

**Dickinson Square**  
**Draft Conservation Area Appraisal**  
**2013**



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*Cover photographs: Various views of Dickinson Square. Edward James*

# PART 1: CONSERVATION AREA CHARACTER APPRAISAL

## INTRODUCTION

### ***Background***

- 1.1 This appraisal was conducted to define the special interest of Dickinson Square Conservation Area in order to preserve and enhance its character, and to provide a basis for making sustainable decisions about its future management. It also included a review of the current boundary of the conservation area in view of recent development within the area.
- 1.2 It was carried out for Three Rivers District Council during 2011/12 by BEAMS Ltd, part of the Hertfordshire Building Preservation Trust. No part of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted in any form without the prior permission of Three Rivers District Council.
- 1.3 Dickinson Square Conservation Area was first designated on the 15<sup>th</sup> June 1995 (London Gazette 1995, 8736). The Area includes land encompassing Dickinson Square, part of Dickinson Avenue, and Cherry Croft. The Area is divided into three distinct character areas.
- 1.4 In 1996, after public consultation with residents of Dickinson Square, an Article 4 Direction was put in place under the powers granted to the Authority by the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, which aimed to limit harmful development and conserve the historic character and appearance of the Area.
- 1.5 Part 1 of this appraisal highlights the special qualities and features that underpin the conservation area and justify its designation. Guidelines provided in Part 2 (“Management Proposals”) are designed to prevent harm and encourage enhancement. This type of assessment conforms to English Heritage guidance and to Government advice (PPS 5). It also supports and amplifies those policies aimed at protecting the overall character of conservation areas and forming part of Three Rivers District Council's Local Development Plan Framework.



**Map 1 - Dickinson Square Conservation Area, showing the extent of the current boundary (Courtesy Three Rivers District Council).**

### ***Definition of Special Interest***

- 1.6 Dickinson Square is based on the defined late Victorian development of Dickinson Square sandwiched between the two busy roads through Croxley Green of New Road and the A412 Watford Road. Although there is a route through the Square from one to the other this is not busy and creates a sense of peace and seclusion by comparison. The entrance roads to the Square are unassuming and do not offer wide views into the Square. This helps to create a defined sense of place, separate to its wider setting within Croxley Green.
- 1.7 Dickinson Square's coherent, planned, construction as an example of a paternalistic Victorian planned development for local mill workers is still very much evident in the plan form and architectural style of the Conservation Area, along with the maintained garden area at its centre.
- 1.8 The houses that make up the square are principally late Victorian in origin, and are an attractive mix of small terraced cottages and larger semi-terraced houses encircling the green open space of the public square. This coherence of design adds to its interest as a distinct area of settlement within Croxley Green.
- 1.9 The Square's association with John Dickinson, the local paper maker, is significant. Dickinson was a key employer in the region and the industry is fondly remembered in the local area.
- 1.10 These factors combine to make Dickinson Square unique example of late Victorian, high quality, patriarchal industrial housing, more commonly associated with northern mill towns such as Saltaire.

### ***Street pattern***

- 1.11 The street pattern of Dickinson Square is based around the central public space, with the two original access roads entering from the North and South. A later road was opened up to the West which exits on to Yorke Road.

## **PLANNING AND POLICY FRAMEWORK**

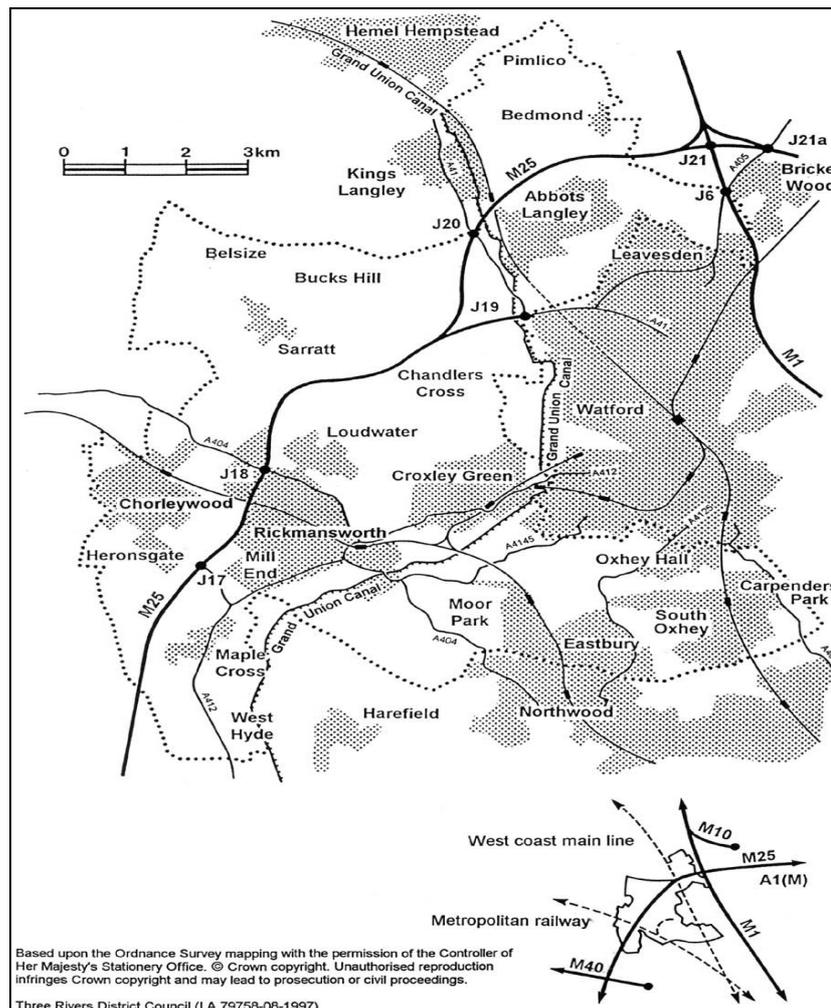
- 2.1 A Conservation Area is defined under Chapter 9 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas), as *an area of special architectural or historic interest the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance*. Each local planning authority is responsible for the designation of such conservation areas under the Act.
- 2.2 Section 71 of the same Act requires local planning authorities to ‘...formulate and publish proposals for the preservation and enhancement...’ of these conservation areas.
- 2.3 Section 72 of the Act also specifies that, in making a decision on an application for development in a conservation area, special attention should be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of that area.
- 2.4 The “National Planning Policy Framework” (NPPF) makes reference to Conservation Areas.
- Paragraph 127: “*When considering the designation of conservation areas, local planning authorities should ensure that an area justifies such status because of its special architectural or historic interest and that the concept of conservation is not devalued through the designation of areas that lack special interest*”.
  - Paragraph 137: “*Local planning authorities should look for opportunities for new development within Conservation Areas and World Heritage Sites and within the setting of heritage assets to enhance or better reveal their significance. Proposals that preserve those elements of the setting that make a positive contribution to or better reveal the significance of the asset should be treated favourably*”.
  - Paragraph 138: “*Not all elements of a Conservation Area will necessarily contribute to its significance. Loss of a building (or other element) which makes a positive contribution to the significance of the Conservation Area or World Heritage Site should be treated either as substantial harm under paragraph 133 or less than substantial harm under paragraph 134, as appropriate, taking into account the relative significance of the element affected and its contribution to the significance of the Conservation Area as a whole*”.
- 2.5 *Three Rivers District Council’s Core Strategy was adopted in 2011 as part of the Local Development Framework (LDF) for the District and it provides a framework for future development in the District until 2026. It contains policies relating to a number of important issues including the Green Belt, Housing, Employment and Transport. Of particular note is Strategic Object ‘S10’ which states that a key objective is “**To conserve and enhance the historic environment by resisting the loss of, or damage to, heritage assets including important buildings and to ensure that new development respects the unique character and identity of the towns and villages in the District**”*(Three Rivers District Council 2011, 12)(Website 1).
- 2.6 In accordance with Section 69 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, Three Rivers District Council shall, from time to time, conduct a detailed analysis/appraisal of its Conservation Areas.

