

# Church Gate Conservation Area Character Appraisal

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## **INTRODUCTION**

The Church Gate Conservation Area was designated in February 1976 and extended in August 2001 to include Limehurst House. It covers an area of about 6.6 ha to the north and east of the town centre. At its heart the Conservation Area covers the medieval centre of the town and the subsequent expansion and rebuilding of the town in the Georgian and Victorian periods. Given the range of its historical development the Conservation Area contains many notable buildings, principally from the late Georgian and Victorian periods, but also earlier medieval buildings and later buildings from the early part of the twentieth century, including the All Saints Parish Church, the Baptist Meeting House in addition to the several Georgian town houses and Victorian shops.

The purpose of this appraisal is to examine the historical development of the Area and to describe its present appearance in order to assess the special architectural and historic interest of the Conservation Area. The appraisal will then be used to inform the consideration of management and development proposals within the Area.

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The main document sets out the planning policy context and how this appraisal relates to national, regional and local planning policies.

The main part of the report focuses on the assessment of the special interest of the conservation area, describing:

- Location and setting, how the conservation area relates to the historic town and surrounding area.
- Historic development and archaeology, sets out how architecture and archaeology are related to the social and economic growth of the town.
- Spatial analysis describes the historic plan form of the town and how this has changed, the interrelationship of streets and spaces and identifies key views and landmarks.
- Character analysis, identifies the uses, types and layouts of buildings, key listed and unlisted buildings, coherent groups of buildings, distinctive building material and architectural details, significant green spaces and trees, and detrimental features.

These elements are then brought together in a summary of the overall special interest of the conservation area. An assessment of the general condition of the buildings and spaces within the area is also included.

The main issues and proposed management actions are then summarised. Recommendations for developing longer term management proposals for the area are suggested.

## **PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT**

A conservation area is an area of special architectural or historic interest whose character or appearance should be preserved or enhanced. In making decisions on potential development within a conservation area, the Council is required to 'pay attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of the area'. Permission will not be granted for proposals that are likely to harm the character or appearance of a conservation area. Sections 69 and 72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.

Planning Policy Guidance Note 15: Planning and the Historic Environment says that special attention should be paid when considering proposals for development in a conservation area.

The key principles of PPS9 require that planning policies and decisions not only avoid, mitigate or compensate for harm but also seek ways to enhance, restore and add to biodiversity and geodiversity.

The Regional Spatial Strategy for the East Midlands published in March 2005 advises local authorities to develop strategies that avoid damage to the region's cultural assets. Policy 27: Protecting and Enhancing the Region's Natural and Cultural Assets.

The Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland Structure Plan 1996 to 2016 published in December 2004 seeks to identify, protect, preserve and enhance areas, sites, buildings and settings of historic or architectural interest or archaeological importance. Development within conservation areas should preserve or enhance their character and appearance. Environment Policy 2: Sites and Buildings of Historic Architectural and Archaeological Interest.

The Borough of Charnwood Local Plan 1991 – 2006 adopted in January 2004 seeks to ensure that new development in conservation areas preserves or enhances the character and appearance of the area. Policy EV/10.

The Council's adopted supplementary Planning Document 'Leading in Design' builds on the design policies set out in the Charnwood Local Plan and will contribute to the development of more effective approaches to securing good design in the emerging Local Development Framework. The guide is also intended to support the implementation of the community strategy, Charnwood Together, by providing a set of principles that will inform the physical development implicit in the initiatives and actions of all partners in the local strategic partnership.

Other SPG/SPD guidance.

- Backland & Tandem Development.
- House Extensions
- Shopfronts & Signs
- Student Housing
- Town Centre Masterplan
- Former General Hospital Site Development Brief

## **ASSESSMENT OF SPECIAL INTEREST**

### **LOCATION AND SETTING**

The Church Gate Conservation Area is located in the historic centre of Loughborough to the east of the Market Place and takes in the substantial medieval and Georgian development of the town, which was principally established around All Saints Church and the Market Place on land east of the Woodbrook, a physical barrier to the westward spread of the medieval town.

The Area now forms an integral part of Loughborough's commercial centre, its boundary is woven through the urban fabric following older plot boundaries with no well defined or physical boundaries to distinguish it from the surrounding areas.

The Area is centred on the Church and its immediate environs, and extends in a narrow linear fashion to encompass the properties fronting Church Gate and its continuation along Sparrow Hill, which together formed the principal route into the town over the River Soar at Cotes from the surrounding countryside and from Nottingham.

The most distinct boundary runs along Fennel Street, where the historic buildings on the east side of the street are in marked contrast to the recent Rushes development. Elsewhere the boundary extends to Bridge Street and Toothill Road to bring in two Georgian properties, and onto Baxter Gate, to include a range of Victorian and early twentieth century properties.

### **HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT AND ARCHAEOLOGY**

The settlement of Loughborough first developed to the east of the Woodbrook on the raised gravel terraces above the flood plain of the River Soar close to its lowest bridging point at Cotes. Mentioned in the Domesday Survey of 1086 as a town of 40 houses and a manor, the settlement was surrounded by rich agricultural land and an important destination for a number of routes. Loughborough was therefore able to develop as an agricultural market town, important particularly for its trade in wool and malt, and then as a centre for domestic framework knitting before the advent of the Victorian hosiery factories.

The medieval town had "many fair buildings and a large church" (Burton, 1622) but the Church is the only medieval building left standing in its entirety. The Church was situated in the centre of a large oval shaped church-yard on high ground, making it a conspicuous landmark for many miles round. The Church was a reflection of the town's medieval prosperity and it comprises of a fourteenth century nave and chancel with a square tower and clearstorey added in the fifteenth century. It was subsequently restored by the Victorians in 1862 under the direction of George Gilbert Scott. The survival of the Church is probably due to the fact that it is built of stone, which is resilient to weathering and fire.

Around the Church are the Area's oldest surviving buildings. To the west is the Old Rectory (now a Grade II\* listed building), which dates back to the late thirteenth or early fourteenth century and is a rare survival of a medieval stone manor house. The building was substantially rebuilt in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries when a large wing was added. By 1962 it had fallen into a dilapidated condition and all but the medieval core was demolished, the original solar and buttery being restored by the Loughborough Archaeological and Historical Society.

