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Rolfe Street Masterplan
Character Studies and an Assessment of Significance

For Sandwell Council



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1.0 Summary History of Smethwick and the Masterplan Area

1.1 Origins

The masterplan area is situated in the town of Smethwick. Of early medieval origin, for much of its history it remained a small settlement within the parish of Harborne, west of Birmingham, and was described in 1675 as a 'discontinued village' on the road from Birmingham to Dudley.¹ The main settlement before the 19th century was focused southwest of the masterplan area, at the junction of the Birmingham-Dudley Road and Bearwood Road, later named Bearwood Hill.² The area gained prominence during 18th and 19th centuries as a key industrial settlement within the Galton Valley and the wider Black Country.

1.2 Industrial Growth

Smethwick gained prominence, given its proximity to Birmingham, following the comprehensive onset of late-18th and 19th century infrastructure. Prior to this the area to the north and north-east of the canal had been built up only with scattered farms and the site of Smethwick Hall.³ This was to change from

1768-69 when James Brindley designed and cut the Old Main Line navigation.⁴ In this context, the area began industrialization from the late-18th century. This included key sites such as Bolton and Watt's Soho Foundry to the east of the masterplan area. The canal was further lowered in 1790, with possible input from James Smeaton, and the Bolton and Watt designed engine installed on Bridge Street. An earlier canal feeder arm was made navigable in the late 1790s to service the engine.⁵

Early industrial development along the Canal Feeder Arm was situated on shallow sites with small and medium sized industries such as the Crown Works/Forge (by 1839), as well as the Patent Rivet Works and Smethwick Iron Foundry to the east; each with its own wharf [Plate 1.1]. Thomas Telford cut a second, deeper, navigation (the New Main Line), between 1829-30; this included an aqueduct to continue the link between the Feeder Arm and the Old Main Line and an indexing station below.⁶ The intervening peninsula developed as an Iron Foundry, though focused primarily to its eastern half with smaller-scale industrial premises and a basin, later infilled with larger-scale buildings

developed for a drop forge. This development in transport infrastructure continued into the mid-19th century with the opening of the Birmingham-Wolverhampton and Stour Valley Line, with a station opened at Rolfe Street, in 1852.

1 A P Baggs, G C Baugh, C R J Currie and Johnson D A, 'Smethwick: Introduction', in *A History of the County of Stafford: Volume 17, Offlow Hundred (Part)*, ed. M W Greenslade (London, 1976), pp. 87-88. *British History Online* <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/vch/staffs/vol17/pp87-88>

2 *Ibid* pp.88-96

3 *Ibid* pp.88-96

4 A Upson, B Kirkham, *Smethwick Summit, Galton Valley Conservation Area: Appraisal and Boundary Review (2003)*

5 A Upson, B Kirkham and S Potter, *An Historic Landscape Appraisal of Soho Technology Park, Smethwick, Sandwell, West Midlands (2002)*

6 Upson et al (2003)

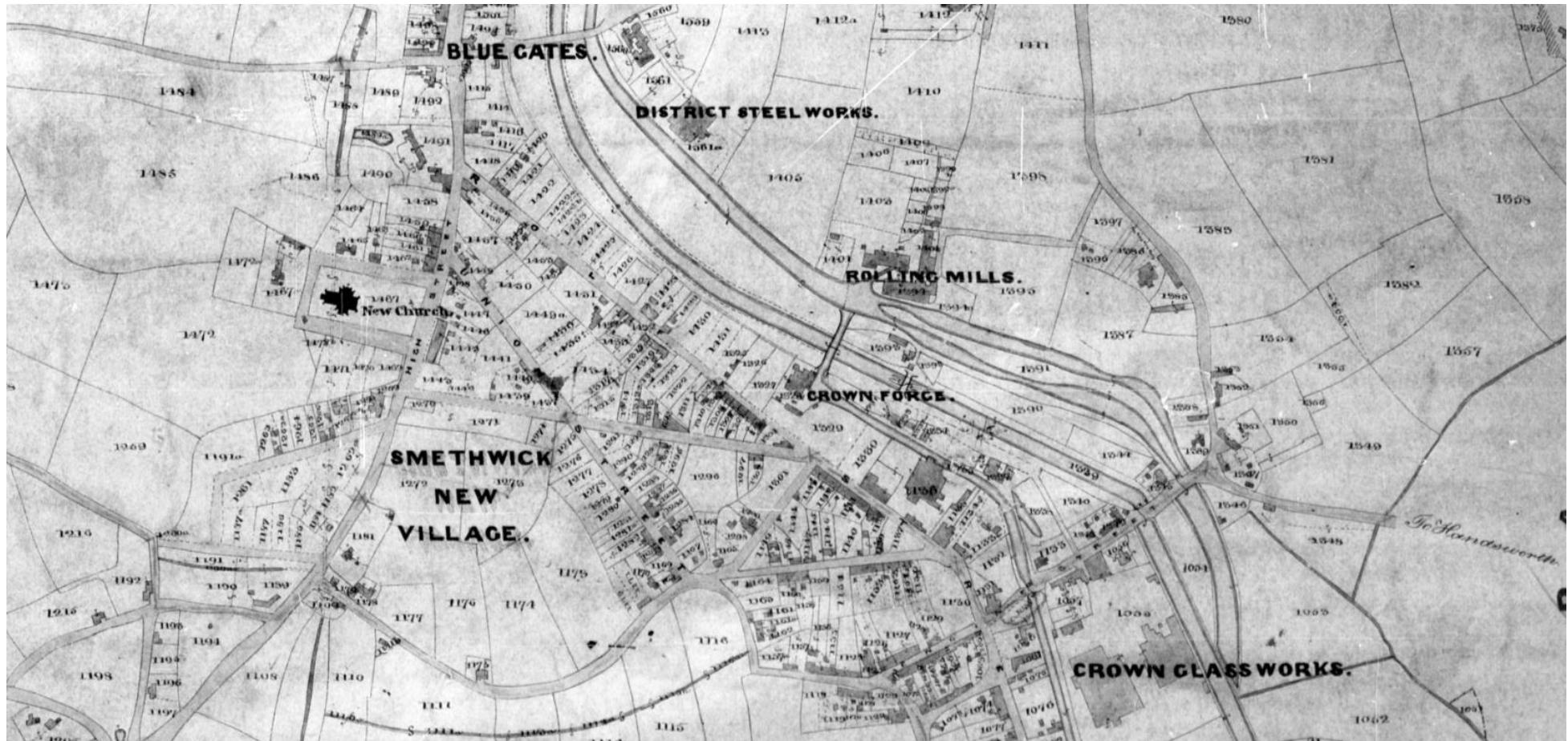


Plate 1.1 1839 Tithe Map

1.3 Urban Development

The cutting of the New Main Line galvanized development in the masterplan area and its immediate context, leading to the growth of the 'New Village'. With building plots for sale on Cross Street as potentially early as 1824, Rolfe Street, New Street, Cross Street and Hill Street were laid out with a mix of residential, commercial, and public buildings to the south in the 1830s.⁷ By the mid-19th century Rolfe Street had become the centre of Smethwick with a mix of commercial and residential premises as well as public houses, and later major civic buildings including the Theatre Royal close to the railway station (1897) and the Public Baths along Rolfe Street (1888).⁸

There was a very strong pattern of development – shown in the 1889-90 Ordnance Survey map [Plate 1.2] – whereby the large-scale industry was located north of the canals; smaller scale industrial, commercial and civic buildings were located on the north side of Rolfe Street, with some premises backing onto the canals; smaller scale properties, with largely residential and associated community uses on the south side of Rolfe Street and the streets south of this; hemmed in by the railway line but with Cross, Hill and New Streets providing consistent connections to Smethwick High Street to the south.

7 Baggs et al (1976)

8 *Ibid*



Plate 1.2 1889-1890 Ordnance Survey Map

Landmark
© INFORMATION GROUP

Landmark Historical Map
County: STAFFORDSHIRE
Published Date(s): 1889-1890
Originally plotted at: 1:2,500

1.4 Later Redevelopment

Rolfe Street remained the centre of Smethwick until the late 19th century. Demolition in the area around the station, coupled with the replacement of a level crossing with a railway bridge in the 1880s, led to the decline and closure of many commercial works, at which point commercial focus shifted to Soho Street.⁹

Of particular importance was the sale of the Crown Forge Works site in the 1890s, resulting in the demolition of the forge buildings [Plate 1.3]. It was bought by the Smethwick Corporation who used the site as a Works Department yard. This coincided with the growth of later municipal buildings including the Fire Station (1910), with training tower and ancillary buildings linking the station with the canal area [Plate 1.4], and housing for married firemen at Rolfe House (1933). As part of the Fire Station development the yard was extended resulting in construction of an early reinforced concrete retaining wall along the New Main Line (now Grade II-listed).¹⁰

The 20th century included significant spatial changes to the area. By the late 1930s much of the urban block along Rolfe Street, Hill Street and New Street was demolished for the development of a Drop Forge Works, incorporating an earlier bank building [Plate 1.5].

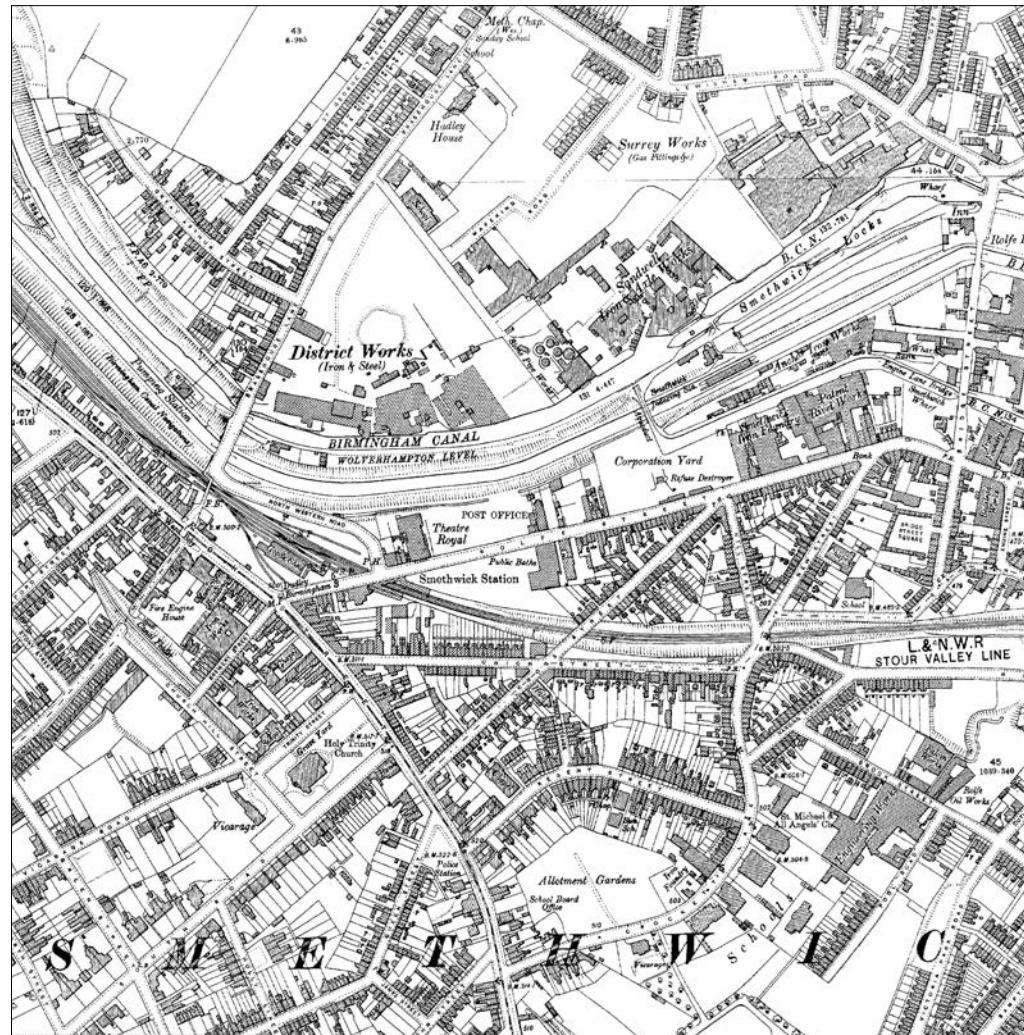
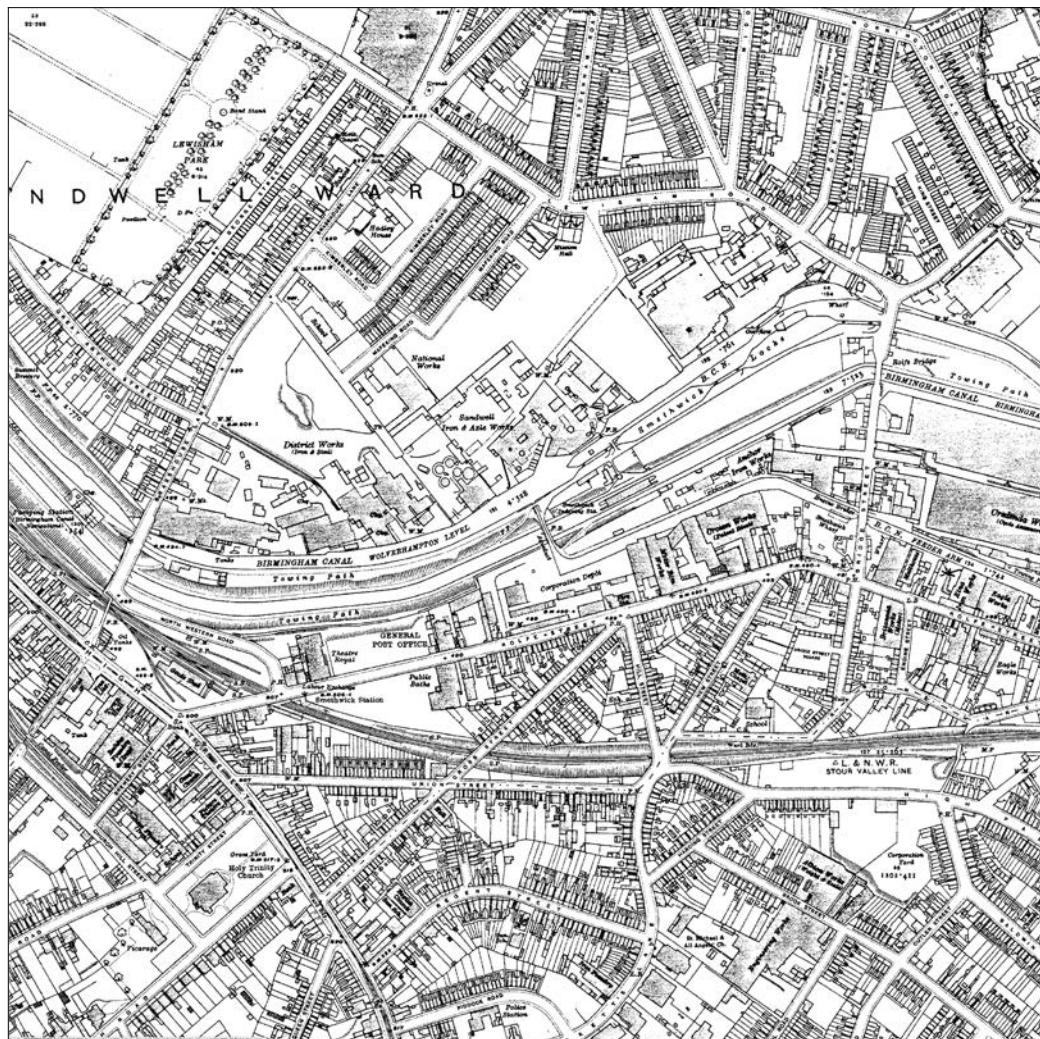


