

Loxley Road Character Study

1 Context

There has long been a core of settlement on the east side of the river crossing, and the crossing itself is naturally the focus of a number of roads, major and minor, leading in to Stratford.

However, Loxley Road is the most minor of these roads; leading only to the small hamlet of Loxley, south-east of Stratford.



Plate 1: Aerial view of study area
Image from Stratford upon Avon District Council

2 Site and setting: introduction

This area is part of Bridgetown, the suburban area immediately south of the River Avon where four approach roads converge on the Clopton Bridge, a Scheduled Ancient Monument but also the site of the heaviest traffic of Stratford's road network.

Loxley Road carries some traffic towards the small hamlet of Loxley to the south. Observation, however, indicates constant traffic, more than was anticipated and not restricted to peak periods. It is connected to Banbury Road through two estates, but these are not major traffic routes.

2.1 Landscape

Towards its junction with Tiddington Road the area is flat, essentially part of the river floodplain. To the south-east there is a very slight rise, to a height of 47m at the cross-roads with Knights Lane (just outside the study area); this continues to Loxley itself (about 90m) and Long Hill to its south (129m).

The entire length of the built-up area lies on river terrace gravels.¹

¹ Geological Survey sheet 200, 1974.

2.2 General character and plan form summary

This is a residential area characterised by relatively small and relatively shallow plots, although these become slightly larger (especially longer) to the east end of the area. This is a characteristic area of inter-war 'ribbon development', with some vacant plots being infilled in the post-war period. The area consists of one slightly sinuous 'ribbon' road – Loxley Road – together with Manor Road, a former farm track, connecting with Banbury Road to the south. The plan form and architectural characteristics of this area do not readily suggest subdivision into smaller units.

