

Whetley Grove

CONSERVATION AREA ASSESSMENT

February 2006

What is a Conservation Area?

A conservation area is an 'area of special architectural or historic interest the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance' (Section 69 of the Town and Country Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990).

They were first introduced into British legislation by the Civic Amenities Act of 1967 and are an attempt to protect the wider historic environment. It is the responsibility of Local Planning Authorities to designate conservation areas. An area may warrant designation if, for example, it has an historic layout of property boundaries and streets or exhibits characteristic materials and landscaping. They may include a mix of ages and uses of buildings, as well as open spaces and landscaping that contribute to the character of the area. The interaction of the buildings and spaces within designated areas create unique environments that constitute irreplaceable components of our local, regional and national heritage.

Conservation area designation confers a general control over the demolition of unlisted properties within their confines, strengthens controls over minor development and makes special provision for the protection of trees. The objective of these measures is to provide for the preservation of the essential character and appearance of the area, in order to maintain or improve its environmental quality and safeguard local distinctiveness and sense of place, within a framework of controlled and positive management of change. It is recognised that to survive conservation areas must be allowed to evolve to meet changing demands and commercial pressures, and that modern additions can be just as interesting as the existing fabric, if implemented in a complementary manner.



Right:
Whetley Grove conservation area boundary.

What is the Purpose of Conservation Area Assessments?

The Conservation Team of the City of Bradford Metropolitan District Council is currently undertaking an assessment and review of each of its fifty-six conservation areas. The principal objectives of this exercise are to:

- Clearly define and record the special interest of each conservation area;
- Reassess the current boundaries to ensure that they reflect the areas of special interest;
- Increase public awareness of the aims and objectives of conservation area designation and stimulate their involvement in the protection of their character;
- Assess the action that may be necessary to safeguard and enhance their special interest.

The documents will then form the basis on which future planning decisions concerning the areas are made.

The designation of a conservation area does not in itself provide for the complete protection of its character. The intrusion of modern materials or features, interruption to the building rhythm and the impacts of commercial pressure can all take their toll. Typically, the insensitive alteration of traditional door and window features or the loss of natural roofscape, chimney stacks and boundary walls all have a significant negative impact on the character of an area. With the support of the community, the assessment documents could incorporate policies to control these types of works.

History of Whetley Grove

The area was at the eastern extreme of Girdlington at the border with the township of Manningham. The first building in or adjacent to the conservation area is the since-demolished Wheatley House which was built in 1652 on the southern side of Wheatley Lane (as Whetley Lane used to be known), which is named after the House.

By 1852, the only development in the conservation area was 1-7 Whetley Grove and 63-67 Whetley Lane, which were collectively known as *Spring Field Place*. There were few other buildings along Wheatley Lane. Girdlington was still predominantly rural, unlike nearby Bradford, and to a lesser extent Manningham, where mills and high-density industrial housing were being built. By 1852 wealthy industrialists had bought large plots of land along Toller Lane and Smith Lane where they built large detached country houses set in large grounds. This location was distinctly separate from the built up area of Bradford, but was still conveniently close.



