



Solihull
METROPOLITAN
BOROUGH COUNCIL



White House Way Conservation Area

Appraisal and Management Plan

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01 Introduction

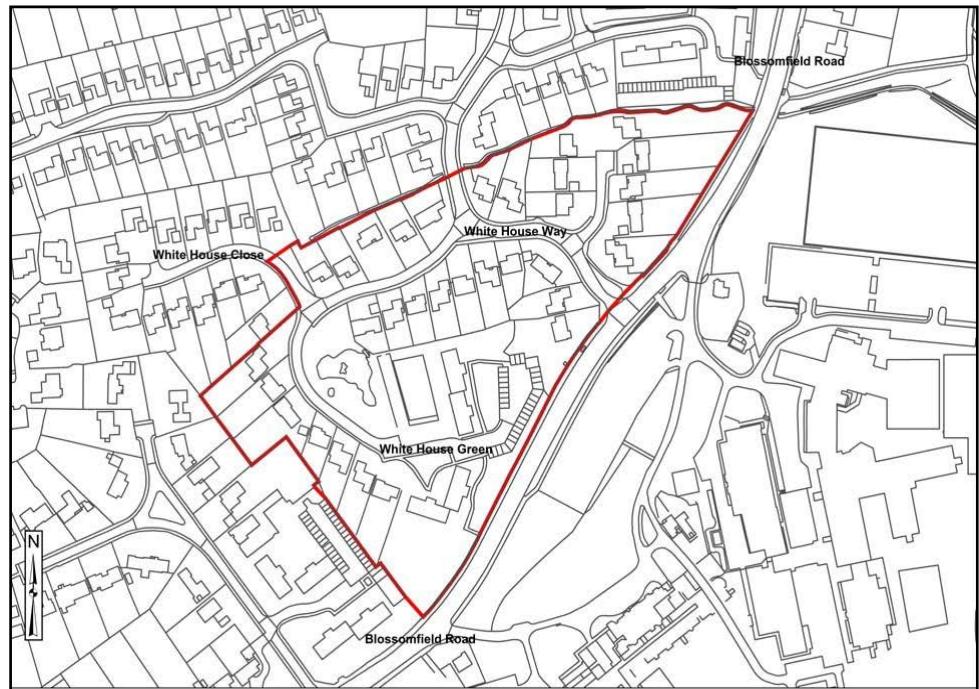
The White House Way housing development, which was built in the 1960s, was designated a conservation area in 1999, under the provisions of the *Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990*.

Following designation a direction made under article 4 of the *Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 (As amended)* was imposed on the dwellinghouses within the conservation area. The direction brought minor alterations under planning controls as a measure to preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the conservation area.

The White House Way Conservation Area is of special interest as an architectural concept that has maintained much of its original integrity, with a distinctive form. The well devised layout with mature trees, green open spaces, wildlife pond and brook all create a sense of seclusion.

