



**SMETHWICK  
CONSERVATION AREA  
CHARACTER APPRAISAL:**

**AREA C:  
CAPE HILL TOWN CENTRE**

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**Plan C: Cape Hill Town Centre Study Area**



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## **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

**The 1990 Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act places a duty on every local planning authority to determine which parts of their area are areas of special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance. Such areas can then be designated as conservation areas.**

**The Act also states that local planning authorities should, from time to time, review their existing conservation areas and formulate and publish proposals for the preservation and enhancement of these conservation areas.**

**This report, which has been prepared in accordance with a brief set by Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council to consider possible conservation area designations within Smethwick, therefore consists of an appraisal of the established character and appearance of the area identified in Plan C of the brief.**

**The prime purpose of the report is to recommend whether or not any of the area shown on Plan C is of sufficient quality and interest to merit designation as a conservation area.**

**On the basis that it is recommended that a conservation area should be designated, the report is also intended to**

- Assist in defining what is of special architectural or historic importance**
- Give recommendations on features and characteristics that should be protected**

- **Identify possible areas for future enhancement within the designated area**
- **Provide guidance on the form, style and location of future change and development within the designated area.**

The report is divided into the following sections:

## **2.0 The History of the Area**

This covers the period from prehistory to the present day. It includes significant architectural history, important dates and references to people and events that have helped to shape the area as we see it today. As Smethwick is an area of almost exclusively Victorian and later development and character, this section focuses on the history of the area from c.1840 onwards.

## **3.0 The Established Character**

This is an assessment of the existing character of the area, including its topography, architectural styles, predominant building materials and natural or man-made features of local interest. This section also includes a reasoned justification and explanation for the suggested boundaries to the proposed conservation area.

## **4.0 Possible Areas for Enhancement**

These can range from major areas for environmental improvement, or in some cases redevelopment, to very minor works of repair and redecoration.

## **5.0 Bibliography**

This consists of the principal published sources consulted in the preparation of the report.

## **Plan of the Conservation Area**

This is a plan of the area that aims to identify the elements which contribute to its character and appearance. The plan shows the proposed conservation area boundary, listed buildings (buildings identified by DCMS as being of special architectural or historic interest), Scheduled Ancient Monuments and other buildings or structures of local note.

This latter group consists of buildings that play a part in establishing the character of the area but have not yet been considered to be of sufficient importance to meet the current criteria for listing. However, as government guidance contained in *PPG 15- Planning and the Historic Environment* (1994) makes clear, there is a presumption against the demolition of such buildings, particularly where they make a significant contribution to the character and appearance of the conservation area.

In identifying buildings of local note on both the plan and in the text of the report, account has been taken of the recommendations for 'local listing' recently made by Richard Morriss as part of the Historic Landscape Characterisation Survey conducted by the Council, English Heritage and Urban Living. It should be emphasized, however, that while in the main the buildings identified as of local note in this report are the same that Morriss recommends for 'local listing' there are occasional differences. The plan does not include those buildings recommended for 'local listing' which fall outside the proposed conservation area.

'Important' trees are also identified. These are usually highly visible from public places and/or they contribute to the setting of a listed building, the street scene or a building of local note. Important open spaces are also marked on the plan, as these are a vital element in the character of an area. Character is defined not just by buildings, walls and trees, but also by the spaces between them. These contribute to the setting of buildings. Open spaces allow views around the area and they are often

an important element in telling the story of the historical development of a community.

Important unlisted walls and other forms of boundary enclosure, such as railings or hedges, are recognized. These are usually built of local materials and help to define spaces and frame views. Significant views into, out of and around the proposed conservation area are also identified for it should be appreciated that a conservation area's character does not necessarily end with a line drawn on a map. Often the character is closely associated with attractive views out to other areas, sometimes via gaps between buildings, along streets or across open spaces. Views within an area such as that to a church or other landmark buildings can also be particularly valuable.



## **2.0 THE HISTORY OF THE AREA**

- 2.1 Smethwick lies just to the west of Birmingham, within the Metropolitan Borough of Sandwell, and in the 17<sup>th</sup> century was a hamlet of the South Staffordshire village of Harborne; in 1695 it was described as a ‘discontinued village’ (*i.e.* a scattered village) strung out along the Birmingham-Dudley Road.
- 2.2 Smethwick established its own identity upon separation from the manor of Harborne in 1710, its first church, Smethwick Old Church, being opened in 1732. However, it was not until the late 18<sup>th</sup> century that the settlement saw significant development; this was linked to the provision of transport infrastructure, which then led to the location of manufacturing industry and engineering in the area.
- 2.3 The main road through Smethwick became part of the Birmingham, Dudley and Wolverhampton turnpike in 1760, probably stimulating growth in the High Street around the Blue Gates Inn. Yates’s 1775 map of Staffordshire shows ‘Smithwick,’ the canal and a few buildings dotted along the turnpike, including a reference to the ‘Blue Gate’.
- 2.4 The topography of the area influenced the pattern of land use with the higher land to the south and west falling away to the northeast, and it is along this lower ground in the north that the canals and railways run. The first of Birmingham’s canals, the Birmingham Old Main Line, was constructed through the northern part of Smethwick by James Brindley in 1768-69, and this had a dramatic effect on the area’s fortunes. The canal connected Birmingham with the coal, iron and mineral resources of Wednesbury and Bilston and was fundamental to the economic development of the area, quickly attracting industrial development to land along the canal corridor.
- 2.5 Manufacturing industry, particularly metalworking and engineering, played an important role in the settlement’s growth and development. The first works,

