings for local listing. Map 4 contains proposals for extending the conservation area to include further buildings in Highgate Road, Sandwell Street and Vincent Street.

A separate map showing the most important trees (Map 5) has also been prepared. 'Important' trees are usually highly visible from public places and/or they contribute to the setting of a listed building, the street scene or a building of local note. The map relates back to a schedule of species and condition which has been prepared by the consultants, and will be used by the Council as part of its on-going management of trees in the conservation area.



*An important wall in Windmill Street*



## PART 2 CHARACTER APPRAISAL

### 5 LOCATION AND SETTING

Highgate is situated within an urban setting in the south east quadrant of the town of Walsall, well within the Ring Road which encompasses the whole settlement (the A4148). The conservation area is located on a ridge which at its highest point (about 500 feet above sea level) provides views over the rest of the town. The University of Wolverhampton (the former West Midlands College) lies a kilometre further to the south east and the town centre half a kilometre to the north west. The area is bounded to the north east by the A34 which connects Walsall to Birmingham, and, to the west, by the A4031, which leads towards West Bromwich. The Church Hill Conservation Area butts up to the northern boundary of the conservation area, namely along Lysways Street.

The Highgate Conservation Area was designated by Walsall Council in 1988 and extended in 1994. The conservation area lies within a built-up area without any open spaces or public parks in the immediate vicinity, although more rural areas can be found outside the Ring Road to the north east, towards Aldridge, and to the south east, including Walsall Golf Club and the Rushall Canal.

### 6 ORIGINS AND HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT

The majority of the present Highgate Conservation Area formed part of the countryside setting to the industrialised town of Walsall until the early 19th century, the Tithe Map of 1845 confirming that the area was then mostly fields with some very scattered development of residential properties along what is now Little London, Sandwell Street and Highgate Road. The main settlement was at Caldmore village, to the west of Highgate, which was inhabited as early as the 14th century – a Thomas Faulkes of Caldmore is recorded in 1307. Little London was an inhabited area by the later 17th century, and spur making was recorded there in the earlier part of the 18th century. By the 1760s an industrial suburb of metal workers had developed between Sandwell and Bath Streets, and Caldmore included four metal workers in 1770 as well as two farmers. Slightly to the north, the area round Windmill Street was further developed in the 1830s and early 1840s when Lord Bradford granted building leases in Orlando Street and in the northern part of Bath Street.



*The White Lion Public House, Sandwell Street*

Nos. 1 – 4 Doveridge Place, off Sandwell Street, and now listed grade II, represents the earliest surviving residential development in the Highgate area, and formed part of the small hamlet known as Little London, which included the White Lion Public House (rebuilt in the late 19th century) and nos. 137-141 Sandwell Street, which also date to the 1800s and are locally listed. Slightly outside what is now the Highgate Conservation Area, Gorway House was built in the late 1820s by Peter Potter, Lord Bradford's agent. Apart from these buildings, the only other surviving building of this early date is the listed windmill, built around 1770 when it was described as 'newly erected'. At this time Highgate Road was called Windmill Lane and it is said that the area is named after a gate which was located near its junction with Sandwell Street, which led from the town into the country. In the early 19th century there was some metal working, particularly spur makers, in the area, but after the 1860s leather working became the most important occupation, incrementally replacing the agricultural activities which until that time were predominant. By the early 20th century Walsall was known as the leather capital of the world.