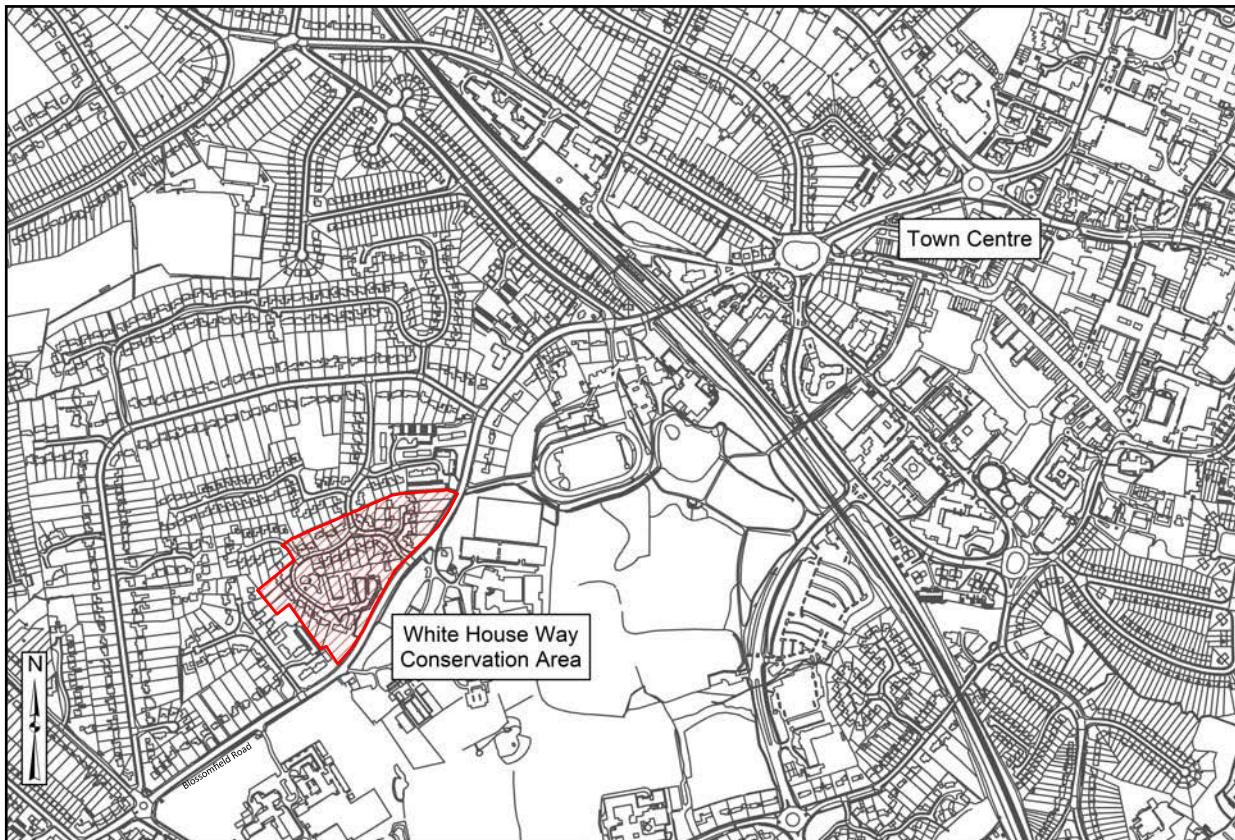
The architectural approach represents the embodiment of a 1960s design concept for modern suburban housing. The retention of its special attributes is important if its character and appearance are to be maintained. Every effort will be made by the local planning authority to prevent the loss of any key features, open spaces or original architectural materials and details.

The extension of the existing boundary to incorporate later phases of the development remains open to review and should be reassessed at regular intervals to ensure this estate receives the protection it deserves in the future.



Boundary of the White House Way Conservation
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02 Location and land uses



Conservation Area Boundary

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The White House Way Conservation Area includes an area of approximately 4.3 hectares located approximately one mile from Solihull Town Centre off Blossomfield Road.

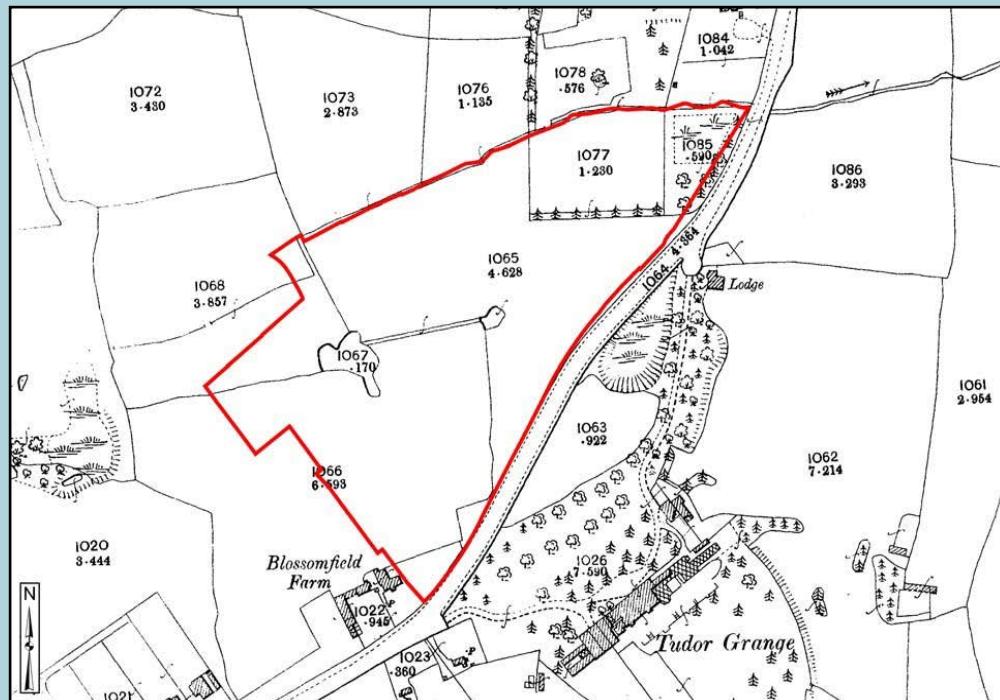
It is unusual in that it encompasses the initial phase of a private housing development that dates from the 1960s, rather than a more historic group of buildings. Now around 60 years old their appearance and materials are plainly of a post-war nature. This particular part of the development was deemed worthy of protection as a particularly good example of its type, retaining much of its original character and integrity, and also incorporating several landscape features of special interest.

