

DOWNSHIRE SQUARE CONSERVATION AREA APPRAISAL



Reading Borough Council

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DOWNSHIRE SQUARE CONSERVATION AREA APPRAISAL

1.0 Introduction

1.1 Purpose of the appraisal

This appraisal seeks to record and analyse the various features which give the Downshire Square Conservation Area its special architectural and historic interest. The area's buildings and spaces are noted and described, and marked on the Townscape Appraisal Map (Appendix 1) along with listed buildings, buildings of townscape merit, significant trees and spaces, and important views into and out of the conservation area. There is a presumption that all of these features should be "preserved or enhanced", as required by legislation.

This appraisal builds upon national policy, as set out in *Planning Policy Guidance Note 15 (PPG 15) - Planning and the Historic Environment*, and local policy, as set out in the *Reading Borough Local Plan 1991-2006* and the emerging *Reading Borough Local Development Framework*. It provides a firm basis on which applications for development within the Downshire Conservation Area can be assessed. It also forms a basis for further work on design guidance and enhancement proposals for the area.

This appraisal follows the suggested format contained in Appendix 2 of the English Heritage document "Guidance on Conservation Area Appraisals" August 2005.

1.2 Summary of special interest

The Downshire Square Conservation Area comprises a tightly drawn essentially Victorian/Edwardian suburb a little more than 1km to the west of Reading town centre, and itself centred on All Saints Church in Downshire Square. It lies between Tilehurst Road to the north and Bath Road to the south and comprises an originally planned formal layout of roads, comprising the two arms of Downshire Square, Brownlow Road and Maitland Road. The boundaries of the area are indicated on the Appraisal Map appended to this report (Appendix 1). It was formally designated on 12 February 1991 following a period of public consultation.

There are three listed properties within the Conservation Area: All Saints Church in Downshire Square dating from 1865-74; All Saints Infants School and playground area railings to the north of the church on the east side of Brownlow Road (1865-6); and number 35 Tilehurst Road (c1835). The area otherwise contains a wide variety of house types and architectural styles, on large plots, giving the area a spacious feel. There are a number of dwellings from the Victorian and Edwardian periods, the majority of which retain their original character, but also a number of more recent developments than is usual in Reading's conservation areas. These however generally reflect the original and still prevailing character of the area.

Number 35 Tilehurst Road apart, the earliest houses date from after the 1860s. Unlike other similarly located suburbs and conservation areas outside Reading town centre, development was not confined to one particular period, giving rise to the varied house types and architectural styles previously mentioned. The historical development of the area is discussed in more detail in Section 4 below.

The variety, exuberance and blending of the architectural styles of the Victorian and later periods in what was originally envisaged as formal street layout with large tree lined plots makes the area attractive and worthy of conservation area status. This is reinforced by the retention of boundary walls and railings throughout the area, which together with mature tree cover, including good avenues of street trees in the streets comprising the two arms of Downshire Square, give the area its coherence, with All Saints Church and All Saints School dominating its centre.



All Saints School

2.0 The planning policy context

Conservation areas are designated under the provisions of Section 69 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. A conservation area is defined as *“an area of special architectural or historic interest the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance”*. It is the quality and interest of an *area*, rather than that of individual buildings, which is the prime consideration in identifying a conservation area.

Section 71 of the same Act requires local planning authorities to formulate and publish proposals for the preservation and enhancement of any parts of their area which are conservation areas. Section 72 specifies that, in making a decision on an application for development in a conservation area, special attention shall be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of that area.

This document should be read in conjunction with national planning policy guidance, particularly PPG 15 - Planning and the Historic Environment. The layout and content of this conservation area appraisal follows "Guidance on Conservation area Appraisals" published by English Heritage in February 2006.

2.1 Local planning policy

The Reading Borough core strategy was found to be "sound" in December 2007 and was adopted in January 2008. Policy CS33 provides a strategic level policy that indicates that the historic environment including their settings will be preserved and enhanced. This policy will, in part, replace the Reading Borough Local Plan policies, including some of the saved policies discussed below. Proposals will have to have regard to the provisions set out in PPG15.

