

## PROPOSAL FOR EXTENSION OF THE MELBOURNE CONSERVATION AREA

### Introduction.

The Melbourne Conservation Area was first designated in 1969. As an obvious candidate for conservation area designation, it was one of the first to be designated within the present South Derbyshire District area following the Civic Amenities Act of 1967 which introduced the concept of conservation areas.

Like many early designations, the original boundary was tightly drawn. Since then, designations have generally taken more account of the natural features, parkland and open spaces, or pattern of enclosed spaces that can greatly contribute to or complement the special architectural or historic interest of a settlement. Such features can be part of the essential framework of historic places, and are often an intrinsic part of the story of a settlement's growth and development.

The Melbourne Conservation Area has thus been extended several times. Blanch Croft, originally earmarked for slum clearance, was added in 1976, several areas were added in 1991 and some small areas in 2011. The 2011 extensions were based on recommendations put forward by a consultant in 2005. It is not unusual for longstanding, large conservation areas to have been extended several times since first designation.

### Proposed extension

The area now recommended for inclusion in a further extension comprises the following:

**Bare Hills and Brown's Field**, being an outlying landscape area of the parkland belonging to Melbourne Hall. This is a little vale accentuated by C19 tree planting both in clumps and plantations and is very much a public asset, traversed by well-used public footpaths giving open views in a variety of directions. It has a quasi-parkland feel due to the rolling landscape of permanent pasture and trees, emphasized by its long use (unofficially, and not of right) as an open space where people roam freely. Its picturesque character made it a subject of early 20<sup>th</sup> century picture postcards.

The land is not included within the English Heritage park and garden register entry for Melbourne, but the same is true of the "Intake" (the wood fringing the south side of the pool) and the double avenue near Park Farm (now of beech trees but formerly Spanish Chestnuts) first planted in the 18<sup>th</sup> century as a bold landscape feature viewed from the gardens.

**The Melbourne Arms**, 92 Ashby Road, is a prominent landmark built in 1791, three storeys high at the front and two at the back, which contained a large clubroom on the first floor. Like many other Melbourne buildings of the period it was built using a mixture of rubblestone and brick. Its large size and commanding location went hand in hand with its purpose built role as a public house, designed to attract trade at the edge of the village.

The Melbourne Arms was purchased by the Melbourne Estate in 1864 to protect it from rumoured threats of undesirable development (a steam driven corn and bone mill), because it was visible from the estate's heartland. The Estate sold it again in 1919, along with a large proportion of their estate, in response to the financial hardship faced by landed estates in general at that time.

The trees opposite were in fact planted to prevent the building being visible from Melbourne Pool, but at closer quarters the building and trees enhance one another.

Between the Melbourne Arms and Spring Vale are three detached 1930s houses and a bungalow, and a vacant plot (no 78) with planning permission for redevelopment. Part of the garden of Spring Vale also has planning permission for two houses. These parcels of land and buildings are included because they head the view up the valley from Melbourne Pool and thereby strongly influence the character of the area, despite being of no special merit in themselves.

**“Spring Vale” no. 60 Ashby Road**, was named after the spring which rises nearby. It is a distinctive and attractive house of 1859, with pale painted rendered walls and a profusion of gables sporting shaped barge boards. It stands on the site of an earlier house. Spring Vale and the Melbourne Arms each arrest attention when either leaving or entering Melbourne, and both thereby help to forge the character of this part of Melbourne.

**Site of “the Cottage”, 78 Ashby Road.** This house of c1797 was demolished in April-May 2013. It was attractive and a positive influence on the character of the area, but occupied a more retiring and less prominent position than either the Melbourne Arms or Spring Vale. The stone wall in front is a continuation of the front wall to Spring Vale; it is locally distinctive and serves as a reminder that both properties once belonged to the Ward family

**Lambert’s Quarry** was one of the first quarries to be opened on Melbourne Common, which was a rich source of the gritstone still to be seen everywhere in Melbourne. It took its name from the Lambert family who lived at a house nearby in the early 18<sup>th</sup> century, showing that the quarry was active then. Stone production appears to have ceased there around 1900, but the quarry remained active for some time afterwards for the production of sand.

## History

Much of the character of the area is owed to past efforts to improve the setting of Melbourne Hall.

Ashby Road was laid out in 1789 as a wholly new length of road connecting Melbourne’s High Street to the parish boundary shared with Staunton Harold. The old main road, skirting Melbourne Pool, was an irritation to Lord Melbourne and an obstacle to the privacy of his estate, hence the radical decision to have it moved. The old road became private, paving the way for the more secluded environment enjoyed by Melbourne Hall today.

The plots of land later occupied by the Cottage and the Melbourne Arms were laid out at the same time, having formerly been part of Melbourne Common. The Melbourne Arms was built in 1791 and formerly had a croft belonging to it where three 1930s detached houses and a bungalow now stand. The Cottage (demolished 2013) was built around 1797.

The Bare Hills are probably named from the practice of “baring” land for stone quarrying. The name is misleading, as there are plenty of trees in the vicinity. A drain or culvert along the lowest point of the land carries the spring water from Spring Vale towards Melbourne Pool.

The cultivation of the area as an outlier of the Melbourne Hall parkland appears to date from the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century. Melbourne Pool was altered and landscaped by Lord Melbourne, Queen Victoria’s first prime minister, at vast expense between 1842 and 1847.

For decades after this the estate took an intense interest in safeguarding and further improving the environment of the pool.



Above: Approach to the Melbourne Arms along Ashby Road from the north, showing its historic prominence in the street scene.



Above: Bare Hills, showing the Melbourne Arms on a knoll, with the clump of trees opposite to hide it from view of Melbourne Pool.





Above: Bare Hills and Brown's Field, showing the quasi-parkland character of permanent pasture with ornamental planting including coniferous trees and Lombardy poplars.



Above: An early 20<sup>th</sup> Century postcard view of 'Bare Hills Vale and Melbourne Pool' by Edward Martin, a photographer who was active in Melbourne from about 1890 to 1921.



Above: 'Spring Vale', built in 1859 on the site of an older property.  
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