There are no surviving domestic medieval buildings; by 1863 White's Directory reports that whilst Loughborough was "now a large and well built town...it has few old thatched buildings left to remind us of its ancient days". Such buildings were normally built of timber frame and thatch and were vulnerable to fire and underwent improvement. Contemporary reporters commented that the town had been "diminished by fire" (Burton, 1622) and Nichols (1805) noted that fire was devastating to thatch and rotten timber and lamented the fact that many

plots were never rebuilt. Nichols also notes that many old thatched buildings had been improved by the use of Swithland slate.

However, these early buildings have not disappeared altogether, fragments of medieval fabric still survives trapped within many of the existing buildings in the Area, hidden behind brick or stucco facades or within rear courtyards or elevations, and in particular in a small group of buildings around the Church. On Sparrow Hill adjacent to the Church, stands The Windmill Public House, a Grade II Listed Building and possibly Loughborough's oldest pub. The list description describes the building as being timber-framed of sixteenth century origin with a mostly early nineteenth century facade.

Opposite, are two further blocks of ancient property. At nos. 11 & 12 Sparrow Hill (The Manor Hotel), also a Grade II Listed Building, is a house described as being of probably sixteenth century origin with visible post and panel timber framing with a stuccoed front elevation and a Swithland slate roof of early nineteenth century character (this re-rendering and re-roofing are the common types of improvement referred to by Nichols). Nos. 37 & 38 and 39 & 40 Church Gate (Charles Lowe's Antiques and Furniture shop), which are also Grade II Listed, are described as being of sixteenth century origin with a timber-frame encased in a brick and stuccoed front with Swithland slate roofs. The interior of nos. 37 & 38 reveal exposed timber-framing, while nos. 39 & 40 has a cross passage plan, a typical medieval house layout.

Further along Church Gate, the rear gable of no. 54 reveals a close studded box-frame and further timber posts and bracing along the boundary wall. Other internal evidence of timber frame can be found at no. 7 Church Gate and at no. 9 Meadow Lane. In addition, a mid-Victorian photograph (Wix et al, 2005, page 19) shows a house of timber box-frame construction with a thatched roof that originally stood on the corner of Church Gate and Fennel Street prior to its demolition in 1880.

Therefore whilst the Conservation Area is contained within the medieval core of the town, most of the surviving historic buildings are post-medieval, of Georgian or Victorian origin, when timber frame and thatch gave way to brick and tile or slate construction.

Wood's 1837 street map of Loughborough shows the progression of development throughout the Georgian period and it shows a fully developed Conservation Area. The Church sits in centre of the churchyard and the Windmill Inn is notated to the east and buildings extend along the Sparrow Hill corner and encroach into Meadow Lane.

Church Gate is fully developed from its junction with Biggin Street, with one notable building on the south side marked as the school which opened in 1825. This school was operated by the Thomas Burton charities and was shared between the Grammar School, which had moved from dilapidated buildings within the churchyard, a girls' school and two Lancastrian schools. The school stood opposite the White Hart (also marked) and although it has since been demolished the inscribed stone tablets from the front of the building now lie in the front of Limehurst School on Bridge Street.

Of particular historic interest is the erection of the Loughborough General Hospital that was built on Baxter Gate in 1862 with funds provided by William Perry Herrick. Before the hospital the sick poor had to rely on the public dispensary, which was also on Baxter Gate but this was an outpatients facility only, which was treating in excess of 1500 patients annually. The new hospital provided accommodation for the surgeon and matron alongside consulting and waiting rooms and men's wards on the ground floor, with an operating room, women's wards and five separate bedrooms on the first floor. The hospital was built in an Italianate style in a distinctive cream brick, with stone dressings and quoins.

The building was originally two storeys high with 5 bays, but it was extended in the first part of the twentieth century with the addition of a side wing and two upper two floors. (A photograph in Keil et al, 2006, page 59, shows the original hospital building.)

Fearon Hall was built as the church hall in a corner of the churchyard at the head of Rectory Road. This handsome late Victorian building was built in a Tudor Gothic style in a T-plan and carries the name 'Fearon Hall' in a terracotta panel in the front gable's apex.

The Church Gate Conservation Area has considerable archaeological interest and much of the Area has been designated an 'Area of Archaeological Interest'. It is therefore highly likely that archaeological deposits survive within this designated area and in neighbouring areas around the northern part of the churchyard and the adjacent grounds of the Old Rectory. Any major development requiring excavation works, especially in the vicinity of the Parish Church and the Old Manor House, require a careful archaeological assessment and investigation.

In addition as many of the buildings on Church Gate conceal earlier medieval or submedieval remains, any works involving the disturbance of the existing fabric merit further archaeological investigation.

## **SPATIAL ANALYSIS**

### **PLAN FORM**

The Conservation Area occupies an area of relatively flat land that falls gently from All Saints Church, which stands at about 44m above sea level on an area of raised ground, along Church Gate towards the Market Place at about 41 metres.

The Area covers the whole range of historical and architectural development from earliest medieval times through the Georgian and Victorian rebuilding and expansion of the town and more recent twentieth century developments that are often associated with road widening schemes, with the principal historic building stock dating from the Georgian and early Victorian periods. This historical development has encompassed a whole range of different land uses including religious, educational, commercial, residential and industrial uses.

Whilst there are few surviving medieval buildings the underlying street pattern, which has a strong north-east - south-west orientation, is a legacy of the medieval development of the town. Contemporary reporters noted that Loughborough had "four fair strates or more well paved" and was largely built of timber (Leland, 1539) and Nichols (1805) notes that the town's principal streets included: Church Gate; Baxter Gate; and Sparrow Hill.

Church Gate was an important part of the main thoroughfare that ran between from the Market Place to the Church, then eastwards across the Cotes bridge and on towards Nottingham and is the only surviving street that still retains its medieval width of 18 feet. However, Market Place and Church Gate were not directly linked, the western end of Church Gate joined Biggin Street at a narrow junction, as opposed to the rather wide entrance there today, with a sharp turn along Biggin Street before entering the Market Place. This junction was likely to have been a source of congestion but may also have been a control point to monitor traders and goods entering and leaving the Market Place.

Running parallel to Church Gate, and also offset from the Market Place by a short narrow stretch of High Street, was Baxter Gate, described as a spacious street that led to the town bakehouse and taking its name Baxter from the Scottish word for baker. Uniting these two streets was Sparrow Hill, which ran in a broad arc from the end of Baxter Gate to the bottom of Church Gate before turning to run alongside the churchyard, then turning again to lead out towards the River Soar along Nottingham Road.