The Local Plan policies which seek the preservation and enhancement of archaeological sites, historic parks and gardens, listed buildings and conservation areas are set out in Chapter 6 of the *Reading Borough Local Plan 1991-2006* which was adopted on 14th October 1998, the majority of policies of which were "saved" by Direction of the Secretary of State on 24 September 2007 (with effect from 27 September 2007). The saved policies of particular note are Policies CUD 6 (Demolition of Unlisted Buildings in Conservation Areas) and CUD7 (New Development in Conservation Areas), which outline Reading Borough Council's approach to development in Conservation Areas. Copies of these policies can be found at Appendix 2 of this document. With regard to listed buildings in the Conservation Area, Policies CUD 1 ((Works Affecting Listed Buildings), CUD 2 (Change of Use of Listed Buildings), CUD 3 (Maintenance of Listed Buildings) and CUD 4 (Setting of Listed Buildings) also apply.

The Local Plan's conservation objectives are stated as:

- (i) to conserve or enhance the Borough's stock of listed buildings and other buildings of architectural quality or historical significance;
- (ii) to identify protect or enhance areas of character;
- (iii) to identify and conserve areas of archaeological significance and to protect or enhance finds and sites for the education and enjoyment of Reading residents.

3.0 Location and setting

3.1 Location, topography and setting

The boundaries of the Downshire Square Conservation Area are shown at Appendix 1. The area lies a little more than 1km west of Reading town centre, between the main A4 Bath Road to the south and Tilehurst Road to the north, two very important east-west local distributor roads and important bus routes in to and out of Reading town centre, although the conservation area is within walking distance of Reading town centre. Reading West railway station also lies a short distance to the west, giving the

area a high level of accessibility to local amenities, Reading town centre and points farther afield by non-car modes of transport. However, whilst accessibility and of course the character of the area are attractive to residents of the area, it has also made the area attractive to shoppers and commuters in to Reading town centre for convenient free car parking.

The area is generally flat but is situated at the top of a hill accessed from the north and east. Indeed, just north of the conservation area, behind properties facing Tilehurst Road on its north side (and therefore outside the conservation area) there is a significant break in slope, tantamount to a small escarpment, which gives significant views north between the aforementioned properties as far as the Warren escarpment on the north bank of the River Thames. The best of these views would of course be gained from the upper floors of properties facing Tilehurst Road within the conservation area. At street level views out of the conservation area tend to be to more modern developments, including a number of flats, although these are partially screened by trees and landscaping.

The area surrounding the conservation area tends to be much more mixed in character including older, but much altered, terraced houses to the west in Brunswick Street, and a number of redevelopments for flats along Tilehurst Road and Bath Road. This higher density housing reflects the proximity of these areas to Reading town centre. Notable exceptions nearby to this general pattern are the listed number 42 Bath Road and the listed Water Tower plus its associated reservoir to the west, but these are separated from the conservation area by less attractive, more recent and/or much altered properties on the west side of Brunswick Street, the whole of which was not previously considered worthy of inclusion in this conservation area. To the east on Bath Road (16-20), the Dunedin Clinic is a significant presence but has been considerably altered from its original form and again has previously not been considered worthy of inclusion in this conservation area. 1A and 3 Tilehurst Road, to the east of the Robert Hewett Recreation Ground, whilst attractive, are quite different in character to the rest of the Tilehurst Road frontage in this conservation area.

In short, the Downshire Square Conservation Area stands out as an attractive exception to the varied and often redeveloped character of the wider area which surrounds it.

4.0 Historic development

4.1 History

Reading is named after the Readingas, Saxon followers of Reada, 'the Red', who settled in the spit of land in the fork of the Thames and Kennet in the 6th century. At the time of the Domesday Survey in 1086, Reading belonged to the king and included a small borough and two manors. Reading Abbey was founded by Henry I in 1121. The

abbey dominated the town and became one of the richest religious houses in England making Reading a wealthy place, and a centre of religion and pilgrimage.

Wool and leather were Reading's principal trades in the 16th and early 17th centuries, making good use of the town's road and river links. In the 18th century Reading was an important market and coaching town; new industries developed, notably brewing, iron-founding and brick and tile making. Early 19th century maps show the town had hardly extended beyond its medieval core but a fast town expansion was stimulated by the development of new transport links. The Kennet and Avon Canal was opened in 1810 bringing London and Bristol, two major sea ports, into direct communication by water. Of much greater significance, however, was the construction of the Great Western Railway which reached the town in 1840. The coming of the railway resulted in a rapid growth of major industries, notably Huntley & Palmer and Suttons Seeds, which provided work for a rapidly increasing population.

