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1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 The purpose of this character appraisal is to record and review the character and appearance of the Old Humberstone Conservation Area and to determine whether the area remains special and deserving of its special 'conservation' status. The appraisal also assesses the boundaries of the conservation area, to determine whether they should be amended, and identifies those features or problems that detract from the quality of the area. The appraisal also indicates how the area could be managed so that its character can be preserved and enhanced.
- 1.2 The survey and appraisal of the conservation area was carried out during 2005 following the methodology suggested by English Heritage. Following consultation with local people and other interested parties the completed appraisal and management proposals will be presented to the Cabinet and full Council of Leicester City Council for formal adoption in March/April 2006.
- 1.3 Old Humberstone is one of Leicester's 'village' suburbs and dates back to at least Anglo-Saxon times. The conservation area centres on the church and village on Main Street and extends west and north into the fields and enclosures of what was the medieval farming community. The Old Humberstone Conservation Area was designated in January 1974 and extended to cover the land to the west and north of Keyham Lane in 1983. It has an area of approximately 20.11 hectares. The Conservation Area boundary and the proposed extensions are shown on Map 2.

2.0 Planning Policy Framework

- 2.1 The concept of 'conservation areas' was first introduced in national legislation in 1967 in the Civic Amenities Act which defined a conservation area as "*an area of special architectural or historic interest, the character of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance*". It is not the purpose of a conservation area to prevent change but to manage change in ways that maintain and, if possible, strengthen an area's special qualities.
- 2.2 Current legislation governing conservation areas is set out in the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. This places a duty on local planning authorities to declare these as conservation areas those parts of their area that they consider to be of special architectural or historic interest [s.69(1)]. It also imposes on them a duty to review past designations from time to time [s.69(2)].
- 2.3 The City Council also has a duty to preserve and enhance the character and appearance of each Conservation Area [s.71(1) of that 1990 Act], and must pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character of the area when determining planning applications [s.72(1)].
- 2.4 Conservation area designation confers a general control over the demolition of unlisted buildings within their boundaries, strengthens controls over minor development (such as replacing doors and windows in non-domestic properties), and makes special provision for the protection of trees. There is also normally a presumption in favour of retaining buildings that make a positive contribution to the character or appearance of a conservation area. The objective of these measures is to provide for the protection of the essential character, appearance and sense of place of the area in order to maintain or improve its environmental quality.

- 2.5 The East Midlands Regional Strategy also confirms the importance of conservation in its environment policy EN1: 'to protect, improve and manage the rich diversity of the natural and built environmental and archaeological assets of the Region'. Similar policies are included in the City of Leicester Local Plan that and are attached at Appendix 5.

3.0 Definition of Special Interest

- 3.1 The Old Humberstone conservation area extends over quite a large area and the two parts, the 'village core' and the 'open landscape', may appear at first glance to be unconnected and distinct from one another. The high number of 20th century buildings in the conservation area may also appear to have altered the area so much that it could now be regarded as 'just another suburb' of Leicester.
- 3.2 However, that would be to ignore its history and architectural qualities. The conservation area is very firmly and visibly rooted in its past. The village core still functions, and is regarded locally, as 'the village', with local shops and services centred on its medieval church. Archaeological and visual evidence of Humberstone's origins are still visible in the ridge and furrow marks in the fields south of Manor Farm, where, in medieval times, the village peasantry would have farmed the manor holdings. The ancient footpath across the fields is a further reminder of that time. The ponds that used to provide fish for the lord and his family survive as to the east of what, even today, is known as Humberstone Manor.
- 3.3 Many other features of architectural, historical and archaeological interest also survive to define and add interest to the conservation area. The village's linear form and winding Main Street hark back to its ancient origins and various buildings from previous centuries remain to chart the development and changes the village has undergone over time (such as 106 Tennis Court Drive, The Warren, Little Warren).
- 3.4 The special interest of the conservation area is also due to the number and species of its trees, with which it is particularly well endowed in both the public and the private realms. These are significant contributors to the character of the area and add considerably to its visual and townscape quality.

4.0 Assessment of Special Interest

Location and setting

- 4.1 Old Humberstone Conservation Area is located just under three miles to the north east of Leicester, on the edge of the city and close to the border with Charnwood and Market Harborough districts. It covers an area of approximately 20 hectares (Map 2). The village is linear in form and stands in an elevated position on a gravel ridge. A small valley bisect the conservation area, along which runs Keyham Lane (see Figure A). The lowest point is 76m above sea level and (at the junction of Gipsy Lane with Keyham Lane).
- 4.2 From the Keyham/Gipsy Lane junction the hilly nature of the conservation area is clearly appreciated. Gipsy Lane, Thurmaston Lane and Main Street rise away at either side with views to the north over rough grazing land. From the top of the hill at Manor Farm there are extensive open views to the south towards the spire of St Mary's Church in the village and the suburbs of Leicester in the valley below and the General Hospital on the ridge beyond.

Historic development and archaeology

- 4.3 The Old Humberstone Conservation Area covers the central and western parts of the village of Humberstone and its ancient origins are supported by archaeological evidence recorded in the Sites and Monuments Record (SMR). For example, recent investigations of the site of the former Windmill Public House on Main Street (now occupied by the houses of Lidster Close) revealed evidence of a boundary ditch and trackway of Anglo Saxon date. Other excavations indicate that the later, medieval, village settlement extended approximately 500m to the east of St. Mary's Church. Although nothing of that part now survives above ground the alignments of Main Street, Steins Lane, Netherhall Road and Keyham Close date from that time. Despite extensive modern infill development in that area, it is likely that some archaeological remains still survive.
- 4.4 The area that includes the village is identified as 'Humerstan' in the Domesday records, and the nearby 'Humber Stone' is linked with various myths and legends possibly referring to the area's best-known feature, the Humber Stone. Although outside the Conservation Area, the stone is important, both in geological and archaeological terms. Located close to Thurmaston Lane it is a source of local myth and legend. It is made of Mountsorrel granite and was probably deposited by an ice sheet as it retreated at the end of the last Ice Age (and is therefore what is known as a glacial 'erratic').
- 4.5 At the time of Domesday (1086) Humberstone Manor was in a single ownership but was divided into three ownerships some time during the 12th century. However, there were probably only two manorial sites by the 14th century. The western manor is known as the Martival-Hesilrige manor (or Humberstone Manor) and would have centred on a manor house complex with fishponds and ridge and furrow fields around it. Evidence of the fishponds and the ancient field system of is clearly visible in the fields to the west of Keyham Lane. The core of the 15th century manor house was retained when the Humberstone Manor (608 Gipsy Lane) was enlarged by William Pochin in the late 18th century (a stone with the inscription WP 1790 is visible in the gable of the barn). Remnants of the earlier house are to be found in the roof timbers, which are pierced into 3 trefoils and are still visible above the first floor ceilings. An even earlier house may also have existed on this site as traces of pillars and great windows are supposed to have been found during the 18th century building works. The three medieval fishponds in the field to the east of the Manor are known locally as 'Fox's Hollows' and a possible rabbit warren ('The Cunnery') is thought to have existed around them.
- 4.6 The other manor was the Hotoft manor (so designated to distinguish it from the Hesilrige manor) and was probably located east of the conservation area in the area of Steins Lane on a site known as Swan's Orchard. In the 12th century the lord of the manor (Jordan de Humet) was responsible for the building of a church (the second to occupy the site of the present St Mary's). However, it seems that the manorial rights became the subject of some dispute because, when the church was presented to Leicester Abbey around 1160, the manorial rights (and much of the income) went with it. Despite de Humet family's efforts to contest the conditions of the gift, Leicester Abbey had managed to wholly appropriate the rights to the manor by 1229. The Abbot then arranged for the church to be rebuilt in the Early English style. It was dedicated in 1277, although only the tower and parts of the chancel survive today following the substantial rebuilding in 1858. However, the Hotofts (a family of great antiquity) continued to live in Humberstone between until 1475-85 when they sold their property to a Thomas Keble. All these surnames are commemorated in local street names.

- 4.7 In the village the church would have been the focal point of a self-sustaining rural community that made its living from farming, labouring and other trades such as blacksmith. This tradition lasted until the early years of the 18th century when framework knitters established themselves in the village. At least 22 different names of framework knitters were recorded between 1812 and 1833 and the population of the village more than doubled between 1821 and 1851. Early in the 19th century the village acquired a new vicarage at what is now known as Monk's Rest and a school was built on the corner of Main Street and Lidster Close in 1856. The Windmill Inn occupied the other corner (the site of 20-22 Main Street), its name recording the existence of a nearby windmill.
- 4.8 The village remained a largely rural community up to the end of the 19th century (Map 3). However the suburbs of Leicester were rapidly encroaching on the village and part of the Humberstone parish was incorporated within the city boundary in 1892. The village and the rest of the parish were themselves absorbed in 1935 by which time the area between the village and Leicester had become built up.
- 4.9 The 20th century saw the greatest changes in the village. Until its 22 acres were sold off in 1919, the northern drive and landscaped grounds of the former Paget estate (centred on Humberstone Hall) opened directly onto the village's Main Street. The estate comprised some 23 houses, a market garden, a small farm and the Plough Inn. One of the houses would have been what is now known as The Paddock at 135 Humberstone Drive. It dates from the late 19th century. Following the sale of the estate the land was quickly developed for housing, creating Tennis Court Drive, Stanley Drive and the somewhat inaccurately named Pine Tree Avenue (which follows the route of the Wellingtonia-lined drive that used to run from Scruptoft Lane to the Hall). The Hall itself was demolished in 1928 and its site is now occupied by 50-56 Pine Tree Avenue. Of the thatched and cruck-framed cottages in the village that formed part of the Paget estate only 106 Tennis Court Drive now remains, the rest having been replaced by brick houses.
- 4.10 Elsewhere, the Junior school was built in the 1920s as was Warren Lodge (1926) which acquired from Stoughton Hall, at this time, the Gothic Revival gates and railings that had stood at one of the entrances to the grounds of the Hall. The Infant School was constructed in 1936 and, in 1958, the house known as The Warren and its large grounds were sold as several lots. The Warren became two houses, and the Warren Close development was built in the 1960s. The church hall dates from the same year, as does the public park at Monks Rest Gardens. The British Legion Club and the group of shops on Main Street were built in the mid-1960s, the former incorporating the ground floor of one of the larger Paget estate houses, The Firs. The Manor House Gardens development and the re-building of The Manor House took place in the 1970s, as did the construction of 85 and 87 Main Street. The housing association cottages at Lidster Close were completed in the 1990s (see Map 6).

4.11 Character Analysis

(No appraisal can be completely comprehensive and the omission of any features, buildings or spaces in this section should not be taken to imply that it is of no interest. The buildings that are considered to make a positive contribution to the conservation area are shown in **bold**. If a building is not included this should not be taken to indicate that it does not make a significant contribution to the character of the conservation area)

Character Zones

- 4.12 As is clear from the Map 2 the conservation area is not homogeneous and splits naturally into two distinct areas along the line of Keyham Lane.
- 4.13 To the north and west the land is primarily **open landscape** with rough grazing land, mature hedgerows and trees and the 'ridge and furrow' evidence of medieval farming. From the top of the ridge there are wide, open views southwards to the city in the valley and on the ridgeline beyond. Buildings are confined to an area around the junction of Thurmaston and Gipsy Lanes with the Manor Farm complex outlined along the northern ridgeline.
- 4.14 The eastern part of the conservation area is the **village core**. It has a distinctive linear character with the village strung out along a winding Main Street. The area is quite densely built up (more so than in the past - Map 3 refers) and the character has therefore changed from that of a scattered rural community to a tightly-packed residential suburb.