This appraisal utilises the guidance set by English Heritage, Guidance on Conservation Area Appraisals, published in February 2006, which offers advice to those undertaking conservation area appraisals.

## LOCATION AND SETTING

### Location

- 3.1 Dickinson Square is located in central Croxley Green between New Road and the A412 Watford Road. It falls within the Three Rivers District Authority Area.



Map 2 - Map of Three Rivers District (courtesy of Three Rivers District Council)

### Boundaries

- 3.2 The boundary of Dickinson Square Conservation Area has not changed since designation in 1995, and consists of the principle layout of Dickinson Square and the curtilages of all the buildings including those in Cherry Croft, which was originally the local allotments, and the postwar building housing Croxley Computers and Reycol on the north entrance.

### Topography

- 3.3 Dickinson Square Conservation Area is part of Croxley Green. Croxley Green is approximately 100 metres above ordnance datum, lying inside the ring of the M25. It

is situated on a plateau between the north-south river valleys of the River Chess to the west and the River Gade and Grand Union (formerly Junction) Canal to the East. The east-west flowing River Colne also confluences with these just south-west of Croxley Green. The town of Rickmansworth lies approximately 1 mile to the West.

- 3.4 The principle land use within the Conservation Area is residential, although to the north there is a small scale commercial operation consisting of Croxley Computers and Reycol, along with the rear entrance to the Co-Op store on New Road. There is a public amenity space at the centre of Dickinson Square, for the use of local residents.

### **Geology**

- 3.5 The geology of Croxley Green is mixed, the bedrock consisting of gravel from the Pleistocene epoch and chalk from the late Cretaceous epoch. Superficial alluvial deposits of sand, silt and clay and gravel from the Holocene epoch are found chiefly along the adjacent river valleys. (BGS Map)

### **Archaeology**

#### **Prehistoric**

- 3.6 There is extensive archaeological evidence for Paleolithic human activity in the Croxley Green area. Several hundred hand-axes, flint flakes and cores have been found in Long Valley Wood by V. P Kitchen, approximately 500m to the south of Dickinson Square (Wymer 1996, 70) (HHER Records 565, 566, 567 and 860). Neolithic and late Iron Age sherds of pot were also found in Long Valley Wood in 1906 (HHER 12817). This suggests the area was populated by humans from a very early period.

#### **Roman**

- 3.7 The evidence for the Roman period in the vicinity is limited to finds related to a Roman cremation (HHER 1369) and this indicates that there was Roman activity in the area.

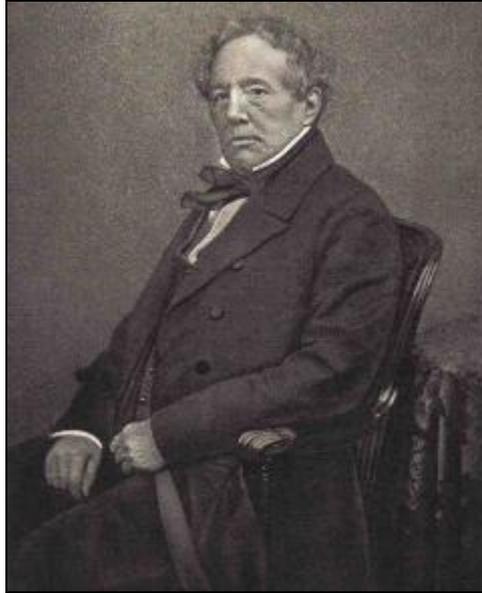
#### **Medieval and Later**

- 3.8 Archaeological evidence from the medieval period at Croxley Green is scarce and no significant finds have been uncovered in the immediate area of Dickinson Square. There are a number of important medieval buildings in the area however, a significant example being the medieval tithe barn at Croxley Hall Farm dating from c.1400 (Pevsner and Cherry 1977, 135).
- 3.9 Post-Medieval archaeological finds in the vicinity are limited to a small flint-lined built feature in Stones Orchard (NMR 1348575). There are however significant elements of the post-medieval era in Croxley Green's historic core, including the site of a post-medieval blacksmith's workshop behind the Coach and Horses public house and the 18<sup>th</sup> Century wellhead adjacent to Croxley House. The 19<sup>th</sup> century Scots Hill Windmill is also of local significance from this period.
- 3.10 Evidence of the industrial era in the vicinity is substantial, ranging from the London and North Western Railway, the Grand Junction/Union Canal and associated lock gates and, of most relevance, the site and evidence of John Dickinson's Croxley Mills. The archaeology of the Metropolitan Railway is also important due to its role in the expansion of Croxley Green during the 19<sup>th</sup> Century.
- 3.11 The prominent All Saints Church was constructed in 1870-2.

# **THE HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE AREA**

## **John Dickinson and Croxley Mills**

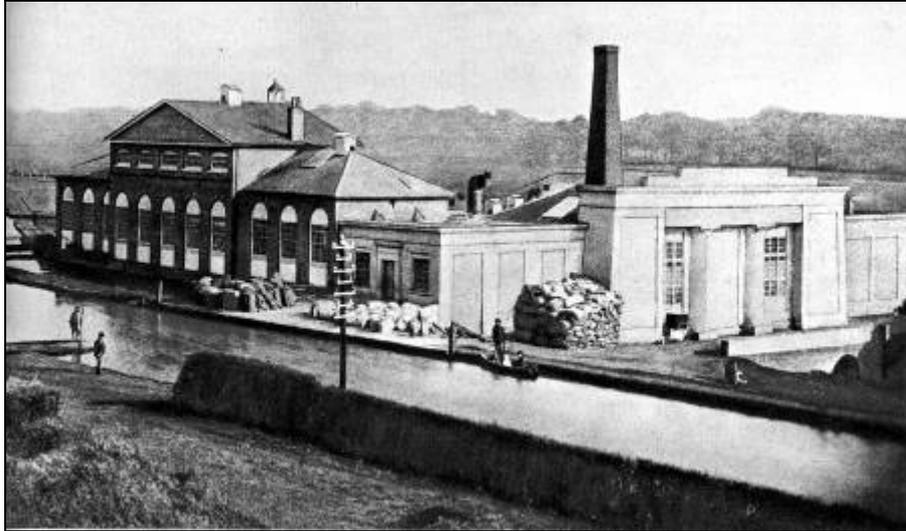
- 4.1 John Dickinson was born in 1782, and was originally a stationer in London. In 1807-9 he used the knowledge and inspiration gained from working at the stationers to go into business making his own paper south Hertfordshire.