Between 1850 and 1900 the population of the Borough more than trebled from 21,456 to 72,217 and the housing stock increased accordingly. The development of "Downshire Square" was part of the post-railway late 19th century expansion of the town during which period large numbers of houses were built and growing civic pride was celebrated in the building of Reading's Town Hall (1875), the Concert Hall (1882), and the Museum and Library (1883-4), to the designs of Alfred Waterhouse, a resident of Reading from 1868. The Downshire Square Conservation Area, like many other of Reading's designated conservation areas outside the town centre represents a "middle-class" area, untouched by commerce and industry, and was clearly designed as such, to be a more spacious and leafy area than the artisans' terraces which lie closer to their employers particularly to the east of Reading centre, although there are similar terraces west of Reading town centre and generally north of the Downshire Square Conservation Area.



26 Bath Road

Downshire "Square" is not a square in the traditional sense of having a park or garden at its centre surrounded on two, three or four sides by a road or roads and buildings facing towards it, but the area was planned with a formal layout of roads and buildings by Poulton and Woodman circa 1853. The streets which comprise the "Downshire Square" itself comprise two separate south-north arms from Bath Road linked at their northern end in front of All Saints Church. However, apart from the pair of stone houses (numbers 24 and 26) facing Bath Road (also by Poulton and Woodman) the buildings in this area do not reflect this original ideal and date from later.

It appears that the main reason for this part of Reading not developing as quickly as others, for example to the east of Reading, was the presence of a turnpike gate near the Tilehurst Road junction. This was removed in 1864, which led to the construction of stone, brick and stuccoed villas in large well stocked gardens fronting both sides of Bath Road. Unfortunately many of these (outside the conservation area) have been redeveloped for flats.

The take up of plots within the conservation area itself was again much slower, with the earliest maps of the area suggesting that very little was built before 1860.

All Saints Church dates from 1865-1874. It was commissioned in response to the need to cater for the growing congregation of the Minster Church of St Mary (of which All Saints was a daughter church), and at the same time to cater for the anticipated population influx in to the Bath Road area, including the Downshire Square. It was only half complete when it opened for the first time in 1865, and not completed in its original form until 1874. Even then it was without an envisaged tower/steeple (which would have rivalled that of Christ Church as a viewpoint), presumably because of lack of funds and the (lack of) envisaged congregation. All Saints School dates from 1865-6. The architect for both the church and the school was St Aubyn.

4.2 The effect of historic development on plan form

The designated Conservation Area is essentially defined by the formal layout of roads and plots fronting Bath Road, Tilehurst Road, Downshire Square, Brownlow Road and Maitland Road, but exhibits a variety of architectural styles reflecting the time scale over which the properties therein were built. Despite the architectural variety, the original plan form is still in evidence, and is a good example of one which forms part of the post-railway expansion and development of Reading.

5.0 Spatial analysis

5.1 Key views and vistas

Although approached by a rise up from the north and east, the area is relatively flat and there are few special focal points. All Saints Church (despite its lack of a tower/steeple), forms a visual “stop” at the northern end of an avenue of street trees in the western arm of Downshire Square, but these trees and those in front of it tend to screen the view of the church to some extent. The stone villas which front Bath Road are quite substantial buildings, but are quite well screened by street and garden trees except from vantage points quite close to them. The main building which really stands out from views outside and inside the conservation area is the “rotunda” building on the recently (re)developed site of number 54 Tilehurst Road, not least because this is of quite a different character to its surrounds. Generally, corner buildings, whilst quite prominent “close up” in the local street scene, are not visible from any distance. Views at ground level out of the Conservation Area across the main Tilehurst Road to the north and Bath Road to the south are to more modern, less attractive developments, although these are partially softened by trees and landscaping. There are however potentially more spectacular views to the north towards the Warren escarpment from the upper floors of buildings fronting Tilehurst Road, but not from street level.

5.2 The character of spaces within the area

The conservation area is, generally speaking, a tightly knit suburban area composed of continuous frontages of two-, three- and some four-storey buildings with front gardens generally reflecting a consistent frontage building line to each separate street frontage. Although there are some bungalows at the Maitland Road/Downshire Square junction, there is one recent example where bungalows have been successfully redeveloped to create a development more in keeping with its neighbours at what is now Brownlow Lodge to the north of number 2 Brownlow Road. This redevelopment enhances the character and appearance of the conservation area. Similarly, redevelopments and extensions based on original buildings at Windsor Court fronting Tilehurst Road reflect the character and appearance of the original buildings on the site by using compatible materials and retaining important boundary wall details.

