

RELIGIOUS HERITAGE IN TRANSITION: SIKH PLACES OF WORSHIP IN ENGLAND

Thesis submitted for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy  
at the University of Leicester

by  
Clare Canning  
Department of Archaeology and Ancient History  
University of Leicester

March 2017

I, Clare Canning, confirm that the work presented in this thesis is my own. Where information has been derived from other sources, I confirm that this has been indicated in the thesis.

## Abstract

This research considers Sikh gurdwaras in England as heritage places, responding to recent debates within heritage studies and the wider social sciences surrounding how we identify the value and significance of places for people. It also aims to address an emphasis within heritage practice on original and built form, by allowing for new conceptions of place and value to come to the fore which acknowledge cultural diversity and scalar flexibility. The thesis asks what the value is of gurdwaras in England to those who use and manage them, and have been involved with their ongoing development. It is envisaged that the results presented here will directly impact upon ongoing debates regarding what constitutes heritage in England, and how this is recognised and managed by Historic England and the wider heritage and planning sectors.

The methodological approach taken to the research is qualitative, with a focus on exploring the everyday use and significance of gurdwaras for those who use them regularly, or are involved in their management and development. The narrative experiences of respondents reveal shared and competing understandings of places as gurdwaras, reflecting the religious and social diversity of the Sikh community in England. In general, importance is placed on any gurdwara as the home of the Guru Granth Sahib (Sikh scriptures) and related practices, and on remaining useful, relevant and purposeful for the immediate and wider community. This research also reveals that the relationship between social and religious values and the physical fabric of a gurdwara building, is nuanced, complex and often highly contextual; where one may be valued because of the community contribution to development work, another may have previously functioned as a church, and is now valued because of its past and ongoing religious function.

The implications of this research relate to a need to more fully debate how a range of values and understandings of place can be acknowledged within heritage practice, ensuring the appropriate future recognition and management of perceived heritage places.

## Acknowledgements

Huge thanks to my PhD supervisors, Deirdre O’Sullivan, Dr Ruth Young and Dr Linda Monckton. You have offered a wealth of support, knowledge, perspective and enthusiasm from beginning to end. It has been a privilege to work with you.

To those who gave their time to being interviewed for the project, I thank you all enormously. Thanks also go to all those who provided such a warm and hospitable introduction to gurdwaras across the country. Particular thanks go to Inderjeet Panesar and Surinderpal Singh for enjoyable and fruitful discussions at the beginning of the project, and helping to guide it forward.

To both Dr Jasjit Singh and Shahed Saleem for your support and advice regarding the project, and to Dr Richard Gale and Dr Claire Dwyer for your interest in my work.

I must also thank the School of Archaeology and Ancient History, and College of Social Sciences, Arts and Humanities at the University of Leicester, for monetary awards for conference attendance and travel. Thanks too to the Arts and Humanities Research Council and Historic England for their generous financial contributions.

Thanks to the staff and my fellow postgraduate researchers at the School of Archaeology and Ancient History at the University of Leicester, for creating such an enjoyable working environment. Particular thanks to Prof Neil Christie for your unwavering support for our work and wellbeing, and to Andy Lamb for all the tea and chat.



## Table of Contents

Abstract.....	ii
Acknowledgements .....	iii
Table of Contents.....	iv
List of figures.....	vii
List of tables.....	x
Abbreviations.....	xi
Glossary of terms.....	xii
 Chapter 1: Introduction .....	 1
1.1. An introduction to the thesis.....	1
1.2. Analytical framework.....	5
<i>Religion and place</i> .....	5
<i>Heritage value and narratives of the everyday</i> .....	8
<i>The city of Leicester, religion and local policy</i> .....	9
1.3. Structure of the thesis .....	15
 Chapter 2: The ‘Gateway to the Guru’ – A background to gurdwara development .....	 18
2.1. The Sikh faith .....	18
2.2. Gurdwaras and cultural heritage.....	24
<i>A Sikh architecture?</i> .....	24
<i>Gurdwaras as heritage places</i> .....	27
2.3. Sikh migration to Britain .....	31
<i>Early migration from Punjab</i> .....	32
<i>Immigration to Britain post 1945</i> .....	34
<i>Demography</i> .....	36
2.4. Gurdwaras in Britain .....	39
<i>History of development</i> .....	39
<i>Preliminary data</i> .....	42
<i>Chapter Summary</i> .....	48
 Chapter 3: Place and value in the heritage process .....	 50
3.1. Values-based approaches.....	51
<i>The Cultural Value debate</i> .....	52
<i>Historic England and management practice</i> .....	56
3.2. Determining the value of the gurdwara in Britain.....	61

<i>Community and scale</i> .....	61
<i>Cultural diversity and authenticity</i> .....	63
<i>Chapter conclusion: The gurdwara as a heritage place</i> .....	65
 Chapter 4: Methodology.....	68
4.1. Rationale .....	69
<i>A narrative approach</i> .....	69
<i>Establishing a framework</i> .....	73
<i>Research Questions</i> .....	74
4.2. Doing the research.....	79
<i>Approaching gurdwaras</i> .....	79
<i>Interviews</i> .....	80
<i>Ethics</i> .....	82
<i>Documentary evidence</i> .....	83
4.3. Analysis and reflection.....	84
<i>Position of the researcher</i> .....	85
<i>Profiles summary, bias and presentation of the data</i> .....	86
 Chapter 5: A distinctive sacred space? .....	89
5.1. 'The Guru Granth Sahib is the gurdwara' .....	90
5.2. 'All gurdwaras are the same' .....	94
5.3. 'Everyone is welcome' .....	99
5.4. 'We're part of the community' .....	105
5.5. 'Seva is very important' .....	109
<i>Chapter summary</i> .....	111
 Chapter 6: Narratives of gurdwara development in a multicultural city .....	113
6.1. Migration and early places of worship .....	113
6.2. Reinventing the industrial.....	120
6.3. Continuing Adaptation.....	127
6.4. Building anew: the Ramgarhia Board Gurdwara .....	129
6.5. Future architectures .....	139
<i>Chapter Summary</i> .....	142
 Chapter 7: Architectures of adaptive-reuse: the gurdwara and significance.....	143
7.1. Gurdwara as custodian .....	146

<i>Inherited use and value</i> .....	147
<i>Re-using a religious place</i> .....	149
<i>Re-using a heritage place</i> .....	155
7.2. Self-design and the role of the architect .....	158
<i>Seva in gurdwara development</i> .....	159
<i>Interior Objects</i> .....	162
<i>‘Professional’ involvement</i> .....	165
<i>Attachment to gurdwara buildings</i> .....	169
<i>Chapter conclusion</i> .....	171
 Chapter 8: Discussion .....	 173
8.1. The value of the gurdwara.....	174
<i>How are gurdwaras in Britain valued?</i> .....	174
<i>How is the value of gurdwaras related to their physical form?</i> .....	176
<i>Materials and aesthetic authenticity</i> .....	178
<i>Value and earlier use</i> .....	181
<i>Place, people and narrative</i> .....	183
8.2. Establishing a national framework .....	185
<i>Gurdwaras as heritage places</i> .....	186
<i>Implications and recommendations</i> .....	187
<i>Further research</i> .....	190
 Conclusion .....	 192
Bibliography .....	199
Appendix 1 – Example of database entries .....	211
Appendix 2 – Case study gazetteer.....	212
Appendix 3 – Copy of interview consent form .....	227

## List of figures

Figure 1.1: The Khalsa Jatha British Isles in Shepherd's Bush, London.

Figure 1.2: The Nishan Sahib at the Sri Guru Teg Bahadur Gurdwara, Nottingham.

Figure 1.3: A map detailing the Sikh population of Leicester by percentage of ward.

Figure 2.1: A portrait of Guru Nanak outside of the prayer hall at Guru Teg Bahadur Gurdwara, Nottingham.

Figure 2.2: The ik oan kar symbol in stained glass, above the door of the Liverpool Sikh Association Gurdwara, and two khandas below.

Figure 2.3: The Harimandir Sahib (Golden Temple), Amritsar, India.

Figure 2.4: The Guru Tegh Bahadur Gurdwara in Leicester, as the annual Vaisakhi parade arrives in April 2014.

Figure 2.5: The Gur Sikh Temple in Abbotsford, British Columbia, Canada.

Figure 2.6: A map detailing northern India and the Indian state of Punjab (in red). Source: Wikimedia Commons.

Figure 2.7: A map detailing the Sikh population of England and Wales by percentage of ward.

Figure 2.8: A map detailing the distribution of gurdwaras across England and Wales.

Figure 2.9: The Guru Nanak Satsang Sabha Karamsar UK, Ilford.

Figure 2.10: Detail of carved sandstone at the Karamsar Gurdwara.

Figure 3.1: The 'Value Triangle' developed by Holden (2006).

Figure 3.2: The 'Information Flow' diagram detailing the introversion of the cultural system (Holden 2006).

Figure 5.1: Washing facilities in the entrance lobby at Guru Nanak Gurdwara, Leicester.

Figure 5.2: A sign in the shoe room at Guru Nanak Gurdwara, Leicester.

Figure 5.3: The Guru Granth Sahib being read at the Ramgarhia Board Gurdwara, Leicester.

Figure 5.4: Guru Granth Sahibs resting in the sach khand at the Ramgarhia Board Gurdwara, Leicester.

Figure 5.5: An image of the Golden Temple outside of the prayer hall at Guru Gobind Singh Gurdwara, Bedford.

Figure 5.6: Guru Amar Das Gurdwara, Leicester.

Figure 5.7: The langar hall on the ground floor of Guru Amar Das Gurdwara, Leicester.

Figure 5.8: Langar being served at Shri Guru Ravidass Gurdwara, Leicester.

Figure 5.9: A serving of langar at Guru Nanak Gurdwara, Leicester.

Figure 5.10: Nishkam Primary School, part of the Guru Nanak Nishkam Sewak Jatha campus and opposite the gurdwara.

Figure 5.11: Guru Nanak Nishkam Sewak Jatha Gurdwara.

Figure 5.12: The interior of the main dome at GNNSJ Gurdwara, decorated with a mosaic.

Figure 5.13: Drawers of cleaning materials for performing shoe seva.

Figure 6.1: Guru Tegh Bahadur Gurdwara on East Park Road, Leicester; formerly a shoe factory and warehouse.

Figure 6.2: Guru Nanak Gurdwara at Holy Bones in Leicester; formerly a manufacturing plant and warehouse.

Figure 6.3: The Ramgarhia Board Gurdwara on Meynell Road, Leicester.

Figure 6.4: Ogee arches and ceiling panelling in the langar hall of Guru Nanak Gurdwara.

Figure 6.5: Illustration of proposed external changes to Guru Nanak Gurdwara, submitted for approval by Leicester City Council in 1996 and 2001. © GUG Architects 1996

Figure 6.6: The library at Guru Tegh Bahadur Gurdwara, Leicester, which was closed at the time of visit.

Figure 6.7: Stairs leading to the prayer halls at Guru Tegh Bahadur Gurdwara, Leicester.

Figure 6.8: Guru Tegh Bahadur Gurdwara, with the porch and dome at the rear entrance, completed in 2009.

Figure 6.9: The Shri Guru Ravidass Temple, the first purpose-built gurdwara in Leicester.

Figure 6.10: The main prayer hall on the first floor of Guru Amar Das Gurdwara.

Figure 6.11: Original leaded light windows.

Figure 6.12: Original interior door with 'Ministers Vestry' signage.

Figure 6.13: A plan detailing the proposed layout for a new Ramgarhia gurdwara, circular in form and surrounded by a water pool. © Agenda 21 Architects.

Figure 6.14: Gur Parkash Panth Gurdwara on Ashford Road, Leicester.

Figure 6.15: Gurudwara Shri Guru Dashmesh Sahib on Gypsy Lane, Leicester.

Figure 6.16: Sri Sat Guru Ram Singh Ji Sahai (Namdhari Gurdwara), Linden Street, Leicester.

Figure 6.17: The prayer hall at the Namdhari Gurdwara, Leicester.

Figure 6.18: Holes in the ceiling panels at the Namdhari Gurdwara, corresponding to those on a memorial in Mayerkolta, India.

Figure 6.19: Plans for a new Ramgarhia Gurdwara in Leicester, on display at the current Ramgarhia Gurdwara on Meynell Road.

Figure 7.1: Guru Nanak Gurdwara, Bedford. A former working man's club, to the right, continues to hold the langar hall.

Figure 7.2: Guru Gobind Singh Gurdwara, Bedford.

Figure 7.3: Images of purpose-built gurdwaras in Britain, pinned to the wall outside of the prayer hall.

Figure 7.4: Plans for a new façade and rear extension at Guru Gobind Singh Gurdwara, Bedford © archi-tekt partnership.

Figure 7.5: The prayer hall at Guru Nanak Gurdwara, Leicester, where pillars are necessary to support the building.

Figure 7.6: The newly created first floor at the Liverpool Sikh Association Gurdwara.

Figure 7.7: The Guru Singh Sabha Gurdwara, Southampton, where the original church windows are now split between the ground and first floors.

Figure 7.8: Singh Sabha Gurdwara, Southampton; formerly St Luke's Church.

Figure 7.9: The entrance lobby to Singh Sabha Gurdwara, with original wooden doors.

Figure 7.10: The original alter-place at Singh Sabha Gurdwara, Southampton, formerly St Luke's Church. To the left of the image, mosaics have been replaced with plasterwork, and the area has assumed a new significance as the room where newly married couples sign the marriage register.

Figure 7.11: Guru Teg Bahadur Gurdwara, Nottingham; formerly a church school.

Figure 7.12: The prayer hall with hammer-beam roof at Guru Teg Bahadur Gurdwara, Nottingham.

Figure 7.13: A kitchen extension to the ground floor of the gurdwara.

Figure 7.14: The Ramgarhia Gurdwara, Bristol.

Figure 7.15: The langar hall of the gurdwara following internal renovations designed by community members.

Figure 7.16: The entrance lobby of Sri Guru Ravidass Temple, Leicester.

Figure 7.17: The palki sahib with marble surround at Singh Sabha Gurdwara, Southampton.

Figure 7.18: The palki Sahib at the Ramgarhia Gurdwara, Bristol. The canopy is made from fibreglass, designed by a member of the sangat to suspend effortlessly from the ceiling.

Figure 7.19: Sri Guru Singh Sabha Gurdwara, built at a cost of £17 million in Southall, Greater London.

Figure 7.20: The main prayer hall at Sri Guru Singh Sabha Gurdwara, Southall.

## List of tables

Table 2.1: Estimated Sikh population in England and Wales 1961-2011, and Sikh places of worship.

Table 2.2: Sikh population by region, 2011.

Table 2.3: Local authorities with the highest proportions of Sikhs, 2011.

Table 2.4: Gurdwaras in England by region.

Table 2.5: Gurdwaras in the United Kingdom by former use and level of change.

## Abbreviations

**AHD:** Authorised Heritage Discourse

**AHRC:** Arts and Humanities Research Council

**BBC:** British Broadcasting Corporation

**DCLG:** Department for Communities and Local Government

**DCMS:** Department for Culture, Media, and Sport

**ELC:** European Landscape Convention

**GCI:** Getty Conservation Institute

**HLF:** Heritage Lottery Fund

**INTACH:** Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage

**IWA:** Indian Workers' Association

**NPPF:** National Planning Policy Framework

**ONS:** Office for National Statistics

**SGPC:** Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee

**UK:** United Kingdom

**UNESCO:** United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organisation

**WHS:** World Heritage Site



## Glossary of terms

Note: Italics are not used for proper nouns, places or terms in more general usage. Italics are used where terms are likely to be new to the reader.

**Adi Granth:** Guru Granth Sahib, Sikh scripture

**Akal Takht:** the building facing the Golden Temple, Sikhs' seat of religious authority

***amrit sanskar:*** initiation to Khalsa

***amritdhari:*** initiated Sikh

**Ardas:** congregational prayer

***bani:*** utterance

***bhagat:*** a devotee, in particular the saint-poets

**Bhatra:** first *zat* to settle in Britain

***chauri:*** a whisk made of horse or yak hair, used as a symbol of Guru Granth Sahib's authority

***dalit:*** or 'untouchable', used in reference to people at the bottom of the caste hierarchy

***dhan:*** physical service (part of *seva*)

***dharamsala:*** a resting place for Sikh devotees; former term for a *gurdwara*

**Five Ks:** outward symbols of a Khalsa Sikh

**Golden Temple:** or 'Harimandir Sahib' or 'Darbar Sahib', Sikhs' most honoured shrine, in Amritsar, Indian Punjab

***granthi:*** attendant on Guru Granth Sahib

***gurdwara:*** Sikh place of worship

**Gurmukhi:** script of the Sikh scripture

**Guru Granth Sahib:** Sikh scripture

**Harimandir Sahib:** *see* Golden Temple

***hukamnama:*** an edict from Guru or from Akal Takht

***ik oan kar:*** God is one; a logo denoting Sikhism

**Japji:** Guru Nanak's hymn at the start of Guru Granth Sahib

**Jat:** Sikh's largest *zat*, a hereditary land-owning community

***kachh:*** cotton breeches, one of the Five Ks

***kangha***: small wooden comb, one of the Five Ks

***kara prashad***: sweet made of flour, sugar, butter, and water, distributed at religious gatherings

***kara***: iron or steel bangle worn on the wrist, one of the Five Ks

***kes***: uncut hair, one of the Five Ks

***Khalistan***: an area of land comprising Indian and Pakistani Punjab claimed as a Sikh homeland and nation-state

***Khalsa***: literally ‘pure’; Sikhs, especially *amritdhari* Sikhs

***khanda***: double-edged sword used as part of the *khanda* symbol

***kirpan***: sword carried by Sikhs, one of the Five Ks

***kirtan***: singing of *shabads*

***langar***: shared vegetarian meal prepared and eaten in a gurdwara; the kitchen area of the gurdwara

***mahant***: custodian of historic gurdwaras, until the early 20<sup>th</sup> century

***man***: mind; mental service (part of *seva*)

***miri***: temporal authority

***Mughal***: Muslim dynasty ruling in North India from 1526

***nam***: literally ‘name’; a central Sikh concept of divine reality

***nam simaran***: the repetition of a spiritually charged word or mantra

***Namdhari***: a reform movement of the 19<sup>th</sup> century

***Nirankari***: a reform movement emphasising God as formless

***nishan sahib***: Sikh flagpole bearing the *khanda*

***palki***: stand supporting the Guru Granth Sahib

***Panth***: Sikh community

***piri***: spiritual authority

***ragi***: musician

***rahit***: discipline

***Ramgarhia***: *zat* traditionally employed in construction

***sach khand***: night-time resting place of Guru Granth Sahib, or bedroom

***sanatan***: term applied to Sikhs with inclusive attitude to Hindu tradition

***sangat***: congregation

**Sant**: medieval poet-mystics; title for some 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> century spiritual and political leaders

***seva***: selfless service, a key principle of Sikhism

***shabad***: word or composition in the Guru Granth Sahib

**Sikh Rehit Maryada**: code of discipline, published in 1950

**Singh Sabha**: movement of Sikh renewal from late 19<sup>th</sup> century

***tan***: material service (part of seva)

**Vaisakhi**: historical and religious festival celebrated in April

**Waheguru**: or 'Vahiguru', God

***zat***: caste

## Chapter 1: Introduction

### 1.1. An introduction to the thesis

A *gurdwara* is a Sikh place of worship used for daily prayer, meditation, and the celebration of festivals, weddings and other religious events. The word *gurdwara*, or *gurudwara* means ‘house of the Guru’ or ‘gateway to the Guru’ so-called as in each resides the *Guru Granth Sahib*, the scripture compiled by the Gurus and others (Ganeri 2003, 28; Dalal 2010, 133). The *Guru Granth Sahib* was proclaimed the everlasting Guru by the last in a succession of ten human Gurus, *Guru Gobind Singh*, in 1708, and is treated with great reverence. *Gurdwaras* across the world are open to all to visit and gain guidance from the *Guru Granth Sahib*, irrespective of religious affiliation or social standing, and many encompass the needs of a practising faith community in a broad sense. A visitor is likely to be offered food and drink, access to a gym or exercise classes, Punjabi or English language tuition, or a whole range of other services. Throughout the year the *gurdwara* may provide anything from advice on health and wellbeing to lectures on the history of Sikhism. Central to all are the words within the *Guru Granth Sahib*, which are read or sung during religious services and placed in a *sach khand*, or bedroom, at night.