**Figure 1 - John Dickinson, the founder of the company.**

- 4.2 Paper making had been long established in Hertfordshire since 1494 when a John Tate operated Sele Mill on the River Bean at Hertford (Branch Johnson 1970, 55; Zeevat 2010. 46). Following this time various paper mills were opened and closed throughout the 16th and 17th century, most notably at Hatfield where a mill operated from 1672-1835. The 18th century witnessed the opening of a large number of small paper mills, converted from flour mills, along the rivers Chess, Colne and Bulborne in the south west, and others on the Ver and the Lea. Papermaking on this small scale really was a rural industry (Branch Johnson 1970, 56).
- 4.3 In the late 18th century however, this changed. In the south of Hertfordshire at their Frogmore mill a papermaking revolution was sparked by Henry and Sealy Fourdrinier, when they invented the method of making paper in a 'continuous web' which could then be cut as desired. The Fourdrinier's had gone bankrupt by 1817, and John Dickinson had moved into the gap in the market, purchasing Apsley Mill in Hemel Hempstead in 1809. It was here that he patented his advanced version of Fourdrinier's concept of the continuous paper making machinery, and formed the long lived John Dickinson & Co Ltd paper making company. It expanded across southern Hertfordshire; to Nash Mills in Abbots Langley in 1811, Home Park Mills in King's Langley in 1826, and Croxley Mills in 1830 (Branch Johnson 1970, 59)
- 4.4 Croxley Mills opened for business in 1830, and became very successful; producing over 14 tonnes of paper a week by 1838. By 1887 Dickinson & Co's paper making had been concentrated at Croxley and the site had been extended by 16 acres. A new 200ft chimney, engine house and mess and dining rooms were constructed at the mill, and land was also bought in the village of Croxley at Milestone Field – later this would be the site of the Dickinson Square development. The expansions at Croxley Mills were designed by George Hubbard, the same architect who designed the houses at Dickinson Square. Croxley Mill had an enormous Egyptian façade, an attempt to appease critics of the mill who said it would be a blot on the landscape.

- 4.5 John Dickinson himself died in 1869, leaving the company to his family, under whose direction it became a Limited Liability Company. Before his death however, he took out over 20 new patents. He pioneered the use of silk-thread as protection from forgery, and invented a method of removing iron dust to create brilliant white paper. His paper was used in Exchequer Bonds and Government documents, some of the early postage stamps, and an enormous variety of other things. He was “*that admirable person, a man in harmony with his own times and equipped to take advantage of them*” (Branch Johnson 1970, 59).



**Figure 2 - Croxley Mill in 1827 (Evans 1955)**

### ***Croxley Green***

- 4.6 Croxley Green itself is a settlement of Anglo-Saxon origin, first mentioned in writing in 1016 by a moneyer to King Canute called ‘Croc’, in a report for taxation purposes. Croxley Green developed into a thriving agricultural settlement during the Medieval period under the jurisdiction of Rickmansworth parish.
- 4.7 Croxley, while being a Manor in its own right, did not really begin to expand until 1792 when the Grand Junction Canal was constructed, crossing Croxley Moor, and opening up the area for the large scale transport of goods – most notably gravel and agricultural produce from the area. The canal also had great significance when it came to the choosing of a site for John Dickinson’s paper mills, not least Croxley Mill in 1830, which was built on its eastern bank.
- 4.8 Croxley Green parish was created in 1872, and a church built dedicated to All Saints, at which time the population was approximately 1000 (Website 3). Croxley Mills’ construction and the success of John Dickinson & Co Ltd is undoubtedly the main reason for the expansion of Croxley Green. In the late 1880s an expansion at Croxley Mills was the driver for construction along New Road, which had been little more than a pathway before this time, and the land for Dickinson Square was bought by the company. Croxley Green became an industrial community.
- 4.9 John Dickinson & Co Ltd continued to operate Croxley Mills until 1980, when rising fuel costs and the effect of competition from overseas meant the mills was no longer economically viable. The mill complex was demolished in 1982, and Croxley Green developed between Watford and Rickmansworth into a largely commuter village, typical of South Hertfordshire. It is served by the Metropolitan Line from Croxley Green ‘tube’ station.

### **Dickinson Square**

- 4.10 The land upon which Dickinson Square is built was originally part of the Common Moor, on which the villagers, tenants of Croxley Manor, had historic grazing rights. When Croxley Mill's activity was expanded in 1886, the influx of employees from across the country meant new accommodation needed to be constructed for them.
- 4.11 Houses were built along New Road, and Milestone Field, part of Common Moor, was also chosen and the grazing rights on it were exchanged, after negotiation with Commoners and Gonville and Caius College (who were 'Lords of the Manor') to another larger meadow, and the area was developed into what is now known as Dickinson Square. Milestone Field originally derived its name from the milepost on Watford Road on its southern boundary, which appears to no longer be in existence.



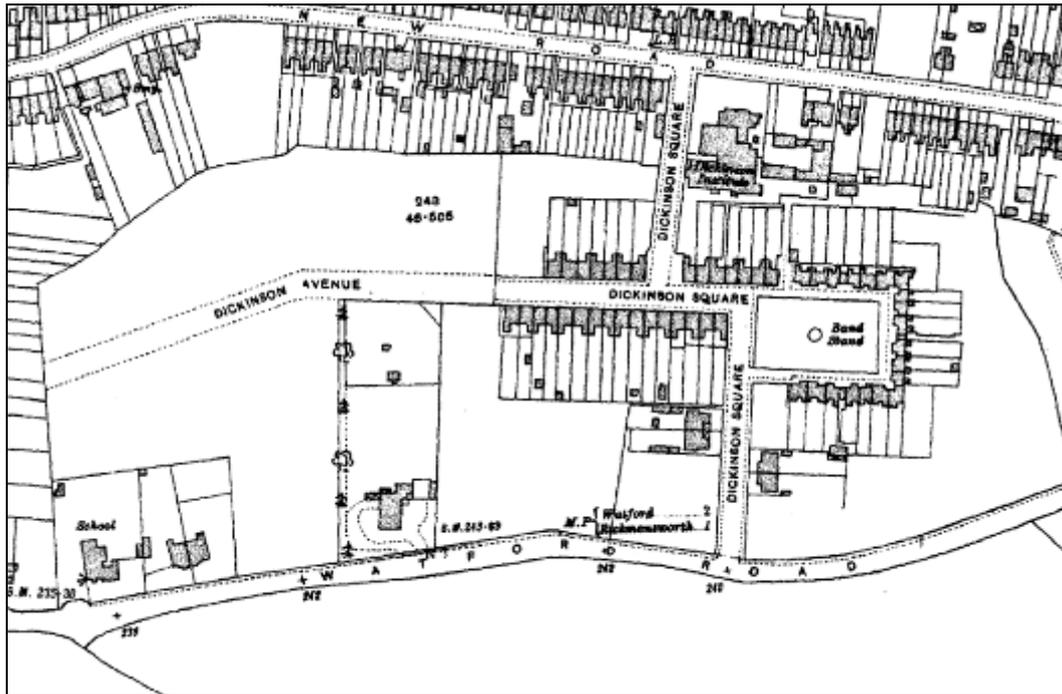
**Map 3 - 1873 1st Edition OS Map, with Milestone Field outlined.**

- 4.12 The purchase of Milestone Field was complete in March 1887, and construction finished soon after. The houses also included a large detached house for the Manager costing £2,000. This was located on the site of 'Lindiswara Court', a post war block of flats. The appearance of the area was obviously of importance to the company, and prizes of £5, £2, and £1 were offered by the Chairman for the best kept garden, with a bonus of £10 from the company Board.