Smethwick Brasshouse, had been established by 1772 near the canal on Brasshouse Lane. In 1795, Boulton Watt & Sons acquired a piece of undeveloped land alongside the old Mainline Canal to the southeast of Rabone Lane on which they opened the Soho Foundry, the first purpose-built steam engine manufactory in the world. Chance's Glassworks, which became one of the largest glassworks in the country, producing glass for the Crystal Palace in 1851, was established in 1814 on land close to the Old Main Line Canal west of Spon Lane. In 1829-30 Telford's Mainline Canal adopted the (present) direct line and the old line became a series of loops off it. Soho Foundry Loop was one of these but in 1852 it was cut into two by new railway embankments, after which it was infilled and reduced to Soho Foundry Basin only. The line of the canal and the land beyond was acquired and the Mint built alongside the New Main Line in 1860.

- 2.6 The idea of lowering the summit on the Old Main Line Canal to ease traffic congestion on the canal had first been suggested by John Smeaton but, Smeaton himself had little involvement in this as he died in 1791 and the scheme was shelved for a while. By the 1820s, however, the growth of industry along the canal had rendered the traffic once more unmanageable and Thomas Telford was commissioned to build the New Main Line Canal, which ran parallel to the Old Main Line. This canal, opened in 1829-30, was wider and straighter, had towpaths to either side and encouraged the increase of industrial development in the area; this in turn led to an increase in Smethwick's population (from 1,097 in 1801 to 2,676 in 1831) and the growth of the New Village, an area of factories and workers' housing on the eastern side of the Birmingham-Dudley Road between Smethwick and Cape Hill.
- 2.7 Smethwick's engineering reputation continued to grow during the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries and it emerged as one of the country's leading centres for the manufacture of nuts, bolts and screws, local companies Watkins & Keen and Nettlefold & Chamberlain being among the leading manufacturers. The Birmingham Wagon Co. Ltd. came to Smethwick in 1864 and was one of the most important employers in the

town, and Richard Evered & Son (tube makers) came to the town in 1866. As a result of this industrial development the town's population grew rapidly during the latter half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

2.8 In 1852, the Birmingham, Wolverhampton and Stour Valley Railway Line was opened through Smethwick, and the Stourbridge Extension Railway opened in 1867, linking Smethwick with Old Hill and providing a route between Birmingham and Stourbridge. The canals and railways (and associated structures) have left their mark on the landscape; several fine bridges were built to carry the railway lines across the canal cuttings, including the Galton Bridge to the north of Smethwick.

2.9 In 1894 a separate civil parish of Smethwick was created and, by 1899 the rapidly growing status of the town led to its becoming a municipal borough, being raised to county borough status in 1907; by this time the population had reached 54,539. The town continued to grow, reaching 84,406 in 1931 but then the population began to fall, as a result of a decline in the industrial prosperity of the area during the depression of the 1930s. The heavier industries continued to decline in the later 20<sup>th</sup> century, although as late as the 1960s Smethwick was still one of the most densely populated urban areas in England (outside London). In 1966, the Borough of Smethwick was transferred from Staffordshire to Worcestershire to form part of the new borough of Warley but, after 1974, it became part of Sandwell Metropolitan Borough within the newly-created county of the West Midlands.

## 2.10 Cape Hill

2.10.1 Cape Hill takes its name from the Cape of Good Hope Inn, which stood at the junction of Grove Lane and the main road at the foot of the hill, close to the boundary with Birmingham. The present building (apparently the third on the site) was erected in 1925.

2.10.2 The Shireland Hall Estate, to the south of Cape Hill, formerly a private estate (and shown on Yates's 1775 map of Staffordshire), was developed towards the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Cape Hill, Windmill Lane and Shireland Road, to the southwest of the industrialised part, developed largely as a district of workers' houses, with factories on the eastern boundaries and a new commercial centre along the Birmingham-Dudley road and part of Waterloo Road. This area formerly comprised several farms and woodland.

2.10.3 The west side of Windmill Lane was not developed until the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century. Before this there was a windmill and Oakfield Farm to the east and a row of houses on the west side of Soho Street. Streets were laid out in the 1850s (the northern half of Montague Road had been built by 1854) but building was piecemeal over the next half-century. Most of the streets between Montague Road and Waterloo Road were completed by the late 1880s. The land between Windmill Lane and Raglan Road was still largely open fields in 1890, while Cape Hill Farm occupied the site of The Cape Schools. Pool Farm and open fields separated Smethwick from Cape Hill.