Plate 1.3 1904 Ordnance Survey Map

9 Baggs et al (1976)

10 Upson et al (2002)

Landmark
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Published Date(s): 1904
Originally plotted at: 1:2,500



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Landmark Historical Map
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Published Date(s): 1917-1918
Originally plotted at: 1:2,500

Plate 1.4 1917-1918 Ordnance Survey Map

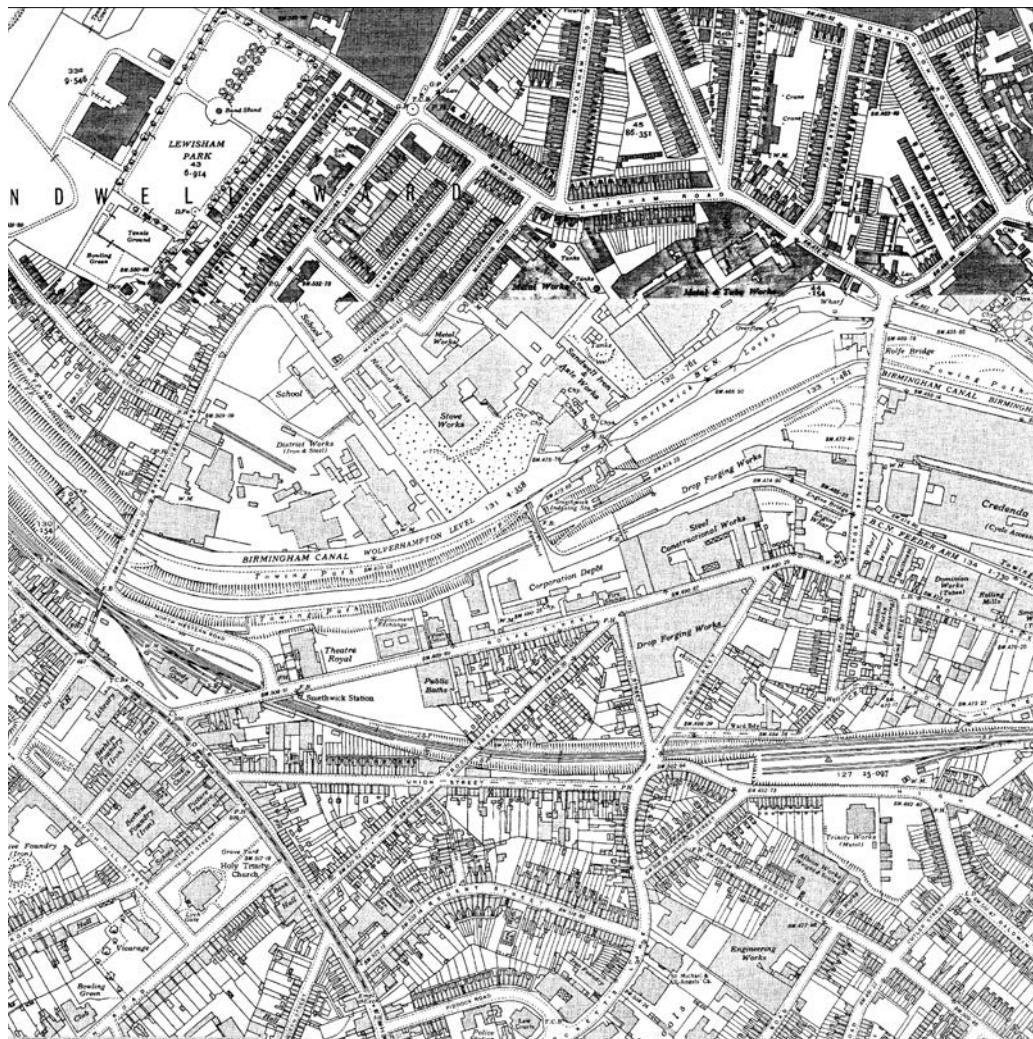


Plate 1.5 1937-1938 Ordnance Survey Map

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Landmark Historical Map
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Published Date(s): 1937-1938
Originally plotted at: 1:2,500



Plate 1.6 1958 Ordnance Survey Map

Landmark
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Landmark Historical Map
County:
Published Date(s): 1958
Originally plotted at: 1:2,500

This was followed in the 1960s with the demolition of properties along the Rolfe Street and Cross Street block and its redevelopment with scattered industrial units resulting in major truncation of Cross Street itself, with only a small section left over the railway line. Only the Cross and Anchor pub survived (though this was demolished in 2022) along with the Rolfe Street Baths further west (deconstructed and moved to the Black Country Museum in the 1980s). The Patent Rivet Works and Smethwick Iron Foundry were amalgamated into a Steel Constructional works in the 1950s [Plate 1.6], though many of the buildings look to have been maintained.

2.0 Character of the Masterplan Area



Plate 2.1 Aerial Photogrphah of the masterplan area 1946
© Historic England Archive. Aerofilms Collection

2.1 Summary of General Character

This area represents an evolved industrial and commercial landscape of make do and mend, largely developed as a result of the three converging canals, which together with the railway line frame the masterplan area. The canal and canal basin still clearly demonstrate the distinct phasing of the 18th and 19th century infrastructure – some of the highest significance - in a now heavily landscaped setting with the Victorian industrial buildings creating an attractive and characterful backdrop which hints at their once unified functions.

The canal green corridor is now a respite from the hectic industrial areas to the south, whilst the housing lining its northern banks, alongside its recreational uses, typify the nationwide transition of the industrial waterways into a haven for wildlife and leisure. This contrast is one of its defining features. The area to the north of the canal has been developed with a range of residences over the past 20 years, some more successful than others but all a drastic departure in character from the various works which once lined it.

Once a thriving high street, Rolfe Street lost its prominence at the end of the 19th century and since then the area has evolved; its high street shops and housing were removed as part of slum clearances and its civic buildings have been lost or repurposed – leaving large gaps in the street scene. The wider angular road layout remains largely extant but has been eroded by the removal of most of Cross Street and changes to Hill Street, and its multiple connections to Smethwick High Street have been severely impinged through the introduction of Tollhouse Way.

Historically a hive of industrial activity, its buildings have been repurposed, subdivided, and adapted to suit early-21st century demands and the area continues to play a very active role in Smethwick's urban make-up – with bustling streets containing motor repair garages, bathroom suppliers, restaurants and small pockets of residential use. Lack of investment has led to the slow decay of many of its remaining historic buildings and has led in some cases to their untimely dereliction and in some cases demolition – leaving further gaps in the townscape.

Throughout, the scale is relatively low, with some finer grains found along Rolfe Street and lining the canal, alongside large footprint buildings in the industrial hinterlands and large gap sites. Overly generous setbacks have in some instances eroded the historic character of the area but the arrangement of buildings around central courtyards is representative of its industrial character. The civic and commercial groupings along Rolfe Street have a late-19th to early-20th century character of their own – some quite decorative - whilst many of the industrial buildings feature characteristic gabled elevations suggesting the pitched and north light roofs beyond.

The Enterprise Centre is an almost intact complex of early-20th century industrial buildings, functionally grouped around a series of yards and large tarmacked car parks (once an open wharf) and, whilst individually most of its buildings are of limited architectural interest, it has considerable townscape merit. The once strong differential between industry to the north and residential areas to the south of Rolfe Street has been eroded by the conversion of this area

for industrial use. The direct relationships between infrastructure and industry however are still evident and the buildings which demonstrate this are worthy of retention wherever possible.

In the wider setting is Smethwick High Street, which lies beyond the railway cutting and car-dominated Tollhouse Way; the High Street contains a number of listed and non-designated heritage assets which represent Smethwick's late-18th to 20th century development. It is set within a conservation area and is lined with the Holy Trinity Church (Grade II) and the spectacular Gurdwara, illustrating the importance of immigration to the area in the 1950s, which are visible from various points in the masterplan area and are reflective of the local community.

2.2 Overall Opportunities for Enhancement

These include¹¹:

- Increased use of and connection to the canal corridor
- Circular walking and cycling routes
- Retention and restoration of significant frontages and boundary treatments using traditional materials
- Better-revealing heritage assets – removing modern materials, improving setting, managing planting, providing interpretation etc.
- Maintaining glimpsed views of the green canal corridor from Rolfe Street
- Opening existing significant views and potentially opening additional views to increase intervisibility with the surrounding townscape
- Retaining and enhancing views to and from the High Street and key landmarks / assets including the Gurdwara and Church
- Strengthening the visual connection and use between historic buildings and the canal
- Restoring historic grain
- Improving road surfaces – cobbles, curbs etc.
- Improving the relationship between pedestrian and cars
- Maintaining a mixture of affordable commercial and industrial uses to retain character and communal value
- Visually and physically enhancing gateways into the area – including near Rolfe Street Station, near New Street / Hill Street and Bridge Street as well as further east by Soho Street
- Relocate landfill, scrap yards and other uses incompatible with the area's status.

11 Adapted from Upson et al (2003), p18



Plate 2.2
Theatre
Royal, c.1902,
reproduced
with
permission
of Sandwell
Archives

2.3 Character Areas

2.3.1 Area 1: Eroded High Street

Historic character

Around the railway station, the Theatre Royal would have provided a strong sense of arrival, and civic presence, reinforced by the visual draw of the public baths further along the road. Alongside the civic buildings, were numerous terraced houses, presumably some with ground floor shops, and there was and a Methodist chapel and Sunday school on the northwest side of Rolfe Street – reflecting the dominant religion of the area's residents at that time. The liner nature of Rolfe Street itself was reinforced by a tight urban grain of low-scale houses, shops and pubs built hard up against the pavement edge, creating an enclosed mixed-use commercial and residential environment.