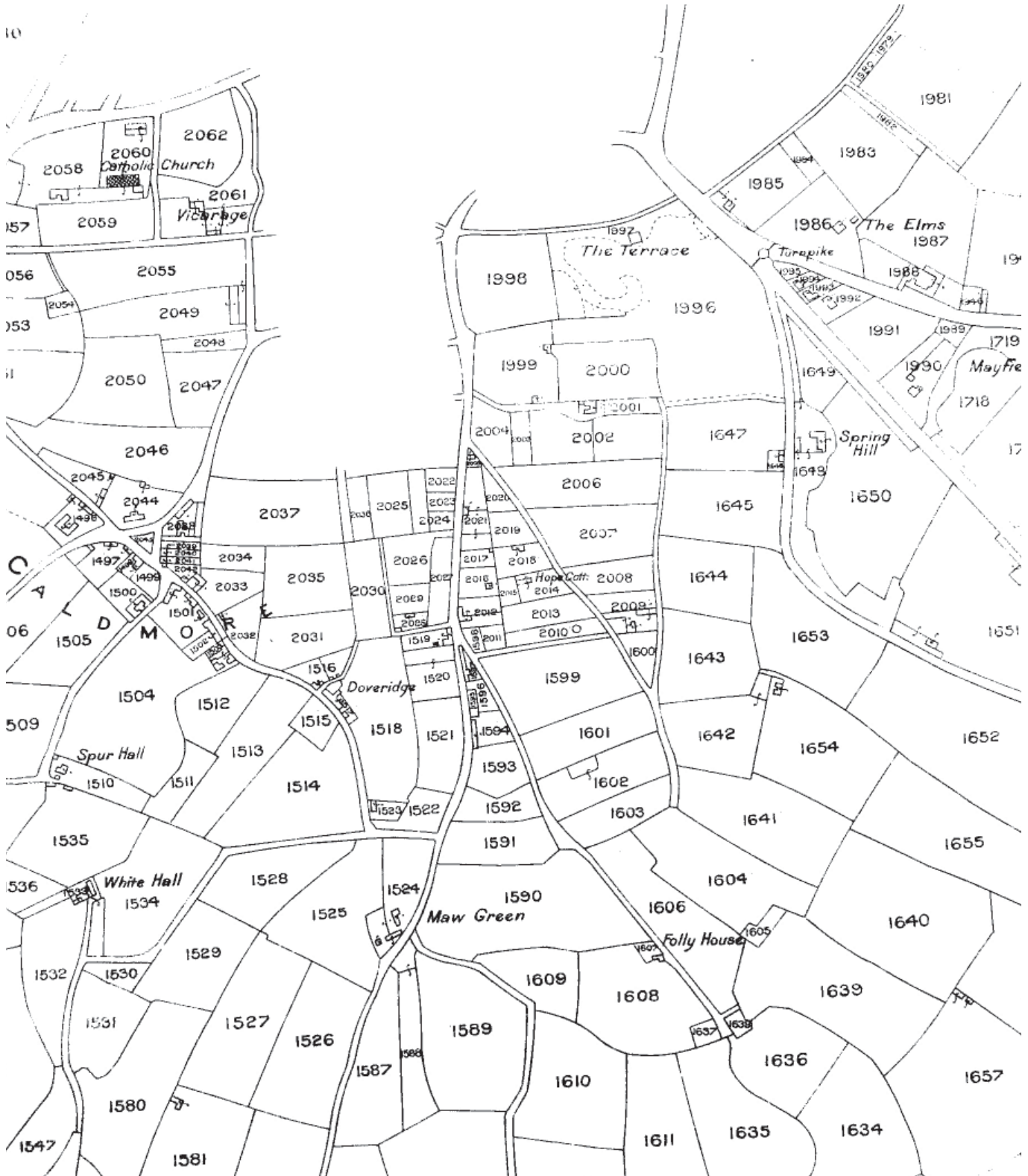


*Windmill Lane looking south*



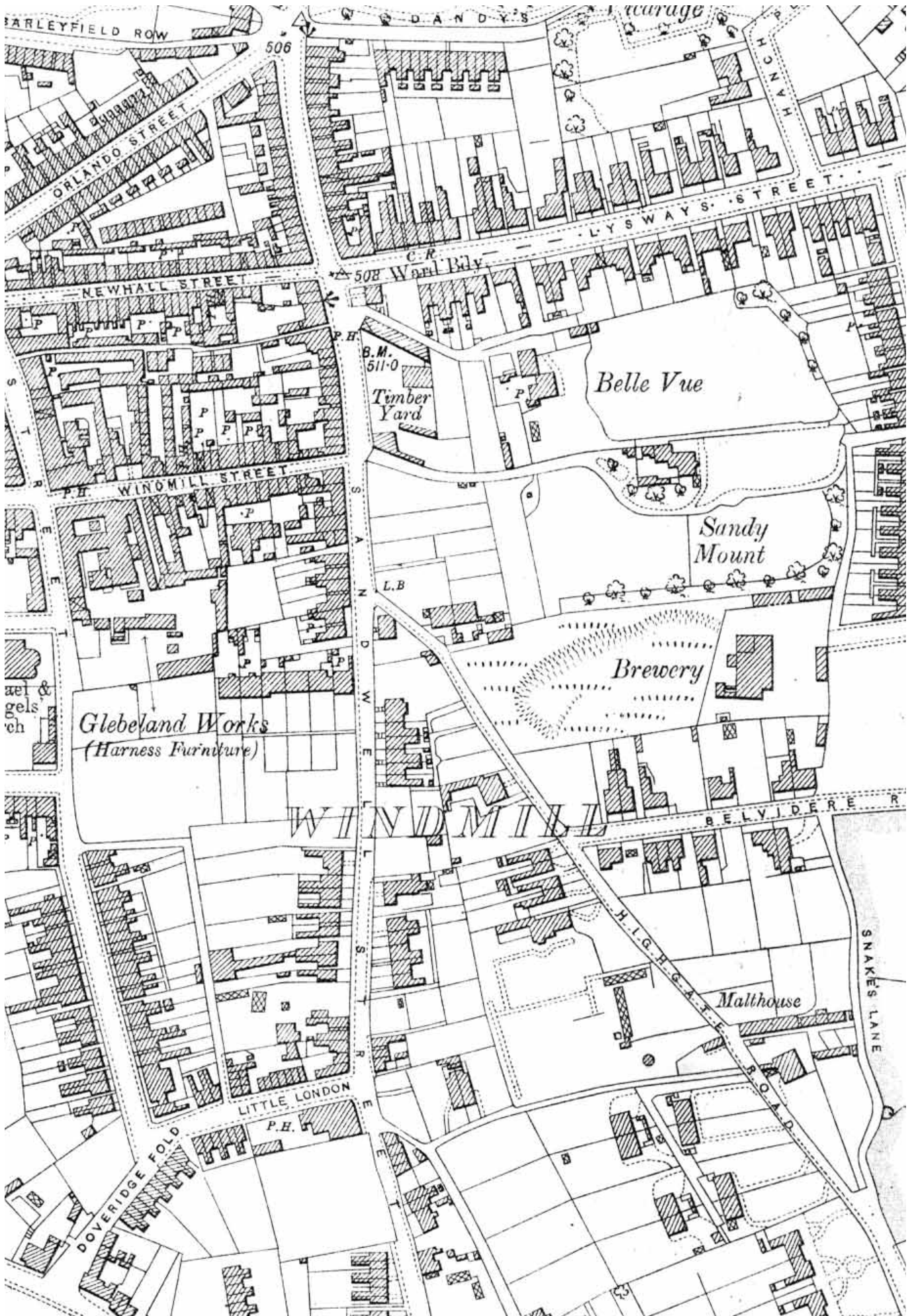
From the mid-19th century the middle classes started moving out of the cramped conditions in Walsall town centre and building prestigious detached or semi-detached villas in the area, most notably along Belvidere Road, where development was assisted by the gradual release of land by Lord Bradford from the 1860 onwards. Highgate House was built in the mid 1850s for F B Oerton, a saddlers' ironmonger who had lived in a house next to his works in Bath Street – he

was Walsall's mayor in 1854-5. In 1865 the Walsall Free Press described the area as having "uninterrupted beautiful views", adding to its attractions. In 1866 a new school was built in nearby Caldmore to serve the whole area, and in 1871 a new church (St Michael's) followed. However, the map of 1887 shows that the area was still predominantly rural in character with buildings still concentrated in Little London and Belvidere Road.



1840s Tithe Map





Historic Map of 1903



Highgate Brewery was built in what is now the centre of the conservation area in 1898/9 by the Highgate-Walsall Brewery, but it was taken over by Michells and Butler in 1939, then passed through several ownerships until 2007, when it was sold to the Smethick-based Global Star Group. It is still a working brewery and is run by the Highgate and Walsall Brewing Company Ltd.

By 1887, a map of this date shows a few terraces of workers' cottages in Emery Street and Jesson Road, but at this time the remaining buildings were more prestigious family houses, including Highgate House (on the site of present-day Highgate Close) and Sandy Mount, (on the site of Emery Close). Otherwise, the area is still rural in character although to the north, closer to Walsall town centre, factories (for harnessing and buckles) and terraced houses are beginning to dominate. By 1903, the map confirms that the brewery had been built and some of the terraced houses in Sandwell Street. Windmill Lane has become Highgate Road, but present-day Highgate Avenue is still a winding narrow lane, bounded by fields and called 'Snake's Lane'.



Highgate windmill

In the 1880s the windmill was partially demolished but in the 1920s the top of the tower was rebuilt and was used as an observatory by a local amateur astronomer, George Skidmore. A map of 1916 confirms that open fields remained in the area until the Inter-War period when new housing was added to create such streets as Gorway Road and Little Gorway. Highgate House and Sandy Mount were demolished in the 1960s and their spacious gardens developed with new housing. In 1966 Gorway House was demolished and the land developed as part of the new West Midlands College, later merged with Wolverhampton University. The building of the M6 motorway in 1970 provided improved transport to the area.

The Highgate Conservation Area was designated by Walsall Council in 1988 and extended in 1994. The name 'Highgate' is a modern invention, named after the historic lane and Highgate House (demolished in the 1960s), the area being referred to as 'Windmill' until the 1930s at least. In 1991 the Council served an Article 4 Direction on residential properties in the conservation area, bringing minor alterations such as the insertion of plastic windows under planning control.

#### **References:**

*We'm Goin on Anuther Walk A history of Caldmore and Highgate* Ann French

*A History of Walsall Reprint from the Victoria County History*

#### **Archaeology**

The Council is required to take archaeology into account as a material consideration when determining planning applications. The Council's Archaeology Service is provided by the Black Country Archaeologist in a joint arrangement with Wolverhampton City Council. The Black Country Historic Environment Record (HER), held at Wolverhampton City Council, contains information on all known archaeological sites and finds in Walsall. There are currently around 1500 records for the town of Walsall on the HER ranging from Mesolithic flint tools to 20th century industrial structures.



For the Highgate area, the HER records the listed and locally listed buildings (noted in the Character Areas below), as well as the results of archaeological field surveys, observations and excavations. Only one site in the conservation area is recorded as being of potentially prehistoric date, a single coin minted during the late 1st century BC (prior to the Roman invasion of Britain in AD 43). The coin is recorded as having been found at no. 51 Emery Street although the circumstances of its discovery are unknown. It is clearly a very unusual find and may suggest the presence of a high status Iron Age settlement in the vicinity. Other sites recorded by the HER in this area are limited to the remains of industrial buildings and historic buildings of interest.

Historically, the area lay within Walsall's agricultural hinterland. The early development of a metalworking trade was focused within the Little London area of Caldmore, on the edge of the conservation area, and is of particular interest. Further study of the past and present settlement pattern and buried remains of buildings, structures, property boundaries and other deposits in this area should be of particular value in informing an understanding of the nature of industrial settlements in the period just before, and at the beginning, of the industrial revolution.

When considering applications that may affect sites within Highgate, the Council will sometimes, as allowed for in PPG16: *Archaeology*, require the submission of an archaeological assessment, possibly supported by the findings of field work or evaluation as part of the submission for planning approval. Other sites may need to be recorded before development commences – this may be required as a planning condition. The preservation of archaeological deposits and historic buildings *in situ* is the preferred option and is expected where remains are of national importance. An early consultation with the Borough archaeologist is advised for all major schemes.

## 7 CHARACTER AREAS

The Highgate Conservation Area divides into four distinct 'Character Areas' according to historical development, uses, building type, architectural style and spatial arrangements. They are:

- Character Area 1: Bath Street
- Character Area 2: Sandwell Street
- Character Area 3: Highgate Road
- Character Area 4: Belvidere Road
- Character Area 5: Highgate Brewery, Sandy Mount Road, Emery Street and Jesson Road

Each Character Area is considered in terms of:

- General character, historical development and present-day uses
- Spatial features and views
- The buildings and their details
- Negative or neutral features

### ***Character Area 1: Bath Street***

*General character, historical development and present-day uses*

This Character Area lies to the north of the Highgate Conservation Area, close to the centre of Walsall, and comprises Windmill Street and a section of Bath Street. It forms part of the industrialised development of the town from the 1830s and early 1840s onwards, when the landowner, Lord Bradford, began granting building leases on land in the area. On the 1845 Tithe Map the northern end of Bath Street is called 'Prospect Row' and Windmill Street is defined on either side by densely developed courts and buildings. Today, several high quality industrial buildings remain facing Bath Street, and are used as offices, but the site of the former Glebeland Works (makers of 'Harness Furniture' according to the 1887 map) has been developed with housing (Buckle Close) and the factory building redeveloped, leaving the front façade only facing Bath Street. Along Windmill Street, but outside the conservation area, are a number of derelict former factories, presumably awaiting redevelopment. St Michael's Church of 1871 was built to provide Caldmore and Highgate with a place of worship.



