

11. Building Materials

Facing Materials

The most widespread building material within the Conservation Area is the orange hue red brickwork common to Victorian properties elsewhere within the city. All buildings except for St Peter's Church are constructed in brick. A significant number of properties also features blue brickwork, used for foundations and 'in-built' decorations, such as stringcourses and diaper patterns. The Old Song School does feature some darker red brickwork to the lower portion of its elevations, in slight contrast to the preeminent orange variety. The rendered side elevations at 7 Main Street, matching the treatment of associated outbuildings, introduce a visually unsightly break in the streetscene of this part of the Conservation Area.

St Peter's Church is the only building within the Conservation Area constructed in stone, comprising undressed granite and limestone. Nonetheless, stone is prominent as a 'dressing material material throughout the Conservation Area, for example at St Peter's Vicarage and at 8 – 9 Main Street.



Top: The red brickwork set in Flemish bond with the original stonemason's mark at 3 Main Street.

Left: Diaper brickwork is a common feature in the area, present (different patterns and extend) at Cressida Place and at 1-6 Main Street.

Roofs

Most of the roofs within the area are clad with either stone slates or clay tiles. Swithland slates define the roofscape of Church of St Peter, also present at the Vicarage at 7 Main Street. The properties attributed to William Butterfield, that is Cressida Cottages and the three pairs of dwellinghouses at 1-6 Main Street are topped with pitched roofs clad with red tiles.

Chimneystacks make for important and integral features of the townscape of the Conservation Area, adding visual interest, character, legibility and rhythm throughout. The difference of massing, design and architectural detailing between individual examples, even within the same group of buildings (Cressida Place and 1-6 Main Street), is often subtle but notable, and adds considerably to the architectural merit of these historic properties. Many retain their original clay chimney pots.

There are only a few decorative roofscape features besides the aforementioned chimneystacks spotted throughout the Conservation Area. Worth highlighting are the ridge features that animate the roofscape of St Peter's Church, most notable being the prominent gilded metal weather vane to the top of the medieval west tower.



Top: The weathered red clay Rosemary tiles at Cressida Place.

Bottom: The Swithland slate roofscape of St Peter's Church, including the brick Queen Anne porch.



Decorative weather vane to top of the west tower at St Mary's Church.



The heavily moulded and prominent chimneystack at the former Old National School.



The two-stepped chimneystack at 5-6 Main Street is the only example of its type along the street.



The bulky chimneys at the workers' cottage at Cressida Place punctuate the local skyline.



Boundary Treatments

Generally, garden walls, railings and hedges make an important contribution to the character of the Conservation Area. They are not only attractive features in themselves, providing a pleasant setting for the buildings and spaces behind, but also offer a clear definition between the public and the private domain, create a sense of enclosure and provide a visual 'edge' to the local townscape. Where they have been removed, for example to provide car parking space, this edge is weakened or lost to the detriment of both the visual environment and to the sense of enclosure to which they would previously have contributed.

Whilst many properties retain their brick boundary walls, the diversity of boundary treatments throughout is notable. These range from the elegant brick boundary with blue clay coping stones at 8 Main Street to the poorly maintained standardized fencing next door.



At 1-6 Main Street the mismatching fencing sections that define the curtilage of the properties are supplemented by trimmed hedges that line the public pavement. Noteworthy is the low-lying coursed rubble boundary that defines the southern extremity of Church Fields and the churchyard itself. Metal railings and gates are sparse throughout the Conservation Area, with few examples present at Main Street and Cressida Place

Top: Most of the pavements, side roads and the main highway in the Conservation Area are laid in tarmac, with a variety of boundary treatments long Main Street.

Bottom: The frontages of Cressida Place cottages are lined with hedging, adding to the visual merit of this historic residential enclave.

Other Materials

Timber is the predominant material used for windows and doors throughout the area. Most are original or good quality replacements. The Grade II Listed dwellings at Cressida Place and at 1-6 Main Street feature a mix of timber framed casements of traditional design and stylized solid timber doorways with original metal fittings. This is not the case at numbers 7-9 Main Street, where timber windows have since been replaced with poorly proportioned plastic windows.