2.10.4 In 1877-79 Henry Mitchell founded the Cape Hill Brewery (later Mitchells & Butlers Ltd) on the south side of the Birmingham-Dudley road. Further development took place in the 1880s and the triangle of land between Windmill Lane, Grove Lane and the Cape Hill stretch of the main road was built up by the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, providing housing and other facilities for the workers at the brewery and nearby factories. The brewery continued to grow and by 1924 occupied a site of 90 acres, employing a workforce of 1500 people. In 1961, the brewery became part of the Bass Charrington Group and closed down in 2003.

2.10.5 During the early years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Cape Hill developed as a shopping centre. By 1905, it was densely developed along both sides of the main road up to the borough boundary with Birmingham. Various buildings date from this time,

including purpose-built banks and public houses displaying the strong civic pride so characteristic of this period.

### **3.0 THE ESTABLISHED CHARACTER**

#### **3.1 Introduction and Overview**

- 3.1.1 The proposed conservation area at Cape Hill is considerably smaller than the other two conservation areas proposed as part of this study. However, with three listed buildings and four other individual or groups of historic buildings identified as of local note, it has a distinct and coherent character of its own. It comprises the bustling heart of Cape Hill and is focused on the busy junction of Cape Hill with Waterloo Road, Shireland Road and Windmill Lane.
- 3.1.2 As with the other two proposed conservation areas, the initial impression formed by the centre of Cape Hill is that it is not an area appropriate for conservation area designation. Once again, this is largely the result of the fact that, as a district of late Victorian predominantly working class character, Cape Hill is not the sort of place that even now is generally thought worthy of protection through conservation area status.
- 3.1.3 Unlike many conservation areas, especially in rural areas, much of the area is not visually appealing and even within the context of other urban conservation areas within the Birmingham conurbation, the centre of Cape Hill lacks superficial attractiveness or the monumental industrial structures that can provide an immediately recognizable and specific character to a neighbourhood.
- 3.1.4 This does not mean to say, of course, that the centre of Cape Hill does not have its own character. It is simply that in terms of a character and appearance that can be protected and enhanced by conservation area designation, that area is limited in extent and its special quality is best emphasised by its boundary being tightly drawn.

- 3.1.5 For this reason the decision was taken relatively early on in the examination of Area C of the study area, not to propose the vast majority of this area for conservation area status. Outside the centre of Cape Hill the character of the area is much weaker and the quality of its appearance is seriously diluted by later alteration. For instance, the creation of the Cape Hill Retail Centre on the south side of Cape Hill itself has effectively destroyed the original character here and nothing now can bring this back. Similarly, the visual quality of the eastern end of Smethwick High Street where it runs into Cape Hill is of very poor visual quality and nothing would be achieved by including it within the proposed conservation area.
- 3.1.6 Finally, the decision to propose the centre of Cape Hill as a conservation area provides an opportunity to recognize the contribution of the Indian, Afro-Caribbean and other immigrant communities to the district from the 1950s onwards. This has provided another rich layer of tradition and character to the area and it is in the shops and other buildings used by these communities that their contribution is most strongly apparent.
- 3.1.7 Despite the small size of the proposed conservation area, the fact that it contains parts of four separate streets means that there is still merit in describing the main components in turn rather than in one.

## 3.2 Cape Hill

- 3.2.1 The north side of Cape Hill officially starts on the eastern side of Hume Street on the site of the recently demolished Nos.1-15 Cape Hill and continues in an easterly direction down the hill until it reaches the former Mitchell & Butlers Cape Hill Brewery. On the south side, Cape Hill begins a little further to the west at the junction of Claremont Road and Smethwick High Street. There is a notable long-distance view down Cape Hill from its junction with Shireland Road (**Plate 1**).

- 3.2.2 The proposed conservation area begins with Nos.26 & 28 Cape Hill (the former Lloyds Bank), which after statutory listing at Grade II in June 2000 has been successfully converted into a Wetherspoon's pub, 'The Sampson Lloyd' (**Plates 2 and 3**). It is a striking building, occupying a prominent corner site on the junction with Waterloo Road, and was purpose built as a bank in 1907. It is constructed of red brick and white terracotta, the latter alone on the Cape Hill elevation, with a slate roof largely concealed behind parapets. The style is typically exuberant, being an asymmetrical mix of the Italianate and the Baroque. No surface on the Cape Hill side is left undecorated and although the Waterloo Road elevation is slightly quieter, it too has some fine detail. The building (and indeed the centre of Cape Hill as a whole) is dominated by its pedimented and domed corner turret, which serves as a prominent local landmark.
- 3.2.3 Directly opposite and to the north-east of the former bank is a row of late 19<sup>th</sup>-century two-storey red brick buildings, Nos.17-31 Cape Hill (**Plate 4**), which are characterised by the ornamental cusped bargeboards of their prominent gables, some grey brick diaper detailing, a continuous fishscale clay tile roof and ornamental brick chimneys.
- 3.2.4 All have been disfigured by poor quality replacement windows and shop-fronts (Nos.25 & 29 have also had their brickwork painted) and No.31 has had its gable replaced by a 1920s brick façade, but their original Tudor Gothic form is still clearly discernible and despite all the later alterations, they are still worthwhile buildings.
- 3.2.5 The 'Picturesque' qualities of Nos.17-31 are more readily apparent in their taller and immediate neighbours, Nos.33-37 Cape Hill, before the two-storey height of Nos.17-31 is resumed in Nos.110 & 111 Windmill Lane. Nos.33-37 stand right on the corner with Windmill Lane and are of three storeys (**Plate 5**). They share many of the characteristics of the two-storey row they stand proud of and although there is clear