However, during the twentieth century significant changes were made to this street pattern: the northern side of Baxter Gate was removed for street widening in the 1920s; Steeple Row was formed linking Rectory Place to Church Gate following the clearance of older properties between 1901 and 1919 and a new route was formed along Fennel Street and Lemington Street, cutting across the medieval street pattern but reflecting new traffic movements.

### **CHARACTER AND INTER-RELATIONSHIP OF SPACES**

The churchyard provides the principle open space within the existing conservation area. The south side of All Saints Church has a distinctive sense of place, dominated by the church but contributed to by the movement and activity along Church Gate/Sparrow Hill and to a degree along Steeple Row. The quality and variety of buildings that provide the enclosure, the tightness of the main entrances to the space from Church Gate, Sparrow Hill and most significantly Nottingham Road and the number of mature trees are also paramount in creating this unique sense of place.

In contrast, the area immediately to the north side of the church is enclosed by the main church building, Fearon Hall and a number of mature trees to give a more tranquil quieter space and although both these spaces are part of the churchyard, they are distinctly different in character.

The space at the junction of Lemyngton Street/Fennel Street has been created to accommodate the modern highway layout and has no historic significance. The buildings on the former north side of Church Gate which now face onto this space are of historic merit. It is unfortunate that the treatment of the space is ill conceived and hence it provides a poor transitional space between the enclosed medieval street proportions of the lower part of Church Gate and the south churchyard area. There is considerable opportunity for improvement.

As mentioned previously, the western end of Church Gate joined Biggin Street at a narrow junction, as opposed to the rather wide entrance there today, with a sharp turn along Biggin Street before entering the Market Place. This wide entrance to Church Gate provides a subservient and informal space as a contrast to the more formal space of the Market Place.

The townscape along Church Gate heading towards Nottingham Road offers the experience of a series of spaces of changing character with sequential glimpses of the church tower, until a full view is obtained after entering the space to the south of the church. This sequence of change is significant to the character of the street.

### **KEY VIEWS AND VISTAS**

Key views are those of All Saints Church from various points within and beyond the boundary of the conservation area. The view along Warner's Lane of No.54 Church Gate, emphasizes the intimate enclosed character of this part of the conservation area.

### **LANDMARKS**

All Saints Church is a dominant major landmark as it can be viewed from most parts of the conservation area. Although not of particular high architectural quality, the former hospital building on Baxter Gate has to be considered a local landmark. The other local landmark is Fearon Hall to the north of the church. Other significant buildings in terms of landmarks are the Baptist Chapel on Baxter Gate, No.54 and Lowe's Antiques on Church Gate, and the Old Manor House, Sparrow Hill. A number of significant landmark buildings are situated just outside the conservation area.

## **CHARACTER ANALYSIS**

### **BUILDING USES**

Given the wide span of historical development, the Area has encompassed a broad range of land uses including religious, educational, commercial residential and industrial uses.

The oldest part of the Conservation Area, developed as the civic centre of the medieval town centred on the Church and the neighbouring rectory and manor house. The building of the Baptist Meeting House and the General Hospital on Baxter Gate by the Georgians and the Victorians maintained this tradition of civic buildings.

The Area also developed as an important commercial centre, due to the importance of Church Gate and Baxter Gate as medieval streets within the town, and whilst later Georgian and Victorian buildings have replaced the early medieval buildings, these streets are still important cultural and commercial corridors.

Residential uses developed around the early town centre, the smaller cottages that were built on Sparrow Hill and Meadow Lane/Nottingham Road remain in residential use while many of the larger Georgian town houses built on Bridge Street and along Rectory Place and Fennel Street have now reverted to commercial use due to their size and proximity to the town centre.

### **BUILDING TYPES AND LAYOUTS**

Directly opposite the Parish Church on Church Gate two blocks of ancient property remain. Capped by old Swithland slate roofs and now serving as Lowes' Antique Furniture premises, one part once formed two houses. The main shop premises have in old documents been referred to as 'Lord's Place', 'Great Hall' and 'Great House' and was probably built originally as a meeting hall or guildhall for Loughborough's merchants

Many of the buildings along the south side of Church Gate are located towards the front of their plots with gardens and orchards behind, between them and the adjoining buildings on Baxter Gate. On the north side of Church Gate the plots display more extensive ranges of buildings extending into the rear yard areas behind the frontage buildings and close to the Church one such range of narrow houses is marked as Steeple Row, now the line of the present road. Like Steeple Row, many of these residential courts have been cleared.

To the west of the Church was a clearly defined network of roads with Rectory Lane ending in front of a second entrance to the churchyard and an extensive range of Georgian town houses along Fennel Street (nos. 12a, 16, 17 & 17a) into Rectory Place (nos. 1, 2 (Chesterton House) and 3. No. 2 Rectory Place was formerly known as Darby's Buildings and the Loughborough High School, the first girls' grammar school in the country, opened here on 11<sup>th</sup> March 1850, before moving to its new premises off Burton Street in 1879. The present Chesterton House name was only applied in 1919.

Beyond Rectory Place, two buildings, separated by small fields and orchards, are also shown fronting Toothill Road: Ivy Cottage, a distinguished early nineteenth century villa, at the entrance to the Tatmarsh, and Limehurst House, an early nineteenth century house.

By 1837 the south side of Baxter Gate had been developed with a narrow range of buildings extending from the High Street and between Baxter Gate and Church Gate the outline of the Baptist Meeting House is also evident, its large size indicating the importance of non-conformity amongst the population of Loughborough.

The outlines of buildings shown on the 1837 plan are shown in more detail by the 1885 Ordnance Survey plan along with the changes that had taken place over the intervening 50 years. The dense back-to-back housing courts established behind the frontage development

along Church Gate and Sparrow Hill are clearly evident as is Steeple Row. Two public houses are shown at the lower end of Church Gate, the White Hart and the Eagle Inn (which is now The Three Nuns but Dimoch Fletcher (1881) refers to it as The Three Tuns, a tun being an enormous cask used to store either beer or wine).

By this time, a large hosiery factory had been built on Church Gate, although this has now been replaced by the modern shops and office block on the Lemington Street corner.

The second half of the nineteenth century also saw the development of the last two major buildings within the Conservation area: the General Hospital and Fearon Hall.

After these two buildings the most significant changes to the Conservation Area, appear to be as a result of road widening and demolitions in the twentieth century. The northern side of Baxter Gate was removed for street widening in the 1920s and its rebuilding resulted in some good examples of early twentieth buildings; and Fennel Street lost its south-west side during the 1960s and a major traffic route was cut through Church Gate with the construction of Lemington Street.

