

Leicester
City Council

CABINET

21st May 2001

**Supplementary Planning Guidance:
Evington Footpath Conservation Area – Character Statement**

Report of the Director of Environment, Development & Commercial Services

1 Purpose of Report

To seek Cabinet approval to adopt the Evington Footpath Conservation Area Character Statement as supplementary planning guidance to the City of Leicester Local Plan.

2 Summary

The Evington Footpath Conservation Area, bounded by London Road, Evington Road and Mayfield Road was declared in January 1981. Various environmental improvements have been undertaken since then. However, advice in Planning Policy Guidance 15 focuses attention on the need for local planning authorities to prepare character statements which identify the factors which make a conservation area an area of special architectural and historic interest, in order to ensure soundly based decisions are made on planning applications deemed to affect that character. Increasing emphasis is being placed on character appraisals by planning inspectors and statements are to be prepared for each of the City's 23 Conservation Areas.

A draft character statement for the Evington Footpath Conservation Area is attached. This has been the subject of a consultation exercise as described in the supporting information to this report. This is the first of a two stage process – the second being the production of an enhancement statement to identify the works needed to preserve and restore the appearance of conservation areas.

3 Recommendation

3.1 Cabinet

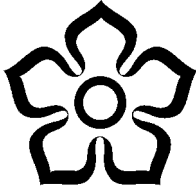
CABINET is recommended to ADOPT the Evington Footpath Conservation Area Character Statement as supplementary planning guidance to the City of Leicester Local Plan.

4 Financial Implications

There are no direct financial implications.

5 Report Author/Officer to Contact

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**Supplementary Planning Guidance:
Evington Footpath Conservation Area – Character Statement**

Report of the Director of Environment, Development & Commercial Services

PAPER 1 – SUPPORTING INFORMATION

1 Purpose of Report

This report advises members of the results of a consultation exercise undertaken in respect of the preparation of the character statement for Evington Footpath Conservation Area and to seek Cabinet's approval to the adoption of the attached character statement as supplementary planning guidance to the City of Leicester Local Plan.

2 Details of parties consulted

City Council Departments:

Director of Arts & Leisure: City Archaeologist & Trees and Woodland Officer provided background information.

Conservation Advisory Panel, 24 May 2000:

CAP recommended that the draft character statement be endorsed.

Residents and interested parties:

I have written to all households and commercial occupiers in the area inviting comments as well as offering copies of the draft statement. In addition, an exhibition was held at St James Church Hall for one evening and at the New Walk Centre for one week. Comments received from residents indicate that there is recognition of the quality of the area and the benefits of conservation area designation. Residents were also asked for their views on the declaration of an Article 4 Direction, the effect of which would be to remove "permitted development" rights from individual houses. This would then require planning permission for alterations such as the installation of replacement windows and doors. It was clear that those occupiers who attended the exhibition appreciated the area's special character and supported efforts by the City Council to protect that character. An objection to the suggested Article 4 Direction was received from an owner of rented property in the area on the basis that they would incur extra cost in having to submit planning applications and the proposal would restrict "commercially desirable changes".

Other comments received from residents included:

- Restoration of grant assistance for environmental works and to enable residents to restore their properties;

- High levels of traffic and the need for a residents parking scheme;
- Problem of wheelie-bins outside flats;
- Mayfield traffic island should be included in the conservation area;
- Problems of leaf clearing in autumn.

Ward Councillors

Copies of the draft character statement have been sent to both Ward councillors.

3 Responses to issues raised

The support of local residents, notably to the suggestion of declaring an Article 4 Direction, is welcome. I propose to undertake the necessary survey work and re-notify residents with a view to reporting back to Cabinet on this aspect later in the year. The measure would apply only to individual houses, since planning permission is already required for alterations to commercial properties and flats.

With regard to the provision of financial assistance, repair grants to owners of properties in conservation areas were phased out several years ago. If resources were available, then restoration of grant assistance could be considered. Many of the other comments received are outside the remit of the character statement but will be forwarded to the relevant section of the authority.

3 Equal Opportunity Implications

The aim of the character statement is to maintain the quality of the environment of the area to the benefit of all residents.

4 Sustainability & Environmental Implications (including EMAS)

The character statement is intended to re-enforce the attractiveness of the area as a place to live and work and thereby encourage re-use of buildings.

5 Legal Implications

There are no direct legal implications for the Council in this report. Any future requirement for planning permission as a result of the Article 4 Direction will be the subject of reports to Development Control Sub-Committee.

6 Crime and Disorder Implications

None

7 Background Papers - Local Government Act 1972

City of Leicester Local Plan, 1994.

Evington Footpath Conservation Area

Leicester

Character Statement

CONSULTATION DRAFT

This is a consultation draft of the proposed character statement for Evington Footpath Conservation Area. Comments are welcome and should be sent to Stephen Bradwell, Senior Building Conservation Officer, Urban Design Group, E & D, Leicester City Council, Welford Place, Leicester, LE1 6ZG, telephone 0116 252 7296, fax 0116 247 1149, or e-mail brads001@leicester.gov.uk.

March 2001

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 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*¹. There are 23 conservation areas in Leicester, containing the best of the older parts of the city. Each conservation area is distinctive and contains qualities that help to give the city an overall character of its own whilst also serving the needs of the city today. The City Council designates conservation areas, after consulting local people, under powers contained in national planning legislation and in accordance with advice from central government.
- 1.2 The Council has a duty to preserve and enhance the character and appearance of conservation areas and the purpose of this statement is to identify the factors which make Evington Footpath an area of special architectural and historic interest. The statement will enable the Council, when dealing with planning applications, to ensure that the development will help to preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the area. It is not the purpose of a conservation area to prevent change but to manage change in the light of the existing character of the area.
- 1.3 Looking after and improving the qualities of conservation areas can bring real benefits to the people who live and work there. An attractive environment also helps to maintain property values. However, for a conservation area to be successful, both residents and property owners must play their part. The Council will continue to strive to improve the environment of conservation areas whenever the opportunity presents itself and when resources are available and will encourage others to do likewise.
- 1.4 Evington Footpath Conservation Area was designated in January 1981 and its boundaries are shown on Map 1.

2.0 Location, area and landform

- 2.1 The Evington Footpath Conservation Area lies on the south side of the city, 1.4 kilometres south-east of the Clock Tower, at the top of a low ridge of boulder clay and gravel which falls gently away to the south. The conservation area covers approximately 6.7 hectares.

3.0 Layout

- 3.1 The conservation area is roughly triangular in shape with the sides formed by London Road, Evington Road and Mayfield Road. The triangle lies along a north- west to south-east axis with its apex at the north-west end. It is bisected by the Evington Footway. St James Road further breaks up the area by crossing the wider end of the 'triangle' from south-west to north-east.