Prevailing and former uses

- 4.13 Until the end of the 19th century the village was primarily a self-sustaining rural community with its own shops, blacksmith, bakehouse, school and the cottages of farmworkers, labourers and estate workers. Its buildings were scattered along Main Street in small groups with open farmland on all side (Map 3). The incorporation of the village into the Borough of Leicester and the sales of the Humberstone estate and The Warren were the prime catalyst for change, turning the village and its environs into a residential suburb of the city.
- 4.14 Today, agricultural buildings such as the stables at Francis Dixon Lodge and the barn at Humberstone Manor, have been converted for housing use and, of the three public houses that the village used to boast, there is now only one. The former vicarage (now 63 Vicarage Lane) has been converted into flats and its extensive garden and glebe lands have become a public park (Monk's Rest Gardens). The rest of the buildings in the conservation area are primarily residential, with a small mid-20th century shops and flats development on the site of some former cottages, the church, a restaurant, a small group of offices around 3 Main Street and two clubs. Manor Farm remains in agricultural use, but new uses are likely to found for it as part of the new Hamilton development to its north and east. The farmland will, however, be retained as open space thus ensuring that the character of this part of the conservation area will remain for posterity, but with better public access.

Architectural character and key unlisted buildings

- 4.15 There are 10 listed buildings within the Old Humberstone Conservation Area boundary and a number of notable unlisted buildings, all which contribute to the character of the Conservation Area.

Village Core area

- 4.16 **St. Mary's Church** is the central focus of the conservation area. Its spire acts as a focal point and is a prominent local landmark, being a particular feature of views through the Conservation Area along Main Street and from the corner of Vicarage Lane looking north. It is a Grade I listed building that was extensively rebuilt in 1858 to the designs of Raphael Brandon. The only original 13th century parts of

the building that now remain are parts of the outer chancel walls and the tower. The church is constructed of yellow sandstone in the Decorated Gothic style with a buttressed west tower and a broach spire with quatrefoil detailing. It is set back from Main Street at the back of the churchyard, which is notable for its slate headstones, clipped yew hedges and a robustly built 20th century oak **lychgate**. The churchyard is contained within low brick walls to Main Street, and random granite rubble walls with brick buttresses along Lidster Close. A small section of mud wall, protected by slate copings can be seen, much burrowed by bees, on the north side. Internally a decorative frieze in local alabaster and terracotta and some excellent 19th century stained glass are particularly notable.

- 4.17 Adjacent to the churchyard is the small development known as Monks Rest Gardens centred on '**The Manor House**'. This three storey house is not the original late 18th century building but a replica, built in the 1970s following its controversial demolition. The justification for its Grade II listing has therefore been seriously compromised and the building will be recommended for de-listing. Nevertheless, its Georgian-style proportions and simple detailing, the light and dark chequered brickwork and sliding sash windows are a positive contribution to the character of the conservation area.
- 4.18 Nearby, at **63 Vicarage Lane**, is the former vicarage to the church. It is a Grade II listed building and dates from the early/mid 19th century. The building has now been converted to flats and has been greatly enlarged. The elegant classical lines of the stuccoed front façade are complemented by the ornate cast iron balcony over the semi-circular porch. The gardens surrounding Monks Rest are a key open space and define the historic setting of the listed building. Views through the gardens emphasise the quiet character of the Conservation Area and have been largely preserved despite pressure from surrounding modern infill development.
- 4.19 To the east of Manor House Gardens lie the village **Humberstone Infant and Junior schools**. These are set back behind trees and wide green lawns and are interesting examples of 1920s and 1930s school buildings. The Infant school, dated 1936, takes its design influences from the Junior school to the east. It is also a pleasant single storey red brick building that is built around an internal courtyard. Its large red clay-tiled hipped and gabled roof stands tall over the symmetrically placed windows and doors. Its neighbour, the Junior school, dates from the 1920s and is also of single storey red brick and clay tile construction. It also has symmetrical windows in the two double gabled elevations that face onto Main Street. The two halves are linked together by a later flat-roofed infill of little architectural value. The roof ventilation system, set out in a diamond pattern in the apex of each gable, is particularly effective and simple decorative element. Around the site, but providentially not obscuring the original facades, are various temporary and permanent extensions, none of which have any architectural value. The use of palisade-type design for security fencing around the site is regrettable.
- 4.20 The majority of the historic buildings are clustered along Main Street, key evidence that this is the historic core of the village. The terraced houses at **79-83 Main Street** and **60-68 Vicarage Lane** demonstrate the expansion of the village during the 19th century. These two terraces date from the mid-19th century and, although some alterations have been made, many original features can still be seen including timber sash windows, decorative stone or brick windowheads, moulded stringcourses and corbelled brick eaves decoration. The reconstruction of the ground floor facade at 83 Main Street following the cessation of its use as a shop is particularly successful. These buildings, although simple and plain, nevertheless contribute to the special character of the Conservation Area.

