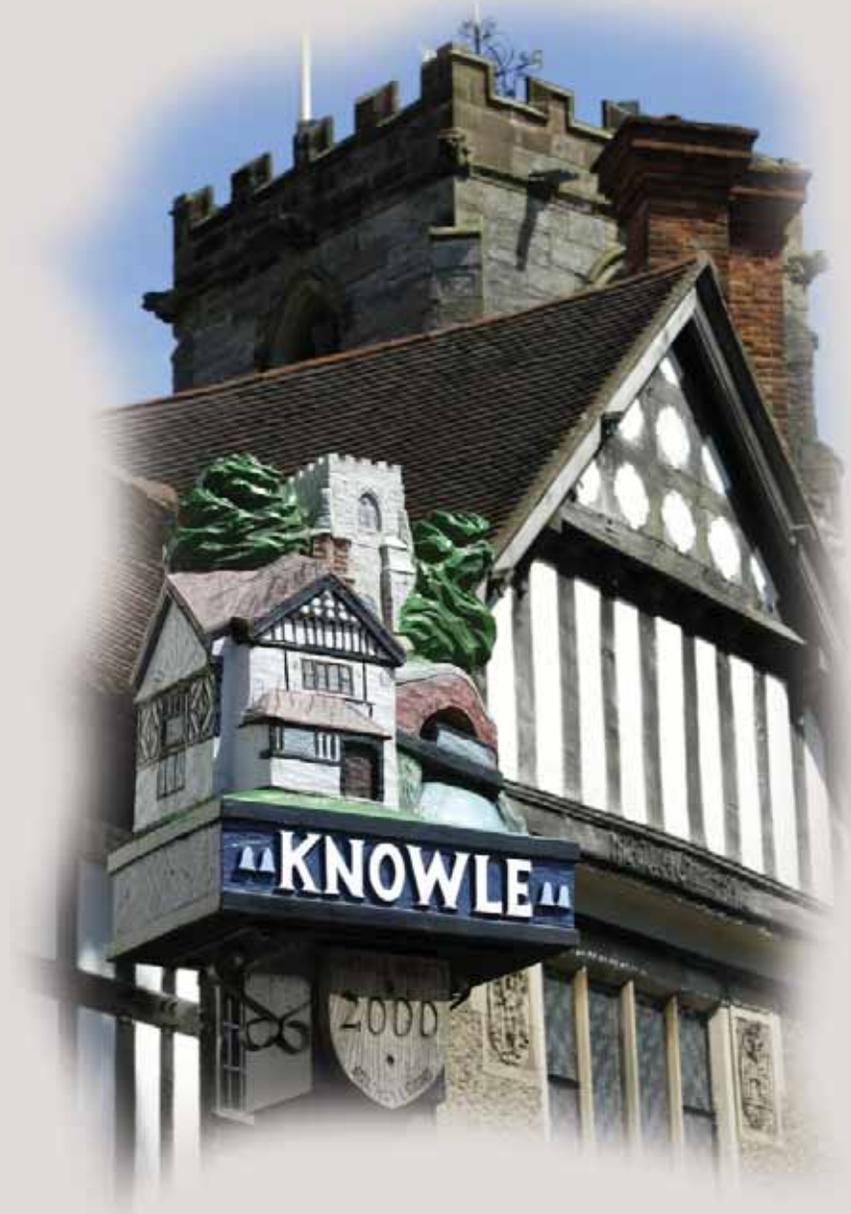




**Solihull**  
METROPOLITAN  
BOROUGH COUNCIL

# Knowle

## Conservation Area Appraisal



September 2007

## **Preface**

At the Decision Session of 15 February 2007, the Cabinet Member for Regeneration approved a draft version of this document for consultation. The consultation was carried out during February/March 2007 and a summary of consultation undertaken is provided at Appendix 2.

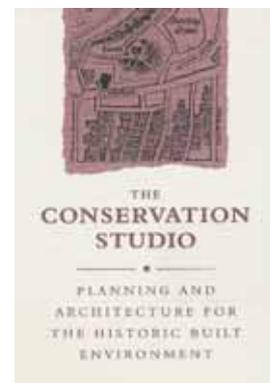
The results of the consultation were reported back to the Cabinet Member for Regeneration on 5<sup>th</sup> July 2007 where this appraisal document was formally approved, subject to further consultation with those affected by proposed boundary changes. At the end of the consultation period this appraisal document was adopted on 14<sup>th</sup> September 2007.

## **Acknowledgement**

The authors are grateful to the Knowle Society who provided helpful insights and facilitated the public meeting.

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## 1. SUMMARY

### 1.1 Key positive characteristics

This Character Appraisal concludes that the key *positive* characteristics of the Knowle Conservation Area are:

- An evolved history that provides a diverse range of plot widths and building types
- Significance as a staging post on the route from London to Birmingham
- Consistent use of building materials – timber, brick and tile
- Consistent building lines
- Consistent two-storey height
- Dense enclosure in the core of the area with a more dispersed pattern at the periphery
- Important focus of the parish church and The Square
- Significant groups of listed and locally listed buildings

### 1.2 Recommendations

This Character Appraisal makes the following recommendations (summary):

- Maintain quality of buildings, gardens and green open spaces that contribute to the character of the conservation area
- Revise Article 4 directions to increase control of development where necessary
- Prepare design briefs for opportunity sites and areas for enhancement
- Enhance the area between the High Street and St John's Close
- Prepare a tree management plan when resources permit
- Consider an integrated package of traffic calming, pedestrian priority and environmental enhancement for the High Street
- Prepare updated planning guidance for shopfronts and signage
- Review the statutory list of listed buildings in Knowle
- Review the local list in partnership with the Knowle Society
- Change the conservation area boundary in two places

## 2. INTRODUCTION

### 2.1 The Knowle Conservation Area

The village of Knowle lies about 4 kilometres south east of Solihull. It was greatly extended on its west side in the 1960s and 1970s. The Knowle Conservation Area was first designated in March 1968 by the - then, County Borough Council in order to preserve the historic core of the settlement. Modest additions have been made to the designation since.

The area focuses on the High Street and the 15<sup>th</sup> century church and extends into Warwick Road to the north, Station Road/ Lodge Road to the west, and Kenilworth Road/ Kixley Lane to the east.



*Figure 1: The Knowle village sign*

## 2.2 The purpose of a conservation area character appraisal

Conservation areas are designated under the provisions of Section 69 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. A conservation area is defined as “*an area of special architectural or historic interest the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance*”.

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

In response to these statutory requirements, this document defines and records the special architectural and historic interest of the Knowle Conservation Area and identifies opportunities for enhancement. It conforms with English Heritage guidance as set out in *Guidance on conservation area appraisals* (2006). Additional government guidance regarding the management of historic buildings and conservation areas is set out within *Planning Policy Guidance 15: Planning and the Historic Environment* (PPG15). Government advice on archaeology is set out in *Planning Policy Guidance Note 16: Archaeology* (PPG16).