Plate 2.3 Sense of arrival at the station, looking east to the former site of the Theatre Royal and Station Inn



Plate 2.4 Modern intimidating boundary treatments along Rolfe Street



Plate 2.5 Built form is set well back from Rolfe Street behind modern boundary fencing



Plate 2.6 Site of the Crown and Anchor, demolished 2022

Summary of character and urban form

The civic presence in the area has been eroded through the loss of the theatre and baths, whilst the strong sense of enclosure has diminished following mid-20th century re-development, though Rolfe Street itself remains a key urban spine [Plate 2.3].

The area now contains poor quality late-20th century industrial units, of varying scales, with little cohesion. It has lost its once strong street frontage and the building line is now set back behind functional tarmacked or concreted yards of differing depths and bound by metal palisade fencing - providing a harsh and intimidating environment [Plates 2.4 and 2.5]. The recent loss of the Crown and Anchor Public House, a non-designated heritage asset, on the corner of Hill Street is regrettable but it has opened a view from Hill Street to Rolfe House [Plate 2.6]. Smethwick Wharf is located to the east, adjacent to Bridge Street North – this area is overgrown and was not surveyed due to limited access (though the site may have archaeological potential relating to wharves).

The **scale** in this area is one and two storeys, footprints are small to medium and stretch back on a north-south orientation from Rolfe Street, but do not follow the historic grain. Buildings are mostly late-20th century, set back behind large yards or carparks, there are large footprint single storey (equating to two storeys) or two storey industrial or simple commercial buildings with steel frames and brick skins with pitched or flat roofs, as well as smaller shacks or sheds, petrol station canopies and gantry structures. Facing building **materials** are typically brick, render or corrugated panels, with corrugated metal or

asphalt roofs and, whilst windows are limited given the commercial nature of the buildings, they are typically uPVC or low-quality metal framed.

The **public realm** comprises the main road, which is tarmacked and its narrow pavements, some historic stone curbs remain as do cobbled carriage openings (most covered), and there are also bell-shaped bollards [Plate 2.7]. It is dominated by vehicular traffic and street parking as well as vehicles crossing the public realm to access premises and is not pedestrian-friendly. **Boundaries** are defined by harsh palisade fencing, modern dwarf red brick walls and metal railings, some being quite domestic. Smethwick Engine House wall stretches from Bridge Street North onto Rolfe Street and is constructed in red brick with engineering brick string courses and coping stones (likely late-19th century) [Plate 2.8].



Plate 2.7 Public realm including Bell Bollards



Plate 2.8 Wall to the site of the Smethwick Engine



Plate 2.9 Rolfe Street Station



Plate 2.11 View east along Rolfe Street from the junction of Rolfe Street, Bridge Streets North and South



Plate 2.10 View west from Rolfe Street Station to central Smethwick

Key Heritage Assets

- Part in the Galton Valley, Smethwick Summit Conservation Area
- Part in the immediate setting of the Galton Valley, Smethwick Summit Conservation Area
- Its western portion is in the immediate setting of the Smethwick High Street Conservation Area
- Smethwick Engine House (Scheduled Monument)
- Smethwick Engine House wall, stretching onto Rolfe Street
- Rolfe Street Station (Local List) **[Plate 2.9]**
- NB. Smethwick Wharf has not been reviewed fully given limited access.

Views

- There are typical street views up and down Rolfe Street, including west back to central Smethwick **[Plate 2.10]**
- The road curvature largely prevents views east until close to Bridge Street North and its junction with Rolfe Street and Bridge Street South, from which views along the rest of Rolfe Street take in gabled roof forms **[Plate 2.11]**
- Glimpsed views between buildings to the green corridor along the canal

Detracting elements

- Lost grain / gaps sites
- Large set backs
- Low quality commercial buildings
- Poor boundary treatments / car parking / yards

Opportunities

- Reintroduce a closer urban grain and reinforce a sense of enclosure of the street, enhancing the linear form of Rolfe Street (noting that there were some historic yards)
- Restore a sense of civic presence and arrival close to Rolfe Street Station
- Restore civic or communal uses alongside some small-scale commercial uses
- Better reveal the Smethwick Engine House (Scheduled Monument) and retain the former wall lining Rolfe Street
- Clear the former Smethwick Wharf area adjacent to the Engine House to create a public space with interpretation
- Improve the relationship between the road and pedestrians



2.3.2 Area 2: Historic High Street

Historic character

These sections of the high street comprise a cluster of civic or public service buildings, including the Post Office, Fire Station and associated accommodation on the north side of the street which were developed in the early-20th century, following the loss of the high street's commercial prominence. Before that time there were large commercial yards and gap sites in the high street. To the east, large iron and rivet works fronted the Engine Arm Canal and stretched up to front the high street with smaller commercial buildings or showrooms – likely used to display wares from the works. Corner plots were given to banks and pubs and featured canted corners which accentuated the angularity of the roads and provided key townscape features. The linear nature and mixture of uses along Rolfe Street was reflected in its tight urban grain of terraced houses, shops and pubs arranged hard up against the pavement edge.

*Rolfe Street Fire Station 1930s,
reproduced with permission of
Sandwell Archives*

Summary of character and urban form

This character of this area centres on a series of late-19th and early-20th century civic, industrial, commercial, and residential buildings including a former Post Office, Fire Station and Rolfe House adjacent – which together represent the former civic core and sit within, or close to, the Enterprise Centre [Plates 2.12, 13, 14 and 15]. Along with the lost baths and theatre these civic uses once stretched down to the railway station – a building which now sits isolated at the far extreme of Rolfe Street.

The sense of a vibrant high street has been lost given the repurposing of most of these buildings, but architecturally they still contribute to the character of the conservation area (for a more detailed assessment of the buildings on the Enterprise Centre, see Appendix I). The former Iron and Patent Rivet Works at 72-80a Rolfe Street stretches back to the canal (into the Canalside Industrial Character Area, see below) and represent one of the few places within the study area which reflect the original relationship between works premises, the canal, and the high street [Plates 2.16].



Plate 2.12 Former Post Office



Plate 2.13 Former Fire Station



Plate 2.14 Rolfe House



Plate 2.15 Frontage of the Enterprise Centre, former Corporation Yard



Plate 2.16 Part of the industrial frontages at 72-80 Rolfe Street, damaged by fire and in poor condition

The **urban grain** is fine to medium and many of the frontages are inactive – particularly the west side of the Enterprise Centre. Buildings are mostly arranged hard up against the pavement edge, though Rolfe House has a slight set back to provide a buffer from the busy commercial street.

Building orientation is mixed and reflects the mixed functions of the high street – with narrow commercial frontages stretching away (north-south) from the high street and containing the backland industrial functions – some stretching to the engine Arm Canal, as well as long, linear blocks on an east-west arrangement, fronting the street – the latter are mainly within the Enterprise Centre site but can also be found at the former Drop Forge Works (No.164) [Plate 2.17].

Building heights in this area are two to four storeys plus the Fire Station's training tower. To the east of this civic core are a range of commercial and industrial buildings including the remainder of the Drop Forging Works, they range between one and three storeys. The **roofline** fronting the street is lively – with a variety of gable ends and parapets enlivened by the variances in building height. Roofs are mostly pitched, though Rolfe House is hipped with flat roofs to the Fire Station and some of the other early-20th century industrial buildings.

Buildings materials are typically red brick, some with render, with slated / corrugated metal / asphalt roofs and some remaining historic timber and timber, iron / steel framed windows, though many have been replaced with low-quality metal or uPVC. 78 and 80a Rolfe Street feature shop frontages, whilst the remainder feature shuttered commercial / industrial

openings. There are several carriage openings in frontages, most appear to be blocked or feature metal shutters. Many of the inactive frontages have a common architectural language – red brick walls with plinths, inset panels and some with gable ends containing oculi.

The **public realm** is limited to the main tarmacked road, which is dominated by cars and narrow pavements, though there are some historic stone curbs (granite and Rowley rag) and cobbling to carriage openings (though most are covered with tarmac). Since the buildings generally front directly onto the pavement, there are few plot boundaries but where they do exist, they comprise dwarf red brick walls and metal railings.

Key Heritage Assets

- In the Galton Valley, Smethwick Summit Conservation Area
- Its western portion is in the immediate setting of the Smethwick High Street Conservation Area
- Non-designated assets: Former Post Office, Rolfe House, Fire Station including the prominent training tower (its later set back extension detracts), 72-80a comprise a group of workshops (former Iron and Patent Rivet Works), 80a features a shop frontage, whilst the remainder feature shuttered commercial / industrial openings [Plate 2.18]. 160 Rolfe Street (129), a former bank later used as part of the Drop Forge Works. [Plate 2.19].
- 164 Rolfe Street (former Drop Forge Works). The blind panelled brick wall could potentially be retained or adapted as part of redevelopment behind.



Plate 2.17 Former Drop Forge Works



Plate 2.18 80 Rolfe Street with carriage opening



Plate 2.19 Former Bank, reused as part of the Drop Forge Works

Views

- Typical street views up and down the high street taking in the diverse frontages and lively roof forms of the remaining historic 'civic core' and industrial buildings **[Plate 2.23]**
- Glimpsed views between buildings to industrial buildings and yards beyond as well as the green corridor along the canal **[Plates 2.20-21]**
- Key corner building – 160 Rolfe Street – in views west **[Plate 2.22]**

Detracting elements

- Views of concrete terracing on north side of the canal
- Modern gates to the Enterprise Centre
- Blind elevations of the Enterprise Centre
- Poor boundary treatments / carparking / yards
- Very poor condition of many of the buildings, particularly those related to the former Iron and Patent Rivet Works, some of which have suffered fire damage
- Low quality alterations and extensions, such as the former Fire Station and windows to Rolfe House

Opportunities

- Restore grain along the high street to stitch eroded high street together
- Improve blind / inactive elevations to activate the street scene
- Retain and enhance views along the street by infilling gap sites and retain and create more towards the green corridor along the canal
- Repurpose civic buildings – ideally with communal / civic use
- Improve pedestrian / car relationship and restore appropriate hard surfaces and, where applicable uncover features such as cobbles and historic curbs.

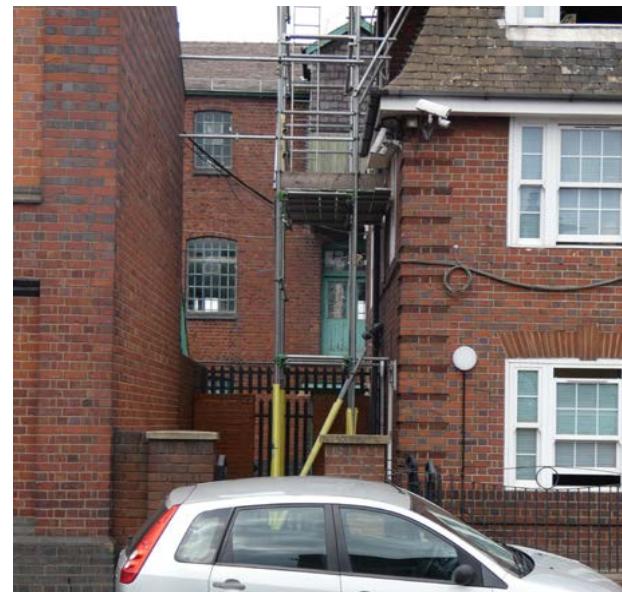


Plate 2.20 Glimpse to industrial buildings on the Enterprise Centre site



Plate 2.21 Glimpse down a yard at number 82, including vegetation along the canal



Plate 2.22 Number 160 is prominent as a key corner building from the west



Plate 2.23 Strong frontage of the remaining buildings of the civic core



2.3.4 Area 3: Industrial Backlands

Historic character

To the south of Rolfe Street, three main triangular urban blocks were divided at acute angles by Cross Street, Hill Street and New Street (laid out in 1836) and hemmed into the south by the railway line, which was introduced in 1852 as part of the Birmingham, Wolverhampton, and Stour Valley line.

This was a predominantly residential and secondary shopping area, with associated functions including public houses, a school on Hill Street and a chapel on New Street. The houses were mostly terraced and arranged along the principal streets, with some backland colony-style terraced housing presumably accessed via ginnels. To the rear of the terraces, were parcels of land, variously subdivided, and apparently shared by numerous properties, those close to the high street merely had yards and many featured small outbuildings. Aside from the community buildings, there were some larger footprint buildings, presumably in commercial or small-scale industrial uses.