- 4.21 Nearby, the small group of houses at **21-27 Main Street**, built originally as shops, have lost their original first floor sash windows. Nevertheless, their location and position on Main Street reflects the original building line, although the sense of enclosure that would have existed in earlier years before the demolition of the cottages, school and Windmill Inn opposite has been lost. Two of the most attractive 19th century buildings can be found at **17 and 19 Main Street**. The former is a small house (formerly the police house) with a symmetrical façade, half dormer gables and a pitched roof porch. Distinctive ‘Paget’s Pots’ (see below) crown its tall chimney giving the roofline much visual interest. To its west a small single storey building stands gable on to the road. Its stone detailing around its two windows and central door are picked out in black paint, as is the round bull’s-eye window in the gable apex. Both properties are brick built, but the brickwork has been painted, obscuring the original detailing and colour.
- 4.22 At the junction of Tennis Court Drive and Main Street stand the village’s most attractive houses, **Little Warren, The Warren and Warren Stables**, all of which are Grade II listed. Although partly hidden behind high walls, these buildings date from the 17th century but were much altered and extended in the 19th century. Small-paned sash windows pierce the brick and painted facades and there is a central Victorian porch and splayed bay at Little Warren. To the west the two storey gable of the former stables is clearly visible as are the small segmental-arched windows of the hayloft. The varied rooflines and tall chimneys of this group create an interesting skyline with the tall twisted chimney pots (known locally as ‘Paget Pots’ after the Paget family who installed these on all the village properties belonging to their estate) adding further visual interest.
- 4.23 The oldest house in the village is **106 Tennis Court Drive**. Dating from around the 17th century it is a timber-framed building, the original wattle and daub infill between the frames having been replaced in brick. It has a thatched roof and tall chimneys with ‘Paget Pots’ and is mostly hidden by a tall hedge with an attractive Victorian gate leading to the garden. Nevertheless, it is an important focal point and historic connection to the village’s past and ‘closes’ the view westwards along Main Street. The gate into the garden on Tennis Court Drive offers intriguing glimpses of the house to passers-by.
- 4.24 Two pairs of 1930s semi-detached houses, some 1960s bungalows and a block of undistinguished 1980s flats occupy most of the western end of Main Street. However 3 Main Street (Grade II listed) stands out, despite its plain, simple design. Built in red brick in the late 18th century, it has an attractive 19th century panelled doorcase with console brackets to either side supporting a simple cornice. The round arched windows along the side elevation of the former chapel (**1 Main Street**) are still visible above the large extension behind the Old Humberstone Constitutional Club at 155 Humberstone Drive and add visual interest to this approach to the village.
- 4.25 Opposite this building stand some curved **ornamental railings and gates** at the entrance to Warren Lodge. These are in need of some restoration work and were brought to this location from the entrance to Stoughton Grange, a grand Victorian house (now demolished) that used to stand on Gartree Road. Their style is early Gothic Revival and, although not listed, they are worthy of inclusion in the Local List of Buildings of Architectural and Historic Interest.
- 4.26 At the junction of Main Street and Humberstone Drive is the **Old Humberstone Constitutional Club**, a much-extended late 19th century house. It has an unusual portico supported by a single sturdy column and original small-paned casement

windows, although the brickwork has been painted to the detriment of its character. Beyond the club car park, and sited off Humberstone Drive, is '**The Paddock**' at **135 Humberstone Drive**, a small black and white painted brick house with half-dormers, leaded lights to the casement windows, tall chimneys, a large chimney breast on the south side and Swithland slate roofs. Its original **outbuilding** also remains.

Open Landscape area

- 4.27 West of Keyham Lane the most of the remaining buildings in the conservation area cluster around the junction of Thurmaston Lane and Gipsy Lane. Most of these buildings are Grade II listed – **Grange Cottage** and the **Grange Clinic** on Thurmaston Lane and the house and stables of '**The Beeches**', **602** (known as 'Tithe Barn') and **608** (Humberstone Manor) on **Gipsy Lane**. Apart from Grange Cottage and Humberstone Manor, all have been substantially altered or extended.
- 4.28 Approached up a cobbled drive, the oldest building is **Humberstone Manor**. Its origins are medieval and the present house is built around what is thought to have been the original Lord's hall and solar in the south-east wing. Finely carved 15th century roof timbers still survive here in situ. From the outside, the house is a plain T-shaped building faced in 18th century brick, with 19th century additions to the rear. The initials "W.P.1789" are set into the gable recording the rebuilding of the house for William Pochin in that year. Although set back from the road on rising ground it is effectively hidden behind its high garden wall.
- 4.29 Adjoining the Manor are three houses constructed on the footprint of the manor's 17th century barns. Only the left-hand end ('**Tithe Barn**') is listed, although its conversion to residential use has resulted in the loss of all original facing bricks. Much of the original cobbled yard remains, however. The rest of the building is in mock-Georgian style that does little to enhance this part of the conservation area.
- 4.30 **Grange Cottage** stands alone on the corner of Thurmaston Lane and Gipsy Lane and presents a simple, generally unaltered early 19th century brick façade to the street and pleasantly 'stops' the view west from the Keyham Lane junction. Being open to view it acts as an important focal point in the area and gives identity to the junction. The **Grange Clinic**, in contrast, is set back on its site and on lower ground and is less visible and stands behind a large red brick paved parking area.
- 4.31 **The Beeches** is separated from the rest of the conservation area's buildings, being set back at the end of a 75m driveway. It is a mid- to late 18th century brick house with an open porch supported by Ionic columns. It has been much altered and extended inside and at the rear to accommodate its use as a nursing home. It is surrounded by mature trees, although part of its gardens have been lost to a modern flat development and new elderly persons' bungalows.
- 4.32 The remaining buildings in the conservation area are on Thurmaston Lane. This narrow lane rises from the junction with Gipsy Lane and separates Humberstone Heights golf course to the west from the fields of Manor Farm to the east. There is a pair of cottages (**Hilltop Cottages**) on the east side and a single detached house beyond on the west side. The **Manor Farm complex** stands out on the ridgeline and is an important landmark and focal point in the conservation area. It was built in 1936 as a 'model farm' attached to The Towers Mental Hospital and is a fine example of 1930s style.

Building Materials and the public realm

Brick and clay

- 4.33 The majority of buildings in the conservation area are built of brick. The oldest brick buildings date from the late 18th century and the bricks are generally paler than the Victorian red bricks that can be seen in the terraces on Main Street. However, the old bricks tend to have a warmer tone than the 'mixed reds' and 'multis' of more recent buildings such as those on Lidster Close and 85-87 Main Street. Of particular note is the chequerboard effect using light and dark bricks at the Manor House, Manor House Gardens. Unfortunately, brickwork has been painted white at several properties (17, 19 and 23 Main Street, Little Warren and 155 Humberstone Drive) resulting in a loss of colour and detailing. The orange-red bricks of Manor Farm create added interest to the surrounding green landscape. The pale yellowish bricks of the village shop and flat development is an incongruous element. Red clay tiles are particular features of the schools and add a warm, welcoming note to the buildings and the site.
- 4.34 Brick is the primary material for the area's boundary walls. In some cases these serve to screen buildings (85/87 Main Street, the Warren/Little Warren, Humberstone Manor and the grounds of The Beeches); elsewhere they separate the public and private realms (12-26 Lidster Close, 17 Main Street). Where the views are open the visual effect of high walls can be interesting and relatively benign (such as the boundary to Humberstone Manor on Gipsy Lane). Elsewhere they can dominate the townscape (85 and 87 Main Street and The Warrens). The low brick wall around the churchyard is an important edge and helps to open up the east end of Main Street, balancing the high brick walls and hedging opposite.