This document therefore seeks to:

- Define the special interest of the Knowle Conservation Area by analysing its historical development, landscape setting, spaces, buildings and activities
- Identify negative features and provide a list of improvements and actions
- Carry out a review of the existing conservation area boundary and make recommendations for change as appropriate

English Heritage recommends that, once a character appraisal is completed, proposals for the future management of the area will need to be developed. Ideally, this should be prepared with the help and co-operation of the local community. This would provide more detailed guidelines to prevent harm and achieve enhancement, based on the various issues identified in the character appraisal. To help this subsequent work, English Heritage has published *Guidance on the management of conservation areas* (2006).

Survey work for this document was carried out in November and December 2006 by The Conservation Studio, when a full photographic record was also taken of the area and its buildings. The survey noted unlisted buildings which make a positive contribution to the character of the area, significant trees, views and open spaces, and areas and buildings with opportunities for enhancement. These and other matters are recorded on the Townscape Appraisal map. The omission of any particular feature does not imply that it is of no significance.

The existing boundary of the conservation area was also carefully surveyed and additions and deletions considered. These are detailed in Chapter 8 *Recommendations*.

### **2.3 The planning policy context**

This document therefore provides a firm basis against which applications for future development within the Knowle Conservation Area can be assessed. It should be read in conjunction with the wider development plan policy framework as set out in *Regional planning guidance for the West Midlands* (RPG11 – June 2004) and the *Solihull Unitary Development Plan* (UDP), which was adopted in February 2006.

The UDP Proposals Map shows the Knowle Conservation Area within its wider urban context, which is set within the Green Belt. The map does not record any proposals that directly affect the conservation area, but it does show a long-term housing site at Hampton Road, to the north, and the line of the Knowle Relief Road to the west.

Policies in the UDP, which relate to listed buildings, conservation areas, archaeology and new development are included at Appendix 1.

In 2004, a new planning system was introduced nationally. Under this, the Council's UDP policies and proposals will gradually be replaced by a folder of documents known as the *Local Development Framework*. More information about this important change to the planning system can be found on the Council's website: [www.solihull.gov.uk/ldf](http://www.solihull.gov.uk/ldf)

### **2.4 Community involvement**

This document was initially drafted following a meeting and walkabout with representatives from the Knowle Society on 7 November 2006 when the extent of the conservation area boundary was discussed, along with some of

the main problems and issues which face the community. Following this meeting, a first draft was agreed with the Council and a presentation was made to an open public meeting held at the Knowle Village Hall on 23 February 2007. A period of consultation followed and a Report of Consultation provided at Appendix 2 details the comments received and the actions taken in response to them.

After the completion of this period of public consultation, the final draft was produced and the document illustrated and printed for formal adoption by the Council.



*Figure 2: Berrow Cottage Homes, 1721-1727 High Street*

### 3. LOCATION AND LANDSCAPE SETTING

#### 3.1 Location and activities

Knowle is located within the West Midlands Green Belt to the south of the part known as the 'Meriden Gap'. It is about four kilometres to the south east of Solihull on the A4141 road, which leads from Birmingham and Solihull south east to Warwick. It lies at a crossroads with the B4101, which leads south west to Dorridge and on to Redditch, and west towards Coventry and Kenilworth.

Knowle is primarily a residential village, but it also acts as a local centre to meet immediate shopping, commercial and social needs. The conservation area is largely shaped by the commercial core of the village with residential uses at its extremities. It also includes the important open spaces of the churchyard and the Children's field.

The village centre has a busy feel with active shops and businesses and the effect of constant traffic on the A4141. However, there are relatively tranquil areas also, such as the churchyard and Kixley Lane.



*Figure 3: Church of St John the Baptist, St Lawrence and St Anne*

### **3.2 Geology and Topography**

The Birmingham Plateau comprises two uplifted blocks of older Palaeozoic strata, which form the South Staffordshire Coalfield and the Warwickshire Coalfield. These are separated at a slightly lower level by Triassic rocks which form the Knowle Basin. This area was then overlaid by glacial drift, clays and gravels.

The surface geology provides land of varying fertility. Around Knowle there is pasture, but poorer soils in the vicinity are indicated by several local placenames that include the word 'heath'.

The River Blythe threads through the area of the Knowle Basin and the village itself lies within a large meander as it passes within a kilometre to the west, north and east. Knowle, therefore, lies in a slightly elevated position at about 125 metres (400 ft) above sea level. This gives rise to the name, which derives from the Saxon *gnolle*, meaning a small hill.

### **3.3 Landscape**

The surrounding countryside is part of the ancient Forest of Arden, much of which was cleared for agriculture by the 17<sup>th</sup> century. The resulting landscape is characterised by a rolling landform with winding lanes, small fields and dispersed settlements.

The conservation area directly abuts open countryside on its east and south sides. Also to the east, the Grand Union Canal passes close to the village, acknowledging the raised position with a picturesque flight of locks.

As there is no building stone locally, the landscape provided timber for early building construction and clay for bricks and tiles.

## **4. HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT**

### **4.1 Saxon origins and the middle ages**

The derivation of 'Knowle' suggests that there was a Saxon settlement but, as part of the Manor of Hampden-in Arden, it went unrecorded, for instance in the Domesday survey of 1086.

There are certainly references to Knowle from 1200 as it and the Lordship of the Manor changed hands several times. The de Arden family are said to have built a chapel at Knowle in 1217 and, by 1278, there was certainly enough of a settlement for a manorial court to be held at Knowle. This recorded a community that included agricultural workers, brewers, millers and a potter.

In 1396, Walter Cook successfully obtained a licence from Pope Boniface IX to build a chapel at Knowle. Cook, a member of a wealthy local family and a Canon of Lincoln, argued that it was difficult for local people to reach the parish church at Hampton in bad weather. This was the origin of the present church. Although it was consecrated in 1402, construction continued throughout the first third of the 15<sup>th</sup> century. The church is dedicated, unusually, to a trio of saints: St John the Baptist, St Lawrence and St Anne.

In 1412, Cook also founded the Guild of St Anne to raise subscriptions for a college of ten priests. William Shakespeare's family were among the many members of the Guild. However, although the Guild House was provided next to the church, it appears that the endowments were never sufficient. Both Guild and College were dissolved with the suppression of the chantries in 1547, but the church was reprieved as the Commissioners reported that the 'greate and daungerowse' water of the River Blythe made it impossible in the winter to reach the parish church at Hampton.

### **4.2 Post-mediaeval Knowle**

By the 17<sup>th</sup> century, Knowle could boast several significant houses, such as Chester House and Milverton House. These were ostentatiously built with heavy close-studded timber-framing and cross wings. Other more modest houses have simpler box frames. A poll tax of 1660 indicates an adult population of 529.

Throughout the 18<sup>th</sup> century, Knowle remained an agricultural village, focussed on the church and the village green, which was on the triangle formed by the High Street, Kenilworth Road and Wilson's Road.