*Sandwell Street*

*Spatial features and views*

This part of Highgate has a simple street layout on a grid pattern, confirming the planned nature of its development. A narrow alleyway, shown on the 1845 Map and presumably representing an older footpath, survives on the south side of the buildings fronting Newhall Street. The buildings sit on the back of the pavement, with nos. 52-57 Bath Street still retaining a large partially enclosed courtyard to the rear, which is visible from Windmill Street through an opening in the well detailed brick wall. The elevated position provides long views to the west over Walsall, particularly down the hill in Hope Street.

*The buildings and their details*

There are only six historic buildings in this Character Area, all of them of note. St Michael's Church is grade II listed and provides a good example of its type being built from red sandstone in the Early English style. An adjoining vicarage is of a similar date, and although not listed, is well designed and important in the streetscape. Further along Bath Street are three former industrial buildings – Maxsys House, a well detailed red brick two storey former facto, notable for its corner entrance and cast iron windows; no. 59, the former Glebeland Works, of which only the front elevation remains; and nos. 51-57 Bath Street, once the Bath Street Works but now called Holland House. This was originally a buckle and harness manufacturers and a plaque on the front elevation records that the Bath Street Works was established in 1800. It is now used as offices. No. 59 and nos. 51-57 are locally listed. Turning the corner into Newhall Street, nos. 47 and 49 Bath Street are less impressively detailed, being faced in painted render with more simple details, but again, they enclose a courtyard which is accessed via a cart entrance facing Bath Street. All of these buildings, apart from the vicarage, are 'focal' buildings in that they dominate the streetscape and views along these streets.



*St Michael's Church, St Michael's Street*



*Maxsys House, Bath Street*



*Entrance to Nos.51-57, Bath Street*



### *Negative or neutral features*

- Nos. 47 and 49 Bath Street are 'To Let' and would benefit from the restoration of their original windows, and the removal of modern features such as the metal flue in the front roof slope;
- Upvc windows in many of the buildings;
- Buckle Close is a modern development of terraced houses with a suburban layout which relates poorly to the grain and scale of the surroundings.

### **Character Area 2: Sandwell Street**

#### *General character, historical development and present-day uses*

Sandwell Street, leading down to Follyhouse Lane, is a residential area encompassing just one commercial building, the White Lion Public House. The northern end of Sandwell Street, leading up to the junction with Newhall Street, lies outside the conservation area boundary and provides more mixed uses and some modern development. Sandwell Street is shown on the 1845 Tithe Map as 'Doveridge' with a few buildings fronting the road, namely what is now nos. 137-141 Sandwell Street, the original White Lion Inn, and some small cottages. ('Folly House' is shown on the 1845 map and was located next to 'Hawthorne Villa', now called The Hawthornes in Highgate Road). Follyhouse Lane is an unadopted, more tranquil, road which retains a rural quality.



*Sandwell Street (north)*

#### *Spatial features and views*

Sandwell Street drops gently southwards down a hill, flattening out beyond the current conservation area boundary towards the commencement of West Bromwich Road. The

buildings are set back from the road with a fairly common building line, creating small front gardens, although many of these have been converted into car parking spaces. Some of these sit up a raised bank, sometimes faced with a local black stone (which is also used for boundary walls) creating a greater sense of enclosure. A few mature trees in these front gardens provide some welcome 'greenery'. Green Hill Walk is a narrow alleyway which leads through from Follyhouse Lane and is paved in blue Staffordshire brick pavements.

There are long views along the street, particularly focused on the White Lion Public House (which is a notable focal point), but none beyond the buildings themselves.

#### *The buildings and their details*

Apart from the early 19th century houses in Doveridge Place and Little London, most of the houses on the west side of Sandwell Street were built between 1887 and 1903. The buildings on the east side of the road are early 20th century or Inter-War. Many of the houses are built in short terraces or as pairs. Nos. 1-4 Doveridge Place are the most important, being grade II listed and have been dated back to 1781. Originally just one room deep, the last two of the terrace have unfortunately been demolished. Sir Henry Newbolt lived in one of the demolished houses, and Howard Fletcher, founder of Highgate brewery, lived at no. 6 in 1871. Three storeys high, they are built from a deep red brick and retain some of their original six over six sash windows, bracket door hoods.



*No. 137, Sandwell Street (locally listed)*



Further south, nos. 137-141 Sandwell Street are a short terrace of well preserved brick cottages which date to c1840. Stone window and door lintels, and some original six over six sash windows, add to their attractions. They are locally listed. Close by, the White Lion Public House is a prominent corner building which represents the rebuilding of an earlier building which took place in c1890. Built from red brick with half-timbered gables, the three storey building retains a single storey original side extension facing Little London, with smaller but matching timbered gables. Some of the original one over one sash windows survive.

Otherwise, the two storey buildings are typical of the late 19th century being built from red brick, often with stone string courses and, or, terracotta details at the eaves. The roofs are covered in Welsh slate which are enlivened by the thick chimney stacks. Some of the houses have canted ground floor bays, with moulded cornice details. No. 79 Sandwell Street is a particularly good example of the local 'vernacular', being a detached house which is symmetrically arranged around a heavily moulded front door. The Article 4 Direction does not cover this part of the conservation area. Occasionally, a house retains a well detailed original brick boundary wall.

#### *Negative or neutral features*

- Many of the houses have been adversely affected by the insertion of uPVC windows (sometimes changing the original window openings) or front doors;
- Many of the original ground floor bay windows have either been replaced or otherwise unsympathetically altered;
- Some of the houses have been painted, obscuring the original brickwork;
- The almost universal loss of front boundaries and gardens in sections of Sandwell Street to car parking, and the use of a variety of modern paving materials;
- Overhead cables and dominant telegraph poles;
- A certain amount of modern infill development, of not special merit but fortunately mostly copying the prevailing historic building line;
- Satellite dishes on the front elevations of a number of the buildings which are presumably unauthorised.



*Sandwell Street (central)*

### *Character Area 3: Highgate Road*

#### *General character, historical development and present-day uses*

This is a totally residential area, developed from farmland in an incremental, informal way from the mid 19th century onwards. Highgate Road, once called Windmill Lane, is a narrow, enclosed street with an almost rural quality which is reinforced by the many mature trees and spacious plots sizes, particularly around Fairfield Mount. This is a development of four pairs of houses, two of which were built by 1887 although they have been added to, altered and infilled since. The surviving tower of the late 18th century windmill is another reminder that until the mid 19th century this area was primarily in agricultural uses, and part of a former malthouse remains between Highgate Road and Highgate Avenue. 20th century development in the central section of the street has impacted on the overall quality of this part of the conservation area.

#### *Spatial features and views*

To the north, Highgate Road is enclosed by brick walls before the junction with Sandwell Lane. The back boundaries of the houses facing Sandwell Lane are visible and in some cases have been removed to allow vehicle access. More mixed development, some of it historic, helps to reinforce the street-side boundaries further southwards along Highgate Road. Views of the top of the brewery chimney are also important in views along both Highgate Road and along Drayman Close. To the south, the enclosed nature of the road, which also winds gently, means that there are no views out although glimpsed views of the windmill tower do provide a small degree of focus. Overall, the many mature trees, spacious gardens, brick boundary walls and hedges in many parts of Highgate Road help to shield the buildings from public view and reinforce the sylvan character of the area.



*Nos. 79-85 (odd), Highgate Road*

#### *The buildings and their details*

The only listed building is the windmill tower (grade II), built from brick and altered in the early 20th century. Otherwise, the late 19th century houses in Fairfield Mount provide a somewhat altered example of well detailed late 19th century villas, including the use of dark red brick, slate roofs, symmetrically arranged front elevations and central front doors. No. 73 is probably the best (and most visible example) although the windows have recently been replaced. No. 2 Highgate Road sits behind a high brick wall and is the remaining half of a pair of houses shown on the 1887 map, the other half having been demolished to allow the development of Frederick Court. A modern two storey porch has been added to the southern elevation, but otherwise the shallow hipped slate roof and (altered) sash windows suggests a date of c1860. On the opposite side of the road, no. 91 Highgate Road is an unusual (in this setting) example of a substantial stuccoed villa of c1850 with a symmetrical frontage facing the road and shallow hipped slated roof. The central front door is six panelled and heavily moulded, with two Tuscan columns supporting a simple entablature to create a doorcase. On either side are canted bay windows with pilasters supporting a heavily moulded cornice. Further along the street the south are two unusual pairs of tall late 19th century houses with canted ground floor bays, tripartite sash windows and gabled second floors. Beacon Villa and its neighbour were once one house and were built in c1870 from red brick with shallow hipped slate roofs. The elevation facing south is the best preserved with a pair of canted bay windows and original open porch.





No.91, Highgate Road

All of the historic houses in this part of the conservation area are covered by the Article 4 Direction.