Stone

- 4.35 The use of stone in the conservation area is uncommon. It can best be seen in the church which is built in limestone. Elsewhere stone is confined to detailing, such as Victorian windowheads and red granite kerbstones. Random red and grey granite is a particular feature of the old boundary walls to the churchyard, The Warren and the western and eastern garden boundaries of Humberstone Manor. The granite cobbles in the driveways and parking courts at Tithe Barn and Humberstone Manor are particularly attractive and of historic importance. Swithland slate roofs can also be seen on several buildings.

Timber

- 4.36 Timber is generally used for windows and doors (where it has not been replaced by modern plastics). However the conservation area boasts two special timber features – the lychgate to the churchyard and the medieval timber framing of 106 Tennis Court Drive. Both are oak and both are of great importance to the architectural and historic character of the conservation area. The free-standing timber sign to the Humberstone Public House adds visual interest. Timber post and rail boundary fences are also an important feature of the conservation area's farmland.

Metal

- 4.37 The conservation area contains a very fine, though somewhat neglected, set of early Gothic Revival railings and gates at Warren Lodge, Main Street. These unusual embellishments at the entrance to a 1920s bungalow add a quirky

character to townscape in an area that otherwise lacks much ornament. Most other railings in the conservation area are modern – black painted mild steel at the Lidster Close development, galvanised steel pedestrian barriers railings at the church hall and on the verge at the Tennis Court Drive junction, thin bow-topped railings along the drive to The Beeches and some fancy wrought-ironwork at 17 Main Street (La Casa Vecchia).

Other Materials

- 4.38 The conservation area boundaries contain one of the few remaining thatched roofs in Leicester at 106 Tennis Court Drive. There is also a fine example of stucco finishing at Monk's Rest. Rooflines and roofing materials are important features of townscape and add texture and variety. Old Humberstone displays a range of roofing materials and colours. There are stone slates at The Warrens, Humberstone Manor and the garden store in Monk's Rest Gardens, Welsh slate on the Victorian terraces and lychgate, red pantiles at Manor Farm, as well as modern concrete tiles and composite roofing slates on modern houses and porches.
- 4.39 Coping stones to boundary walls are similarly varied – half-round and 'saddleback' blue clay at the churchyard and The Warrens, red 'saddleback' on the old boundary walls of Humberstone Manor, with brick or concrete on more modern properties. A few render finishes also appear, such as at 20-22 Main Street.

The public realm

- 4.40 Roads and footpaths in the village core are generally narrow, with sharp bends at each end. There is a significant gradient down to Keyham Lane junction and the footpath slopes steeply at the entrance to Warren Close. Surfaces are laid to tarmac, with tarmac finishes or concrete slabs for footways. Standard grey-painted street lamps provide lighting and the two bus stops are in the corporate green colour. Street name signs are generally made of pressed metal, although a traditional-style name sign has been put up at the entrance to Manor House Gardens. Many visually and historically important granite kerbstones also survive but concrete kerbs are also common. A bus stop and plastic litter bin stand in the forecourt to the village shops. The verge opposite the British Legion Club is laid to grass with mature trees.

Greenery and green spaces

- 4.41 Trees in general help to soften hard urban landscapes and, in winter, the tracery of bare branches creates additional visual interest. Trees are also of ecological importance, as they not only clean the air but also provide food and nest sites for birds and animals.
- 4.42 Trees contribute to a great extent to the character of the Old Humberstone Conservation Area. It presents a very 'green' appearance to the visitor. While much of its garden planting tends to be tucked behind high walls or in culs-de-sac off the main traffic routes, the visitor can still catch glimpses into these private spaces through open gates and around corners. The garden at 106 Tennis Court Drive hides behind a tall privet hedge and is only briefly visible through the arched wrought iron garden gate. The open front gardens of the new houses around Lidster Close are laid mainly to grass and have yet to contribute to the village's green environment to any significant degree.

- 4.43 However, the conservation area is particularly well-endowed with trees, having many mature specimens that make a significant contribution to its character and appearance. The trees in Old Humberstone are a considerable asset to the village and its associated open landscapes. All the trees in the Old Humberstone Conservation Area are protected by virtue of their location in a conservation area, but many are also protected by Tree Preservation Orders (see Map 5).
- 4.44 Along the main street, trees dominate the townscape. Three large horse chestnuts define the junction with Tennis Court Drive and frame the western entrance to the village. In summer their dense foliage closes the view to the western part of Main Street. In the private front gardens of the 'Warrens' tall pine trees stand out against the skyline, whilst along the boundary with Lidster Close a large mixed group of trees, including pines, sycamore, yew and walnut, tower over the surrounding houses. Another fine group of cedar trees and beeches line the high ground in front of 7 and 8 Warren Close.
- 4.45 At the eastern end of the village mature pollarded lime trees mark the boundary of the churchyard. As with the trees at the western end of the village, these are of much townscape importance, softening the streetscape and framing the spire of the church. Within the churchyard, upright Irish yews, tied to maintain their upright habit, stand either side of the path that leads from the lychgate. Behind the church is a large attractive Cedar of Lebanon, with more limes and hawthorn hedges lining the path through Windmill Park. Manor House Gardens also boasts some fine trees horse chestnuts behind the front boundary wall, with an attractive copper beech serving as a focal point in the centre of the site.
- 4.46 The wide lawned spaces in front of the village schools are also important visual elements in the conservation area, creating a feeling of openness that contrasts dramatically with the closely built-up village core around the corner. Trees and shrubs define the boundaries and soften the edges of the site.
- 4.47 The formal gardens, mown grass and terraces of Monk's Rest Gardens are the village's local park. Close to Monk's Rest House there is a varied collection of native and exotic trees, reminding us of the park's origins as a private garden to the original vicarage. Of particular note are the magnificent cedars and large mature beech. The trees line the west side of Vicarage Lane as far as Scraftoft Lane, creating a strong and important 'green' edge.
- 4.48 The western half of the conservation area has a different character to the part that centres on the village. It is an undulating agricultural landscape, but one that contains many fine trees. Many fine oaks, along with some ash trees, are scattered along the hawthorn hedges that form field boundaries. Scrubby thorns grow around the ancient fish ponds and the view north-west is cut across by the hedge along Thurmaston Lane and the line of poplars beyond. A woodland is visible on the northern ridge to the east of the Manor Farm complex and, although it is outside the conservation area, it nevertheless has a strong and beneficial influence on its character.
- 4.49 Some fine trees can be seen in the gardens and grounds of the houses clustered around the buildings the Gipsy Lane/Thurmaston Lane junction. Of particular value are the two limes and one horse chestnut near the corner of Keyham Lane. However, trees can detract from, as well as enhance, the environment. An example of this is the mass planting of leylandii along the front boundary 602 Gipsy Lane. Probably planted as a quick-growing screen, the effect is unfortunately rather gloomy and ponderous. Their effect is compounded by the poor condition of the site opposite, which is rubble-strewn with a few poor quality