In 1725 the Birmingham-Warwick Turnpike act was passed. The road was improved and Knowle became a staging post on the route from Birmingham to London. As a consequence, the Red Lion Inn and the Swan Inn flourished. Rising prosperity is indicated by the re-fronting of timber-framed houses with newly fashionable brickwork.



*Figure 4: Milverton House, 1743 Warwick Road*

### **4.3 The 19<sup>th</sup> century**

Common land in the Manor of Hampton-in-Arden was enclosed in 1824. Much of the land around Knowle had been open, as the names Knowle Common Road and Waste Lane testify. They became the streets we now recognise as Lodge Road and Longdon Road. The Tithe Map of 1841 shows a road pattern substantially as it is now with the village buildings concentrated on High Street surrounded by irregular fields. There was very little development on what are now Station Road and Lodge Road, and the triangle they form with the High Street was agricultural.

Communications improved dramatically. In 1836, a mail coach covered the 119 miles from London to Birmingham, via Knowle, in just under 12 hours.

Under an Act obtained in 1793, the Birmingham Warwick Canal was constructed. It opened in 1800. Rising out of the city by six locks, it maintains its summit for 16 kilometres before descending five steps at the Knowle Locks. Capacity was increased when the Birmingham Junction Canal was opened in 1844. However, in 1854 a railway station was opened close to Knowle, which led to the development of Dorridge. Despite the railway, canal use continued into the 20<sup>th</sup> century, but it was mainly restricted to bulk cargos.

The combined effect of canal and railway was to intensify agricultural business and to make Birmingham and London more accessible. Knowle prospered and expanded with buildings that made use of imported bricks, stone and Welsh roofing slate.

In 1850, Knowle finally won its independence from Hampton when it was considered sufficiently autonomous to be constituted as an ecclesiastical parish in its own right.

From the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century Knowle intensified and expanded. The north side of Station Road and into Lodge Road was progressively developed as was Kenilworth Road. Meanwhile in the village centre, 12-24 Wilsons Road was built in 1841, Milverton Crescent in 1840 and the Berrow Cottage Homes replaced the village green in 1885. The process is shown on the Ordnance Survey of 1888 and, with further intensification, on the map of 1904.