Despite its relatively recent date, the Area has some interesting historical associations. It was built on land formerly owned by Sir Robert Bland Bird, the grandson of Alfred Bird, the founder of the Birmingham-based Bird's Custard firm. Sir Robert and his wife lived at The White House, which they built within the grounds of the substantial Victorian family home, Tudor Grange, in Blossomfield Road. They designed attractive gardens around The White House, which included many mature trees and features which were retained within the White House Way development.

03 Historical development

During the 20th century, the area around Solihull developed rapidly as an affluent commuter suburb. The 1902 OS map shows that much of the Blossomfield Road was essentially rural in character at this time, with woodland and meadowland flanking the Alder Brook. Blossomfield Farm, a large farmstead, located at the south-west corner of the present Conservation Area. The pond that now forms a central feature of the Area can be clearly identified on this map. However, already there were signs of the residential development that was to cover much of the outskirts of Solihull by the end of the century. Some victorian housing had been built on regular plots along Blossomfield Road, Alderbrook Road had been partly constructed. Tudor Grange, a substantial Victorian country house standing within ornate gardens and parkland stood on the eastern side of Blossomfield Road.

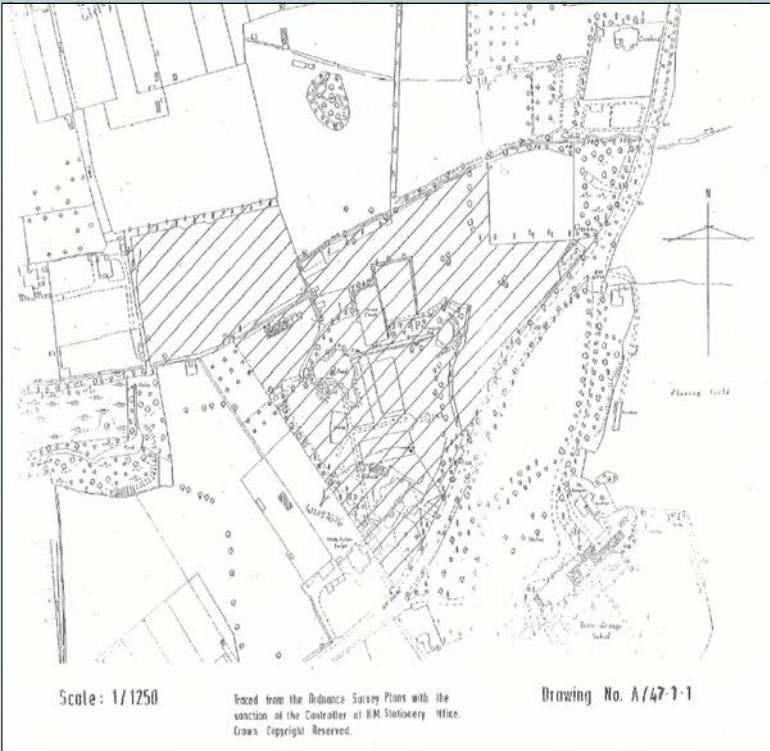
Various publications and local history sources can be referred to for a full account of the historical development of the borough.



Tudor Grange

Tudor Grange belonged to the Bird family, the Birmingham custard manufacturers. Between the Wars, the elder son, Sir Robert Bland Bird, built a substantial house (The White House) on land on the opposite side of Blossomfield Road that now lies within White House Way Conservation Area and from which its name derives. He and his wife laid out an elaborate garden that rivalled that at Tudor Grange which included the existing pond, a maze, topiary, a swimming pool, tennis court and a croquet lawn. In 1960 Sir Robert died and, after the death of his wife the following year, his executors sold the site to the Council for residential development.