In Britain, the first *gurdwara* was established at a residential property at 97 Sinclair Road, Shepherd’s Bush in 1911, which later relocated to a former Salvation Army Hall in the 1960s (Bance *et al* 2008, 2) (figure 1.1). This remained the only *gurdwara* in Britain until the growth of the Sikh population in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (which now stands at around half a million people). Today, there are over 200 *gurdwaras*, ranging from previously used properties to multi-million-pound purpose-built structures. While the majority share a religious focus on the *Guru Granth Sahib* and basic tenets of the Sikh faith, there is huge diversity in the architectural characteristics of *gurdwaras* in Britain. Where some have been purpose-built and clad with imported Indian stone, others occupy buildings once used as factories, warehouses, churches, synagogues, hotels, houses, garages and schools. There is significant diversity also in the level of conversion and change to original building features. In some cases, there may be an elaborately designed façade with balconied windows and ribbed lotus-shaped domes, whilst others may only be recognisable as a *gurdwara* by the *nishan*

*sahib* (triangular flag bearing the khanda, which is the icon of swords symbolising Sikhism) upon a flagpole shrouded in orange or saffron yellow cloth (figure 1.2).



Figure 1.1 (left): The Khalsa Jatha British Isles in Shepherd's Bush. Figure 1.2 (right): The nishan sahib at the Sri Guru Teg Bahadur Gurdwara, Nottingham.

Although the Sikh community is often viewed in Britain as a homogenous religious and ethnic group, easily recognised by public signs and symbols, such as the turban, Sikh identity is diverse and complex (Mcleod 2002). The development of gurdwaras, too, is enmeshed with the influence of historic societal structures, patterns of international migration, and enduring caste and factional interests. Whilst Singh and Tatla (2006) have considered the development of gurdwaras in the context of Sikh community building in Britain, other recent studies have focused on minority faith buildings as reflections of the identities of religious groups, and their growing confidence in expressing their religious identities in British towns and cities (Gale & Naylor 2002; Naylor & Ryan 2003; Peach & Gale 2003). However, the religious, social and political landscape within which gurdwaras have been established, and continue to develop and contribute, has not received adequate academic attention. Furthermore, Singh and Tatla state that, despite clear diversity, there has been 'very little substantive evidence... of its reflection in gurdwaras or other places of worship' (2006, 77). Likewise, gurdwaras have not been the subject of academic attention in relation to a recognition as places of cultural heritage, nor have practical studies considered them in this way.

This gap in research, particularly in relation to gurdwaras as heritage places, has been acknowledged by Historic England. The current research stems from the perceived lack of understanding of non-Christian faith buildings in England (Historic England 2013), and the recognition of a 'major gap' in the histories of British minority ethnic communities (Singh & Tatla 2006, 2). Whereas Historic England has commissioned research projects, including a national survey of the development of the mosque in Britain, and smaller scale projects on Hindu, Buddhist and Jain places of worship (Historic England 2016a), an understanding of gurdwaras was to be achieved through the joint supervision of a PhD project, of which this thesis is a result. In a description of their aims for the project, English Heritage (now Historic England) stated:

English Heritage aims to address important elements of often invisible or transitory aspects of our national story by learning about what a particular faith group considers of 'value' in their buildings, and how the surrounding community approaches them. It aims to raise the profile of Sikh built heritage and its values and provide an evidence base for assessing national significance.

(English Heritage 2013)

Historically, the identification of values and assessment of their relative significance, have been utilised in heritage management processes to research and protect the historic environment (see chapter three). Historic England describes how the significance of a place 'embraces all the diverse cultural and natural heritage values that people associate with it, or which prompt them to respond to it' (English Heritage 2008, 21). Such terms and practices, and the philosophies underpinning them, have received criticism for being at the mercy of the subjectivities of heritage professionals, and traditionally favouring original and historic fabric (explored in chapter three). In the aims for the project, as quoted above, English Heritage placed the focus on establishing what communities themselves consider of value in their buildings. The concept of value itself, what it encompasses, and how it is employed in management practices is also explored.

The methodology, then, is focused on the experiences of gurdwara attendees, and responds to a recent emphasis on 'non-official narratives' and everyday use and social value, developing within heritage studies, partly in response to issues regarding the undefined use of such terminology as 'value' and 'significance' and their practical

application. It also looks to areas within cultural geography and elsewhere to aid in a suitable and effective study of people's relationships with the gurdwara as both a spiritual and physical entity, involving participant interviews, photography and archival work. I have, however, contextualised this approach within wider ongoing debates within heritage studies, archaeology and elsewhere regarding the assessment and management of the historic environment. Whilst an aim of this research is to establish how gurdwaras are valued, and how this value is translated as physical form, it is positioned within a discourse which necessitates a consideration of heritage as a process. As such, my position as a researcher, and the undertaking of the project itself, is also reflected in this thesis.

Here, an original contribution to knowledge encompasses both an increased understanding of how gurdwaras in Britain are used and valued, alongside a critique of a heritage-value approach as related to this building type. The thesis indicates the applicability of such an approach in future considerations of gurdwaras and related building types within heritage and planning sectors, specifically cases of re-use or conversion of built religious space in the context of the contemporary or recent past.

The thesis poses the following questions:

1. What is the character of Sikh places of worship in Britain, and what is the nature of their development?
2. In what way are gurdwaras, the processes of their development, and the objects within them, perceived and valued by those most closely associated with the buildings?
3. How is this value negotiated during development processes and translated as physical form?
4. In what ways can this study assist in our understanding of heritage value and significance, and subsequent management strategies?

This introduction serves to briefly outline the analytical framework within which this research has been carried out, and provide a crucial background to the extent to which gurdwaras have been considered in academic debate within the social sciences. It also introduces the city of Leicester as a specific focus of the research, and outlines the structure of the remainder of the thesis.

## 1.2. Analytical framework

The following section will briefly introduce the analytical framework adopted in this study. It will outline the justification for the theoretical and methodological approach taken to the study of gurdwaras by highlighting relevant debates within archaeology, heritage studies and cultural geography. Particular attention is drawn to the key concepts of place and heritage value, prior to the introduction of the city of Leicester as a geographical focus of locally-specific fieldwork.

### *Religion and place*

Current methodologies deployed to relate place, space and religion in archaeology are somewhat sketchy and undeveloped. Furthermore, the nature of 20th and 21st century development of religious space in Britain, specifically related to South Asian migration, has received little attention within archaeology and heritage studies. In post-medieval Britain, King and Sayer (2011, 1) argue religion played a vital role in both physical and mental landscapes. However, they state work on more recent religious heritage, specifically related to Christian heritage, is 'dominated by gazetteers and surveys of particular monument types, only rarely considered as elements within wider physical and cultural landscapes' (2011, 2). Other work across the social sciences has utilised space syntax methods, developed by Hillier and Hanson (1984), in aiming to decipher spatial configurations within religious and other buildings, represented as maps and plans. However, methodologies encompassing space syntax and space semantics have been strongly criticised within archaeology, as stated by Parker Pearson and Richards who argue that 'by ignoring symbolic meanings we overlook the possibility that design structures have different meanings in different cultural contexts' (1994, 30). They note that the absence of a physical boundary need not imply the absence of a conceptual one (ibid, 24) and believe that meaning is realised through social practices (ibid, 40). However, in his work on Dutch and Walloon Christian immigrants who settled in Norwich in the late 16th century, King demonstrates the significant role archaeology can play in mapping evidence for changes to religious space, and in understanding the lifestyles of immigrant communities, their visibility in the urban landscape and 'their varied social and cultural relationship with the wider urban population' (2011, 85). Through this work, King identifies the material legacy of a particular community as



complex and varied, and the urban landscape of Norwich as fluid, culturally diverse and without bounded ethnic and religious groups.

Likewise, O'Sullivan and Young argue religious buildings are not permanent and that the religious function of a building can be adopted, abandoned and created in very short time frames (2012, 349). They recognise the importance of faith in the construction of 'the everyday' in their study of South Asian religious and cultural heritage in Leicester (ibid, 342). In a discussion of the sacred, they claim it is often linked to movable objects and their spatial arrangement within a structure, rather than the structure itself. In this way they challenge approaches within archaeology to the study of religious practice, which rely upon the analysis of dimensions and spatial arrangements between elements of architectural space. In so-doing they raise the idea of buildings as translations of faith rather than embodiments of faith (ibid, 350).

This recent work in archaeology builds upon the relatively considerable attention given to the creation and development of places of worship in the 20th century in the wider social sciences. Largely, discussions are focussed around the social dimensions of places which frame the reproduction of community and value of a place of origin (Knott 2009) and how identity and belonging in the new context is negotiated and transmitted to a local population (Reddy & Zavos 2009). The characteristics of minority religious space are also explored within the context of influences upon design, and the approach of policy makers and planning officers to decisions taken regarding alterations to a specific local landscape. This is often restricted to debates surrounding the building, extension, or adaptation of mosques, Hindu temples and gurdwaras, and the interests of various stakeholders; including a focus on the objections and perceived sensibilities of neighbouring individuals and groups.

The most comprehensive of these studies is that by Peach and Gale (2003), who identify a four-stage process in which faith groups gain the confidence to exhibit a physical representation of their religious identity, alongside the recognition and greater understanding of planning professionals to their needs. Other texts considering this process of development include Naylor and Ryan (2003), Gale (2005), Gale and Naylor (2002), and Nasser (2003) and describe the gradual progression of faith groups from gathering in residential property, to the conversion of previously-used space, to the

development of purpose-built property. In this way O'Sullivan and Young are critical of the approach taken by Gale and others where they recognise a 'tendency to identify the new architecture as a marker of 'non-Britishness' rather than a meaningful addition to the urban fabric' (2012, 344). In an exploration of faith in suburbia, Dwyer, Gilbert and Shah also assert that most commentaries 'simply point to the incongruity of spectacular and 'exotic' architecture in mundane suburban spaces' (ibid, 403). They argue the geography of faith can be seen as quite specific responses ultimately tied in to complex elements of modern suburbia.

Using the case study of the Jain Temple at Potters Bar, built in the grounds of Grade II listed Hook House close to the M25, Shah, Dwyer and Gilbert (2011) rail against what they describe as the 'old orthodoxies of the Chicago School-style sociology' (regarding cities as centres of migration and suburbs as sites of later assimilation). Through a series of interviews with members of the Jain community, and with the architectural firm, alongside the examination of architects' plans and planning records, they consider the final form of the temple to be a reflection of the relationship between complex religious beliefs, the work of Indian and white British architects, the setting of Hook House and the local planning process; in other words 'a distinctive hybrid architecture' (2011, 79). And more recently, a consideration of minority religious space by Dwyer and Gilbert through the AHRC funded 'Making Suburban Faith' project (Making Suburban Faith 2016), has encompassed the relationship of the user community and wider society to the design process of purpose-built and converted premises and, importantly, material culture. This current work has begun to utilise a broader methodological 'toolkit' to encompass ethnographic approaches such as interviews, observation, creative practice and participant photography.

This project then, in focusing on the experiences and perceptions of Sikh communities and their relationships with gurdwaras, has sought to adopt such a methodological toolkit, incorporating ethnography. It responds to this recent work in archaeology and cultural geography in framing the discussion around 'place' as opposed to 'space' in deciphering how a gurdwara (both conceptually and architecturally) becomes a meaningful place for those who use, manage and maintain it. Within heritage policy and management practices, too, place is a focus, and understood as 'borne of interpreted

engagement with time, stories, associations, people, buildings, structures and objects’ as opposed to any necessary fixed physical boundaries (Townend and Whittaker 2011, 67). Thus, rather than adopting the analysis of space semantics, which may be considered a feasible method within this study, I have chosen to implement a series of participant interviews in an effort to establish a more nuanced appreciation of the meaning of place.

#### *Heritage value and narratives of the everyday*

Heritage management processes have received criticism for a narrow focus on Western perceptions of value and significance, largely traditionally incorporating a preference for original, historic and aesthetically pleasing fabric (explored in chapter three). In recent studies, a perceived neglect of the recognition of social values and adoption of democratic heritage-making practices have come to the fore, alongside a recognition that there is a difficulty in addressing more nuanced relationships between tangible and intangible values within existing statutory remits (Jones 2017).

Heritage management processes are not alone in receiving criticism for the way in which we deal with the built environment and its related values. Within architecture and cultural geography too, there have been calls for the recognition that meaning does not exclusively reside in the physical properties of the built environment itself, or in the processes of its formation. In response to the focus on the plural nature of space and social formations within the social sciences in general, binary oppositions have been rescinded in favour of broader, more complex theoretical and analytical explorations of social knowledge. In response, notions of narrative and storytelling have emerged across disciplines, in forms of engagement deciphering what makes places meaningful to those who live, work and reside within them. In the context of participation in the regeneration of north Sheffield, Chiles has described narrative as ‘a device to help us develop a set of background ideas, an identity for a place – a “there” for somewhere that was not there before’ (Chiles 2005, 187) and Hayden (1995) tells us that narratives locate us within something bigger than our individual experiences. David Harvey, a cultural geographer, has also cited a lack of recognition of narrative in what he describes as the failings of ‘new urbanism’ (a planning movement focused on human-scale design). In specific reference to the failings of new urbanism, Harvey notes it lacks the

narratives of history and collective memory that make a place (1997). He argues that it thus 'builds an image (only) of community and a rhetoric of place' (Harvey 1997, 68).

Such discussions take place within the context of place-making and regeneration, but their relevance for understanding meanings associated with pre-existing, and planned, places are valid. A description of the narrative process by Chiles is particularly relevant to this project and its aims: 'What we learn from the narrative process more than anything is that it breaks through professional codes, it appeals to the majority – to lay people uninitiated in the private world of conventional architectural or regeneration 'language'' (Chiles 2005, 191). Sophia Psarra in a discussion of the formation of cultural meaning and architecture too states that 'a narrative requires a narrator and a reader...a narrative therefore, is not only the content of the story that is narrated, or the way in which it is interpreted by readers, but also the way in which it is structured and presented to an audience by an authorial entity' (Psarra 2009, 2). Within calls for a more democratic heritage process, a focus on narrative can thus position both the participant and the researcher or heritage practitioner in such a way as to be critically acknowledged.

The concept of narrative storytelling has been adopted in this study, in an attempt to both understand the nuanced relationship of Sikh communities and gurdwaras, and ensure that the position of the researcher is acknowledged within this process of building understanding. The study has applied a mixed-methods approach, where participant interviews are semi-structured and undertaken whilst walking around the gurdwara, allowing the participant to freely recount stories related to their experience of the place. I sought to gather the stories of members of Sikh gurdwaras and those involved in their development, as well as other stakeholders such as architects and heritage professionals, in seeking to understand what makes gurdwaras meaningful places (explored further in chapter four).

#### *The city of Leicester, religion and local policy*

The geographical remit of the project is national, though resources did not allow for an in-depth national survey of gurdwaras or the undertaking of fieldwork on such a scale. Background information regarding basic metadata was gathered for gurdwaras across

the United Kingdom (UK) whilst visits were made and more in-depth fieldwork was conducted at gurdwaras across England. It was decided early on in the project that it should have a locally-specific element, in order to address complex development processes, related to the diversity of Sikh communities and the relationship with local civic policies. This local case study could then provide a comparative basis with which to undertake and analyse fieldwork conducted at individual gurdwaras elsewhere in England. This section will briefly outline the justification for undertaking this research in the city of Leicester.

The PhD has been carried out at the University of Leicester, where links with minority faith communities had previously been established through the *Mapping Faith and Place* project, which sought to map faith buildings across the city, and explore the values and experiences of those who engaged with them (University of Leicester 2016). The city has also received considerable attention in the past decades as a successful multicultural city, where the civic approach to social cohesion has been widely lauded. In September 2007, the national press announced that Leicester was to become Britain's first plural city, with no ethnic majority, by 2019 (Gaines 2007). Although the city had become pluralised sometime before the 2011 census, such reports drew attention to the unique situation of Leicester, already heralded as a model of multicultural cohesion and racial tolerance, as a city of great ethnic diversity. The Cattle Report, commissioned by the government in 2001 following the race riots in northern towns and cities such as Bradford and Oldham, aimed to identify key policy issues regarding community cohesion. Within Leicester the report recognised a positive approach to diversity within schools and education, which was also adopted by political, civic and faith leaders (Cattle 2001, 15), upholding the belief that the city had found a way to acknowledge and support social integration of ethnic minority groups.

Leicester has since been widely acknowledged as a model of community cohesion within the UK (and Europe), with the 'Leicester model' of social cohesion and urban governance heralded as having an 'exceptional status' (Singh, G. 2006, 295). Singh has suggested that whilst the combination of a thriving local economy, immigration and availability of cheap public and private housing is unexceptional (as this could be found in other localities such as West London and parts of the West Midlands), the proactive

actions taken by Leicester City Council to tackle so-called 'exceptional complexities' (ibid, 300), make it a critical case study in this research. The complexities referred to by Singh are focused around a unique mix of inequality and deprivation present in the city, with cultural and racial diversity. In the early 2000s the council articulated their vision for Leicester to be a diverse society in which everyone is involved, claiming this vision was shared by local political leadership and broader organisations such as the Leicester Council of Faiths (which itself had been functioning from the 1980s, before interfaith work was part of a national agenda). Singh goes on to explain that there was also a focus on the development of effective and consistent community engagement through networking and partnership with local community groups, and the active celebration of diversity through the promotion of festivals such as Diwali, Vaisakhi, Eid, Christmas, and the Caribbean carnival (ibid).