*Figure 5: 12-24 Wilsons Road*



*Figure 6: Tithe map 1841*

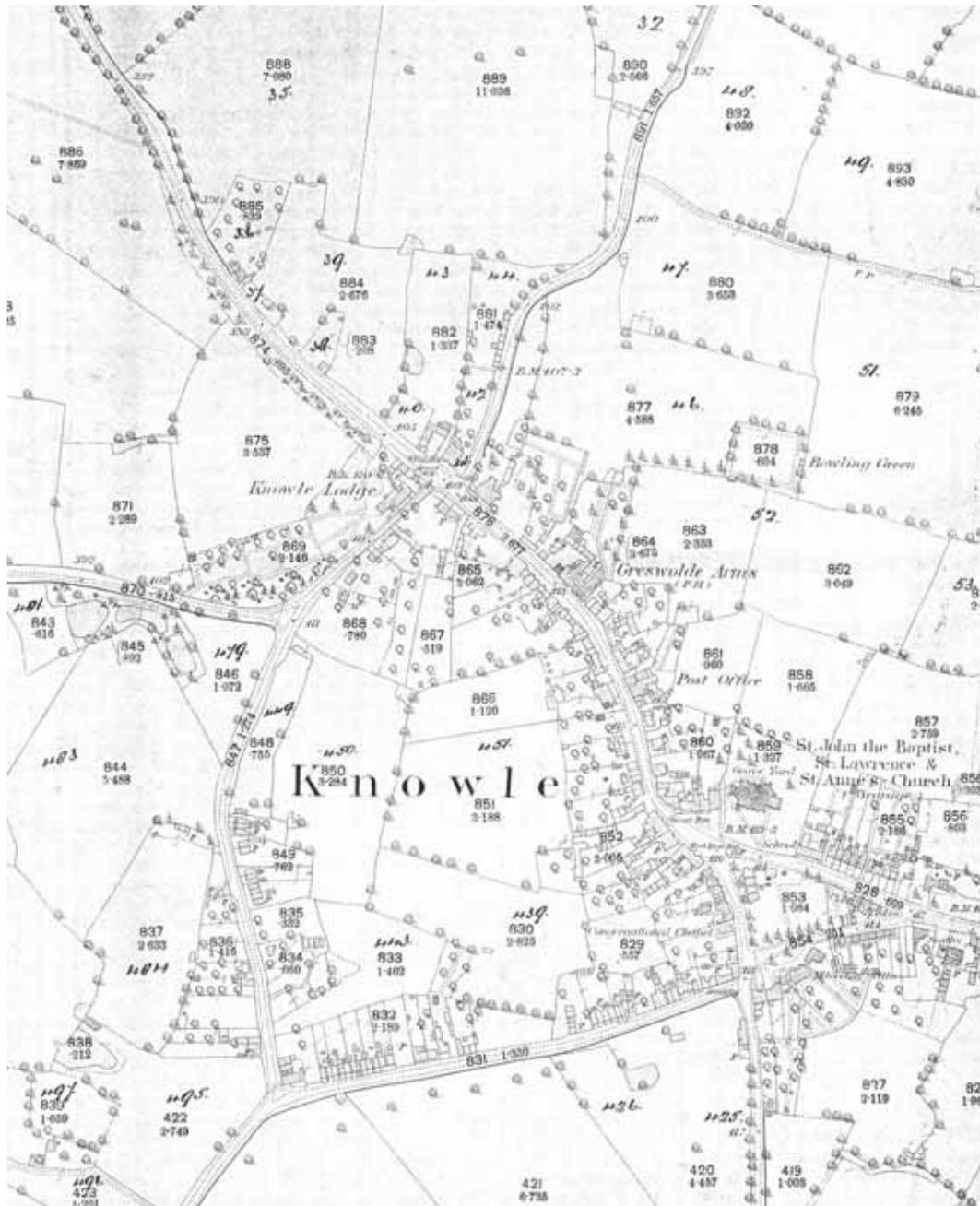


Figure 7: First Edition Ordnance Survey map 1888

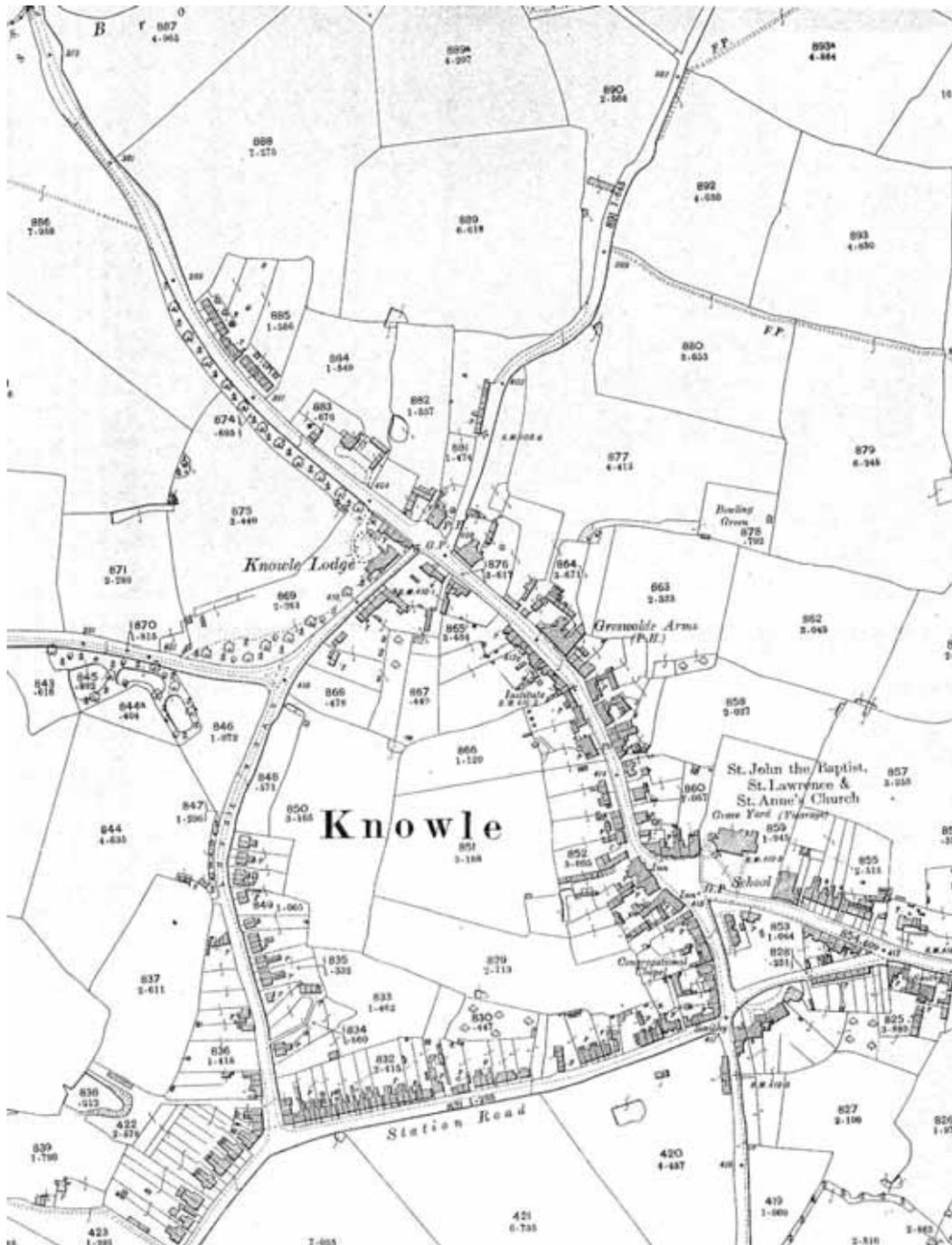


Figure 8: Ordnance Survey map 1904

#### **4.4 Recent history**

The inter-war period of the 1920s and '30s saw the construction of council houses in Kixley Lane and the urbanisation of much of the village's periphery. For instance, land to the south of Station Road was lotted up for housing on Milverton Road in 1932.

After the Second World War, Knowle expanded rapidly with mass housing projects, particularly on the west side. In the 1960s, the development of St John's Close saw the infilling of the Station Road/ Lodge Road triangle with housing in the south round a new village green and, in the northern part, retail uses, carparking and the village hall.

From 1904 to 1977 the population of Knowle rose from 2,093 to 11,500 with the bulk of that increase coming in the last decade.

The shopping precinct was designed to minimise its impact on the High Street after concerns were expressed by the Knowle Society about the potential threat of a supermarket being inserted into the townscape of the main street. Further developments in the High Street in the 1970s were acclaimed at the time for '*a sympathetic architectural approach*' although they may now be viewed differently.

Over the last few years Knowle has striven to maintain its village character in the face of development pressures and rising traffic levels.

#### **4.5 Archaeology**

There are no Scheduled Ancient Monuments within the conservation area. However, knowledge of the early development of Knowle is far from complete. Awareness of archaeological potential will, therefore, be a significant issue in any future developments.

## **5. SPATIAL ANALYSIS**

### **5.1 Plan form, site layout and boundaries**

The Knowle Conservation Area is notable for the sinuous form of its principal axis – the High Street and Warwick Road – and for the staggered junction where the two main routes cross. The former provides engaging views as the townscape unfolds and the latter provides a complexity that produces spaces of added interest. This is heightened by the set back of the church, which would have made more sense when it addressed the village green.

Plot widths in the older development are not regular, as they tend to be in planned settlements elsewhere. This reflects the incremental growth of the village and it contrasts with the regularity of some later developments such as the late 19<sup>th</sup> century terrace on the north side of Station Road or the even later houses of Kixley Lane.

The unifying factor is the consistency of the building lines whether at the back of the pavement, in the case of the High Street, or behind short front gardens elsewhere.

In common with many places, the building density is greater at the core of the village where gaps between buildings may be simple alleyways. Density tends to decrease at the periphery, particularly on Kenilworth Road where there is less sense of enclosure and an increasing feeling of space as one approaches open countryside.

### **5.2 Landmarks, focal points and views**

Appropriately, the church with its four-stage tower is a focal point for the village and a significant landmark. Other landmarks are the high status properties: - the Guild House, Chester House and Milverton House. Chimney stacks are less prevalent than they are in historical photographs, but the ornately grouped stacks of Milverton House provide a dramatic landmark in views from the south.

Townscape views within the conservation area are an important part of its character. A series of views along the High Street unfolds with the curve of the road. Chester House is a prominent objective in these. Similarly, there are a series of views from Warwick Road South culminating with the church tower. There are also important glimpses of the tower, for instance through the gap between 1701 and 1703 High Street.

Where the conservation area abuts open countryside, there are extensive views across the Green Belt. These points are primarily on Kenilworth Road and Kixley Lane.



*Figure 9: Chester House, 1667 and 1669 Warwick Road*



*Figure 10: View to the church tower from the High Street*

### 5.3 Open spaces, trees and landscape

The conservation area has two major open spaces – the churchyard and the Children’s Field – and, together, they form a significant asset. The Children’s Field was bought with public donations in the 1920s and was vested in the National Trust for use as a recreation ground. It is, therefore, open and grassed. By contrast, the churchyard has a fine collection of mature trees including an oak tree planted in 1911 on King George V’s coronation.



*Figure 11: The churchyard is a key open green space*

Another important space is that outside the Guild House. Known as The Square, this is the modern village centre and is appropriately where the millennial village sign is placed. There is also a large open space in front of the Parade at the junction of Station Road and Warwick Road. This includes some planting, but is otherwise dominated by roads.