¹Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 section 69

4.0 Archaeology, history and development

- 4.1 The Evington Footway is an ancient path that is thought to follow roughly the line of the Roman road which linked Leicester with Huntingdon and Colchester. Immediately outside the city, its route is visible as the line of Gartree Road. Within the conservation area, recent work indicates that the road may survive, at least in patches, as buried archaeological remains. It is also likely that associated occupation and industrial remains also survive. At the junction of Evington Road and London Road, antiquarian records report the discovery of a substantial Roman and/or Anglo-Saxon cemetery and it is possible that this may continue into the north west corner of the conservation area.
- 4.2 The post-medieval Mount Pleasant windmill is recorded as standing between Evington Road and Evington Footpath (the site is shown on Fowler's 1828 map - see Map 2). This map also shows that at this time the conservation area was still very rural in character with orchards, windmills and a plant nursery. The Footway itself is clearly shown, sign-posted as the pedestrian route to Stoughton and Evington Village, some 3kms away. It was preserved as a right of way when the city began to expand in the 19th century.
- 4.3 Development began in the 1820s with the construction of the houses at 170 London Road and 172-174 London Road. The Leicester racecourse was then sited on what is now Victoria Park and the houses had the advantage of open views to the west. The 1844 map shows further development with the construction of a large house at the junction of London Road and the north-west end of the Footway (Granby House) together with terraced houses at 164 - 168 and 176-182 London Road. By 1870, most of the houses on London Road had been built and the 1879 map (Map 3) shows that St James Road had been laid out and that the racecourse had been replaced by Victoria Park. Development elsewhere remained somewhat sporadic with small groups of houses being built in piecemeal fashion in various locations as and when builders' funds became available. For example, 34-36 and 11 St James Road were built in 1871, 33-39, 49-53 and 61 Evington Road in 1872 and 150-156 London Road and 21-23 Abingdon Road in 1878. However, by 1900 development was effectively completed (as shown on the 1902 Ordnance Survey - see Map 4), including the construction of two groups of small houses (Victoria Terrace and Oxford Avenue) in the large rear gardens of 188 and 190 London Road. The large parish church of St James the Greater, construction of which began in 1895, was completed with the addition of its ornate west front in 1914.
- 4.4 During the last 60 years, three large houses on London Road have been demolished - 'Granby House' (No. 158), 'Italian Villa' (No. 188) - both replaced by flats (158 London Road and The Park respectively) and a detached villa at 196 London Road, now the car park of the Old Horse public house. Two houses on the north side of Abingdon Road, nos. 4 and 6, have been replaced with the Arbor Court flats. The church hall at the rear of St James the Greater was built in the late 1960s. The local authority flats on the corner of St James Terrace and Mayfield Road were built in the late 1970s replacing some very

small terraced cottages which had been included in the Council's slum clearance programme.

4.5 One of the biggest threats to the area before the conservation area was declared was the proposed Eastern Relief Road. This would have cut through the base of the conservation area 'triangle' in a wide arc ranging between 35m and 80m wide from Abingdon Road, bisecting St James Road to join London Road at a large new junction. That much of the best parts of the conservation area environment remain today is due to the abandonment of this urban motorway in the mid-70s.

4.6 However, by the 1980s, the quality and attractiveness of the footpath had deteriorated and it became a litter-strewn back alley. The availability of funding for conservation area improvements in 1995 allowed some improvements to be made to lighting and unused or dark corners. The boundaries of two car parks were also improved and the footpath resurfaced.

5.0 Homogeneity

5.1 Despite its small size, the conservation area is not homogeneous in character and can be divided into six quite distinct areas. Although the scale of the buildings tends to be large, each of the streets within the area is visually different and displays different urban styles and qualities. The buildings along London Road are of diverse design and occupy the largest plots, which set them apart as one group; the almost continuous brick terrace layout of those on Evington Road forms another and the small, secluded group tucked away on Abingdon Road is a third. The Evington Footway itself creates its own enclave whilst the large decorated houses on St James Road are a quite distinctive group. Mayfield Road is again different in style and layout and can therefore be viewed as the sixth sub-area.

6.0 Townscape

6.1 *Townscape* refers to the way in which views open and close through an area, to changes in level, visual contrasts and linkages, texture and the rhythm and pattern in the street scene: elements which give the environment of an area individuality and character.

6.2 The conservation area can be seen as six separate sub-areas. The most important of these is **Evington Footway** which acts as a spine running north-west to south-east through the middle of the area, knitting it together. On either side of the footpath are large back gardens screened by high brick walls or fences, some of which offer occasional glimpses into private gardens. The footpath takes the pedestrian through different sorts of environments - from the noise of London Road to the quiet of Oxford Avenue, then out into the brighter crossing at St James Road and back through a shaded narrow passageway to the busyness of Mayfield Road. The contrast between the busy, 'public' domain of the streets and the quiet, leafy 'private' domain of the Footway gives the area its most important characteristic.

- 6.3 The entrance to the footpath at the apex of the conservation area 'triangle' is somewhat formless. Boundary definition on the north side is poor because of the loss of a boundary wall to create a large car park. The path widens on the south side to reveal another large expanse of tarmac (the car park for the flats at 158 London Road) and, for the first 100m of its length, it is effectively an access route to car parks and workshops. This causes much conflict between pedestrians and vehicles and affects the character of the footpath. Once past the entrance to the last parking area (now enclosed by a new brick wall with decorative railings), the path suddenly narrows to a 1.6m passageway enclosed on both sides by buildings or high brick walls overhung by trees.
- 6.4 Along the whole of its length, views down the footpath are alternately constrained or opened up; for example, at the meeting point of **Oxford Avenue** and Abingdon Walk where a slight widening and a bend to the left reveals unexpected views. Subtle changes in direction mean that at no point can the whole of the path be seen in either direction. The crossing point at St James Road, where the shaded route from Mayfield Road suddenly delivers the pedestrian into sunlight, is particularly unexpected. This narrowing and enclosure establishes the special 'secret' character of the footpath.
- 6.5 **London Road** offers an entirely different type of townscape. Its value lies in the variety and scale of its two and three-storey buildings and their staggered relationship with the wide street and the open vistas across Victoria Park. Views are deflected along the gentle curves of the road and seen through and behind trees. Differing building heights and roof styles create interest along the skyline, which is punctuated by chimneys. Approaching the conservation area from the north, the street is hidden by the trees forming the edge of Victoria Park. Moving south, however, views open up to reveal the curve of the street and the twin towers and cupolas of the area's landmark building, St James the Greater Church, towering over the rooftops. At the south end, views are 'closed' by the densely planted Mayfield Road roundabout, the high cost and elaborate construction of which caused much controversy when it was first installed in the 1950s; more recently a similar controversy arose when a proposal was put forward to replace it with a traffic light junction. Beyond the roundabout, the mature trees of north Stoneygate can be glimpsed. These features serve to create a much less urban 'feel' along this boundary, although this is tempered by the heavy traffic flows.
- 6.6 By contrast, **Evington Road** is much more 'urban' in quality with a series of terraced properties creating an almost continuous built edge. Visual interest is enhanced by the gentle curves, rises and falls of the street and the break in the building line at No.45, where the houses step forward closer to the road. The almost continuous wall on the other side of the street helps to create a feeling of enclosure. Again, however, heavy traffic is evident and this has a distinct effect on the character of the street. The almost complete loss of front gardens to car parking creates a considerable weakness in the townscape, which is only partly alleviated by four trees.
- 6.7 **St James Road, Abingdon Road and St James Terrace** are quiet residential enclaves comprising groups of terraced two and three-storey dwellings, built to