## **KEY LISTED BUILDINGS AND STRUCTURES**

### Baxter Gate

The Baptist Church stands back from the street frontage, its front elevation only visible through a break in the Baxter Gate frontage. Attached to the side of the church, and visible from the adjoining car park, is the original school room

Beyond the hospital is no. 54 Baxter Gate which was built as an auction market in about 1900. It has an irregular frontage in an eclectic Arts and Crafts style and is built in brick laid in an English Garden Wall bond as opposed to the more typical Flemish bond. The main doorway sits under a pediment and on either side are large four-centred arches containing twentieth century shop fronts and a gateway. The upper floors have a range of sash windows and a small octagonal tower rises from the first floor through the eaves. Adjacent to the tower is a canted oriel window at first-floor level that supports a further oriel on the second floor.

### Church Gate

The most important buildings on the lower section of Church Gate beyond Lemington Street belong to Charles Lowe & Sons, Antiques (nos. 37-38 and 39 & 40 Church Gate). These two properties (which are Grade II Listed) date from the sixteenth century with timber frames encased in later brickwork. The front elevation to nos. 37-8 has a range of 9-pane sash windows on both the ground and first floors and a jumble of twentieth century 'Georgian' shop fronts; while nos. 39-40 have a range of 16-pane sash windows and a pair of bracketed doorcases.

### Sparrow Hill

Nos. 58, 59 and 60 Sparrow Hill is a terrace of millworkers' cottages dated 1854. The regular front elevation has 4-panel entrance doors and a range of 16-pane sash windows under splayed lintels.

No. 11 & 12 Sparrow Hill (Old Manor House) dates from the fifteenth century and has a timber-frame, now clad in brick.

Opposite is the Windmill public house (no. 62 Sparrow Hill) dating from the seventeenth century, the front block is also timber-framed with a rendered brick-cladding and a red tile roof.

### Meadow Lane

Meadow Lane was originally a natural extension of Sparrow Hill into the open fields beyond the town.

No. 9 Meadow Lane (Ivy Cottage) has an attractive timber doorcase with an overlight and a canted oriel window at the first floor.

### Fennel Street

No. 12a Fennel Street (Woolley, Beardsleys, & Bosworth) (which is Grade II Listed) is built side-on to Fennel Street and faces similar houses on Rectory Place, providing an attractive square of Georgian townhouses. This former house is rendered and lined to simulate ashlar and has a central front door, with a radial fanlight, and a range of 16-pane sash windows.

Nos. 16, 17 and 17a Fennel Street (which are Grade II Listed) were originally a pair of early nineteenth century houses, that are rendered and lined to simulate ashlar. The front elevation has a variety of small-paned sash windows, with a single front door to no. 16 that has an arched head and an overlight, while the paired entrance doors to nos. 17 and 17a have wooden doorcases with plain overlights.

### Rectory Place

Nos. 1 and 2 (Chesterton House) Rectory Place (both of which are Grade II Listed) were originally a pair of houses; the windows are all 12-pane sashes, and those to the ground-floor windows to no. 2 have external shutters.

No. 3 Rectory Place (Edward Hands & Lewis, Solicitors) (also a Grade II Listed Building) completes the terrace and this has a central door with a canopy and renewed small-paned sashes.

The Old Rectory, a medieval hall house of late 13<sup>th</sup> or early 14<sup>th</sup> century origins, is now substantially a ruin with part of the lower end rebuilt as a museum in the 1960's.

### Bridge Street

Limehurst House has recently been refurbished. This property has a rendered and lined front with a range of range of sash windows with moulded architraves and a central sash with a moulded hood on brackets on the first floor.

### Steeple Row

All Saints Church is mainly 14<sup>th</sup> century and was much restored and secondary south aisle added in 1862 by G.G.Scott. The churchyard has a fine collection of carved Swithland slate headstones which were unfortunately relocated to form a perimeter wall to the churchyard. The best of which have now been used to recreate a traditional churchyard and the remainder relocated to create a memorial garden as part of the Parish Green Project.

## **KEY UNLISTED BUILDINGS**

### Baxter Gate

No. 11 Baxter Gate was built as a bank in about 1930 in a plain neo-classical style. The ground floor is almost all stone, with large pilasters supporting the fascia, whilst the first floor has a range of 15-pane sash windows. The central window sits below a cornice and has a raised architrave with swept feet.

Denham's Jewellers shop (nos. 1 High Street and 67 Baxter Gate, including no. 66a Baxter Gate (Quickstitch)) stands at the corner with the High Street and is dated 1907, making it one of the last buildings to be added to this side of Baxter Gate. The building has a distinctive Art Nouveau style and is faced with a buff terracotta, with large canted plate-glass windows, with leaded and patterned upper sections, on the first floor above the modern shop fronts. The

upper floors also contain intricate terracotta detailing, including a date panel and an egg-and-dart frieze, above the windows.

No 59a Baxter Gate (formerly Marshall Green, Gents Outfitter) has a particularly interesting late nineteenth century frontage, being virtually all plate glass at both the ground and first floor and is an unusually early example of its type. Both shop fronts have retained their panelled pilasters and console brackets.

The most prominent building on the southern side of Baxter Gate is the General Hospital, which is of significant social and historical interest but its architectural interest has been somewhat diminished. The earliest part of the building, which was originally two storeys, was built in 1862 and its most distinctive surviving feature is the main door. This sits within a shouldered arch with an acanthus frieze on the lintel above the door, which is then enclosed by an outer segmental-headed arch with rich mouldings, shafted jambs and much foliage carving, with 'Dispensary 1862' inscribed on the face of the arch. However the building, which had quite elegant proportions, was subsequently extended and a further two floors were added to it resulting in a rather inelegant and top-heavy building.

#### Church Gate

Nos. 5 & 6 Church Gate (Casa Cafe/The Cheese Cottage) is an elegant building with well proportioned window openings and sill bands in the upper floors. However the original sash windows have been replaced by upvc double glazed units and the shop fronts have been replaced with strident new shop fronts in a timber-effect upvc.

No. 7 Church Gate (Rainbow Books) has a gabled front to the street and it may have an earlier medieval core. Otherwise its front elevation has little surviving detail.

Nos. 11 & 12 Church Gate (Wish & Stuart's Leather and Travel Goods & So Café to the rear) comprises a front block facing Church Gate and a rear range running back along the east side of Warner's Lane. The upper part of this building was the home of the Unitarian minister in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. The block has been much altered with new windows and shop fronts, however the original shop front to Stuart's remains in place and this has some fine panelled pilasters with Ionic capitals and console brackets.