Generally, gardens are private. In Kenilworth Road, for instance, properties tend to be set back further than in other streets. This produces additional space for planting which, although private, adds considerably to the visual appeal of the area. One garden that is public is the formal garden created behind the library at Chester House. This is an important social and historical resource.

To the north, the conservation area was extended beyond the Wilson Arms as far as Northend Cottages. On the west side of Warwick Road, this extension also includes the Spinney, a tree-lined verge that provides a welcoming entrance to the village.

Further important trees and tree groups are recorded on the townscape appraisal map. These include the oak at the corner of Lodge Road, opposite the Wilson Arms, which has a commanding presence in views along the High Street.



*Figure 12: The large oak tree on the corner of Lodge Road is an important tree and forms a distinctive local landmark*

#### **5.4 Public realm**

Historical photographs show roads of rammed earth and stone edged with setted gutters, stone kerbs and wide pavements. Today's tarmac surfaces can be seen as a natural successor to this vernacular past, although stone detailing has often given way to concrete substitutes.

Since the 1960s, pavements have been relaid with concrete slabs in non-traditional square modules and stack-bonded patterns. There is, however, evidence in alleyways for brick paving using blue and red Staffordshire 'dust bricks'.

Street furniture is appropriately minimal. Where necessary, there are plain modern bollards and streetlights are a modern interpretation of the historical Windsor lantern. In the High Street there is a cast-iron telephone kiosk of the K6 type designed by Giles Gilbert Scott in the 1930s.

Where buildings are set back, property boundaries tend to be informal and unobtrusive – low walls and hedges. Exceptions are the formal boundary wall to the churchyard and the distinctive pierced brickwork of the boundary wall to Milverton Crescent.



*Figure 13: 'Dust bricks' lining an alleyway*

## 6. THE BUILDINGS OF THE CONSERVATION AREA

### 6.1 Building types

Historically, the village comprised the church, houses and inns. The church was built of stone for durability and to emphasise its pre-eminent status. Other buildings used more local materials – timber, brick and tile. Here too, there are divisions according to status and age.

Before the 18<sup>th</sup> century, building construction was timber-framed. Higher status buildings, such as the Guild House and Chester House, used heavier close-studded framing, while lesser buildings made use of lighter, more economic box frames. They are often lower too, with upper floors extending into the roof space. Examples include Artillery Cottages and those at 1624/1628 High Street.



*Figure 14: The Guild House, 1715 Warwick Road*

In the 18<sup>th</sup> century, brick became fashionable. It was used first to re-front existing timber frames and then became the structural material of choice. At the same time trading became more formal and shopfronts were introduced, initially as alterations to houses and later as part of purpose-built shops, such as those on Station Road. Occasionally, stucco has been used to develop detailing or to cover inferior bricks. Milverton Crescent, for instance, is a middle class housing development influenced perhaps by similar styles in Leamington Spa.

As the village grew, so did the need for other services, such as banking. One of the earliest Midland banks was at 1632/1636 High Street before it moved in the 1920s to the quirkily purpose-built premises next door. The National Westminster bank was built after the demolition of the timber-framed White Swan Inn in 1939. This set the tone for much of the subsequent development.

Further building uses included the police station, surgery, hotel (The Greswolde), chapels, a men's institute as well as a women's institute, a cinema, garages and schools. Some of these were converted from existing buildings. However, the 1930s saw the addition of the United Reform Church in Station Road, with its unusual Germanic/Moorish style, and the Art Deco influences of the garages on Lodge Road and High Street. The original school, since converted to sheltered accommodation, is adjacent to the churchyard.



*Figure 15: The United Reform Church,  
Station Road*

Despite the diversity of building types, plot width and materials, the village is unified by a general two-storey height, which allows the landmarks to be seen without competition. There were very few exceptions until the 20<sup>th</sup> century when the National Westminster bank and then other commercial buildings in the High Street rose to two-and-a-half or three storeys.

## 6.2 Listed buildings

There are 53 listed buildings in the conservation area, all but three of them at grade II. St John the Baptist, St Lawrence and St Anne's Church is listed grade 1, and Chester House and the Guild House are listed grade II\*.

There are several groups where listed buildings are concentrated. For instance:

- Kenilworth Road - The Manor House and Golden End cottages
- Wilson's Road - Milverton House and Milverton Crescent
- Warwick Road - Buildings on the west side
- The Square - The Church, the Red Lion and the Guild House with adjacent buildings
- High Street - Chester House, the adjacent building and those on the opposite side

There are also 34 buildings on the Council's Local List. These are buildings which, although not statutorily protected, are nonetheless significant in the local context. The Council will take local listing into account when considering planning proposals.

The local list includes the Greswolde Hotel, the old school in Kenilworth Road, the 1841 terrace in Wilson's Road and several 17<sup>th</sup> century timber-framed buildings.



*Figure 16: The old school, Kenilworth Road*

The listed and locally listed buildings are shown on the townscape appraisal map and in Appendix 3. The map also identifies other buildings that make a positive contribution to the character of the conservation area. It should be noted, however, that designations in the Knowle Conservation Area are probably understated. There are locally listed buildings that fulfil the criteria for statutory listing and there are positive buildings that could be locally listed.

### **6.3 Positive buildings**

These are the buildings that make a positive contribution to the character of the conservation area and, therefore, underpin its special interest. Listed buildings are, of course, positive and they have their own system of protection. In addition, the '*positive*' category includes all locally listed buildings and further buildings have been identified during the survey. As recommended in government policy (PPG15), they are recorded on the townscape appraisal map.

There is a general presumption in favour of retaining positive buildings within the conservation area. PPG15 provides tests to be met before demolition can be considered and the Council will be especially vigilant when considering applications for alteration or extension.

Positive buildings are often the later and more vernacular buildings that are less recognised by other designations. In the Knowle Conservation Area they include buildings such as:

- Nos.1610-1620 High Street
- Northend Cottages, Warwick Road
- 7-23 and 29-59 Kixley Lane
- The terraces on Kenilworth Road and Station Road
- The Parade, Station Road

### **6.4 Building styles, materials and colours**

The style of buildings is largely dictated by the materials they are made of. In post-mediaeval times, when Knowle really began to develop, the timber-frame tradition clearly derived from plentiful supplies of oak from the Forest of Arden. This was mostly a vernacular tradition of modest houses built economically with well-spaced timbers creating box frames.

On higher status houses, wealth was expressed by the conspicuous use of timber in heavier sections placed closer together. Imposing gables often face the street and, in the case of the Guild House, there is impressive coving to the eaves on the elevation facing the church. Windows in timber buildings were usually leaded lights with iron casements for openers. However, many of these windows have since been modernised as timber casements.