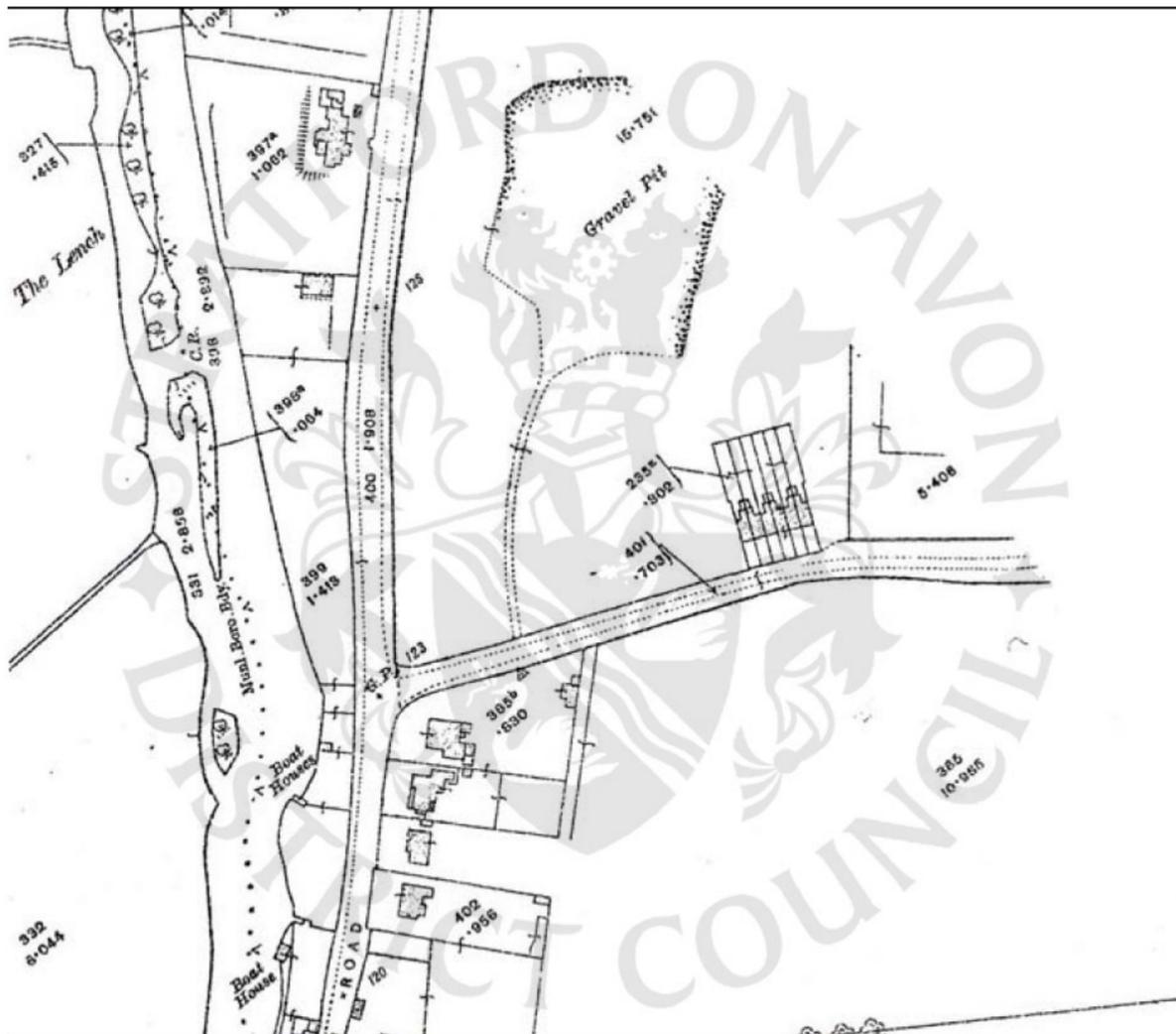
2.3 Landmarks/views

There are no landmarks within the area and no significant views or vistas. The road itself is sufficiently sinuous to prevent long vistas. From the slightly higher ground to the east there are longer views into