**Map 4 -2nd Edition OS Map of 1898, 10 years after Dickinson Square was constructed. The large house under the 'Mile' of Milestone is assumed to be the Manager's house.**

- 4.13 During this period Dickinson Square was known as 'The Mill Square', not yet having been named after John Dickinson, although in some places it is still referred to as Milestone Field. In 1888 No.5 Milestone Field Cottages was converted into the shop and store of The Croxley Cooperative Society, indicating a close knit and active community during this period.
- 4.14 In 1891 census records indicate that the majority of the residents were all employees of Croxley Mill making paper, or in ancillary roles related to the operation of the mill. The Croxley Mill foreman George Rooke and his family were allocated the most prestigious house – Croxley Mill House. As mentioned above, this no longer survives. Only the larger houses around the Square itself are given numbers in the 1891 census; the rest being described simply as Mill Cottages.
- 4.15 The Square grew into a thriving community, and activity was especially centred on the nearby Dickinson Institute, enthusiastically supported by the then Croxley Mill manager Mr Charles Barton Smith, and this offered classes, lectures, concerts and other entertainments and even a library to local inhabitants. In 1910 the Institute was expanded to include a games room and in 1911 the Institute's facilities were again enlarged to include six acres of recreation field. It was clearly a highly valued and incredibly important focus of communal activity at Dickinson Square.



**Map 5 - 3rd Edition OS Map from 1914. Note the extension of Dickinson Avenue to the West, and the Band Stand in the green.**

- 4.16 The 1914 OS Map gives a good impression of how Dickinson Square was laid out just before the First World War and of special interest is the band stand in the middle of the Square itself, obviously used for local entertainment. Housing pressure is also evident from the expansion of Dickinson Avenue to the West, which although not yet populated with houses, was clearly under construction at this time.
- 4.17 In 1918 the founder of the Dickinson Institute, Charles Barton Smith, died and a plaque was installed within the Institute buildings to commemorate him and his important contribution to the Croxley Mill community. Now that the institute has been demolished it is unknown what happened to this plaque.



**Map 6 - 4th Edition OS Map from 1934. The band stand has been removed, and the extension to Dickinson Avenue shows signs of development.**

- 4.18 Following the First and Second World Wars the Square expanded, and empty land along the newly built Dickinson Avenue and Watford Road was filled with houses. Unfortunately this resulted at some point in the demolition of the largest of the original houses, probably the Mill foreman's house, which fronted Watford Road, to make way for new developments. The start of this development is visible in the 1934 OS Map above.
- 4.19 After the closure of the Croxley Mills in the 1980s the houses within Dickinson Square were no longer associated with the company, and became privately owned. Local entertainment traditions survive however, in the form of Mummers who regularly perform mythical tales of, amongst others, St George and the Dragon.
- 4.20 In 1995, to preserve the character of the Square, Dickinson Square became a Conservation Area. This was followed in 2000 by the construction of houses along Cherry Croft, which was constructed on disused allotment plots.

## ***SURVIVING HISTORICAL FEATURES WITHIN THE CONSERVATION AREA***

- 5.1 The historical elements of Dickinson Square as it was constructed are largely intact. The central open space in the middle of the square may represent the last remaining fragment of Milestone Field, upon which Dickinson Square was constructed, although it has been landscaped to include flowerbeds and arboricultural elements and has a wrought iron perimeter fence. The only substantial changes are the construction of a post-war house on the Square's southern side.
- 5.2 A former wash house stands at the south side of the square with nos.2,7 & 8 backing on to it. The structure is now an outbuilding associated with no.2.
- 5.3 The railings and the unusual old, black kerb stones around the green space are notable elements.
- 5.4 Back of footpath boundary walls with copings are important elements of the streetscape.

### ***Street pattern***

- 5.5 The surviving rectilinear street pattern of the historic core of Dickinson Square has remained unaltered since its construction, with the exception of the extension of Dickinson Avenue to the East which now forms a third route out of the Square. The street pattern is typical of a small Victorian Square, constructed as a coherent collection of buildings.
- 5.6 The Square is sandwiched between the two main roads of Croxley Green, the Watford Road and New Road.
- 5.7 A new road, Cherry Croft, forms an L shape around the eastern side of Dickinson Square.

### ***Doors and Windows***

- 5.8 Doors and Windows make an important contribution to the character and appearance of the Dickinson Square Conservation Area. Approximately 15 of 55 houses in Dickinson Square still retain their original timber windows; a further 6 retain at least some of their original windows. The quality of new replacement windows varies greatly around the Square with some exemplary historically sympathetic replacements. Unfortunately a number of highly unsympathetic uPVC, Aluminium and Timber replacement windows have also been installed.
- 5.9 The Article 4 Direction that covers Dickinson Square seeks to retain the authenticity of windows and doors on front elevations within the Conservation Area by requiring residents to apply for planning permission for all proposed changes to windows and doors. Conservation Officers will be consulted on all planning applications submitted that propose changes to doors and windows to allow the impact on the Conservation Area special architectural and historic interest to be considered. Planning Permission will only be granted where Officers are satisfied that the architectural and historic interest of Dickinson Square will not be detrimentally affected by the proposed changes.

# **THE CHARACTER AND APPEARANCE OF THE CONSERVATION AREA**

## ***Current Activities and Uses***

- 6.1 Following the closure of Croxley Mills the population of Dickinson Square are no longer employed by the John Dickinson & Co. paper company, but the sole active use within the Square is residential. There are shops immediately to the North outside the boundary of the conservation area, and the small scale commercial enterprises of Reycol and Croxley Computers in the larger municipal style building just outside the northern boundary of the conservation area.
- 6.2 The central square garden area offers an amenity space, where residents or visitors can sit in relative tranquillity. The area originally contained a bandstand, but this does not survive.

## ***Focal points, views and vistas***

- 6.3 Dickinson Square was built with the open space of the Square at its centre, and this forms the focal point of the area. The green was designed to create an open, green amenity space in the middle of the houses to provide an area for relaxation and entertainment. The houses are laid out around this area, looking out into it through the trees.
- 6.4 Views into and within the conservation area which are particularly important are from:
- The entrance from the A412 Watford Road to the south of Dickinson Square.
  - The entrance from New Road to the north of Dickinson Square.
  - The view east along Dickinson Avenue towards the Square.
  - The view from the north entrance to Dickinson Square, across the fence and trees of the Square towards the partially obscured larger houses.
  - The views along the narrow streets along the long sides of Dickinson Square, towards the end of the Square.
  - The view into Cherry Croft.

A map detailing these views and their orientations within each character area is to be found in the Appendices.

## ***Open spaces, landscape and trees***

- 6.5 The centre of Dickinson Square forms a rectangular green, incorporating flowerbeds, and bordered by a mixture of coniferous and deciduous trees and a fence of iron railings, pierced by a gate at the east and west ends. This area is still used on occasion by the local Croxley Mummers as a scene for their mock battles with dragons, which reinforces its original intended social use.
- 6.6 The other roads are lined with planted Lime trees at regular intervals, giving the roads a pleasant grove like feel to them. The tree roots have, however, caused the upheaval of the tarmac and pavement immediately at their bases.