Whilst properties in the area have varying depths, they retain substantial rear garden spaces, another feature which adds to the spacious character of the area. Planning decisions in the area have sought to retain these rear garden spaces and therefore the spacious character of the area. Properties within the core of the area front streets of some width (reflecting their formal planned layout), with street trees adding character and a spacious feel of the area.

There is no public open space within the core of the conservation area, but there is an interesting Victorian Playground in the north east of the area (the Robert Hewett

Playground) accessed from Tilehurst Road. This shares a common feature of many of the properties in the conservation area of a brick wall, but in this case with railings intact.

The properties tend to be older, more substantial and closer to the back edge of pavement in Tilehurst Road and Brownlow Road, and smaller and set back further from the back edge of the pavement in Downshire Square and Maitland Road. Those fronting Bath Road are again more substantial, but set back further. Throughout the area however there exists a sense of space, of a variety of properties, generally situated in quite large plots. Certainly, individual properties, particularly individual houses, retain substantial rear gardens, themselves a characteristic of the character and appearance of this conservation area, and one which should be preserved.



Maitland Road east side from Tilehurst Road

Throughout the area, front boundaries are defined by brick walls and railings and a significant tree cover, which also provide a good setting for individual properties and the character of the conservation area as a whole.

6.0 Definition of the special interest of the conservation area

6.1 Definition of character areas

The Conservation Area is a tightly drawn area centred on the grade II listed All Saints Church. It is a predominantly late Victorian area containing many fine buildings but has been subject to pressures for redevelopment. Redevlopments have however generally respected the character and appearance of the conservation area. The character of the area therefore remains strong and most new developments have made a positive contribution to the street scene. The area can be divided into the following three character areas:

1. Central core of Brownlow Road and Downshire Square with All Saints Church and adjoining Infants School.

The Church is approached from Bath Road via an avenue of lime trees, where it dominates the local view. The houses on the west side of Downshire Square and in Brownlow Road illustrate the diverse range of architectural styles prevalent in the area, but most have interesting details including a recurring sunflower motif.

All Saints Church was built 1865-74 in the early English style of coursed rubble stone with ashlar detailing. By contrast the adjoining school is red brick, and a good example of its type. Both are listed buildings.

Maitland Road and the eastern arm of Downshire Square do not contain any significant buildings, but are an integral part of the historical development of the area.

Linking features in the area are brick boundary walls, some with railings intact and street trees in the two arms of Downshire Square.

2. The entrance to the area along Tilehurst Road.

The south side of Tilehurst Road comprises a terrace of small Victorian houses and a number of more substantial Victorian villas. Windsor Court is a good example of newer extensions fitting in well with original buildings in terms of scale and materials used, and given extra coherence by a particularly good frontage brick wall. Patterned brickwork is well represented and, as previously stated is echoed in more modern developments. Number 9 Tilehurst Road is worthy of particular mention because of its finely detailed brick chimneys.

On the north side of Tilehurst Road is a listed mid nineteenth century stuccoed villa with a high stuccoed wall to the street. This property has recently been refurbished and extended with modern buildings in its grounds. "The Observatory" on the corner of Tilehurst Road and Brunswick Hill is clearly a "landmark" building, highly visible particularly from the west and from outside the area. This and the buildings on the site are also prominent when seen from that part of the conservation area to the south of them. The character of this site is now quite different to the main part of the conservation area opposite it, and does pose the question as to whether or why it was/is included in the conservation area. It does represent something of an "outlier" to the main conservation area. The site currently contains a total of some 28 flats, of which 12 are in the original buildings on site and 15 are in new buildings in the grounds, including 6 in "The Observatory".

Robert Hewett Recreation Ground was/is included because of its individuality and the presence of a number of trees. It also has attractive boundary walls and railings, a

typical linking feature of the Tilehurst Road frontage and the conservation area generally.

Although trees are generally less evident on the Tilehurst Road frontage of the conservation area, brick boundary walls, some with railings intact, represent a key linking feature of this frontage, although in parts requiring reinstatement and/or repair.