the area, although they principally show only a residential roofscape.

3 Historical development: overview

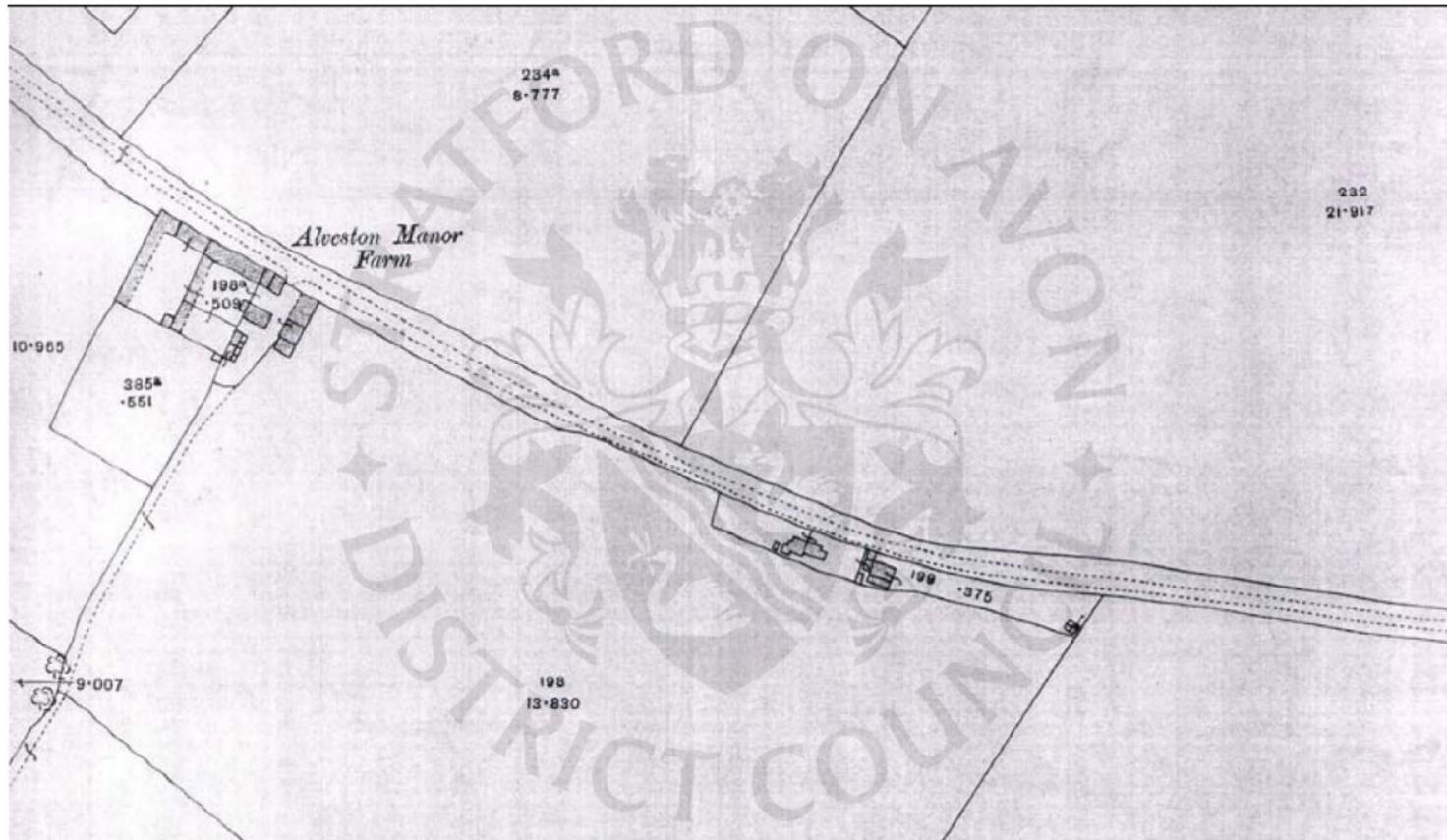
This area was being developed on a large scale in the inter-war period, with infill continuing in the post-war period.