#### *Negative or neutral features*

- The poor condition of the listed windmill tower;
- Highview is a very large block of flats dating to the 1990s which was built in the large garden of a 19th century house which was demolished to make way for the new development;
- Drayman Close is a more recent development of houses and flats, some of which are three storeys high, which were allowed on appeal;
- The enclosed character of Highgate Road has been lost in places due to the loss of front boundaries, usually to create car parking, for the houses not covered by the Article 4 Direction;
- Some poor quality front boundaries, some of them built using modern, non-traditional materials;
- The substantial amount of remodeling and redevelopment of the properties in Fairfield Mount.

### *Character Area 4: Belvidere Road*

#### *General character, historical development and present-day uses*

Belvidere Road is an almost totally residential street which did not exist before Lord Bradford started selling off building leases in the 1860s. The road was laid out between Snake's Lane (now Highgate Avenue) and Highgate Road and the houses were built first in the west and extreme east, the houses to the immediate east of Snake's Lane (which is preserved by the line of the alleyway to Sandy Mount Road) appearing between 1887 and 1903. Belvidere Road therefore represents a small development of more 'planned' houses although they are varied in style and materials. These properties, all of which are covered by the Article 4 Direction, provide the best preserved examples of more prestigious 19th century houses in the conservation area.

#### *Spatial features and views*

The relatively short road is wide and spacious with the buildings set back on the north side slightly more than on the south. A common building on either side provides some regularity. Mature trees, front boundary walls and attractive gardens all reinforce the pleasantly suburban character of the area. The road does fall in level towards the east, proving some distant views of the countryside beyond Walsall.

#### *The buildings and their details*

The 25 historic houses in Belvidere road are both detached or built in pairs, sometimes creating a short terrace. In addition, four modern houses have been added, largely relatively unobtrusively. The most notable houses are nos. 6 and 8 which are locally listed. No. 6 is a typical 'Staffordshire' house, built from red brick with bluey-black brick decoration, sash windows, and a slate roof with decorated red clay ridge tiles. The moulded chimneys are topped with 'castle' clay pots, and the front door is defined by a timber porch, possibly a slightly later addition but in keeping. Two gables add to the asymmetry of the front façade. By contrast, no 8 is stuccoed and painted cream with a more classical façade, with sash windows and canted or square bay windows to the ground floor. A corbelled doorhood defines the front door.



No.6, Belvidere Road

Otherwise the buildings largely follow the style, details and materials of no. 6 although each house is different. The only degree of greater conformity is provided by nos. 15-19 which form a group and appear to have been built last. No. 94 has a particularly fine terracotta eaves cornice, a typical 'Staffordshire' detail. No. 25 is a 'one off', a tall (three storey) building with a slated tower topped by cast iron railings, and next door, no. 24 is also unusual, with Dutch gables and terracotta details. On the other side, no. 26 turns the corner into Jesson Road and is a substantial villa with an attractively detailed open porch supported on Gothic columns. The brick boundary wall around the site is of special merit, and visually links to similar walls on the other side of the street.



No.25, Belvidere Road

#### *Negative or neutral features*

- Cars parked on the pavement, mainly in the western end of the road, creating a cluttered appearance;
- The poor condition and surface finishes of the alley way to Sandy Mount Road;

- The loss of some original windows despite the Article 4 Direction;
- No. 25 - all of the windows have been replaced in uPVC and a satellite dish installed on the front elevation;
- Some infill development of no special merit;
- Some of the trees appear to be in need of pruning or other work;
- Some non-native coniferous trees of little positive visual value.

#### ***Character Area 5: Highgate Brewery, Sandy Mount Road, Emery Street and Jesson Road***

##### *General character, historical development and present-day uses*

This Character Area includes the grade II listed brewery and groups of high quality terraced houses which date to the late 19th century. The Tithe Map of 1845 confirms that at this date, the area was fields, linked by the northern continuation of Snake's Lane. This is still recognised in the alley which leads from Belvidere Road to Sandy Mount Road. On the Tithe Map, lot 2006 appears to mark the present boundary of the brewery, which was built in 1897-8 on the site of a former sand pit – the map of 1887 shows this as a dip in the ground, the name of the adjoining large house, 'Sandy Mount', confirming this geological feature. Sandy Mount, its large garden, and the land associated with Belle Vue to the north, were eventually developed for housing (Emery Close and The Pines) in the Post WW2 period. A few houses are shown along the northern end of Emery Street by 1887, and by 1903 had been completed, along with further new houses in 'Lodge Street', later renamed Sandy Mount Road. Nos. 31, 33 and 35 Sandy Mount Road were built between 1903 and 1916, the rest of the road (which is outside the conservation area) remaining undeveloped until post-1945. The Terraced houses in Jesson Road would appear to also date to the late 19th century.



### *The buildings and their details*

The most important building is the grade II listed brewery, dating to the late 19th century and providing the conservation area with its most notable focal building, its tall square brick chimney being visible from many locations within the conservation area. The five storey building retains some of its original cast iron windows and because it is in use appears to be well maintained although there have been some unsympathetic changes such as the installation of modern shutters. The site is also notable for the survival of a number of single storey offices and store rooms which add to the historic setting of the principal building. To mark the centenary of its construction, new metal front gates were provided by the Friends of Highgate Brewery. Next to the entrance, nos. 31, 33 and 35 Sandy Mount Road are typical of the period, with red brick elevations, margin light sash windows, and very slightly protruding front bay windows.



*Emery Street*

Emery Street and Jesson Road contain extremely well detailed late 19th century terraced houses, the ones in Jesson Road being larger with original three light dormers topped by small pediments. The Article 4 Direction covers most of these buildings, excluding some along the east side of Emery Street where presumably it was considered that the buildings were too altered already. Where the buildings have been protected, the survival of the original features such as the sash windows, terracotta detailing, and bay windows is noticeable. Nos. 32 - 64 Emery Street are also notable for the curved relieving arches over the tripartite ground floor windows and single upper floor windows, and for their slate roofs with brick chimney stacks and clay pots. Some of the ground floor bay windows on the east side of Emery Street have attractive timber fascias with pretty details such as brackets and gothic-style decoration.



*Nos. 31-35 (odd), Sandy Mount Road*

Today, apart from the brewery, which is still brewing beer, the uses are all residential.

### *Spatial features and views*

The area is notable for its simple grid of residential street and for the way the old thoroughfare (Snake's Lane) can still be traced in the alleyway next to the brewery. The terraced houses sit back slightly from the pavement, providing small front gardens defined by hedges or low brick walls, some of which have the characteristic Staffordshire blue brick copings. The area undulates slightly and there are interesting views which focus on the brewery (particularly its very tall chimney) and along each street.



*Highgate Brewery*



Nos.2-26 (even), Jesson Road

#### Negative or neutral features

- Some unsympathetic alterations to the listed brewery;
- The poor quality of the surface to the alleyway (black tarmacadam rather than the more traditional Staffordshire blue paviments) next to the brewery;
- A number of inappropriate alterations to the houses which are covered by the Article 4 Direction, of uncertain date;
- Other changes to the remaining historic buildings, such as rendering or painting of the original brickwork; insertion of uPVC windows; use of concrete tiles instead of slate; and the loss of moulded eaves detailing;
- Lorries accessing the brewery, and some other fast moving traffic;
- Parked cars on the pavement;
- Some satellite dishes on the front elevations of the houses;
- Telegraph poles and overhead cables;
- Visible satellite dishes on front elevations;
- Poor quality front boundaries, like the concrete wall in front of no. 32 Emery Street, or the altered low brick wall in front of no. 38;
- No. 12 Jesson Road has been painted, the windows changed to uPVC, and the front garden converted to car parking (with no. 14).



## PART 3 THE MANAGEMENT PLAN

### 8 SUMMARY OF ISSUES

- The poor condition of the listed windmill tower;
- Some recent development has impinged on the historical layout, historic building lines, and architectural character, of the conservation area, namely Drayman Close and Highview;
- Some properties covered by the Article 4 Direction have been unsympathetically altered, although the dates of these changes is uncertain; other historic properties are not included within the Article 4 Direction area;
- Some car parking on the pavements, particularly the western end of Belvidere Road;



*On-street parking in Belvidere Road*

- The use of tarmacadam for side alleys rather than the traditional Staffordshire blue pavements, as in Green Hill Walk;
- Poor condition of some of the trees e.g. Belvidere Road and Fairfield Mount;



*Trees in the conservation area need to be protected (Belvidere Road)*

- The loss of front gardens to car parking (despite the Article 4 Direction);
- A number of satellite dishes on front elevations;
- A few poor quality front boundaries;
- A sizeable extension to the existing conservation area is proposed to include the southern ends of Sandwell Street and Highgate Road, as well as Vincent Street;
- A number of buildings and features are proposed for local listing.