evidence from changes in the brickwork that the original (probably oriel) windows have been replaced, the existing windows at least have a consistency of appearance. Interestingly, the bargeboards of Nos.33-37's gables are comparatively plain in comparison to those of the two-storey row.

- 3.2.6 Immediately opposite Nos.33-37 on the other side of Windmill Lane is The Seven Stars public house (recently renamed 'The Goose on Cape Hill') (**Plate 6**). This is not shown on the 1890 Ordnance Survey map of the area but does appear on the corresponding map of 1904. It is built of red brick with a slate roof and is a typical three-story example of the 'prime-site' corner location sought by many pubs at this period. By contrast to The Waterloo nearby (see below), it is fairly plain and its three-bay gabled elevation to Cape Hill and similar two-bay return to Windmill Lane are dominated by canted bay windows on both the ground and first floors, albeit that those on the ground floor have been altered and are now partly obscured by deep modern fascias above.
- 3.2.7 Both the map evidence and strong stylistic similarities show that the terrace of Nos.41-65 was built at the same period as The Seven Stars. The architectural similarity is particularly strong at the western end, where Nos.41-49 have exactly the same detailing, including the corbelled eaves cornice and the gables, as the pub. The first floor has canted bay windows, although unlike the pub, which retains all of its original sash windows intact, only Nos.41 & 45 (**Plate 7**) still have the original joinery. All of the shop-fronts are inappropriate modern replacements.
- 3.2.8 Nos.51-65 (**Plate 8**) are rather simpler, without gables, although they too have corbelled eaves and elaborate chimneys. Many of the windows have been replaced, although some original fenestration remains. Again, all of the shop-fronts are inappropriate modern replacements.

- 3.2.9 No.67 Cape Hill, originally the United Counties now Barclay's Bank (**Plate 9**), is not marked on the 1904 map, the site beside the newly laid out Salisbury Road still being vacant at this time, but must have been built shortly afterwards. It commands its corner site well, as even without its tower it is slightly higher than the terrace it adjoins. It is constructed of red brick with yellow terracotta detailing, which is extensively used to the door and window surrounds. The entrance is on the splayed corner, above which rises an octagonal corner turret with a cap shaped rather like a Chinese pagoda. This is a distinctive building, largely unaltered externally, which makes a significant contribution to the street scene.
- 3.2.10 The quality of the buildings deteriorates on the other side of Salisbury Road. Again the map evidence shows that the terrace that now forms Nos.69-79 Cape Hill (**Plate 10**) was built between 1890 and 1905, but even in its original form it is clear that it was not of the same architectural quality as Nos.41-65 Cape Hill. Furthermore, its appearance has been worsened by a series of unsympathetic alterations, including replacement of all but one of the original windows (and in most cases the openings as well) and a row of particularly inappropriate shop-fronts. The projecting clock to No.79 does, nevertheless, add some interest to the street scene (**Plates 10 and 13**).
- 3.2.11 Despite the overall poor quality, however, the terrace does at least retain its original three-storey gabled form intact and this is undoubtedly preferable to the lower flat-roofed building at Nos.81-87 (C.F. Carpets) (**Plate 11**), a structure with no redeeming qualities whatsoever and which, as a result of its lower height and massing, creates an unfortunate 'hole' in the street scene.
- 3.2.12 Indeed, were it not for the presence of the Dudley Arms on the corner with Roseberry Road (**Plate 12**), there would be no justification for including the stretch of Cape Hill between Salisbury Road and Roseberry Road within the proposed conservation area. Like the other Cape Hill pubs, the Dudley Arms, which was built in 1910 (date on rainwater head), makes good use of its corner position with 'show' elevations on two

streets. The upper floor is of machine made red brick with yellow terracotta detailing and a rusticated ground floor. The Cape Hill elevation has two gables to the front and one to each end (it is worth noting that the plain rendered west gable would not originally have been visible owing to the former continuation of the terrace described above), but the Roseberry Road elevation is simpler with a plain parapet followed by another two-storey section, which looks more domestic in character. The elaborately carved and spiked corner bracket bearing the pub's name above the splayed corner entrance is another distinctive local feature.