3.1 Details of the study area, using historical maps



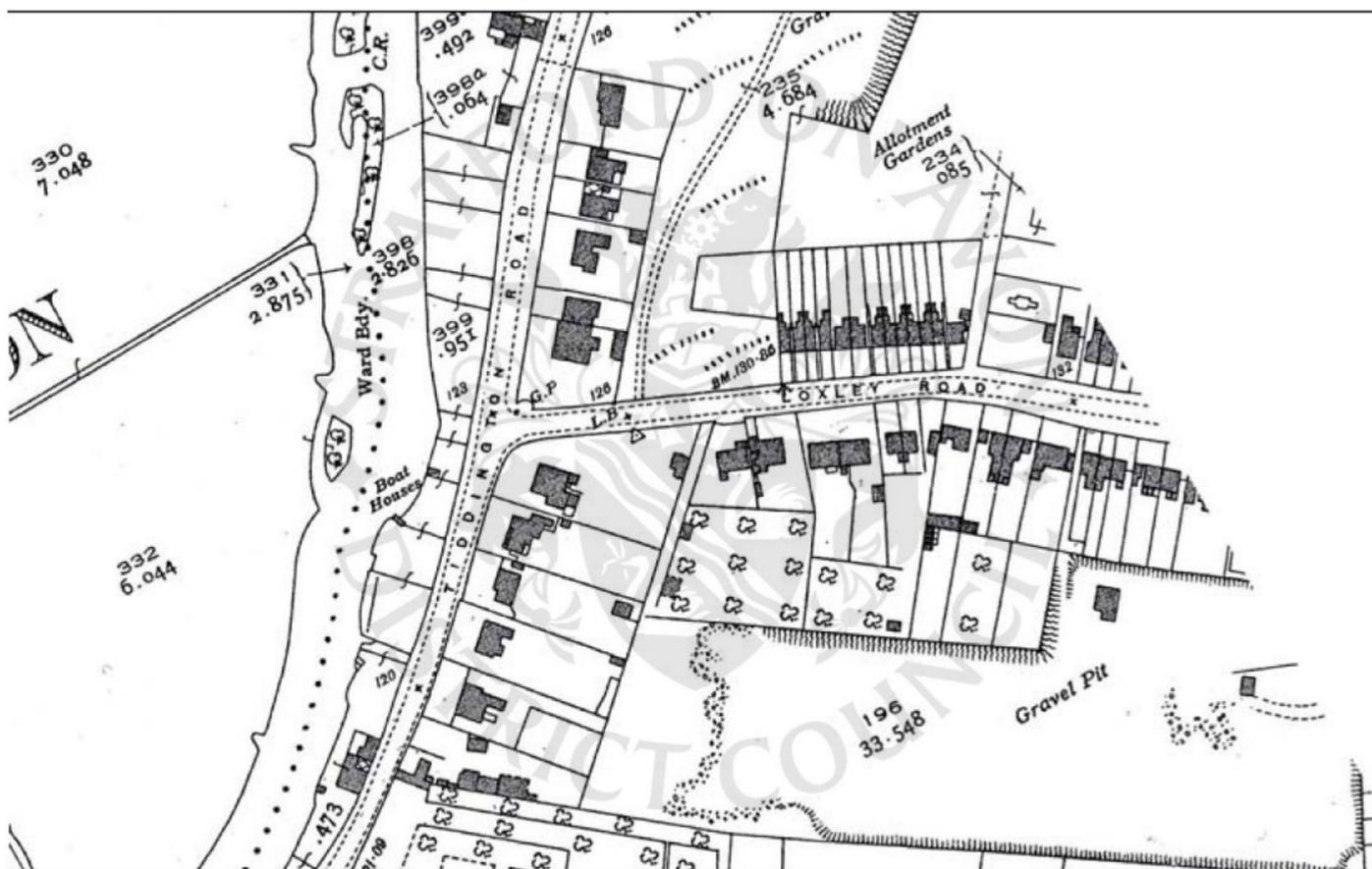
Map 1: Ordnance Survey 1914
North to the top left

