



Hinckley & Bosworth
Borough Council

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**Hinckley – Druid Street
Conservation Area Appraisal**

February 2009

Conservation Area Appraisal

The Druid Street Conservation Area

Framework knitting was introduced into Hinckley in c1640 and by the end of the C17 was widespread and well established. Until the mid C18 it was often a by-employment practiced in parallel with agriculture.

The factories in the Druid Quarter were built between 1887 and 1903 which was the period during which powered factory production was adopted in the general hosiery industry. By the end of the C19 wages in Hinckley had been stabilised although were low compared to Leicester and elsewhere. After c1900 owing to the growth of the industry and the adoption of machine based piecework, the hosiery industry became one of the better paid employments particularly for women and this continued until at least the mid 1960's. After this there was increasing amalgamation with the closing of smaller firms resulting in alterations and demolitions rather than additions to the building stock. Unlike most other traditional industries, most hosiery factories were designed as promotional architecture for specific clients of whom the offices of the Moore and Osborne factory on Druid Street are an outstanding example.

Since the decline of the hosiery industry many factories have been adapted to other uses or are vacant, but none remain in use as hosiery factories.

The true value of the Conservation Area is that enough housing and industrial buildings survive to illustrate how a specialist community developed over 150 years.

Setting

The Druid Quarter is a mixed use enclave surrounded to the north, east and west by residential areas and to the south by the commercial and retail core of Hinckley town centre. The area is linked into the local jitty (pedestrian footpath) system which connect the town centre with the Victorian suburbs

Gateways and Views

On Upper Bond Street, the conservation area is defined by the Ghia hosiery factory with its curved corner entrance and the Brocklehurst building. Views of this building complex set the image of the area and it is important that they are not interrupted by modern features or signage. The archways on Bond Street and Druid Street provide particularly significant views through the buildings and the linking jitty, surfaced with granite sets passes through a courtyard which is typical of these factories. The southern entrance to the area is defined by the Art Decoratif offices of the former Moore and Osbourne factory. Within the area a significant industrial landmark is the steel aerial at the junction of Well Lane and Druid Street which can be seen from many points in the and without of the area.

Character Statement

The area is characterised by its collection of red brick former hosiery factories mixed with small pockets of terraced housing. The Druid Quarter contains many attractive former hosiery factories which are mixed comfortably with compact areas of terraced housing. . However, it is dominated by cleared sites, car parks and forecourts, all of which degrade the urban quality of the area.

Townscape and Architectural Quality of the Buildings

Appearance

The land within the conservation area slopes gently down from the north which provides views of the town centre and St Mary's Church spire from certain locations.

The area is essentially low rise with the majority of buildings in and adjacent to the area being no more than two stories in height. Almost all the housing is two storeys but single storey and three storeys is represented. The late C19 factories tend to be taller at 3 to 4 stories which reflect changes in production technology and mechanisation. These buildings tend to be visually more attractive than the more shed like early and mid C20th industrial buildings. The late C20th light industrial and motor trade buildings are all single storey and do not contribute to the townscape quality of the conservation area.

The streets, particularly at corners, are dominated by the hosiery factories. These are large inward looking groups of buildings distributed around hard surfaced internal courtyards.

Although the conservation area is close to a number of large parks, the area itself is completely devoid of trees and public amenity areas which reflect its recent industrial past.

Building Context, Style, Scale and Detail

Within the Conservation Area there are a number of recurring motifs. These include perimeter blocks with internal courts, the corner positioning and the elaboration of entrances, the use of red brick and slate and the general height limit of two stories. Exceptions also exist, however, and there are a few notable landmark buildings within the area and nearby

Significant corner entrances can be seen on the Moore and Osborne offices, now residential, at the junction of Druid Street and Albert Road, the Lord factory nearby and the Brocklehurst building on Upper Bond Street.

Sites with perimeter block layouts and internal courtyards include the Laban Tansey complex, the Lord factory and the Bedford building. Distinctive cart entrances of different styles are incorporated into the Brocklehurst building on Upper Bond Street, and the Puffer sites on Druid Street.

Traditional large volume buildings such as the hosiery factories are always built to the back of the pavement while residential properties either follow the back of the footpath or occasionally are set back behind short front gardens. Corners are generally tight with no setback for sight lines. Where possible existing buildings should be retained particularly those elements which face the street. New buildings should demonstrate a clear understanding of context. Single storey buildings will not be acceptable where they face street frontages. The jitty system is a defining feature of the area. They are characterised by brick boundary walls and iron railings which should be protected. The public lighting has recently been improved by cast iron heritage style lamp posts on the

principle jitties. New development should demonstrate that external works and lighting has been considered as part of the overall design.

Parking: All parking should be hidden from the street in courtyards. Forecourt parking between buildings and the street is unacceptable. The use of planting to screen parking is unacceptable. Highway signage should be kept to a minimum. Signs should be wall fixed or share poles to avoid clutter. New development should consolidate the established pattern. Setbacks for off-street parking, inappropriate large front gardens, and corner setbacks for sightlines are inappropriate in the conservation area.

Key Buildings

Laban Tansey/Brocklehurst/Puffer 1 site. The northern most building of the group, the former Brocklehurst factory, on Bond Street is a gabled three storey brick building with a slate roof. Because of its polychromatic brickwork and stone features it was probably intended to be a warehouse when it was constructed in the 1870's.

Next to this is a two story Ghia factory which fronts both Bond Street and Neal's Yard has a distinctive corner entrance and first floor oriel window of the manager's office. Although the ground floor windows were modified in the early C20, the first floor windows are original. These buildings are the most architecturally distinctive of that period in the Conservation Area.