**Figure 3 - The entrance on the West side of the green.**



**Figure 4 - Looking across the green.**

***Public Realm: Floorscape, street furniture etc.***

- 6.7 The appearance of the majority of the roadside pavements and other hard landscaped areas, apart from repaired sections, consists of uniform tarmac surface with concrete curb edgings; typical of an urban area like Croxley Green.
- 6.8 The small side entrance to the north of the square retains its historic black kerb edgings and guttering.
- 6.9 The iron railings around the central square contribute significantly to the historic character of the conservation area, delineating the road space from the amenity space. They are in need of conservation and repainting however.
- 6.10 The lampposts within the conservation area are a concrete post war design



**Figure 5 - The pavement and kerbstones are of standard design for the most part, and the lampposts are concrete post-war in design.**



**Figure 6 - One section retains earlier black kerb stones and road surface material.**



**Figure 7 - The iron railings around the green area are an important part of the character of the area.**

## CHARACTER AREAS

7.1 The predominant characteristic of Dickinson Square is of a residential community contained within the boundaries of the square. The historic nature of the interior part of the conservation area has been relatively successfully preserved by the nature of the square's design and the lack of opportunity for infill development. The loss of the area of allotment behind the Victorian houses to the north-east of the conservation area reflects the changing nature of the community and the increased pressure for housing development in the area. The development to the North and East, Cherry Croft, forms a distinct character area apart from the historic core of Dickinson Square.

### Identifying the Key Character Areas

7.2 Dickinson Square Conservation Area, though small, can be divided into two distinct character areas which relate to their architecture or historic development. These are detailed below.



Map 7 - The Character Areas of Dickinson Square Conservation Area.

### Area 1: Historic Core of Dickinson Square and Avenue

7.3 This character area encompasses the following:

#### North Access Road

7.4 The access road to the north encompasses the larger post-First World War building to the rear which now houses Croxley Computers and Reycol. The commercial activity in this area forms a contrast to the rest of the conservation area which is entirely residential.

- 7.5 The walls along the east side of this road are of pleasing, contemporary Victorian design, with round topped coping bricks and the road is lined, like the rest of the Area, with tall lime trees which softens the geometric angles of the houses as one looks into the Area.

#### *South Access Road*

- 7.6 The access road to the south of Dickinson Square leading to the A412 Watford Road has a separate character to the rest of Dickinson Square despite being constructed contemporarily with the rest of the development. Here the historic houses are larger and set back from the road with walled front gardens, probably reserved originally for employees of higher rank and their families.
- 7.7 On the north east corner of the junction between the entrance road and Dickinson Square is a 20<sup>th</sup> century detached house, of typical 1970s design: stretcher bond brickwork, fine pebble-dashed upper storey, and large pane double glazed windows. The architecture of this house is entirely atypical of the rest of the conservation area, and provides a contrast with the partly decorative architecture of the Victorian houses.
- 7.8 The two larger Victorian houses on this section of the Square were probably reserved for higher rank line managers or floor foremen in Croxley Mill and their families. They are subtly different in design; one sporting Dutch gable ends with double sash windows on the ground floor, and the other house having simple pitched gables and large multiple pane windows. These houses are significantly larger in area, and in terms of their respective land plots, than the other dwellings within the Square.

#### *Square*

- 7.9 This area comprises the larger semi-terraced houses which encircle the open square itself. The houses here are larger with more architectural embellishment and also occupy the prime location within the conservation area, facing onto the pleasant central green space and trees of the square. The houses themselves are obscured by the foliage on the perimeter of the green, but historically would have overlooked manicured garden areas and any event held in the Square's bandstand.
- 7.10 To the rear of the south side of the square is a small two bay outhouse, constructed of the same yellow brick with terracotta dressings.

#### *Avenue*

- 7.11 This area consists of the smaller terraced houses which form the remainder of the historic core of Dickinson Square leading out along Dickinson Avenue. The houses are arranged in blocks of terraces that on the north side of the Avenue are divided by the access road to New Road.
- 7.12 The road is lined with Lime trees, which serve to soften the appearance of the street and give it a more pleasant atmosphere. In Spring and Summer these will create an exclusive green canopy along and within the streetscape, but have the disadvantage of disrupting the pavement areas with their root growth.



**Figure 8 - The view looking East along Dickinson Avenue.**



**Figure 9 - The view along Dickinson Avenue looking West, taken from the edge of the Square.**



**Figure 10 - The view looking North out of Dickinson Square towards New Road.**



**Figure 11 - The view south, into the Area, from New Road.**



**Figure 12 - The building occupied by Croxley Computers on the east side of the north access road.**



**Figure 13 - Taken from the North access road, this view shows the rear of the smaller terraces, as well as the significant historic wall along this road.**



**Figure 14 - The view looking east, with the central green on the right, towards the larger terraced houses.**



**Figure 15 - A similar view, but taken further east. This also illustrates the scale of the houses as compared to the trees.**



**Figure 16 - An example of the houses on the north side of the square, showing the attractive central arch design.**



**Figure 17 - The historical cast iron drain, and the quoin which has been carved over generations with people's initials.**



**Figure 18 - The view along the East side of the Square, facing South.**



**Figure 19 - Looking West, from the East side of the Square.**



**Figure 20 - The two larger semi-detached houses on the South entrance road to the Dickinson Square.**



**Figure 21 - Looking into the Square from the South.**



**Figure 22 - A view from further up the South access road, looking towards the smaller terraced houses on the North side.**



**Figure 23 - Looking North-East towards the central green.**



**Figure 24 - Looking South, out of Dickinson Square.**



**Figure 25 - The rear of the south-east corner of the larger terraced houses on the square.**



**Figure 26 - The rear of the eastern side of the square.**



**Figure 27 - The small outhouse to the rear of the south side of the square.**

## Area 2: Cherry Croft

- 7.13 This area encompasses the modern 21<sup>st</sup> century development of Cherry Croft which lies to the north and east of the historic core of Dickinson Square, behind No's 11-24. This development was built post Conservation Area designation, and replaced the area of allotments which had previously occupied the space. The allotment space was one of the key areas which local residents considered central to the conservation area at the time it was designated.
- 7.14 The houses here are attractively designed. Their architecture emulates but doesn't slavishly copy that of the earlier Dickinson Square houses, with added features like decorative barge boards and diamond pattern brickwork in the elevations.
- 7.15 Overall this development acknowledges the adjoining Square, though it involved the loss of associated once cultivated, open space within the urban built up area. There is a surviving, much larger allotment space within Croxley Green to the north of the Square.



**Figure 28 - No. 1 Cherry Croft, looking East.**



**Figure 29 - The view along Cherry Croft from the southern end.**

### ***The Buildings of the Conservation Area***

- 7.16 In contrast to the rest of Croxley Green, where there are buildings from the medieval era onwards, Dickinson Square consists of structures largely from a single period, or emulate that original style. The style of the buildings within Dickinson Square itself is fairly uniform, reflecting the nature of their planned development and their period in history. There are no buildings dating from before the late Victorian era, with the majority of the houses having been constructed in the late 1880s, and this influences the character of the area quite significantly.
- 7.17 The semi-detached houses along the entrance road to the south, exhibit a wider array of architectural embellishments and flair than the smaller buildings further into the conservation area.
- 7.18 The larger houses which surround the Square are punctuated by three terracotta coloured brick arches, which add to their distinctiveness and provide access to the plots of land to the rear. These are attractive in design, and have had initials and other things carved into them over the years, which adds to their character. The cast iron drain pipes, set into the walls are also characteristic features.
- 7.19 The early 20<sup>th</sup> century commercial building on the northern access road is notable by its contrast to the residential character of the rest of the Conservation Area. It is unclear exactly what its original purpose would have been, but it may have been related to the Dickinson Institute which was originally sited opposite the building on the other side of the north access road, but has since been demolished or to the Co-operative stores on New Road.