Timber bargeboards are also common throughout the Conservation Area. These range from the more elaborate examples at 8 Main Street, to the more simplified angular examples at 1-6 Main Street.

Cast iron rainwater goods were originally present to all 19th century properties. They are still present to most nationally listed properties, but have been partly or comprehensively removed elsewhere. One of the modern PVC replacements at Old Song School, which crudely pierces the slate roof of the entrance porch, has negatively impacted on this historic property. This feature stands in stark contrast to the neatly positioned cast iron example with an elegant hopper at 4 Main Street.

Road surfaces in the Conservation Area are generally laid in tarmac. Few granite kerbstones survive, the overwhelming majority having been replaced with modern concrete. Subsidiary pathways and access roads, at Cressida Place and within Church Gardens, are defined by a mix of gravel and tarmac. Other floorscape materials include red pavers, concrete paving slabs and rubble masonry.



The cast iron downpipe with a stamped hopper at St Mary's Church.



Right: Original timber casements and good replacements of the original units (timber framed or matching design) are the most common windows throughout the Conservation Area.



12 Open spaces and trees

Greenery and green spaces, in the form of trees, domestic gardens and open public spaces, are important features of the Conservation Area. Their presence adds visual texture and seasonal colour, adding distinctiveness to the local townscape.

The area to the centre of the Conservation Area is occupied by an expansive open meadow of Church Fields, with its southern boundary defined by mature tree cover, with sparser tree cover to its eastern and northern extremities. Its core is laid in grass, subdivided by pathways laid in tarmac. Church Fields are believed to have formed the core of an early medieval village of Braunstone, with likely archaeological remains preserved below ground. The wooded area north of Cressida Place forms a natural extension to Church Fields.

Church of St Peter is positioned at the north end of Church Fields. It is bounded by lush tree cover from the south, west and east, visually framed by mature planting to the north. The trees here include ash, cypress, thorn and holly, making for prominent additions to the local views. The graveyard features historic and modern gravestones, hedges and wildflower beds, that add further seasonal interest to this area.

The rich green curtilage of Cressida Place cottages contributes significantly to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area, spilling out onto Main Street and



Top: The mature tree cover around the churchyard obscures the stone elevation of St Mary's Church, and is of both ecological and visual value.

Bottom: Cressida Place is richly complimented by soft landscaping and mature trees, comprising protected (TPOs) ash, oak and chestnut.

13. Lighting and street furniture Leicester City Conservation Area Appraisal Page 29

Street furniture and lighting features are fairly limited in quantity and overall impact on the character of Braunstone Conservation Area. Modern steel columns with high pressure lanterns are present along the main 'spine' of the Conservation. One Victorian lamp post of traditional design is present to the north-east end of Cressida Place, of positive contribution to the character of the Conservation Area.

Within the open space of Church Fields, there is a number of standardized public benches and litter bins. There is also a number of heritage and nature interpretation panels located throughout the Conservation Area. A number of green cast iron conservation area plaques punctuate the local townscape. Few cast iron street name plaques also survive.



Top: Few cast iron street name plates survive throughout the Conservation Area, including the example at Cressida Place.

Right: The Victorian street lamp to the north end of Cressida Place is the only surviving example of its kind in the area, of much visual and historic interest.



14. The extend of intrusion or damage (Negative Factors)

Buildings and materials

The installation of poorly proportioned plastic joinery to a number of buildings in the area has had a detriment impact on the buildings concerned, as well as the character of the Conservation Area more generally. While some styles include mock glazing bars, none successfully reproduce the original forms and detailing. Satellite dishes and antennas that have been installed at a number of designated and non-designated buildings also make a negative contribution to the local streetscene, adding clutter to the streetscene of the Conservation Area.

The rendering of brickwork at 7 Main Street has obscured the texture and colour of the natural brick surfaces of this dwellinghouse, mismatching its brick front boundary treatment and frontage.

Although the area escaped wholesale redevelopment and infill expansion since the 19th century, few outbuildings have had a detrimental impact of the local character and setting of the historic building stock. These include the outbuildings to 7 Main Street, as well as the crude and poorly proportioned garage adjacent number 6 Main Street.



Rendered elevations and poorly proportioned uPVC windows at 7 Main Street are negative additions in the Conservation Area's streetscene, adversely effecting its character and visual coherence.