3.2.13 As a building of local note the Dudley Arms forms a logical point at which to draw the boundary of the proposed conservation area and there is certainly nothing either immediately to the east on the north side of Cape Hill or directly facing it that warrants inclusion within the designated area. For this reason, the proposed boundary runs along the pavement in front of the Dudley Arms back to No.79, where it crosses the road to take in No.90 as the first building on the south side of Cape Hill.

3.2.14 From No.90 westwards back to No.26 (on the corner with Shireland Road) the existing frontage elevation onto Cape Hill is first shown in its present form on the Ordnance Survey map of 1905. Although the corresponding map of 1890 shows a short terrace along part of this length, this stretch seems to have been demolished to make way for the development shown on the 1905 map and it is essentially this that remains today.

3.2.15 The section of the terrace formed by Nos.68-90 Cape Hill (**Plate 13**) is known as Smethwick Market (see the name plaques on the front wall) and in its original form consisted of three roughly equal-sized two-storey blocks stepped down the hill from west to east with a decorative eaves cornice and canted bay windows on the first floor. Although much of the original detail has been lost (including the loss of the cornice and the bay windows above 'Sada Superstore' (Nos.74-76) (**Plate 14**), the basic form remains and Nos.68-72 even retain their bay windows as built (**Plate 15**).

3.2.16 As is so often the case, the damage has been even more profound at ground-floor level and not one decent shop-front survives. It should be recognized, however, that the large and colourful display of fruit and vegetables outside ‘Pak Supermarket’ (Nos.80-84; **Plate 16**) adds considerably to the vibrancy and character of the area, even if the space between the stalls and the bus shelter in front is uncomfortably tight.

3.2.17 Nos.28-66 (**Plate 17**) share many of the same characteristics as Nos.68-90, albeit that they are of three storeys (some with dormers to the roof) and there are no drops in roof line. The continuous eaves cornice is elaborate and mostly well preserved but otherwise the degree of unsympathetic alteration is even greater than on Nos.68-90, including to the shop-fronts. The terrace is, however, potentially important in conservation terms owing to the basic retention of its original form and the contribution it brings to the area through the tremendous range and diversity of its shops.

3.2.18 The terrace ends in No.26 (the West Bromwich Building Society; **Plate 18**), which turns the corner with Shireland Road. Unlike the buildings it adjoins on Cape Hill it is a vaguely classical-looking building with apparently truncated pilasters to the corners. It is not, however, a distinguished structure (its feeble flat roof suggests that it may have been reduced in scale) and it is only on account of its significant corner position that it is included within the proposed conservation area.

3.2.19 The building is also important for the small but key group it forms with The Waterloo public house on the other side of Shireland Road and the former Lloyd’s Bank described above (**Plate 19**). The Waterloo, which occupies a corner site at the junction with Waterloo Road, and thus has frontages to both streets, is one of Cape Hill’s landmark buildings (**Plate 20**). Erected in 1907 for Mitchells & Butlers, it was designed by the brewery architects, Wood & Kendrick in a free Edwardian Baroque

style and is constructed of red brick above a pink granite plinth with buff and red terracotta detailing. It is a Grade II listed building.

3.2.20 The Waterloo is of three storeys above a basement and is characterised by its strong sense of articulation created by the pilastered bay divisions and horizontal banding. The columned and pedimented window surrounds and the cartouches to the gables are also strong features, while the galleon-shaped weathervane adds a delightfully quirky touch. The cast-iron railings to the retaining wall on Shireland Road are also of note. The pub is particularly important for its splendidly rich and largely unaltered interior.

3.2.21 Adjoining the Waterloo Road frontage is a vacant plot (**Plate 21**), which although occupied by a building on the 1955 and earlier Ordnance Survey maps is first shown as empty on the 1980 map. This creates an ugly gap in the street scene and is included within the proposed conservation area on account of its importance to the setting of the neighbouring listed buildings (it also stands directly opposite the former Lloyd's Bank) and the conservation area.

### 3.3 Windmill Lane

3.3.1 Windmill Lane runs north from Cape Hill immediately to the west of The Seven Stars. Nos.110-11 and the main part of the Windmill Lane elevation of The Seven Stars have already been described above, but it is worth noting here the single-storey section of the latter (**Plate 22**), which is made up of two distinct elements, the first of yellow terracotta with Ionic columns beneath a moulded entablature and cornice with a red brick continuation to the left punctuated by pointed windows and with grey brick banding.