trees and the dark corridor of Thurmaston Lane where it rises beneath a canopy of over-hanging trees.

- 4.50 The western end of the conservation area is occupied by the pitch and putt course of Humberstone Heights Golf Club. The grounds have many fine trees in a variety of species that create a substantial and valuable green edge.

Negative Factors

Physical

- 4.51 Many changes have taken place in the conservation area since its declaration in 1974, although not all of them have a negative effect on the area. The 'staggered' frontages of the new houses on Main Street, for example, adds visual interest, although it could be argued that the set-back from Main Street does not create the sense of 'enclosure' that the street used to have. Their window proportions are also different from those of older buildings in the area.
- 4.52 Elsewhere, the 1960s design of the British Legion Club actively detracts from this important entrance to the conservation area. Its large grounds are rather untidy and the Memorial Gates appear to need some refurbishment. To the east, both the Humberstone pub and the flat development at Keyham Court have been set towards the backs of their respective sites so that unsightly car parks face on to the street. Any opportunity to recreate the original building lines (see Map 4) has therefore been lost, to the detriment of the townscape of Main Street.
- 4.53 The loss of building details can also have a detrimental effect on the conservation area. Individually, such small changes have little effect but, cumulatively, they can alter the character of an area. The loss of original sash windows in the Victorian terraces on Main Street are a case in point. In the absence of an Article 4 Direction which would have required planning permission for such alterations, they have been replaced with plastic framed double-glazed units, the profiles of which do not reproduce the more finely moulded forms of the originals. The removal of front garden boundary walls at 5 -11 Main Street to provide off-street parking, whilst understandable, nevertheless diffuses the boundary between the public and private zones and results in the loss of an important townscape 'edge'.
- 4.54 There are two groups of high, boundary walls (at The Warren/ Little Warren and 85-87 Main Street) that present a blank façade to the main route through the village. It is likely that they were constructed to preserve privacy or improve security but they have little townscape value. In addition, the stone wall to the former is built in a material that is alien to the conservation area (records from the 19th century indicate that it replaced a low brick wall with ornamental railings and gates).
- 4.55 Painted brickwork is also a feature of several buildings in the conservation area. In most cases the paint would not have been an original decorative treatment and thus the paint obscures what would otherwise be typical Leicester red bricks. The loss of such historic material and its colour, texture and detailing is regrettable and, where the paintwork is not well-maintained, buildings can look uncared-for and thus detract from the character and appearance of the area. The facades of Casa Vecchia at 17 Main Street, 19 Main Street and The Old Humberstone Constitutional Club at 155 Humberstone Drive are examples.
- 4.56 Mention has already been made of the damaging effect that blank walls can have on the character of the conservation area. However, the use of some species of

tree can also be unsuitable or visually intrusive. The mass planting of leylandii at 602 Gipsy Lane has already been mentioned.

- 4.57 There has been waste ground at the important Gipsy Lane/Thurmaston Lane since the demolition of the group of eight terraced cottages in 1939. The sensitive redevelopment of this site should be a priority.

Social

- 4.58 It is not only the physical characteristics of land and buildings within an area that define its character. The uses to which land and buildings are put also make a contribution. For example, noisy uses, streets busy with vehicle or pedestrian traffic, a street market or a quiet enclave around a church, can each give the visitor a different impression of the area as a whole.

- 4.59 In Old Humberstone, Main Street is an important and relatively busy traffic artery and local bus route. Combined with some narrow pavements, this can, at some locations, make the pedestrian experience of Main Street rather intimidating. A growing local concern that affects people's views and experiences of the conservation area centres on anti-social behaviour in the village centre and churchyard. A petition has been sent to the local Area Committee requesting help to resolve these issues, including the installation of CCTV cameras.

General condition of the area and buildings

- 4.60 The conservation area's buildings and land are generally in good condition. However, as has been noted earlier, the ornamental railings and gates to Warren Lodge require refurbishment and would, if restored, make an important decorative addition to the conservation area. The setting of the war memorial, the refurbishment of the Memorial Gates and better surfacing and landscaping of the car park at the British Legion Club would also help to improve this location, as would the replacement of the galvanised pedestrian guardrails with a more attractive design and finish.
- 4.61 Elsewhere, one or two shopfronts would benefit from improvement or replacement and the service yard and access roads at the sides and rear of 51-77 Main Street are unsightly. The condition of the front and western boundary walls of the churchyard is poor in parts and the whole would benefit from specialist and sensitive rebuilding or restoration.