*Figure 17: Elaborate polychrome brickwork on Kenilworth Road.*

Bricks and tiles are similarly a reflection of local availability of raw material. Bricks were used first as ‘noggings’ to infill the panels of timber frames and then as a facing material. The tradition of load-bearing brick has continued from the 18<sup>th</sup> century to the present day. Again, there is a modest vernacular as at the Old Surgery, in the 1841 terrace at Wilsons Road and in the 20<sup>th</sup> century council houses of Kixley Lane. More exuberant brickwork was used for the school, and a fashion for brick patterns extended into the neighbouring houses in Kenilworth Road.

While the earliest buildings may have been thatched, the use of tiles for roofing has been constant since at least the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Tiles were hand-made and, therefore, subject to slight irregularities. Those that have survived re-roofing over several centuries tend to be the stronger tiles that have been fired most. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century flatter machine-made tiles were introduced and, for a minority of buildings, Welsh slates were imported.

Render and stucco (the more ornamental form of render) are used sparingly in the conservation area from the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. The most notable example is Milverton Crescent.

Stone was used sparingly in the conservation area because it had to be imported and because brick was the readily available alternative. The notable exception is the church. Here, stone was used to express the highest status and durability. The original church was built of white Arden sandstone, but the alterations and additions, including the upper storey of the tower, used red sandstone from Kenilworth.

The blackening of timbers is largely a practice of the 19<sup>th</sup> century onwards. In Knowle, this is often black-and-red where brick noggings have been left unpainted. When Chester House was restored in the early 1970s, there was a deliberate attempt to go back to an earlier tradition of leaving oak and plaster in their natural state. Where brickwork and render are painted, they tend to be white or cream.

The overall palette for the village is, therefore, fairly neutral other than the red of bricks and tiles. This means that the use of vibrant colours for signage or shopfronts could easily cause harm to the appearance of the area.



*Figure 18: Milverton Crescent, 2-10 Wilsons Road*

## 7. ISSUES

### 7.1 Key positive characteristics

This Character Appraisal concludes that the key *positive* characteristics of the Knowle Conservation Area are:

- An evolved history that provides a diverse range of plot widths and building types
- Significance as an agricultural settlement serving a rural hinterland
- Significance as a staging post on the route from London to Birmingham
- Consistent use of building materials – timber, brick and tile
- Consistent building lines at the back of the pavement in the core area and behind front gardens towards the periphery
- Consistent two-storey height with pitched roofs
- Dense enclosure in the core of the area with a more dispersed pattern at the periphery
- Important focus of the parish church and The Square
- Subtle curve of the High Street provides unfolding townscape views
- Important views of church tower and to open countryside
- Significant groups of listed and locally listed buildings
- Important open spaces: the churchyard and the Children's Field
- Strong contribution of tree groups, but not in the central area

### 7.2 Key negative characteristics

This Character Appraisal concludes that the key *negative* characteristics of the Knowle Conservation Area are:

- Erosion of historic layout from the 1960s onwards by modern infill development and the amalgamation of plots
- Erosive effect of the increasing height of development from the 1960s onwards
- Use of non-traditional materials, such as plastic window frames, machine-made and concrete tiles, painting of brickwork
- Loss of front gardens for hard surfaces and carparking
- Loss of traditional front boundary walls and hedges
- Need for some tree management
- Weight of traffic at times along the High Street and Warwick Road
- Opportunity sites for better use or redevelopment
- Dated paving in need of enhancement

### **7.3 Issues**

The Knowle Conservation Area encompasses an attractive rural settlement including its gradual growth up until the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. The main threats to its character came with rapid post-war expansion when redevelopment might have had far more impact than it did, but for the concerted strength of local feeling.

Now, changes are more subtle, but incrementally they could still have an adverse affect on the quality of the environment if not controlled properly. The buildings are generally in good condition and generally the area is a desirable location in which to live. However there are a number of issues that will need to be addressed if the conservation area is to be protected from unsympathetic changes. These are:

#### **1. Development**

In general, the need is to maintain the quality of Knowle through the consistent application of basic urban design principles. These include:

- Observing historical plot sizes
- Limiting the height and bulk of buildings
- Using a limited palette of materials and colours
- Maintaining the sense of enclosure at the centre with increasing openness towards the edges
- Promoting pedestrian accessibility

The erosive effects of small-scale change have already made their mark. The Council has responded in the past with two Article 4 directions to control building details at addresses in Kixley Lane and Wilson's Road, and to control front gardens on the north side of Station Road. There is a case for controlling permitted development rights throughout the conservation area with a more comprehensive Article 4 direction.

There are also opportunity sites within the conservation area that do not currently enhance it, for instance the petrol station on Kenilworth Road and the British Legion Club. Design Briefs for these sites would ensure that any future building was sympathetic with the character of the area.

The character of the designated area can also be affected by developments outside the boundary. This may not be an issue where the land is either protected as Green Belt or it is taken up with established buildings. However, St John's Close is a particular case because it is bounded on three sides by the conservation area.

St John's Close was developed in the 1960s and, while its buildings are not critical to the architectural and historic interest of Knowle, it does provide a modern village green in its attractive central area of grass planted with specimen trees. To the north of the green, the character is less cohesive. Here, an unplanned clutter of buildings, service areas, garages and carparks present a less than welcoming access to the conservation area that would benefit from concerted enhancement.

## **2. Trees**

Trees contribute strongly to the character of the conservation area, particularly outside the urban core of the High Street. Many are now reaching maturity. In addition to any health and safety issues that arise, there is a need for landowners to ensure succession through replacement planting.



*Figure 19: 'Golden End', 49 Kenilworth Road*

## **3. Traffic management and the public realm**

Traffic can be heavy, particularly along the High Street and Warwick Road. Provision has been made in the UDP for a relief road on the west side of the village. However, there are still opportunities to build on the efforts that have already been made for traffic calming and pedestrian priority.

Street enhancements undertaken in recent decades used non-traditional materials, such as concrete flags in square modules. As these begin to tire, there are opportunities for significant improvements to visual appearance and pedestrian comfort.



*Figure 20: Traffic calming measures have an intrusive impact on the conservation area*

#### **4. Designations**

It is clear that Knowle is under-represented in both statutory and local listing. Clarity of decision making would be greatly enhanced if designations were brought up to date. This would require representations to English Heritage, who determine listing nationally, and a systematic update of the Council's Local List.

#### **5. Conservation Area boundary review**

As part of the appraisal process, the conservation area boundary was inspected and reviewed. It was suggested that two amendments should be made to include the terrace of shops at Nos.33-47 Station Road and to exclude the modern extension of Beausale Drive at the rear of No.1621 Warwick Road. These changes have been approved.