- 3.3.2 This theme is continued in the outbuilding to the left of the passage-way (**Plate 23**) at the back of The Seven Stars, this time with a decorative cornice, interrupted by a utilitarian 1930s public convenience (currently disused; **Plate 23**), made architecturally more palatable by the elegant *Art Deco* engraved lettering of the words 'MEN' and 'WOMEN' above the respective entrances.
- 3.3.3 Next on the east side of the road is the group of warehouses formed by No.105 Windmill Lane and immediately before them the detached building at No.106. Structures are first shown here on the 1905 Ordnance Survey map and, although No.106 seems to be of a different phase to the warehouse both must have been built c.1900. The lower, northern section of the warehousing (both the parapeted section and the wide gabled part) is clearly much later and was probably built in the 1930s (it is first shown on the 1938 map).
- 3.3.4 Despite the ugly intrusion of its modern shop-front, No.106 (**Plate 24**) is a surprisingly assured building with three rubbed brick segmental-headed 4-paned sash windows on the first floor (the centre one with a scrolled keystone) beneath a parapet with moulded terracotta cornice. The original warehouse too is an impressive structure (**Plate 25**), of four storeys, gabled to the front with three sash windows on both the first and second floors, surmounted by a roundel to the apex. All of the windows (including the roundel) are set in slightly recessed brick surrounds with finely cut detail, which together with the decorated keystones, give added emphasis to the façade. Even the ground floor, despite a rather unsympathetic shop fascia retains three plain pilasters to the original opening.
- 3.3.5 By contrast to the high quality of the original warehouse, the 1930s addition (**Plate 26**) is a disappointment but even this with its typical combination of brick and stonework detail has something to offer (see in particular the decorative effect of the doorway surround in the parapeted section and the lionhead detail to the north-west corner of the gabled part). Directly opposite the warehouse is the former Rink

Cinema, now a Mecca Bingo Hall (**Plate 27**). This recently listed Grade II building was built in 1929-30 by William T Benslyn for Provincial Cinematograph Theatres Ltd. and closed as a cinema in 1964, since when it has operated as a bingo hall. It is constructed of brown brick on a steel frame with painted stone dressings and stock brick to the rear; sheet metal roof.

3.3.6 The dour southern flank elevation is currently unduly prominent owing to the recent removal of adjoining buildings (the site is being redeveloped) but the broad façade (120ft in width) remains impressive with its simple curving form complimented by the extravagant Baroque window surrounds above the entrance with their swan-necked pediments surmounted by peacocks with spreading tails.

3.3.7 There is a good view of the late 19<sup>th</sup>-century terrace on the other side of the road from just outside the cinema (**Plate 28**). Unusually, this terrace retains much of its original detailing intact, including its canted bay windows, coupled entrances, chimney stacks and decorative ridge cresting, all of which combined with its gently curving form make it appear particularly attractive in the street scene. Nevertheless, the character of this terrace has more in common with the surrounding residential area than the centre of Cape Hill and for this reason it seems more logical to terminate the boundary of the proposed conservation area with the monumental structures of the cinema and warehouse.

3.3.8 To the south of the cinema it is proposed to draw the conservation area boundary along the back of the pavement, thus excluding the site currently being redeveloped from the designated area (**Plate 29**). However, this can, if necessary or desirable, always be reviewed at a later date. Certainly, the redevelopment of this site will have considerable impact on the character and appearance of the proposed conservation area.

## **4.0 POSSIBLE AREAS FOR ENHANCEMENT**

### **4.1 Introduction and Overview**

4.1.1 There are many ways in which the character and appearance of the proposed conservation area could be enhanced. These range from minor works of repair or improvement to individual properties, through works of environmental improvement to schemes of redevelopment on certain ‘opportunity sites’. It should be emphasised that with the latter in particular, consideration of the issues involved is limited only to the effect that redevelopment would have on the character and appearance of the proposed conservation area and the setting of listed buildings. Other important planning issues, such as highway matters, effects on residential amenity, parking provision and other policy requirements are not considered here.

4.1.2 For ease of reference, suggestions for enhancement are considered area by area, following the sequence adopted in Section 3.0. Before looking at these, however, and to avoid unnecessary repetition a few general observations can be offered. First, parts of the area are generally rather scruffy and run down and, while any temptation towards ‘gentrification’ should be avoided as alien to the history and character of the area, much could be achieved simply by keeping parts of the area tidier and better maintained.

4.1.3 Secondly, the effects of traffic, as in most urban environments, are pervasive and in terms of the impact on the historic built environment are almost all harmful. The traditional Victorian street pattern of this part of Smethwick, most of which has survived substantially intact, was not designed for the car and therefore the appearance of many of the streets in the area is blighted by traffic (often moving faster than the speed restrictions allow) or by parked vehicles.