Problems, pressures and capacity for change

- 4.62 The village core in the conservation area is now effectively built up and it is unlikely that there will be much pressure for change in this area, bearing in mind the age and use of the existing buildings. However, the Humberstone Village Forum notes that short term parking for shoppers is insufficient, there being a few spaces only in the layby outside the village shopping centre. There is potential for extra spaces in the rear service yard and this could be pursued with the several owners and occupiers, subject to planning permission and funding being available. The scheme could also include a scheme to improve or unify the design of the shopfronts.
- 4.63 The use of the land north of Gipsy Lane as a golf course (Humberstone Heights) is unlikely to change. It is designated as a 'Green Wedge' in the Replacement City of Leicester Local Plan and the landscaped grounds are maintained by the Council (Appendix 5).

- 4.64 The greatest pressure for change is likely to come as a consequence of the Hamilton development to the north of Keyham Lane and east of Thurmaston Lane. The existing farmland is generally protected by its designation as 'Green Space' in the Replacement City of Leicester Local Plan (see Appendix 5). The 'green space' designation is confirmed in the formal Site Development Guidance (SDG) for the Manor Farm Housing Site (adopted in 2002) that additionally requires the retention of the key landscape features, including the hedgerows and trees, and the Manor Farm complex of buildings. In addition, the Council's schools improvement programme could have implications for the existing school sites.
- 4.65 Although it is not listed, the SDG notes that Manor Farm complex is an important landmark on the ridgeline above the conservation area. Its siting and importance have therefore to be protected and the SDG sets out some specific site layout and urban design requirements (Appendix 5). The Council has a statutory duty to ensure that development preserve and enhance the character and appearance of the conservation area. The Manor farmhouse and its ancillary buildings must therefore be retained and a sympathetic alternative use found for them. In addition, the SDG recognises the archaeological and historical importance of the open land to the south of Manor Farm. The land must, therefore, be retained in its current open form and managed to prevent it becoming overgrown. Proper public access to, and footpath routes across, the land will also have to be provided.

5.0 Community involvement

- 5.1 As part of the preparation of the character appraisal the Council wrote to all residents and businesses in the conservation area. They were asked for their opinions on the proposed management plan (included on the reverse of the letter) and were later invited to a public meeting in the St Mary's Church hall. Their views were considered as part of the appraisal. A copy of the draft Appraisal was placed on the Council's website with contacts addresses for comments to be sent by post and e-mail to a generic e-mail address. Copies of the Appraisal were also available on request.

6.0 Conservation area boundary

- 6.1 The Council has a duty to review of the boundaries of the conservation areas from time to time and to determine whether or not to extend existing areas or designate new conservation areas [s.69(2) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990]. Local people made various suggestions for changes to the boundary. They suggest that Warren Close is excluded and the 'The Paddock' (135 Humberstone Drive), the two schools, Hanover Close and the Millennium Walk are included.
- 6.2 The exclusion of Warren Close would remove eight 1960s bungalows from the conservation area. Whilst making little positive contribution to the architectural interest of the area, they do not actively detract from it. The land on which they stand has historic links with the two 'Warrens' on Main Street and this is recognised by the existing boundary. The exclusion of Warren Close is not therefore deemed appropriate.
- 6.3 The architectural quality, and the historical connection, of 135 Humberstone Drive with the 19th century Paget estate makes this site worthy of including within the conservation area boundary. Local people suggested a further extension to include the two village schools on the east side of the conservation area. These buildings have strong local associations and are simple but attractive buildings in

their own right. The buildings and their green spaces make positive contributions to the character of the conservation area and the buildings are therefore worthy of inclusion in the conservation area.

6.4 Other amendments suggested during the consultation period have been considered but rejected for the following reasons:

- **Hanover Close** - This modern Council housing estate has no architectural or historic interest and, although its highway line follows roughly the route of an ancient path that led across the medieval field system to Thurmaston Lane, this would not be sufficient justification to include the modern houses.
- **Millennium Walk** – this path runs along the east (police station) side of an old field boundary and therefore has no direct connection with the medieval field system of the conservation area. It would not therefore be appropriate to include it.

7.0 Management proposals

7.1 Section 71(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 places a duty on the Council to 'formulate and publish proposals for the preservation and enhancement of any parts of their area which are conservation areas'. The 2006 City of Leicester Local Plan contains specific policies for the preservation of the historic environment and these are set out in Appendix 5. Most importantly, there is a general presumption against the demolition of buildings in conservation areas where these make positive contributions to the character or appearance of the area.

7.2 Based on the issues identified in the foregoing appraisal, some proposals have been devised for a management strategy for Old Humberstone Conservation Area, including:

- Improving the quality and design of shopfronts where these do not preserve or enhance the character and appearance of the conservation area;
- Improving facilities for shoppers by seeking better use and layout of the service yard at the rear of 51-77 Main Street;
- Investigating sources of funding for restoration and enhancement works to buildings, sites and boundaries;
- De-listing of the 'Manor House', 104 Manor House Gardens;
- Revising the Conservation Area information leaflet and distribute to owners and occupiers in the conservation area, including reference to matters that require planning permission or conservation area consent;
- Publicising the need to retain, restore and maintain original features such as windows, chimneys, roofing materials, architectural details.

7.3 The management strategy is set out at Appendix 3, together with indications as to sources of possible funding and timescales.