individual designs or in small matching groups. There are also a few detached houses or semi-detached villas. The quiet character of **St James Road** is firmly established by an avenue of sycamores and one lime. This, together with the rhythmic vertical pattern of bay windows, the dip in levels to a low point half way along its length and the proximity of the buildings to the back of the footway, enhances a sense of enclosure. A feeling of secrecy is also apparent, particularly in the summer when foliage hides upper storeys. The visual interest is further enhanced by the gentle curve at the lowest point of the road which prevents the whole of the street being seen from either end. This curve also deflects views and intensifies the contrasts between the view out from the area onto the inner city environment at the Evington Road end with the open views across the trees and spaces of Victoria Park at the other end.

- 6.8 The views into and out of **Abingdon Road**, a quiet back street, are 'closed' by the right-angled bend at each end. The retention of front gardens, boundary walls, railings and trees contribute to the townscape, and the recently built flats on the north side of the street maintains the built edge. The townscape suffers at the eastern end, where commercial uses intrude and weaken the space - the off-street loading area to a shop breaks the line of high back garden walls and is a particularly unfortunate feature in the street scene.
- 6.9 **St James Terrace** comprises a small group of attractive two storey houses in local red brick. Again, however, the townscape becomes very weak on the south side where the continuous built edge has been lost following the construction of flats on the corner with Mayfield Road and the church hall to St James the Greater. Both these developments are set back from the footway with little in the way of boundary definition. The church hall is a very dominant feature in the townscape but adds little to the townscape quality.
- 6.10 **Mayfield Road** slopes down towards a sharp right-hand bend at the foot of the hill and is the area where the conservation area's townscape suffers most. Although largely hidden from London Road by the leftward curve in the road, the lack of definite boundaries at the St James Terrace corner and in front of the garage at the foot of the hill create particular weak points. The townscape is, however, improved by trees in front of the flats, in the garden of number 12 and in back gardens, which show above the roofs of the houses on St James Road. The eastern end of Evington Footway is at the foot of the hill and offers interesting views into the conservation area. However, the sequence of views offered by the bend in the road to the left and the slope down the north side of the ridge to the houses of Kimberley Road is visually interesting. Glimpses deeper into the conservation area are possible along St James Terrace.

7.0 Architectural Character

The inclusion of buildings in this section is selective and is intended to illustrate the range of building types, styles and materials in the conservation area. 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.

- 7.1 The architectural character of the conservation area varies from the grand, wide frontage villas on London Road to the plainer terraces on Evington Road and the more ornate buildings along St James Road.
- 7.2 On **London Road** the predominant materials are buff brick, complemented by painted stucco, and the local orange-red brick. Carved stone detailing, especially around windows and doors, is much in evidence. The buildings display a wide variety of fashionable architectural styles and designs and the differing heights, rooflines, windows and detailing create an interesting, rhythmic edge to the conservation area. This edge is dramatically punctuated by the square brick towers and carved stone cupolas of the large, turn-of-the-century parish church of St James the Greater.
- 7.3 Built over a period of about 70 years from the 1820s, the buildings range from the restrained design typical of the early 19th century 'classical' style (at nos.172-4, London Road for example) to more exuberant Italianate and Gothic styles popular in the 1870s and 1880s, with their carved stonework, polychrome brickwork and windows with pointed arches (as can be seen best at 202-4). Bay windows are much in evidence and a few buildings have small timber balconies at second floor level.
- 7.4 Three buildings were demolished during the 20th century - Granby House at 158 London Road, 'Italian Villa' at number 188 and another detached villa at 196 London Road. The site of the latter now forms part of the car park of the 'Old Horse' public house, while the others were redeveloped in the 1970s with the construction of three storey flats. These brick faced buildings, whilst being fairly sympathetic in terms of materials, add little to the architectural qualities of the street and, indeed, their flat roofs are quite out of character. Number 158 is a particularly brash statement at the northern approach to the conservation area, although it makes concessions to the area's character in its use of buff bricks and a bayed facade.
- 7.5 The properties along **Evington Road** were constructed by a variety of individuals and developers over a period of about 30 years from the 1870s onwards and tend to be modestly designed and proportioned. A few, however, express their greater importance by being larger and more highly decorated, such as nos. 45 to 47 and 61 to 63. They are divided roughly into two basic groups - a homogeneous terrace from no.1 to 43 and more varied and individual houses from 45 to 71.
- 7.6 Building materials generally are orange-red brick, with stone detailing used with varying degrees of decoration around windows, doors and on dormer copings. The gabled three-storey terrace between no.1 to 15 exhibits modest Gothic detailing which contrasts well with the more sober architectural styles of the two and three storey terraces further on. Along the whole of the conservation area boundary there is a common use of single or double height bay windows. Rooflines vary in height and design and include dormers, dormer gables with timber or stone copings and finials, some richly bracketed eaves and, in one prominent case, a bold Dutch-style gable. Windows and doors display a variety of stone heads, sills and mullions, with evidence of

decorative ironwork on some bay roofs. Two fine polished granite and sandstone pillars support a portico at the side of 49 Evington Road. Despite the almost wholesale conversion of houses to multiple-occupancy or business use, most buildings retain their original window proportions and panelled front doors. A small infill flat development between nos.53 and 55 picks up visual cues from the street in its use of bays and gabled roofline.