Nos. 24 & 25 Church Gate and 22 Fennel Street (The Left Legged Pineapple) and no. 26 Church Gate (R & J, Antique and Modern) have a series of original shop fronts with panelled pilasters, carved brackets and modillion cornices. This run of shop fronts then continues across nos. 28 & 29 Church Gate (LCT Upholsterers) which has a pair of shop fronts flanked by panelled pilasters, carved brackets and modillion cornices with an octagonal pier situated between the central recessed doorways.

No. 54 Church Gate (Caroline James) has a modern shop front set between the original pilasters. On the first floor there is a mix of timber sliding casements and tripartite sash windows in moulded surrounds with 4-pane Yorkshire sliding sashes on the second floor. This building is also of particular interest as the rear wing contains the timber frame of an earlier medieval building.

No. 52 Church Gate (Goodliffe's Bistro) has a tall double shop front with a pair of central recessed doors. The shop front is framed by the original fluted timber pilasters, console brackets and fascia and the patterned iron ventilation grills still survive above the glazed shop fronts and door. The first floor has two tall round-arched windows with a moulded string carried over them.

### Sparrow Hill

Adjoining the Windmill is a block of former shop units (nos. 63-5 Sparrow Hill) that have been converted to houses. The ground floor retains the original shop fronts which have a continuous cornice and console brackets while the upper floors have three square oriels with swept leaded tops.

To the side of the Manor House is no. 10 Sparrow Hill (Sidney Powell Flower Shop) that has lost most of its original details under a roughcast render although there are sash windows to the upper floors.

The lower part of Sparrow Hill and the corner into Nottingham Road is made up of a terrace of similar small retail premises. Nos. 1 (The White Room), 2 and 3 Sparrow Hill (both vacant) have all retained their original timber shop fronts with panelled pilasters, console brackets and cornices with recessed doors. On the upper floors to nos. 1 and 3 are a pair of 24-pane Yorkshire sliding sash windows.

### Meadow Lane

Nos. 2 (The Old House) and 4 Meadow Lane have both been much altered but no. 2 retains a range of 12-pane sash windows in the first floor and no. 4 has an attractive doorcase with carved brackets.

### Fennel Street

No. 21 Fennel Street (the Labour Club) was probably first built as a theatre, and its ornate frontage of orange brick with ashlar dressings and terracotta panels, all surmounted by a prominent Dutch gable, make it one of the most architecturally imposing buildings on Fennel Street. The ground floor has a large 3-light mullioned-and-transomed window in the centre with narrower transomed windows to the side and on either side of the frontage are two entrance doors sitting under pedimented gables. On the first-floor there is a large arched opening in the centre that encloses a smaller 4-pane sash which has its own ornamental pediment with single 4-pane sashes to each side.

At the junction with Lemyngton Street is Unity House School which displays some good terracotta details. This building was previously used by the Loughborough Medical Aid Society.

### Toothill Road

Ivy Lodge is an early nineteenth century villa with a later taller gabled extension to the side. It has a distinctive Welsh slate roof with bands of fish-scale patterning and an oriel window within the extension that has 4-pane sash windows with diagonal glazing bars and swept leaded top.

### Rectory Road

Rectory Road sits behind the churchyard and at its head stands Fearon Hall, the former church hall. This is a handsome late Victorian building, built in a Tudor Gothic style in a T-plan. The walls are supported by a series of brick buttresses between which are set large stone mullion and transom windows, those on the ground floor having square heads while the first floor windows have trefoil heads. The corners of the building are supported by angled buttresses. The front range has a central porch set between a pair of buttresses with a 4-centred moulded arch and a panelled parapet and surmounted by a gable with a terracotta panel inscribed 'Fearon Hall'.

## **COHERENT GROUPS**

The southern side of Baxter Gate is made up of mainly late eighteenth century or early nineteenth century buildings, of two and three storeys, many of which retain their original

shop fronts and have a range of surviving architectural details, particularly in the upper floors. Nos. 58 to 66a Baxter Gate along with No.1 High Street form a good group.

The buildings along Church Gate, are interestingly varied but of a similar scale, either three or two storeys. While these buildings mainly date from the eighteenth and nineteenth century, earlier medieval remains may still survive within the fabric of many of these properties.

The north-east side of Fennel Street has a series of interesting eighteenth and nineteenth century buildings, although some, such as nos. 18 and 19 (Brush Social Club) and no. 20 (Catholic Club), have suffered badly as a result of twentieth century alterations.

Rectory Place is an L-plan link between Fennel Street and Bridge Street; and contains the best examples of Georgian buildings in the town.

## **BUILDING MATERIALS AND ARCHITECTURAL DETAILS**

Despite the age span of the buildings in the Area, the materials used in their construction are drawn from a relatively small palette, principally of brick and slate or tile. Some of these materials are very distinctive and make a significant contribution to the unique character of the area.

The use of brick is common and is typically a smooth faced orange brick from the local works that is mostly laid in a distinctive Flemish bond. This is particularly evident in the buildings along the south side of Baxter Gate and along Church Gate and into Sparrow Lane and Nottingham Road. A major exception to this is the hospital, which is built of a distinctive cream brick.

In some cases the external brickwork has been painted, although this appears to be a later alteration rather than original finish.

Few obvious examples of timber framing remain but some survive disguised and hidden behind brick or stucco facades or within rear courtyards or elevations.

Many of the commercial buildings display terracotta and faience decoration of local provenance.

Roofs throughout the Area are mostly covered in traditional materials. Most of the earliest surviving roofs are of the locally quarried and very distinctive Swithland slate laid in diminishing courses. Since the mid-nineteenth century, with the arrival of the railway to the town, Welsh slate has become a common roofing material. Plain clay tiles and, to a lesser extent, pantiles are also evident. Thatch was common up to the beginning of the twentieth century but today there are no surviving examples within the town. Ivy Lodge on Toothill Road has an interesting Welsh slate roof with bands of fish-scale patterning. Many buildings also have serrated terracotta ridge tiles.

A number of properties have been re-roofed with concrete tiles, however these look out of place and are visually intrusive. To maintain the character and appearance of the Conservation Area new development, whether extensions or new build, should use these traditional materials.

Other external finishes include the use of true stucco render, often lined to imitate stonework, such as on the main Georgian buildings, roughcast render, often used on the upper floors, as seen in several properties along Church Gate and the use of modern cement-based types has also been quite common.