03 Historical development



Copy of the original plan of the White House and garden made when they were sold in 1961

It appears from the site plan, which accompanied the conveyance, that remarkably little new building had occurred in the immediate vicinity since 1902, with the exception of the new houses along Alderbrook Road. However, by the early 1960s, as demand within the private housing sector increased, the sale of the site presented an ideal opportunity. In 1963, the developers, C. Bryant & Son, commissioned James A Roberts and Associates to design a small private housing scheme that would incorporate many of the mature trees and garden features within its layout. It was intended that this would serve as a pilot scheme for later mass development within the borough.

The original design included five basic house types, including bungalows, which were grouped at the entrance from Blossomfield Road as show homes. These house types were strategically located within the general layout to reduce regimentation and responded to changes in levels. There were 26 houses, 6 bungalows and 4 blocks of three-storey flats within this original phase of the scheme, the properties being sold leasehold initially.

This original phase was extended in a somewhat piecemeal fashion as adjacent parcels of land were acquired, and the later houses were built in progressively higher densities. The result was that the integrity evident in the initial scheme was compromised as pressures for development increased.

04 Summary of special interest

4.1 Character Analysis



Common Attributes

The character and appearance of the conservation area is the combination and collective effect of many different attributes, such as topography, setting, patterns of development and movement, building type, style and materials, etc, which are applicable to the entire area (the common attributes).

However, there are parts of the conservation area which vary in their character or appearance but which are still mutually supportive due to their interaction with the common attributes.

Individual buildings

The White House Way Conservation Area is unusual in that it includes no individual buildings that make a special contribution to its character and appearance. Neither does it include any Listed Buildings of special architectural or historic interest or any buildings identified by the Planning Authority as being of Local Interest.

This is because the Area's special character and appearance derives from its overall design and layout, as a pioneering example of private housing undertaken in the 1960s. Consequently every part and every building makes a significant contribution to the whole effect but is not of individual distinction.

04 Summary of special interest

4.2 Character of spaces within the area

The key characteristics of the Area is its uniformity of design in terms of its land use, landscaping, scale, building design, and materials. It is evident that there was a clear vision for the place which encompassed a model for suburban living with a range of houses that would appeal to different age groups and needs, but where convenience could be combined with semi-rural surroundings and where car ownership was assumed to be an essential element of that lifestyle.

The land falls away gently from the south-east towards Alder Brook along the north-west boundary, before rising gently again northwards beyond the boundary. The highest point within the Area is at the flats at the south-eastern corner, the lowest point is also within the eastern half of the Area around the pond where the land drops quite sharply to form fairly steep-sided banks.

The layout makes use of the topography of the site. The semi-circular road alignment enabled much of the development to be set some distance from Blossomfield Road. From this road a cul-de-sac leads off to the north within the Area, and a series of cul-de-sacs that lead out of the Area to subsequent developments. The area is occupied by private housing. The dwelling plots follow the layout of the streets and are similar width. Rear gardens, vary in size and shape due to the curvature of the road layout. The amenity space at the south-west end is known as White House Green. This includes the former pond or small lake which was once at the southern end of The White House estate.

The natural area around the pond contrasts with the adjacent remnant of the formal gardens to The White House that are for the private use of the occupants of the flats.