- 4.1.4 This is not an easy problem to address but in reality it probably has more impact on the character and appearance of the area than any other single factor. With the right approach, however, many of the features now sadly taken almost for granted in an urban context such as this could be substantially improved or, in some cases removed completely. These include ugly lighting columns, steel barriers at road edges (particularly on road junctions), poorly or unduly prominently sited traffic signs, yellow lines and bollards. The design quality of bus shelters and other items of street furniture could also, with a little imagination, be considerably improved.
- 4.1.5 Another very obvious and immediate enhancement of the area's built environment would be the laying underground of the many prominent telephone and electricity wires that disrupt the skyline. As would be expected, wires and cables of this sort can be found throughout the area and it is therefore only where they are especially intrusive, and the effects of laying them underground would be most beneficial, that this is referred to again.
- 4.1.6 The use of traditional materials and detailing can have considerable effect in enhancing a conservation area's character. The owners of historic and prominent properties are therefore encouraged to remove unsympathetic modern materials such as artificial roofing materials, aluminium and uPVC windows (of which there are all too many in the area) and plastic rainwater goods and to reinstate traditional materials such as natural Welsh slates, clay tiles (where the roof pitch is appropriate), painted softwood windows and cast iron guttering.

## 4.2 Cape Hill

- 4.2.1 Apart from the general improvements suggested above, the most obvious improvements that could be made within the proposed conservation area would be the demolition and appropriate redevelopment of the building currently occupied by

C.F. Carpets at one end of the area (**Plate 11**) and the sympathetic infill of the empty ‘eyesore’ plot adjoining The Waterloo at the other (**Plate 21**).

- 4.2.2 There are also several other locations where redevelopment immediately outside the proposed conservation area could do much to improve its setting. These include the existing post office on the corner with Roseberry Road (**Plate 30**) and the ugly flat-roofed premises of N.C.F. Furniture diagonally opposite on the other side of Cape Hill (**Plate 31**).
- 4.2.3 Most of Cape Hill’s shops are located within the proposed conservation area and the success of these shops is vital to the regeneration of the area as a whole. In order that this important objective can be achieved, the outward appearance of these shops and the general appearance of the street scene is absolutely critical. Steel roller shutters and poorly designed shop-fronts do not inspire confidence in the quality of the area and while there will understandably be concerns about security, much could be achieved through the reinstatement of traditional shop-front design in these buildings.
- 4.2.4 In some cases, elements of traditional fascias probably survive behind later applied shop-fronts and these should certainly not be disregarded in any scheme of shop-front replacement, even if they serve only as a template for reinstatement. Sadly, though, no good-quality shop-fronts can currently be seen on either side of Cape Hill, which only serves to emphasise the need for a systematic and targeted programme of shop-front renewal to be carried out as soon as possible. In this connection, some of the traditional, albeit very dilapidated, late Victorian and Edwardian shop-fronts along Waterloo Road could serve as a useful model to be followed in such a programme.
- 4.2.5 Improvements to the pavement and road surfaces and making the area more pedestrian friendly, perhaps by a sympathetic and appropriate traffic calming scheme that enabled the removal of the steel barriers from the road edge and reduced or

eliminated on-street parking, could also play a key role in the general enhancement and upgrading of the area.