Summary of character and urban form

Today, this area comprises a patchwork of large-scale industrial buildings, with modern infill development, work yards and smaller industrial premises. The residential buildings and uses have been entirely removed and the character is of a hectic, industrial / commercial area. Cross Street has now been abridged to lead into Buttress Way (cul-de-sac) [Plate 2.25] and Hill Street has been divided in two at its northern end [Plate 2.26].

Plate 2.24 Cross Street, 1960, reproduced with permission of Sandwell Archives

The **grain** is course, with medium to large footprint industrial buildings, defined by the breaking up of elevations into gable ends. Building **heights** are predominantly one or two storeys. Roof forms are flat and pitched and features are limited to blind panels in brick walls.

On New Street, in the setting of the masterplan area, is the former Wesleyan Chapel (non-designated heritage asset), which is a late-Victorian building of two tall storeys, with loosely Classical detailing to its first-floor windows and its bays defined by pilasters, its ground floor is obscured by workshop extensions [Plate 2.27]. Buildings lining New Street have a strong, continuous building line particularly on the west side where they present low red brick walls and some characteristic gable ends – these are the remaining walls of the former Drop Forging Works (interwar) (see Plate 2.27).

Materials are mostly red brick, with corrugated metal elevations and roofs. As with the historic high street, some of the inactive frontages have a common language – red brick walls with plinths with inset panels, which have been altered with the insertion of modern windows.

The **public realm** in this area is poor and is very traffic-dominated, with very narrow pavements if any. The road surfaces are tarmacked and there are fragments of stone curbs, boundary treatments are mixed and include blue engineering brick bridges and walls, and palisade fencing lining the railway line, whilst industrial premises are lined with palisade fences or tall red brick walls which create impenetrable plots along Rabone Lane and New Street.



Plate 2.25 Buttress Way



Plate 2.26 Hill Street leading into Buttress Way (left)



Plate 2.27 New Street with the gables of the Drop Forge Works (left) and Wesleyan Chapel (right)

Key Heritage Assets

- In the immediate setting of the Galton Valley, Smethwick Summit Conservation Area
- In the immediate setting of the former Chapel on New Street
- In the wider setting of the Smethwick High Street Conservation Area and listed and locally-listed buildings

Views

- Views over the railway tracks **[Plate 2.29]**
- Views out – positive views towards Smethwick High Street – of the Church and Gurdwara **[Plate 2.30]**
- Views out – detracting views of Tollhouse Way **[Plate 2.31]**
- Views along Hill Street to the Fire Station / Rolfe House (see Plate 2.26)
- A key gateway view into the area from Tollhouse Way and the southern end of New Street is disappointing – the corner building at New Street / Hill Street is very low-scale **[Plate 2.32]**

Detracting elements

- Poor condition of many buildings
- Gap sites
- Poor boundary treatments
- Heavy traffic and pollution and limited pavements

Opportunities

- Re-develop the area, following its historic character, and taking the opportunity to restore a finer grain and historic uses (e.g., residential)
- Improve pedestrian / car relationship and restore appropriate hard surfaces
- Improve views in and out of the area
- There may be scope to retain gable ends or walls as part of a redevelopment



Plate 2.29 View north from the railway bridge including the railway tracks and Rolfe Street behind



Plate 2.30 Views of the Gurdwara along Tollhouse Way (photo outside the masterplan area)



Plate 2.31 Tollhouse Way from the south looking north to the masterplan area



Plate 2.32 Poor-quality gateway at the southern end of New Street

2.3.5 Area 4: Canalside Industrial



Plate 2.33 Aerial photograph of the canal, 1934
© Historic England Archive. Aerofilms Collection

Historic character

This area is inextricably linked to the canal network, functionally and visually, and would have been characterized by a busy and hard industrial atmosphere. In the early 19th century, the area was more open with smaller compact premises, including that of the Crown Forge, built hard up against the canal feeder arm and incorporating private wharves including one to the eastern edge of the peninsula. They inherently became more built up, and denser, over time, through development of the Anchor Iron Works (on the peninsula), and the Patent Rivet Works and Smethwick Iron Foundry. This later became the site of a large steel constructional works; long ranges were developed the depth of the site with a strong visual presence built hard up against both the Canal Feeder Arm and Rolfe Street, set around yards. The Corporation Yard, replacing the Crown Forge, was less built up than the adjoining works with ranges focused on the east-west orientation of Rolfe Street and significantly more open tarmacked space around the canal itself, though maintaining a clear functional relationship.

Summary of character and urban form

This area includes the Enterprise Centre, with crossover with the Historic High Street Character Area (see above), whilst the eastern portion of the Engine Arm Peninsula has crossover with the Canal Character Area. The former Iron and Patent Rivet Works at 72-80a Rolfe Street stretch away from the canal to Rolfe Street (within the Historic High Street Character Area) and represents one of the few places within the study

area which reflect the original relationship between the works premises, the canal and the high street. Buildings in the eastern portion of this character area front the canal and have a very strong relationship with it – once featuring private wharves [Plates 2.34 and 35]. Buildings are 19th and 20th century, with some adaptation and some fire damage (74/75 Rolfe Street) [Plates 2.36].



Plate 2.34 Industrial buildings fronting the Engine Arm (part of 72-80 Rolfe Street)

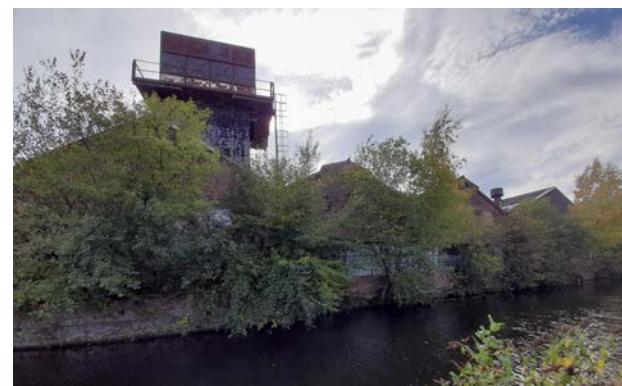


Plate 2.35 Industrial buildings fronting the Engine Arm, with prominent water tower



Plate 2.36 Fire damaged premises at 74 Rolfe Street

The **grain** is fine to medium, with buildings arranged around yards and some buildings stretching all of the way between Rolfe Street and the Engine Arm Canal. Between 80a Rolfe Street and Bridge Street North are expansive yards to Rolfe Street and gabled industrial buildings facing the canal, with a series of open and blocked openings which demonstrate their relationship with the canal (see Plates 2.34 and 35). The **building heights** here are one to three storeys.

Materials are red brick, with some exposed steelwork and render. Roof forms are largely gabled, with those facing the canal the most consistent and characterful, punctuated by a water tower and chimneystack.

The industrial area at the eastern end of the Engine Arm Peninsula has been recently altered and now only appears to feature a large mid- to late-20th century red brick and corrugated metal warehouse and adjacent a late-19th or early-20th century commercial building (40 Bridge Street North) [Plate 2.37a and b].



Plate 2.37a Buildings to the eastern edge of the Engine Arm Peninsula

The Enterprise Centre – once the Corporation Yard – comprises a low-lying group of buildings arranged around a series of yards which stretch between Rolfe Street and the canal – sloping down towards it. It contains Rolfe House, the former Fire Station and associated training and storage buildings to the rear with industrial buildings as well as other late-19th and early-20th century buildings including storage / garaging [Plates 2.38 and 39]. The grain is open, with long ranges with shallow footprints [Plate 2.40 and 41]. The scale ranges between one to four storeys. The buildings, particularly the Fire Station, have a very strong relationship with the canal [Plate 2.42]. Roof forms in this area are mostly pitched, materials are red brick and render. The Fire Station and Rolfe House feature fine brickwork arches / quoins and, whilst of differing architectural style, both have an overarching civic or institutional character.



Plate 2.38 Characterful industrial building on the Enterprise Centre site



Plate 2.37b Late 19th-early 20th century commercial building to the eastern edge of the Engine Arm Peninsula



Plate 2.39 Workshop range on the Enterprise Centre site



Plate 2.40 Long ranges at the Enterprise Centre site



Plate 2.41 Long range to the rear of the fire station



Plate 2.42 View of the fire station and surrounding buildings on the Enterprise Centre from the Aqueduct

This area includes **open space** primarily formed of industrial yards with **public realm** largely characterised by swathes of poor-quality hard standing with modern tarmac [Plate 2.43, 44 and 45], and some overgrown vegetation along parts of the canal boundary. There are some intermittent changes in surfaces, including an area of pavers evident at the entrance to the Enterprise Centre (though partially covered in tarmac) [Plate 2.46] and stone setts close to the Engine Arm Canal [Plate 2.47], and there is some drainage ironmongery bearing the names of a local firm (Ridgeacre Foundry, West Bromwich) though its age is unclear.

Key Heritage Assets

- Part in the Galton Valley, Smethwick Summit Conservation Area
- Part in the immediate setting of the Galton Valley, Smethwick Summit Conservation Area
- Former Smethwick Engine House (Scheduled Monument)
- Retaining wall to former Corporation Yard (Grade II) [Plate 2.48]
- Non-designated assets industrial building (300 – See Plate 2.38) on the Enterprise Centre site; see also non-designated assets in the Historic High Street and Canal character areas. 72-80 Rolfe Street [Plate 2.49 and 2.50]
- Other buildings of interest - 40 Bridge Street North (see plates 2.37 a and b)



Plate 2.43 Hard standing of the Enterprise Centre adjacent to the Engine Arm Canal



Plate 2.44 View from the higher levels of the Enterprise Centre north across the canal and modern housing beyond



Plate 2.45 View of an industrial yard at 82 Rolfe Street with curtain wall along the canal



Plate 2.47 Setts close to the Engine Arm at the Enterprise Centre site



Plate 2.48 The retaining wall to the Corporation Yard along the New Main Line covered with vegetation



Plate 2.46 Covered pavers at the entrance to the Enterprise Centre



Plate 2.49 Part of 72-80 Rolfe Street fronting the Engine Arm Canal



Plate 2.50 Parts of 72-80 Rolfe Street, foreground, with views to the Fire Station and Enterprise Centre

Views

- Views of this area are best appreciated from the canal, particularly the Engine Arm Peninsula (although access is currently limited), where the gabled end elevations (some now merely glazed screen walls), former Fire Station training tower, water tower and chimneystack face the canal and reflect the former relationship between the industry and canal (see Plate 2.42)
- Views of the listed concrete wall are almost entirely obscured from the canal (see Plate 2.48), views from Rolfe Street are possible but underwhelming
- Views from Rolfe Street and surrounding streets of Rolfe House and Fire Station buildings are characterful (see Plate 2.50)

Detracting elements

- Poor condition of many buildings.

Opportunities

- Open access to the Engine Arm Peninsula via Bridge Street North and from Rolfe Street via Enterprise Centre
- Remove some foliage from the canal side of the listed concrete wall and introduce appropriate painted interpretation (subject to appropriate paint / medium and ecological value of foliage)
- Remove some of the less significant 20th century buildings in the Enterprise Centre
- The condition of many of buildings at 72-80 is poor so a pragmatic, staged approach needs to be taken. Buildings are first to be categorised in terms of significance, proceeding exercises will need to assess condition and convertibility on a case-by-case basis, noting that the recreation of gabled forms fronting the canal may be the result and if this is the route taken, the reuse of materials should be pursued.



2.3.6 Area 5: Canals

Historic character

This area contains a cohesive and complex series of canal infrastructure associated with the Old Main Line (1768-69) developed by Brindley and the New Main Line (1829-30) by Telford alongside the later Engine Arm Canal (1789-90). The two parallel waterways created 60 years apart, represent distinct engineering and visual differences and reflect the fast-pace of the late-18th and early-19th century infrastructure / engineering feats. What they achieved for Smethwick, over a very short period was to propel it from an interstitial place into an industrial hub. Its character would have been stark, and defined by cuttings, large scale industry to the north, smaller scale industry to the south, and individual wharves.

Plate 2.51 View of the Old Main Line

Summary of character and form

The masterplan area represents two main phases of canal infrastructure and is the point where three waterways converge - featuring towpaths, cuttings and built infrastructure including the Engine Arm Aqueduct (Grade II* and Scheduled), locks and bridges (Grade II and non-designated). This character area is bookended to the west by two large bridges (non-designated heritage assets) and to the east by Bridge Street North / South **[Plates 2.52 and 53]**. Telford's New Main Line is deeper and from the towpaths feels more secluded, despite its proximity to Rolfe Street - it incorporates the surface of the former indexing station **[Plate 2.54]**.