Apart from the Church and Old Rectory, the two oldest buildings in the Area, stone is not used as a principal building material but is used in a number of buildings as a dressing around doors and windows.

As a longstanding commercial area, a particular feature throughout the Conservation Area is the large number of surviving Victorian timber shop fronts with their fashioned pilasters, console brackets and cornices. These make a significant contribution to the historic character of the Area, particularly along the southern side of Baxter Gate, along Church Gate and at the lower end of Sparrow Hill and into Nottingham Road.

Many buildings also retain their original timber sash and casement windows, particularly in the upper storeys above the ground floor shop fronts. Of particular note are the rare surviving examples of margined sash windows, Yorkshire (horizontal) sliding sash windows and the range of oriel windows on many of the buildings throughout the Area.

### **PARKS, GARDENS AND TREES**

All Saints churchyard is the primary green space within the conservation area. It has up until recently, suffered a period of ill conceived approaches to alteration and maintenance. This has been addressed by the recent implementation of phase 1 of the Parish Green Project, which has achieved a dramatic visual improvement and made a significant contribution to restoring the character of this important green space. The future implementation of phases 2 and 3 will further improve this space.

The area around the church is greatly enhanced by the abundance of mature trees, those along Sparrow Hill planted as a short avenue and other single specimens within the churchyard. The tree adjacent to The Windmill P.H. is particularly important.

The mature trees along Bridge Street make a valuable contribution to the character of the street scene and the setting of Limehurst House.

### **BIODIVERSITY**

The Conservation Area comprises a range of urban wildlife habitats, including a variety of buildings and managed green spaces. Green spaces are located at All Saints Churchyard, the Old Rectory, Rectory Wildlife Garden and along Bridge Street. They include areas of amenity grassland, dense shrubbery and a significant number of mature trees. This variety of habitats gives some species the combination of breeding sites, foraging resource and shelter they need within a relatively small space.

The mature trees of the Conservation Area represent an invaluable green network. They support a large rookery within the grounds of the Churchyard and act a magnet to wildlife; in summer, swifts are seen circling above the tree tops and bats feed on insects drawn to the shelter of the tree canopy. Garden birds nest and take cover in the dense shrubbery along the boundary of the Churchyard with the Rectory Wildlife Garden.

The Rectory Wildlife Garden was created some 15 years ago as a demonstration garden. A range of small scale habitats, such as a pond, native hedgerow, wildflower meadow, log piles, butterfly beds and green walls have become a haven to many species. The Garden gives local residents the opportunity to come into contact with nature and contribute to their quality of life.

Some bat species have been recorded within the Conservation Area. With their complex life cycle, bats need warm summer breeding roosts and cold, secure hibernation sites, both found in buildings. A few species may also rely on mature trees for roosts throughout the year.

Some bird species, such as the swift and house sparrow, are also dependent on buildings for nesting.

Many individual wildlife species receive statutory protection under a range of legislative provisions. Prior surveys are particularly critical where there is a reasonable likelihood of legally protected species or priority Biodiversity Action Plan species being present and at risk of impact from development or management.

## **DETRIMENTAL FEATURES**

The historic environment of the Church Gate area has suffered over many years because of a combination of factors. In part the problems arise because the town centre is bisected by the A6 trunk route, which forms a significant barrier to pedestrian movement. Those parts of the town centre to the south-west of the road are seen as 'core' and commercially tend to perform relatively well. Those areas to the north-east of the road, around Church Gate and Baxter Gate, have become marginalised and often suffer difficult trading conditions.

Although the area is close to and visible from the core shopping area of the Market Place, many of the buildings tend to attract short term occupiers who operate the lowest standards in terms of presentation of their premises and property maintenance. Upper floors in particular tend to be underused. A recent survey of Church Gate found that at least 25% of properties had vacant upper floors.

In addition the area is in a large number of ownership's and, therefore, there is little incentive for any individual to undertake substantial investment as the effects may be negated by the inaction of others. As a result there is a lack of investment in the area's commercial fabric and a considerable variation in the quality and appearance of frontages. A partnership grant scheme would enable the development of a strategy which would involve, guide and act as an incentive to property owners, encouraging them to undertake investment and raising the level of commercial confidence in the area.

The Conservation Area has also been blighted by a site adjoining its boundary and which was identified in the Borough of Charnwood Local Plan as Development Opportunity site. The Loughborough Hospital site has awaited firm development proposals for several years, and in the interim has suffered neglect and lack of investment. However, the Council is currently considering proposals for mixed use development on this site.

## DEFINITION OF SPECIAL INTEREST

The Church Gate area has considerable archaeological and historic interest. Notable is the way the area reflects the effects of the textile industry's evolution from Medieval wool merchants, innovative mill owners of the industrial revolution (including such eminent figures as Cartwright, Cotton and Heathcote) to the present day. The area exhibits a great variety of periods and styles of architecture and a surprising range of locally sourced, distinctive materials.

The characteristics of special interest are:

- The variety in the nature of the streets and spaces within the conservation area. Busy Biggin St/Church Gate, historic and architectural quality of the area around the Church Gate/Sparrow Hill junction and the quietness of the area between the church and Fearon Hall.
- The dominance of All Saints church tower in a number of views from within and on the fringe of the area.
- The surviving medieval street pattern, in particular the street width along Church Gate.
- Narrow entry points and sense of enclosure to the area in front of All Saints church.
- Groups of trees and individual specimens the provide termination of views, townscape elements and foil or contrast certain buildings within the conservation area.
- Survival of some unbroken groups or blocks of historic buildings, complete with many of their boundaries and sub-divisions.
- The wide range of building types and layouts that display the social and economic history of the town.
- The quality of historic building stock, All Saints church and churchyard along with the remains of the Old Rectory, the former 'Great Hall' (Lowes' Antique Furniture) and the Manor House, a distinguished group of late eighteenth and early nineteenth century houses in Rectory Place, and in addition to some good examples of Victorian and Edwardian architecture.
- Much of the value and distinctiveness of the Conservation Area is derived from the wealth and variety of the architectural details that survive in many of the buildings. These details reflect the quality and status of the original buildings and now make a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area.
- The use of a range of local materials derived from the local geology are significant; red brick from local works is common, many of the commercial buildings display, terracotta and faience decoration of local provenance, and surviving roofs of the locally quarried Swithland slate are very distinctive.
- The colours and textures that these distinctive local materials provide.
- The use of granite kerb stones of different types in some of the streets of the conservation area.
- The value that traditional independent shops contribute to the character and vitality of some streets within the area.
- Some examples of sensitive and appropriate redevelopment and infill which reflect the local character.