3. The entrance to the area from Bath Road.

The entrance is dominated by a magnificent pair of Victorian sandstone houses (number 24 and 26 Bath Road). Architectural details and links include castellations and hexagonal towers. Number 22 is in a similar style but more domestic in scale and built of brick. 1930s architecture is represented by the inclusion of Florida Court, with several flats under a single green pantile roof grouped round a landscaped court. The detailing is typical of the period and shows a strong horizontal emphasis to the windows and solid balconies.



Florida Court

Again, street trees, garden trees and brick walls and railings form a linking feature through the area.

The Area generally.

Features that make a positive contribution to the historic character and appearance of the conservation area:

- Retention of original buildings and their settings with few detrimental changes by way of new development and/or addition of non-traditional materials;

- Retention of original brick walls and/or railings (original and replacement) throughout the area;
- Good tree cover within the grounds of individual properties;
- Street trees in Downshire Square and on the Bath Road frontage.

Features that have a negative impact on the historic character and appearance of the conservation area:

Please note that this Conservation Area generally “looks after itself” very well, but the scale of these negative features, whilst not individually great, does affect the character and appearance of the Conservation Area. Attention to these will clearly enhance that character and appearance.

- Some (limited) use of non-traditional materials: e.g. upvc windows;
- Some (limited) loss of original brick walls and/or railings e.g. replacement of railings with newer brick walls and/or timber fencing;
- Some walls in need of repair;
- Whilst not inherently unattractive in itself, some overgrowth of railings with hedges;
- Lack of traditional street furniture, including street lighting;
- Over-reliance on individual telegraph poles throughout the area with attendant wires radiating out to the houses within it;
- Plethora of street furniture associated with the road junctions at Bath Road and Tilehurst Road at the entrances to the conservation area;
- Some views out of the Conservation Area to modern, sometimes out of character developments (see below).

Surrounded by much higher density buildings immediately outside it, the Conservation Area itself and the buildings within it have generally retained their envisaged spacious character, although much that lies within the area is of more recent date than Victorian/Edwardian. Further, despite pressures to redevelop certain sites in the past, these have generally respected the prevailing character and appearance of the conservation area. However there is clearly scope to redress some quite modest failings apparent in the foregoing list.

6.2 Activities and uses

Historically and currently, the conservation area was/is essentially a residential area of detached and semi-detached and some terraced residential properties fronting the streets within it (as described in the previous section). The exceptions are All Saints Church and the adjoining school. Although there have been some institutional uses in the area in the past, including local government offices at 24 Bath Road, the only “institutions” now are homes for the elderly, including Windsor Court fronting Tilehurst Road and “Abbeyfield” on Maitland Road. Some larger properties have been converted or redeveloped for flats, but there are still a significant proportion of family houses in the area.

Properties in the area appear to be very much in demand and therefore generally fully occupied and in a good state of repair.

The area generally has a quiet residential atmosphere within its core, but the peripheral roads (Bath Road and Tilehurst Road) are very busy local distributor roads and bus routes. Given its proximity to the town centre, there is evidence of daytime parking for shoppers and commuters and/or people working in the locality, but there are few parking restrictions in the locality (except near road junctions) and no reported requests for a resident's parking scheme for the area. The majority of properties in the locality appear to have their own parking provision, but the area is also an attractive place to live because it benefits from good accessibility by public transport and is close Reading town centre.

6.3 Architectural and historic character: building methods and materials

The conservation area is essentially a Victorian/Edwardian residential suburb of Reading, highly prized because of its location close to Reading town centre. It contains a core of Victorian and Edwardian buildings, and despite otherwise containing "newer" properties than many of Reading's other conservation areas, it retains its historical character and special architectural interest.

With the exception of a few stucco and stone buildings, the buildings in the Conservation area are generally of brick, which is one of the distinguishing features of Reading's architecture and there are examples of good quality brickwork throughout the conservation area. Brick was a popular building material in the 19th centuries and the ready availability of different coloured bricks provided the opportunity for the lively polychromatic brickwork found throughout this part of Victorian/Edwardian Reading. The town had several brickworks, the most notable being S & E Collier Ltd at Water Road and Elgar Road and two brick works in the Tilehurst area.

6.4 Buildings of Townscape Merit

Buildings identified as having "townscape merit" will vary, but commonly they will be good examples of relatively unaltered 19th century and later buildings where their style, detailing and building materials provides the streetscape with interest and variety. Most importantly, they make a positive contribution to the special interest of a conservation area.