The 1914 OS 25" sheet shows the alignment of the road, but the only houses (on Sheet XLIV.7) is the terrace of 6 houses, nos 31-41 (north side). A large parcel of land between Loxley Road and Tiddington Road is a gravel pit.



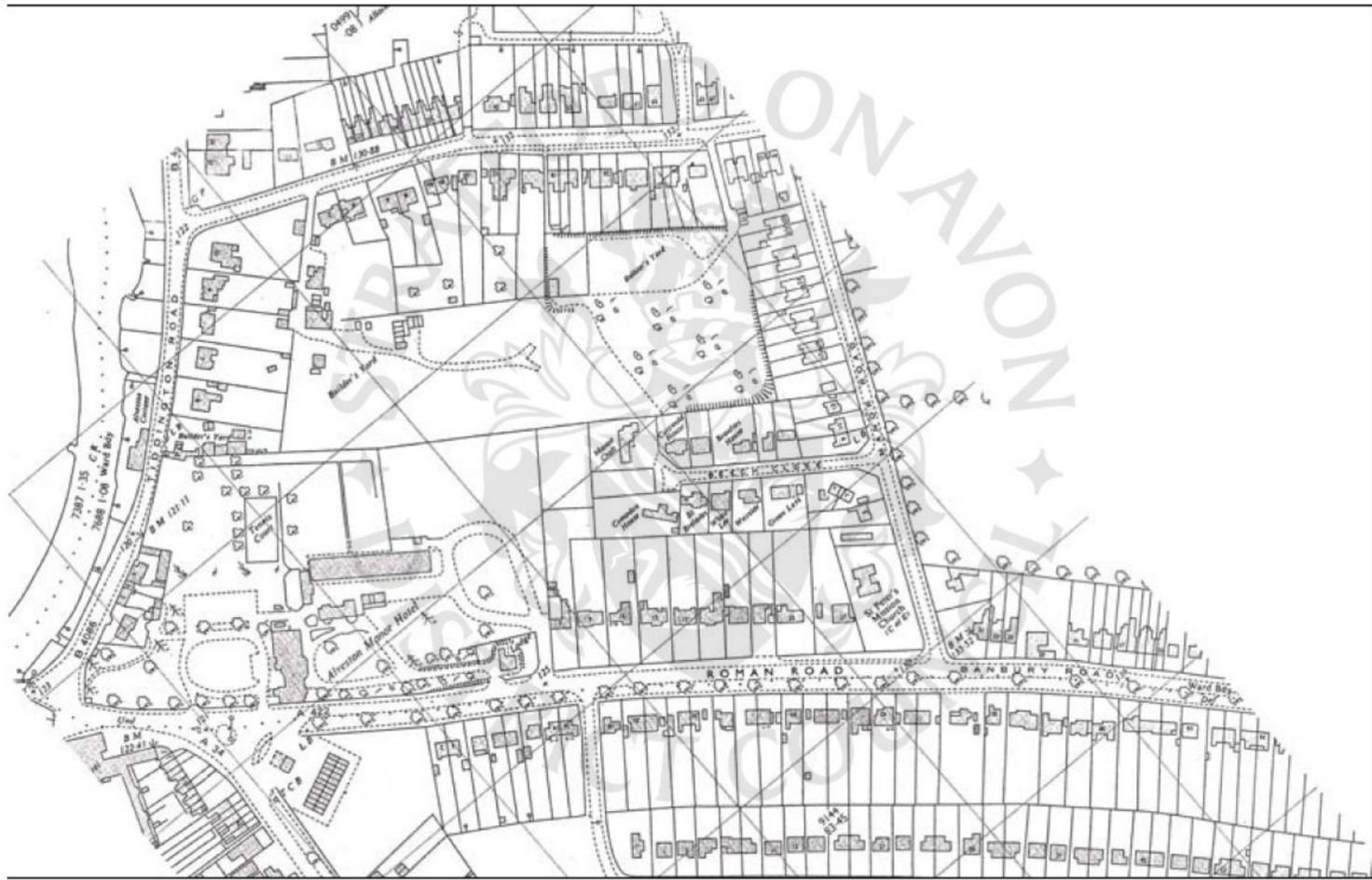
Map 2: Ordnance Survey 1915

The next sheet (surveyed 1913, published 1915) shows Alveston Manor Farm, then three small buildings, then no further development to the east.



Map 3: Ordnance Survey 1938/46

The 1938 OS 25" sheet (published 1946) shows the layout and build-up of the large majority of plots at the western end of the road.