- 7.7 Some of the properties have been converted into shops. The largest, formed from a group of 4 terraced houses, makes no concessions to its setting with its large modern plate glass windows, a deep continuous fascia and painted upper storey. By contrast, two other shops nearby were subject to an improvement scheme in recent years. The new simple design, with its pitch roofed double bayed shopfronts, curved headed windows, rationalised signage and harmonising colours and materials has done much to improve the appearance and architectural integrity of this small group of buildings.
- 7.8 By contrast, the buildings on **St James Road** are the most ornate to be found in the conservation area. There are examples of most of the decorative domestic architectural styles popular in the Victorian era for example, Tudor Revival, Gothic and Queen Anne. The unifying feature is *ornament*. It takes the form of carved and fretted bargeboards, mock half-timbering, ornate timber porches, carved door canopies, tile-hung bays, moulded brick panels and stained glass windows.
- 7.9 One site has, however, been redeveloped by the construction of a four-storey block of flats, which contrasts sharply with the designs and styles its surroundings. Whilst some effort has been made to complement the character of the street through the choice of construction materials, the scale, mass, sloping mansard roof, window proportions and lack of detail mean that the building stands out as an alien feature in an otherwise cohesive whole.
- 7.10 The small loop which forms **Abingdon Road** serves both residential and commercial uses as well as a 1930s Christadelphian Hall. Houses are of mixed sizes ranging from a group of 6 small, two storey, bay-fronted dwellings to a pair of large stone-fronted three storey semi-detached villas. Orange-red brick is again the common feature and visual interest is created by the varying rooflines (with chimneys much in evidence) and different window types - dormer, oriel and bays in 'Queen Anne' style. The Christadelphian Hall, whilst being completely different in size and design, nevertheless adds to the quality of the street in its polite use of brick, ornamental window design and front railings. The retention of front gardens, boundary walls, railings and trees along the street also contribute much to the townscape and the recently constructed flats on the north side of the street fit in well.
- 7.11 The north side of **St James Terrace** is an attractive group of 8 two storey houses which are laid out with the houses at either end stepped forward to the back of pavement to give an interesting edge to the street. Bay windows, decorative blue brick banding and patterning, as well as moulded and bracketed brick eaves, cornices and tall chimney stacks, create visual interest. By contrast, the church hall opposite is constructed in a hard reflective

engineering brick and is set much further back from the road, revealing the normally hidden backs of some of the houses on St James Road. Although some effort has been made to lighten the design by articulating the ground floor with recessed bays between the structural piers, its general scale, deep overhanging eaves and shallow roof pitch tend to set it apart from the otherwise cohesive whole which is the St James' area. The modern two storey flats adjoining are also quite alien in design using small square windows, half dormers and roughcast rendering on the facades, although they do reflect a style typical of the 1970s.

- 7.12 There are very few buildings on **Mayfield Road** and none of those facing onto the street offer much in the way of architectural value. The main characteristic here is one of mixed styles, designs and materials - the new flats at the St James Terrace junction contrast strongly with the red bricks of the buildings on the opposite corner. However, the new extension at the rear of 218 London Road sets up a dramatic contrast of post-modern style with the mass and scale of the side view of the nave of St James the Greater.

8.0 Boundary treatment

- 8.1 Garden walls and hedges make important contributions to the character of a conservation area. They are not only important features in themselves but also help to create a sense of enclosure and provide a pleasant setting for the buildings behind. The boundaries within the Evington Footpath conservation area tend to reflect the use of the buildings - for example, non-residential buildings have, in most cases, lost their boundary walls and it is only the houses which have a well-defined built edge to the street.
- 8.2 The loss of garden walls has its greatest visual impact on Evington Road, where the front gardens of the central terrace have been given over to car parking. However, the rebuilding of the side boundaries (low brick walls with railings) helps to alleviate the effect and the retention of front walls at either end further reduces the visual impact of the loss. From 49 Evington Road, and continuing along Abingdon Road and St James Road, many garden walls were rebuilt as part of improvement schemes carried out in the 1980s. The design mixed flat-top, bow-top and 'tulip-top' railings and gates to create visual interest. Where original boundaries remain, there are examples of garden walls in Charnwood granite with stone copings and ornate pier caps (nos. 20-22 St James Road). Well-kept privet hedges and front yards are evident at 33-35 St James Road and 71 Evington Road and a high side boundary wall at 202 London Road defines the end of St James Road.
- 8.3 Most original front boundary walls along London Road have been lost, although the walls and railings at 202-220 London Road have been rebuilt, including the re-use of 'angel-wing' design churchyard railings at number 218. The retention of small trees of mixed species such as hawthorn, laburnum and sycamore helps to divert the eye from otherwise poor quality boundaries.
- 8.4 The greatest visual impact created by boundary walls is along the Evington Footway, where their height and proximity to the pedestrian define the

character of the path. Generally, the walls are between 2m and 3m high and built of brick. Where they form garden walls the brick is usually good quality commons; where the boundary is formed by buildings the brickwork tends to be smooth red local facings. Grey clay coping tiles are common and occasional gable ends rise higher to create additional visual interest. The glazed double-height roof of an Edwardian greenhouse at the rear of 170 London Road is another unusual feature. A new boundary wall with railings has been built at the entrance to Oxford Avenue to define that space and a picturesque pedimented archway in the wall at its west-end adds to the visual interest of this small residential enclave. Not all walls are in good condition, however - the need for repointing is a common feature and back gates tend also to be neglected and unused (concern for security may well be the reason for this). Where walls or outbuildings have been removed to provide space for cars, the loss of a defining edge weakens the physical and visual space. This is especially so at the north end of the footway, where all that remains of the boundary is an ornate cast iron gate post. Diagonal hit-and-miss fencing at the south end of the footpath, however, adds visual interest.

9.0 Parks and Gardens

9.1 Although there are no public parks within the conservation area, the expanse of Victoria Park² along the south-west boundary has a particular impact on the character of the area. The general pattern of private gardens in the conservation area is that of small and shallow front yards, some better cared for than others, with larger back gardens. At a few locations gaps between houses offer glimpses into these back gardens, such as between 34 to 38 St James Road and 190 London Road. Where rear gardens are large, such as on London Road, there is space for large trees which add to skyline interest and punctuate views.

9.2 Most of the front gardens along London Road have been paved over either for ease of maintenance by the non-residential occupiers (at numbers 176-180 for example) or are tarmac surfaced for car parking (as at 190-194). The modern planting in front of no.170 is visually interesting and the formal tree planting at 218 contrasts with the more ornate railings.

10.0 Trees

10.1 Because the area is so heavily built up, trees are highly important in defining and enhancing the quality of this conservation area. They soften the hard built form and create areas of contrasting colour and shape; older trees can also complement the established character of the conservation area. However, the density of the area is such that there is little room available for large size trees to develop and grow to maturity. With this in mind, it is perhaps surprising that there are a significant number of large mature trees, which are mainly beech, lime and sycamore.

² Victoria Park is registered at Grade II in the *Register of Parks and Gardens of Historic Interest in England*

- 10.2 The Town & Country Planning Act 1990 makes special provision for trees in conservation areas. Under Section 211, anyone proposing to cut down or carry out work on a tree in a conservation area is required to give the local planning authority six weeks' prior notice of their intentions. The purpose of this requirement is to give the Authority an opportunity to consider whether a Tree Preservation Order should be made to give specific protection to the tree.
- 10.3 There are two trees in the Conservation Area protected by Tree Preservation Order. These are the copper beech at the rear of 1 Abingdon Road and a pear tree at the rear of 23 Evington Road, visible from the footpath. It is an offence to cut down, top, lop, uproot or wilfully destroy a protected tree without the City Council's permission.
- 10.4 There are four important beech trees in the conservation area, all in private gardens. The protected beech in the rear garden of 1 Abingdon Road is a large mature tree that stands close to the boundary wall with Evington Footpath; its canopy spreads out over the footpath and adjacent properties. Another copper beech stands at the rear of 188 London Road is also visible from the footpath; it is a mature specimen with a very high crown. There are also two beech trees on Evington Road, a middle age tree in front of 33 Evington Road and a mature tree in front of no.23. Both these trees stand in tarmac car parks and are highly valuable to the visual amenity of the area. The older tree, in particular is a magnificent specimen with a high, spreading crown.
- 10.5 Although the beech trees make an important contribution to the street scene, the limes and sycamores are far more numerous. There are thirty-five street trees in St James Road, thirty-four sycamores and one lime. The front gardens of the properties on St James Road are too small to accommodate trees, so the street trees are very valuable. They form an avenue on both sides of the street which, although containing sizeable gaps, maintains its unity because of the similar age, size and form of the trees. All the trees have been pollarded to facilitate their retention close to buildings and it is intended to continue this form of management in the long term to keep them at a manageable size. The trees have responded well to this form of management and almost all of them remain in good condition.
- 10.6 Responsibility for street trees lies with the City Council and future management and replacement programmes are essential elements in conserving the character of the area. A strategy and management plan has been developed for street trees throughout the city and this will help to maintain the distinctive character of the area by ensuring that street trees are kept in good condition and any diseased or dying trees are replaced at the earliest opportunity.
- 10.7 Sycamore trees in private gardens include a number of apparently self-set trees. Some trees have been cut back at various times in attempts to control their size while others have been allowed to grow. Noteworthy sycamores include the large mature tree at the front of the Old Vicarage on St James

Road and two trees, one on either side of the footpath, between Oxford Avenue and St James Road. There are many smaller self-set sycamores close to the footpath, as well as other, older ones that have been crudely topped in the past.

- 10.8 Many lime trees in the conservation area have also been topped and lopped in the past, but lime trees can be quite resilient and for the most part they have recovered to produce trees of reasonably good size and form. Notable lime trees include those in the front garden of nos. 5 and 17 Evington Road, at the side of 49 Evington Road and a group of three young limes that have been planted outside the flats at 20-24 Mayfield Road.
- 10.9 Other trees of some value in the conservation area include a middle age oak at the corner of London Road and Mayfield Road, a mature yew at the rear of the garage on Mayfield Road and a small multi-stemmed sorbus next to the modern building at the western end of the footpath, which helps to soften the appearance of the building.
- 10.10 It would appear that the value of the trees is appreciated by residents of the area since only four applications of proposed removal of trees and two notifications of proposed pruning were submitted between 1996 and 2001. However, the level of space does mean that opportunities for new planting are very limited. There is no mechanism for the local authority to secure replacement planting when a notification is received of a proposal to remove a tree in a conservation area, but this power does exist where the tree is protected by a TPO. It may therefore be appropriate to make additional TPO's to ensure that new trees are provided to replace the older trees when their removal becomes necessary.

11.0 Surface treatment

- 11.1 Adopted highways in the area are surfaced in tarmac with concrete slabs the most common material used for pavements. Evington Footpath, however, has been surfaced in red tarmac to create an individual identity. Square granite sets are used to define the central drainage channel at the north end. Kerbstones on the streets are mainly granite but St James Road has long runs of diorite. The forecourt of the Old Horse is laid out with square granite setts and the remains of a black square clay sett driveway is visible in the rear yard to 69 Evington Road, which also has a square granite sett footway crossing. The whole of the frontage to St James the Greater is paved in York stone. Car parks are surfaced in tarmac and many front gardens on London Road have been paved in concrete paving slabs, red and grey pavers or tarmac.

12.0 Lighting and street furniture

- 12.1 Most of the street lighting is on modern steel columns but on St James Road, Abingdon Road and Evington Footpath, 'Victorian' style lanterns and columns have been installed. There is also an attractive pair of lamps to either side of the St James the Greater forecourt.

13.0 Land use and social factors

13.1 Generally, the areas away from the main traffic routes of London Road and Evington Road remain primarily in residential use, although, where the properties are very large, this includes a mixture of flats, residential homes and student residences. This has resulted in greater demand for car parking (usually on-street as there is little land available off-street) as well as bin storage. Where buildings are smaller, they tend to have remained in single family use. Non-residential uses such as offices, shops, dental/veterinary surgeries as well as education establishments have become established on London Road and Evington Road and there are some small industrial type uses on Abingdon Road and Mayfield Road.

14.0 Loss of character

14.1 The loss of front gardens for car parking is the most significant change that has altered the character of the area and reflects the conversion of properties into flats and increasing levels of traffic and car ownership. Traffic levels are high on the three roads forming the edges of the conservation area and this introduces noise and pollution as well as making the roads difficult to cross. The particular effect is to isolate the area from Victoria Park. The conversion of properties to multiple occupation has, in some instances, resulted in neglect of gardens and poorer building maintenance, as well as a clutter of 'wheelie bins'.

14.2 There has been only a small amount of redevelopment in the area and the new flats at 57 Evington Road complement their surroundings quite well. The redevelopment of 13-17 St James Road is less sympathetic, however, with its 'mansard style' upper storeys and square windows. Whilst the four storeys of 158 London Road make a bold statement at the north end the high plot ratio and lack of boundary definition leaves the site somewhat barren.

14.3 There have been some alterations to buildings over the years but not the wholesale rush towards substitutes such as uPVC evident in other areas. There are some exceptions, such as 170 and 208 London Road and 11 St James Road. Elsewhere, timber windows have generally been retained, although some properties have replaced multi-pane upper sashes with single glazed panes. Many stained glass leaded lights to doors and windows also survive to the great benefit of the visual environment.

