



SHARDLOW CANAL PORT

At the beginning of August, the designation of the Shardlow Conservation Area was formally completed, after almost a year of negotiations. The designation was made jointly by the County Council and South Derbyshire District Council, the delay having been caused by local concern about the financial implications of designation.

The conservation area incorporates the whole of the inland canal port area, from the entry lock to the south of No. 2 Mill, to the partially silted-up cut to the east of the new canal bridge on Wilne Lane. Due regard has been shown for both the historical and architectural merits of the area, with features such as the rope walk specifically included within the designation brief.

Under the 1974 Town and Country Amenities Act, additional protection is given to unlisted buildings within conservation areas, and prevents their demolition without specific consent. In effect, this extends the protection normally afforded to listed buildings in connection with proposed demolition to all of the buildings within the conservation area boundary.

One of the key factors in the designation was the threat posed to the area by several current planning applications to demolish buildings within the proposed conservation area. The demolition of the Brewery area adjacent to The Wharf illustrated the effect of such developments upon the character of the area. At the time of writing, there are four current applications for listed building consent to demolish or alter buildings within the conservation area. These are:-

1. Application to convert No.2 Mill into flats, and to construct 22 dwellings on adjacent 1½ acres. (The building is listed Grade II*).
2. Application to demolish the Salt Warehouse (Listed, Grade II).
3. Application to demolish No.2 Store. (Listed, Grade II).
4. Application to demolish Nos. 40 and 42, The Wharf. (Listed, Grade II).

In none of the above mentioned cases has listed building consent to demolish or alter been granted by the District Council, who are the relevant Planning Authority.

At Shardlow, the main problems to be overcome are to reconcile an existing and active industrial usage with the requirements of conservation area control policy, and to find suitable new uses for those buildings which have outlived their commercial viability. This is especially urgent in the case of No.2 Mill, which is the outstanding industrial building within the Shardlow complex and No.2 Store, which is in a near-dangerous condition. Several proposals have been put forward for the adaptive re-use of the building, and for some form of residential development in land adjacent to the building, in order to meet the requirements of an existing outline permission granted for the site.

Opinion is divided as to whether the developments can be made to preserve or enhance the historical and architectural character of both the listed building and the conservation area. The idea of 20th century housing immediately adjacent to an 18th century industrial building seems incongruous, but against this must be weighed the fact that much of the character of Shardlow is generated by the juxtaposition of industrial, commercial and domestic buildings. Many of the fears concerning conservation areas stem from the misconception that such areas become static, as if affected by a negative form of planning blight.

The aim of the conservation area legislation is not to prevent change, but to ensure that those changes which take place preserve or enhance the character of the area. Change is an essential ingredient if areas such as Shardlow are to retain their vitality.

It is a hard fact of life at the moment that money is not available for schemes of preservation such as would allow Shardlow to be preserved in a completely unchanged form as a site museum. An appropriate active usage for the buildings of Shardlow has therefore to be found, if the character of the buildings and the integrity of the area are to be retained.

Enquiries and representations concerning the current planning applications at Shardlow should be addressed to the Chief Planning Officer, South Derbyshire District Council, The Poplars, Rolleston Road, Burton-upon-Trent, Staffordshire DE13 0JY.

Details of the Shardlow Conservation Area are available in a booklet produced by Derbyshire County Council. The booklet was prepared by the Design and Conservation Section of the Planning Department, which is a multi-disciplinary team dealing with all matters relating to historic buildings, and which includes an industrial archaeologist amongst its number. A limited number of these booklets are still available from the County Planning Officer, County Offices, Matlock, Derbyshire DE4 3AG.