

## Sheet Stores Industrial Estate

### Character Appraisal

#### 1 Introduction

Section 69 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 defines a conservation area as an area of “special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance”.

Under Section 69(1) of the 1990 Act, the Local Planning Authority has a duty to determine periodically which parts of their area meet the statutory definition of a conservation area, and to designate those areas accordingly. The purpose of this rapid appraisal is to determine whether the Sheet Stores industrial estate meets the statutory definition of a conservation area.

#### 2 Definition of Special Interest

The Sheet Stores industrial estate appears to satisfy two of the three criteria in the adopted *Criteria for Local Heritage Designation* – that is, ‘age and rarity’ and ‘historic interest’. On this basis, the site appears to meet the statutory definition of a conservation area and should be considered for designation. The Midland



Counties’ railway bridge (pictured) was designed by the nationally important civil engineer Charles Blacker Vignoles, but otherwise the site does not merit designation on the basis of its architectural interest.

##### Age and Rarity

The adopted *Criteria for Local Heritage Designations* asks whether an area “predates an era of mass production and mass transportation”. Subsidiary questions include whether the area predates “the arrival of an early transportation route” or whether it is “a particularly early example of its type”. “In the case of an area”, it asks whether there is “a concentration of buildings that possess qualities of age and rarity”.

The Midland Counties Railway (1839) was “an early transportation route” and hence “a particularly early example of its type. It was part of the “pioneering first phase” of railway development between 1825 and 1841<sup>1</sup>. The elements of the site relating to its initial use as a transhipment depot may also be considered as part of this pioneering phase. These elements have qualities of age and rarity, both singly and as a group, that would justify designation.

### Historic Interest

The adopted criteria document asks whether an area “illustrates an important aspect of local economic history”. Subsidiary questions include whether it has “a close historic association with a locally important person, company or organisation” and whether there is an account of the area “in a recognised archaeological journal” or “gazetteer of industrial archaeology”.

There is an account of the Sheet Stores industrial estate in the Derbyshire Archaeological Journal<sup>2</sup> and in Frank Nixon’s *Industrial Archaeology of Derbyshire* (1965). The former refers to “the impressive range of purpose built buildings” constructed “during the remainder of the nineteenth century”. The latter also refers to these buildings, their “fancy cast iron windows” and the “vented lantern roof” on the sheet dressing shop of 1899 (pictured).



The Midland Counties Railway may be considered a locally important company, considering (for example) their patronage of five listed railway bridges in the Borough. On the basis of the above, the site illustrates an important aspect of local economic history and thus exhibits qualities of historic interest that would justify designation.

## **3 Location and Setting**

The Sheet Stores industrial estate is off Fields Farm Road, about 1 mile south of the centre of Long Eaton. The site is within the Long Eaton urban area, which is expected to provide 1,450 new homes by 2028. In turn, the urban area forms part of the Nottingham Principal Urban Area, which is expected to provide a focus for new development regionally.

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<sup>1</sup> English Heritage (2011) Listing selection guide: Transport buildings.

<sup>2</sup> Mitchell I (2008) “The Midland Counties Railway basin and coke store at Long Eaton”. Derbyshire Archaeological Journal, volume 128.

Sheet Stores is situated within a mile of the River Trent. It is situated on generally flat terrain at about 30m AOD. The geology here is superficial, being composed of alluvium.

#### 4 Historic Development

Long Eaton's open fields were enclosed by Act of Parliament in 1765. The Erewash Canal was constructed between 1777 and 1779. John Varley was the engineer appointed to oversee the construction works. The canal connected coal mines around the Erewash Valley to the Loughborough Navigation and thence by road to Leicester and elsewhere.

The Midland Counties Railway opened in 1839, linking Nottingham and Derby to Leicester and thence to Rugby. The railway crossed the Erewash Canal about one mile south of Long Eaton; a bridge was built to the designs of the railway company's chief engineer, Charles Blacker Vignoles.

Immediately to the north of the bridge, a transhipment depot was constructed to transfer coke between the Erewash Canal and the railway. A canal basin, coke store and manager's house were built to the west side of a 2.5ha (6 acre) site. The coke store (pictured) was designed by the railway company's assistant engineer, Thomas Woodhouse.