The Old Main Line is more peaceful, set away from the main roads and is lined by modern housing developments on its northern side – some more successful than others **[Plate 2.55]**. The more recent development off Lewisham Road does not relate well to the canals in terms of character, layout and building lines and there is a sea of concrete terracing and steps leading down to the canal **[Plate 2.56]**. The Engine Arm Peninsula is accessed from Bridge Street North (access is private) along the canal corridor with some mostly late-20th century industrial buildings at the eastern end, which do not contribute visually to the area. To the western end areas of tarmac where earlier buildings, such as an Iron Foundry have been removed **[Plate 2.57]**.



Plate 2.52 Brasshouse Lane Bridge



Plate 2.53 Pope Bridge and Bottom Lock along Bridge Street North



Plate 2.54 Remains of the New Main Line indexing station



Plate 2.55 Modern housing along the Old Main Line



Plate 2.56 Modern concrete terracing along the Old Main Line



Plate 2.57 Hard standing on the Engine Arm Peninsula

In terms of **amenity space**, the canal provides an important green corridor which stretches through the otherwise highly urban and industrial setting, providing green public amenity space as a watercourse used for leisure and the towpath used as a walkway / cycleway. The verges and cuttings are heavily planted with mature trees, hedges and grass and the once harsh cuttings of Telford's canal have been softened almost beyond recognition, whilst gaining ecological value. Beyond the Engine Arm Aqueduct, to the east, a wide plateau between the canals allows views to the rear of properties along Rolfe Street and the industrial hinterland [Plate 2.58 and 59]. The enormous man-made landscape features created by the cutting of the canals into and through the natural topography, make a fundamental contribution to the special character and interest of the conservation area. The planted and natural vegetation which has colonised these banks has softened the appearance of the cuttings which, even in the 1920's appears to have still been relatively bare, and they now have significant nature conservation value.



Plate 2.58 Views to the rear of Rolfe Street from a plateau along the Old Main Line



Plate 2.59 Views to the rear of Rolfe Street from a plateau along the Old Main Line

There are many nationally important structures along the canals within the Galton Valley, though many appear to have been listed for their group value. Of those which have considerable intrinsic architectural and/or historic merit, the most notable are Smeaton's Summit Bridge, which is a Scheduled Ancient Monument, Telford's Galton Bridge, a Grade I listed structure [Plate 2.60], and Telford's Engine Arm Aqueduct [Plate 2.61 and 62], which is also a Scheduled Ancient Monument. Whilst these are of national importance as individual structures, and of great architectural and historic significance, their contribution to the special character and appearance of the conservation area is in some ways overridden by the more mundane structures which are evocative of the former atmosphere of life on the canals.



Plate 2.60 Galton Bridge



Plate 2.61 Engine Arm Aqueduct from the New Main Line



Plate 2.62 Engine Arm Aqueduct from the Old Main Line

Key Heritage Assets

- In the Galton Valley, Smethwick Summit Conservation Area
- Listed buildings / structures; Engine Arm Aqueduct (scheduled monument, Grade II*), Top lock (Grade II), middle lock (Grade II) and bottom lock (Grade II) [Plates 2.63, 64, 65, 66]
- Non-designated assets - both Brasshouse Lane Bridges (034 and 035) (see Plate 2.52), Pope's Bridge (046) (see Plate 2.53), Smethwick Gauging / indexing Station (049) (see Plate 2.54), Engine Bridge, Bridge Street North (051) [Plate 2.67], Wall south of Smethwick Locks (069) [Plate 2.68].



Plate 2.63 Bottom Lock



Plate 2.64 Middle Lock



Plate 2.65 Top lock and the reconstructed toll office, leading to the Aqueduct (left) from the east around Middle Lock



Plate 2.66 Top Lock, toll office and aqueduct from the west



Plate 2.67 Engine Bridge



Plate 2.68 Wall along the Old Main Line



Plate 2.69 The Chimney of the pumping house over Brasshouse Lane Bridge (taken from Great Western Road)

Views

General **views** along the towpath capture it as an attractive green corridor and waterway, punctuated by historic infrastructure and with a backdrop of Victorian and Edwardian industrial and civic buildings and modern housing developments. Within the masterplan area there are evocative views of the Pumping House (Grade II) through and from the bridges on Brasshouse Lane [Plate 2.69], and the Engine Arm Aqueduct is one of the most striking assets, with the best views of it obtained from the west along the New Main Line (see Plate 2.61); currently access is limited to the east (but this and views to the Aqueduct could be opened up). Significant views along the canal include an attractive succession of locks (Smethwick Locks) from the Engine Arm towpath bridge, looking east and conversely from Pope's Bridge looking west (see plates 2.63 to 66). Other views can be obtained from

the various bridges, looking along canals hemmed in by industrial buildings. The Fire Station tower is highly visible from a variety of views from the eastern end of the canal, as well as a water tower and chimneystacks within the Canalside Industrial Character Area

[Plate 2.70]. The gables of industrial buildings – the former Iron and Patent Rivet Works – here are highly characteristic of the eastern end of this area and should be retained where possible (see Canalside Industrial Character Area).



Plate 2.70 Views to the Fire Station Tower and industrial buildings from the eastern leg of the Old Main Line

Detracting elements

- Replaced surfaces and railings around the Engine Arm Aqueduct
- Concrete terracing to housing development on the north side of the canal and modern industrial buildings to the east detract from the setting of the heritage assets
- Overgrown planting, covering Grade II-listed wall and obscuring the original form of the canal cuttings

Opportunities

- Enhance visual appearance of concrete terracing on the north side of the canal (public art, planting)
- Better reveal the concrete wall (Grade II), with the potential for appropriate artistic / interpretation
- Introduce connectivity down to the canal, potentially via the Enterprise Centre
- Engine Arm Aqueduct – modern railings and surfaces could be improved (some original surfaces have been removed) to enhance its setting – and provide connection from Enterprise Centre
- Improve landscaping adjacent to Bridge Street North (Pope Bridge / Rolfe Bridge)
- Tarmacked enclave / plant north of the feeder arm could be landscaped

- Modern industrial buildings adjacent to Bridge Street North (Engine Arm Peninsula) – opportunity to connect Bridge Street to the canal - development and landscaping
- Reviewing landscaping of canal cuttings to restore their more angular original form and to open up views (subject to findings of ecological study)

N.B. Previous research has flagged that the site of the Crown Forge (the Enterprise Centre) has considerable archaeological potential. The site of the Smethwick Foundry and Patent Rivet Works both have below-ground and standing archaeological potential, and the site of the malthouse and kilns also have below-ground potential. The wharf to the east of the Engine is also considered to potentially incorporate earlier feeders given it is largely undeveloped.¹² Given the lack of previous investigation it is recommended that investigation into the built and below-ground surviving remains is undertaken prior to development in this area.

12 Upson et al (2002)

3.0 Summary of Significance

3.1 The Masterplan Area

The masterplan area incorporates both the canal network, and the wider urban area that developed in response to the commercial opportunities the nавигаций posed.

The canal network, and associated infrastructure, is of national, and likely international, historic interest illustrating technological development spanning the primary canal building phases of the industrial revolution, reinforced by the proximity of multiple phases of nавигаций to one another. These in turn are associated with major canal engineers including Brindley, Smeaton, and Telford as well as figures such as Bolton and Watt, though the latter has been reduced following removal of the Smethwick Engine.¹³

The broader urban area, most notably the Canalside Industrial Area and the Rolfe Street spine, is of lesser intrinsic importance, with interest primarily founded in the local context, further lessened given significant loss and alteration of both the urban structure and built form in the 20th century in these and the adjoining areas to the south. However, it serves to both contextualise the canal network, including the retention of industrial premises along its course, and illustrate the influence it had on the development and growth of Smethwick as an urban centre at a critical point in its rise to prominence during the 18th and 19th centuries, including the fragmented remnants of key public buildings along Rolfe Street.

13 Upson et al (2003)

3.1.1 Eroded High Street

This area historically included key buildings such as the Theatre Royal, as well as strong residential and commercial frontages. However, these have been lost and replaced with a mix of poor-quality buildings and spatial form lacking in cohesion and enclosure. As such, they do not contribute, and could be said to detract, from the character of the masterplan area.

3.1.2 Historic High Street

This area has also seen significant change and a degree of loss. However, it remains more intact than the Eroded High Street and retains key public and commercial architecture including the Post Office, Rolfe House and the Fire Station which are of some architectural interest as examples of late 19th and early 20th century public design (the Fire Station and Rolfe House in particular are good quality interwar buildings despite detracting later alteration) as well as the commercial frontage of the Enterprise Centre (with views north through its entrance). Together these serve to illustrate the 19th and 20th century growth and development of the area, initially with a strong mix of uses and later with further public service development, in the context the canal.

3.1.3 Industrial Backlands

Historically an area of strong frontages of residential properties, contributing to the mix of uses around Rolfe Street, this area has undergone significant, almost wholesale, alteration including not only the loss of earlier residential and commercial buildings but the erosion of the historic block and road form. This factor, coupled with its poor quality industrial built-form and lack of spatial cohesion means it does not contribute, and could be said to detract, from the Character of the masterplan area.

3.1.4 Canalside Industrial

The built form in this area is of generally limited architectural interest as individual structures, and there has been significant loss of earlier industrial complexes. However, through the areas continued commercial use, remaining fragments of 19th and early 20th century-built form that relate strongly to both the canal and Rolfe Street - most notably sites such as the Patent Rivet Works and Enterprise Centre - and spatial positioning of buildings along and around yards, the area collectively reinforces the historic interest of the canal network and illustrates the importance of industrialisation to the growth of Smethwick as an area.

3.1.5 Canals

The canals are of high historic interest, illustrating several phases of technological innovations in engineering to account for the difficult topography of Smethwick Summit, resulting in both a contour and direct line canal, which span the main periods of canal building in Britain. These are in turn associated nationally with major canal engineers including Brindley, Telford, and Smeaton and locally with firms producing much of the infrastructure.¹⁴

The conservation area appraisal draws attention to the masterplan area as a significant part of the wider navigations given the particular proximity to the junction of both navigations and the close succession of key surviving-built form including Telford's Engine Arm Aqueduct, itself of significant architectural interest, from which both main lines and the canal feeder are visible with their varying topography, Smethwick Locks, remains of the indexing station, an early brick roving bridge as well as the accurate reconstruction of the toll office.¹⁵ The area also includes an early reinforced concrete retaining wall to the Enterprise Centre along the New Main Line, adding to the area's illustration of technological innovation.

¹⁴ *Upson et al (2003)*

¹⁵ *Ibid*

Appendix I – Character Area Map

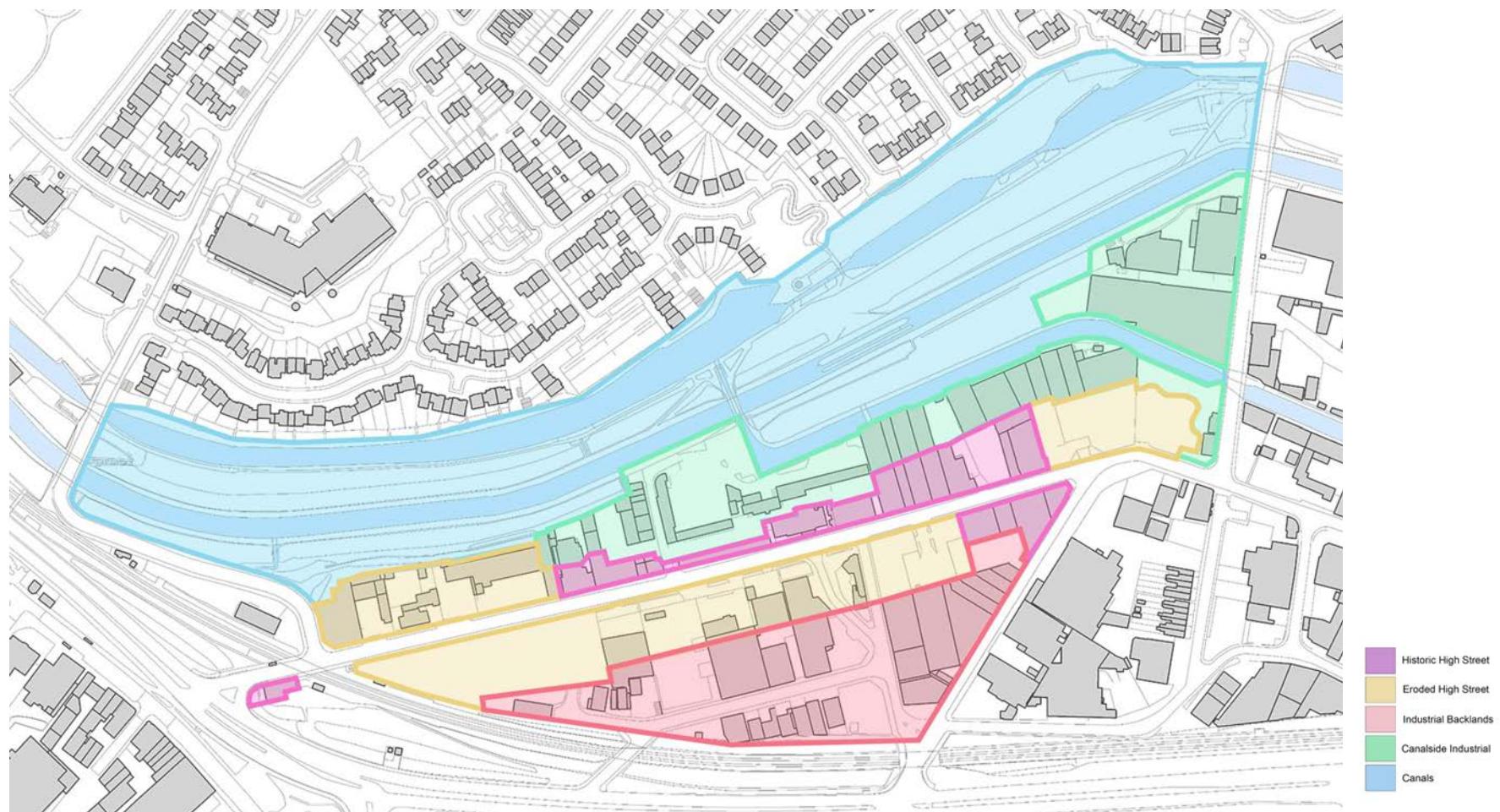


Plate I.1 Character Areas, Insalls, November 2022

Appendix II – The Enterprise Centre

Overall significance

N.B. reference below is made to the 2022 draft Local List. Whilst these assets were not identified on the published Local List, relevant buildings are nonetheless considered non-designated heritage assets given identification in schedules from relevant background documents identified in Appendix IV.