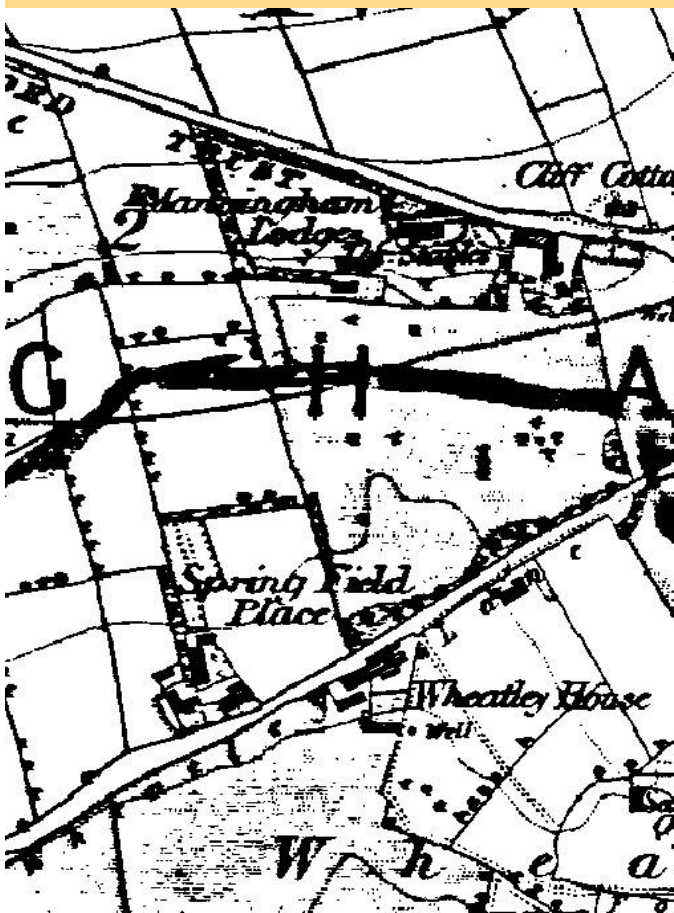
John Rand (1793-1873, *left*) was chiefly responsible for the development of the conservation area. Rand's father had founded one of Bradford's earliest worsted mills, Rand's Mill, at Horton Lane in 1803, and his family ran the mill as John Rand & Sons. In 1835 John Rand inherited Wheatley House from his father and resided there. He then bought a long strip of land which extends between Toller Lane and Whetley Lane and includes the site on which Whetley Grove Conservation Area stands. At the Toller Lane side, Rand built Manningham Thorpe (now Lilycroft Working Men's Club) as his new villa residence not long after 1852, and the rest of the site was used as a garden.

Although John Rand was an industrialist, Cudworth (1886) stated that '*his name will long be associated with the various religious, social and philanthropic movements of his time.*' Rand was concerned about the living conditions of the working classes and experimented with building high quality workers' dwellings at Rand Street, Little Horton which still stand today. Rand and his brother-in-law Dr Macturk were founding members of the Bradford Philosophical Society which was established in 1865 and was responsible for creating Bradford's first museum.

Above: Photo of John Rand.

Source: www.thisisbradford.co.uk

Left: A Map of the then-rural Whetley Grove area which was published in 1852. The group of buildings known as 'Spring Field Place' (51-57 Whetley Lane and 1-7 Whetley Grove) are the only buildings in the present day conservation area. John Rand would soon build Manningham Thorpe next-door to Manningham Lodge, another large country house.



It appears that John Rand sold a small corner of his garden for the development of working class housing before 1870. The resulting back-to-back terrace at Jarrat Street and Jarrat Street (East) are named after their developer and original landlord William Jarrat.

By 1870 the area to the west of the conservation area had been developed for long urban terraces of workers' housing. The rapid industrial expansion of Bradford and Manningham meant that the country villas built by the wealthy were becoming swamped by urban development and were losing their tranquillity and prestige. Sometime after 1870, if not before, the large terraced dwellings at Whetley Grove were built for middle class occupants who wanted to live in a suburban location, but could not afford to build large detached villas.

When John Rand died in 1873, he bequeathed that almshouses would be built in his name. The high quality and ornate Rand's almshouses on Macturk Grove were built and endowed by Mrs Rand in 1876, at what was then the foot of the garden of Manningham Thorpe. The almshouses are another example of Rand's philanthropy, decades before local authorities built social housing.

Between 1880 and 1900 the neighbouring country estates of Manningham Lodge and Woodlands were sold for development (a process which is shown on the 1893 Ordnance Survey map), while the garden of Manningham Thorpe became allotment gardens on which a primary school has been recently built.

Below: Rand Almshouses, Macturk Grove were the final houses built in the conservation area, providing housing in old age for retired workers. The almshouses are well-detailed with a mixture of gothic and Jacobean revival styles which were popular at the time. The gable over the central doorways contains a plaque which is dated 1876 and describes why the almshouses were built. Below this is a plaque initialled JER (John and Elizabeth Rand). The end gables contain small plaques which feature relief carvings of a boar's head over a crown, an insignia of Bradford since medieval times. The almshouses are Grade II Listed for their special architectural and historic interest.