15.0 Preserving the character

15.1 The previous sections have described the Evington Footpath area to explain why it is important and how the setting, relationship of buildings and details have combined to create a unique character worthy of special care and protection. It was the recognition of the area's quality and variety that led to its declaration as a Conservation Area in 1981. The City of Leicester Local Plan (currently under review) also contains policies designed to protect the area's character, for example by ensuring that new development takes account of the scale, form, materials and details of its surroundings.

- 15.2 Conservation Area Consent must be obtained for demolition of all but the smallest buildings (such as outbuildings) and may also be needed for demolishing parts of buildings, like chimney stacks or front boundary walls. There are also restrictions on installing satellite dishes and these controls are tighter in conservation areas than elsewhere. The City Council is keen to see that satellite dishes and antennas are placed on buildings so as to have the least possible effect on the character and appearance of the conservation area; it is not seen as realistic to resist the siting of such plant in conservation areas altogether. Listed building consent is required to attach a satellite dish to a listed building.
- 15.3 The details of individual buildings are also important in forming the character of the area and range from the decorative use of timber for windows, porches and doors and the external detailing of houses built in the 19th century. Equally important is the retention of original roofing materials – mainly Welsh slate, but also plain clay tiles. In general, repair and restoration work should always keep to the original appearance of the building as closely as possible and be done in materials to match the originals.
- 15.4 However, conservation area designation alone does not prevent alterations to houses which could spoil the character and appearance of the area. Original timber windows and doors, for instance, could be replaced in uPVC, whilst houses could be rendered or re-roofed in modern materials without planning permission being required. Alterations such as these to houses are allowed as “permitted development” under the Town & Country Planning General Development Order.
- 15.5 In order to safeguard the character and appearance of houses within the conservation area, the City Council is proposing to serve an Article 4 Direction on all those houses within the area that have retained their original external features. Such a direction would remove permitted development rights, so that planning permission would be required for any external alterations to houses in the area. This measure would not apply to flats or commercial properties, as such properties do not have permitted development rights.
- 15.6 Plants and trees in private gardens are equally important to the character of the area and provide homes and food for a variety of birds and wildlife. Loss of such greenery on a wide scale would have a serious effect on the appearance and attractiveness of the area as well as on urban wildlife. Care should always therefore be taken to ensure that when gardens are being changed any new surface treatments are porous and laid as far from roots and branches as possible to minimise damage.

APPENDICES

Appendix 1

Listed Buildings

170 London Road (Grade II)
172-174 London Road (Grade II)
St James the Greater (Grade II*)

Details of the official listed building descriptions are available from the Urban Design Group, tel. 0116 2527218

Appendix 2

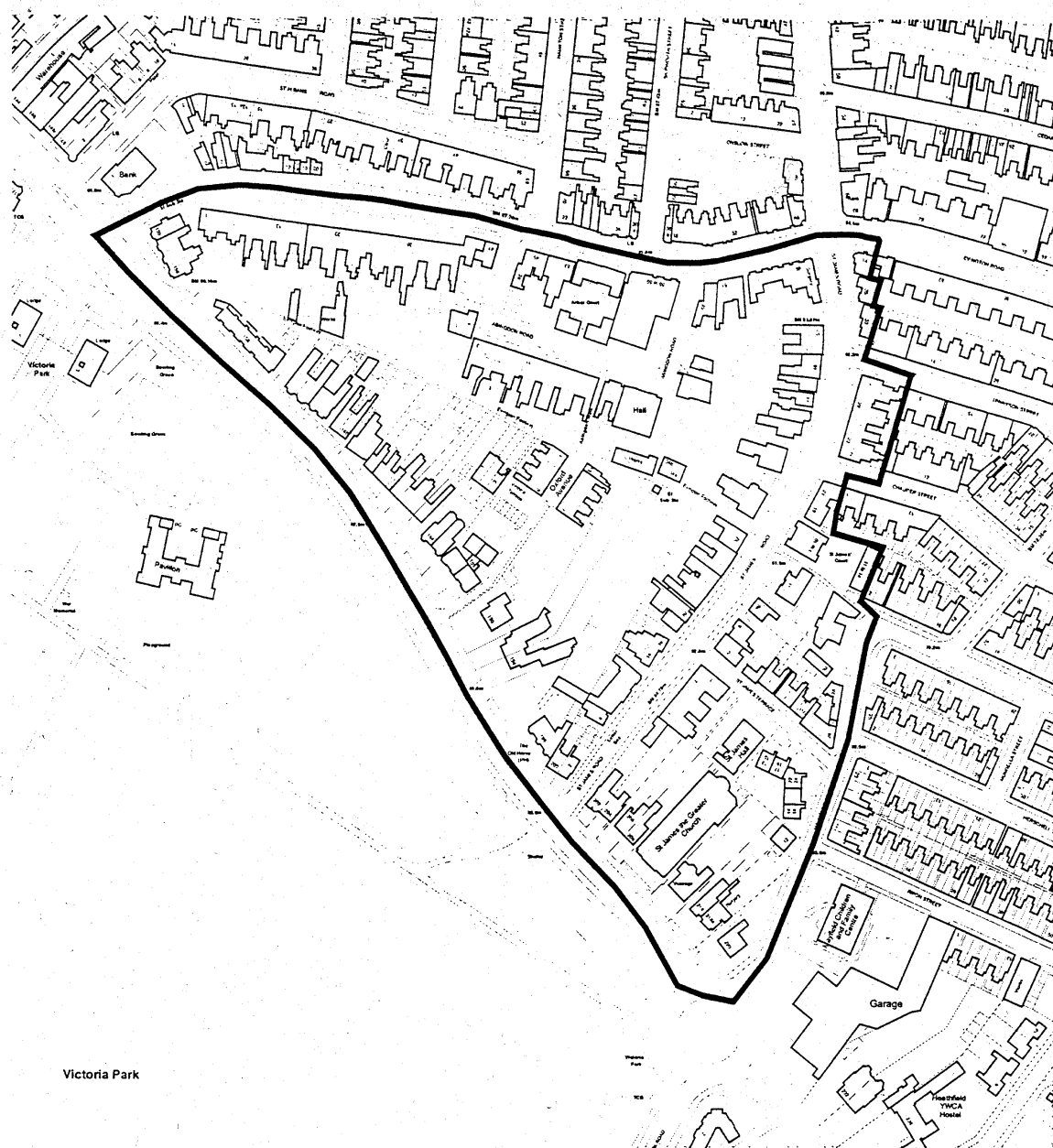
Tree Preservation Orders

252 r/o 23 Evington Road
255 r/o 1 Abingdon Road

Appendix 3

List of Buildings within the Evington Footpath Conservation Area

Abingdon Road	-	1-27, Christadelphian Hall, 39
Chaucer Street	-	2
Evington Road	-	1-53, 55-57 (Arbor Court), 59-71
London Road	-	150 -186, 1-3 Victoria Terrace (r/o 182-186), 188 (The Park flats), 190-194, 198 (the Old Horse pub), 200 -208, St James the Greater Church, 216-220
Mayfield Road	-	12, 14-24 (flats), 26-30, Tyres Galore Garage
Oxford Avenue	-	1-13 (inc.)
St James Road	-	2-52,1-9a, 11 ('The Vicarage' flats), 13-17 (Mayfield Court flats 1-14), 19-35
St James Terrace	-	2-16, 1, St James Hall, 13-19 (flats)
Tennyson Street	-	1 (Tennyson House)