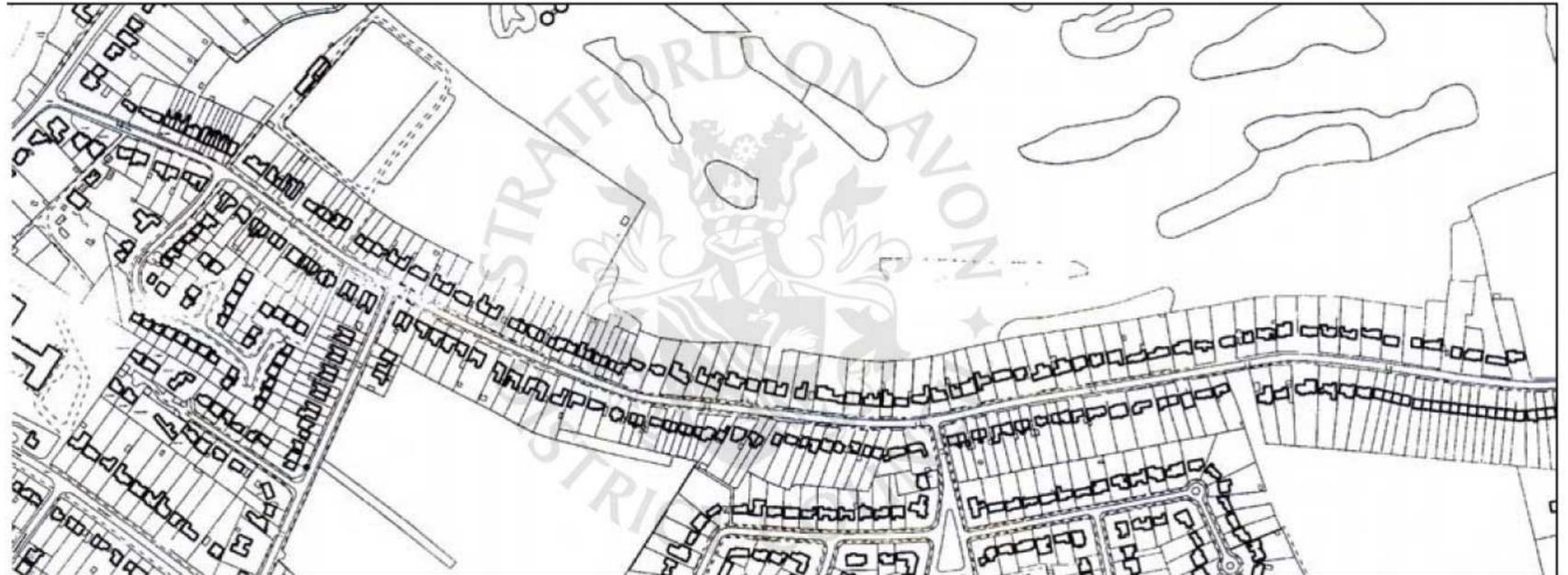


Maps 4 and 5: Ordnance Survey 1965

The two extracts from the 1965 OS 25" sheet show that all plots are built up. Behind 2-36 (south side) are two large builders' yards and some waste ground.

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Several plots appear to be double plots, with the house built on only one half (usually the western half). Residents suggest that some of these wide plots originally contained tennis courts. On the upper extract, Manor Road follows the alignment of the former farm track from Alveston Manor Farm, which has itself been redeveloped. On the lower extract, the eastern boundary of the playing fields follows a field boundary visible on the 1913/15 map and appears to extend to Loxley Road, where it constrains the alignment of the 12 plots to the east. The field boundary east of Wootton Close also extends to Loxley Road; east of this is a small gap before the regular plot series begins again.



Map 6: Contemporary GIS

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The contemporary map shows the full development of the area, including the development of the former builders' yards to the west.

4 Spatial analysis

This is a linear area following a minor road, now suburban in character but originally rural, leading to the small settlement of Loxley to the east. There are two roads connecting through housing development to Banbury Road to the south.

4.1 Character and inter-relationship of spaces

There are no public open spaces within this area itself. However the road is bounded to the north by the golf course, established on this site in 1925, the rugby field and allotments. Taken as a whole, this open space presents a valuable 'soft edge' to the built-up area, and is readily visible as such on the approach from Loxley. Part of the area is bounded to the south by the school playing fields. These form a substantial green oasis within the built-up area, and public consultation shows that this is a widely-regarded resource.

4.2 Movement patterns/uses

There is no traffic count data for this road. Observation suggests that through traffic is significantly lower than the other three roads east of the Avon, as it is not a quick through route, and Loxley is only a small village. Traffic approaching the urban edge appears often to significantly exceed the 30mph speed limit. Loxley Road is also a bus route. Relatively little traffic appears to use the Dale

Avenue estate route; although some through traffic does use Manor Road (derived in part from users of the nursery and playing fields).

5 Built character analysis

5.1 Plot patterns

The wide range of plot patterns in the area is demonstrated by some sample measurements of particular development types and periods. Recent infill is clearly on significantly smaller plots than much of the original inter-war development.

Residents have suggested that some of the wider inter-war plots that have subsequently been infilled were originally used as tennis courts.

Development type	Plot length (m)	Plot width (m)	Plot area (m ²)
pre-1914 terrace	45.97	4.66	208
Inter-war bungalows	44.37	11.9	566.92
Inter-war semi-detached	69.33	8.1	565.33
Inter-war detached	48.26	17.38	837.19
Early post-war infill	53.53	9.84	455.5
Recent infill	47.76	13.68	545.75
Average for samples in area	51.54	10.93	529.78

5.2 Building patterns

The same sample shows some interesting variations in building patterns. In this area the rows of inter-war semi-detached to the east end of the road are on very deep plots, which gives a low density, and the houses are set well back. The earliest development, the surviving pre-1914 terrace, is clearly at significantly higher density. The bungalows tend to be larger-footprint buildings (on wider plots); the recent infill is at higher density.

Development type	Building setback (m)	Building footprint (m ²)	% of plot built over (m ²)
pre-1914 terrace	9.32	51.09	24.56
Inter-war bungalows	9.91	96.34	17.05
Inter-war semi-detached	18.51	66.42	11.75
Inter-war detached	10.75	127.22	15.9
Early post-war infill	15.36	134.56	16.67
Recent infill	12.2	107.94	19.21
Average for area	12.68	173.9	17.52

5.3 Architectural and/or historical qualities of buildings



Map 7: Building periods

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- Early-mid Victorian
- Late-Victorian - Edwardian
- Inter-war
- Early post-war c. 1955-1970
- Middle post-war c. 1970-1990
- Recent, post-1990

The bulk of the buildings are of inter-war date, with the few surviving pre-First World War buildings being to the west. There is some post-Second World War infilling of vacant plots throughout the length of the road.