### ***Architectural styles and detailing***

- 7.20 The style and architectural form of the buildings in Dickinson Square is largely consistent and this reinforces its character and interest. They consist of late Victorian styles, finishes and materials within the historic core of the square, and this is then emulated with modern materials in Cherry Croft.
- 7.21 Typical features are:
- Brick construction, finely pointed.
  - Decorative brick elements, such as string courses, windows surrounds, quoins and the attractive arches.
  - Wooden framed sash windows. In the larger buildings the top sash originally would have had sixteen small panes, and decorative horns. In the smaller terraced houses these would originally have been of the '2-over-2' type, also with decorative horns on the upper sash. An increasing number of these have been replaced over the years with inappropriate materials or finishes, such as uPVC and Aluminium, and in unsympathetic style.
  - Outward facing gables on the larger houses, with the smaller gables including white wooden bargeboards.
  - Terracotta brick is common.
  - Pitched roofs, slated on the smaller terraces, tiled on the larger houses and in Cherry Croft.
  - Uniform house frontages, terraces all a set distance away from the road, and the larger houses around the Square following a regular layout.



**Figure 30 - The Terracotta brick features are an attractive design detail in the larger houses.**



**Figure 31 - The smaller terraces are also adorned with attractive, but more subtle, decorative brick moulded string courses and window arches. Together with the attractive sash windows, these form a neat façade.**