The Alder Brook



The pond

04 Summary of special interest

4.3 Landmarks, Focal Points and Special Features

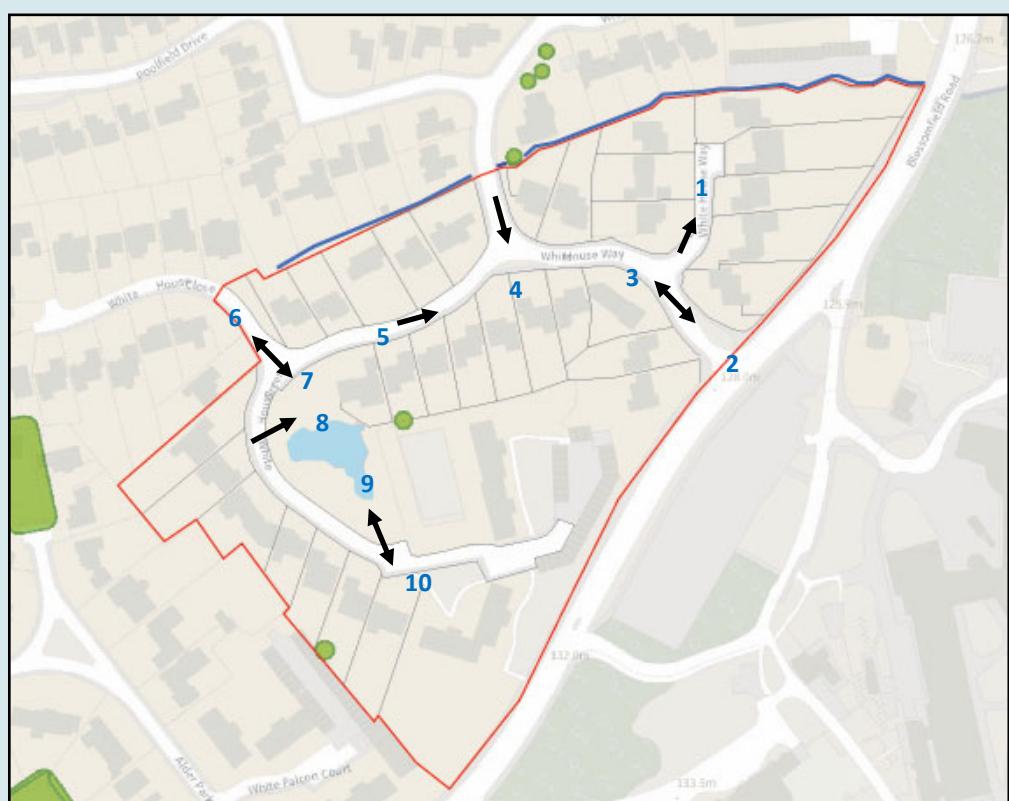
The landscaping within the Area has been designed to enhance the natural advantages of the pond and the generous use of space. The mature trees, notably the oaks that around the pond and the tall *stand of pines* adjacent to the flats, have been retained. The areas of lawn and shrubs around the flats extend visually the areas of public open space and create additional interest. There are small groups of trees at the entrance from the main road and at the minor road junctions. These add further to the overall impression of greenery and serves as a reminder of the large garden on which the present estate now stands.

The sense of space within the Area may be attributed in part to the incorporation of the pond area, the formal garden features and the generous communal gardens that surround the flats. The open-plan front gardens of the houses also play a valuable role as they create a continuous green linear space that flanks the access roads. The depth of most of the plots along with the staggered layout also helps to conceal the narrow space between the properties and helps to lead the eye through the estate from the main road towards the pond and communal garden areas. The informality and change in layout giving the illusion of space and inviting further exploration.



05 Spatial analysis

Key views



— Conservation area boundary

● TPO Trees

→ Important Views

Views into the Area

The views into the Area from the neighbouring roads are typically restricted and defined by the curvature of the roads, house frontages and open plan front gardens. Mature trees throughout the site combined with boundary treatments form a backdrop to these views affording a greater sense of privacy and seclusion.

Views Within and Across the Area

Throughout much of the Area the views are linear and contained by the house frontages. The eye is drawn along these frontages and their open-plan gardens with only individual or small groups of trees providing obstacles to these long vistas creating variety and interest. The exception is at the western end of White House Green where the linear space opens up as a large circular area around the pond. The impact of this broad open space is enhanced considerably by the striking contrast between the natural and informal character of the pond area and the formal geometry of the yew hedging, croquet lawn, and the row of tall Scots Pines, which flank the croquet lawn. This contrast creates a dramatic tension and heightens the element of surprise. It is this element of surprise and contrast at the heart of the Area that is among its most admirable characteristics and which contributes to its special identity.

05 Spatial analysis



Figure 1 Looking into White House Way



Figure 2 Looking out of the area towards Blossomfield Road



Figure 3 Looking toward the northern boundary



Figure 4 Looking into White House Way



Figure 6 Looking into White House Way from White House Close



Figure 7 Looking out towards White House Close



Figure 5 Looking along White House Way



Figure 8 Looking towards the pond



Figure 9 Looking back towards White House Way and the pond



Figure 10 Looking towards the flats

06 Buildings

6.1 Building Materials and Architectural features



There are three different types of residential buildings: two-storey houses, bungalows and flats set within four three-storey blocks. All have spacious proportions. The variety in architectural application of similar features and height of the buildings avoids a sense of monotony. The variety in type and height also enabled different buildings to be located to work best with the layout and topography of the site.