8.0 Contacts and appendices

8.1 For further information on this, or other, conservation areas you can contact the Council's Building Conservation Officer as follows:

- Urban Design Group, Regeneration & Culture, Leicester City Council, New Walk Centre, Welford place, Leicester, LE1 6ZG;
- Phone Leicester 2527217
- Fax Leicester 2471149
- E-mail urbandesigngroup@leicester.gov.uk

- Under Conservation Areas on the Council's website at www.leicester.gov.uk

Appendix 1 : List of buildings in the conservation area
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Abbots Road North	Nos. 72-76 (even)
Gipsy Lane	Humberstone Heights Golf clubhouse, Humberstone View Nursing Home, Humberstone Grange Clinic, 580-606 (even), Flats 1-8 (incl) The Beeches
Humberstone Drive	No. 155 (Old Humberstone Constitutional Club)
Lidster Close	Flats 1a-d (inclusive), 1-5 (inclusive), 10, St Mary's Church hall, No. 8 (Parkside)
Main Street	Nos. 3-27 (odd), British Legion Club, Humberstone PH, Nos. 51-79 (odd), 83-87 (odd), Warren Lodge, The Warren, Little Warren, 12-26 (even), St Mary's Church, Humberstone Infant and Primary School, Humberstone Junior School
Manor House Gardens	The Manor House (1-4 incl), Nos. 5-20 (incl)
Tennis Court Drive	No. 106
Thurmaston Lane	The Grange Cottage, 1 & 2 Hilltop Cottages, Manor Farm
Vicarage Lane	63 (Monks's rest), 60-68 (even)
Warren Close	1-8 (incl)

Appendix 2 : List of listed buildings and Tree Preservation Orders in the conservation area
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LISTED BUILDINGS

Gipsy Lane	Humberstone View Nursing Home (listed as Francis Dixon Lodge and Stables), Humberstone Grange Clinic, 602 ('Tithe Barn'), 608 (Humberstone Manor)
Lidster Close	St Mary's Church
Main Street	No. 3, The Warren, Little Warren
Manor House Gardens	Manor House (rebuilt in replica)
Tennis Court Drive	106
Thurmaston Lane	Grange Cottage
Vicarage Lane	No. 63 Monk's Rest (partly rebuilt in replica)

TREE PRESERVATION ORDERS

Number 42	Humberstone British Legion Club	Sept. 1980
Number 86	The Warrens, Main Street	Aug. 1983
Number 124	St Mary's Church Humberstone	June 1983
Number 176	Manor Farm & Church Farm	Nov. 1988
Number 181	Towers Hospital (part)	July 1992
Number 203	Francis Dixon Lodge	Aug 1991
Number 215	Windmill Inn Humberstone	Dec 1992

Appendix 3 : Management Strategy and Enhancement proposals

Definitions : **short term** – 1-3 years, **medium term** – 3-5 years, **long term** – 5 years +

Location	Strategy, Proposals and delivery mechanism
Conservation Area generally	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Apply Local Plan policies to secure the preservation and enhancement of the character and appearance of the conservation area Delivery – short term • Publish and distribute an explanatory leaflet about the conservation area, including the need for planning permission and conservation area consent as well as advice on repairs, restoration and alterations Delivery – short term • Seek sources of funding for restoration, repair and improvement works as set out below Delivery – short to medium term • Seek funding to replace pressed aluminium street name signs with the traditional local design
Main Street	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recommend to English Heritage the de-listing of Manor House Delivery – short term • Include the early Gothic Revival railings and gates at Warren Lodge on the Local List of Buildings of Architectural or Historic Interest Delivery – short term • Investigate the cost and feasibility of providing joint-use parking and servicing space at the rear of the shops at 65-77 Main Street, including improvements to access roads Delivery – short to medium term • Investigate cost and feasibility of undertaking improvements to the appearance and street furniture at the shops forecourt at 65-77 Main Street, the memorial gates and war memorial site at the British Legion Club, and improved boundary treatments at the Humberstone PH, Keyham Court, the churchyard and other similar environmental improvement projects Delivery – short to medium term, subject to interest and funding • Replace galvanised pedestrian barriers with railings of better design • Seek funding for grants towards the cost or repair, restoration and environmental improvement projects Delivery – short to medium term

Appendix 4 : Community involvement

The following is a summary of how and when the local community was involved in the preparation of the character appraisal and management plan.

- Letters sent to all owners and/or occupiers of property within the boundary of the conservation area on 18th January inviting them to a public meeting;
- Public meeting to discuss the draft management plan - 24th January 2006;
- Draft Appraisal placed on Council's website by 27th January with a quick link to take viewers direct to the document;
- Draft Appraisal placed before Strategic Planning and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee and the Humberstone & Hamilton Area Committee for feedback – 25th and 30th January 2006 respectively;
- Article placed in March 2006 issue of the Humberstone Newsletter;
- Council website and draft document included postal, fax and generic e-mail contact information;
- All comments and views collated and included as an Appendix in the report to Cabinet on March 13th;
- Where appropriate and relevant, views and ideas incorporated in the Character Appraisal document, except where they already form part of the document;
- Any comments that relate to matters that are not directly relevant to the Character Appraisal are noted in the Cabinet report Appendix and forwarded to the relevant service(s) for action;

Appendix 5 : Relevant Local Plan Policies

City of Leicester Local Plan (adopted January 2006)

Subject	Policy No.	Details
The Plan Strategy	PS01(d)	Conservation & enhancement of the city's buildings, spaces and Strategic Green Network
Urban Design	UD01	High quality building design & local context
	UD06	Landscape design
Retailing	R05	Local & district shopping centres
	R07	Development for food & drink purposes
Built Environment	BE01	Archaeology
	BE02-05	Listed buildings
	BE06-07	Conservation areas
	BE08	Buildings of local interest
	BE10-14	Shopfronts & advertisements
	BE22	Outside Lighting
The Green Environment	GE03	Biodiversity enhancement sites
	GE06-08	Protection of green wedges

	GE09	Green space
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Supplementary Planning Guidance

Manor Farm Housing Site – Site Development Guidance (adopted 2002)

Appendix 6 : Glossary of architectural terms

broach spire	a spire with inclined masonry forms at its base where it joins a square tower
console bracket	an ornamental bracket supporting a projecting feature above
corbelled	a feature formed by a series of projecting blocks, each projecting further forward than the one beneath
quatrefoil	with four lobes forming a circle
saddleback	pointed in an inverse 'V' shape to throw water off
segmental arch	a very shallow arch
stringcourse	a continuous decorative horizontal band projecting from a wall and usually moulded