The cultural and racial diversity of Leicester is evident in census figures for the city. In 2001, 60.5% of census respondents in Leicester identified as White British, compared to 45% in 2011, almost half the national average (80%) (Jones & Baker, 2013). Outside of London and close neighbouring towns, it is the most ethnically diverse city in the UK. It is also historically left-leaning and labour supporting, though has at times had a visible far right presence (largely in the 1970s and early 1980s) (ibid). The city has a relatively large population from East Africa, growing in the 1970s due to the Africanisation policies of East African states prompting what Gale and Naylor (2002) refer to as a 'sudden expansion in the demand for places of worship in Leicester during the early 1970s'. By 1991 the city had a population of 270,493, of which 76,991 (28.5%) were members of ethnic minority communities, and South Asians were fairly concentrated in the inner city areas of Highfields and Belgrave, though later there has been movement to suburban areas (Gale and Naylor 2002, 400-401). The Sikh population of Leicester is currently almost five times the national average, with 4% of the city's 329,900 residents identifying as Sikh as opposed to 0.8% nationally (Office for National Statistics (ONS) 2016). There are currently nine gurdwaras in the city (including the Sant Nirankari Mandal) with a further two in Loughborough and Oadby, within Leicestershire. These are dispersed across the city, as seen in the general dispersal of the Sikh population of

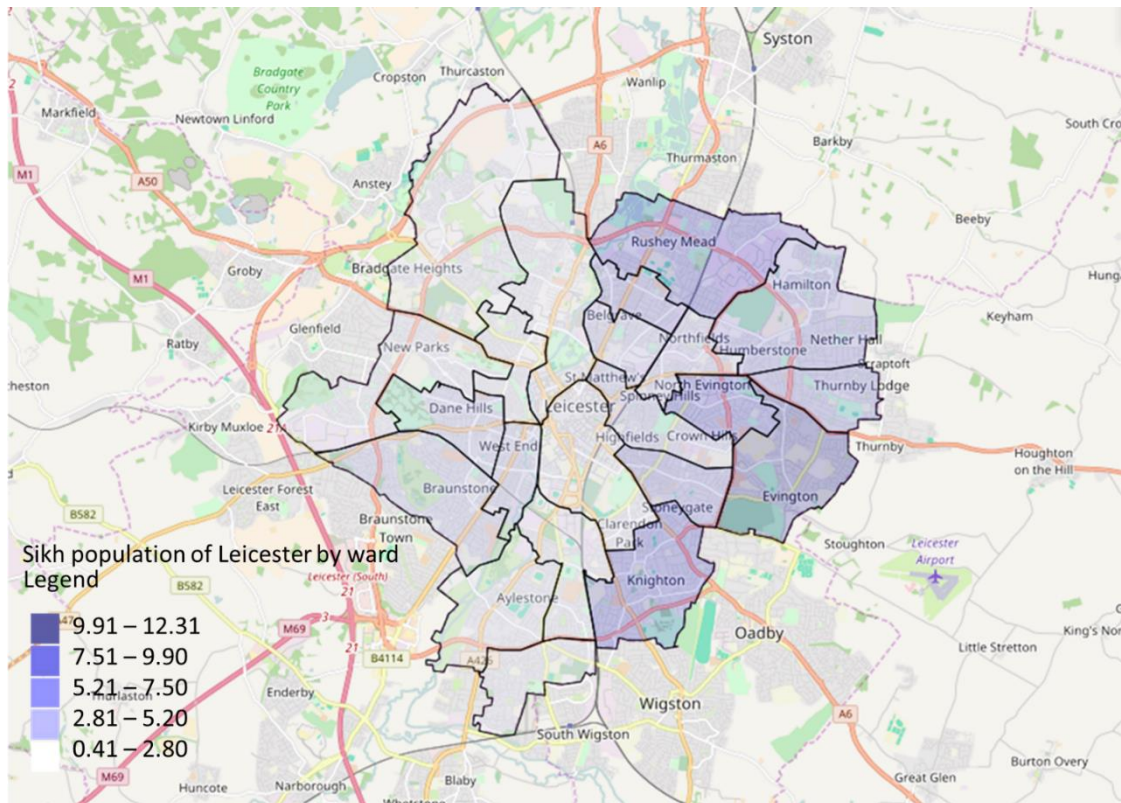


Figure 1.3: A map detailing the Sikh population of Leicester by percentage of ward. ONS Census 2011 data mapped by NOMIS.

the city (figure 1.3). Gurdwaras, and other non-Christian places of worship, do however tend to avoid the working and middle-class suburbs in Leicester West.

There has been some academic focus on Sikh places of worship in Leicester beyond the Mapping Faith and Place project, by Sato (2012) who has explored the presence of caste within four of the gurdwaras, and by Finn (forthcoming) who has undertaken an archaeological study of the Guru Tegh Bahadur Gurdwara. The development of gurdwaras in Leicester has also been described by Singh and Tatla as ‘more typical’ of the national situation than elsewhere in the country, due to the presence of factional rivalries and caste pluralism, and the effects of such on the continual breaking-away of groups to establish new gurdwaras (2006). The focus of such studies, the high Sikh population of the city, and the presence of established networks at the University of Leicester all justified the city becoming a local case study and focus of this project.

The active approach of Leicester City Council to involvement in the development of places of worship in the city, also contributed to the suitability of using Leicester gurdwaras in the study. In 1987 the council produced a report called ‘Places of Worship

1987' which presented the findings of the Working Party on Sites and Buildings for Places of Worship (Leicester City Council 1987). This followed the '1977 report' which aimed to identify places of worship in the city, and assess the current and future provision of space (Leicester City Council 1977). Farnsworth (1989, 19) was critical of the 1977 policy, which he stated 'saw each place of worship as a potential nuisance to nearby residents', and viewed the outcomes of the working party as a 'real advance' due to the development of new provisions of positive service (ibid, 21). Places of Worship 1987 aimed to help faith communities 'by looking at the ways in which the council can assist religious groups in achieving their aspirations while ensuring that places of worship fit harmoniously into the fabric and life of the City' (Leicester City Council 1987, 5).

Within the document, a number of generalised case studies were presented of typical scenarios of faith groups and their buildings, expressing the need for debate and policy regarding the ongoing development of places of worship. Case studies included: 'a place of worship successfully set up but outgrown'; 'Planning permission granted to unauthorised use which later begins to outgrow its premises'; 'A place of worship set up without planning permission and eventually moving to more suitable premises'; 'Planning permission granted but never taken up'; 'A place of worship set up in a converted factory later replaced by a new building' (Leicester City Council 1987). Proposals within the report to address such issues included establishing a register of religious groups wishing to find more suitable premises, as well as a presumption in favour of changes of use of existing buildings to places of worship (ibid, 32). The register was set up in 1988, alongside criteria for selection and a policy for the allocation of land. By 1996, the register had over 30 religious groups listed as in need of new premises (Leicester City Council 1999a, 14).

In relation to funding assistance for developments, the report proclaimed 'the Council...has no specific legal powers to give financial help to religious groups to carry out their religious or educational functions' (Leicester City Council 1987, 36) and that if funding were to be available there would undoubtedly be many groups interested in making applications:



Dealing with all the competing claims even-handedly would be very difficult. The independence of religious groups in their role as religious and educational bodies should be respected and this report accepts that the Council should not offer direct funding to religious groups for these activities

(ibid)

Despite this statement, the report does suggest other ways of financially supporting religious groups, 'for example, the Recreation Committee offer grants to groups in the community for recreational activities and religious groups can benefit from these. Under the Inner Area Programme religious groups can obtain funds for developing community facilities but not for developing places of worship' (ibid, 37). It was a condition of any such grant that facilities should be made available to the general public. Grants for repair work to historic buildings, under the 'Operation Clean-Up' Scheme to improve the external appearance of places of worship, and for making their place of worship more easily accessible for disabled people were also listed as potential funding opportunities. Finally, it was suggested that consideration should be given to selling council-owned land for purpose-built developments at a reduced rate. In 1993, in the case of one such development for a new Ramgarhia Board Gurdwara (discussed in chapter six) planning committees approved a 50% discount on the value of such land.

At the time of writing, a core strategy is in place which is adapted from the local plan 2006 (an updated local plan is due in 2018). It states that the council will seek to retain existing places of worship, and that the consideration of new places of worship will be undertaken with demand for such a provision in the local neighbourhood in mind (Leicester City Council 2014). Furthermore, places of worship would be viewed as cultural facilities which 'help people who live here to develop a sense of belonging, to value the cultural diversity of our city and become more confident and proud of Leicester' (Leicester City Council 2014, 90).

The interaction of local authorities and minority ethnic or faith groups has been examined by Vertovec in his considerations of 'institutionalised multiculturalism', which he describes as the development of institutional structures 'to provide better social services, and resources to ethnic minority organisations' (1996, 49). Whilst he acknowledges that the role played by communities themselves is crucial, he is also critical of social and political separation which effectively fetishizes cultural differences.

Dinham and Lowndes have more recently identified three ‘distinctive stories of faith and urban governance: the “resources” narrative of national policy makers, the “religion” narrative of faith actors, and the “representation” narrative of local stakeholders’ (2008, 828). In their study of engagement of faith groups in British urban governance, they argue that different stakeholders understand faith engagement differently; each making specific assumptions about how beliefs, actions and institutions are linked (ibid, 840). Such attention marks a move within academic studies away from the dominant celebratory narrative of wholly successful social cohesion policies, to the critical consideration of accounts of conservative domestic power relations and ethno-religious parochialism, amongst other issues (McLoughlin 2013). Multiculturalism was also explored in a recent BBC Radio 4 program which emphasised not only the social cohesion policies of the City of Leicester, but also the power of faith leaders to control block voting, and the willingness of political figures to distribute funds for services at places of worship accordingly (BBC Radio Four 2016).

Within this project the extent to which the interaction between gurdwara communities and the local authority are referred to in participant narratives is of interest. Local planning records were also consulted in order to establish the physical alteration of a gurdwara building, alongside the role and perception of the local authority and wider community of the presence of the gurdwara and its physical attributes.

### 1.3. Structure of the thesis

In chapter two, I contextualise the project through short discussions of Sikhism and gurdwara development. Initially, consideration is given to the nature of Sikhism and gurdwaras across the Sikh diaspora. An outline of the Sikh faith is provided prior to an exploration of Sikh architecture, and the consideration of gurdwaras as heritage places, providing a background to the migration of Sikhs to Britain, and the subsequent development of gurdwaras, nationally. The chapter concludes with a brief consideration of gurdwaras in Britain, exploring their geographical, architectural, and religious diversity.

Chapter three is framed around discussions of place and value, looking to heritage discourse and practice, and debates surrounding cultural value. Here, the role of

Historic England, and strategies for the identification and management of perceived heritage places are explored in more detail. The second half of the chapter relates such discourse and practice to issues presented through determining the value of the gurdwara in Britain. Recent debates particularly pertinent to this study include those considering the nuances of community and scale, and cultural diversity. The conclusion to the chapter outlines how we may respond to these debates by adopting broader methodologies, and chapter four moves on to detail the rationale for the mixed-methods approach utilised in the project. A focus on narrative experiences is justified through a consideration of recent approaches adopted in other studies across the social sciences, including archaeology and cultural geography. Reflections on doing the research are then explored, incorporating discussions around interviews, ethics, the use of documentary evidence, and the position of the researcher.

Analysis of the data collated during fieldwork commences in chapter five, which considers the gurdwara in Britain as 'a distinctive sacred space'. Five narrative themes across the interview transcripts were identified, and are explored in turn. The themes are understood to relate to gurdwaras in a general sense, and so help us to determine what a gurdwara is and is becoming, and what their use, meaning and purpose are as they are perceived by those who use and manage them. The chapter concludes by highlighting that such themes suggest a gurdwara exists as a place, distinct from the physical structure it inhabits.

Chapters six and seven then question this early conclusion, by focusing on how such meaning is related to the physical fabric of gurdwaras across the country. Although perceptions of the value of gurdwara buildings themselves are less general and more context-specific, the focus of these chapters is on the complex processes of development, the role of other stakeholders, and use of materials, which ultimately help us to locate meaning in the physical fabric. The focus of chapter six is on the complex processes of development of gurdwaras in the city of Leicester. Narratives related to the early development of gurdwaras and their ongoing development are linked to migration histories, diversity of Sikhs in the city, the local built landscape of the city, and the changing pro and re-active response of the local authority to the development of minority religious space. Chapter seven then broadens discussion to

take account of other gurdwaras across England. It focuses on the architectural qualities of gurdwaras, from those resident in formerly used religious buildings, to industrial spaces, and heritage-listed buildings. Interior objects and the design of purpose-built gurdwaras are also considered in relating the findings of chapter five to our understanding of gurdwaras as both meaningful places, and their relationship with physical fabric.

Discussion of the research in chapter eight draws together gurdwara narratives, the methodological approach, theoretical perspectives, and background knowledge, in discussions of the research findings. Commonalities and differences between case studies and individual perspectives are highlighted, and reflections and implications of the research are given. More specific conclusions drawn from the discussion are then presented in chapter nine, the concluding chapter of the thesis.

## Chapter 2: The 'Gateway to the Guru' – A background to gurdwara development

The aim of this chapter is to provide a platform from which to understand the development of gurdwaras in Britain, based on what is already known. A brief introduction to the Sikh faith, and how it is understood to relate to gurdwara architecture, is combined with a discussion of Sikh migration to Britain, situating gurdwaras within their wider historical context. The concept of gurdwaras as cultural heritage is also introduced, and several examples regarding debates surrounding the official recognition of gurdwaras as heritage are considered from across the diaspora. Finally, a breakdown of a scoping survey of gurdwaras in Britain, performed as part of this research, is analysed, alongside the presentation of demographic data. Whilst it is conceived that the exploration of each of these elements provides a comprehensive background to the various subjects and themes covered in the thesis, it should also be noted that the literature on Sikhism is vast, and only that which is deemed particularly pertinent to this study is included here.

### 2.1. The Sikh faith

Sikhism has around 28 million followers worldwide, and is often considered the newest of the world religions. With origins in late 15<sup>th</sup> century Punjab, it is a monotheistic religion marked by a devotion to a succession of ten Gurus and the Guru Granth Sahib (Holy Scripture). For Sikhs, the word Guru means 'remover of the darkness' (Nesbitt 2005, 2) and refers to the ten spiritual guides who were all physical embodiments of one Guru. Guru Nanak was the first of these, ending with Guru Gobind Singh. Guru Nanak, born in 1469 in the Sheikhpura District of present-day Pakistan (approximately 70km west of Lahore) is widely venerated by Sikhs as one of their most important figures (figure 2.1). He urged men and women of every caste and creed to worship God whilst transcending religious labels. 'There is no Muslim; there is no Hindu' are understood to be his first words following his initial religious experience (McLeod 1997, 8) and the wholeness of humanity and concept of One Reality remains the cornerstone of the Sikh faith (Kaur Singh 1995, 2).



Figure 2.1 (left): A portrait of Guru Nanak outside of the prayer hall at Guru Teg Bahadur Gurdwara, Nottingham. Figure 2.2 (right): the ik oan kar symbol in stained glass, above the door of the Liverpool Sikh Association Gurdwara, and two khandas, below.

Having attracted a body of disciples (the *Panth*), initial gatherings would take place in simple rooms known as *dharamsalas*, and later, following expansion of the Panth, in gurdwaras. Sikhs were expected to practice *nam simaran*, the repetition of a spiritually charged word or mantra, and gather together to sing hymns composed by the Guru (*kirtan*) or sit silently in meditation (McLeod 1997, 34). Guru Nanak and successive Gurus introduced *langar*, the shared production and consumption of food, later making it specifically anti-caste. They also contributed to the creation of the *Adi Granth*, the first Sikh text.

According to tradition, Guru Arjan, the fifth Guru, instructed his son and successor, Hargobind, to always sit fully armed on his throne, following ongoing violence by the Mughals and martyrdom of the Gurus for refusing to convert to Islam (McLeod 1997, 45). Hargobind went on to symbolically carry two swords, one indicating the spiritual authority of the Guru (*piri*) and the other a temporal authority (*miri*), now symbolically demonstrated as the two swords of the khanda (figure 2.2). McLeod remarks that this was a turning point in Sikh history, leading to the Panth no longer assuming a strictly religious identity, but displaying an ability to defend itself, and others, against persecution (ibid, 46). Hargobind was only 11 years old at the time of his succession, and grew to demand offerings of arms and horses instead of money from the *Mahants*

(proprietors), who were at that time in control of the gurdwaras. He took his seat at the Akal Takht ('the throne of the timeless one') which was erected facing the Harimandir Sahib in Amritsar, Punjab (later known as the Golden Temple) thus ensuring that they become the seats of temporal and spiritual authority (ibid, 47).

The last Guru, Guru Gobind Singh, is revered as 'Lord of the Khalsa' (ibid, 49). Decades prior to his succession had seen the growing corruption of the Mahants, which he insisted must come to an end. In 1699 he announced the founding of the Khalsa (the body of disciples who follow *rahit* (a code of conduct)) and proclaimed that all were to be present and armed on Vaisakhi Day for an annual festival. In order to become part of the Khalsa, an individual would have to follow *rahit*, an essential part of which was the adherence to the five Ks; *kes* (uncut hair), *kangha* (comb), *kara* (steel bracelet), *kirpan* (sword) and *kachh* (pair of breeches). Male members were to adopt the name Singh and females the name Kaur. In so doing, Guru Gobind Singh ensured every Sikh was recognisable and ready to fight. He died in October 1708, declaring the line of personal Gurus was at an end. Prior to his death, he added further texts to the Adi Granth in elevating it to the Guru Granth Sahib. Consisting of 1430 pages written by 36 contributors, including six of the Gurus and 30 other non-Sikh scholars and saints, the Guru Granth Sahib was thereafter considered the physical embodiment of the Guru, to whose words Sikhs should turn for guidance and authority.

McLeod asserts that rather than any synthesising of Islam and Hinduism, Sikhism was a rejection of both faiths (McLeod 1970, 161). Sikhs believe in the oneness of the Divine Reality, which is both inherent within all forms and yet formless, and is emphasised in the first words of the Guru Granth Sahib (Kaur Singh 1995, 2). The Jap, or *bani*, of Guru Nanak is recited daily, and the first words 'Ik Oan Kar' literally translated as 'One Reality Is' can be found as a symbol 'on Sikh gateways, walls, medallions, canopies, fabric, and even jewellery' (ibid, 5) (figure 2.2). The first lines of the *bani*, translated by Kaur Singh (1995, 51) are as follows:

There is One Being  
Truth by Name  
Primal Creator  
Without fear  
Without enmity  
Timeless in form

Unborn  
Self-existent  
The grace of the Guru

MEDITATE  
Truth before time  
Truth throughout time  
Truth here and now  
Says Nanak, Truth is evermore

Kaur Singh explains that striving to approach the Divine Reality is central to Sikhism and that 'Name' (within us and all around us) is the only way of communing with the Divine; to receive it is to 'experience the formless in this world of form' (1995, 6). Day-to-day existence presents challenges to this approach, and Sikhism calls for the rejection of ego, lust, anger, greed and attachment in our interactions. Regardless, the transcendent goal within Sikhism remains in this world, developed through everyday experience and duties (ibid, 10). Guru Nanak teaches that 'we are all provided with the opportunity to act ethically and purposefully. Earthly existence is not to be shunned but to be lived fully and intensely' (ibid, 14), and is perhaps most evident in the practice of *seva* or selfless service which takes three forms. These are *tan*, or physical service, *man*, or mental service, and *dhan*, or material service. In practice, Sikhs should strive to work hard, be charitable with time, money and skills, and serve the community. Meditation alone is not understood to bring one closer to the Divine Reality.

Contradictions to this world view are, of course, also present. Although Guru Nanak teaches that pilgrimages, fasts and rituals 'are of no avail', many Sikhs continue to travel to visit the Harimandir Sahib at Amritsar, despite the fact that this is not presented as a necessity for those initiated to the Khalsa or otherwise (ibid, 10). Practices of social equality may not also always be a reality. Management committees of gurdwaras continue to be dominated by men, and stories regarding women gaining the right to vote for members of management committees in Britain are still relatively recent (SikhNet 2008). During the time of the human Gurus, the recognition of the wholeness of humanity, absence of a caste-based priesthood and respect for manual labour is said to have 'exercised a significant liberating influence on the dalits in the Punjab' who, within Sikhism, were viewed as equals to those of higher social caste groups (Puri,



2003). However, Puri does assert that ‘there was a wide gap between the doctrinal principles and social practice’ and a distinct caste hierarchy, influenced by tribal cultural patterns of the dominant Jats (landowners) and their power interests continued to play out in what is now a Sikh majority state. The enduring presence of caste across the Sikh diaspora is a reminder that, although the words inscribed in the Guru Granth Sahib have complete authority within Sikhism, Sikh tradition and identity is fluid and complex.

The sites of the Harimandir Sahib and Akal Takht remain the seats of spiritual and temporal authority for many Sikhs across the diaspora, though other forms of religious management have emerged. Hukamnamas or decrees are, in theory, issued by the Akal Takht and applicable universally to gurdwaras in Punjab and elsewhere. The website of the Sri Akal Takht Sahib lists eight such ‘directives’ detailing, for example, that chairs or sofas should not be used in gurdwaras, that only *amritdhari* Sikhs (those formally initiated to the Khalsa) should be on management committees, and advice regarding electrical faults and damage to the Guru Granth Sahib at gurdwaras (Sri Akal Takht Sahib 2014).

However, the 19th century witnessed the emergence of Sikhs who, not identifying with the Khalsa, adopted a range of different identities. The later years of Ranjit Singh’s reign (1801 – 1839), saw the development of the Nirankari and Namdhari sectarian movements in the Punjab. The Nirankaris were disillusioned by the apparent neglect of Guru Nanak’s original teachings and the Namdharis dismayed at the failure to abide by the principles of the Khalsa. Both sects follow a living Guru, but while the Namdharis continue to keep the Guru Granth Sahib present in their places of worship, the Nirankaris, generally, do not. Many sects now have a strong following in Britain including Nirankaris and Namdharis, Ravidasias and Valmikis (of whom the latter three have a strongly caste specific membership). To some, these practices are unacceptably heterodox, and each sectarian group, and indeed each congregation, has tended to develop its own conventions in Sikh religious rituals and has established places of worship in Britain (Ballard 1994, 112).

For example, traditionally, Valmikis made a living as agricultural labourers working for higher-caste (usually Jat Sikh) peasant farmers (Nesbitt 1995, 118). Since independence in 1947, members have adopted a much wider range of occupations, but like their close

associates, the Ravidasias, whose traditional occupations included the removal of dead cattle and tanning their hides to make leather, the Valmikis are conventionally regarded as *dalits* or untouchables (Nesbitt 1995, 118). In the Punjab, until very recently, Valmikis and Ravidasias were routinely prevented from entering temples, gurdwaras and mosques and from sending their children to school (ibid).

While the Valmikis and Ravidasias have often acted as allies, this cooperation has not spilled into religious affairs or into the process of community formation (ibid). Although they arrived in Britain at the same time and in the same places, they have formed their own separate and still strictly endogamous local community and established their own temples. Apart from the prominent position accorded Guru Ravi Das in their gurdwara, little distinguishes their styles of worship from higher caste Sikhs, though many still firmly identify themselves as Hindus (Nesbitt 1990).

Additionally, the Singh Sabha ('society of the Singhs') movement was founded in 1873 in Amritsar and initially constituted Sikhs who regarded the Panth as part of wider Hindu society (*sanatan* Sikhs). They argued that those who did not consider the Rahit or Khalsa as mandatory were just as entitled to consider themselves Sikh as members of the Khalsa. Again, gurdwaras affiliated with the Singh Sabha movement are now commonplace across the Sikh diaspora, though religious practice does not notably differ to those which do not include the Singh Sabha title.

A further development in 1902, following the convening of a number of prominent Sikhs, created the Chief Khalsa Diwan which aimed to represent all Sikhs in faith and other matters. The Akali Movement, which emerged after the First World War, eventually overtook this and the Gurdwara Reform Movement took place between 1920 and 1925. By the 18th century, gurdwaras had become distinct from the smaller *dharamsalas* and were regarded as shrines associated with particular Gurus, attracting considerable donations. Most were in the hands of mahants who were granted ownership rights under British rule, and many declined the Khalsa identity and lived ever more luxurious lives. The objective of the Akali Movement was to transfer control of the gurdwaras to the Khalsa.

These events led to the introduction of the Shiromoni Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee (SGPC), which was formed to administrate the newly liberated gurdwaras in 1920. The Sikh Gurdwaras Act was then passed in 1925 and makes reference to Sikhs as distinguished from Hindus, as Sikhs 'could have no other religion' (McLeod 1997, 83). The SGPC from this point managed most of the major gurdwaras until the partition of India in 1947. It remains in charge of a number of Sikh religious institutions, including the Akal Takht, and is responsible for managing historical gurdwaras in present-day Indian Punjab. The Sikh Rehat Maryada was published in 1950 by the SGPC following 20 years of consultation with Sikh scholars. It details instructions on the social and religious practices of Sikhs, and is considered a code of conduct. However, Nesbitt asserts that its remit 'technically extends only as far as the pre-1966 Indian states of Punjab, in other words it operates only in the present states of Punjab, Haryana, and Himachal Pradesh, but not, for example, in Delhi, let alone the diaspora' (2005, 131). The SGPC, Akal Takht and the Sant Samaj (a recently formed body of independent groups led by living sants) all compete for religious authority (Nesbitt 2005, 127).

Diversity in management and religious practice, the ongoing presence of reform movements, and caste distinctions means Sikh identity remains highly diverse throughout the diaspora in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Sections 2.3 and 2.4 provide further discussion of Sikh diversity in relation to Sikh migration to Britain and the development of gurdwaras nationally.

## 2.2. Gurdwaras and cultural heritage

### *A Sikh architecture?*

There has been relatively little focus on Sikh or gurdwara architecture, beyond attention to the Golden Temple. Early Sikh places of worship in Punjab were referred to as dharamsalas, later becoming substantial structures more akin to the Golden Temple at Amritsar (figure 2.3). The origins of the architectural design are Indo-Persian, and scholarship largely equates its development to an extension of Mughal architecture, with a penchant for ribbed lotus domes, balconied windows and rectangular halls suited to the gathering of large numbers of people (Singh, K. 2014, 6). The Harimandir Sahib (Golden Temple), the spiritual and temporal centre for the Panth, is distinguished by its bright gold exterior. It is rectangular in shape, adorned with chattris (roof-top pavilions

with domes, usually supported by four columns (Ching 2014, 428)) and kiosks, and embellished with decoration on all four sides. It sits in the centre of a pool of water, surrounded by ancillary buildings housing kitchens and langar halls, gurdwaras and places of accommodation. The complex has entrances on all four sides, symbolic of a gurdwara's open policy to those of all faiths and castes.



Figure 2.3: The Harimandir Sahib (Golden Temple), Amritsar, India. Source: Wikimedia Commons

The Golden Temple remains the pre-eminent gurdwara in Sikh consciousness, though the complex is not explicitly emulated elsewhere. The words within the Guru Granth Sahib do not dictate the form a gurdwara should take, and documents like the Sikh Rehat Maryada detail religious and social practices both within and outside the gurdwara, as opposed to the physical character of the gurdwara itself. The Akal Ustat, by Guru Gobind Singh (within the Guru Granth Sahib) states:

...Hindus and Muslims are one.  
The same Reality in the Creator and Preserver of all;  
Know no distinctions between them.

The monastery and the mosque are the same;  
So are the Hindu worship and the Muslim prayer.  
Humans are all one!

(Kaur Singh 1995, 9)

The religion itself, and guidance given to Sikhs in the Guru Granth Sahib give no indication of a defined architectural style, given the one-ness of humans and their places of prayer. Furthermore, the dispelling of ego, greed and pride have been related to the rejection of any embellished architectural form for gurdwaras. For instance, at the start of an article, Glover refers to the description of the Golden Temple by amateur British historian James Fergusson (1899):

Runjeet Singh was too emulous of the wealth of his Hindu and Moslem subjects in this respect not to desire to rival their magnificence, and consequently we have the Golden Temple in the Holy Tank at Amritsar—as splendid an example of its class as is found in India, though neither its outline nor its details can be commended. It is useful, however, as exemplifying one of the forms which Indian temple-architecture assumed in the 19th century, and where for the present, we must leave it...now that the sovereignty has passed from the Sikhs we cannot expect their priests or people to indulge in a magnificence their religion does not countenance or encourage.

(Fergusson 1899, vi; from Glover 2012, 33)

Here, Fergusson sets the Golden Temple apart from any other progression of Sikh architecture, and highlights the perception that due to the nature of their faith, there is little interest in an ‘architecture of magnificence’ amongst Sikhs (Glover 2012, 33). Glover counters this suggestion in his study of the demolition of historic gurdwaras in India, and the rebuilding of them on larger, grander scales, with the use of marble and other materials (2012). The process of redevelopment appears to be of value to communities who wish to perform seva by contributing to the physical form of the gurdwara itself. He remarks that:

To participate as a kar sevak is both a duty and a privilege for most Sikhs, and the demolition of older gurdwaras in order to replace them with new, larger, more finely finished buildings brings considerable satisfaction to a great number of people.

(Glover 2012, 35)

The suggestion too that ‘an architecture of magnificence’ is not countenanced in Sikhism, is dispelled by Kaur Singh’s description of patterns, symmetry and repetition within traditional gurdwaras:

Just as the words of the Guru Granth are not static, in the same way the geometric designs on the gurdwara floors and the floral designs on its walls of marble and stone are not closures either. Abstraction, symmetry, rhythm and repetition are essential characteristics of Sikh architecture. Abstract patterns make possible a passage into another world beyond the senses.

(Kaur Singh 1995, 32)

In this description, Kaur Singh references gurdwara design as assisting in religious practices related to finding the formless in form, in communing with the Divine, which is not restricted to an architecture of simplicity, but rather relies upon fluidity. Indeed, Glover (2012) has recognised the destruction and rebuilding of historic gurdwaras in Indian Punjab as a process which stirs debate about the nature of heritage and what is and is not important in a consideration of Sikh architecture. The locally managed nature of these sites, whilst in many cases linked to a complex network influenced by diversity in religious practice, migration history and caste affiliation, has led to the development of a building type which follows few universally held conventions.

#### *Gurdwaras as heritage places*

In the case of gurdwaras in Britain, it is clear they are important and significant places, though official recognition as such through heritage assessment and management has not been undertaken in Britain on a national scale. Many gurdwaras do feature on local authority heritage lists, such as the Guru Tegh Bahadur gurdwara in Leicester, formerly a shoe factory and one of the largest gurdwaras in the country (figure 2.4). There are also gurdwaras which have received national listed status, though of the eleven in this category, all are listed due to the original design and function of the building, and in many cases listing descriptions make little, or only passing, mention of their use as a gurdwara. Mile End and Bow District Synagogue, for example, has been in use as Harley Grove Gurdwara since 1979, though the listing description makes no mention of this fact, or an indication of how the building is now used and valued (Historic England 2016b).

Within India, historic gurdwaras are largely afforded heritage status and relevant protections, and in Pakistan, attention has been paid to a heritage deemed at risk (see Singh, A. 2016 for example). Elsewhere, in the diaspora, there have been moves to



Figure 2.4: The Guru Tegh Bahadur Gurdwara in Leicester, as the annual Vaisakhi parade arrives in 2014.

recognise and protect Sikh-built heritage. In Canada, one of the first Sikh gurdwaras to be established in the country has been awarded national heritage status. The Gur Sikh Temple in Abbotsford, British Columbia is the oldest in North America and was declared a National Historic Site of Canada in 2002 (figure 2.5). The wood-frame structure is, according to the listing description, ‘typical of Canadian commercial vernacular architecture of the period’ (Canada’s Historic Places 2016). The heritage value of the site is achieved due to its status as ‘the oldest surviving example of the temples which played a crucial religious, social and political role in the pioneer phase of Sikh immigration to North America’ and represents ‘a pragmatic adaptation of Sikh traditions to the Canadian context’ (ibid). Whilst the religious, social and political role of the gurdwara is recognised, value is also placed on the architectural form of the building, as conforming to typical local vernaculars. It remains the only nationally listed gurdwara (aside from those listed due to earlier functions) outside of India and Pakistan.



Figure 2.5. The Gur Sikh Temple in Abbotsford, British Columbia, Canada. The gurdwara opened in 1912 and is now a National Historic Site. ©canadiansikhheritage.ca

In 2014, controversy arose when it was reported the Golden Temple was being considered for nomination as a World Heritage Site (WHS). A Change.org petition with c.20,000 signatures was set up in Belgium ‘to delete the name of Sri Harimandir Sahib, Amritsar Sahib from the world heritage nomination list (Tentative) sent by the Indian Government’ (change.org 2014). The petition requests the SGPC to get the site removed from the tentative list, and includes reasons for resisting listing regarding loss of sovereignty, number of visitors to the complex and the potential change from a ‘deeply spiritual place to one of cultural tourism’ (ibid).

Although the petition was instigated from outside India, and garnered relatively little support, the issue was clearly one of concern to Sikhs throughout the diaspora. Counter opinions argued that fears were ‘baseless’ (Raizada 2015) and comparisons were made between the Harimandir as a ‘living place of worship’ and the Vatican and Mecca, as sites which either acknowledge WHS status and tourists (with minimal rules), or reject the concept of ‘heritage’ and do not allow non-Muslims (Guha 2015). One commenter stated that ‘Amarjit Kaur’s insistence it [the Harimandir Sahib] “is not a tourist place but a worship place” is contradicted by the happy coexistence of tourists and worshippers at Harimandir Sahib, where architectural preservation is taken seriously’ (ibid). In April 2015, the Times of India reported on the issue and quoted the SGPC president Avtar



Singh Makkar, who is opposed to inscription: 'Golden Temple doesn't need recognition from any organization. It is a heritage in itself. It is the abode of the Guru; we can't even think about such a thing' (Rana 2015a). The report highlights the position of the SGPC as opposed to attempts by the Indian Government to inscribe the Golden Temple due to potential 'interference in religious affairs' (ibid). The report also made reference to a conservation expert, Balwinder Singh, who believed there was a need to create awareness of the way the site would be managed in the event it was inscribed (ibid).

The issue appears to have come to a head with the composition of a letter by Kishore Rao, then Deputy Director of the World Heritage Centre, stating that the site was put on the tentative list in 2004, but that no nomination from the Indian Government for its inscription on the world heritage list had yet been received. Attempts have been made to view a copy of the correspondence from UNESCO but no response has been received from the World Heritage Centre. Again the issue was reported by the Times of India, a month after their earlier article, in May 2015 (Rana 2015b). Various online opinions, some of which have been referred to above, suggest there was some confusion regarding exactly how and why the Golden Temple had been nominated for inscription. Tensions clearly exist about the idea of a Sikh-managed site in Indian Punjab being listed and potentially managed by the Indian national government. Though it has also been asserted that a feared loss of sovereignty and control regarding the future management, architectural preservation and religious authenticity of the site, is either exaggerated or misinformed.

The potential acknowledgement of the Golden Temple as an official heritage site, for some at least, appears to be at odds with its function and use, as a living religious site with relevance to Sikhs across the world, and one managed independently. The heritage listing of gurdwaras regionally in India does not seem to have received the same level of opposition, and at least one gurdwara has received recognition by UNESCO for methods utilised in its conservation. The Lakhpat Gurudwara in Gujarat, was declared a protected monument in 1992, and received a UNESCO Asia-Pacific Award for Cultural Heritage Conservation in 2004 (UNESCO Bangkok 2004). The gurdwara is in use and is also a frequently visited tourist site associated with a reported visit from Guru Nanak in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. The conservation used local materials and encouraged the

participation of the local community in the process, equipping them with new skills which they could utilise in the future (ibid). An important issue recognised in the administration of the award was the significant contribution of *kar sewaks* (those performing voluntary service as part of seva) who came from neighbouring and distant places to contribute to the work (ibid). UNESCO stress that they were able to share their views on the work being undertaken, helping 'the conservation team to understand the requirements of the community at large' (ibid). The project has been deemed a success especially due to the 'creation of a platform for constructive dialogue between the various stakeholders of the site' which enabled the community to understand conservation standards better, while 'making the government departments more sensitive about the requirements and expectations of the local community' (ibid).

These cases, although disparate, can help contribute to an understanding of heritage debates regarding Sikh places of worship. Controversy regarding the inscription of the Golden Temple on the World Heritage List points to the locally managed nature of the site and fears regarding giving a living religious site heritage status, something perceived to shift control and damage authenticity. The process of conservation of the Lakhpat Gurdwara, in contrast, highlights the interaction of official, community and religious heritage-making practices. The contribution of *kar sewaks* in particular, echoes suggestions made by Glover (2012) that the redevelopment of gurdwaras is valued as a part of religious practice itself, and suggests that this recognition is integral to best-practice in the heritage management of Sikh places of worship.

### 2.3. Sikh migration to Britain

Discussions surrounding Sikhs in Britain have largely consisted of elements of wider debates regarding the development of a multi-cultural and multi-faith society. Accounts of the tenacity of Sikhs, political activism and a tendency towards hard-working values are often given as examples of a successful migrant community which has utilised gurdwaras for the needs of an expanding minority ethnic and religious group. Singh and Tatla described how Sikhs have been regularly portrayed as 'a noble military race, as victims of racial abuse, as troublemakers deeply committed to their faith, as an exceptionally talented business community – or, more recently, as terrorists committed to the politics of homeland' (2006, 9).

Stories relating to the passing of legislation in the 1970s onwards allowing Sikhs to wear turbans in the workplace and carry the kirpan (a small symbolic knife worn under the clothes) are often the focus of a consideration of Sikhism in debates regarding multiculturalism. Likewise, the media image of Sikhism in the UK is predominantly male and often suggests a preoccupation with the turban and with the carrying of knives. In 2012 a Sikh soldier was given permission to wear a turban as a guardsman at Buckingham Palace for the first time. This, alongside the centenary of World War I in 2014 and a greater awareness of turbaned soldiers has highlighted the involvement of Sikhs in the British forces for over a century, often acting as evidence of 'British-ness' and legitimating allowances made in expressing their religion freely by the media. Furthermore, the key finding of the British Sikh Report 2013 undertaken by City Sikhs UK (one of many organisations claiming to support the representation of Sikhs in policy and governmental issues) was that Sikhs are 'proud of being born or living in Britain' (British Sikh Report 2013).

Whilst literature on Sikhs in Britain is largely framed within debates surrounding multiculturalism, where individuals and groups are lauded for their success in political and statutory battles regarding their rights to religious freedom and expression, in mainland Europe issues relating to religious diversity, identity and tolerance of religious symbols in the public sphere remain dominant concerns (Thandi 2012, 18). It is important to note therefore that the following exploration of Sikh migration to Britain relates to the particular British experience of multiculturalism. Thandi is clear that issues affecting European Sikhs are diverse, but that they point to a community largely at the margins of continental European society, 'still struggling for visibility and acceptance' (ibid, 12).

This section serves to briefly chart Sikh migration from Punjab to Britain over the past 150 years. This migration is complex and reflects the diversity of both the British Sikh community, and the institutions formed in Britain as a result, including gurdwaras.