**Figure 32 - The facade of the larger terraced buildings.**



**Figure 33 - No. 4 Dickinson Avenue, with Dutch gables in contrast to the other buildings within the Area.**

### ***Listed buildings***

7.22 There are no Statutorily Listed buildings of any grade within Dickinson Square Conservation Area.

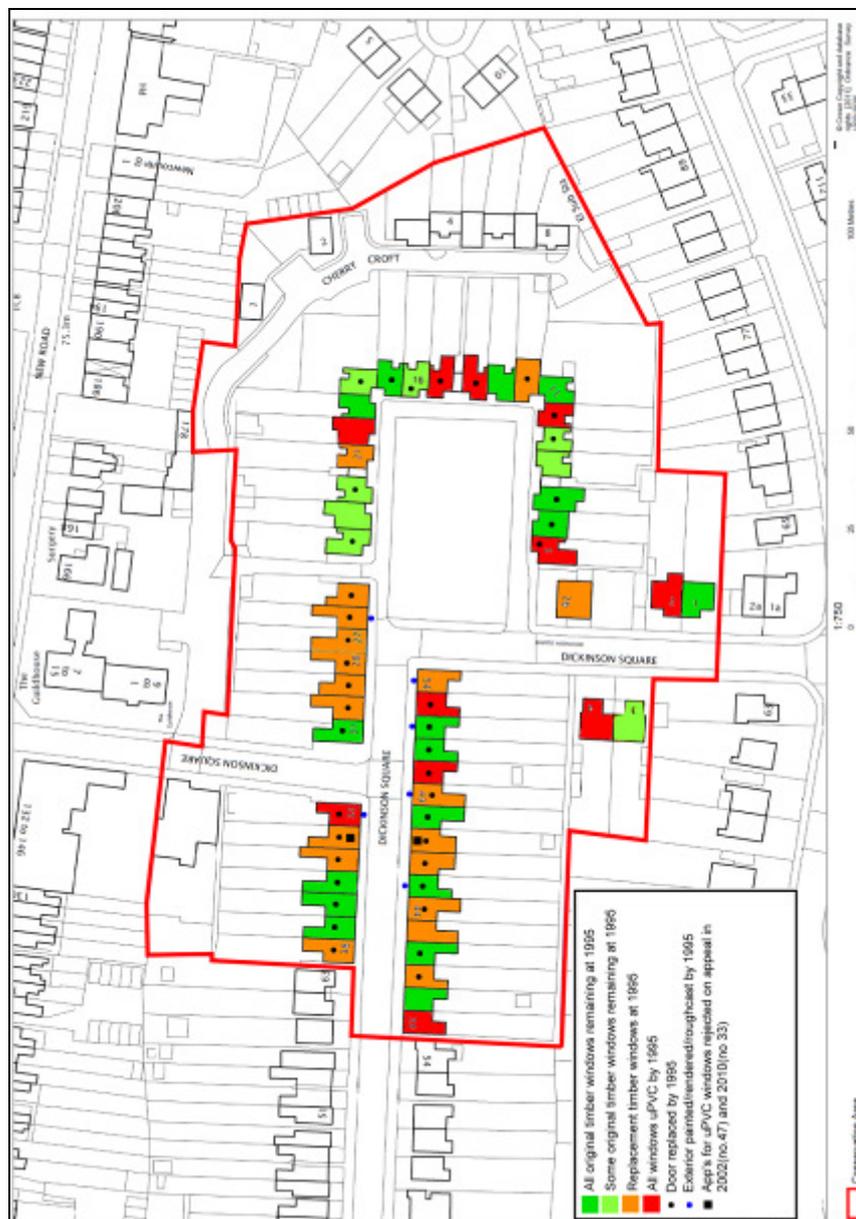
### ***Locally listed buildings***

7.23 There are no locally listed buildings within the Dickinson Square Conservation Area.

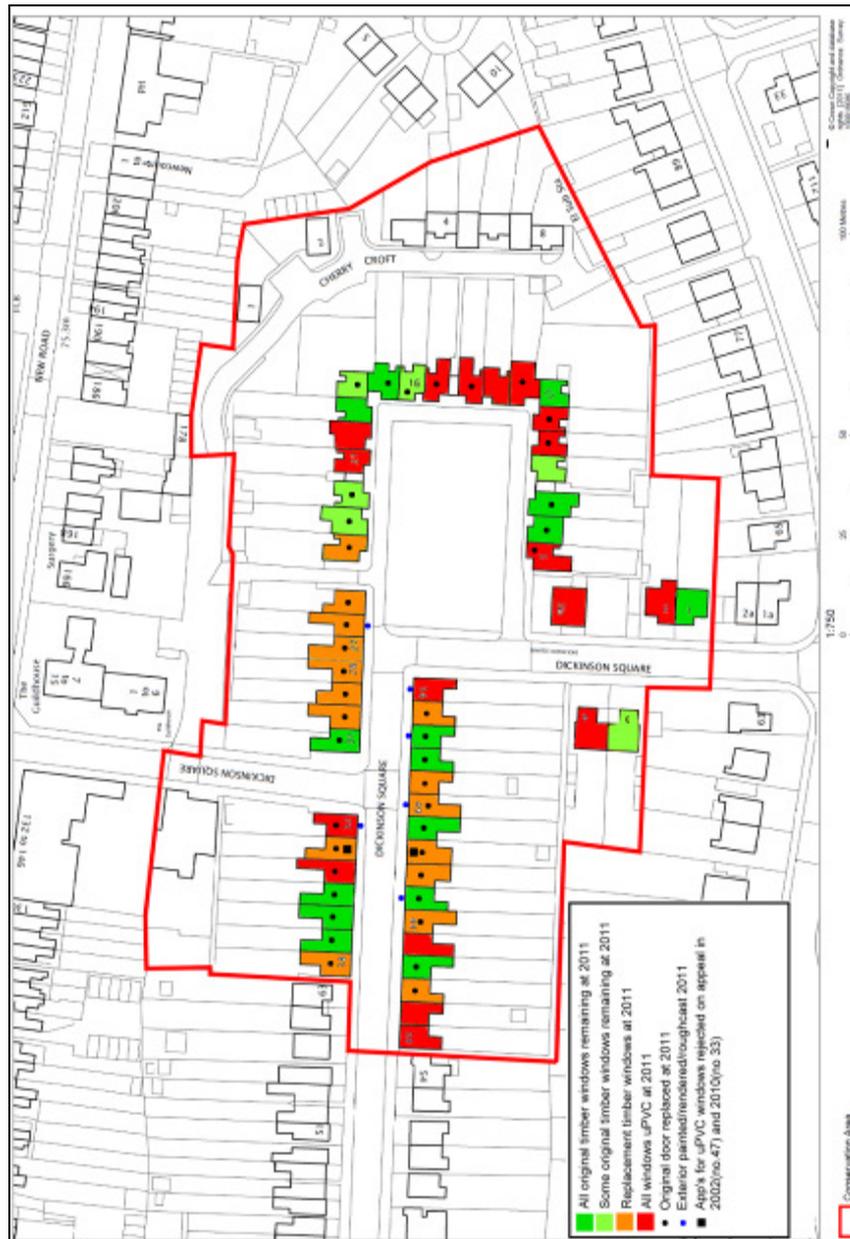
## Negative Features and Issues

### Inappropriate Alterations to Buildings

- 8.1 Over time a number of the houses within Dickinson Square Conservation Area have had their original historic timber framed sash windows replaced inappropriately with modern uPVC type windows. This is the principle cause of any loss of character within the conservation area, despite the Area being subject to an Article 4 Direction prohibiting such alterations from taking place without planning permission – this was voluntarily signed up to by the residents when the Conservation Area was first designated. In some cases, as illustrated on the below maps, inappropriate replacements windows were installed before Dickinson Square was designated as a Conservation Area and before an Article 4 Direction was applied to the area.
- 8.2 In some instances inappropriate finishes have been applied to the exterior brickwork of the houses, for instance pebbledash render, or paint of various colours



**Map 8 - This map shows the condition of the houses within the historic core of the conservation area, as they were in 1995 when the area was designated.**



**Map 9 - This map shows the condition of the historic core of Dickinson Square as at the end of 2011. Contrasting with the previous map enables the number of inappropriate changes to the area to be identified.**

8.3 Particular examples of houses that have had inappropriate alterations carried out which adversely affect the Conservation Area are:

- No. 14 – This house is one of a number where the original windows have been replaced inappropriately. The original windows were replaced in 1986, before the Square was designated as a Conservation Area. In this case the sashes have been replaced with large, modern glass panes of glass in unattractive uPVC frames, set flush with the wall and with black surrounds, which is totally contrary to the historic character of the conservation area. There are other houses with similar alterations, but this stands out.



**Figure 34 - No. 14 Dickinson Square, showing the inappropriate replacement windows installed in 1986.**

- No. 22. – This house has its original timber window frames intact, but the original small panes within the top sash have been removed and the frames are suffering severely from a lack of maintenance. The poor condition and inappropriate windows at No. 22 were replaced with new timber framed windows of an appropriate historic design and appearance in early 2014.



**Figure 35 - No. 22, showing the poor condition of the window frames and the inappropriate alterations to the glazing contrasted with the recently (early 2014) installed timber framed windows of an appropriate historic design and appearance.**

- No. 26. – This example of one of the smaller terraced houses has, at some point in its past, had its original sash windows removed completely, on the ground floor and had them replaced with a single frame, removing the central brick pillar. This contrasts negatively with those houses nearby which retain windows of the original form.



**Figure 36 - No. 26, showing the painted exterior and the entirely inappropriate replacement of the window.**

- No. 54. – This house suffers aesthetically from having both its windows and doors replaced inappropriately with poor quality uPVC, which is beginning to rot. The house has also been painted in its totality with bright white paint, which detracts from the aesthetics and character of the Area.



**Figure 37 - Two views of No. 54, indicating its poor quality and inappropriate uPVC windows, coupled with glaring painted exterior which detracts from the house's historic character significantly.**

### ***Negative Buildings & Areas***

8.4 The 1970s built No. 2b, due to its design, setting and historical provenance, is out of place in the conservation area, detracting from the historical unity of design and layout of Dickinson Square.



**Figure 38 - 2b Dickinson Square**

### ***Intrusive Traffic***

- 8.5 Dickinson Square forms a through route from Watford Road to New Road and this does get used by local traffic looking for a short cut between the two main roads.
- 8.6 Parking is intensive, and nearly every space outside the terraced houses is occupied on both sides of the road. Around the Square itself there are fewer cars, but these do occupy a considerable amount of space nonetheless. On the north side of the Square a small side cul-de-sac provides a minimal amount of 'off street' parking for the neighbouring houses.

### ***Signage***

- 8.7 Signage within the Conservation Area is limited. There are Neighbourhood Watch Area signs on the concrete lampposts, and signs warning against dog fouling in the park. Road name signs are discreet, cast iron signs affixed to the elevations of the buildings on the corners of the access roads. These are apparently historic in nature, and add to the character of the Area where modern plastic or reflective road signs would be a negative feature.



**Figure 39 - The cast-iron sign on the side of No. 32.**



**Figure 40 - A similar sign on No. 54, painted white.**

- 8.8 Outside the Area, but pertinent to its interior, are normal plastic road signs indicating the name of the street.



**Figure 41 - The modern plastic road sign on the south access road.**

### ***Inappropriate Landscaping***

- 8.9 The landscaping within the Area is pleasant in nature. The Square itself provides good relief from hard surfaces, and the trees lining the roads are attractive. These do

present problems however, where their roots have disrupted the tarmacadam surface of the pavements and road where they are growing.

### ***Neutral Buildings***

- 8.10 Due to the uniform nature of the architecture of the Area within its historic centre, none of these buildings can be classified as being neutral – either they enhance the character of the area, or due to inappropriate alterations or poor design they detract from it.

### ***Lamp-posts***

- 8.11 Precast concrete Lamp-posts were installed in the 1950's by the Highway Authority, Herts CC. It is understood that, when considering designation of the Dickinson Square Conservation Area in 1994, Hertfordshire County Council (HCC) planned to install more appropriate "retro" style lamp-posts. This did not happen and during November 2013 HCC began a programme of replacing the faulty precast concrete lamp-posts with a standard metal galvanised post with swan necks and LED's. These were inappropriate in the Conservation Area and unsuitable for a number of other reasons including the disturbance caused by the lights to residents. Hertfordshire County Council have recently undertaken work to improve the appearance of the lamp-posts and address other issues related to the lamp-post raised by residents. As such the lamp-posts are now considerably more suitable within the context of the Conservation Area.

## PART 2: CONSERVATION AND MANAGEMENT PROPOSALS

### **INTRODUCTION**

#### ***Boundary Review***

- 1.1 The construction of the houses along Cherry Croft, replacing the allotment land which originally existed on the site, was a controversial development. At the time of original designation a questionnaire was filled out by the occupants of the then proposed Dickinson Square Conservation Area, and nearly all respondents cited the retention of that open space as being important to the character of the area.
- 1.2 Despite the essentially aesthetically pleasing nature of the modern houses and their emulation of Victorian style in order to better protect the character of the Area after their construction, Cherry Croft potentially detracts from the historic contemporaneity of the rest of the area's houses. Options, therefore, are:
  - Removal of Cherry Croft from the Area, due to the reasons cited above.
  - Retention of Cherry Croft within the Conservation Area, precluding any further inappropriate or undesirable alterations which would erode the significance of the Area further.