Buildings of Townscape Merit help create a conservation area's distinctive and interesting historic townscape. As recommended in Planning Policy Guidance 15: Planning and the Historic Environment, the general presumption should be in favour of retaining buildings which make a positive contribution to the character or appearance of a conservation area.

Clearly, all the buildings within the Conservation area are important to its "townscape", but it is generally unlisted corner buildings which strictly have a more commanding presence. Although not visible from any great distance, the following buildings are considered to be fall in to this category:

- All Saints Church:
- "The Observatory" building at 54 Tilehurst Road on the Brunswick Hill corner;
- 22 and 24 Bath Road ;

These buildings are considered worthy as being "Buildings of Townscape Merit". Many of the (larger) buildings in the area, which might be considered in this category are otherwise screened by trees.



'The Observatory' from the west

6.5 Public realm. Floorscape, street lighting and street furniture.

Road and footway surfaces are predominantly modern i.e. tarmac and concrete kerbs. Whilst generally in average condition (there is evidence of repairs by "utilities" throughout the area), these surfaces are not attractive and not "traditional" in conservation area terms.

Street lighting columns, signage and street furniture are modern, and this is another area with considerable potential for improvement. There are no examples of traditional lighting in the Area.

Properties in the Conservation Area rely on individual telegraph poles throughout the area with attendant wires radiating out to the houses.

Street trees are an important element of the character of the conservation area.

Brick walls and railings are to be found throughout the area and are clearly an essential part of the public realm and character of the Conservation Area.

6.6 Local details and features

The pre-eminent local detail throughout this Conservation Area, and “unifying” it, is the presence, with few exceptions, of brick walls and/or brick walls and railings at the front of the properties.

6.7 Historic associations

Few historical associations other than those mentioned already in the foregoing text have been found for the area. This is clearly a reflection of the relative “newness” of the building of the conservation area compared with other similar conservation areas in Reading.

6.8 Green spaces, trees and other natural elements

Although there is only one area of formal “green” space, Robert Hewett recreation Ground in the north east corner of the conservation area, the area includes a number of mature properties situated in mature gardens, with extensive tree cover throughout, as well as significant street tree planting in the two arms of Downshire Square, together giving a general verdant feel to the area of buildings and trees in harmony.



Robert Hewett playground

Trees therefore make a significant contribution to this suburban Conservation Area’s special character and sense of identity. Significant tree groups are shown on the Appraisal Map at Appendix 1.

Because of their importance to the character and appearance of a Conservation Area, where they are not already protected by a Tree Preservation Order (and there appears to be just the one in the area, at number 6 Brownlow Road) it is necessary to give the local planning authority 6 weeks notice of any intention to cut down, top or lop any tree in a Conservation Area, which also enables a local planning authority to consider whether the trees should be formally protected by the making of a Tree Preservation Order.

6.9 General condition of the area: The extent of loss, intrusions or damage i.e. negative features.

The general state of repair of the properties in the Conservation Area is good with properties not remaining vacant for any length of time.

The open space at Robert Hewett Recreation Ground is also a generally well maintained public space, having for example children's play equipment and seating in an attractive landscaped setting.

However, in common with many of Reading's conservation areas, the Area is lacking in the quality, if not the state of repair of the highway environment (roadways, footways and street furniture).

All of these areas would benefit from continued monitoring, and the seizing of opportunities for improvement as they arise.

6.10 Problems, pressures and issues

Design of new development

Within the conservation area itself there are few recent developments, but these have generally respected the character, scale of buildings and materials used in the conservation area, thus maintaining its character and appearance. A small number of elements within the conservation area detract from its character, but it is the larger developments immediately outside the conservation area which pay least heed to their context adjoining or near the conservation area and have a notably negative effect on its character and appearance. The design of new development within and adjoining/near the conservation area therefore remains a major issue.

Loss of original architectural details

In general terms the loss of original features, particularly front elevation and boundary features is fairly limited. There are examples of non-traditional windows in the buildings in the Conservation Area. There is a clear issue here in terms of respecting the setting of individual buildings as well as enhancing the character and

appearance of the Conservation Area, in accordance with advice contained in PPG15 and policies contained in the Reading Borough Local Plan.

Notwithstanding the current appearance of the conservation area, it may however be expedient, subject to the requisite publicity and the views of local people to consider whether the local planning authority should consider using its powers to withdraw permitted development rights which affect the external appearance of dwelling houses in the conservation area, namely alterations to doors, windows, roofs and frontages (including boundary walls).