## **8. RECOMMENDATIONS**

Based on the various Issues identified in the preceding chapter, the following recommendations are made:

### **8.1 Development**

- The Council should ensure that all new development in the conservation area adheres to UDP policies, to the spirit of advice contained in PPG15 about conservation areas and to established urban design principles. Generally, there should be a presumption in favour of retaining existing buildings, gardens and green open spaces that contribute positively to the character of the conservation area
- A review of the existing Article 4 directions should be undertaken with a view to withdrawing other permitted development rights where appropriate in the conservation area
- Development briefs should be prepared for opportunity sites
- Opportunities for enhancement should be considered, particularly in the area between the High Street and St John's Close

### **8.2 Designations**

- A review of the statutory list for Knowle should be undertaken in partnership with English Heritage
- The Council should undertake a review of the local list in partnership with the Knowle Society

### **8.3 Conservation Area boundary review**

- As part of the appraisal process, the conservation area boundary was inspected and reviewed. The following changes were recommended and subsequently approved:
  - Include the terrace of shops at Nos.33-47 Station Road
  - Exclude the modern extension of Beausale Drive at the rear of No.1621 Warwick Road.

#### **8.4 Traffic management and the public realm**

- Consideration should be given to further work in the High Street area to provide an integrated package of traffic calming, pedestrian priority and environmental enhancement

#### **8.5 Trees**

- A Tree Management Plan should, when resources permit, be drawn up to provide a management regime for existing trees in the conservation area and to plan ahead for future planting needs

## **APPENDIX 1. UDP policies**

The relevant document is the *Solihull Unitary Development Plan*, which was formally adopted by Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council in February 2006.

Policies relating to conservation areas and listed buildings are included in *Chapter 6: The Environment*.

The relevant policies are:

### **ENV1: Mixed use development**

The Council will promote and seek to retain a mixture of uses in town centres and other areas highly accessible by public transport, in order to increase diversity and minimise the need to travel.

### **ENV2: Urban design**

In considering proposals for development, the council will promote good quality building and urban design. Development will be permitted only if it:

- (i) Respects the harmony and relationships between buildings, the urban environment and the landscape
- (ii) Enhances the quality and attractiveness of the Borough
- (iii) Contributes to a sense of local identity and regional diversity
- (iv) Protects and enhances the character and local distinctiveness of the Borough's urban areas
- (v) Protects and enhances the amenity of existing occupiers
- (vi) Optimises the use of the site, makes efficient and prudent use of resources, and supports local facilities and transport networks
- (vii) Allows for ease of movement by pedestrians and cyclists and gives priority to the needs of pedestrians
- (viii) Minimises the potential for crime and anti-social behaviour

### **ENV5: Conservation areas**

The council will review the designation of Conservation Areas through the development plan process. In considering whether changes or additions are appropriate the council will have regard to the special architectural or historic interest of the area.

The Council will seek to preserve and enhance the special character and appearance of the Conservation Areas in the Borough, as set out in the Conservation Area Appraisal documents.

Development within or affecting the setting of a Conservation Area, including the demolition of buildings, will be permitted only if it will preserve or enhance the character and appearance of the Conservation Area.

### **ENV6: Listed Buildings**

In considering proposals for development, the Council will safeguard and encourage the enhancement of the special character of Listed Buildings. Proposals for the demolition of a Listed Building will not be permitted, unless it is proven that no realistic alternative for its survival can be secured. Development involving alterations or additions will be permitted only if it would not have an adverse effect on the special character of the building or its setting. Changes of use of a Listed Building will be permitted only if it is demonstrated that the proposal would contribute to the conservation of the building whilst preserving or enhancing its special character.

### **ENV7: 'Locally listed' buildings**

Development that involves the loss of a 'locally listed' building will be permitted only if it is proven that no realistic alternative for its survival can be secured, and the benefits of the development outweigh the need to safeguard its conservation value.

These policies should be read in conjunction with their supporting text and with other policies relating to, for instance, the natural environment, countryside, retailing, housing and transport.

## **APPENDIX 2.**

### **Knowle conservation area appraisal**

#### **Report of consultation**

##### **Background**

The draft conservation area appraisal was widely circulated to properties in Knowle village and it was posted on the Solihull MBC website. It was then the subject of a public meeting facilitated by the Knowle Society and attended by almost 100 people. The meeting was held on 23 February 2007 at Knowle Village Hall. The consultant who had prepared the draft gave a presentation and this was followed by an open discussion.

In addition, two drop-in sessions were held at the Knowle Public Library on 1 & 3 March 2007. Planning Officers (Conservation) from Solihull MBC attended these sessions.

##### **Report**

The following table summarises all the comments made to the consultation process and the Council's response in each case. Contributions made at the public meeting were unattributed.

Abbreviations:

CA – Conservation Area

TPO – Tree Preservation Order

	<b>Name:</b>	<b>Comment:</b>	<b>Response:</b>	<b>Accept/ Reject:</b>
1.	Meeting	Protect the green space outside the Village Hall by including it in the CA	Green area not included, as it is part of setting but not an integral part of CA	Reject
2.	Meeting	Include Grimshaw Hall and Knowle Hall	Too far outside the CA to be included. Both are already protected by statutory listing	Reject
3.	Meeting	Include Knowle Locks	Too separate from the CA to be included, but the Council will consider potential for listing and a separate CA designation	Partially accept
4.	Meeting	Bowling Green to rear of Red Lion no longer used and is therefore an Opportunity Site	Included as an Area of Enhancement	Accept
5.	Meeting	Would the Council support a Village Design Statement?	The Council would welcome production of a design statement by the community. Whether the Council can contribute any resources would be another issue	Accept
6.	Meeting	Loss of houses from 1940s and 50s. Can we protect the heritage of tomorrow	Yes, through possible future designations, but not as yet	Accept in principle
7.	Meeting	Planning of areas outside the CA can have an affect on the character of the area itself	The Council has a duty to take such effects into account	Accept

8.	Meeting	Can CA control shops?	Planning permission needed for material changes e.g. new shopfronts and in some cases colour	Accept
9.	Meeting	Include the allotments	Allotments part of setting of, but not integral to CA, so not included	Reject
10.	Meeting	Include Knowle Park	The park is considered to be a separate entity. If it was to be a CA it should be a separate designation. However, it is already protected by planning policies	Reject
11.	Meeting (The Vicar)	A business, apparently operating from a container in the car park by the school, is a particular eyesore	The Council undertook to investigate this	Accept
12.	Meeting	Car parking is essential to the vitality of the village. Need to take account of residents as well as workers and visitors	Car parking needs will be considered in the subsequent management of the CA	Accept
13.	Mrs Sutherland	Concern over (i) unstable historic wall and (ii) TPO on a dead tree	(i) Demolition likely to be resisted (ii) Tree Officer to inspect	Accept