### 9 CONSERVATION AREA BOUNDARY REVIEW

As part of the survey work for the Character Appraisal, and following recommendations made by the local community during the walkabout on 28 April 2009, a large addition is proposed to the existing conservation area to include the southern ends of Sandwell Street and Highgate Road, as well as Vincent Street. This is shown on Map 4 *Conservation Area Boundary Review*. The western side of Sandwell Street, including the two terraces (nos. 178 – 228, and 230 – 248) were built between 1887 and 1903, along with nos. 32 – 54 Vincent Street, which had only been recently laid out, connecting Sandwell Street to Follyhouse Lane. By 1916 paired houses (nos. 187 – 213) had been built along the east side of Sandwell Street and similar properties (nos. 29 – 49 and 16 – 30) added in Vincent Street.



*Highgate Road (south)*



*Well detailed houses in Vincent Street*

The building of Highgate Road was probably instigated by the development of the Gorway estate and the construction of Highgate House in the 1850s, providing a more convenient and prestigious link to the south west of the town. On the 1887 map, it is shown as a wide road which bends at its junction with 'Folly Lane' and then bends again along what is now Gorway Road. There are just two buildings shown on the map – The Hawthorns (then called Hawthorne Villas) and Highgate Place, a development of just four houses (now nos. 32 – 38) in the central part of the southern section of the road which is dated 1883. By 1903 most of the buildings in street had been built apart from the more westerly properties which were added by 1916.

The properties in these three streets, Sandwell Street, Highgate Road and Vincent Street, were therefore mainly built in the late 19th century

or early 20th century. Despite no statutory protection, they remain remarkably cohesive and have not been particularly altered although the use of uPVC windows is a negative feature, particularly in Sandwell Street where traffic noise is more of a problem. The houses in Highgate Road are slightly higher status and many of them retain their original front boundaries, timber sash windows, and heavily moulded panelled front doors. Turning into the more northerly section of Highgate Road, up to and slightly beyond the junction with Gorway Road, the streetscape is defined by a number of high quality boundary walls and the many mature trees. This area contains a number of prestigious middle-class detached houses of which no. 68 (Cremlin) is the finest. It is dated 1893 and is two storeys high with an attic floor. Built from red brick, with stone lined bay windows and a clay tiled roof, it dominates views along the street. On



the opposite side of the road, Crossways is a neo-Tudor house, now used as a Care Home, which is stylistically completely different to the other houses in the area. However, its bold black and white timbering, use of gables, casement or mullioned and transomed windows all provide some variety within an area where the usual style was a form of classical Arts and Crafts. Next to Crossways, no. 64 is noted as The Vicarage and is another high status red brick house with a particularly notable front

boundary wall with curved blue brick copings. The Vicarage is built from red brick with a modillion eaves cornice, white painted stone lintels, architraves and string courses. Canute Close is a modern development which is enclosed by a particularly high quality front boundary wall, included within the proposed boundary. On the northern side of the road, nos. 49/51 and 53/55 are large, late 19th century semi-detached houses, again built from red brick but with more gothic details, such as gables and pointed arches.



*Crossways, Highgate Road*



*Houses in Highgate Road (south)*

Another much more minor alteration to the existing conservation area is shown on Map 4 *Conservation Area Boundary Review*. This is the inclusion of a group of four relatively unaltered 1970s houses, of some interest in their own right, to the east side of Highgate Road. These buildings sit back from the narrow lane with a number of mature trees in their gardens, and their front gardens and planting add to the visual qualities of the conservation area.

## 10 PROPOSED ADDITIONS TO THE LOCAL LIST

The following buildings are proposed to be added to Walsall Council's list of locally significant buildings (the 'Local List'). Locally Listed buildings are protected under Policy ENV28 of the Walsall Unitary Development Plan, and whilst they do not have the statutory protection afforded to 'listed' buildings, which are listed under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, the Council will ensure that all applications for change

which would affect locally listed buildings are particularly carefully considered. In addition, there is a presumption that all locally listed buildings should remain, so any applications for demolition are likely to be refused. The preparation of guidance for the owners of locally listed buildings would be welcome, to explain the significance of owning such a building and setting out how the Council will deal with applications for change in the future.

The proposed additions to the local list in the existing and proposed Highgate Conservation Area are as follows:

### 1 *The Vicarage, no. 12 St Michael's Street*

A substantial purpose-built vicarage which dates to c1877 when the church was completed. Natural slate roof, red brick, bath stone dressings, casement and sash windows.

*Reason for local listing:* An important historic building built in close association with the adjoining grade II listed Church.



*The Vicarage, St Michael's street*



## 2 Maxsys House, Bath Street

A two storey building former factory located prominently on the corner with St Michael's Street. Built between 1887 and 1903. High quality brick details with terracotta eaves cornice. Four windows wide to St Michael's Street and nine windows wide to Bath Street. Arched windows set in matching arched recesses. Some original cast iron windows remain. Retains 'St Michael's Street' historic street sign on southern elevation.



Side elevation, Maxsys House

*Reason for local listing:* A fine example of a former factory in the more industrial part of the Highgate Conservation Area, relatively unaltered.

## 3 The White Lion Public House, Sandwell Street

Late 19th century rebuilt of earlier inn, wrapping around a prominent corner site. Two storeys high plus attics, the attic windows set in half timbered gables either side of a decorative pediment which marks the corner. Clay tiled roof. Red brick with Bath stone dressings. Five windows wide facing Sandwell Street and two windows wide facing Little London. Single storey contemporary extension to west, again with half timbered gables. Corner entrance now blocked. North elevation retains 'Little London' historic street sign.



The White Lion Public House, Sandwell Street

*Reason for local listing:* A well preserved example of a purpose built late 19th century public house, prominently located.

## 4 No. 91 Highgate Road

A substantial two storey stuccoed villa of c1850 with a shallow pitched slated roof (chimneys have been reduced in height). Three windows wide with central front door, with canted abys to either side. Front door is defined by Tuscan columns supporting a simple flat pediment. The original front door is six panelled, with heavy mouldings. The bay windows to either side have pilasters supporting the heavily moulded cornice. Margin lights sashes to first floor, plain sashes to ground floor.



Entrance detail: No. 91, Highgate Road

*Reason for local listing:* An unusual example (for Highgate) of a stuccoed mid-19th century villa, well preserved.

5 *No. 26 Belvidere Road (including boundary wall)*

A substantial two storey red brick villa on prominent corner plot. Built in c1870. Pyramid slated roof with tall red and blue brick chimney stacks, asymmetrically arranged. Three windows wide facing Jesson Road, with central porch with gothic decoration. Two windows wide facing Belvidere Road, the windows to the ground floor being square bays with highly decorated eaves. Two metres high brick boundary wall with triangular terracotta copings.



*No.26, Belvidere Road*

*Reason for local listing:* A prominent unaltered house with high quality details such as the porch and bay windows.

6 *Cremlin, no. 68 Highgate Road*

A substantial two storey plus attic house built in 1893 (date on cast iron down pipe on west elevation). Prominent corner location, irregular composition. Clay tiled roof with gables facing south and west. Tall brick chimneys. Mixed fenestration including tripartite sash windows and oriel bay to ground floor facing Highgate Road, with stained glass set into sashes. Original brick boundary wall and corner entrance, defined by brick and stone piers. Contemporary single storey gabled extension facing Highgate Road, probably the service rooms.



*Cremlin, Highgate Road*

*Reason for local listing:* A prominent higher status house which appears to be unaltered.

7 *The Vicarage, no. 64 Highgate Road*

Symmetrical two storey villa of c1890. Red brick with shallow hipped slated roof and modillion eaves cornice. Italianate style with white painted architraves around the sash windows. Double front doors sit in a shallow protruding bay, with two windows above. Side elevation to Gorway Close has full height canted bay.



*The Vicarage, Highgate Road*

*Reason for local listing:* A prominent higher status house which appears to be unaltered.



## 11 THE ARTICLE 4 DIRECTION

Under schedule 2 of the General Permitted Development Order (GPDO) 1995, and as amended in 2008, planning permission is not required for a range of minor alterations or extensions to family houses which are considered to be 'permitted development'. However, in conservation areas greater restrictions automatically apply and planning permission is required for alterations such as the addition of dormer windows, the installation of particular types of cladding, the erection of satellite dishes on a wall or roof slope facing a highway, and extensions over a certain size. Recent changes (2008) have also removed the necessity of applying for planning permission in a conservation area for solar heating panels on the front facing roof of family dwellings, though permission is required for locating them on the front-facing wall. Since 2008, planning permission is also required for new boiler flues and or soil vent pipes on the front elevation.