Boundary Treatments

The disjointed and incoherent boundary treatments throughout the Conservation Area negatively affect the character of the area. Despite a relatively compact size, a disparity of front boundaries is prominent, especially along Main Street (Braunstone Lane).

More generally, the partial or complete loss of front boundary walls to provide forecourt parking is harmful, obscuring the definition between the public and private spaces. This has caused visual disconnection between the cohesive groups of listed buildings at 1-6 Main Street and at Cressida Place.

Public Realm

Sections of public pavement and highway along Main Street (Braunstone Lane) are in poor condition. Structural damage and insufficient integration between different sections of pavements is most notable to the immediate south of Church Fields. This coupled with the overtly narrow pavement creates somewhat of a health and safety hazard for pedestrians, and should be addressed. Some of the fencing around Church Fields and boundary treatments more generally are in disrepair.

Some isolated examples of graffiti, on signage, panels and timber fencing punctuate the Conservation Area. Fortunately these have had a limited negative impact on the Conservation Area, and damage remains low-key and generally reversible.

The lack of integration between public furniture in terms of finish and design, bollards in particular, adds to the visual clutter of the Conservation Area.



Right: Some of the information panels around the area are in poor condition and would benefit from renewal / repairs.

15. Capacity for Change

Braunstone Conservation Area has escaped considerable redevelopment since the 19th century, characterized by loose urban grain, in sheer number dominated with designated heritage assets. Although expensive undeveloped areas survive within the Conservation Area (Bendbow Spinney and Church Fields), these are of historic, archaeological and ecological importance. Thus, there is limited scope for new development.

Change must not come at the expense of degrading the character and scale that makes the area special, and alterations to properties need to be sympathetic to their context. Any new development should aim to preserve or enhance the character and streetscene of the locality, be compatible with the existing building stock and the local townscape.

16. Additional planning controls

Beyond the conservation area status itself, Braunstone Conservation Area is not currently subject to additional planning controls. The Council is proposing to introduce a comprehensive Article 4 Direction for the whole area. This would remove permitted development rights so that a planning permission is required for certain works to the external aspects of properties.

More information on the proposed Article 4 Direction will be provided in the Management Plan due to be produced for all 'village' conservation areas in the city.

17. Conservation Area Boundary

The Council is required to review the boundaries of conservation areas and to consider changing them as appropriate. The boundaries of the Braunstone Conservation Area have been considered and the Council does not propose to add to, or to remove any parts of the area it presently covers as an independent local authority.

18. Local Consultation

This draft Character Appraisal document is published for public consultation. The final version will be produced with the benefit of the comments received during that consultation.

19. Management Proposals

A separate Conservation Areas Management Plan has been produced for all the 'village' conservation areas in the city. This includes Aylestone, Belgrave Hall, Braunstone, Evington and Knighton and Old Humberstone Conservation Areas.

The Management Plan will set out proposals and actions to preserve and enhance the special character of these conservation areas.

20. Contacts

For further information on this, or other, conservation areas you can contact the Council's Building Conservation Officers by phone, letter or e-mail at the following addresses:

Conservation Team
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E: planning@leicester.gov.uk

Information on all conservation areas is available on the Council's website: www.leicester.gov.uk

Appendix: Glossary of Architectural Terms

ashlar	smooth faced masonry blocks laid horizontally
bargeboard	a timber board fixed at projecting gable ends of roof, usually carved
corbel	a weight-carrying bracket projecting from a wall, e.g. under a balcony
cornice	horizontal projecting section at the top of a building or wall
diaper brickwork	geometrical brick pattern of repeating diamonds
doorcase	decorative timber or stone framing a doorway
fanlight	a window over a door
finial	a formal ornament at the apex of a gable or spire
hood mould	projecting moulding over an arch or lintel
lancet	a slender, pointed window
pediment	a low pitched gable shape over a door or window
pilaster	rectangular element of vertical masonry which projects slightly from the wall and resembles a flat column
segmental arch	a very shallow arch
stringcourse	a continuous decorative horizontal band projecting from a wall and usually moulded
spandrel	a triangular space between the top of an arch and the outer frame of the associated opening
tracery	ornamental stone or metal openwork in a window opening