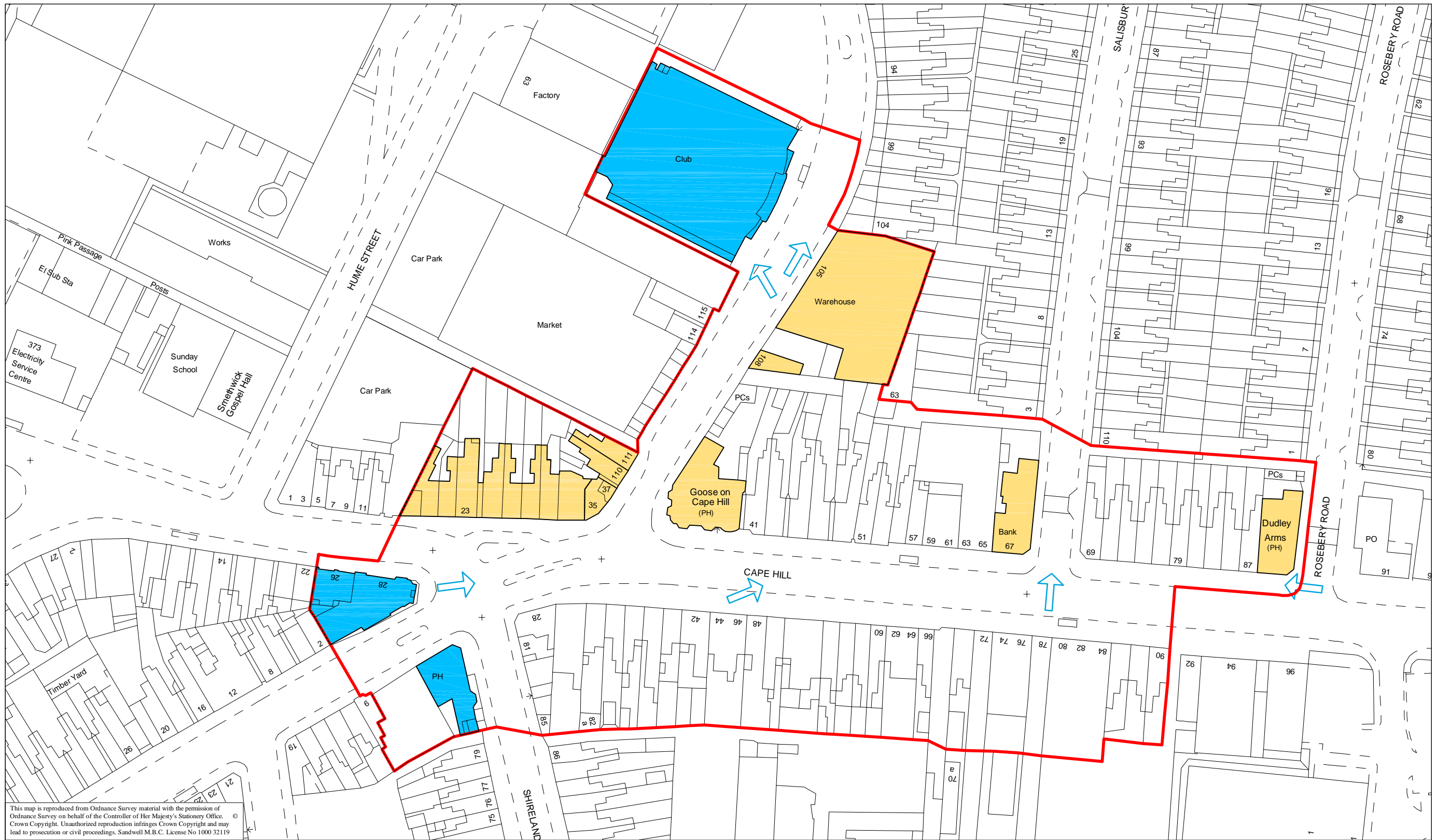
### 4.3 Windmill Lane

4.3.1 Only a short stretch of Windmill Lane is included within the proposed conservation area and here the most obvious area for enhancement is the site immediately outside the area proposed for designation (**Plate 29**), which nevertheless will have considerable impact on the character and appearance of the area within. This is a large site that continues round to Cape Hill/High Street, where the impact of its redevelopment on the proposed conservation area will be equally felt.

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- Proposed conservation area boundary
- Buildings of local note
- Listed buildings
- Significant views in / out / around

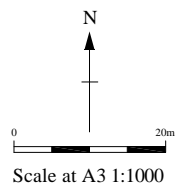




Plate 1: Long-distance view eastwards down Cape Hill from its junction with Shireland Road



Plate 2: Nos.26 & 28 Cape Hill (the former Lloyds Bank), now converted into a Wetherspoon's pub, 'The Sampson Lloyd'





Plate 3: Nos.26 & 28 Cape Hill (the former Lloyds Bank)



Plate 4: Nos. 17-31 Cape Hill (late 19<sup>th</sup>-century)





Plate 5: 35-37 Cape Hill



Plate 6: The former Seven Stars public house (recently renamed 'The Goose on Cape Hill')



Plate 7: Nos. 41-45 Cape Hill



Plate 8: Nos. 51-65 Cape Hill





Plate 9: No.67 Cape Hill, originally the United Counties, now Barclay's Bank



Plate 10: Nos.69-79 Cape Hill



Plate 11: Nos. 81-87 Cape Hill and The Dudley Arms



Plate 12: The Dudley Arms on the corner of High Street and Roseberry Road





Plate 13: Nos. 68-90 Cape Hill on the left, and showing the projecting clock of No. 79 Cape Hill on the right



Plate 14: Nos. 68-76 Cape Hill, showing loss of the cornice and the bay windows above 'Sada Superstore' (Nos.74-76)



Plate 15: Nos.68-72 High Street, showing original first-floor bay windows



Plate 16: Colourful display outside Pak Supermarket on Cape Hill (Nos. 80-84)





Plate 17: Nos. 28-66 Cape Hill



Plate 18: The West Bromwich Building Society building (No. 26 Cape Hill, corner with Shireland Road)



Plate 19: No. 26 Cape Hill, The Waterloo and the former Lloyds Bank building



Plate 20: The Waterloo public house





Plate 21: Vacant plot adjacent to The Waterloo public house on Cape Hill



Plate 22: Single-storey Windmill Lane elevation of the former Seven Stars public house



Plate 23: Outbuilding to the left of the passageway adjacent to the former Seven Stars public house, and the 1930s public toilets, Windmill Lane



Plate 24: No. 106 Windmill Lane





Plate 25: No. 105 Windmill Lane



Plate 26: 1930s addition to No. 105 Windmill Lane



Plate 27: The Grade II listed former Rank Cinema, now a Mecca Bingo Hall, Windmill Lane



Plate 28: Late 19<sup>th</sup>-century terrace on Windmill Lane





Plate 29: South elevation of the Mecca Bingo Hall, with adjacent redevelopment site



Plate 30: Post Office on corner of Roseberry Road



Plate 31: The premises of N.C.F. Furniture, Cape Hill