The Erewash Valley Line opened in 1847, linking (initially) the Mansfield and Pinxton Railway with the Midland Counties Railway. Hence within seven years of its construction, the transhipment depot was made obsolete. In 1854 the depot was converted for use as a sheet (i.e. tarpaulin) dressing works. During the conversion works the coke store was damaged by fire.

To the east side of the site, a second phase of construction was carried out c.1865-72. The principal element of this phase was the sheet shop (1865), built alongside the railway line; other surviving elements include the canteen (1865) and boiler house (1866). The third and final phase of construction comprised the large sheet dressing shop (1899).

The site closed in 1963 and in 1966 British Railways sold the site to a development company. The site has been maintained since that date as an industrial estate. To the east of the site, outline permission was granted in 1983 for a substantial residential development (our ref ERE/0980/0014).

In 1992 the sack store (1869) was destroyed by fire and replaced by a modern portal-frame unit.

## 5 Character Analysis

### Uses of Buildings

The transhipment depot of 1840 was constructed for the transfer of coke between the Erewash Canal and the railway. The depot was made obsolete in 1847 and used from 1854 as a sheet dressing works. Further buildings were constructed 1865-1899 for the same industrial use. The site remains in industrial use, having become a private industrial estate in 1966.

### Character of Development – Landscape, Layout and Density

The site has been laid out in a linear manner that reflects the rectangular boundary of the site. The site has been developed to an irregular density, with a cluster of buildings toward the east of the site and a large area of hard surfacing to the west. Soft landscaping makes little contribution to the character of the site.

### Character of Development – Scale, Height and Massing

A distinction may be made between the small – i.e. domestic – scale buildings on the site (including the manager's house, boiler house and canteen) and the large scale industrial buildings (including the coke store, the sheet shop and the very large sheet dressing shop). Development varies between one and three storeys, the coke store being three storeys tall addressing the canal basin and two storeys tall addressing the railway line.

Buildings on the site are generally linear in their massing. The coke store and sheet dressing shop have gabled roofs, while other buildings on the site have hipped roofs.

### Building Materials

Buildings at Sheet Stores are faced in red brick beneath corrugated sheet roofs. Some of the buildings have been painted in whole or in part, notably the manager's house (pictured) and canteen. The manager's house has a fibre cement slate roof.



The coke store is built of red brick on a plinth of coursed and squared stone. The abutments of the accommodation bridge are also built of coursed and squared stone, while the railway bridge is built of rockfaced ashlar stone.



### Local Details

Nixon (1965) notes several distinctive architectural features on those buildings constructed 1865-1899. These features include “fancy cast iron windows” (evident on the sheet shop, canteen and boiler house) and the use of a “vented lantern roof” on the sheet dressing shop of 1899.

### Designated Buildings

The Midland Counties’ railway bridge (known as Long Eaton Canal Bridge) was listed at grade II in February 2014. The manager’s house and the coke store were included on the Borough Council’s *List of Buildings of Local Interest* in October 2012.

## **6 Key Views and Landmarks**

Land to the south of the industrial estate is in agricultural use and forms part of the Nottingham and Derby Green Belt. There is an open view from the canal towpath toward the industrial estate, in which the sheet shop is prominent. Sheet Stores Farm, a post-enclosure farmstead, appears in the foreground of this view (pictured).



## **7 Opportunities for Enhancement**

The most striking opportunity to enhance the architectural interest of the site would be the reinstatement of natural slate roofs across the buildings. The designation of the site as a conservation area may provide access to funds (such as the Heritage Lottery Fund “Heritage Enterprise” grant) that may allow this opportunity to be realised.

## **8 Problems and Pressures**

The Employment Land Study (2013) assessed the Sheet Stores industrial estate as being “good quality” due to its “good size and strategic position” close to the town centre, the railway station and the strategic highway network.

Network Rail intends to electrify the Midland Mainline by 2020. This will require the installation of overhead wires along the route. This work is likely to affect the setting of the Sheet Stores industrial estate and the open view toward the industrial estate from the south.