#### *Early migration from Punjab*

The processes involved in South Asian migration to Britain and elsewhere have been the focus of a significant body of research. Visram has highlighted that large-scale migration



Figure 2.6: A map detailing Northern India and the Indian state of Punjab (in red). Source: Wikimedia Commons.

was preceded by long established networks of movement from South Asia to Britain and around the world dating back as early as the 17th century, largely characterised by sailors, students and the princely elite (1986; 2002). One of the first and most notable Sikh sojourners to Britain was the Maharaja Duleep Singh, who arrived in 1854 following the annexation of Punjab by the East India Company in 1849 (Singh and Tatla 2006, 44). Duleep Singh had converted to Christianity and was quickly favoured by Queen Victoria, spending time at Osborne House and Castle Menzies in Perthshire. He later purchased Elveden Hall in Norfolk, and in 1999 Prince Charles opened a permanent statue of him in Thetford, built by the Maharaja Duleep Singh Centenary Trust. Singh and Tatla describe him as ‘an icon for new generations of British Sikhs’ and ‘a tangible link with royalty for ‘reimagining’ the British Sikh experience’ (2006, 45). The Maharaja of Patiala, Bhupendra Singh, was also a regular visitor to Britain, and is understood to have donated £8000 in 1911 to the development of the first Sikh gurdwara in Britain, in Shepherd’s Bush (Bance *et al.* 2008, 6). Writers and students more regularly resided in Britain following the opening of the civil service to Indians in the early 20th century, with more affluent Punjabis choosing to send their sons and daughters to elite schools for education (Singh & Tatla 2006, 47).

More permanent Sikh settlement was brought by Bhatras (peddlars), from West Punjab, in the 1930s. It is not clear what sparked this migration, but several hundred Bhatra Sikhs lived in, predominantly, the port cities of Cardiff and Glasgow, and later Manchester, Birmingham and Peterborough (ibid, 48). The Indian Workers' Association (IWA) was founded in Coventry in 1938, and its membership consisted of Punjabis from the Doaba region, an area of Punjab. Singh and Tatla argue early migration from the Jalandhar District and surrounding Doaba region of Indian Punjab, saw decades of related chain migration through to the end of the 20th century (2006, 48-49). By the end of World War II it has been estimated that between 1000 and 2000 Sikhs were resident in Britain (ibid). These early settlers are understood to have lived largely without community organisation, besides religious gatherings at the gurdwara in Shepherd's Bush.

#### *Immigration to Britain post 1945*

Sikh migration to Britain is largely considered a post-war story, sparked by a boom in industry and apparent shortage of labour in the reconstruction of post-war Britain, as well as the partition of India in 1947. This event led to one of the biggest population movements in recorded history, resulting in the deaths of thousands of people across the Punjab and the northern states of India and Pakistan and the misplacement of millions more. In the years following 1947, a Sikh diaspora grew significantly in North America, Britain, the Middle East, and South East Asia. In the early 1950s demand for unskilled labour increased in the industrial towns of the Midlands and the North. Early settlers also provided a sound base for the movement of, largely, young single men, increasing the Sikh presence in the cities of Coventry, Birmingham, Leicester and Glasgow, and later in the towns of the West Midlands, West and East London, Bedford, Derby, Bradford, Leeds, Nottingham, Manchester, Scunthorpe and Huddersfield (Singh & Tatla 2006, 51). Most new migrants had contacts already resident in Britain, who could help with accommodation and securing work, and who were drawn from the same villages and castes as the early pioneers (Ballard 1994, 94).

The inflow of Bhatras, whose community in Punjab had been close-knit, remained tightly focused both socially and geographically. However, the pattern was different amongst the Jats. The Jalandhar District (or Doaba region), where most Jat Sikhs in

Britain originate, is one of the most densely populated parts of the Punjab. Since the 1950s they account for the overwhelming majority of Sikh migrants to Britain, and well over half of Sikhs now living in Britain are Jats (Ballard 1994, 95). Unlike the Bhatras, peasant farmer Jats were far from isolated. So although early settlers were likely to assist those from their own caste group, others from a range of caste backgrounds later migrated along the same routes (ibid). In 1962, the Commonwealth Immigration Act was introduced, restricting the rights of Commonwealth citizens to enter Britain. The two years leading up to the passing of the legislation saw almost 46,000 migrants arriving from India, and later, the reunion of family members (Singh & Tatla 2006, 52).

A second wave of migration between 1968 and 1972 saw the arrival of East African Asians occurring due to Africanisation programmes in previously colonial countries, Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania and Malawi. These are groups Parminder Bhachu has dubbed 'twice migrants', and argues that they differ significantly from those who have migrated from South Asia directly to Britain (1985). In the 19th century, several thousand craftsmen, primarily Ramgarhia Sikhs from the Doaba region, were recruited to work on the railway being driven up to Nairobi from the coast (Nesbitt 2005, 225). As colonial infrastructure grew, more and more Ramgarhia Sikhs joined through chain migration and, as skilled labourers, they occupied an immediate position in the colonial social order (ibid). The compartmentalisation of the Indian community into religious sectional and caste groups has been described by Morris (1967) in examining the importance of caste in East Africa. He states that 'the need for caste exclusiveness was so strong that in spite of an environment almost wholly unfavourable to it, [caste] was one of the most important structural principles in organising Indian social life in East Africa' (Morris 1967, 276).

An important consequence of this is that different communities were able to maintain separate identities through caste associations and communal caste facilities; these were transferred to Britain as larger numbers of Ramgarhias migrated (Bhachu 1985, 26). Bhachu (1985) states their circumstances differed from earlier Sikh migrants in that they generally entered Britain as entire family units who had once already adapted to life in a new country, established relative economic prosperity, adopted English fluency and had experience of commercial or self-employment. She also suggests that as a

consequence of their minority position, greater stress has been placed on their 'East Africanness' and 'Ramgarhianess', which are projected positively in terms of their wealth, education, urban sophistication, and more stringent adherence to Sikhism and ritual procedures (Bhachu 1985, 54).

More recently, further migration has occurred from Malaysia, Singapore, Hong Kong, Fiji and the West Indies, again by 'twice' or 'thrice' migrants with significant skills and broad social networks (Singh & Tatla 2006, 54). The result of such movement, the reunion of family members, subsequent generations of British-born Asians, and complexities of shifting caste and class influences challenging Punjab societal structure, leave a very complex picture. Singh and Tatla also refer to certain levels of 'out-migration' predominantly to North America, Australia and Europe, as well as the return of pensioners from Britain to ancestral Punjabi villages for retirement (2006, 56). They point out that migration is second nature to the inhabitants of Punjab, due to its geographical placement and shifting political rule, and that 'movements within the Sikh diaspora are now a constant feature of contemporary Sikh life' (ibid, 56).

### *Demography*

In 2011 the Sikh population of England and Wales was around 423,000 people, 0.8% of the total population. Religious identity was first included as a category in the 2001 census, and so reported numbers of Sikhs in Britain prior to this date remain estimates.

Table 2.1: Estimated Sikh population in England and Wales 1961-2011 & Sikh places of worship

Year	Total Sikh population	Places of Worship	Faith community per place of worship
1961	16,000	3	5,333
1971	72,000	33	2,182
1981	144,000	69	2,087
1991	206,000	138	1,493
2001	340,000	193	1,762
2011	423,000*	212**	1,995

Source: Ceri Peach and Richard Gale, 'Muslims, Hindus and Sikhs in the New Religious Landscape of England', *The Geographical Review* 93(2), 469-90.

\*Source: ONS Census 2011

\*\*Source: This research (including gurdwaras in Scotland and Northern Ireland).

Table 2.1 details these estimates, highlighting the growth of the Sikh population of England and Wales since 1961, to almost half a million people today. The increase of Sikh places of worship between the early 1960s and the present day is also demonstrated. Early estimates of Sikh populations were made using data on place of birth, with a quarter to a third of those born in India understood to be Sikhs, later refuted to be an over-estimation (Singh & Tatla 2006, 57). The majority of British Sikhs are now British-born (56.5%) with 4.7% from Africa, and 36.9% from Southern Asia (ONS 2011). A high percentage of Sikhs are also under the age of 35 (53.9%) though this has decreased since 2001 (59.4%) (ibid).

Figure 2.7 shows the geographical distribution of Sikhs by percentage of ward. The Sikh population of England and Wales is largely concentrated in the urban areas of West London, the West Midlands and other major cities and towns such as Leeds, Derby, Leicester and Southampton, as demonstrated in figure 2.7. Table 2.2 provides a more precise breakdown of population by region, from across the British Isles.

Table 2.2: Sikh Population by Region 2011

Region	Total population	Sikh population	% of Total
London	8,173,941	126,134	1.5
West Midlands	5,601,847	133,681	2.4
South East	8,634,750	54,941	0.6
East Midlands	4,533,222	44,335	1.0
Yorkshire and Humberside	5,283,733	22,179	0.4
East	5,846,965	18,213	0.3
North West	7,052,177	8,857	0.1
North East	2,596,886	5,964	0.2
South West	5,288,935	5,892	0.1
Scotland*	5,295,000	9,055	0.2
Wales	3,063,456	2,962	0.1
Northern Ireland**	1,810,863	216	0.01

Source: ONS Census 2011

\*National Records of Scotland Census 2011

\*\*Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency Census 2011



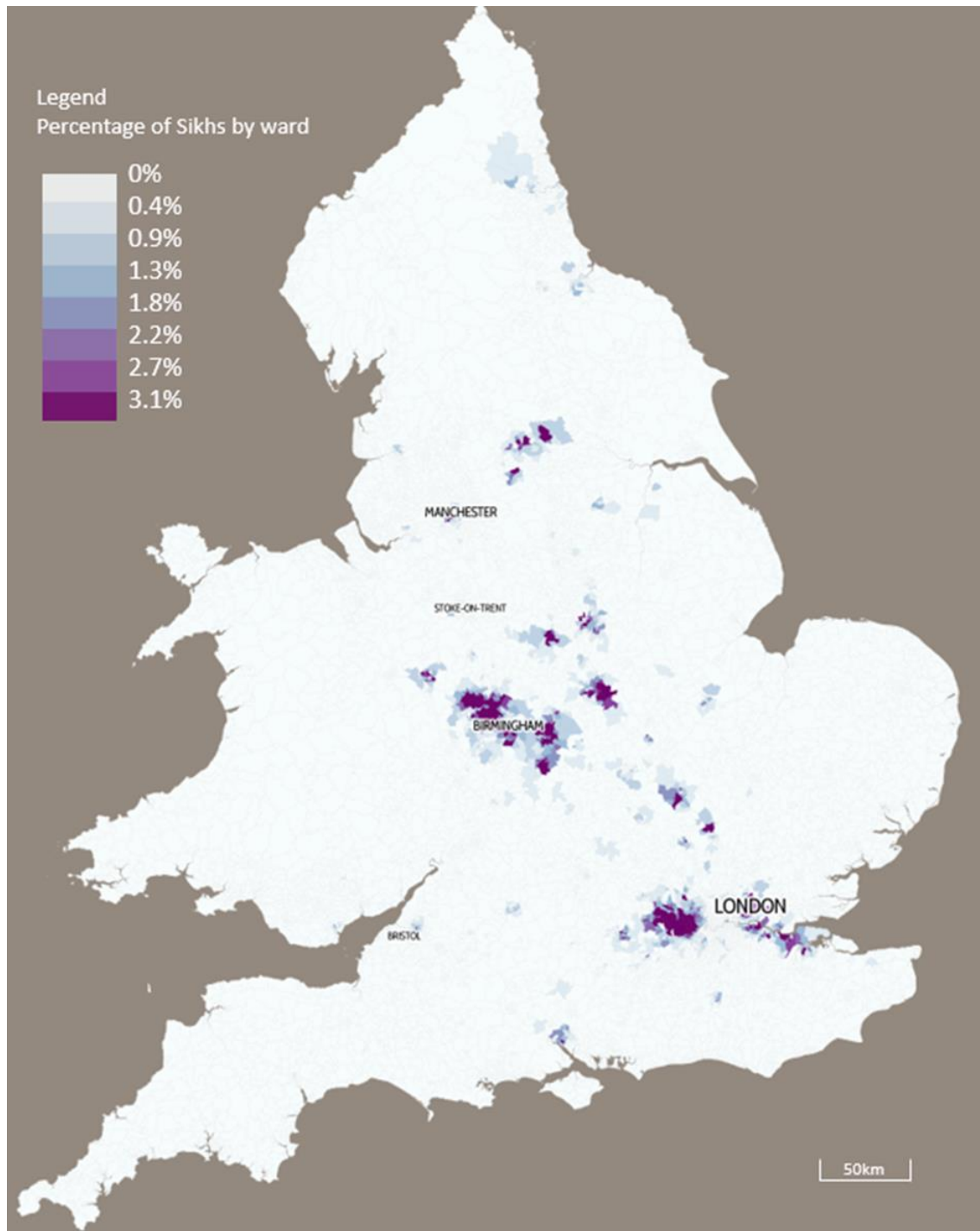


Figure 2.7: A map detailing the Sikh population of England and Wales by percentage of ward. ONS Census 2011 data mapped by datashine.org.

Table 2.3 further details the local authorities with the highest proportions of Sikhs according to the 2011 Census. Again, it is areas within West London and the West Midlands where Sikh populations are far above the national average of 0.8%.

Table 2.3: Local authorities with highest proportions of Sikhs, 2011

Local authority	Percentage of local population who are Sikh
Slough	10.6
Wolverhampton	9.1
Hounslow	9.0
Sandwell	8.7
Ealing	7.9

Source: ONS Census 2011

Singh and Tatla note that the growth rate of the Sikh population is beginning to plateau, and predict that it will increasingly follow the pattern of other minorities such as Hindu and Jewish populations, which tend to mirror national trends regarding growth and age distribution (2006, 59).

## 2.4. Gurdwaras in Britain

### *History of development*

The most comprehensive work focusing on the development of gurdwaras in Britain is Singh and Tatla's, 'Sikhs in Britain: The Making of a Community' (2006) where a chapter is dedicated to the review of community building 'by analysing the history of the British Sikh gurdwara movement' (2006, 5). Singh and Tatla describe gurdwaras 'first and foremost, as places of worship; they are the foundations of community building, act as guardians of its core values, and provide a forum for collective worship by the sangat' (ibid, 69). Other work considers gurdwaras in discussions concerning wider Sikh-related issues, such as the politics of identity amongst Sikh youth, the importance of religious ritual, and community building (Jaspal 2012; Singh, J. 2012; Jacobsen & Myrvold 2012; 2016). Ballard (2000) and Singh, G. (2006) pay more attention to the architectural history of gurdwaras, but this is limited to discussions surrounding the tendency to occupy previously used buildings such as terraced houses and commercial property. The authors detail how factories were converted following the decline of industry in many urban centres in the 1970s and 1980s, and, in the case of some Sikh communities, purpose-built gurdwaras were later built to suit an expanding congregation. Gurdwaras such as the Sri Guru Singh Sabha which opened in Southall in 2003 are likened to 'multicultural cathedrals of Britain' as a result of their grand scale, decoration and ability

to service large numbers of the local, regional and national population (Singh & Tatla 2006, 69).

Gallo (2012), in her study of gurdwaras in Italy, goes some way towards the identification of the complexity of the creation and development of gurdwaras in diasporic contexts, and in addressing sometimes difficult realities. With the use of ethnography, Gallo moves beyond the rhetoric of sacred places as sites of diasporic community (re)building and considers 'the relevance of intercommunity discrepancies and conflicts – as laid out in migrants' biographies and life stories – in the way a religious place is envisioned and experienced' (2012, 11). She argues that:

'The link between migrants' biographical time and religious spatialisation proves to be of use in mapping the way in which religious places tend to take on unpredictable meanings in relation to different localities and histories'.

(Gallo 2012, 11)

Gallo concludes that expectations of solidarity and support are often dashed at inner city Rome gurdwaras, due to 'big men's patronage and control', whereas those developed later in smaller towns or more rural locations are marked by less exploitative relationships and better legal and working conditions for families outside of the gurdwara (ibid, 12). She thus claims that gurdwaras are often places where 'ambivalent and instrumental' relations are established rather than the otherwise accepted perception of them as places where religious and community life can flourish (ibid, 11).

The complex make-up of North Indian society, migration and management of gurdwaras in Punjab mean that caste, and other distinctions, clearly continue to play a part in community development across the diaspora. The development of gurdwaras reflects this, where caste-affiliated groups and sant-based institutions have set up places of worship separate to so-called 'mainstream' gurdwaras; though Singh and Tatla maintain that 'mainstream gurdwaras' are anything but uniform, and rather range from international sant-managed institutions to locally run religious co-ops predominantly ruled by Jats (2006, 75-77).

Recent research by Jasjit Singh into the engagement of young British Sikhs with gurdwaras, also reveals new insights into the diverse spiritual and managerial nature of gurdwaras in Britain. As opposed to classifying them as mainstream (including sant-

based institutions) and caste-based, according to Singh and Tatla (2006, 75-77), Jasjit Singh has identified the following four 'broad but diverse' categories of gurdwara in the UK;

1. **Mainstream gurdwaras** – Either not linked to any particular person or ideology, or linked to a *jathabindi* (tied to a group following a particular *maryada* or code of conduct which differs slightly to the Sikh Rahit Maryada) for a short period of time usually due to the election of members of these groups onto the committee.
2. **Caste based gurdwaras** – Such as Ramgarhia or Bhatra in which the management committee belongs to a particular caste group, usually attracting members of the same caste group.
3. **Sant led gurdwaras** – where the gurdwara is not run by committee but rather led by a *sant* or by people entrusted by the sant.
4. **Jathabindi gurdwaras** – Institutions strongly linked to Khalsa *jathabindis* as committee members and the congregation affiliate to a particular *maryada* though they may be from a variety of caste backgrounds.

(Singh, J. 2016, 43).

Jasjit Singh estimates that approximately fifteen percent of gurdwaras in the UK are specifically caste based, seven percent are sant led and three percent are jathabindi (ibid). The remaining three quarters are believed to be mainstream gurdwaras (ibid).

Often, such ideological affiliations are not made explicit in the name of the gurdwara, nor would they be obvious to a visitor. Even Jasjit Singh's distinctions are difficult to identify in a consideration of a particular gurdwara, particularly the extent to which the gurdwara, or members of the management committee, are linked to a Khalsa Jathabindi. Furthermore, those not explicitly aligned to caste or sect groups may have developed according to the particular migration histories of their community, and many gurdwaras note their history as beginning with a group of people all from the same locality (or socio-religious group) in India or Pakistan. The Harley Grove Gurdwara in Bow, London, for example, notes on its website that its present congregation originates from ten villages in Pakistan 'from a particular sect known as the Bhart Sikh community' (Harley Grove Gurdwara 2016).

The highly contextualised nature of gurdwara development has been recognised in some studies of Sikhism which have been carried out in Britain on local scales, predominantly focused on caste distinctions; in Leeds and Bradford (Kalsi 1992),

Leicester (Sato 2012) and Coventry (Nesbitt 1990). Nesbitt (1990), for example, asserts that Valmiki (traditionally viewed as a dalit caste) in Coventry, reported being subjected to discrimination in gurdwaras, where they were not allowed to assist in the production of food. This subsequently led to the establishing of Jagat Guru Valmik Ji Maharaj Temple, a Valmiki temple, where members had more authority and control over their actions within the gurdwara (ibid).

The relevance of the succession of Sikh Gurus and later developments with regards to the management of gurdwaras in Britain is also substantial. Images of the Gurus, martyrdoms, and the Golden Temple adorn the walls of many of them. Often photographs of armoured Sikhs, those considered martyrs of their faith and bloody images of the destruction of the Golden Temple in 1984, can be found in various areas of gurdwaras (besides the prayer hall) here in Britain. Images of figures such as Sant Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale, are also sometimes found on the walls of gurdwaras. For some, he is a martyr, killed in the events of 1984 in Amritsar and regarded as a sant, though others associate the presence of his image within gurdwaras with calls for an independent Khalistan and 'extremist' politics (Singh & Tatla 2006, 92).