Traffic noise and pollution

The character and environmental quality of the main streets are spoiled by noise and pollution of traffic using and gaining access to and from the main Bath and Tilehurst Roads.

Street clutter

This is not generally an issue with regard to the overall character and appearance of the conservation area, except at the main road entrances to the conservation area as a consequence of their function.

Attention has also been drawn to the detrimental impact of individual telegraph poles and wires radiating out from them.

7.0 Areas for further work

7.1 Consideration of conservation area boundary changes (to be the subject of a public consultation exercise)

Given that there are no changes in circumstances since the Conservation Area was originally designated, and the generally more modern developments adjoining the Conservation Area, no changes are recommended to extend the boundaries of the conservation area (see the penultimate paragraph of Section 3.1). The only possible alteration might be to consider whether the "outlying" site of 54 Tilehurst Road truly relates to the more cohesive nature of the rest of the conservation area, particularly in the light of its recent (re)development, and whether this should be removed from the conservation area.



54 Tilehurst Road and All Saints Court on north side of Tilehurst Road

7.2 Opportunities for enhancement

Floorscape and street furniture improvements should be considered in this area, including replacing telegraph poles.

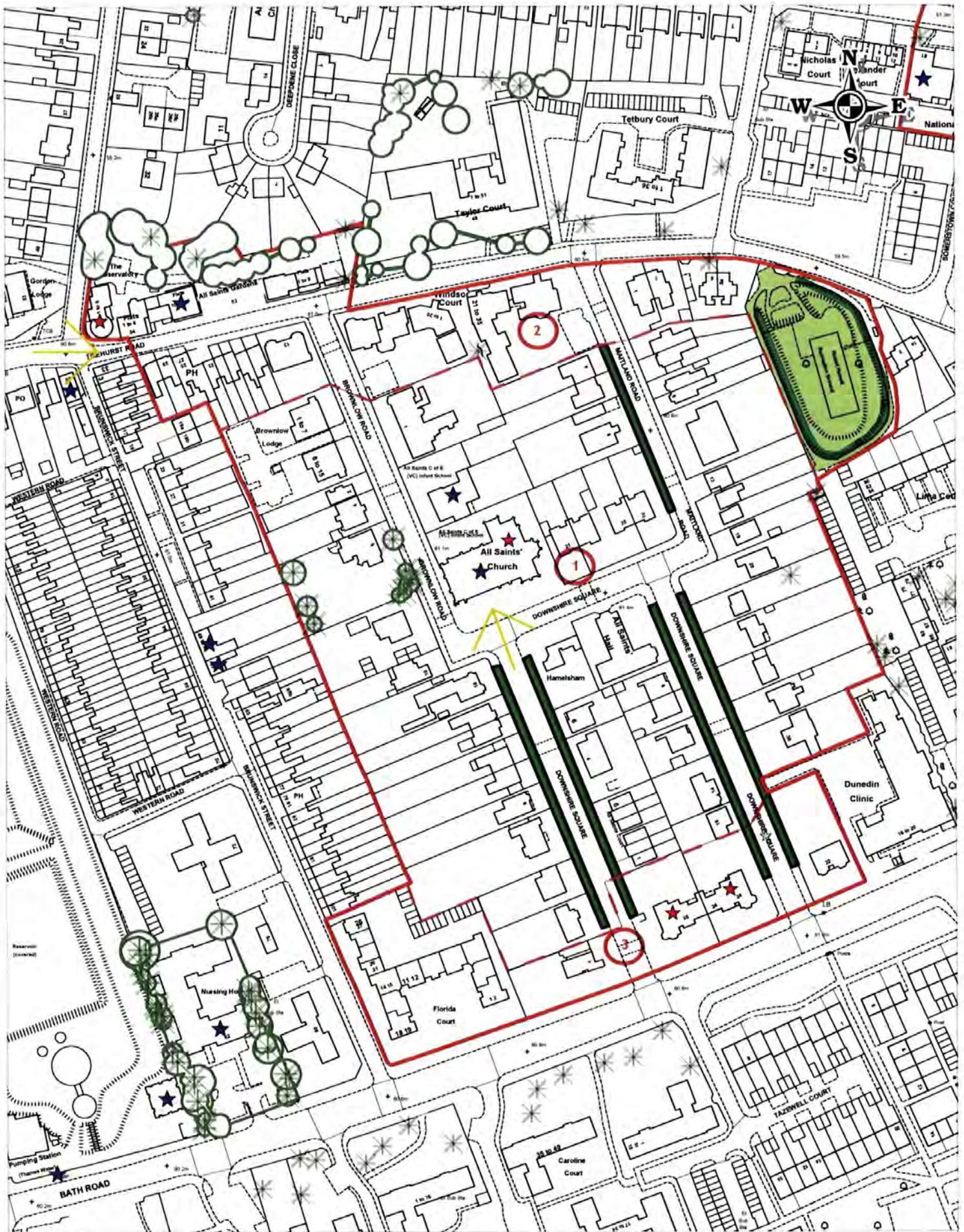
Notwithstanding the current appearance of the conservation area, it may also be expedient, subject to the requisite publicity and the views of local people, to consider whether the local planning authority should consider using its powers to withdraw permitted development rights which affect the external appearance of dwelling houses in the conservation area, namely alterations to doors, windows, roofs and frontages (including boundary walls).