The adjoining three storey Puffer's Unique Hosiery Works, constructed in 1911, stands at the corner of Neal's Yard and Druid Street. Through an Egyptian styled cart entrance on Druid Street, a cobbled jitty connects through a glazed roofed courtyard to a similar entrance on Bond Street. The elevations of the factory consist of large steel windows divided by brick pilasters. It also has a partial basement.

The Laban Tansey needle manufacturing company occupied the adjoining two storey range in the 1890's and added the north light ranges at the rear and the gabled frontage around 1912. This frontage has seen limited change having retained its original steel windows and entrance gate unlike the interiors which have been linked and extensively changed.

Puffer site no 2 on Druid Street was developed between 1887 and the 1930's. All buildings are two storey brick structures with slate roofs. This site has recently been the subject of a major redevelopment project which has an unimplemented planning approval. The earliest building on the site was constructed around 1890 and stands behind the street frontage block. This factory is dated around 1903 and was extended the 1930's. The elevations to all blocks are very plain with large metal windows puncturing brick frontages with only minor brick and window detailing differentiating the period styles.

The Lord Factory was constructed between 1887 and 1903 and has seen limited changes since then. The 'taking in' doors at first floor on the Druid Street frontage suggest the building was constructed for the manufacture of footwear. Its two storey brick form of construction with large segmental headed cast iron windows at ground level and timber sash frames at first floor has given it a domestic appearance and suggests machinery was used on the ground with packing or mending on the first floor. The corner entrance with a staircase immediately behind and a canted oriel window above suggest a sale room and office at first floor, a common feature where direct marketing was adopted.

The Bedford Building was again constructed between 1887 and 1903 originally as a two storey building and extended to three in the 1920's. It is a massive plain brick building with an L shape plan which is typical of hosiery factories of the period. The building suffers from recently added plastic windows and rendering although it has retained its brick chimney indicating it was originally steam powered.

The Co-op Steam Bakery

The building was opened in 1907 and although having been used both as a bakery until 1955 and subsequently as a hosiery factory, it has been little altered externally retaining its original ancillary buildings and gate piers. The metal roof ridge vents and chimney add considerably to its character as does the louvred roof of the original cooling room and the distinctive 'STEAM BAKERY' lettering.

The Moore & Osbourne Factory Offices

The highly distinctive offices were built in 1929 to the designs of Symington & Prince, of Leicester, replacing an earlier office which was part of an L shaped factory complex. With the exception of the offices, this factory was demolished to be replaced by the existing residential development. The building uses a mixture of styles but principally borrows from the Arts Decoatif movement whose origins were the 1926 Paris Exhibition. It is an important building in the area not only because of it appearance but also because of its use of materials.

Boundary and Surface Treatments

Gardens on the street frontage would traditionally have been marked by boundaries of low brick walls or metal railing. Open frontages destroy the close connection of buildings to the street and are unacceptable. Steel security fencing also promotes the image of an area under siege and will also not be encouraged.

The cart entrances and internal courtyards of the hosiery factories have cobbled surfaces and these should be retained or extended.

Contribution of Spaces and Natural Elements

There are no green spaces or trees in the Conservation Area which reflects its industrial past. To retain this characteristic, generally soft landscaping should not separate new development from the street. Hard and soft landscaping should be used to enhance internal courts including parking areas.

FACTORS HAVING A NEGATIVE INFLUENCE ON THE CHARACTER OF THE CONSERVATION AREA

Buildings of Poor Visual Quality

Single storey buildings are not a feature of traditional industrial areas. Modern portal framed warehouses with steel cladding and bungalows are unacceptable in the area.

Enhancement

The enhancement of the character and appearance of the Conservation Area can be defined as the reinforcement of the qualities providing the

special interest, which warranted designation. It may be through the sympathetic development of sites identified in the detailed analysis of the area as opportunity or neutral sites; it may involve physical proposals or the application of sensitive, detailed development control over extensions and alterations. Areas which warrant special attention for enhancement are marked on the Conservation Area Management Plan.

GENERAL CONSERVATION AREA GUIDANCE, PLANNING CONTROLS AND POLICIES

To maintain the distinctive character and appearance of the Druid Street Conservation Area it will be necessary to:

- Retain important buildings of local interest.
- Ensure new development contributes positively to the character or appearance of the conservation area in terms of siting, scale, design and materials used.
- Ensure house extensions comply with the Borough Council's Supplementary Planning Guidance
- Resist development proposals in key areas, which have been identified on the map.
- Ensure the consistent application of positive, sensitive and detailed development control over proposals to alter former industrial buildings, yards and jittys
- **Special attention is given to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the appearance of the Conservation Area. Planning Applications in Conservation Areas are separately advertised. The principal effects of the designation of a Conservation Area are summarised as follows:**
- Consent is required for the total or substantial demolition of any building exceeding 115 cu metres.
- Applications for Outline Planning permission are not normally acceptable. Full planning applications are likely to be required.

Planning permission is required for:

1. The external cladding of any building with stone, artificial stone, pebble dash, render, timber, plastic or tiles.
2. Extensions beyond a wall forming a side elevation of the original dwelling
3. Extensions of more than one storey which extend beyond the rear wall of the original dwelling.
4. The enlargement of a dwelling consisting of an addition or alteration to its roof forming the principal or side elevation of a dwelling.
5. A satellite dish on chimney, wall or roof fronting a highway
6. . Solar PV or solar thermal equipment on a wall or roof slope forming the principal or side elevation of a dwelling
7. Stand alone solar equipment
8. Installation, alteration or replacement of a chimney, flue or soil vent pipe on a wall or roof slope which fronts a highway and forms either the principal or side elevation of a dwelling.

Anyone proposing works to a tree in a Conservation Area must give six weeks prior written notice to the local planning authority.

These requirements do not cover all aspects of control in Conservation Areas and you are advised to contact the Local Planning Authority for further advice.