#### *Preliminary data*

An initial search of various online sources has revealed a total of 312 gurdwaras currently open in the UK. Of these, 212 are assumed to be in use following Google Earth searches, where the presence of a nishan sahib or obvious use as a gurdwara was documented (see chapter four for further details regarding research methods). There is no current and reliable source documenting the total number of gurdwaras in use in the UK, and so this method was adopted to establish an initial estimation of the national picture. The original type and function of each building was noted, alongside the name of the gurdwara and any explicit caste, sect or management associations. The following section briefly analyses this data, allowing a snapshot of the geographical and architectural character of gurdwaras in Britain in 2015. This was built into a Microsoft Access database suitable for updating in the future (appendix 1).

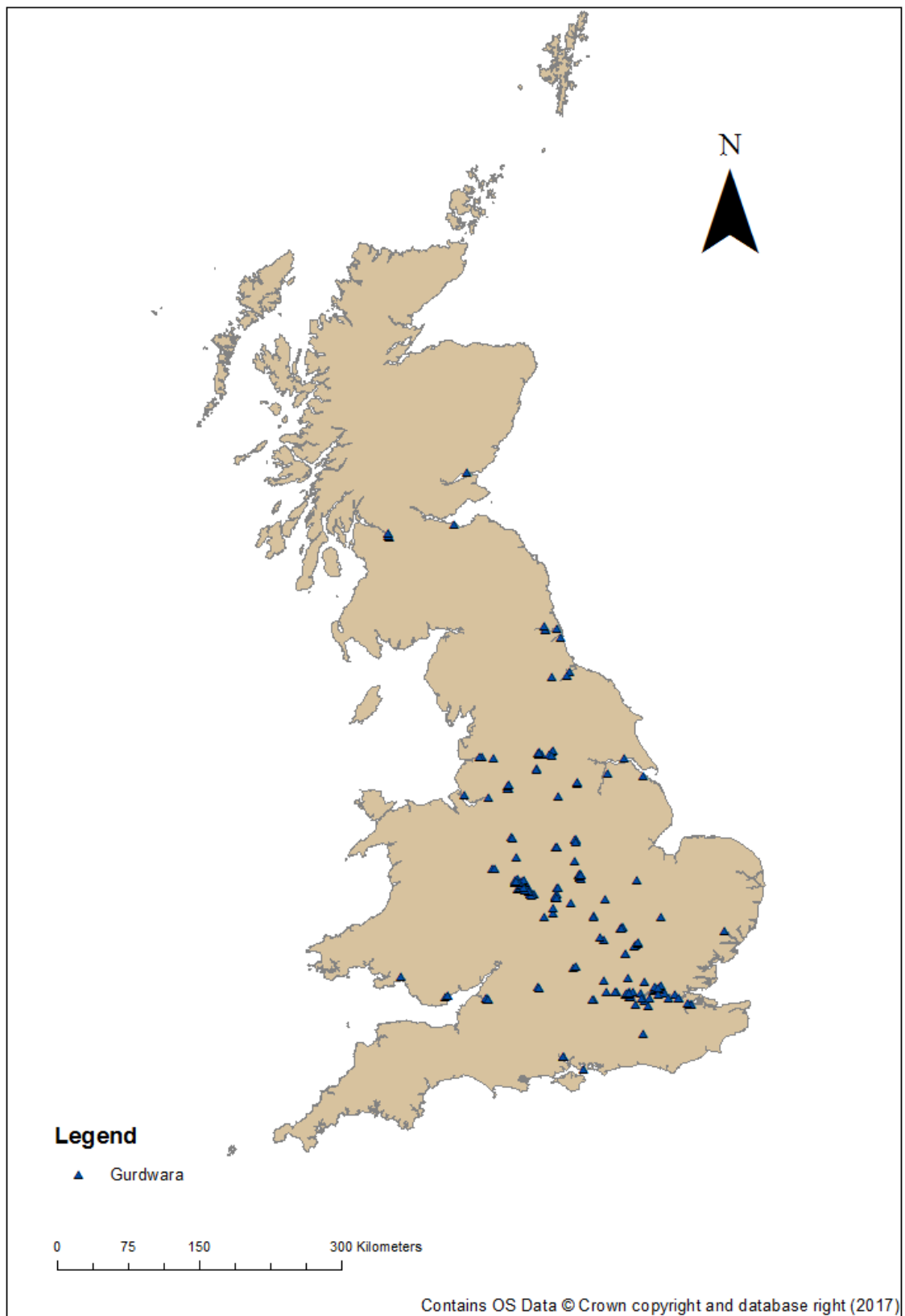


Figure 2.8: A map detailing the distribution of gurdwaras across Great Britain.

The remaining 100 gurdwaras which were listed but not found, could not be confirmed to be in use using this method. The majority of those not identified are residential property, with no outward sign of use as a gurdwara (signage or nishan sahib).

Conversations with Sikhs at gurdwaras point to these properties either being in use at some point in the past, or used for administration purposes for gurdwaras which may have operated from hired halls on a temporary basis. It was also suggested in some conversations during fieldwork, that despite estimates of there being 200 gurdwaras in use nationally, this number is likely to be much higher, and that small groups do continue to perform religious practices from residential property in breaking away from more established or mainstream gurdwaras. Due to the nature and scope of the study, these unidentified properties are excluded from the following analysis of data.

Gurdwaras are largely found in or near urban centres. Figure 2.8 shows a map of their distribution in Britain. The majority are in England but Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland are all represented with six, four and one gurdwara(s) respectively. Table 2.4 provides a breakdown of the number of gurdwaras in England by region. By far the greatest number can be found across the West Midlands with a total of 49 gurdwaras. Most of these can be found in Birmingham (17), Wolverhampton (11), Coventry (8), Walsall (4) and Warley (3). Greater London also has a total of 32 gurdwaras identified. The majority of these (14) can be found in Southall whilst other areas with gurdwaras include Ilford (3), Hounslow (2), Forest Gate (2), and Wandsworth (2). Other localities with five or more gurdwaras include Manchester, Leicester, Nottingham, and Bradford. English counties with no representation include Devon, Cornwall, Somerset, Cumbria, Dorset, Norfolk and Gloucestershire. Gurdwaras are primarily located in urban locations such as high streets, industrial areas and residential street-scapes, although there are a number of gurdwaras in more rural locations. Two Babe Ke gurdwaras (the Babe Ke trust was founded by Sant Baba Nahar Singh Ji Sunheranwale, considered a direct descendent of the Gurus) are in rural locations outside of both Stratford-Upon-Avon and Leamington Spa, whilst the Ramgarhia Sabha Sikh Temple outside Milton Keynes has been built in the grounds of a farm.

The identification of purpose-built gurdwaras is often difficult, particularly if a gurdwara is within a streetscape where substantial changes may have been made to the facade

of the building. Figure 2.9 shows the Guru Nanak Satsang Sabha Karamsar UK on the High Road in Ilford, which I originally thought to be converted from a previous use. In fact, the whole building has been purpose-built, designed by Agenda 21 architects (currently commissioned to design a new East London gurdwara), following the demolition of a Labour Party Hall.

Table 2.4: Gurdwaras in England by region

Region	Gurdwaras
South East	27
London	32
North West	10
East of England	16
West Midlands	60
South West	6
Yorkshire and the Humber	20
East Midlands	24
North East	6

The façade is built from pink sandstone from Rajasthan which was carved in Ilford by a team of craftspeople specially hired from India (figure 2.10). In other cases, structural facades have been built, but the skeleton of an earlier building remains. This is the case with the Khalsa Jatha British Isles, Shepherd’s Bush, which has undergone a series of transformations since the current property, a former Salvation Army Hall was purchased in 1961.

Levels of conversion of previously used property do vary. Whilst some gurdwaras are denoted as such by the presence of signage and the nishan sahib, others have been more substantially renovated, with the installation of stained glass windows, domes, extensions, and the addition of adjacent property. Re-used property accounts for around three quarters of gurdwaras, with 151 in buildings designed for other original purposes. Table 2.5 highlights the type of previous use and intended purpose of these buildings, alongside the extent to which the exterior structure and character of the building has been altered. This is broken into two categories. The first category details those which are identifiable as gurdwaras as a result of minor additions and alterations



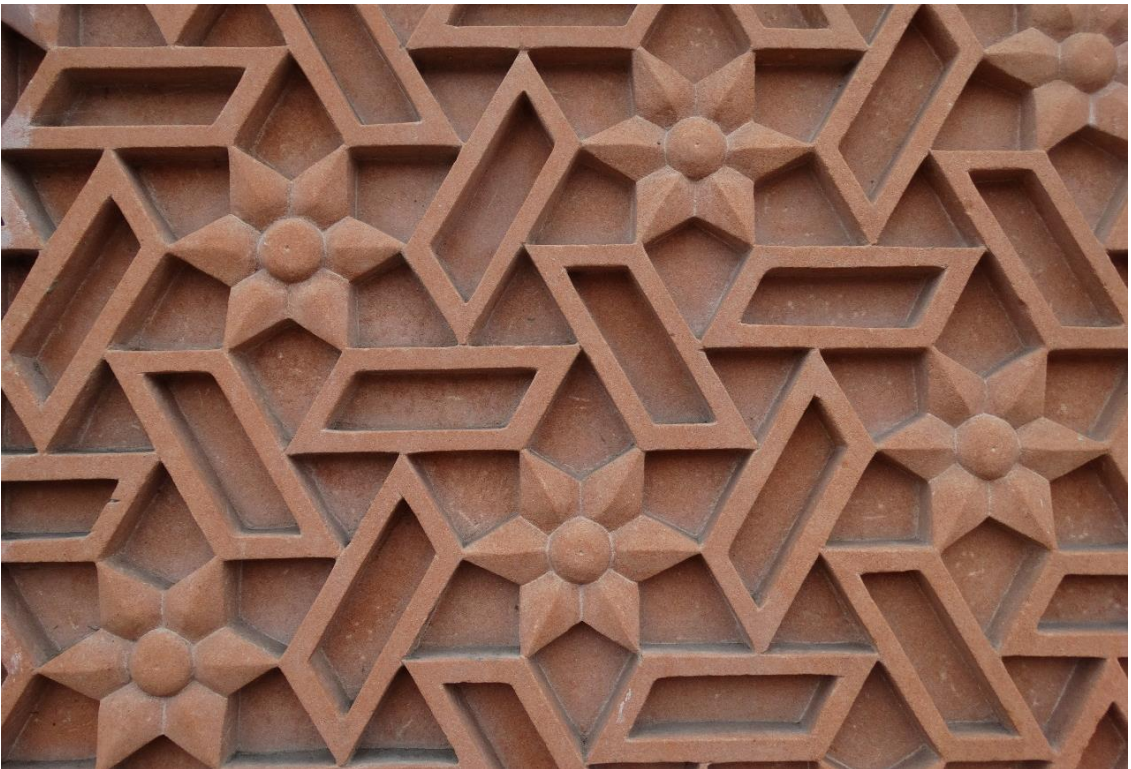


Figure 2.9 (above): The Guru Nanak Satsang Sabha Karamsar UK, Ilford. Figure 2.10 (below): Detail of carved sandstone at the Karamsar Gurdwara.

(96 gurdwaras), such as boundary walls, signage or the nishan sahib. The second category denotes those which have undergone change at a more substantial scale (55 gurdwaras), such as the addition of small extensions like porches, domes, and facades.

Amongst those which have received the least substantial alterations, those with former residential or industrial uses are the most common, whilst 16 are resident in formerly used religious buildings. Gurdwaras where more substantial change has occurred are less common but also more likely to be resident in previously used industrial or religious property, whilst only seven gurdwaras in residential properties appear to have undergone substantial structural alterations.

Table 2.5: Gurdwaras in the United Kingdom by former use and level of change

	Religious	Industrial/ Commercial	Residential	Other
Minor change	16	33	27	20
Substantial change	17	24	7	7

Of the 33 gurdwaras in previously used religious properties, two were synagogues, two were Anglican churches, one was a Masonic hall, one was a Salvation Army Hall, two were Quaker meeting houses and the remainder were other Christian places of worship. Other previous uses of gurdwara buildings include civic buildings, pubs, schools and trade union halls.

Thus, there are many gurdwaras in former residential property but generally these have not been substantially altered. Others are predominantly in industrial or religious properties. Previous literature points to the use of religious and industrial property on account of: planning regulations, where no change of use is required; availability, as church congregations decline and industry has waned; and suitability, as places with large open spaces for the gathering of worshippers (Peach & Gale 2003). As noted previously, 11 gurdwaras are in heritage-listed buildings, all of which have former uses and are listed on account of their original purpose and function.

Of the 212 gurdwaras identified as in use, it is estimated that up to 61 have been purpose-built. Where some gurdwaras have been totally or almost entirely purpose-built, others have created extensions which have often doubled the size of the property, whilst incorporating earlier structures into the evolved design of the site. A total of 44 gurdwaras are believed to be newly built, meaning that close to the whole of the building has been newly constructed. In this analysis, the remaining 17 gurdwaras considered purposely built are believed to be at least 50% newly constructed. Of these, ten are built on the site of or adjacent to former industrial buildings.

Gurdwaras are generally named after one of the Gurus. 73 are named after one of the ten Gurus, where there is no other obvious association, and 40 of these are named after Guru Nanak specifically. Many others have the name of a Guru as part of their name, but where, for example, 'Singh Sabha' makes up the title of a gurdwara, it has been included in that category. There are 32 Singh Sabha gurdwaras, three run by the international gurdwara trust Guru Nanak Nishkam Sewak Jatha, and seven Nanaksar gurdwaras. Others which are named by sect or caste associations are Ramgarhia (24 gurdwaras), Ravidasi (10), Valmiki (5), Nirankari (5) and Namdhari (4). Others are named generally as gurdwaras such as 'Sikh Temple' or by locality, such as 'Cambridge Sikh Association', whilst countless others are named after Sants or other internationally managed groups. Four gurdwaras explicitly refer to a Bhatra association in their name; Sri Guru Tegh Bahadur Gurdwara Bhatra Sangat in Glasgow, Sri Dashmesh Singh Sabha Gurdwara Bhatra Sikh Centre and Nannak Darbar Bhat Sikh Temple in Cardiff, and Gurdwara Guru Nanak Bhatra Singh Sabha & Community Centre in Birmingham. Calls have been made to define gurdwaras of the Bhat community by including 'Bhat or Bhatra' in their name, and creating a Bhat Sikh Gurdwara council (Bhat Sangat Sandesh, 2011). Other caste affiliated communities do have centralised councils and make it explicit in the name of the gurdwara.

### *Chapter Summary*

The literature on Sikhism and Sikhs in Britain is broad and does encompass issues of high complexity. Within the literature, however, a focus on gurdwaras is usually limited to evidence of the building of a successful migrant community. A few in depth local studies, with a focus on the development of gurdwaras according to caste and other

socio-religious distinctions, have been undertaken. However, the nature of Sikh diversity in management and practice at gurdwaras nationally has not been addressed in detail.

The scoping research has revealed that the architectural character of gurdwaras across Britain is also diverse, though discussion of physical characteristics or of gurdwaras as part of the built heritage of Britain is almost non-existent. But, as physical embodiments of multiculturalism in Britain, alongside mosques, mandirs and other recently developed faith buildings, gurdwaras have played a role. The following section will briefly frame the dominant discourses within heritage studies and elsewhere with regards to place and value, that we can relate to a more nuanced understanding of Sikh experience at gurdwaras, in beginning to understand the complexities of their use, meaning and development.

### Chapter 3: Place and value in the heritage process

A consideration of the development of gurdwaras in a British context, and more widely of gurdwaras as heritage places, highlights a gap in our understanding of the relationship between gurdwara communities and their buildings. Reported as important places for community building and the establishing of religious identities, gurdwaras are seen in a simplistic sense, as a physical projection of a confident and well-established homogeneous minority-religious group (Kalsi 1992). Furthermore, gurdwaras are often a focus of discussions surrounding the reuse of built space, and the somewhat opportunistic redevelopment of otherwise redundant buildings. Positioning gurdwaras within debates surrounding the recognition, management and conservation of heritage places, forces a more nuanced appreciation of the way in which they are perceived by those who use and manage them.

This chapter will introduce current heritage discourse as related to a study of gurdwaras in Britain. National heritage research and management frameworks are outlined, which over the past few decades have centred on value-driven methodologies. A brief background to the prevalence of *value* and *significance* in heritage practice is explored, alongside recent debates surrounding the acknowledgement of *social value* and the difficulties in its recognition. By engaging with wider social values attempts have been made to establish a more democratic heritage-making process, challenging the perception that the determination of value of the historic built environment is practiced by expert voices.

In this chapter, I will argue that the consideration of wider social values has widened debates about what constitutes heritage, and how it should be managed, but it has not replaced the ultimate determination of value by professionals and policy-makers. Several themes are explored in order to demonstrate this, including issues of community, scale, and authenticity. These issues are particularly relevant here, where the potential national or local acknowledgement of gurdwaras as heritage places may not be suitable within existing frameworks.

### 3.1. Values-based approaches

Internationally, it has been recognised that heritage management and conservation practices should reflect cultures in flux; ‘heritage should be considered a very fluid phenomenon, a process as opposed to a static set of objects with fixed meaning’ (Avrami *et al* 2000, 6). However, the employment of value-driven planning methodologies in the assessment, management and protection of heritage have dominated heritage practice for decades, often criticised for its preoccupation with historic physical fabric (ibid, 4-6). The 1964 Venice Charter, for example, provided the foundations for national heritage policies, and reinforced a concern with measuring the aesthetic and historic values of original fabric. Countless charters have since referred to the ‘value’ of heritage fabric, monuments, or places, or their ‘cultural significance’ as an articulation of perceived heritage values (see Jones and Leech 2015, 7-16). In later years, challenges were made to the traditional emphasis on material fabric with a focus on ‘setting, use, associations, meanings, records, related places and related objects’ (Australia ICOMOS 2013, Article 1.2).

The most influential criticism of traditional approaches to the assessment of heritage value and significance has been articulated by Smith as the Authorised Heritage Discourse (AHD) (2006). Smith argues the AHD implies that heritage is innately valuable with this value embedded in the material fabric of heritage places, and requires identification and protection as determined by expertise and scholarly research (2006, 87-88). She suggests that the material culture of the past, protected and promoted as a symbolic representation of identity, is reinforced by the nationalising discourse of archaeology and history, and is underwritten by Western value systems which favour the experience of elite social classes, and alienates a range of other social and cultural experiences (2006, 30). These include the experiences of women, a range of ethnic and other community groups, indigenous communities, and working class and labour history (see Smith 2006, 30).

The centrality of value and significance has been further reinforced by the FARO Convention (Council of Europe 2005), European Landscape Convention (Council of Europe 2000), and influential research projects such as the Getty Conservation Institute’s *Research on the Values of Heritage* (Getty Conservation Institute 2017),

though a shift in relation to the range of values recognised has been considerable. This shift has also occurred across social science disciplines, and in operational frameworks of the culture sector in the UK, following calls for cultural institutions to argue the public value of their work and government investment. For instance, in 2006, the BBC adopted the assessment of public value in its strategy for the renewal of its charter, leading to the creation of the BBC Trust (which is now required to undertake a public value test on any new major proposals) (Coyle 2010). The following section will explore the influence of such calls for the recognition of a wider range of values, which incorporates public, cultural or social values, on heritage discourse, and their impact on heritage policy frameworks in England. I argue these developments highlight calls for the emergence of a focus on fluid, culturally specific forms of value, as opposed to the often criticised assumption of inherent significance within the historic fabric of perceived heritage places, and the need for heritage professionals to engage with a range of people to understand the everyday importance of places of meaning within heritage processes.