7.3 Monitoring and review

This document should be reviewed every five years in the light of the Local Development Framework and emerging government policy. A review should include the following:

- A survey of the area to identify changes in its character and appearance;
- An assessment of whether the various recommendations detailed in this document have been acted upon, including proposed enhancements;
- A building condition survey;
- The production of a short report detailing the findings of the survey and any necessary action;
- Publicity and advertising.

Appendix 1 - Townscape Appraisal Map



TITLE Downshire Square Conservation Area

- 1 Central core of Brownlow Road & Downshire Square with All Saints Church & adjacent infant school
- 2 The entrance to the area along Tilehurst Road
- 3 The entrance to the area along Bath Road

SCALE 1:2000



Reading
BOROUGH COUNCIL

PLANNING SUPPORT TEAM

Downshire Square Conservation Area Townscape Appraisal Map



Conservation Area Boundary



Listed Building



Buildings of townscape value



Tree Preservation Orders



Other tree groups



Important open space
(contains important trees)



Significant views



Character Areas

Appendix 2 - Relevant Local Plan Policies

The following policies from the Reading Borough Local Plan (1991-2006) are relevant to the preservation and enhancement of the conservation area:

POLICY CUD 6: DEMOLITION OF UNLISTED BUILDINGS IN CONSERVATION AREAS

CONSENT TO DEMOLISH IN A CONSERVATION AREA WILL NORMALLY ONLY BE PERMITTED WHERE IT CAN BE SHOWN THAT IT IS WHOLLY BEYOND REPAIR, INCAPABLE OF REASONABLY BENEFICIAL USE, OF INAPPROPRIATE STRUCTURE OR DESIGN, OR WHERE IT'S REMOVAL OR REPLACEMENT WOULD BENEFIT THE APPEARANCE OR CHARACTER OF THE AREA. DEMOLITION WILL BE MORE FAVOURABLY ASSESSED WHERE THERE ARE APPROVED DETAILED PLANS FOR REDEVELOPMENT AND A CONTRACT FOR CARRYING OUT THE WORKS HAS BEEN ENTERED INTO.

POLICY CUD 7: NEW DEVELOPMENT IN CONSERVATION AREAS

AS APPROPRIATE NEW DEVELOPMENT IN CONSERVATION AREAS SHOULD MAKE A CONTRIBUTION TO THE AREA BY RESPECTING OR ENHANCING ITS ARCHITECTURAL AND VISUAL QUALITIES AND ACHIEVING A HIGH STANDARD OF DESIGN. DEVELOPMENT WITHIN CONSERVATION AREAS WILL NORMALLY BE PERMITTED ONLY WHERE THE PARTICULAR HISTORIC OR ARCHITECTURAL CHARACTER OR APPEARANCE OF THE AREA WILL BE PRESERVED AND THERE IS NO LIKELIHOOD OF HARM BEING CAUSED TO THE AREAS CHARACTER OR APPEARANCE. THE BOROUGH COUNCIL WILL AS APPROPRIATE SEEK TO PRESERVE THE EXISTING BALANCE OF USES IN CONSERVATION AREAS.

Because of the high percentage of listed buildings in the Conservation Area. Policies CUD 1 ((Works Affecting Listed Buildings), CUD 2 (Change of Use of Listed Buildings), CUD 3 (Maintenance of Listed Buildings) and CUD 4 (Setting of Listed Buildings) also apply.