## **REVIEW OF CONSERVATION AREA BOUNDARY**

The Church Gate Conservation Area was designated in February 1976 by Charnwood Borough Council. The medieval Parish Church, by far the most obvious symbol of the town's long history, provides the area's focal point and the protection of the Church's environs was the principal reason for the original designation. The surrounding area defined by Baxter Gate, Church Gate and Sparrow Hill represents what remains of the oldest core of the town.

The Conservation Area boundary has not been reviewed since the original designation. Preliminary survey work has confirmed that a re-examination of the boundary is long overdue. It is clear that the designated area is too narrowly drawn and that the boundary is in places incoherent, particularly in respect of Baxter Gate. Several groups of Georgian, Victorian and Edwardian buildings, unlisted but which nonetheless contribute positively to the location, have been excluded. In addition, a number of fine Art Deco buildings, the result of a major programme of street improvements undertaken by the Town Corporation between 1928 and 1932, have been ignored. These buildings are beginning to be recognised as a distinctive and valuable part of the town's character.

The present boundary of the area is somewhat arbitrary and would benefit from redefinition in certain areas. In particular there are two areas where the boundary could be extended:

### **BAXTER GATE**

Much of the north side of Baxter Gate is presently excluded from the Conservation Area and it would seem logical to include both sides of the street within the Conservation Area, particularly as there is a good range of buildings equal to those within the Area, namely:

- Nos. 4 & 5 are a pair of shops dated 1905 ('MCMV') with modern shop fronts, the first floor has large mullion and transom windows with keyed segmental heads and surrounds and shaped gables with swags and festoons and carved faces.
- Adjacent is Bar 21, a distinctive Arts and Crafts building, the ground floor is faced in faience with narrow red brick in an English Garden bond above. The first floor has with a central oriel window and a range of mullion casement windows.
- Nos. 7 & 8 (Netspace) are 1930's in style faced in faience with bands of rolled moulding decoration.
- No. 12 (Mercury News) is a 1930's neo-classical building faced in smooth concrete blocks to replicate stone, on the first floor are metal casement windows in raised architraving and a green pantile roof.

The north east end of Baxter Gate also has a good range of buildings in addition to two local landmarks in the former Odeon and current Post Office building. All are worth considering for inclusion.

### **RECTORY ROAD**

To include the north east side of Rectory Road (nos. 3-12), a cul-de-sac leading to Fearon Hall, this terrace of nineteenth century bay-fronted housing, is an attractive group with many surviving original features that contributes to the setting of Fearon Hall.

There is also an opportunity to exclude no. 18 Rectory Road, a modern town house of no particular merit alongside Fearon Hall, from the Area.

### **SWAN STREET/HIGH STREET/MARKET PLACE**

The A6 frontages to Swan Street, High Street and Market Place, contain a number of interesting early twentieth century properties. However they are not naturally a part of the Church Gate Conservation Area and their age does not reflect that of the majority of buildings

in the Area. In addition there are also a number of buildings on the opposite side of the A6 and into the Market Place – these buildings may be best considered as part of a new Conservation Area based on the Market Place and extending along the A6 frontage.

## GENERAL CONDITION

The Church Gate area is potentially the most interesting and characterful part of Loughborough town centre but, sadly and all too noticeably, it has suffered many years of neglect. The area's contribution to the image and quality of the town centre has failed to match its potential or to do justice to its assets. In recent years much has been done to improve the quality of the Market Place area of the town centre, including investment in pedestrianisation, the refurbishment of the listed Town Hall and the conversion to a museum of Queen's Hall. However, this has had the unfortunate repercussion that the Church Gate area has become even more marginalised commercially. The pedestrianised area has now been extended to include Church Gate, Warners Lane and the bottom end of Biggin Street and has had a significant positive impact on the vitality of these streets. The well-being of the Church Gate area is indispensable to the image and future character of Loughborough town centre.

A survey of the use and condition of all the traditional buildings within the area has recently been carried out by Borough Council officers following guidelines established by English Heritage for the Buildings at Risk programme. The survey reveals that, although the overall condition of the built fabric when viewed from the street frontage appears reasonable, many buildings are poorly maintained and that ill conceived restoration works, particularly the inappropriate replacement of roofing materials, windows and doors, has caused significant harm to the traditional character of the area.

The problems become more severe when the rear of buildings and ranges of outbuildings within rear courtyards, a particular feature of the area, are examined. The survey has highlighted the fact that many traditional shop fronts survive but they are often in a poor condition and, therefore, vulnerable to inappropriate repair and replacement. Recently a number of upvc shopfronts have been installed which are significantly detrimental to the character of both the historic buildings to which they are attached and the street scene. The addition of unsympathetic security measures is also a very noticeable problem.

A great deal of past repair work to the historic fabric of the area has been executed by inexpert contractors, cheaply and without consideration or knowledge of good conservation practice. A considerable number of the traditional buildings require major repairs. The dangers of cheap, speculative contractors being employed, resulting in poor quality and inappropriate restoration, or no work being done, thus endangering the future of the buildings concerned, are very evident.

The targeting of favourable grants through the Council's Historic Building Grant Scheme, may provide a persuasive incentive to property owners to undertake necessary repairs and to consider improvements, such as the authentic reinstatement of architectural features. It will also give the Council the opportunity to advise on good practice, to control the standard of work and to monitor the quality of its execution. An area partnership initiative, would embrace the wider management of the historical and cultural resources of the Church Gate area and stands to achieve far more than ad hoc grant aid for individual sites and buildings.

## **ENVIRONMENTAL ENHANCEMENT**

A comprehensive approach is needed to address the generally poor quality and neglected condition of many of the public spaces and highways within the area. Possible enhancement opportunities are listed below. It is not an exhaustive set of proposals but the major areas of need have been identified.