#### *The Cultural Value debate*

Within the UK, Robert Hewison and John Holden (2014) trace the debate around cultural value back to a 2003 conference titled *Valuing Culture*, which they argue gave voice to the New Labour government and the instrumentalism of the cultural sector (which is generally considered to consist of a broad range of arts and cultural organisations, including those concerned with heritage). They quote the then Secretary of State for Culture, Tessa Jowell, who asked ‘how, in going beyond targets, can we best capture the value of culture?’ (Hewison and Holden 2014; from Jowell 2004, 18). In exploring the ways in which cultural institutions demonstrated their public value, Hewison and Holden identified three interlocking kinds of cultural value; intrinsic, instrumental, and institutional, which were further elaborated on in *Cultural Value and the Crisis of Legitimacy* (Holden 2006).

This document argued that culture needed a ‘democratic mandate’ from the public and proposed that institutional value was the best way for cultural organisations to express the public value that was created, or destroyed, through their interactions with the public (ibid). Figure 3.1 details the ‘value triangle’, which was first developed by Holden and subsequently became the operational focus of the work of the Heritage Lottery

Fund (Clark and Maeer 2008). The three kinds of value are described by Holden (2006, 14-17);

**Intrinsic Values** are the set of values that relate to the subjective experience of culture intellectually, emotionally and spiritually.

**Instrumental values** relate to the ancillary effects of culture, where culture is used to achieve a social or economic purpose. They are often, but not always, expressed in figures.

**Institutional value** relates to the processes and techniques that organisations adopt in how they work to create value for the public. Institutional value is created (or destroyed) by how these organisations engage with their public; it flows from their working practices and attitudes, and is rooted in the ethos of public service.

Intrinsic values, then, are argued to take place at the level of the individual and are therefore difficult to measure. Conversely, instrumental values can be measured, for example, in terms of the amount of local employment spurred through the creation of a local cinema, or the truancy rates of school pupils who engage in arts education (Holden 2006, 15). Institutional value is evidenced in feedback from the public and people working closely with the organisation, and was argued by Holden to be an area of assessment which could most effectively capture and demonstrate cultural value. This is in part due to the recognition that there exists a mismatch of concerns between the public, professionals and politicians, represented in figure 3.2. where politicians and policy-makers are concerned with instrumental outcomes, professionals are primarily concerned with intrinsic value, and the public, with intrinsic and institutional (ibid, 32). Furthermore, as Oakley has concluded, the research undertaken by professionals concerning public value tends to be focused at the production end rather than the consumption end (Oakley 2004). According to Oakley this reflects the introversion of the cultural system, with priority given to the professional/politics nexus demonstrated in figure 3.2.



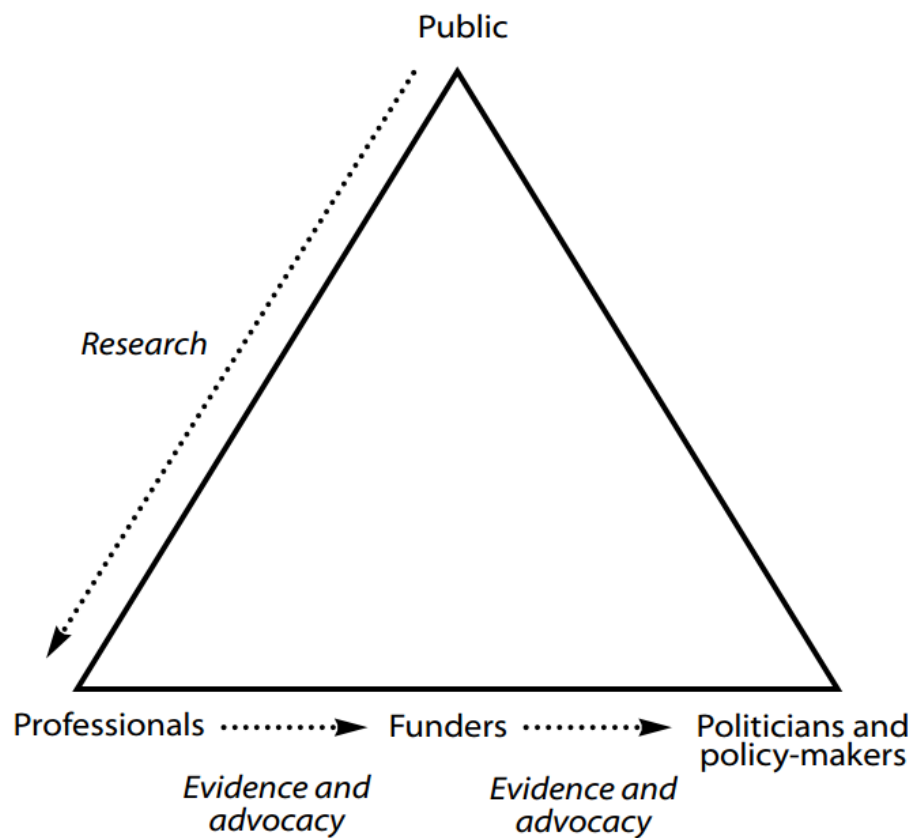
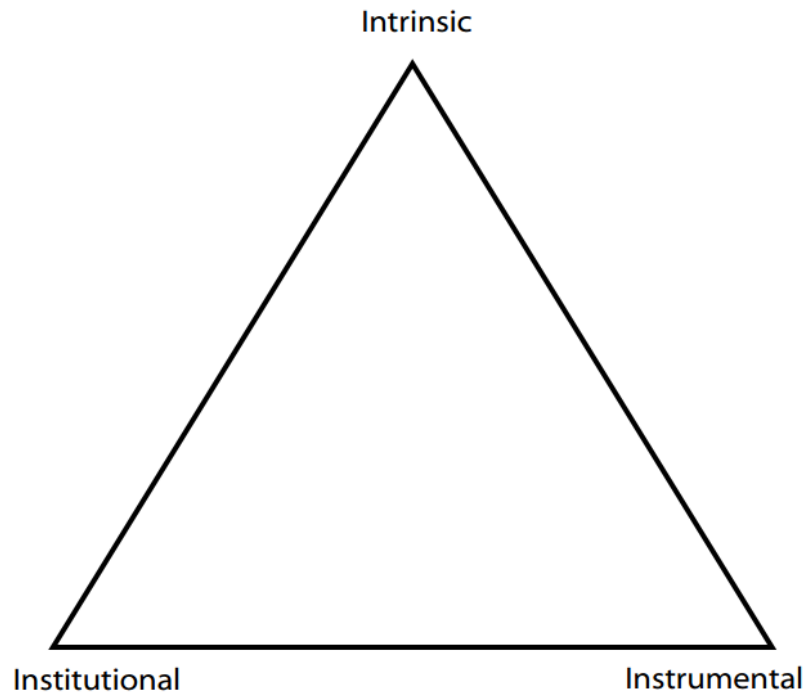


Figure 3.1 (above): The 'Value Triangle' developed by Holden (2006). Figure 3.2 (below): The 'Information Flow' detailing the introversion of the cultural system (Holden 2006).

Holden concluded that the debate about values, in essence, comes down to an attempt to 'improve the terms of engagement between professionals and the public' (ibid, 52). He states what is missing is the voice of the public and argues that what is needed is for cultural professionals to engage more, and differently, with the public in order to counter-act the 'closed conversation' between professionals and politicians. Some of the ways he suggests doing so is through research which focuses on questions brought forward by the public, the abandoning of cultural jargon and striving for a more coherent cultural world which can be better understood as a whole (Holden 2006).

In a discussion of the impact of this debate on heritage policy, Gareth Maeer, the Head of Research at the Heritage Lottery Fund, has explained that the organisation did adopt a more 'people-centred' approach to heritage, and argues that perhaps the ultimate test proves it has been successful – that lottery funding for heritage has won the support of the public (Maeer 2017, 10). One way in which this was achieved was in the reformulation of the application process, where heritage value is first demonstrated before an explanation of what the project will do and the benefits of it for heritage and the public. However it is still acknowledged that levels of awareness of the HLF remain low, that the benefits of heritage funding have not been evenly distributed, and that 'decision-making remains the preserve of the expert board of trustees and the 12 regional and country committees' (ibid, 10).

Elsewhere in the heritage sector too, there has been a broadening of approach to social values. National policy guidelines related to statutory heritage frameworks have been accompanied by 'a new emphasis on the value of heritage places for contemporary communities in terms of identity, memory, sense of place, and sensory and spiritual experience' (Jones & Leech 2015, 15). However, Jones and Leech (2015, 15) also argue that despite a shift towards the recognition of more fluid experience, a continuing emphasis on tangible heritage and historic value 'constrains' how such values are addressed. The following section will detail the role of Historic England, the advisory body to the British government on the historic environment in England, and the development of its approach to the assessment of heritage value and significance.

Historic England is funded by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS), and works with the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG). Within its remit is the administration of the lists of assets designated as of special interest (Buildings, Schedule of Monuments, Register of Parks and Gardens, and Register of Historic Battlefields), though it is also consulted on certain planning and listed building consent applications, delivering expert advice and recommendations to local authorities pertaining to historic environment matters. It also works strategically with other organisations in identifying Heritage at Risk (Historic England 2017a) and outlining and undertaking priority research. Thus, Historic England has a role in both the designation and conservation of the historic environment in England, responding to national and international law and policy.

Jones and Leech (2015, 10) state that within Britain, designation and conservation have ‘developed along parallel paths, trodden by different professional disciplines, often resulting in a lack of common terminology’. Where designation is concerned with the *special interest* of buildings and sites, conservation guidelines call for the *assessment of significance* of places through the identification of *heritage values*. Designation now comes under the Planning Act 1990 and statutory criteria emphasise special or architectural interest. The listing guide for places of worship, for example, states ‘listing is a way of capturing architectural and historic interest: while its principal aim is to inform the planning system of where special significance lies, it is also a barometer of those buildings, structures and sites which are deemed to be of ‘special interest’ (English Heritage 2011). Thus architectural and historic interest are here the subject of concern, as related to physical entities.

The concepts of heritage value and significance emerge more fully in conservation matters when a heritage asset, regarded as such due to its special interest, is potentially at threat. The National Planning Policy Framework [NPPF] (DCLG 2012) was published in March 2012, and sets out planning priorities for England and how they are to be applied. Section 12 details the conservation and enhancement of the historic environment, and states that within Local Plans, local authorities should ‘recognise that heritage assets are an irreplaceable resource and conserve them in a manner

appropriate to their significance' (ibid 2012). Local authorities also require a *statement of significance* from applicants wishing to make alterations affecting a heritage asset, making clear that its significance will not be affected (unless it is necessary to achieve substantial public benefits). The NPPF defines heritage significance as 'the value of a heritage asset to this and future generations because of its heritage interest. That interest may be archaeological, architectural, artistic or historic...Significance derives not only from a heritage asset's physical presence, but also from its setting.' (ibid 2012, annex 2: glossary). Here, different interests are recognised as contributing to the significance of a heritage place, alongside its setting, but as Jones and Leech ascertain 'the range of values recognised is constrained by the legislation with primary focus on fabric and intrinsic historic and architectural value' (2015, 11).

A shift in the approach to the assessment and conservation of the historic environment, with regards to a focus on original built form, is evident in the publication of Conservation Principles by English Heritage, in 2008; which Townend and Whittaker (2011) claim occurred in direct response to the UK's ratification of the European Landscape Convention (ELC) in 2006. Hewison and Holden also note that the cultural value debate was instrumental in the publishing of Conservation Principles, occurring following a consultation launched at the Valuing Culture conference in 2003 (2014). The aim of the European Landscape Convention is to formulate the policy of European governments, and requires 'landscape to be integrated into regional and town planning policies and in cultural, environmental, agricultural, social and economic policies' (Natural England 2009). One conceptual shift can be evidenced in the consideration of the historic built environment as a holistic place, defined as having 'no physical boundaries, objects, structures or buildings that are necessarily implicated' (Townend and Whittaker 2011, 67). Townend and Whittaker, in their consideration of the impact of the convention on heritage policy, further elaborate that place 'is borne of interpreted engagement with time, stories, associations, people, buildings, structures, objects, 'natural' features' (ibid) prompting a wider consideration of heritage value within the Conservation Principles guidance, beyond those associated with the fixed physical fabric of a building or monument.

In contrast to the statutory requirements for listing, as seen above focused on ‘special architectural and historic interest’, Conservation Principles outlines four types of heritage values which incorporate a wider range of experience (English Heritage 2008, 27). The guidance suggests evidential, historical, aesthetic and communal values should be considered by heritage professionals and local planners when determining the significance of a place. Evidential value is described as ‘the potential of a place to yield evidence about past human activity’ and although age is not paramount, it is a strong indicator of evidential value (ibid, 28). Historical value can be either illustrative, where an example demonstrates similarity with other examples or demonstrates distinctiveness; or associative, where the place is connected to aspects of life or past people (ibid, 29). Aesthetic value is described as ‘the way in which people draw sensory and intellectual stimulation from a place’ (ibid, 30). This can encompass design value evidenced by the choice of influences, material, decoration or craftsmanship, or ‘the seemingly fortuitous outcome of the way in which a place has evolved and been used over time’, whilst many combine the two (ibid, 30). Finally, communal values are the meanings of a place for the people who relate to it, or ‘for whom it figures in their collective experience or memory’ (ibid, 31).

Included within communal values are symbolic, commemorative, spiritual and social values. In comparison with the first three categories, Conservation Principles state that communal values (specifically social values) tend to be less dependent on the historic fabric of a place (ibid, 32). It is here that the philosophies of the ELC are most evident, and the inclusion of values not necessarily evident to heritage professionals in the historic fabric of a place are recognised as contributing to its significance.

A second shift evidenced by both the European Landscape Convention and cultural value debate, is the promotion of the participation of people (i.e. non-heritage professionals) in heritage identification and management processes. The Convention states that ‘landscape is an area, as perceived by people...’ (Council of Europe 2000), thus, landscape, as equated with place, is viewed holistically as it is understood by those who engage with it. Townend and Whittaker argue, therefore, that ‘*places do not exist* outside the understandings of those who engage with them; rather it is the *understandings* that constitute the significance of such places’ (2011, 68). Crucially

then, heritage discourse points to the inclusion of *people* in heritage management processes, thus, whilst the definitions of heritage values are being widened, the need for professionals to engage with people who understand the meaning of places is also being recognised. In other words, the Convention calls 'towards those that have an involvement with [the place] and upon whom it may ultimately be understood to rely for its existence', rather than attempting to analyse a place 'in and of itself' (Townend and Whittaker 2011. 67).

The Conservation Principles document does provide guidelines for heritage professionals and local planners to assist them in the process of assessing heritage value and significance. It suggests establishing an understanding of the place, its fabric and evolution, before identifying who values the place and why. Next in the process is the need to 'relate identified heritage values to the fabric of the place' by exploring how different parts of the place and periods in its history contribute to each identified heritage value (ibid, 37). The values are considered for their relative importance, and the contribution of setting, context, associated objects and other places sharing similar values is taken into account. It is possible to ascertain here that although there is an attempt to recognise who it is that values a place and why, it remains the jurisdiction of the expert to first establish an understanding of the place. Thus, the expert voice continues to precede the assessment of meaning of a place through public or community value.

This conclusion may underline the reason that despite such attempts to outline methods in the assessment of significance, Jones (2017) recognises that there often remains insufficient knowledge of the social value of specific heritage places, and that traditional forms of value (historical and architectural) also 'continue to prevail in the context of significance assessment'. Jones and Leech define social value 'as a collective attachment to place that embodies meanings and values that are important to a community or communities' (Jones and Leech 2015, 6; from Johnston 1994, 10) and believe that current practice related to the identification of social value is far removed from that in ELC guidelines. Townend and Whittaker too acknowledge that social values 'cannot be independently defined by a detached professional observer; they can only be articulated by those who have an involvement with the place' (2011, 69). They

propose a qualitative approach to data collection and the use of standard data capture systems to more systematically analyse how the historic environment is perceived. For them the 'conceptual recognition of *place* and *value* are foremost among these challenges' (ibid, 67).

So, within heritage discourse, the acknowledgement of a wider range of values, situated in place, is dependent on engagement between heritage professionals and the public in order to establish the meaning of a place as it is experienced by those who have an understanding of it. Despite this recognition, heritage policy and guidance does not necessarily instigate this kind of action, and rather the expert voice continues to precede the community or public understanding of a place. Furthermore, exactly how this engagement between the heritage professional and the 'public', or individuals within communities, is to take place has not been considered in any meaningful way. Limitations and challenges remain, which continue to require consideration in the formulation of future policy.

Within these limitations are two issues which may present particular challenges to the assessment of gurdwaras as heritage places within existing frameworks, which will be considered in more detail in the following section. The first is an increasing focus on establishing the meaning of places for communities who are attached to specific places. However, there is little recognition that some communities may not be 'place-based' and rather operate in more fragmented or transnational networks, constituting communities of interest rather than place. Secondly, the current heritage discourse and policy explored so far in this chapter focuses on potentially competing perceptions of value held by professionals on the one hand, and communities on the other. It does not acknowledge the need for negotiation of competing opinions, values and claims, from within perceived communities. As already established in chapter two, the Sikh community in the UK is incredibly diverse, and made up of individuals who will each understand and value gurdwaras in different ways, potentially influenced by their own social and religious practices, and personal experience. How one individual finds a place meaningful may well differ significantly to another.

The following section therefore explores these two issues, summarised here as community and scale, and authenticity, and considers how such limitations may impact

upon any attempt to understand the significance of gurdwaras through national frameworks.

### 3.2. Determining the value of the gurdwara in Britain

This section will explore our understanding of community and recognition of scale, and the perceived re-emergence of authenticity in heritage debates, in relation to the study of the heritage value of gurdwaras in Britain. Deciphering how we might assess the significance of these places using current frameworks, goes some way to highlighting the challenges involved for the heritage sector, in both their engagement with the public, and with incorporating varied and complex understandings of meaning within heritage processes.

#### *Community and scale*

Moves towards an emphasis on local perceptions of place and value have recently dominated calls for heritage to become a more democratic process, as opposed to the traditional prominence of physical preservation. Local communities are perceived to hold specific knowledge and attachments to places which would otherwise not exist. For example, Jones and Leech state that contemporary communities can 'claim privileged relationships with specific historic buildings, monuments and places' and explain that such claims are usually based on feelings of 'inalienable belonging rooted in a sense of identity, continuity, and/or place' (2015, 26). Mydland and Grahn also claim that 'locally situated heritage understandings' offer a view that differs from the 'authorised view' held by official heritage institutions (2012, 567), whilst Winter too argues that 'forcing attention towards the community and the local provides a base for countering the authority and hegemony of scientific universalism' (2014, 132) expressed by Smith in her criticisms of the AHD.