However, the rules regarding the need for planning permission within conservation areas are quite complex so it is always advisable to contact Walsall Council to check before commencing any work.

Commercial properties, houses in multiple occupation (such as flats or bedsits) and listed buildings have far fewer permitted development rights than family houses so it is likely that permission will be needed from the Council for a wide range of alterations, including, for listed buildings, alterations to the interior.

Articles 4 (1) and 4(2) of the 1995 Order enable local planning authorities to make certain directions withdrawing permitted development rights. Article 4 (1) Directions can be used to withdraw permitted development rights from any type of land or building, but they need to be approved by the Secretary of State. Article 4 (2) Directions can be used to withdraw permitted development rights for a range of alterations or small extensions to family houses in conservation areas, and are served by the local planning authority concerned without reference to the Secretary of State, after public consultation. The Council can use Article 4 (2) Directions to protect conservation areas from the sort of incremental minor alterations to the fabric of the building, such

as the loss of traditional windows, doors, roof materials or chimneys, which cumulatively can have an adverse effect on the special character or appearance of that area.

Under previous legislation, an Article 4 Direction was served on some of the residential buildings in the Highgate Conservation Area in 1991, one of only two such Directions in the whole Borough. Its effect is similar to a post-1995 Article 4 (2) Direction but includes residential and commercial properties, as well as the listed buildings within the conservation area. The Direction covers selected properties in Sandwell Street, Highgate Road, Belvidere Road, Sandy Mount Road, Emery Street and Jesson Road. Unlisted houses where unsympathetic alterations had already occurred were omitted. A leaflet for householders was prepared at the time. This detailed the types of 'permitted development' for which planning permission would now be required. Briefly this is as follows:



*The buildings in Emery Street are covered by the existing Article 4 Direction*

- Small extensions to any elevation visible from the public highway;
- Changes to the windows, window openings, and door and door openings;
- The addition of any type of external cladding or surface treatment such as render;
- Painting previously unpainted surfaces;
- Changes to the roof including the addition of dormers or the demolition of chimneys;
- Changes to roof materials;

- The addition of a porch;
- Changes to the land around buildings, such as paving or other hard surfacing, fencing, sheds, garages and swimming pools;
- Demolition or erection of boundary walls and fences, including gates;
- Creation of vehicular access off the highway.

The time has now come to review this Article 4 Direction in the light of changes to the GPDO in 1995 and 2008. It is proposed that the existing Article 4 Direction is replaced with a new Article 4 (2) to cover all of the unlisted residential properties within the existing conservation area and within the proposed extension. This would focus on the principal changes the Council wishes to control, namely:

- Changes to the roofs and chimneys, including roof materials\*;
- Changes to the front elevations including new windows, doors, boiler flues, or soil vent pipes\*;
- Adding cladding or a new finish such as render or paint to an existing surface\*;
- The addition of a porch\*;
- Creation of vehicular hardstandings;
- Demolition, alteration or replacement of front boundaries.

\*Changes will only be controlled on elevations or roof slopes which face the public highway.



*Well detailed front boundary walls like this one in Highgate Road (south) need to be protected*

It is accepted that some of the houses previously excluded from the existing Article 4 Direction would come under the new Article 4(2) Direction. However, this is considered necessary as although control cannot be enforced retrospectively, it is hoped that in time the use of traditional materials and details will become to be accepted and incrementally these buildings will be restored to their original appearance. If deemed necessary, the Council could also consider serving an Article 4(1) Direction to prevent unsuitable development within the curtilages of commercial buildings, buildings in multiple occupation, and listed buildings. This would have to be approved by the Secretary of State.

When the new Article 4 (2) Direction is served (which will have to be served once the new extension to the conservation area is designated), the Council should produce a new guidance leaflet for property owners in the conservation area, setting out the requirements for planning permission and explaining how the new Article 4 (2) Direction is to be applied. On or about the day of serving, the Council should carry out a building by building photographic survey to record the existing condition of each building and as an aid to possible enforcement action in the future.

## 12 OPPORTUNITIES FOR ENHANCEMENT

### *Buildings or sites in need of improvement*

Because there are no public open spaces (apart from the streets themselves) there are very limited opportunities for enhancement within the conservation area, other than the improvement of individual buildings as detailed below.

#### *Windmill tower, Highgate Road*

This is listed grade II. It is not used although the adjoining cottage is occupied (not by the owner of the windmill). Encouraged by the Council, the owner of the windmill has cleared ivy from around the base of the tower within the last few years. However a full assessment of the current condition of the building is needed, to see the extent of deterioration. Once this has been done, the owner should be approached to see whether a programme of repairs can be agreed. If negotiations fail,



the Council should consider serving an Urgent Works Notice to make the building wind and weather tight. Ultimately, the Council should also consider a full Repairs Notice, which can lead to compulsory acquisition if the owner refuses to repair the listed building.

#### *Alley to east side of Highgate Brewery (formerly part of Snake's Lane)*

This has been resurfaced using black tarmac, leaving poor quality spaces around the edge of the pathway. In the long term, the removal of this finish and the use of Staffordshire blue pavements should be sought, along with improved street lighting and street furniture of an appropriate design.



*The alley next to Highgate Brewery would benefit from improvements*

#### *Green Hill Walk*

A comprehensive improvement scheme, to include paving, boundaries and a cleansing regime, would be welcome. The existing pavements must be retained and any repairs carried out in matching materials.



*Green Hill Walk*

#### *Streetscape and public realm*

Throughout the conservation area, pavements are almost universally covered in black tarmac, fortunately in many locations retaining the original stone kerbing. Green Hill Walk is the only example of historic paving (Staffordshire blue brick pavements) in the public areas, although there are more examples on private land, where they are used to pave alleyways and front pathways. Street lighting is provided by inconspicuous steel columns. There is little street furniture apart from the occasional litter bin.

The most notable historic feature of the public realm is a number of historic street signs, black on white ceramic, which can be seen on many of the older buildings, such as the White Lion Public House with its 'Little London' sign. These add greatly to the ambiance of the area and contribute to the sense of local distinctiveness within the Borough. They should therefore be preserved *in situ*. The Council has adopted a universal design for new street signs, comprising a brown aluminium sign with white letters, which is generally supported on short (about 600 mm) metal posts. This means that the old street signs are not being maintained by the Council, so the owners of the buildings on which they are located should be encouraged to look after the old signs and ensure that they are not painted over, removed, or otherwise destroyed.

There may be opportunities for some very limited traffic calming in certain locations within the conservation area, to reduce



vehicle speed and make pedestrian movement through the conservation area safer. Any proposals will need to be very carefully and simply designed to reduce the amount of new signage which will be necessary, and the local community should also be fully consulted.

One of the issues raised by the stakeholders in April 2009 was the possible provision of street signs to denote that the boundary of the conservation is being crossed, to promote a better sense of community and 'pride of place'. This could be added to the existing standard brown signs, but more discussions with the Council's Highways Department will be necessary. The name of the conservation area could potentially also be added to any street furniture, such as litter bins, possibly utilising a new 'logo' which would be unique to Highgate.