This area started life as the Crown Works or Crown Forge, developed by the time of the 1839 tithe map. The Crown Works estate was purchased by the Smethwick Corporation in 1897 and became the Corporation Yard by 1900, with a range of buildings developed fronting Rolfe Street, arranged in courtyards and with a wharf area adjacent to the Engine Arm Canal. These buildings were used for storage, warehousing and included a fire station and ambulance service buildings.

As a whole, the '**103: Smethwick New Enterprise Centre**' has been identified in the Council's draft *Local List* (2022) and its significance has been set at 'B3': 'Lesser Intrinsic architectural interest but of historic interest or considerable townscape merit'. With priority for retention set at 'R2': 'Efforts should be sought to retain, refurbish and convert the building to new uses, following archaeological assessment and/or recording.' The buildings are all located within the Smethwick Summit, Galton Valley Conservation Area and most buildings within the complex contribute to its significance.

The buildings collectively have strong group value as part of the former Corporation Yard and most have a strong visual and functional relationship with the canal, particularly the Engine Arm Canal and the Grade II*-listed Engine Arm Aqueduct. The complex is of **moderate historic interest** for its association with Smethwick Corporation as the former works yard encompassing the local fire service and accommodation, ambulance service as well as other works departments and including warehousing / storage space. The site has potential archaeological significance as the location of the former Crown Works / Forge. The buildings **vary in their architectural value and contribution to the townscape**, intrinsically or given modern alterations and this is expanded upon below. The **setting** of the



Plate II.1 Significance Plan of the Enterprise Centre, Insalls, November 2022

buildings has evolved over the past 100 years and there are large expanses of tarmac areas, now used for carparking. Whilst the surfaces and presence of cars detract, the open spaces between buildings and adjacent to the canal are areas of transit and evoke the former relationship between the buildings and the canal and road networks.

Individual Buildings and significance

Building 100

A long-range comprising two sections; one of one-storey and an adjoining two-storey section. Both portions are simple, of red and Staffordshire blue brick and early-20th century. They front Rolfe Street with largely blind and almost identical elevations – with inset brick panels and small high-level windows or vents. The rear elevations feature segmental arched openings with tiled cills, a dentil cornice, stone kneelers and replacement windows – the most architecturally interesting elevation. A continuous gallery passes over both buildings at first floor. The two-storey portion features a blue and red brick ground floor, some segmental arched openings, other concrete lintels and is clad in timber (later alterations), replacement windows and is less interesting that the single storey portion. Possibly parts were used for electrical / power distribution services. The buildings are of **moderate to low architectural significance** and present largely blind elevations to Rolfe Street, which in townscape terms detract. This is alleviated by the panelled brickwork to some extent. The replacement windows, doors, gallery and vents to the street **detract**.

Building 200

A two-storey brick-built building with pitched slated roof, early-20th century. It was probably used for storage or transhipment of goods and still retains large ground floor openings onto the former wharf area. Its north elevation to the canal is two-storeys with a variety of openings arranged asymmetrically under segmental arched lintels; some metal-framed windows and later replacements. Its elevation to Building 100 is single-storey and features a series of large, probably interwar, window openings alongside later replacements. The building is of **moderate to low architectural significance**.

Building 300

This building appears to be a former warehouse, probably very early 20th century (likely contemporary with Building 200). It is of four storeys, of red brick with metal-framed windows with segmental-arched lintels, large ground floor openings set under metal lintels facing the canal and features a timber, slate-clad hoist on its south elevation (which is three storeys given the change in level) and a pitched, slated roof. It features a chunky modern fire escape and lean-to extensions to the north, which appear to be part of a building training programme, which are of **no interest / detract**. This building is of **moderate architectural value** as a typical late-19th or early-20th century warehouse, which retains historic features including metal-framed windows, wide ground floor openings and a timber-clad hoist – which evoke its former use and association with the canal.

Building 400

A single storey range which steps down the ramp to the lower wharf-level of the former Corporation Yard. Early-20th century, brick-built storage or workshops

with metal-framed windows and wide timber doors, some altered. Though a rather humble set of buildings they are characterful and have townscape presence as part of the former Corporation Yard and are of **low to moderate architectural value**. The roller shutters and other later alterations **detract**.

Building 500

Single storey buildings which are only really discernible from the former wharf area / carpark. They comprise a brick retaining wall to the car ramp and flat roofs. They appear to be interwar, with a late-20th century portion to the north. They are of **little architectural interest**.

Buildings 600 and 700

A complex of early-20th, interwar and late-20th century buildings arranged around a courtyard and with sections facing Rolfe Street. Red brick with blue brick bases, one- or two-storeys. Functional garaging / storage buildings, some with gables containing oculi and inset brick panels facing Rolfe Street (these façades are likely interwar). Most have pitched slated roofs, some with cowled vents whilst there are some roofs with corrugated aluminium coverings. Adaptations include alterations to the garage doors, uPVC windows, rebuilt yard-facing sections which appear to be late-20th century, designed to match but fail given brick selection and detailing. They are of **low architectural value**. The roller shutters, uPVC windows and modern extensions **detract**.

67 and 68 Rolfe Street are located adjacent to Building 600 and front Rolfe Street. They are residential in character and appear to date from the early-20th century, potentially used as Corporation staff housing. They are two storeys, red brick with a

blue brick base and stone dressings (painted white), windows are timber or uPVC replacement, and doors are plain boarded. They are of **low architectural value** and have been altered but do contribute to the townscape as remaining elements of the residential character of the high street.

Building 800

Former Fire Station engine sheds / storage. A very utilitarian, two storey range dating from the 1940s or 50s, which negotiates the change in level – presenting one storey to the rear of the Former Fire Station. It has a strong relationship with the Engine Arm Canal, where the water was drawn from for firefighting. Of their time for their functional design, but of **little architectural interest**.

Building 900

This is identified separately from the Enterprise Centre and is numbered **104** on the draft *Local List* (2022). The significance of **the Former Fire Station** has been set at 'B3': 'Lesser Intrinsic architectural interest but of historic interest or considerable townscape merit'. With priority for retention set at 'R2': 'Efforts should be sought to retain, refurbish and convert the building to new uses, following archaeological assessment and/or recording'. It was built in c.1910 as the Warley Fire Brigade headquarters, it has been heavily altered in successive phases.

The 1910 building comprises the red brick training tower, which is a significant townscape element (visible in numerous views within and into the conservation area). The portion facing Rolfe Street features fine arched openings at ground floor, which have been blocked; these reflect the original 1910 building but are

likely interwar, along with the entrance bay adjacent – these portions are of slightly lesser architectural value, but conceal the late-20th century glazed side extensions which detract – overall these portions are of **moderate architectural value**. The later rendered extensions facing Rolfe Street and to the rear are possibly also interwar, they are clunky, diminish the training tower and **detract**. The replacement windows and blocked openings **detract**.

105: Rolfe House (former fire brigade flats), has been identified in the draft *Local List* (2022) and its significance has been set at 'B3': 'Lesser Intrinsic architectural interest but of historic interest or considerable townscape merit'. With priority for retention set at 'R2': 'Efforts should be sought to retain, refurbish and convert the building to new uses, following archaeological assessment and/ or recording.'

Rolfe House was built in 1933 to house married firemen. It is in an interwar domestic Neo-Geo style typically found in housing association flats, which is slightly at odds with its high street location. It is of two- and three-storeys, in red brick with quoin detailing and voussoired lintels. Its second floor is rendered and it features a hipped slated roof over the taller central portion and gambrel roofs over the lower outer bays. It is of **low to moderate architectural value**. Its windows are uPVC replacements, the porch and rear infill extension are also modern - all **detract**.

107 Former Patent Rivet Works (80 Rolfe Street) and **074 Elevations to Engine Arm Canal – Birmingham Feeder Canal** are identified on the draft *Local List* (2022).

The significance of **107 Former Patent Rivet Works (80 Rolfe Street)** is categorised 'B2' 'Moderate intrinsic interest but of significant historic interest or considerable townscape merit, with a retention category of 'R2': 'Efforts should be sought to retain, refurbish and convert the building to new uses, following archaeological assessment and/or recording.' Its archaeological value is set at 'A2', 'Sites considered to have moderate potential'.

Established by 1839 (shown in the tithe map of this date). The site appears to retain some early built fabric, though has been altered. The sheds stretching back from the canal have been re-roofed, but slates may survive beneath modern coverings. They retain a historic water tower and chimneystack, which are townscape elements – particularly visible from the canal. Individually, they of limited architectural value but present an attractive range of gabled red brick elevations, which front directly onto the canal and represent the former intrinsic relationship between the works and the canal. N.B. the earlier elevations / portions of the complex are of higher historic value.

074 Elevations to Engine Arm Canal – Birmingham Feeder Canal are identified as being of '**vital importance to the character and appearance of the Engine Arm**', with their significance at 'Level 3': 'Buildings and structures of moderate intrinsic architectural or historic interest given greater significance by their being part of a group of structures of similar date, form and function resulting in their being of national significance.'