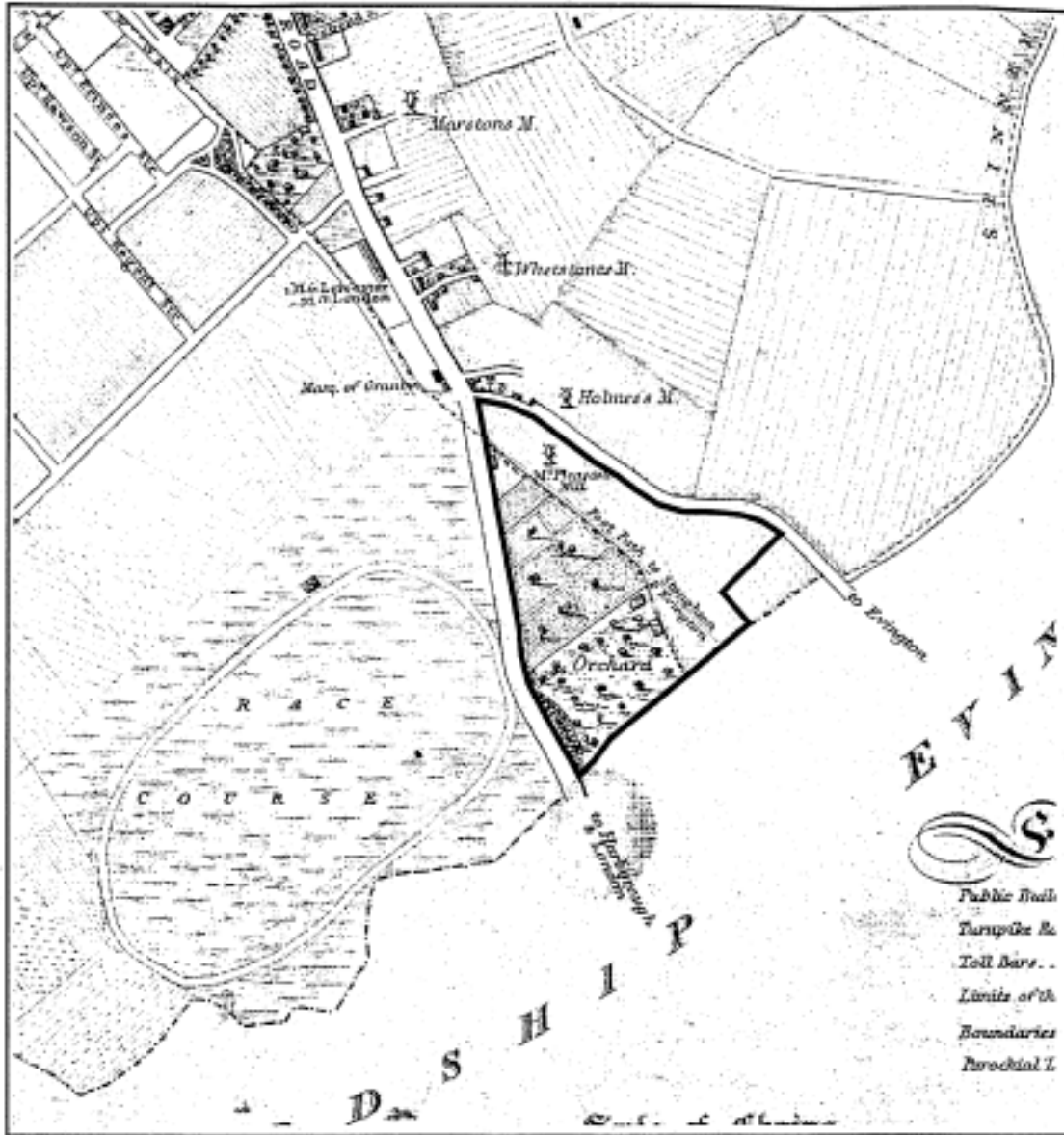
EVINGTON FOOTPATH CONSERVATION AREA CHARACTER STATEMENT

Map 1. Location of Conservation Area superimposed on the Ordnance Survey extract.