The inter-war buildings are typical examples, with brick and painted render the predominant materials. Inter-war brick is usually a deeper red; post-war brick is often significantly paler. Roofs are usually tiled, although there has been some replacement with post-war cement tile.



Map 8: Location of bungalows

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Unusually, within this area there is a large proportion of bungalows (shaded red) and dormer bungalows (shaded yellow). Recent surveys suggest that the bungalow remains the most popular residential building type, yet accounts for only about two per cent of the country's building stock.



Plate 2: Inter-war bungalows

An unusual building type in Loxley Road is the short terrace of three houses, of which there are two examples from the early-inter-war period. Most terraces usually have at least four houses, and these may be examples of a small builder seeking higher returns from higher densities on plots that would otherwise hold a pair of semi-detached houses.



Plates 3 and 4: Early-inter-war short terraces



Map 9: Front garden conversions and replacement windows

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The great majority of these buildings have had original timber windows replaced by aluminium or uPVC (red on the above map). There is a relatively small number of extensions; most of the recent ones being unobtrusive in design, although those having rooms in the roofspace tend to have gable roofs, whereas the great majority of original buildings have hipped roofs. Car parking is an evident problem in this area. Blue dots on Map 8 indicate conversions of front gardens to vehicle parking, usually with the loss of much or all of the front garden enclosure.²

5.4 Audit of heritage assets (listed buildings, scheduled monuments etc)

There are no Listed Buildings or other significant heritage assets.

Archaeologically this road appears to be the southern fringe of the Tiddington Romano-British settlement (part of which is a Scheduled Ancient Monument; discussed further in the Tiddington Road character study). A second-century Roman coin was found in a Loxley Road garden, and further excavation have revealed Mesolithic and Neolithic flint artifacts, and pits and gullies of the Iron Age/Roman period.³

5.5 Contribution of key unlisted buildings

There are no individual unlisted buildings whose individual contribution could be described as "key".

5.6 Public realm audit

Street furniture is standardised, save that some of the telegraph poles retain turned finials. Paved surfaces consist of varying qualities of patched tarmac; kerbstones are standardised. There are some traditional items of street furniture including post boxes, but the telephone kiosk on Mason Road is in need of repainting. Cable boxes are painted green and located at the rear of the pavement.

² From visual estimate, over 50% of the road frontage.

³ Warwickshire County Council, Sites and Monuments Record.

There is an irregular grass verge on the north side of the road, and the pavement disappears towards the north-east end of the road. This change from 'standard suburban' layout is a valuable part of the transition from urban to rural character.

6 Other contributing factors

6.1 Land uses

The area is virtually entirely residential in character. The only significant exceptions are the vet and surviving builders' yard, sharing an access just before the Tiddington Road junction, and the rebuilt Mission Church at the south-west end of Manor Road.

The school playing field is a non-residential use which will generate some degree of additional traffic, parking and noise.

6.2 Vegetation

There are few significant trees, with the exception of a clump at the Tiddington Road junction. However it is possible to see mature trees in gardens on both sides, and beyond in the golf course to the north and the school playing fields to the south. The characteristic spacing of houses, and gaps between them, is significant in giving the impression of mature planting in private spaces. The mature trees around the playing field, and the row forming what appears to be a former field boundary along the centre of the field, are particularly significant.

7 Appraisal

7.1 Development pressure analysis

Analysis of development control files shows a relatively small number of significant planning applications for the period 1990-2004. It is interesting to note that much of the pressure in this street results from the sequence of applications made for no 43 and its adjoining land. There are also two permitted applications to demolish existing inter-war bungalows and replace them (nos 52 and 175).