Following public consultation and the detailed consideration of both options Conservation Officers at TRDC have determined that Cherry Croft should be retained as part of the Conservation Area.

#### ***New buildings***

- 1.3 Following the recent redevelopment of the area now consisting of Cherry Croft, there is very little scope for any other new buildings within the Area. The only potential space would be on the green itself, but this would irrevocably damage the historic character of the area. Similarly the demolition of existing houses within the area in order to provide space for new build houses is not something which should be considered, as this would break the uniform historic character and significance of the houses in the area.

#### ***Buildings at Risk***

- 1.4 There are no buildings at risk within the Area.

#### ***Locally Listed Buildings***

- 1.5 It is not deemed necessary to recommend any of the buildings in the Area for locally listed status. The buildings are largely consistent in style, form and function. The designation of the Conservation Area as a whole is therefore considered the appropriate means of representing their significance.

#### ***Monitoring and Review***

- 1.6 The following actions are recommended to ensure that this appraisal and management proposals are accepted and acted upon by the local community:
- 1.7 To protect and enhance the character of the Area by ensuring that no further historic timber framed sash windows are replaced inappropriately and that where possible currently existing inappropriate windows be exchanged for suitable alternatives in wood at the earliest possibility.
- 1.8 That the iron railings around the Green be repaired and painted.
- 1.9 To ensure that no further infill building happens within the Area, and that the open green space at its historic centre is maintained and where possible enhanced.

- 1.10 That the quality of recent redevelopment be reviewed and a design guide for the conservation area be produced as soon as possible. This should also encompass the replacement of windows in compliance with the Article 4 Direction.
- 1.11 This document should be reviewed every five years in the light of the Local Development Framework, emerging government policy, new best practice guidance, or changes on the ground.

***Public Consultation***

- 1.12 Although there is no statutory requirement to do so, the draft appraisal will be **subject to a six-week period of public consultation during 2014**. The draft document can be viewed on Three Rivers District Council website. A notice will be placed in a locally circulating newspaper, and other such consultation as may be specified.

# **Bibliography**

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Ordnance Survey Map, 1935. Hertfordshire Archive and Library Service, Hertford.

## **Three Rivers District Council**

List of Locally Important Buildings in Croxley Green

Three Rivers Local Plan

## **Other**

*National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)*

*Planning Policy Statement 5: Planning of the Historic Environment (PPS5)*

*Hertfordshire Historic Environment Record (HHER)*

*English Heritage National Monuments Record (NMR)*

## **Websites**

Website 1: Three Rivers District Council Planning.

<http://www.threerivers.gov.uk/Default.aspx/Web/Planning>

Website 2: The National Heritage List for England. [www.english-heritage.org.uk](http://www.english-heritage.org.uk)

Website 3: Hertfordshire Genealogy. [www.hertfordshire-genealogy.co.uk](http://www.hertfordshire-genealogy.co.uk).

*This appraisal utilises the guidance set by English Heritage, Guidance on Conservation Area Appraisals, published in February 2006, which offers advice to those undertaking conservation area appraisals.*

## ***Further Information***

*For Further Information regarding all Planning and Conservation Matters:*

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See also Department for Communities and Local Government  
<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-communities-and-local-government>

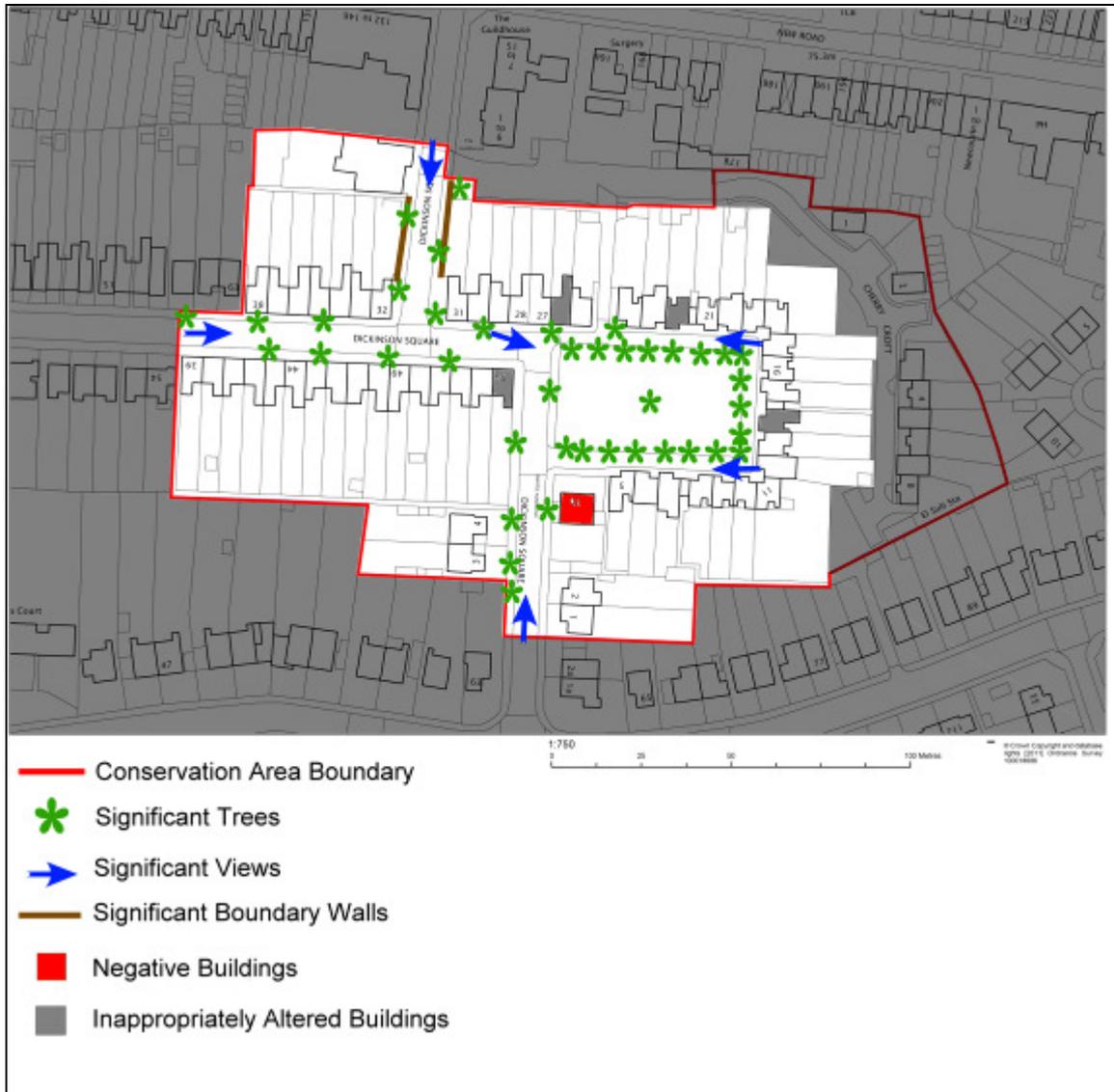
*For Further Information relating to Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas:*

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# Appendices

## Character Area Maps



Map 10 - Character Area 1: Historic Core.



**Map 11 - Character Zone 2: Cherry Croft.**