1. **ALL SAINTS CHURCHYARD & SURROUNDS**  
Improvements to the footpaths around the churchyard edge including better lighting & surface materials, together with landscaping proposals for the churchyard & repair/re-siting of the considerable number of Swithland slate headstones, previously used erroneously to line the footpath or as paving material, have now been implemented. Proposals to improve the Sparrow Hill and Steeple Row entrances, and the creation of a memorial garden within the churchyard are well advanced.
2. **STEEPLE ROW**  
Improved street furniture, lighting and planting within wide grass verges along both sides of Steeple Row, fronting All Saints Church.
3. **RECTORY PLACE**  
A scheme of traditional paving and lighting to the pedestrianised section of Rectory Place to create a more appropriate setting for the four listed buildings which front this space.
4. **CHURCH GATE/LEMINGTON STREET**  
Paving, street furniture and planting improvements to extensive but poorly designed and neglected landscaped areas alongside the road junction.
5. **BAXTER GATE/LEMINGTON STREET**  
Paving, street furniture and planting improvements to poorly designed and neglected public space.
6. **BAXTER GATE/HIGH STREET**  
Paving, street furniture and planting improvements to one of the town's main commercial streets. A contribution towards this scheme may be sought from the redevelopment of the adjacent Loughborough Hospital Opportunity Site.

Many of these issues are likely to be addressed as part of the design and implementation of the Loughborough Inner Relief Road.

The Borough Council has adopted a Percent for Art Policy and has also created an annual budget of £25,000 for public art within Charnwood. It is intended to work with Charnwood Arts to involve artists in the programme of environmental improvements for the Church Gate Conservation Area.

## SUMMARY OF ISSUES AND PROPOSED ACTIONS

Conservation Area Issue	Proposed Action	Lead Partner	Other Partners
The first phase of the Parish Green Project has led to a significant improvement to the area around the churchyard but additional enhancement work is still needed.	Pursue the implementation and completion of Phases 2 & 3.	Parish Green Partnership	
Poor condition and neglect of the upper floors and rear areas of many of the historic buildings within the conservation area.	A Townscape Heritage Initiative (THI) proposal will be developed by the Borough Council and the County Council in consultation with the other partners and the local community.	CBC/LCC	English Heritage
Poor condition and neglect of the upper floors and rear areas of many of the historic buildings within the conservation area.	Review the Historic Building Grant/Commercial Property Grant Schemes. Historic buildings and structures eligible for grant assistance will be identified. Priority buildings will be highlighted and targeted for action. In the case of priority buildings funds may be available for feasibility studies.	CBC	
The present boundary of the area is somewhat arbitrary and excludes several groups of Georgian, Victorian, Edwardian and Art Deco buildings.	Amendments to the Church Gate Conservation Area boundary, as outlined in this appraisal, will be examined and consulted upon by the Borough Council.	CBC	
Gap sites and poor frontages, such as the east side of Warner's Lane that damages the character and appearance of the historic area.	Where necessary formulate Design/development briefs to encourage appropriate new development for identified sites.	CBC	
Generally poor quality and neglected condition of many of the small public spaces and some sections of highway within the area.	<p>Opportunities for enhancement that are identified in the environmental improvements section earlier in this document will be addressed through the Inner Relief Road programme.</p> <p>Further development of the Public Realm Strategy section of the Town Centre Masterplan to produce a manual for street maintenance work.</p>	CBC/LCC	

## DEVELOPING MANAGEMENT PROPOSALS

Various forces, historical, cultural and commercial, have shaped the development of the conservation area, creating a sense of place and individual identity. The character and appearance of the conservation area is vitally important, both in attracting business and new commercial investment in the area itself, and in the encouragement of initiatives to the benefit of the wider community.

Based on the issues that have been identified the following objectives will have a positive impact in both protecting and enhancing the character of the conservation area, and provide the basis of a long term management plan:

- 1 Identify and target for action historic buildings at risk within the area. Action may range from gentle persuasion and the incentive of grants to the use of compulsory powers as necessary/appropriate. Any historic buildings showing signs of neglect need to be identified. They could be enhanced by removing clutter from elevations (pipes, wiring, brackets etc.) masonry cleaning or repainting. Owners could be approached with suggestions as appropriate. The encouragement of the cleaning of buildings, using methods appropriate to their materials, could achieve significant results visually.
- 2 A review how the Council's adopted 'Shopfront & Signs' guidance is being used. A face lift scheme for shops could be considered. Aspects could include shop fronts and fascias, blinds, colour schemes, advertisements and signs. The Borough Council has adopted a Supplementary Planning Document to clarify the Council's policy and provide advice on shop front design, including the issues of advertisements and security measures. Identify any outstanding enforcement issues.
- 3 A survey of advertisements and signage within the area could be carried out and a programme of action prepared to encourage/require the removal/redesign of any that are damaging to the historic environment.
- 4 Encourage development on sites where infill building would be desirable. Design briefs will need to be prepared for such sites to stimulate interest and assist owners and developers to achieve appropriate design and layout.
- 5 A detailed appraisal is necessary to identify sites within the highway where hard ground surfaces need to be introduced or renewed, including consideration of the scope to redefine sections of carriageway, realign kerbing, extend and repave pedestrian areas, provide and mark vehicle parking bays. A policy for the selection and use of materials appropriate for particular situations will need to be agreed with the Highway Authority.
- 6 It is also necessary to identify any land in public control that is under utilised and might be appropriate for a landscaping scheme to be prepared. The adequacy of maintenance for such areas will need to be addressed. Similarly any neglected private land that can be cleared and reclaimed for positive use will be examined. Consideration should be given to the introduction, or reinstatement where they have been lost, of walls, railings and planting to create enclosure.
- 7 A policy regarding the co-ordination of the placing of all permanent items within the streets needs to be formulated and the opportunities to renew, redesign, re-site, eliminate or combine existing street furniture are substantial. Similarly there is a need to look at traffic signs and highway markings, with a view to their rationalisation. The appropriateness of the existing street lighting and the scope to introduce imaginative lighting schemes, including the illumination of key buildings, also merits examination. Guidelines could be set out in a public realm manual.

- 8 The opportunities for public art in various forms to create distinctive and quality solutions to landscape improvements will be examined.
- 9 The production of heritage trail leaflets to increase community awareness and appreciation, including the encouragement of tourism, should be considered. This might involve interpretation material, plaques or similar for key sites and buildings.
- 10 Identify biodiversity enhancements such as:
  - Encourage the provision of bat and bird boxes, particularly swift nest boxes within the fabric of new/converted buildings.
  - Encourage the continued management of the Rectory Wildlife Garden to maximise biodiversity.

### **ADVICE & GUIDANCE**

The Borough Council Development Department can advise on the need for Planning Permission or Listed Building Consent and can provide guidance on matters such as appropriate methods of maintenance/repairs, changes to shopfronts, alterations and extensions and suitable materials.

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