

Conservation in Stoneygate - why it matters!

SCAS was established 27 years ago to help protect and enhance the environment within the conservation area. The area's qualities are in evidence as one walks the streets of this fine suburb, with its mixture of terraced, semi-detached and, in some cases, very grand detached houses, civic buildings and churches. Evident in the diverse building stock is the use of varied materials and the quality and detail. The impression created by the patchwork of individual buildings is completed by the thread which holds the area together; the breadth of the streets and roads with their granite kerbs, coping stones and mature trees.

Together, these qualities combine to create an environment which is worthy of protection and enhancement and should be subject only to sympathetic development which acknowledges and respects its unique qualities.

The status as a conservation area affords a degree of protection for the character of

Stoneygate. This status is however as nothing without the vigilance of individuals and members of the society. The vigil is kept by the review and challenge of inappropriate planning applications (as well as highlighting the impunity of those who fail to make them) and attempts to keep a check on the creep of unsympathetic development, ugly street furniture, building decay and encroaching plants and shrubs.

The unique environment enjoyed by those who live, work, learn and worship in Stoneygate cannot be taken for granted. Those who join and play an active part in the Society, acknowledge this fact and can be sure that through their alert concern the planners will be held to account. If you are in anyway concerned about the environment you enjoy, please continue to support the Society, remain vigilant and share your concerns with the committee. If you wish to play a more active role in the Society contact us - there is always plenty to do.

The qualities of the area are detailed in the Stoneygate Character Statement, available from the City Council building conservation officer who can be contacted on 252 7217.

SEEN THESE CHAPS IN THE NEIBOURHOOD?



Let SCAS know if you recognise them and can pinpoint their location

Victoria Park – A Verdant Gem



Bordering the conservation area, Victoria Park is a cherished open space which provides a wide green playground for Clarendon Park, Stoneygate and the University. Sitting at the top of the Georgian promenade of New Walk, the Park almost appears to serve as a lung for the city.

The combination of pockets of open parkland bordered by enclosed tree lined pathways creates an illusion which reduces the true scale of the park. The Park sits atop the brow of the Soar Valley. And yet, why does it exist? It is almost as if the developing 19th Century city had to pause for breath after it had rolled up London Road Hill, recovering as it crossed this old racecourse and, renewed, continues its expansion in to the mix of buildings on the south side of the Park.

In truth, the City's founding fathers recognised the value in preserving the space following the departure of the racecourse in 1879.

This legacy is a gift that demands maintenance. The trees that cross and frame the park are subject to damage and loss at the hands the elements and vandals. The Society has recently sponsored the planting of 2 new cherry trees on the Park as part of the ongoing effort by the Council to retain its appearance. The programme is ongoing and members can elect to sponsor a tree, or, let us know if you feel that we should sponsor further planting on the Park.



Membership of SCAS – Safety in numbers

Membership of the Society currently stands at 95. A small number perhaps, relative to those who enjoy and cherish the space within the conservation area. The power of the group lies both in the energy and action of the committee (especially in planning matters) and, crucially, the number of people which the committee represents. Membership confers a number of benefits - in the past year the Society has arranged exhibitions, walks, talks and news of events, but it also provides a real measure of the level of support for its aims and objectives. This is vital in challenging the "Creep" which threatens the character of Stoneygate. To this end, you are urged to renew your membership and share the aims of the society with your friends and neighbours.

Contact Odette Fogler about membership matters (2705623) or send her slip on page 4 with your £5 subscription for the coming year.

Planning Matters (August – November 2005)

The SCAS committee has considered and investigated a number of the 33 new planning applications (including trees) within the Conservation Area. These included:

- 2 Alexandra Road: change of use from garage to flat - approved
- Ratcliffe Road: extension to care home - approved
- 2 Howard Road: development of 4 houses – approved
- 12 St Johns Road: change of use from house to flats – approved
- 7 Stanley Road (Eastfield): development of 54 flats - refused
- 56 Stoughton Road: change of use and extension for 4 flats - refused
- 2 Knighton Park Road: enforcement action by the Council for removal of unlawful extension

If you are concerned about a planning matter, contact the development control team at New Walk centre (Tel 2527231) or your local councillor. Alternatively contact SCAS for advice: Anna Reville (2709885) or Nita Foale (2448438).

“Outrage” - The Influence of Ian Nairn

Fifty years ago the concept of a popular conservation movement was yet to gain a foothold. The rapid, virtually unchecked, pace of post war building and development held out the prospect of the permanent disfigurement of the country's urban and rural landscape - the physical distinction of the two blurring in to a blandly offensive “subtopia”. So railed Andrew Nairn, one of the earliest and certainly most vitriolic protagonists of conservation.

For a time Nairn was a lonely public voice, fighting what was, less a creep, more a tidal wave of building destruction, unsympathetic development and ugly street furniture. Using the platform of Architectural Review, BBC documentaries and the swingeing polemic of his landmark book “Outrage” Nairn chastened a society which was prepared to sacrifice its built and natural heritage in the name of progress. Nairn was ultimately overwhelmed by the

ambivalence of planning authorities and the public to his calls to stem the flow, and died a frustrated early death at 52.

We now live in age where conservation and restoration is the stuff of lifestyle TV, and society appears genuinely concerned about the preservation of our environment. To this end, there exists the danger of a slow creep, which diminishes our experience over a slow imperceptible period of time. This can be the permanent, or the encroaching acceptability of scruffy buildings and abandoned detritus. In contrast to the dramatic, unspeakable development of the 50's, 60's and 70's, the planning applications investigated by SCAS may, individually, lack scale. Together however, they have the potential to reduce the character of the area over time and are worthy of the outrage expressed by Nairn.

Contact us if you are concerned about planning matters or contact the City Council environmental health office to raise issues around discarded waste.



What will happen to Johnnies?

Now better known as the Red Cross building on Clarendon Park Road, this imposing redbrick structure was, until 1974, St Johns



Church School – affectionately called Johnnies by its pupils. Built in 1890 by local architects Everard and Pick, the four storey school is crammed in to a site of just 998 square yards. The building replaced a yet earlier school on Cecilia Road and, it

was hoped by the church, would forestall the establishment of a Leicester Board school. Within a year, however the pressure exerted on resources by the opening of the Wheatsheaf Works in Knighton Fields led to the decision by the city to build a new school “the Avenue” to meet the demands created by the influx of “boot and shoe” families.

Some members of SCAS had an opportunity to visit the building on 31st October and see what relics still remain of its role as a school.

The large spaces such as the school hall have of course been divided up but features such as the beams supporting the roof are still visible. The stairs up and down which generations of children must have trod show little sign of wear, even the concrete steps, and the walls faced with glazed bricks were immune to any attempts by pencil or penknife by any pupil to leave a message for posterity.



The highest storey of the building was the preserve of the headmaster and other staff and here there is still a small cast iron fireplace, while the rest of the school was served by large radiators. The roof beams & other internal woodwork are also unaltered and still visible on this floor.



The building served the children of Clarendon Park and Stoneygate for 83 years and, after its most recent incarnation, is up for sale once again.

At this stage it is unclear as to the potential use of the building, let us hope for a sympathetic approach which retains the character appreciated by those who look up.

Contact us: SCAS Chairman Matt Matthew 270 3143
email Anthony.matthew@tiscali.co.

Join us: Complete this slip, and return it to Odette Fogler, 5 Calbri Court, 37 Knighton Drive
Leicester LE2 3HD (270 5623) with a cheque for £5 Annual Membership

Name:

Address:

Contact Phone: email: