



**SOUTHAMPTON
CITY COUNCIL**

ST. JAMES ROAD

**CONSERVATION AREA
CHARACTER
APPRAISAL**

Introduction

St James Road Conservation Area is centred on the setting of St James' Church, a Grade II listed building. It includes mostly residential properties within Bellemoor Road, Church Street, St James Road, Salem Street, Wordsworth Road, Didcot Road, Newbury Road and Stratton Road. Shirley Recreation Ground completes the picture as another key element within the conservation area.

Boundary Location

The boundary can be seen on the map. The historically important and special architectural character of the area, together with the relationship to the church in a townscape context, justifies the boundary indicated on the plan. The area is surrounded by more recent development which thus provides a natural boundary containing the original core of development.

Historical Developments

In the Domesday Book of 1086, Shirley is mentioned under the Mansbridge Hundred "Ralph de Mortimer holds Shirley and Choping held it of King Edward". The area boasted amongst its assets a church and mill. However, it was not

until the 18th century that we find any significant change in old Shirley. In 1778 it was dominated by three roads; Cock Roach Lane (Hill Lane), the road to Winton (Winchester Road) and the road from Romsey to Southampton (Shirley Road). A completely different picture emerges from the map of Hill and Shirley in 1830. An act to enclose Shirley Common (Witheds Wood) was passed on 22 May 1829. This shows 10 public carriageways, two bridleways and 3 footways. This was the beginning of the expansion of Southampton.

On 8 August 1836 Hampshire Advertiser wrote:- "We are glad to observe the progress of the works, private and public, on Shirley Common; villas are fast rising there, creating the appearance of a populous and genteel occupation of what is well known to be one of the most beautiful and healthy spots in our picturesque neighbourhood...". There are many references in local writings of the time to the area "neat villas" and "houses, and well-designed church ... for the accommodation of these inhabitants". In 1868, the town of Southampton as a whole contained 75,000 inhabitants, including Shirley and Freemantle which by then had become effectively suburbs, and also Woolston across the Itchen.

The once secluded rural village of Shirley separated from Southampton by the expanse of the Common, had now become the fashionable area for the "villas" of retired army or naval



Views across Shirley Recreation Ground

officers: St James' church 150th anniversary was in 1986 and the church has continuously served its parishioners as the fields and parks of large prominent houses yielded to the development of rows of brick houses.

In February 1833 preliminaries for the Southampton end of Didcot/Newbury railway line were activated - an approach through Chilworth and Shirley, the latter to be the site of a new station. By May the route had been bought and staked out between Shirley and Blechynden. Due to a variety of factors (mostly financial) the railway line was abandoned. Today only the so-named roads of Didcot Road and Newbury Road within the conservation area where the suburban station had been contemplated, remain to commemorate the town's last effort to secure a second railway. In 1870, Stratton Road was known as Station Road perhaps another reference to this.

Previously pastureland and then a Nursery (pre 1870), by 1897 the now Recreation Ground was owned by Mr George Harris, farmer and brickmaker, who lived at Whiteheadwood Farm, Wilton Road. The Recreation Ground was a gravel pit and used for making bricks until it was sold to the Council in 1914 to provide a recreation ground (along with one at Bitterne).

In 1895, Shirley by Act of Parliament, was annexed from the Parish of Millbrook into the Town of Southampton and continued to grow.

Townscape Analysis

St James Road Conservation Area is predominantly a residential area. The unique character of the conservation area is made up of three key elements, St James' Church, the Recreation Ground and residential development. There are a number of buildings pre-dating 1870, the majority grouped closely in Church Street and Bellemoor Road. After this time there are two main periods of Victorian development (1870-1897) and (1898-1914). Together these present a genteel residential suburb in Southampton.

St James' Church

Shirley's original church is thought to have been destroyed in the middle of the 15th century and was believed to have stood near the junction of Redbridge Hill and Winchester Road. Until 1836, when the existing Church of St James, Shirley was built, inhabitants were forced to make a journey by coach, horseback or on foot to Millbrook Parish for worship.

The present site of St James was given by Nathaniel Jefferies who lived at Hollybrook House in Winchester Road, and was a descendant of Judge Jefferies. By 1836 the parish church of Millbrook was too small to accommodate the ever increasing population (2375).

St James' Church was designed by the architect, W Hinves, in the style known as "Commissioners" Gothic and consecrated by the Bishop of Winchester in 1836. It provides the focal point of the area and is a significant townscape feature being situated at the junction of three roads (Bellemoor Road, St James Road and Church Street).

The church is the only listed building in the conservation area (Grade II) and is built in yellow brick. Several improvements/alterations have been made to the church over the years including a clock for the tower which was provided by public subscription around 1875, and chancel in 1881. The graveyard was enlarged between 1868 and 1897, although owing to problems of its maintenance it was acquired by the Council in 1966 and laid out as a public Garden of Rest. The boundary brick wall and piers remain, minus their metal rails, and the graveyard now provides a pleasant mature park-like feature in the area.

The Recreation Ground

The Recreation Ground occupies a central location within the Conservation Area. This informal park comprises a sunken mainly grassed area with mature trees and railings around the perimeter, with tennis courts, a fenced-in play area and toilet block. Whilst the park is itself a major feature, the views from within the park towards the Church are very important - outlined images of the church and park enclosed by mostly pre-1900 development. The trees (Beech, Oak, Holly, Conifers and ornamental) provide a mature setting to the church and surrounding buildings.

Residential Development

The predominant land use in the area is residential comprising two-storey detached or terraced properties of modest scale. As previously mentioned these span three main periods of development. All of these buildings are unlisted. However, they contribute significantly to the character of the conservation area and their protection is paramount. Historically and architecturally the most important group of unlisted buildings within the conservation area are pre-1870 and can be identified on the tithe maps of 1843.

The three properties to the north-east of the church, nos 1, 3 and 5, Bellemoor Road are of particular interest being of the same period as the church itself and illustrated on an early engraving by T Skelton. They display architectural details which are Mock Tudor characterised by the now demolished Hollybrook House, also designed by Hinves who may well have been the architect for these properties. All three buildings are generally intact and are good examples of the style, recognised as being of local interest.

Other significant detached villas include 121 and 123 Church Street, both with shallow pitched slate roofs and sliding sash windows, located in generous plots. Also of note in Church Street is The Barlow Home for the elderly (No 105). Built of yellow brick with Mock Tudor stone detailing the original roof has since been replaced by concrete tiles. This building is also recognised as being of local interest.

Also included in this early group and worthy of merit are:-

No. 85 Anglesea Road (Wordsworth Villa) detached yellow brick villa with modern extension. Slate roof and slate hung rear elevations with original sash and French windows.

1 and 1a Wordsworth Road - semi-detached yellow brick properties, with some original features (sashes and decorative barge boards).

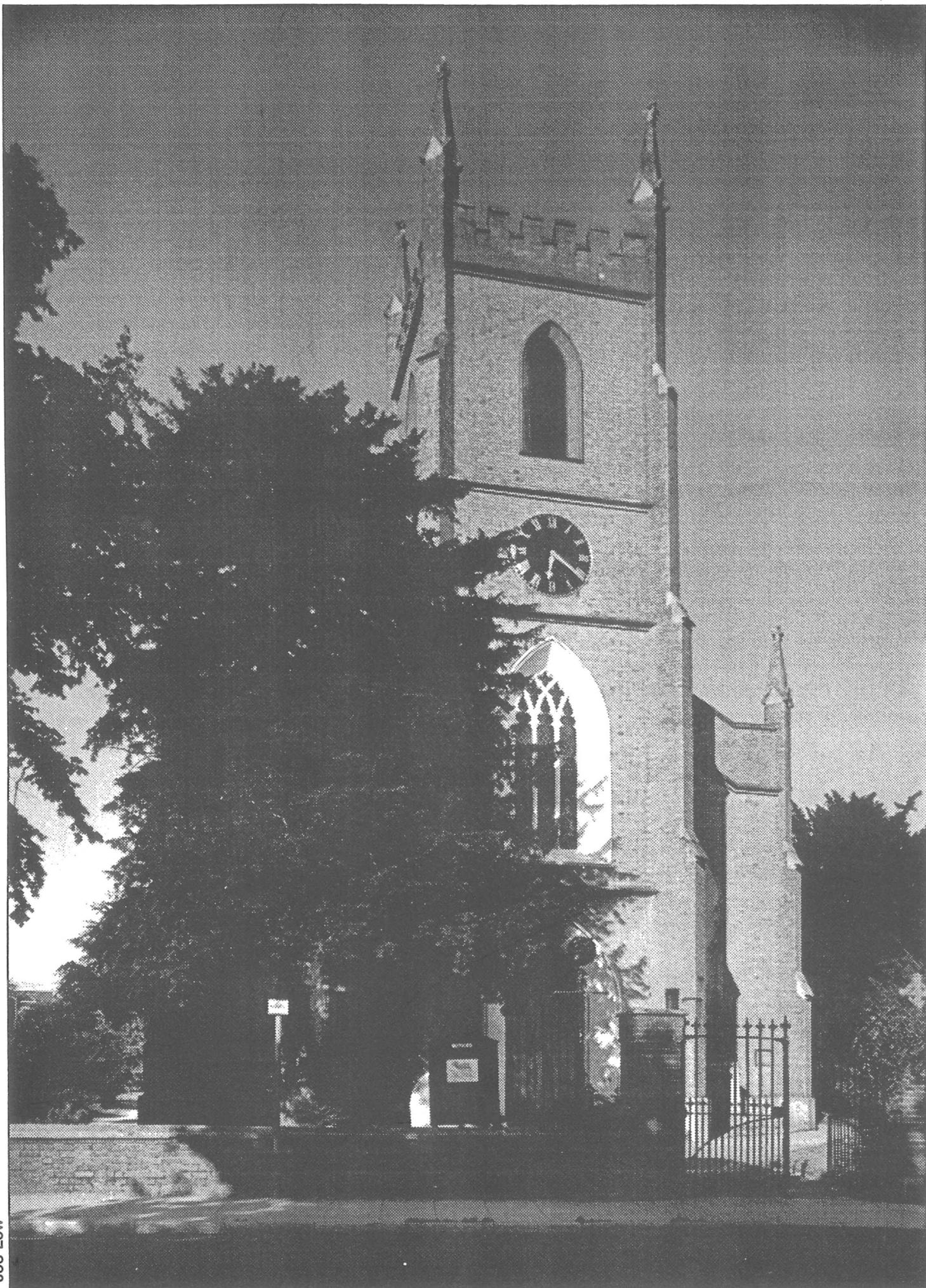
16 and 17 Wordsworth Road - semi-detached yellow brick villa with red brick details and original slate roof and windows.

The remaining residential development occurred in two phases between 1870 and 1914. Two detached properties of note are Alresford House, Wordsworth Road and 146 St James Road. The latter is opposite the listed church, and being a significant corner property this building has a major impact on this part of the conservation area.

Views and Vistas

Part of the character of any conservation area is created by the relationship of all the elements that make up that environment: buildings, trees, open space, roads and so on. Within St James Road Conservation Area the focal point is the church itself, approached from three directions. Views towards the church are an important part of the interpretation of the townscape and every effort should be made to protect them. The remaining buildings form clusters of ordered development around the perimeter of the Recreation Ground, thus enclosing and containing the open space.

The relationship between this green space and surrounding development is crucial, similarly, the church in its own park-like setting. This has created an almost unique location within the much wider residential suburb of Shirley.



Joe Low

St. James' Church: Listed Grade II

Prevalent and Traditional Building Materials

St James Road is a small and neat conservation area, characterised predominantly by red brick terraced housing and individual detached properties, either of yellow brick or render.

Whilst slate roofs were originally prevalent, these have made way for concrete tile replacements (less than 20% now have slate roofs). Further such deterioration should be discouraged by encouraging and promoting the repair of original elements in preference to replacement.

Open Space and Trees

The importance of the Recreation Ground and its mature landscape has already been stressed. Along with the public Garden of Rest adjacent to the Church, the conservation area provides a pleasant, green backdrop for the surrounding residential development. In addition, due to the age of properties, the gardens of many houses have achieved maturity, particularly those pre-dating 1870, and this contributes to the leafy, suburban character of this part of Shirley.

Key Issues

The 'special' qualities of the area derive from its residential character with its associated church and open space. Therefore, it is exactly this that we should strive to protect and retain.

A large number of the Victorian terraced houses have undergone unsympathetic modernisation, particularly the replacement of slate roofs with concrete tiles and a wide variety of replacement windows. Whilst this is detrimental for the individual buildings involved there is still sufficient of the original character remaining to sustain their group value and contribution to the appearance of the area, particularly those bounding the recreation ground. However, any further deterioration will most certainly detract from the simple, but solid lines of this mainly Victorian residential suburb.

There should therefore be a presumption against the demolition or damaging alteration of buildings, particularly the unlisted majority within this conservation area. Further deterioration of the domestic dwelling can only detract from the special character of this area for which it was originally designated.

In addition many problems in conservation areas can arise from or be associated with the measures required for traffic safety, control, and calming or the decision to exclude traffic partly or wholly from historic streets (pedestrianisation). St James Road Conservation Area comprises basically residential roads with St James Road itself being a major through route from Winchester Road. Most traffic is generated at peak times (morning and evening) and during the afternoon when local schools finish for the day.

There are few parking restrictions in the area and these are limited to yellow lines in Wordsworth and Bellemoor Road to improve traffic flow on relatively narrow routes. The Unigate Milk Depot lies just outside the conservation area on Stratton Road and the only vehicular access is through the conservation area causing obvious problems due to its location and the width of the residential streets. If the Depot is to be re-located thought will be given to looking at a more appropriate land use for the site eg. housing.

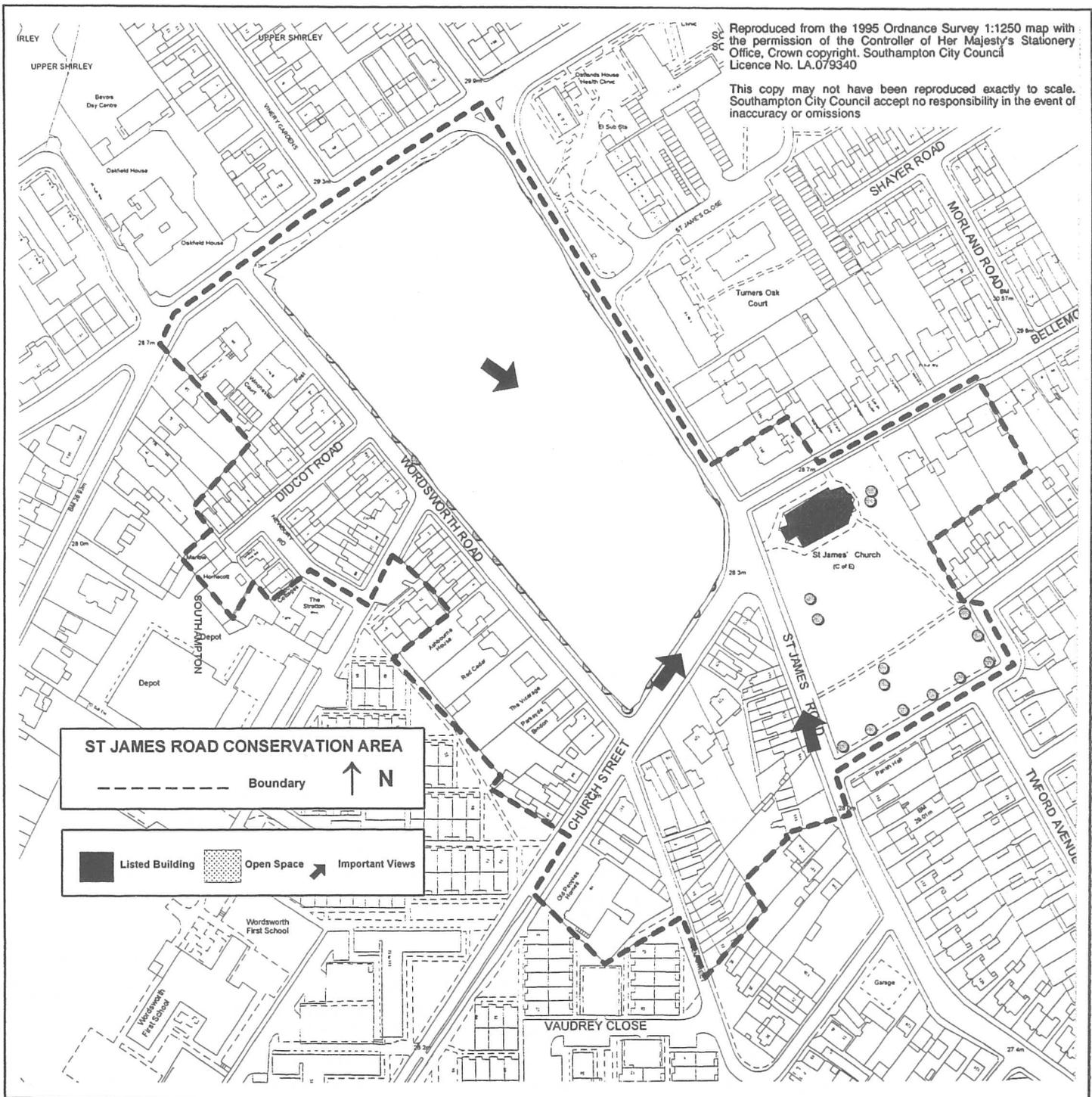
Conclusions

Whilst this character appraisal has sought to define what is essentially 'special' in the St James Road Conservation Area, this alone is not enough. This is only the basis for further work i.e. the future management of the area. Local plan policies, development control guidelines and the formulation of proposals for the preservation and enhancement of the character of appearance of the area are the next step. Public participation can stimulate local debate and enable a critical appraisal of the current state and desired condition of the area.

Please let us know your views on the area or if you require any further guidance contact:

Kate Baxter-Hunter or Anne-Marie Lomax
(Conservation Planners) on (01703) 832555
For people with hearing impairment on
Minicom (01703) 832789
or write to:

Planning and Development Services Division
Southampton City Council
Civic Centre
Southampton
SO14 7LS



**This leaflet is also available in large print and on tape.
Please contact Kate Baxter-Hunter or Anne-Marie Lomax
on (01703) 832555**

Published by Southampton City Council April 1996.
Produced by Urban Regeneration Services, Directorate of Community Services.
Designed and typeset by Graphic Services. Printed by Print Services.
This paper has been produced by an environmentally responsible process from
sustainably harvested softwood trees without the use of chlorine bleaches.