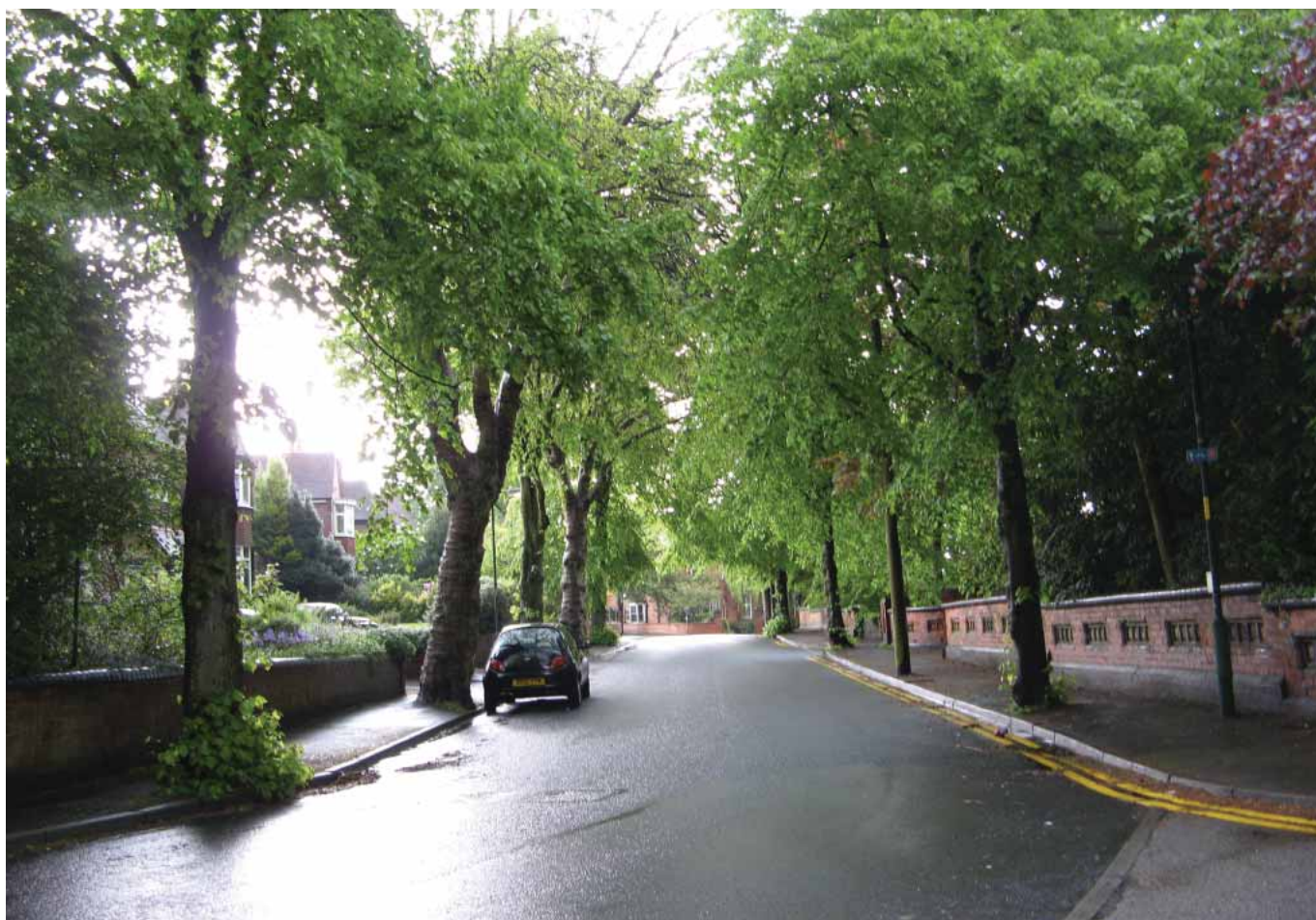
The Council has published a Highway Maintainability Audit which has been developed to ensure that work carried out on the public highway takes on board the future maintenance implications and the cost to the authority. A copy is available on the Council's website.



*Trees in Highgate Road (north)*

### *Trees*

Trees are a vital part of the character and appearance of the Highgate Conservation Area. As part of the appraisal process, trees that make a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the conservation area have been identified and recorded, including details of their species, stage of maturity and approximate height, with notes on their condition where appropriate. Trees were inspected from publicly accessible areas only and, as such, it was not possible to gain the same level of information for trees within private gardens, particularly in the rear of private properties, as for street trees and those on front boundaries.



*Trees in Highgate Road (south)*



## *Policy guidance for tree management*

Reference should be made to the policies contained within the draft Urban Forest Strategy and in particular the *General Policies for Tree Management*.

- Policy 1: The Council will ensure that the tree population continues to be protected, developed and expanded where appropriate.
- Policy 2: The Council will aim to provide a sustainable, high quality tree population. Where appropriate the Council will aim to plant trees of local provenance. These will be planted to maximise habitats for wildlife and to encourage biodiversity.
- Policy 5: The Council will foremost consider its obligation to ensure the health and safety of both people and property when undertaking management decisions in relation to trees.
- Policy 6: The removal of any tree will be resisted unless there is a sound arboricultural, silvicultural or safety reason to indicate otherwise, or in the case of development sites appropriate mitigating measures are taken in accordance with current planning policies.

UDP policies ENV 17 “New Planting” and 18 Existing Woodlands, Trees and Hedgerows” are pertinent and require the Council to ensure the planting of new trees and positive management for its existing ones.

## *Trees in private gardens*

Anyone proposing to carry out works to trees in a conservation area must give six weeks written notice to the Council. The majority of trees within the Highgate Conservation Area are located in private gardens or other privately owned land, reflecting the lack of public open space in this area. This is the situation recorded on the 1st Edition of the 25” Ordnance Survey map, produced in 1887. Many properties have retained large garden trees, including maples, limes, beech, holly, hawthorn and Lombardy poplar amongst others. Many of these trees grow to a large size, providing a valuable vertical element as well as attractive dense foliage between spring and autumn. A particular focus

of these larger and native varieties was noted in the south of the conservation area between Folly House Lane and Highgate Road, which is the area shown as well treed and parcelled up for development on the map of 1887. One as yet undeveloped plot remains in this area, just to the south of no. 51 Folly House Lane, which includes at least two black poplars, which are recorded as nationally scarce. The narrow alleyway between these two lanes is shaded by tall trees to either side, creating a tree lined tunnel that is an interesting route during the day but must be an uninviting area after dark. The gardens of Doveridge Place also provide a focus of large and attractive trees, although they are only appreciable from a small area of path to the front of these properties.

Large trees in the gardens of properties either side of Highgate Road, including the flatted development at High View, nos. 84 – 90 Highgate Road (east side), outside the conservation area, and nos. 89, 93 and 97 Sandwell Street, help to screen views of modern development and reinforce the sylvan qualities of the area.

Trees introduced as ornamental garden species include flowering cherry, silver birch, laburnum, lilac, eucalyptus, robinia and cyprus trees. These provide additional colour and interest and, to some extent, reflect the varieties becoming available to middle class households in the late 19th and early 20th century as this area was being developed as a residential suburb of Walsall. As such, a notable concentration of these varieties is found in the attractive front gardens of properties along Belvidere Road.

A belt of trees that surrounds the Highgate Brewery site is mostly made up of semi- mature and mature examples, which provide a tall screen of trees and foliage. To the north of the site this preserves a feature of the garden planting of Sandy Mount, a large property recorded as standing to the north of the Brewery site on the map of 1887. This tree belt has an important role in reducing the intrusion of industrial activity within the site on neighbouring residential properties.

Trees within the grounds of no. 7 Highgate Road screen views to the former windmill tower, reducing its prominence within the area. Some consideration should be given to reducing the height of the tree coverage within this area to help increase the visibility of this important listed structure.

The Council will require detailed tree surveys of prospective development sites and, where trees are to be retained in new development, proposals demonstrating that the trees will be suitably protected from damage during construction will be required. If a preserved tree dies of natural causes, has to be felled due to its dangerous condition or is destroyed illegally, a replacement tree is a statutory requirement by law though this is imposed at the discretion of the Council. Any replanting should be of an appropriate species which respects the historical context and size of its plot. The size, species and location of replacement trees will be at the discretion of the Tree Officer. All work will be undertaken by a qualified contractor. Significant views of trees should be retained.

#### *Public realm tree planting*

The conservation area has no significant public open spaces and, therefore, trees in the public realm are restricted to street trees and trees planted as part landscaping for modern building developments, as at Drayman Close and Buckle Close. A small group of street trees, all limes, is located on the eastern edge of the conservation area (outside its current boundary) at Jesson Road, which are continued to the east along Jesson Road as a more substantial avenue.

Other, recent public realm planting has used varieties of sorbus including hybrids of *Sorbus aucuparia* (rowan or mountain ash) to provide low growing trees with highly coloured fruit to give seasonal interest and requiring minimal management. However, whilst they are relatively robust, they rarely provide a substantial tree and have a very loose canopy that does not make the type of contribution provided by larger growing trees such as small leaved lime. A very densely growing Swedish whitebeam (*Sorbus intermedia*) on Emery Street, just outside the conservation area, demonstrates the denser canopy of this species, which gives it a greater presence as a street tree, although *Sorbus aria* provides a native alternative with a similar growing habit that might be preferred if new street planting is required. However, given the current focus of tree planting in private gardens, which reflects the area's historical development, it is considered preferable to restrict new public realm planting within the conservation area to those areas such as Jesson Road, where street trees already provide a part of the established character, possibly extending the current group of limes to follow the road northwards.

#### *Policies for the maintenance and enhancement of existing buildings*

Generally, the buildings in the conservation area, and within the proposed extension, are popular family houses which are considered to be desirable residences and have been well maintained. The biggest threat comes from unsympathetic alterations such as the use of concrete roof tiles, uPVC windows or the loss of front boundaries. For most of the buildings in the conservation area, the existing Article 4 Direction already controls these, but the serving of a new Article 4 (2) Direction will bring all of the houses under the same controls and should incrementally ensure the future preservation and enhancement of the conservation area. The Article 4 Direction will also help to remind owners of their location within the conservation area, which brings certain responsibilities as well as providing an attractive environment.