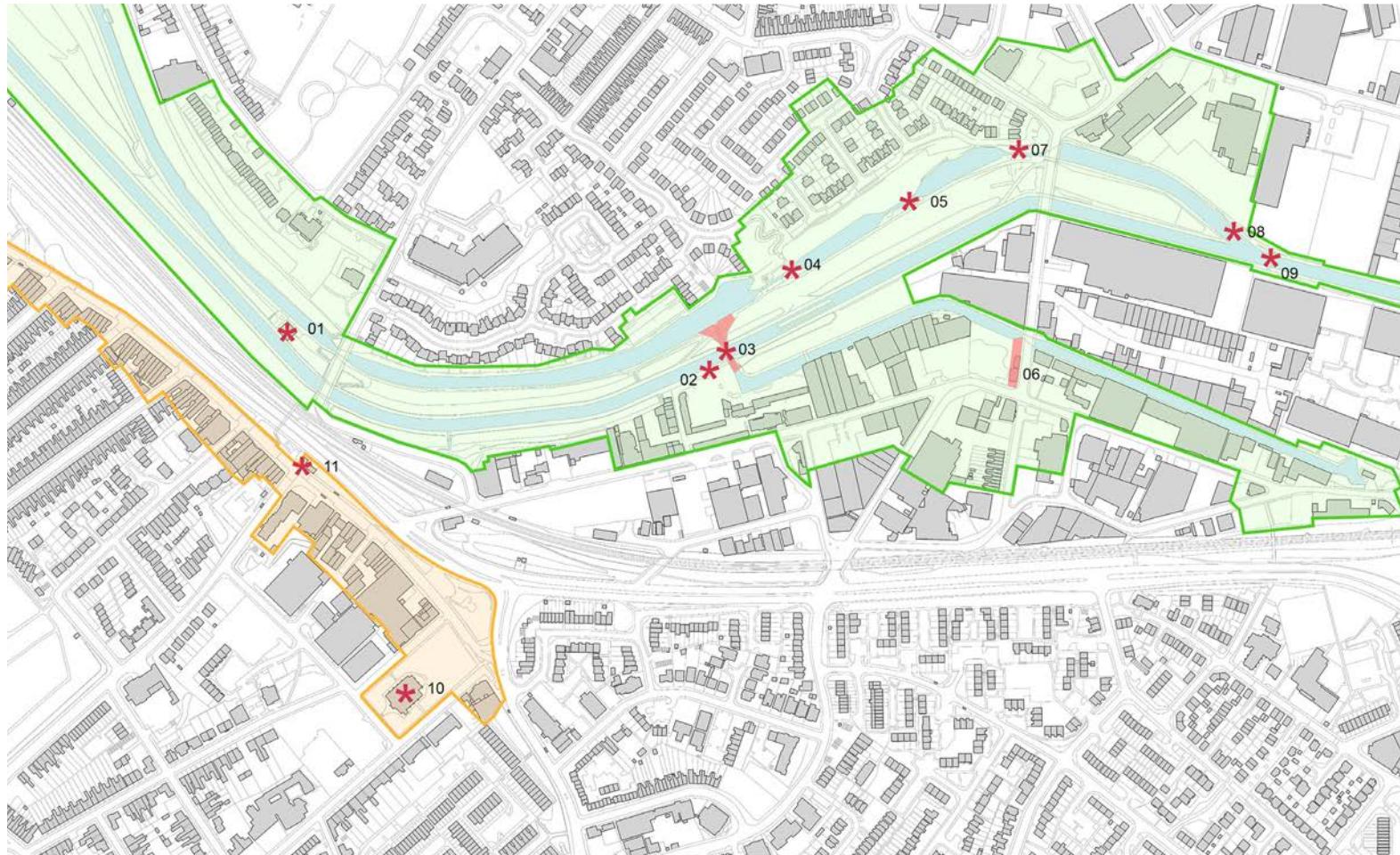
They are 19th and 20th century red brick buildings associated with the former Smethwick Iron Foundry and later Motor Rim Works and Steel Constructional Works, forming the south side of the Engine Arm Canal, mostly semi-derelict with blocked openings. Some still stretch back towards Rolfe Street, whilst others have been demolished behind the façade or almost gutted due to fire damage. They are of varied architectural value individually but present an attractive range of slightly staggered gabled elevations, which front directly onto the canal and are evocative of the former direct relationship between the works and the canal. N.B. The earlier elevations are of higher historic value.

108 Former Smethwick Wharf was noted in the 2002 survey and *Local List*. It is likely to have some archaeological value given its former function but noting appears to survive above-ground. N.B. inspection from nearby bridge only.

Full condition surveys are advisable to determine accurate refurbishment and conversion costs before making any decision on full / partial demolition. Where buildings are to be removed in any forthcoming masterplan or as part of the Towns Fund project, the process of archaeological and/or architectural recording should be carried out prior to demolition and where possible, fabric could be reused in future proposals and the character / style of the buildings could form the basis of new buildings in the forthcoming design codes.

N.B. no internal inspections were carried out as part of this assessment.

Appendix III - Relevant Statutory List Descriptions



- Smethwick Summit, Galton Valley, Conservation Area
- Smethwick High Street Conservation Area
- Scheduled Monuments
- Listed Building
- 1 Smethwick Pumping Station
- 2 Retaining Wall to Corporation Yard
- 3 Engine Arm Aqueduct
- 4 Top Lock
- 5 Middle Lock
- 6 Smethwick Engine
- 7 Bottom Lock
- 8 Footbridge 190m east of Bridge Street
- 9 Footbridge 230m east of Bridge Street
- 10 Holy Trinity
- 11 Toll Office

Plate III.1 Designated Assets

III.I Within the Masterplan Area

Retaining Wall to Former Corporation Yard

Grade: II

List Entry Number: 1391126

GV II Retaining wall. c.1910 for Smethwick Corporation Depot by C. J. Fox Allin, Borough Engineer. Reinforced concrete. Linear stretch of wall approx. 50m long running parallel to the south side of the Birmingham Canal. To the south face, only the parapet is visible. To the north face, there is a band below the parapet then the rest of the approx. 10m high wall. In profile, the wall is canted towards the Canal side, with triangular buttresses positioned along the south land side, both parts supported by concrete footings. Listed for its technological interest as an early reinforced concrete wall, as well as for its strong group value with the Grade I Engine Arm Aqueduct; there is an interesting juxtaposition between these two works of engineering that each took full advantage of the innovative structural and design of their respective periods.

Engine Arm Aqueduct, Birmingham Canal Wolverhampton Level

Grade: II*, List Entry Number: 1391874

Designation: Scheduled, List Entry Number: 1005904

GV II* An iron trough aqueduct with tow path roving bridge. Built circa 1828 by Thomas Telford to carry the Engine Arm of the Wolverhampton level canal over the deep cutting of Telford's new Birmingham mainline navigation and thus ensure the continued supply of water from the Rotton Park Reservoir.

PLAN: The aqueduct is orientated north west to south east and has a tow path on both east and west side. The towpath roving bridge lies on the north west end of the aqueduct, is orientated north east to south west, and has blue engineering brick with stone copings and rusticated stone arch details. It was conceived as an integral part of the aqueduct scheme to allow the towpath to cross the entrance to the aqueduct.

MATERIALS: The aqueduct is an iron trough supported on a single span, cross braced to counter the outward thrust of the weight of water carried, springing from stone and brick abutments. **ELEVATION:** Both the east and west face of the aqueduct are of the same design with decorative ironwork tracery of three orders; the grid-work of the cross bracing rises from a single span arch with fluted gothic columns supporting pointed arches and pierced quartrefoil spandrels above; plain square section railings, rising to trefoil arches immediately below the simple rolled hand rail. The handrail terminates in short octagonal stone end piers, seven faces of which have recessed oblong panels with decorative blind tracery, echoing the trefoil arches of the railings. Sloping octagonal stone copings, cap the piers. The abutments are constructed in engineering brick in English bond with deep rusticated stone coins and copings. The towpath has a brick surface with raised footholds. The humpbacked towpath roving bridge is constructed of blue engineering brick, in English bond with a flattened elliptical arch, and vermiculated rustication to the stone quoins. Sloping abutments set at 90° to bridge, or its south side, carry the tow path from the level of the aqueduct over the bridge, and have plain curved stone copings.

SOURCES: 'Smethwick: Communications', A History of the County of Staffordshire: Volume 17 (1976), 96-8; <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.asp?compid=36174>. Date accessed: 25 September 2006. **SUMMARY OF IMPORTANCE:** The Engine Arm Aqueduct is an unaltered example of a C19 iron trough aqueduct and canal roving bridge, which survives intact with elegant Gothic design details by the renowned engineer Thomas Telford. The aqueduct is an example of Telford's work at its best, demonstrating technical innovation in his use of the iron trough method which allowed aqueducts to securely straddle a far greater width than traditional masonry methods. The broad span latticework arch demonstrates Telford's development of engineering techniques which was taken further in his later work on suspension bridges and road bridges. The aqueduct also has strong group value with Telford's improvement scheme to the Birmingham mainline canal.

Top lock of three, Smethwick Locks with attached footbridge (approximately 270 metres west, South West of Bridge Street Birmingham Canal Wolverhampton level)

Grade: II

List Entry Number: 1077162

Canal lock and footbridge. Probably 1790 when the original Smethwick summit level of 1769 was lowered to that of the Wolverhampton pound. Brick with sand- stone kerbstones partly replaced by concrete. Cast-iron sluice gear at upper and lower ends. Single gates. The lower end of the lock chamber is spanned by a brick footbridge which has a single elliptical arch and parapets with sand- stone copings, partly rebuilt

on the east side. The locks were by-passed when the Smethwick cutting on the Birmingham Level was completed in 1829.

**Middle lock of three, Smethwick Locks
(approximately 140 metres west of Bridge Street)
Birmingham Canal Wolverhampton level**

Grade: II

List Entry Number: 1215330

Canal lock. Probably 1790, when the original Smethwick summit level of 1769 was lowered to that of the Wolverhampton pound. Brick with sandstone kerbstones partly replaced by concrete. Cast-iron sluice gear at upper end. Single gates. The locks were by-passed when the Smethwick cutting on the Birmingham level was completed in 1829.

**Bottom lock of three, Smethwick Locks
immediately west of Bridge Street Birmingham
Canal Wolverhampton level**

Grade: II

List Entry Number: 1077129

Canal lock. Probably 1790, when the original Smethwick summit level of 1769 was lowered to that of the Wolverhampton pound. Brick with sandstone kerbstones partly replaced by concrete. Cast-iron sluice gear at upper and lower ends. Single gates. The locks were by-passed when the Smethwick cutting on the Birmingham Level was completed in 1829.

Smethwick Engine House

Designation: Scheduled

List Entry Number: 1005887

No list entry sourced. Generated from an Old County Number.

III.II In the setting of the masterplan area

**Smethwick New Pumping House Approximately
50m North West of Brasshouse Lane Birmingham
Canal Birmingham Level**

Grade: II

List Entry Number: 1077154

Pumping house between Smeaton's Old Main Line on the Wolverhampton Level and Telford's New Main Line on the Birmingham Level. 1892. Brick with slate roof. One storey to Old Main Line and two storeys to New Main Line. Lower storey has four-bay blind arcade with impost band, and a smaller doorway within right-hand arch. The upper storey has four windows with segmental heads, the two right-hand ones blocked, and a drip course. Miniature false machicolation to the eaves; adjoining to the left is the ashes hole with a doorway for removing the ash. Hipped slate roof in two spans, with louvred ridge ventilators. Right-hand return wall of three bays, with blocked windows. North-east wall, facing upper level, has two wide elliptical arches with smaller inner segmental arches. The right-hand one is blocked, the left-hand one is a doorway. In front of the right-hand archway are the foundation walls of the coal hole. Interior: steel roof trusses. History: This pumping house replaced two earlier pumping stations on the Engine Arm of the Birmingham Canal. It was the last to be erected on this section of the canal and housed two vertical compound engines driving centrifugal pumps capable of lifting 200 locks per day. In 1905 one engine was removed for use at Bentley, the remaining one being in use until the early 1920s. The pumphouse is a prominent feature of the canalside landscape.

Church of Holy Trinity, High Street

Grade: II

List Entry Number: 1077093

Church. 1887 - 9 by Francis Bacon of Newbury. Tower and spire, and some re-used stone, remain from previous church of 1838 by Thomas Johnson of Lichfield. Punched sandstone ashlar with some limestone dressings and imitation slate roofs. Comprises a west tower with spire, nave and chancel under a continuous roof, and north and south aisles under pitched roofs. The west tower has clasping buttresses, and a pointed west doorway with lancet window above. On each side are two lancet bell openings. The spire is set back behind a parapet. Both aisles have a west window of four lights with Geometrical tracery. The aisles have paired lancet windows with buttresses between bays. The north aisle is of five bays and has a doorway to the right of its eastern bay. The south aisle is of four bays, with a gabled porch to the left which has a pointed doorway. The east window of the north aisle is a triple stepped lancet above a lean-to Vestry. The east windows of the south aisle and chancel have Geometrical tracery, the former of three lights, the latter of six lights. Interior: five-bay arcades with round piers, foliated capitals and pointed arches. Two western bays on each side filled by late C20 concrete block walls and west end of nave partitioned to form foyer. Main nave roof trusses have tie-beams, arch-braced collars, king-posts and central vertical iron rods. Alternate trusses have scissor-braced collars. The moulded pointed chancel arch has clustered columns as responds.

Toll House, 115, High Street

Grade: II

List Entry Number: 1077114

Toll house. Probably late C18. Originally on Birmingham, Dudley and Wolverhampton turnpike, formed in 1760. Stuccoed brick with slate roof. Two storeys. Windows sashed with glazing bars. North and south walls both of one bay. First floor window of south wall blind, with painted glazing bars. West wall, facing street, of three bays, the two outer bays canted back. On the first floor in the middle bay is a blind recess with pointed head, probably for a toll board. Door in left-hand bay. Chimney on ridge.

Footbridge at Junction with Birmingham**Canal, Smethwick Junction (approximately 190 metres east of Bridge Street Birmingham Level Wolverhampton Level**

Grade: II

List Entry Number: 1342672

Canal footbridge. 1828. Cast-iron. Brick abutments have sandstone dressings. Single elliptical arch. Sides each of two castings, bolted to central "keystone". Pierced in form of saltire crosses, with band of quatrefoils below handrail. Spandrel inscribed: "HORSELEY IRON WORKS STAFFORDSHIRE 1828". Southern abutment partly repaired with C20 brick and concrete.