Whetley Grove Conservation Area

Given the built-up, urban character and location of the Whetley Grove, much of its interest is derived from the buildings and the street spaces around them rather than natural features, important vistas or the topography. Given that the area is entirely residential and was largely built in a short period in the second half of the 19th century, the survival of key original features and details and the uniform appearance of the rows of houses are of particular importance to the area's special interest.

Conservation area designation does not prevent alterations to dwellings such as the replacement of windows and doors, the changing of roofing materials, the painting of stonework or some alterations to boundary walls, but unsympathetic alterations can chip away at the special character and interest of a historic area. In the case of Rand's Almshouses, the traditional appearance of the building is protected through its status as a Grade II Listed Building and Listed Building Consent is required for any alteration which will affect the appearance of the almshouses. The conservation area was surveyed in March 2004 in order to ascertain to what extent traditional features and details remain in place. The findings of the survey are summarised as follows:

Window and door details – Approximately three quarters of the unlisted houses in the conservation area have doors which are of a modern design and/or are made of inappropriate materials. A further fifth have doors fronted by flat boards which might conceal the original timber four panel timber door detail.

Under a tenth of all unlisted houses in the conservation area have traditional timber sliding sash windows. The vast majority of the houses have replacement windows which are made of non-traditional materials and/or have casement rather than sash openings. The array of modern window and door designs, materials and finishes means that there are unwanted differences between neighbouring houses where modern replacements have been inserted.



Stonework – The stonework of approximately four fifths of the unlisted dwellings at Whetley Grove has been cleaned. Cleaning of stonework is not recommended as it strips away part of a building's character but where it is deemed beneficial for other reasons it should be done in terrace groups and using appropriate methods where abrasive grit at high pressure is not used. Although only one house has a front elevation which has been entirely coated in paint, 85% of the unlisted dwellings in Whetley Grove have paintwork to window cills and lintels, and/or doorcases and hoods.

Stonework is traditionally bare and the painting of stonework can undermine the group value of buildings. The effects of stone cleaning and paintwork are particularly in evidence at Jarratt Street.

Roofscape – 1-7 Whetley Grove and 51-67 Whetley Lane are the oldest buildings in the conservation area and were originally roofed with stone slate. Today, only half of these buildings retain traditional stone slate roofs as the stone has been substituted with modern concrete tiles.

The houses in the rest of Whetley Grove were built in the second half of the 19th century and, with the odd exception, these houses retain their traditional grey slate roofs. This natural roofing material indicates the age of the buildings and helps to give the terraces a more uniform appearance. This said, the roofscape is marred by the intrusion of modern style dormer windows and oversized velux rooflights which can be found on a significant minority of buildings. Unfortunately the majority of these out of character installations are concentrated on one side of Whetley Grove (front and rear) and particularly harm the appearance of this part of the conservation area.



This terrace of housing was built for the middle classes and retains low sandstone boundary walls and gatepiers, though the railings have long been absent.

Boundary walls – The retention of the original coped stone boundary walls is a particularly strong unifying feature of the houses along Jarratt Street and Whetley Lane, with only a few unsympathetic minor alterations. Jarratt Street retains the ramped boundary walls which run between the front gardens of the properties.

The stone boundaries between the gardens of neighbouring houses along Whetley Grove have in most cases been demolished and have either not been replaced or have been replaced with an unsuitable boundary features. The high rear stone walls of the majority of these properties have been demolished to allow vehicle access to the yards behind the houses which has a negative impact on the street scene, particularly as the demolition work has left jagged edges to the sections of wall to either side of each opening.

The boundary walls at Jarratt Street East and the western side of Whetley Grove have on the most part been replaced by inappropriate modern style boundaries.



This open space on Macturk Grove contains a number of trees, but is overgrown and serves no clear purpose.

Open Spaces – Neither of the spaces to the west and south of Rand's Almshouses make a significant contribution to the character of Whetley Grove. The former is garden plots with some mature trees and an overgrown, inappropriate boundary; while the latter lacks a boundary, is featureless, overgrown and strewn with rubbish.

Streetscape – over the years all of the traditional stone sett and flag surfaces have been removed.

Further Information

This document is also available at the Council's website at:

www.bradford.gov.uk/council/planning/heritage/cons_assess.asp

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