The building materials and design are an excellent example of 1960s residential development. The built form is mainly light orange/buff facing bricks, white-painted weatherboarding, metal casement windows including large 'picture' windows, plastic rainwater goods and integral or adjacent double garages. Roofs use machine-made, single-lap clay or concrete tiles on 35 or 25 degree pitches. The buildings are roughly rectangular in plan, some with gabled wings and bays. Most have large flat-roofed, integral garages, with large areas of glazing and asymmetry of design a feature of the main frontages.

Within this general format there are minor variations in the design, layout and outlook of each dwelling to give a sense of individuality that would appeal to the occupants.

The development set an enviable but affordable standard for executive 1960s housing with spacious plots, attractive landscaping, and mature trees. The buildings combined modern comforts and all the convenience of suburban living with a pleasing sense of seclusion with views of green open spaces and mature trees. Despite subsequent change, the Area has retained its appealing ambience, and its well-maintained homes, gardens and amenity areas suggest that these qualities are still much appreciated by local residents.

06 Buildings

6.2 Morphology of Buildings

Houses

- a) These are all of two-storey construction.
- b) Roofs are all pitched, and are built at a shallow angle of 35 degrees
- c) Roofs form a significant but not dominant element within the elevations
- d) Small brick chimneystacks are offset from the main ridge. These add vertical emphasis and punctuate the roof profile but are not dominant features of the design.
- e) Plan forms are basically rectangular with minor variations
- f) Some of the houses have shallow two-storey gabled projections to the front elevations with pitched roofs subservient in height to the main ridge
- g) Windows have a horizontal emphasis.

Within this basic format minor variations include

- a) Single-storey rear additions
- b) Pitched roofed single-storey side projections
- c) Flat-roofed single-storey garages projecting from front elevations
- d) Open and glazed porches with either flat or lean-to roofs. These may link with the garage roof or incorporate an extension.

Bungalows

- a) Roofs are all pitched and are built at a very shallow angle of 25 degrees
- b) Roof forms are dominant but not significant
- c) T-plan bungalows have chimneystacks offset from the main roof ridge which give vertical emphasis and punctuate the roof profile
- d) Plan forms are T shaped. with the main range aligned with the road and the subsidiary range breaking forward slightly to front and rear. An alternative L-plan bungalow was used in later phases of the development.
- e) All have flat-roofed detached double garages that may be linked to the dwelling by a porch or covered walkway.
- f) Windows have a horizontal emphasis

Flats

- a) Flat-roofed
- b) Four storeys
- c) Two blocks of flats form an L-plan with the blocks set at right angles

The other pair are aligned roughly north/south but the blocks are staggered so that they can be read as two separate entities. Despite minor alterations and extensions, the form and overall design of the houses and bungalows remains predominant and in some cases fully intact and can still be clearly appreciated.

Redrawn from original plans bungalow type



Redrawn from original plans house type 1



Redrawn from original plans house type 2



06 Buildings

6.3 Building materials and architectural features

The general sense of coherence and uniformity of the design of the estate was reinforced by the materials used to construct the buildings. The walls were built of either pale orange/buff or greyish-beige coloured brick in stretcher bond, contrasting well with the white weatherboarded panels and gables and white paintwork. Both the blocks of flats had bands of purplish tile-hanging beneath the windows on each floor and white rendered or boarded panels between them.

The roofs of the houses were covered with dark-brown clay tiles, although a few have since been re-roofed with red or dark purple tiles. The roofs of the bungalows were covered with dark brown concrete tiles. Windows were all white metal casements of varied size and design but all had a horizontal emphasis, and the doors were all fully glazed. Garages had 'up and over' painted metal doors. Plastic rainwater goods were employed throughout.

The detailing of the buildings was kept to a minimum and relied on the overall form and proportions. The horizontal emphasis of the design and the striking contrast between brickwork and paintwork was a simple, modern style with clean and well-defined lines and large areas of glass that was suggestive of the light and spacious interiors.

Garden walling used similar bricks to the main buildings, and at the road junctions it was patterned with blue header bricks. Blue engineering bricks were also used in the stepped retaining wall adjacent to the flats.



Windows with a horizontal emphasis



Facing bricks



Roof tiles and white weather boarding



Glazed entrance door



Pavement Surfacing and driveway materials



Tile-hanging



Detail of garden wall

06 Buildings

6.4 Survival of Building Features

Survival of Building Features

In general the development has stood the current trend for home alterations and improvements remarkably well. Residents have respected the architectural integrity of their homes and the development remains much as it was originally designed in the 1960s. It is of particular benefit that the brickwork has not been rendered, the roof profiles have maintained their simple form, and openings have not been altered significantly.

The most significant change has been the introduction of UPVC double-glazed windows and doors. These replacement windows and doors have had a subtle but regrettable impact on the proportions and overall design of many of the buildings as they are of bulkier section and appear less refined in detail than the original metal window frames and glazed timber doors. Of greater concern are the few instances where small-paned windows, windows with 'leaded' lights, bow windows and 'Georgian-style' gabled porches have been introduced. These appear particularly incongruous and disproportionate and are quite contrary to the 1960s design ethos. Another important change has been the replacement of the original weatherboarding with UPVC cladding or, in some cases, with substitute tile-hanging which fails to provide the intended contrast with the brickwork.

These may appear modest in themselves but they have a cumulative effect, which can insidiously erode the special 1960s character of the development and its unity of design. Such alterations include minor additions that may disregard the form and massing of the buildings, different coloured materials, such as red roof tiles or tarmac drives, plastic replacement windows, boarding and doors, and, in particular, inappropriate traditional or reproduction period features such as leaded lights, Georgian bay windows and porches, or the introduction of block paving to replace tarmac drives.

Apart from the frequent use of plastic substitutes, it should be emphasised that the alterations referred to above are still the exception rather than the rule. Consequently

the architectural integrity of the development remains for the most part unimpaired, and legislature to help control such anomalies is already in place.



07 Negative issues

7.1 Neutral Zones

These are sites that would benefit from enhancement so that they can make a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the Area.

The garaging behind the rear of the flats and accessed at the end of White House Green would falls within this category. It is largely concealed from public view on the eastern boundary of the development, well-screened by planting, and occupying the least desirable part of the site near the main road. These flat-roofed buildings, with their metal 'up and over' garage doors, form a crescent enclosing a tarmac yard, and are slightly staggered in height and layout due to the gentle incline and shape of the site.

Many of the garages appear shabby, made all the more apparent by the high standard of maintenance elsewhere on the development. Despite their discreet location, the garages lie within the Conservation Area and so they are subject to all the same policies and legislation and should not be regarded as a 'soft' area but rather, as an opportunity for enhancement. In this particular instance, a modest refurbishment would bring this part of the Area up to the standard evident elsewhere so that it need no longer make a negative contribution to the whole. As cars are generally larger today, the buildings have possibly fallen out of widespread use.



08 Management proposals

8.1 Monitoring and additional measures

Adaption to Climate Change

The location and design of climate change adaption features such as Photovoltaics and Air Source Heat Pumps must be carefully considered in order that they do not detract from the streetscape or become a feature that detracts from the architectural integrity of the different house types. Rear elevations are likely to be more acceptable and photovoltaics integrated into any reroofing would be preferable to mounted panels. The Campaign to Protection of Rural England (CPRE) and BRE have produced useful guidance : Place-ResponsiveZDesignZforZSolarZPhotovoltaics.pdf

Monitoring

- An audit of the conservation area should be undertaken from time to time to identify inappropriate changes or unauthorised alterations. The monitoring of change within the conservation area is necessary to enable the Council to review the effectiveness of planning controls over a period of time and to implement any necessary action. The audit should include a dated photographic record of the conservation area to identify change.
- A building condition and vacancy survey should be undertaken to identify maintenance issues and buildings potentially at a risk from neglect or damage. The Council should seek to secure appropriate repairs as necessary through liaison with property owners. In cases of serious neglect and decay the Council should consider the use of its statutory powers.
- The Area Appraisal and Management Plan should be reviewed from time to time and should include an evaluation of the implementation of the management recommendations contained within this document;
- The master document should be regularly reviewed and updated to ensure the consistency with changes in legislation, government guidance and local planning policy.