*Unlisted 'positive' house in Highgate Road*

- Regular maintenance should be carried out to prevent, or at least delay, the need for significant repairs. Where repairs are necessary they should be carried out using traditional materials that do not damage the character of the building.
- There should be a presumption against alterations to buildings which adversely affect their character and appearance or that of the conservation area. Where in appropriate alterations have already been made private owners should be encouraged to restore the historic character of the building, for example by reinstating appropriate sash windows or removing unsightly additions.



- The distribution of Council guidance leaflets on a variety of issues might help to encourage private owners to improve the appearance of their buildings and prevent unnecessary deterioration. The negative impact of poorly maintained buildings on the street scene as a whole should be emphasised. Suggested leaflets include:

- Living in the Highgate Conservation Area (including the Article 4 information);
- The historical development of Highgate and Caldwell;
- Looking after your historic building;
- The control of trees;
- Front gardens and boundaries;
- Locally listed buildings.

#### *Policies for new development*

All new development in the Highgate Conservation Area should be in accordance with local plan policies contained within the Walsall Unitary Development Plan (adopted 7th March 2007). These include Policies WA5, ENV29 and ENV28 regarding development in conservation areas and the protection of locally listed buildings, as well as Policy ENV27 regarding the protection of buildings of historic and architectural interest.

The Council is currently preparing a Local Development Framework (LDF) which will replace the adopted UDP in stages. As part of the emerging LDF, the four Black Country local authorities of Dudley, Sandwell, Walsall and Wolverhampton are also preparing a Joint Core Strategy for the Black Country in partnership with the community and other key organisations. This will set out the vision, objectives and strategy for future development in the Black Country up to 2026 and beyond, and will form the basis for Walsall's emerging LDF. It will take into account existing and emerging regional and national planning policies and guidance, including the government's Planning Policy Statements, the West Midlands Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS), proposed and emerging revisions to the RSS and other local plans and policies.

The RSS sets out the broad strategic framework for planning within the West Midlands region. It contains policies about the general patterns of development in the built up areas and the countryside across the region.

Within this broad policy framework, there is also more specific local guidance on the design of new development. Developers should refer to urban design guidance contained in *Designing Walsall*, a Design Guide adopted by Walsall Council as a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) in February 2008. This document sets out detailed planning policy guidance on the principles of good design in Walsall, and supports policies in the UDP as well as the emerging Black Country Core Strategy relating to urban design, landscape design and public art.

As a general rule, all new development within the Highgate Conservation Area should:

- Preserve the historic street pattern;
- Preserve the existing plots and their boundaries;
- Be of an appropriate scale, form and density;
- Use traditional materials and details;
- Preserve or enhance the sense of spaciousness and greenery which currently exists;
- Reinforce the character of the conservation area as a tranquil backwater.

## 14 MANAGING THE CONSERVATION AREA

### *Priorities for action and strategies*

The following Priority Actions are considered to be necessary, in order of priority:

- Adopt this Management Plan and designate the proposed extension to the conservation area, to include the southern ends of Sandwell Street and Highgate Road, and Vincent Street;
- Ensure that the listed windmill is maintained in a wind and watertight condition;

- Serve a new Article 4(2) Direction on the existing and new conservation area;
- Undertake a full photographic survey of the conservation area at the same time;
- Prepare householder guidance for the Highgate Conservation Area, (this could possibly include information about energy conservation and the improvement of residents' buildings and their gardens);
- Add the suggested buildings to the local list and prepare a leaflet with policy guidance for owners of locally listed buildings;
- Consider traffic calming measures in and around the Highgate Conservation Area;
- Discuss the provision of new street signs with Highways to denote the boundary of the conservation area;
- Consider taking enforcement action against unauthorised satellite dishes and other infringements of the Article 4 Direction.

#### *Resources and decision making*

Walsall Council will continue to coordinate the management of the Highgate Conservation Area and will ensure that the Priority Actions above are carried through. The Council will ensure that decision making procedures and policy changes are implemented as required. The Council will also prepare technical guidance and inform the community when the new conservation area is designated and the Article 4(2) Direction is served.

#### *Conservation Area Advisory Committee*

To assist in its pro-active management of all of the Borough's conservation areas, the Council could consider establishing a Conservation Area Advisory Committee (CAAC) as recommended in English Heritage's 2006 document *Guidance on the Management of Conservation Areas*. This could bring together local residents, councillors and other interest groups, including local amenity societies and representatives from the various professions (surveyors, architects and town planners) involved with the protection of the historic

environment in Walsall. The CAAC would provide the Council with detailed advice and assistance on applications for change within or on the edges of each conservation area, and would probably meet on a monthly basis.

#### *Planning powers and enforcement*

The Council must have regard to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character and appearance of the Highgate Conservation Area when considering applications for new development within or on the edges of the conservation area. Along with the Walsall Design Guide, *Designing Walsall*, this Character Appraisal and Management Plan will help the Council determine such applications in an informed way. These documents also have an educational and cultural role in that they provide information to the local community about the special features of the area in which they live or work.

The Council will be proactive about enforcement in the conservation area, and using the photographic records when necessary, will take enforcement action where negotiation has failed to produce a satisfactory result.

#### *Monitoring and revision*

As also recommended by English Heritage in *Guidance on the Management of Conservation Areas*, it is essential to monitor the conservation area and to review these documents on a regular basis, ideally no later than every five years.

Changes to the conservation area can be sudden, such as through the construction of a new building, or more gradual, such as small alterations to family houses. It is also possible that properties may become dilapidated and neglected, sometimes through no fault of the owners. Monitoring these changes, and reacting to them in a positive way, is dependent upon the Council providing the necessary resources, particularly in terms of planning and conservation staff. The continued appointment of a senior and possibly a more junior full time conservation officer is absolutely necessary if the Council is to provide the historic built environment of Walsall with suitable protection.



A dated photographic survey of the Highgate Conservation Area has been taken as part of the survey work for these documents. This will need to be supplemented by a building by building photographic survey which will need to be produced when the new Article 4(2) Direction is served. It may be necessary to further supplement this photographic survey with a visual inspection noting down specific features such as roof materials, windows, front doors and front boundaries, which cannot always be recorded by a photograph. This should be updated on a four year cycle for monitoring and enforcement.

The photographic surveys could be carried out by the local community, for example by local historians or representatives from local amenity societies, or even, under professional supervision, by students or older school children. Information could be stored electronically, perhaps by using an Access database, recording the individual buildings or their features. The use of an Access database (or similar) allows the data to be 'searched', for instance, by roof materials or window type. This will be useful in analysing how the conservation area is changing over a period of time, and will provide an indicator of the Council's effectiveness in 'preserving or enhancing' the conservation area as required by law. The degree and rate of change will also suggest whether the Council needs to provide further guidance to property owners.

A review of the Priority Actions also needs to be undertaken on an annual basis to ensure that the actions are included on staff work programmes and the necessary Council resources allocated to the various tasks required.

It should not be necessary to rewrite these documents when carrying out the five year review. Rather, an addendum could be added detailing the changes which have taken place over the last five years, particularly any major planning approvals, and the outcomes from the photographic survey which should also have taken place in the intervening period. Finally, the Priority Actions should be reviewed, and if they have not been resolved, they should be moved forward into a new list of Priority Actions and the means of their rapid implementation agreed.

### *Community involvement*

These documents have been drawn up with the assistance of local stakeholders who attended the walkabout in Highgate in April 2009, and who also provided written comments following that meeting. The most important issues which these stakeholders identified were:

- An overall need for more detailed information about the conservation area and greater contact with Council staff, possibly through a nominated officer for the Highgate Conservation Area;
- The need to provide a clear map illustrating the existing and proposed conservation area boundary, and the extent of the Article 4 Direction;
- Guidance on the existing Article 4 Direction, and what it covers;
- Guidance on living in the conservation area – what requires permission;
- Possible provision of signage to denote the boundaries of the conservation area;
- Possible traffic calming;
- The control of front boundaries;
- Unauthorised satellite dishes;
- The poor condition of the listed windmill tower;
- Possible additions to the Local List;
- The protection of trees including street trees.

One respondent also expressed concern over the expense of adhering to the Article 4 Direction, because of the cost of traditional materials and skilled craftsmen. This could be covered in any guidance produced by the Council, perhaps including a list of local suppliers and builders.

It is hoped that all of these issues have been adequately addressed in this document, but it is likely that further matters will be brought to the Council's attention by the public consultation exercise which will take place before they are placed before the Council for full approval.

**APPENDIX 1      MAPS**

- MAP 1      TOWNSCAPE ANALYSIS MAP
- MAP 2      CHARACTER AREAS MAP
- MAP 3      MANAGEMENT PROPOSALS MAP
- MAP 4      CONSERVATION AREA BOUNDARY REVIEW MAP
- MAP 5      TREE SURVEY