Boundary of conservation area



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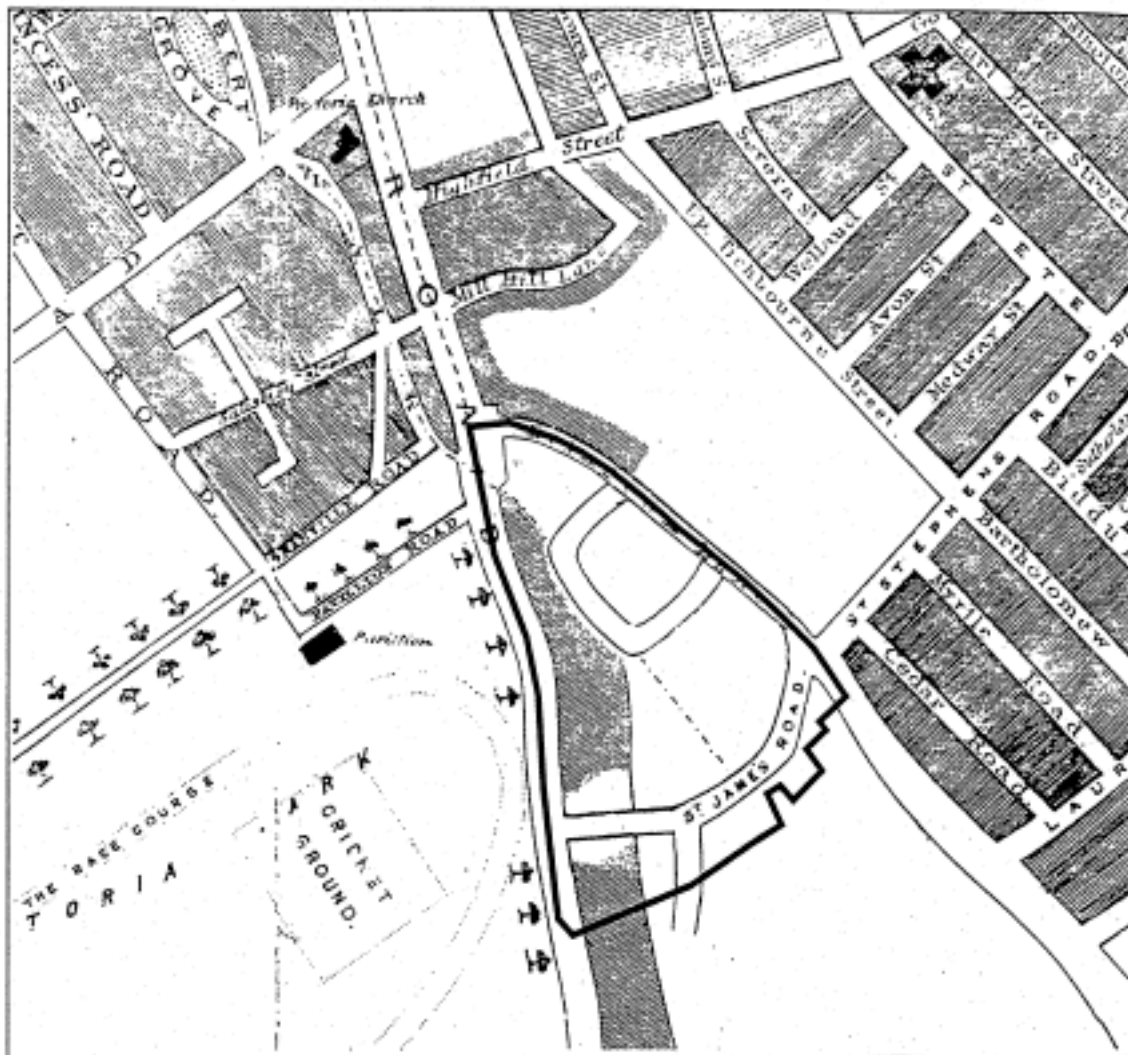


EVINGTON FOOTPATH CONSERVATION AREA CHARACTER STATEMENT

Map 2. Location of Conservation Area superimposed on the Fowlers' 1828 map.

Boundary of conservation area



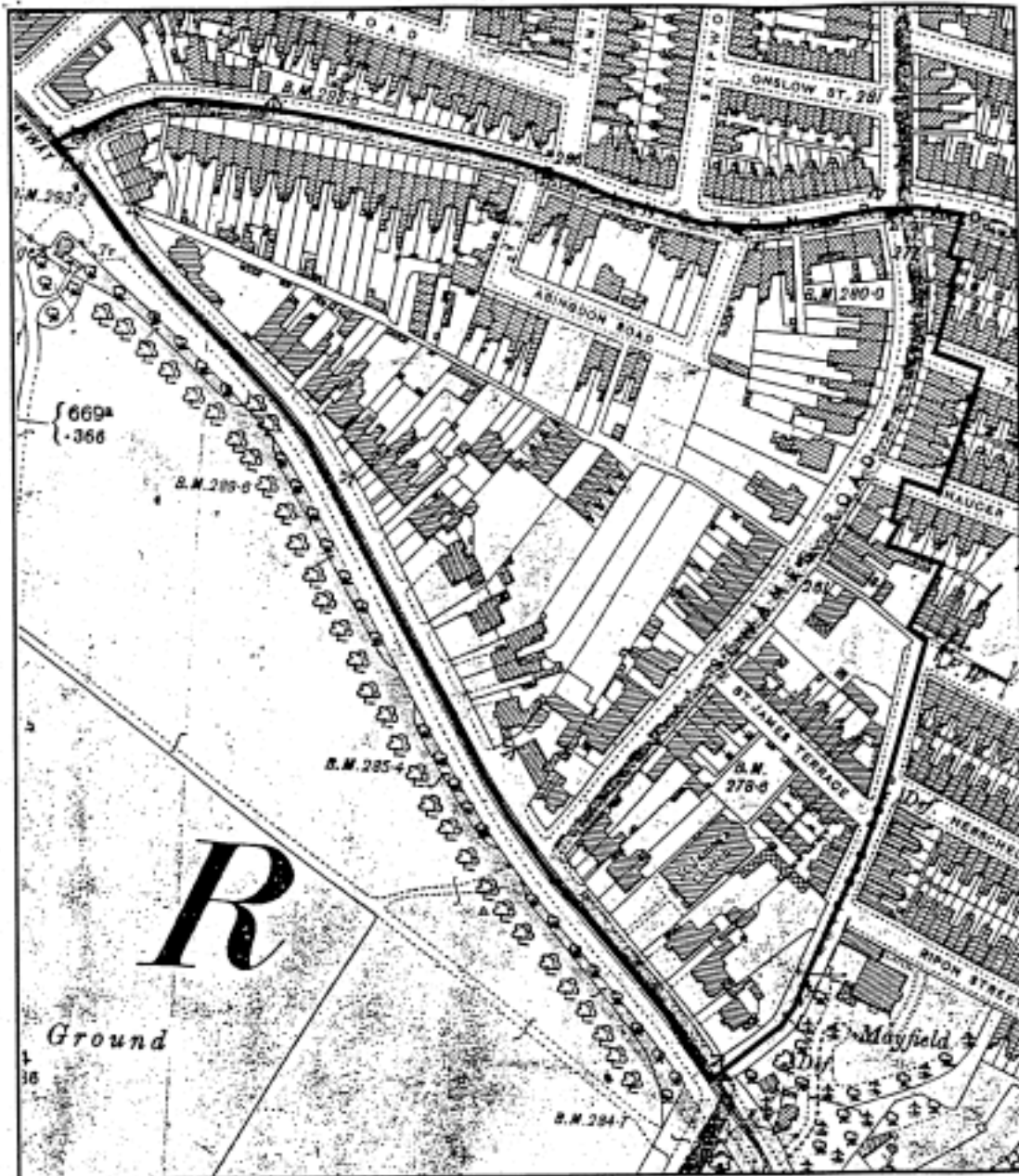


EVINGTON FOOTPATH CONSERVATION AREA CHARACTER STATEMENT

Map 3. Location of Conservation Area superimposed on the 1879 map

Boundary of conservation area —————





EVINGTON FOOTPATH CONSERVATION AREA CHARACTER STATEMENT

Map 4. Location of Conservation Area superimposed on the 1902 Ordnance Survey extract.

Boundary of conservation area