Alteration or Extension to Boundary

A character appraisal of a conservation area presents an opportunity to recommend extensions or alterations to the conservation area boundary if deemed necessary. At the time of designation, the possibility of including White House Close within the Area was considered, but it was decided to confine the Area to the original phase of the development. The preparation of this document represents an appropriate opportunity to reconsider this decision.

There would certainly appear to be a case for including White House Close within the Conservation Area. This is because:

- it shares many common attributes
- it is accessible only from the Area
- No.1 White House Close is actually aligned with the rest of the houses on the west side of White House Green
- part of the Close is clearly visible from and adjacent to the pond and area of green public space around it, the focal point of the development.

However these arguments still do not justify extending the boundary for the following reasons:

- the general ambience is subtly different in White House Close
- the extent of the alterations appears more pronounced
- the sense of green open space is less apparent
- but most importantly in the case of a pioneering designation of this type it is most logical to restrict the Area to its initial phase of development, particularly when that is distinguished by higher design and detailing qualities.

The extension of the boundary will be reviewed from time to time inline with the Councils' statutory duty.

08 Management proposals

8.2 Development management

Development management:

- Conservation area designation is not intended to restrict or prevent new development, its purpose is to manage change in a manner that ensures the character or appearance of the area is not harmed but is either preserved or enhanced. The Council has a statutory duty to ensure that any development proposals within the conservation area satisfy this requirement.
- The Council in the implementation of its development management functions should ensure that all proposals that may affect the special interest of the conservation area are consistent with legislation; the National Planning Policy Framework, local development plan policies; relevant supplementary planning documents and any other relevant material considerations. The Solihull Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan is a material consideration in the determination of planning applications.
- Applications for development proposals that affect the significance of the conservation area will require the submission of a heritage statement that demonstrates how the proposals preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the conservation area in accordance with the requirements of the National Planning Policy Framework.
- There will be a strong presumption in favour of retaining existing buildings and open spaces that make a positive contribution to the character or appearance of the conservation area.

The Area is also subject to an **Article 4 Direction** which means that in addition to the normal requirements for planning permission, the following alterations or demolition would require planning permission as a result of the Article 4 Direction:

- the installation or alteration of windows and doors
- the erection of an extension of any size to the side or front of a house
- alteration to the roof, including changing materials, the insertion of dormer windows or roof lights
- the addition of a porch to an entrance facing a road or open space
- The provision of a hard surface within the grounds of a house for the parking of vehicles
- the alteration, removal or erection of any gate, fence, wall or other means of enclosure within the grounds of a house
- the painting of the exterior of any part of a house or of a building within the grounds of a house not previously painted
- the installation or replacement of a satellite antennae
- rendering walls not previously rendered
- the alteration or removal of a chimney to the house or any other building within the grounds of the house
- the painting of any exterior in the Conservation Area

10 Appendices

Consultation Statement

Consultation on the 2007 statement was carried by individual letter to every property in the conservation area, plus every property in the adjoining White House Close.

In addition to the above, the following organisations were also consulted:

The White House Residents Association

The Twentieth Century Society

Solihull residents Association

Ancient Monument Society

Society for the protection of Ancient Buildings

The Georgian Society

Victorian Society

Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment

Council for British Archaeology

Historic England

Solihull Archaeological Group

National Housing Federation, Central Region

GVA Grimley

Stansgate Planning Consultants

Cala Homes (Midlands) Ltd

Oakmoor Estates Ltd

Chase Homes

Miller Homes

Tyler-Parkes Partnership

RPS

Taylor Woodrow

The Lapworth Partnership

Countrywide Homes

Pegasus Planning Group

Bloor Homes

Warwickshire Museum, Field Services

Barton Hasker Ltd

David Sage

Creative property Design Ltd

Cross & Craig Associates

Design Logic

Dilworth Design

Drawing & Contract Management

Hampton Architecture

Martyn Bramich Associates

Plan AM

Planaconstruct

David Vincent

Ward Councillors

List of Respondents

Council for British Archaeology

Resident of 5 White House Close

Resident of 18 White House Way

This 2025 refreshed document provides the community of White House Way an opportunity to make comment on the Appraisal and Management Plan.

Individual letters have been sent to every property in the conservation area.

Conservation of the Historic Environment, Landscape Architecture, Urban Design and Ecology

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