Footbridge at Junction with Wolverhampton level**(approximately 230 Metres East of bridge Street)****Birmingham Canal Birmingham level**

Grade: II

List Entry Number: 1214908

Canal footbridge. 1828. Cast-iron. Brick abutments have sandstone dressings. Single elliptical arch. Sides each of two castings, bolted to central "keystone". Pierced in form of saltire crosses, with band of quatrefoils below handrail. Spandrel inscribed: "HORSELEY IRON WORKS STAFFORDSHIRE 1828". Southern abutment partly repaired with C20 brick and concrete.

Appendix IV – Non-designated Heritage Assets

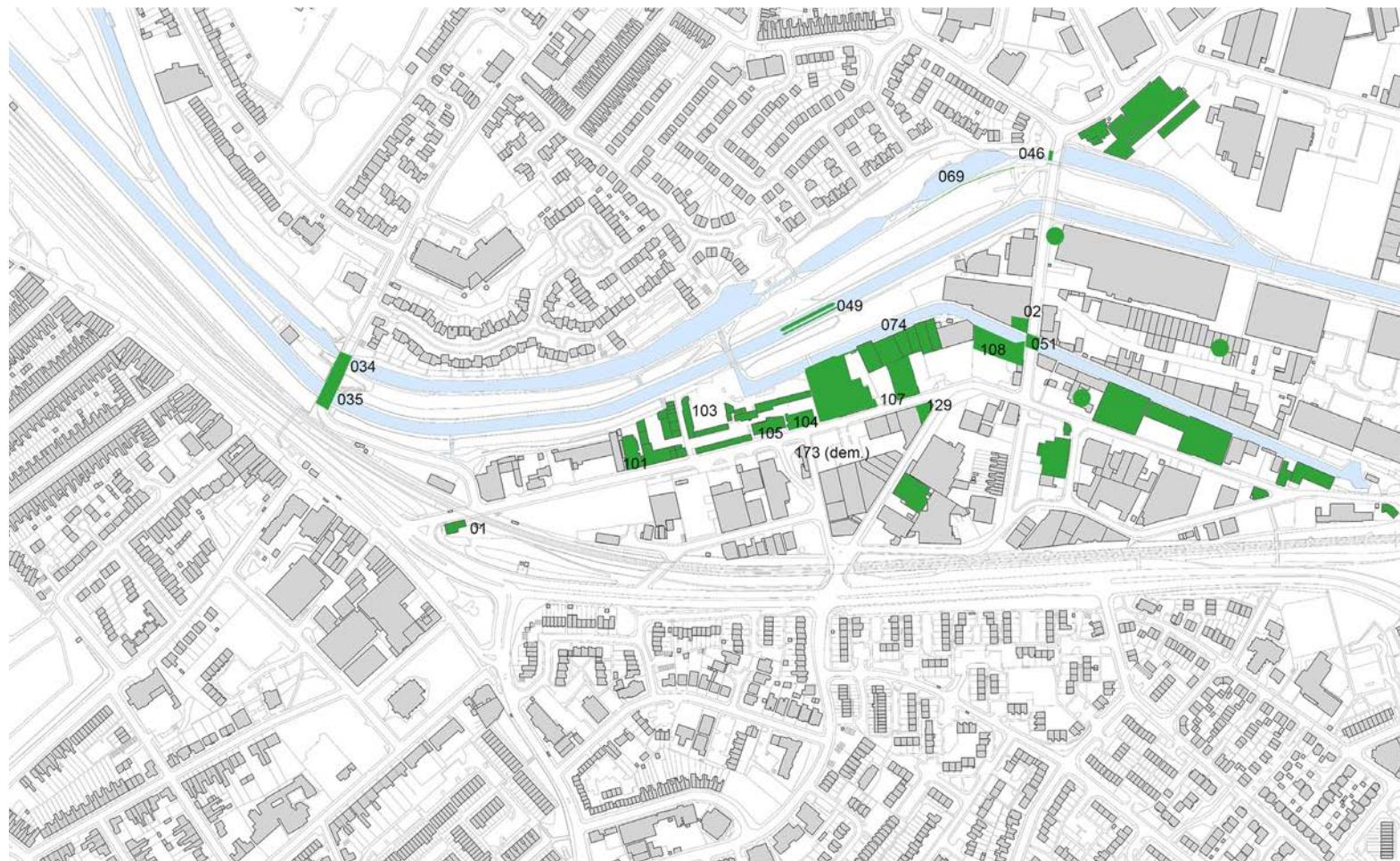


Plate IV.I Non-designated Heritage Assets, Donald Insalls, October 2022 (Reference numbers overleaf)

Schedule of recommendations for local listing adapted from the Audit of Heritage Assets within 'Smethwick Summit Galton Valley, Smethwick, Conservation Area Appraisal' (Upson, Kirkham, Cox and Potter 2002)

Asset No.	Name of Building or structure	Type/Description	Assessment of Significance		Conservation Officer's Local List Recommendation
034	Brasshouse Lane Bridge over Birmingham Canal, Wolverhampton Level	Constructed in 1790 as part of Smeaton's major scheme to lower the Old Main Line over Smethwick Summit. The original span is of red brown brick shown clearly on OS 1 st edition but has been widened.	Much altered but retains evidence of its early manifestation	4	Yes
035	Brasshouse Lane Bridge over Birmingham Canal, Birmingham Level	Built 1826 over New Main Line and widened in blue brick 1890's together with massive retaining wall to North Western Rd.	The widened structure is substantial but architecturally uninspired	6	Yes
046	Pope's Bridge, carrying Bridge Street North over Birmingham Canal, Wolverhampton Level	Original bridge carried Bridge Street over Brindley's bottom lock. Modified to accommodate parallel lock of 1790, with roving bridge attached to west side, and again to allow road widening.	Retains evidence of Brindley's bottom lock within much altered fabric which documents its history.	4	Yes
049	Smethwick gauging station, Birmingham Canal, Birmingham Level, 470m east of Brasshouse Lane Bridge	Gauging and indexing station on New Main Line. Unlike toll islands at Bromford and Winson Green, the two 'prows' are dissimilar. 1857 survey shows a footbridge crossing above the islands, the 1890 OS shows a long building extending the length of the structure.	An interesting feature of the canal system though surviving remains unable to convey original form or function unaided	4	Yes
051	Engine Bridge, carrying Bridge Street North over Engine Arm Feeder Canal	Bridge carrying Bridge Street over Engine Arm canal. Original span of red brick, subject to later widening.		4	Yes
069	Wall to south of Smethwick locks, Birmingham Canal, Wolverhampton Level, 100m west of Pope's Bridge, Bridge Street North	Wall of mixed materials – stone, brick, slag/clinker	As 068	6	Yes
074	Elevations to Engine Arm canal – Birmingham Canal Feeder	19 th and v. early 20 th century brick elevations forming south side of Engine Arm canal, mostly semi-derelict with blocked openings	Of vital importance to the character and appearance of the Engine Arm	3	Yes

**Classification of levels of significance,
(see column five in above table)**

- | | |
|---|---|
| <p>1 Buildings and structures of very high intrinsic architectural or historic interest giving them considerable national significance</p> <p>2 Buildings and structures of high intrinsic architectural or historic interest and of national significance, and features of fundamental importance to the special interest and character of the conservation area</p> <p>3 Buildings and structures of moderate intrinsic architectural or historic interest given greater significance by their being part of a group of structures of similar date, form and function resulting in their being of national significance</p> <p>4 Individual buildings and structures of moderate intrinsic architectural or historic interest, and those of lesser intrinsic interest given greater significance by their being part of a group of structures of similar date, form and function resulting in their being of high regional significance</p> | <p>5 Buildings and structures of lesser intrinsic architectural or historic interest, which individually, or as part of a group make a very positive contribution to the special interest and character of the conservation area</p> <p>6 Structures and features of little intrinsic architectural or historic interest, but which make a positive contribution to the special interest and character of the conservation area</p> <p>7. Structures and features which currently make little contribution to the special interest and character of the conservation area.</p> |
|---|---|

Schedule of recommendations for local listing adapted from the Audit of Heritage Assets within 'Soho Technology Park, Smethwick, Historic Landscape Appraisal' (Upson, Kirkham and Potter 2002) within Smethwick Summit, Galton Valley, Conservation Area Appraisal and Boundary Review (2003)

Asset No.	Name of building or structure	Type/Description	Level of significance	Priority for retention	Conservation Officer's Local List Recommendation
103	Smethwick New Enterprise Centre, Rolfe Street, Smethwick	Former corporation depot containing interesting mix of early 20 th century buildings and early reinforced concrete retaining wall [075]	B3	R2	Yes
104	Former Fire Station, adj 69 Rolfe Street, Smethwick	Warley fire brigade headquarters, built 1910	B3	R2	Yes
105	Rolfe House, (former Fire Brigade flats), 69 Rolfe Street, Smethwick	Block of 12 flats for married firemen, built 1933	B3	R2	Yes
107	Patent Rivet Works, 80 Rolfe Street, Smethwick	Established by 1842, site appears to retain some survival of early built fabric	A2/B2	R2 (part)	Yes
128	173 Rolfe Street, (Crown and Anchor PH), Smethwick	One of 12 public houses on Rolfe Street in 1857. Originally at apex of junction of New Street and Cross Street.	B3	R2	Yes
129	160 Rolfe Street, (former Bank), Smethwick	Two pre 1857 properties shown as bank on 1885 OS. Maybe late Victorian remodelling in stucco with ashlar base and quoins, pediments at IFL and ornate cornice	B3	R2	Yes

KEY TO CLASSIFICATIONS USED IN AUDIT OF HERITAGE ASSETS

Classification of levels of significance (of extant buildings and structures) in table adapted from Soho Technology Park Study:

- B1** High intrinsic architectural or historic interest
- B2** Moderate intrinsic architectural interest but of significant historic interest or considerable townscape merit
- B3** Lesser intrinsic architectural interest but of historic interest or considerable townscape merit
- B4** Lesser intrinsic architectural interest but of some townscape merit

Priority for retention (of extant buildings and structures):

- R1** To be preserved *in situ*
- R2** Efforts should be sought to retain, refurbish and convert the building to new uses, following archaeological assessment and/or recording
- R3** An approved programme of archaeological assessment and/or recording should be carried out prior to development

Classification of levels of significance (of buried archaeological potential):

- A1** Sites considered to have high potential
- A2** Sites considered to have moderate potential
- A3** Sites considered to have some archaeological potential

Schedule adapted from Audit of Heritage Assets within Soho Technology Park Study Area, identifying additional assets for potential inclusion within the proposed revised boundary of the conservation area, adapted from 'Soho Technology Park, Smethwick, Historic Landscape Appraisal' (Upson, Kirkham and Potter 2002) within Smethwick Summit, Galton Valley, Conservation Area Appraisal and Boundary Review (2003)

Asset No.	Name of structure / site	Type / Description	Level of significance	Priority for Retention
101	Former Post Office	1890 former head post office	B4	R2
108	Smethwick Wharf	Open wharf to the Engine Arm Canal for supply of coal to Smethwick Engine. Routes of former feeder channels cross site. Boundary wall to Rolfe Street still survives	A2	-

Classification of levels of significance (of extant buildings and structures) in table adapted from Soho Technology Park Study:

- B1** High intrinsic architectural or historic interest
- B2** Moderate intrinsic architectural interest but of significant historic interest or considerable townscape merit
- B3** Lesser intrinsic architectural interest but of historic interest or considerable townscape merit
- B4** Lesser intrinsic architectural interest but of some townscape merit

Priority for retention (of extant buildings and structures):

- R1** To be preserved *in situ*
- R2** Efforts should be sought to retain, refurbish and convert the building to new uses, following archaeological assessment and/or recording
- R3** An approved programme of archaeological assessment and/or recording should be carried out prior to development

Black Country Local Heritage List, <https://www.blackcountrylocallist.org.uk/>

- 01** Rolfe Street Station, Rolfe Street, Smethwick

Other buildings of interest

- 02** 40-41 Bridge Street North

Appendix V – Bibliography

Published Sources

- Anne Upson, Bettina Kirkham. *Smethwick Summit, Galton Valley Conservation Area: Appraisal and Boundary Review* (2003)
- Anne Upson, Bettina Kirkham, Samantha Potter. *Soho Technology Park Historic Landscape Appraisal* (2002)

Online resources

- A P Baggs, G C Baugh, C R J Currie and Johnson D A, 'Smethwick: Introduction', in *A History of the County of Stafford: Volume 17, Offlow Hundred (Part)*, ed. M W Greenslade (London, 1976), pp. 87-88. British History Online <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/vch/staffs/vol17/pp87-88>
- Black Country History, <https://www.blackcountryhistory.org/>
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