14.	Mr Benton	(i) Include houses east of Manor House (ii) add significant view (iii) mark TPOs and curtilage buildings (iv) address need for pedestrian crossing and traffic controls	(i) Relatively modern houses not part of historic character (ii) views are only indicative, but will be addressed in more detail in management proposals (iii) TPOs too numerous to be accurate at this scale, curtilage buildings subject to other legislation (iv) traffic and highways issues will be addressed in the management of the CA	Reject (i) & (iii), Accept (ii) & (iv)
15.	A Resident	Support for inclusion of (i) Lodge Road, (ii) St. John's Close, (iii) Station Road shops, and (iv) the allotments	Council proposes to add 37 to 47 Station Road, but not the remainder of Lodge Road or St. Johns Close, as this would include buildings of no architectural or historic merit. Allotments referred to at 9.	Accept (iii), reject (i), (ii) and (iv)
16.	S Rogers	Suggests highways improvements	These are issues for subsequent management of the CA	Accept
17.	Mrs Smith/ Mr Evans	Rear access to Hillside Cottages via British Legion site should be maintained otherwise control over hardstandings to the front would be difficult	This issue would be relevant to any Design Brief for the British Legion site Area of Enhancement; Article 4 Direction to remove hardstandings permitted development to be investigated	Accept

18.	Cllr Potts	(i) Suggestions for listing and local listing (ii) include locks in CA (iii) include Knowle Park and Jobs Close (iv) Royal British Legion building is of 'genuine architectural and historical interest' (v) include Grimshaw and Knowle Halls in CA	(i) To be pursued separately (ii) see 3 above (iii) see 10 above (iv) all buildings are part of their local history, but the architectural and historical interest of the Royal British Legion Building is not thought to be 'special' in terms of the CA legislation (v) see 2	Accept (i), Reject (ii) (iii) (iv) and (v)
19.	Brocade	Concern about unauthorised shopfront alterations and advertisements	These are enforcement issues the Council can address separately	Accept
20.	Mr Withers	Clarification over addresses at Nos.1632 – 1636	Clarification noted	Accept
21.	David Lewis	Concern over rear extensions	Advice given	Accept
22.	Mr Quinn	As 21	As 21	Accept
23.	Resident	Bowling Green should be kept as open space	Currently seen as such but this would not prevent the owner from making proposals	Accept
24.	P Vince	(i) Apply open space notation to St John's Green (ii) Enhance Scout hut and drive	(i) Open space clear on townscape appraisal plan (ii) enhancement can be considered in more detail in the management of the setting of CA	Accept

25.	Alan Rebeiro	(i) Take measures to document trees in the CA (ii) include Knowle Park in CA	(i) Trees already raised as an issue. They will be considered in more detail in the management of the CA (ii) see 10 above	Accept (i), Reject (ii)
26.	Jane Moss	(i) Include St John's Close (ii) improve links from High Street through the shopping area (iii) include the allotments (iv) various typos	(i) See (ii) at 15 (ii) options for enhancement will be considered in the management of the CA (iii) see 9 above (iv) corrections have been made	Accept
27.	The Knowle Society	The Society represents over 30% of the voting population in Knowle and it offers 'considerable approval' for the CA appraisal and seven recommendations (i) protection for historic alleyways (ii) add the green in St John's Close, but not the buildings on its periphery (iii) use Staffordshire dust bricks in all future paving (iv) enhance local and statutory listing (v) enforce a neutral colour palette (vi) control hanging signs (vii) designate the old Bowling Green as an 'opportunity site' with its own planning brief	(i, iii, v & vi) These are matters for development control on a case by case basis. Interpretation of control may be enhanced in some areas through an Article 4 Direction and the Council does propose to review the existing directions (ii) inclusion of the green not proposed as not integral to CA but forms part of setting; (iv) the Council has already embarked on revision of its local list and will welcome the involvement of the Society. Statutory listing is a matter of application to English Heritage and SMBC will pursue cases (vii) it is accepted that the Bowling Green can be in the Area of Enhancement	Accept

28. Kimberly Development	Agreement that the area between High Street and St John's Close has poor physical characteristics and traffic congestion due to five uncoordinated car parks. The area should be identified as an 'opportunity site' with its own development brief	The area is not within the current CA. However, the Council does recognise the potential for it to have an affect on the character of the CA. Inclusion within Area of Enhancement is proposed. Any proposal should therefore be set in the context of a Design Brief which the Council will undertake to prepare	Accept
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### **APPENDIX 3. Listed and locally listed buildings**

#### **1. The statutory list of buildings of special architectural or historic interest**

- High Street (East)
  - No.1721-1727
  
- Kenilworth Road (North)
  - Church of St John the Baptist, St Lawrence & St Anne
  - No.49
  
- Kenilworth Road (South)
  - Nos.74-78
  - No.80
  - No.82
  - No.84
  - Nos.86-90
  - No.94
  - The Manor House
  
- Station Road (North side)
  - No. 14, The Olde House

N.B. Warwick Road properties sometimes addressed as High Street

- Warwick Road (East side)
  - No.1587
  - Artillery Cottage, 1589 -1591
  - No.1619
  - The Wilson's Arms and outbuildings
  - No.1637
  - Chester House
  - No.1671
  - Nos.1681, 1683 & 1683a
  - Nos.1699 & 1701
  - No.1709
  - Nos.1711-1713
  - The Guild House
  - Milverton House

- Warwick Road (West side)
  - No.1608
  - No.1622
  - Nos.1624-1628
  - The Red Lion PH
  - Nos.1678-1680
  - Nos.1682 &1684
  - Stowe House
  
- Wilson's Road
  - Nos.2-10 Wilson's Road

## **2. Solihull MBC local list of buildings of special architectural or historic interest**

- High Street
  - The Greswolde Hotel
  - Outbuilding behind No.1677
  - No.1707 High Street
  - Nos.1632-1636 High Street
  
- Kenilworth Road
  - The Old School
  - Nos.29-35 Kenilworth Road
  - The Old Barn House
  - No.30 Kenilworth Road
  - Nos.62-68 Kenilworth Road
  - Nos.96-98 Kenilworth Road
  
- Lodge Road
  - No.119 Lodge Road
  
- Station Road
  - Nos.44-52 Station Road
  - Nos.70-72 Station Road
  
- Wilson's Road
  - Nos.12-24 Wilson's Road

## **APPENDIX 4.       References**

- Department of the Environment – *Planning policy guidance: Planning and the historic environment (PPG15)* – 1994
- English Heritage – *Guidance on conservation area appraisal* – 2006
- The Knowle Society – *A short guide to central Knowle* – 1993
- Pevsner, Nikolaus & Wedgwood, Alexandra – *The Buildings of England: Warwickshire* – 1966
- Solihull MBC – *Knowle Conservation Area* – 1977
- Solihull MBC – *Solihull Unitary Development Plan* – 2006
- Solihull Public Libraries – *Chester House Library* – 1975
- Victoria County History – *County of Warwick: Volume 4* – 1947
- Wootton, Eva – *The history of Knowle* – 1972

### Websites:

[www.british-history.ac.uk](http://www.british-history.ac.uk)

[www.countryside.gov.uk/lar/landscape](http://www.countryside.gov.uk/lar/landscape)

[www.solihull.gov.uk](http://www.solihull.gov.uk)



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