Date	Address	Type	Decision
1990	land adjoining 123 Loxley Road	1 dwelling reserved matters	permitted
1990	199 Loxley Road	side extension	permitted
1990	land at & rear of 43 Loxley Road	residential development	
1991	land at 43 Loxley Road	residential development	refused
1991	land at & rear of 43 Loxley Road	11 detached dwellings	refused
1992	43 Loxley Road	residential development	
1995	land between 179-184 Loxley Road	2-storey house	refused
1996	land between 179-184 Loxley Road	dwelling, reserved matters	approved
1999	43 Loxley Road	residential development	refused
1999	52 Loxley Road	replace existing bungalow with dormer bungalow	permitted
1999	116 Loxley Road	extension	permitted
2001	63A Loxley Road	1 dwelling etc	refused
2001	43 Loxley Road	14 dwellings etc	withdrawn

2002	land at & rear of 43 Loxley Road	1-storey dwelling	refused
2003	43 Loxley Road	side extension	permitted
2003	43 Loxley Road	1 dwelling	refused
2004	175 Loxley Road	demolish and replace	permitted

7.2 Key positive features/areas

The school playing field is a significant open 'lung' for this area, more readily accessible than the private golf course to the north. However the golf course, rugby field and allotments are significant in retaining an open, semi-rural aspect particularly on the approach from Loxley.

The gently curving street has a sense of enclosure formed by the buildings and the garden boundaries, few of which are 'open plan'.

7.3 Neutral areas

The entire street is characterised by a mixture of building ages and styles, although inter-war predominates. As with Alcester Road and Evesham Road, the Loxley Road frontages can be characterised as neutral. The retention of so many original buildings is a positive feature. But its significant variety in original building form, and particularly the scale of window replacements and front-garden conversions which detract from the area's original character and appearance, are negative features; hence the overall judgement is neutral.

7.4 Negative features/areas (loss, damage, intrusion)

There are no significant negative features of the built form. For the most part the various extensions and new buildings have fitted acceptably into this varied townscape.

The speed of traffic, despite traffic calming measures, can be intrusive.

7.5 Character zones

The area is so varied architecturally that any character areas identifiable would be relatively small and unhelpful. It is felt more appropriate to deal with the entirety of Loxley Road and Manor Road as roads of varied architectural styles and small-scale residential character.



Plates 4 and 5: Variety and streetscape

7.6 Areas under existing or potential threat

Development during the post-war period appears already to have filled virtually all of the vacant plots or half-plots. Future development would therefore imply the demolition of existing original buildings. The bungalows may be particularly vulnerable to proposals for replacement as 2/3-storey houses.

8 Discussion of special characteristics

This is a residential street of mixed character, developed largely in the inter-war period by speculative builders on a piecemeal basis. It has no special architectural or historical characteristics.

9 Recommendation on designation

Designation as a conservation area is not recommended. Following the legal definition of a conservation area, and mindful of precedents elsewhere, there is insufficient here of "special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance".⁴

10 Existing policy

Guidance in the Local Plan, the Town Design Statement, and the District Design Guidance, applies.

11 Policy and management suggestions

The frontage development along Loxley Road and Manor Road is of very varied character, but is generally of smaller residential scale and of pleasant predominantly inter-war residential character. Further conversions of front gardens for car parking should retain as much of the existing front garden enclosures as possible. Roof conversions should have flat rooflights or appropriately-designed dormers on the front elevation.

The glimpses into rear gardens are characteristic along this street, even from moving vehicles, and thus side extensions should not close such views. Tall gable ends are not common to the original buildings, and hipped roofs would be preferable. 'Terracisation' should be strongly discouraged and where extensions are proposed they should be in scale and subservient to the original dwelling and set back from the building line. Individual properties could be replaced with new development of appropriate quality, scale and form, and ideally employing the dominant local materials of rendered upper floor and brick ground floor.

The bungalows are a characteristic feature of the area and add a useful resource to the town's building stock. Very careful consideration must be given to applications to redevelop bungalows as houses with regard to the cumulative impact on the area's character.

The school playing fields, with their mature trees, form an important resource for the wider area and should not be developed.

⁴ 1990 Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act.

The open areas to the north likewise form a valuable quasi-rural 'soft edge' to the built-up area and should not be developed.