A growing body of work further explores identity and experience in local communities in relation to the historic environment. For instance, Orange (2011) utilised ethnographic methods in her investigation of the meanings produced and negotiated at Cornish Mining World Heritage Sites. An understanding of 'sense of place' and belonging was reported to emerge through explorations of everyday aspects of places as opposed to any official or dominant histories (2011, 109). Orange noted the



importance of associations with personal biographies as well as with regional and national identities, often unexplored in any authorised heritage accounts. A focus on 'sense of place' is also evident in Waterton's (2005) study of the Northumberland National Park, which revealed locally-determined values amounting to sense of place were often recognised as more valid than those acknowledged nationally. Studies of 'unofficial' or 'counter-heritage' have also played a role in new understandings of social value and the production of meaning related to unacknowledged monuments (Avery 2009, Harrison 2010, Harris 2011).

The summation of identified community value as 'sense of place' or 'sense of belonging' again assumes people have an active or positive relationship with places, and there is little acknowledgement in heritage debates that such attachments to places may not exist. The implication here remains that a place is understood to be important to people as a reflection or receptacle for their identity and sense of self, and urges a focus on everyday places and activities, which would perhaps not be considered as 'heritage' in any traditional sense. Other studies, for example, focus attention, not just on the new meanings of places uncovered through ethnographic approaches, but on community empowerment through a heritage which takes account of both localising and globalising tendencies.

For instance, Robertson and Hall (2007, 29) assert that there are 'important linkages between cultural heritage and identity where tangible and intangible traditions may help maintain and define local identities', and local stewardship is recognised as important in the promotion of facilitating communication and learning (Stephens and Tiwari 2015, 99). The Charter for the Conservation of Unprotected Architectural Heritage and Sites in India, also notes how unprotected 'living' heritage in India embodies 'values of enduring relevance to contemporary Indian society' (INTACH 2004). It states that the conservation of such 'living heritage' must retain meaning within the societies in which it exists (ibid). Here, the concept of 'living heritage' incorporates 'that which is experienced' suggesting that heritage otherwise is understood as a fixed entity with static and defined meaning, use and value. Stephens and Tiwari (2014) argue it thus conceptualises heritage as places where heritage stories interact within a complex network of practices; 'Here, heritage conservation comes as a co-benefit to the tangible

improvements in other areas of community development' and heritage then emerges not as a thing but a 'set of values and meanings' (ibid 2014, 112).

The argument presented by Winter (2015), that focusing attention on local communities can counter the scientific universalism of values-based approaches, may well highlight new perceptions of value which allow for a consideration of places otherwise unrecognised. However, it still relies on an emotional attachment to place and agreement within communities about what makes it meaningful.

#### *Cultural diversity and authenticity*

Winter notes the re-emergence of the concept of authenticity in heritage conservation, in response to debates around a discourse of difference, asserting culturally specific perspectives towards authenticity, spirituality and historical significance (2015). He believes such a consideration results in tendencies to approach heritage significance from a nationally specific standpoint, or, increasingly, as transnational constructs with distinct practices rooted in cultural and religious tradition. For UNESCO, authenticity and the protection of cultural diversity have been rooted in a concern for disappearing cultural traditions (Alivizatou 2012, 139). The Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, for example, emphasises the agency of community groups in deciding what they themselves recognise as their heritage (Jones and Leech 2015, 14), and Alivizatou maintains that UNESCO's activities in the protection of cultural diversity are 'very much rooted in the ideas of overpowering modernity, dying traditions and disappearing cultural traditions' (2012, 139).

Alivizatou argues that despite an emphasis on community perceptions of value, authenticity is again decided by experts and outside researchers (2012). Her research on heritage practices in Melanesia shows that within local contexts authenticity is negotiated along different lines. She argues that mobilising *kastom* (a Melanesian concept meaning to assert traditional values and practices in modern contexts) for processes of local development actively includes heritage in community growth. She recognises, also, that ceremonies performed for a tourist audience are different from the ones performed within the context of village life 100 years ago, but are no less

authentic as tourist experiences, creating 'new spaces for the negotiation of contemporary identities' (2012, 140).

This research, by Aivizatou and others (Akagawa 2016; Wijesuriya 2000), demonstrates the inadequacy of East-West binaries pertaining to conservation ideals emergent in response to criticisms of the AHD. For example, Akagawa (2016) refers to 'misconceptions about an Eastern approach' to heritage conservation, which has tended to focus on the interaction between spiritual understandings of the meaning and importance of original physical fabric and conservation practices. She claims that meanings assigned to objects and practices of heritage significance need to be recognised as multi-layered. Discourse on global cultural diversity and local practice emphasises reconstruction, renewal and dismantling of the physical fabric of perceived heritage places, best evidenced in the NARA Document of Authenticity (1994), which Akagawa argues perpetuates misconceptions about an Eastern approach (2016, 14). She believes that such a focus has meant the full recognition of the religious beliefs embedded in social structures is less evident, and so recognition of cultural diversity remains limited.

Likewise, Karlstrom's (2009) research also considers the application of global conservation practices in culturally-specific contexts. She argues the consumption of heritage in a Laos-Buddhist context becomes 'the prerequisite for maintaining its value' (2009, 352), and that decay is inevitable and restoration is also an act 'of merit-making' (ibid, 351). Different to preservation and conservation principles, 'it is a restoration of an idea of the prestige of the original, rather than of the physical form of the original' (2009, 351). These studies highlight attempts to understand heritage value and conservation in ways which may challenge the perceived Western preoccupation with the inherent, or not, value of physical fabric, which continue to fail to acknowledge the multi-layered way in which places are meaningful.

In the context of migration and transnational practices, religious beliefs and practices have been argued to be an integral part of the everyday experience of many migrants (Orsi 2003). Religious beliefs are generally not considered tangible aspects of cultural heritage but are often inseparable from other elements related to migration and manifested through daily practices or narratives (Sheringham 2010, 1689). Rapoport's

(2011) investigation of people's relationships with the Jewish Eruv (an area demarcated with a technical boundary within which some Jewish communities can move, and carry and push objects, freely on the Sabbath) demonstrates that boundaries are primarily conceptual, shaped by human performance, and agreed upon by consent. She argues that place is 'experienced through knowledge rather than the senses, and of actual consequence to one community living among others' (Rapoport 2011, 891). People may rely on pre-existing boundaries which are 'valid one day and non-existent the next' (ibid, 902). In this understanding, place then is not ascribed to a fixed location, and so capable of inciting conflict where multiple 'places' are perceived within the same space by different groups; evidenced by Rapoport in non-Jewish oppositions to the 'imposition' of an Eruv struggle over exclusivity of meaning (ibid). In contrast, O'Brien (2015) argues that certain historical sites in Ireland (holy wells and mass rocks) actually reconcile complex identities, where different meanings exist for different people; 'ritual engagement with these places...works to shape a cohesive sense of identity: one intimately and intricately tied to the land and its history' (ibid, 345).

Such studies begin to acknowledge that often a consideration of cultural diversity as interpreted through existing heritage structures, is inadequate. The concept of place, as explored by Rapoport, requires an understanding of meaning which allows for scalar flexibility, and Alivizatou's work demonstrates the negotiation of authenticity and identity through heritage practices themselves. Both demonstrate that different 'places' and therefore those elements and associations which make them meaningful, can co-exist, with or without conflict.

#### *Chapter conclusion: The gurdwara as a heritage place*

In this chapter, it has been established that the expert voice precedes that of people associated with places when it comes to the identification of heritage value and assessment of the significance of perceived heritage places. Alongside a move towards the recognition of a wider range of heritage values, there has been a closer consideration of how a place is valued by a given community and why. However, consideration is not necessarily given to different or competing understandings of place between or within communities, nor is there recognition that communities may not be 'place-based' or that place is not always ascribed to a fixed location.

Jones and Leech (2015, 34) state that it is in methodology 'that greatest diversity and disagreement prevails' and remark that a range of approaches to social value is creating confusion, with expert judgement continuing to prevail in understanding and narrating value. Jones (2017, 13) argues that 'collaborative methods involving heritage professionals and communities in a network of ongoing relationships with heritage places are arguably the most productive means to accommodate the inherently fluid processes of valuing the historic environment' (ibid). Such an approach is argued to contribute to a more 'sophisticated' body of knowledge and capture the dynamic processes of *valuing* the historic environment themselves.

Alongside the need for conceptual and methodological responses it has also been argued it is necessary to 'advance constructive debate on the implementation of changes in UK policy and guidance' (Townsend & Whittaker 2011), which is currently felt to constrain the possibilities of articulating new conceptions of place and its meanings for communities. Whilst Jones asserts there may be 'a need to address these issues if social value and public participation in heritage conservation is to move beyond the domain of rhetoric' (2017, 13), it has also been recognised that continuing to legislate for 'increasingly subtle intangible elements of meaning' may be beyond the capacity of such frameworks (Jones & Leech 2015).

Even a preliminary consideration of gurdwaras highlights the difficulties of establishing potential frameworks for understanding the hierarchies of value associated with them as a national building-type, or as local places attached to a specific community. The literature considered in the previous chapter highlights the diversity of the Sikh population in Britain, as with any other perceived homogeneous community, and the religious beliefs and social practices with which individuals may identify. Gurdwara buildings not only differ in relation to religious and social practice, but also their architectural character, nature of development, system of management and position in the built landscape (several gurdwaras have relocated or established new properties during the course of this research, for instance).

The following chapter moves on to consider how this study of the heritage value of gurdwaras aimed to recognise and negotiate for both a wide range of, potentially competing, values, associated with gurdwaras, whilst also allowing for the fact that this

value may not necessarily equate to a feeling of sense of place or belonging in a fixed location. It outlines the methodology adopted in the undertaking of fieldwork and analysis of data, which focused on engagement with Sikh individuals and the narratives they share related to gurdwaras in Britain. What this may mean for the future management of gurdwaras, and other building-types, as heritage places is finally considered in the discussion chapter of the thesis, following the analysis of data.

## Chapter 4: Methodology

This chapter will outline and justify the methods adopted and developed in carrying out this project. A mixed methods approach was determined the most effective way to examine the relationships between the physical properties of gurdwaras and cognitive perceptions of their use and significance. This consisted of locally-shaped qualitative research. Participant interviews, observation, note-taking, photography, and documentary evidence have together formed the dataset for the analysis and discussion performed in the following chapters.

The approach has been influenced both by comparable studies, and heritage management theories and practices (discussed in some detail in chapters one, two and three), alongside initial exploratory fieldwork which assisted in determining both the research questions and best ways forward for their exploration in the field. Broadly speaking, the project has been focused on listening to the voices of those with a working relationship with the sites, in ensuring the narratives people use in relation to gurdwaras are recorded. The approach also offers an alternative to the perception of the way assessment of heritage is usually 'done' – by experts – and allows for a critical approach towards current heritage management practices.

The rationale behind this approach is first discussed, outlining those case studies and methodologies which directly influenced the initial research design, and establishing in what way they were perceived as the most appropriate in exploring the research questions. Discussion includes the approaches taken to sampling, preparing for interviews, other data collection and foreseen challenges. This approach was not fixed and did shift and develop over the course of the project, benefitting from the experience of carrying it out. In subsequent sections, I address this process of change and development in focusing on how the research was done. Inevitably, some of the data collected has not been included in the following analysis. Similarly, it proved unfeasible to undertake data collection at some sites originally earmarked as potential case studies. All such methodological issues and challenges faced are addressed towards the end of the chapter.

#### 4.1. Rationale

##### *A narrative approach*

Although value is central to discussions of heritage, Samuels has pointed out that there are few studies directly engaged with value and how it is prescribed (2008). The Getty Conservation Institute heritage value project also concluded it is necessary to examine why and how heritage is valued, and by whom (Avrami *et al.* 2000). In this respect, and in response to the widely cited critique of the AHD, there has been a move towards the documentation of unofficial perceptions of sites, particularly from non-expert or local voices (Exell & Rico 2013; Weerasinghie 2011). Regarding sites considered as having religious or spiritual value, it has been recognised that some communities and individuals have resisted the interventions of heritage professionals or approached their future management in such a way as to challenge traditional conservation practices (Weerasinghie 2011; Byrne 1995; Glover 2011). Glover's research on gurdwaras in India, for example, concludes that the complete replacement of historic buildings is often favoured over restoration by sangats (Glover 1995). Whilst studies such as these highlight that the assessment of significance and the future management of sites requires cultural specificity, Exell and Rico state there is a 'need for more in-depth studies that address non-official heritage narratives that may complement or resist [official heritage narratives]' (2013, 681). In regards to this current project, this is especially applicable, where the threat of an official heritage status at the Golden Temple, Amritsar, whether real or perceived, was seen to be at odds with a living religious place (chapter two). This current research acknowledges such trends in focusing on value at a local scale in critiquing the alternative perceived top-down approach to the prescription of value.

There are a number of comparable studies which have strived to reveal the nuances of our relationships with place, through the compilation of locally-shaped methodologies. The turn away from heritage construction at official levels has led to the consideration of methodological approaches which may best tackle the emergence of the role of the environment in everyday lived experience (O'Brien 2015; Orange 2012; Stephens 2014; Waterton 2009). Chapter three detailed new conceptions of place, as existing in the everyday meanings and understandings of those who interact with it. Where



traditionally everyday use was overlooked in a focus on the historic built form, it has recently become more central to our understandings of significance in the ongoing development of our environment (chapter three).

In teasing out everyday practice and experience, the exploration of 'narrative' has emerged as a theoretical and practical ethnographic tool. Pocock *et al.* have suggested an alternative to current heritage value and significance practices could be identifying stories before a focus on significance, leading to a final focus on a specific place (2015, 977). They note such an approach is particularly useful on a national scale, in identifying themes and narratives significant to the nation, and argue stories offer histories unrecognised in dominant heritage based on the 'physically obvious and visually spectacular' (2015, 977; Pocock 2002).

Stephens has approached built heritage as the physical manifestation of the concept of 'narrative' in establishing the 'community meaning of a place' (2014, 415). In his work on an abandoned school building in Lakhnu, Uttar Pradesh, India, he has examined the stories of the building in teasing out narratives of place to understand cultural significance. Through undertaking participant interviews, he argues 'there is the possibility of narrative as an alternative route to understanding the cultural significance of a place' (2014, 429). His study focuses on perceptions of nostalgia from the immediate community in a discussion of the school building and its potential future use, and concludes that:

While there were romantic attachments to the place, there were no sentimental attachments to a 'restoration' of the place. There was a tendency to be more concerned with its value as a re-used building, which would become a meaningful place that would provide them with the tools to break from the cycle of poverty.

(Stephens 2014, 429)

In this sense, he argues, narrative is not 'added' but 'implicit', dependent on the nature of the voice, and can assist the development of approaches to subsequent management of sites based upon retaining meaning for immediate communities, rather than relying on an assessment by a heritage professional (2014, 417).

Participant interviews, as utilised by Stephens, are one method in a broader framework proposed in calls for locally-shaped methodologies. In a discussion of future heritage

discourses in Qatar and the Middle East, Exell and Rico suggest 'oral histories, the accommodation of contradictory testimonies, a recognition of local forms of authority and witness, written works..., and visual documentation' will help to validate heritage dialogues not recognised by 'traditional Western academic method' (2013, 681). Literature regarding the assessment of social value, and of a consideration of the plurality and fluidity of heritage, highlights a number of effective qualitative and participatory methods, such as the integration of local history, oral history and folklore. The inclusion 'of archival evidence, such as maps and aerial photographs, with other qualitative research methods such as place-based oral history interviews, site-walks with community members, and audio-visual recordings' have been recognised as ways to gain a more nuanced understanding of meanings and attachments to place (Jones and Leech 2015, 29).

It is also accepted that symbolic meaning, memory and spiritual attachment may not be directly linked to the physical fabric of a historic building, monument or place, and may not even be subject to overt expression within communities, 'remaining latent in daily practices and long-term associations with place' (ibid, 26). Jones and Leech place emphasis on the importance of qualitative research as 'therefore essential to access such aspects of social value, which are unlikely to come to light through more superficial consultation processes' (ibid). However, Gibson (2009) has argued that although such methodologies are known, they are not applied in any widespread way in routine practice and Jones and Leech argue that the routine application of such methodologies could contribute to a much more holistic model for managing heritage objects, places and landscapes 'for their historical, scientific, aesthetic, spiritual *and* social values' (2015, 31).

Such methodologies have gained ground in the wider social sciences, particularly in areas of exploration regarding everyday people-place relationships. The idea of 'street phenomenology' as developed by sociologist Kusenbach is an ethnographic tool developed to contribute to a better 'understanding of how individuals comprehend and engage their physical and social environments in everyday life' (2003, 456). Kusenbach undertook 50 'go-alongs' with 30 residents of urban neighbourhoods in Hollywood, Los Angeles, gathering ethnographic data on residents' biographies and daily experiences.

Drawing from what she determined to be the limits of participant observation and interviewing, regarding them as 'primarily static encounters' which 'separate informants from their routine experiences and practices in 'natural' environments', she took to accompanying residents on usual journeys and activities – whilst asking questions, listening and observing (ibid, 461-463). Kusenbach concluded that the 'go-along' method, employed alongside other, more traditional, methodologies, can expose the 'complex and subtle meanings of place in everyday experience and practices' (ibid, 455).

Anderson has employed a similar method in accessing insights into 'how human constructions are made, developed and valued' (2004, 254) through 'bimbling' or the performance of walking interviews. He uses the work of Casey (2001, 684) to underpin the method, who states that 'we can no longer distinguish neatly between physical and personal identity...place is regarded as constitutive of one's sense of self'. Bimbling, which Anderson describes as 'aimlessly walking', is a bodily movement which he argues 'could open up the senses to allow the re-calling of incidents, feelings and experiences that were constitutive of that individual's understanding of the life world' (2004, 254). Participating in conversation in this way, he states, harnessed the 'associations of these individuals in this place, to excavate levels of meanings both the researcher and researched may therefore have been unaware of' (ibid, 258).

Likewise, Latham, in response to the shift towards the cultural in human geography, argues we should 'work through how we can imbue traditional research methodologies with a sense of the creative, the practical, and being with practice-ness' (2002, 2000). Latham explored the 'diary, diary-interview method' developed in the 1970s where respondents keep their own notes of actions and experiences prior to interview. Concluding there were limitations and potential for inaccuracies, he went about framing the research process as performance and suggested participants view the diary as 'a kind of performance-cum-reportage' of their weekly activities, including both written and photographic accounts (2002, 2004). Latham states that by adopting a creative approach to the research process in this way, it can help 'make a more dynamic and empirically engaging style of human geography' (2002, 2012).

Though not all of these studies are archaeological or directly concerned with heritage and the recent past, cultural geography has long been concerned with human experience in the present and offers perhaps more valid claims to developing our understandings of 'place' in the context of this research. In this sense those methods employed in cultural geography and elsewhere which focus on exploring the nuances in our relationship with the physical world around us, are believed to be the most appropriate here, where gurdwaras have not been labelled or distinguished as 'heritage' in any official sense but are very much lived, everyday spaces. Though calls for the interaction of researchers and heritage practitioners with local people have been explored in the previous chapter, these studies specifically make use of creative engagement to decipher meaning. Thus, methodological approaches such as Kusenbach's (2003) 'go-along' or Anderson's (2004) 'bimbling' to the undertaking of participant interviews may be the most effective way to explore participant's experience and understanding of place. By employing such a walking-interview in this research, it is hoped that the relationship between the physical or conceptual properties of gurdwaras, and meaning, or social value, can be more readily understood.

#### *Establishing a framework*

So far in this chapter, I have highlighted comparable studies which move towards a consideration of the assessment of heritage (or more broadly, people-place relationships) by bettering our understanding of the way sites are valued by immediate communities and other stakeholders. We have seen how locally-shaped methodologies incorporating traditional ethnographic techniques, such as interviews, observation, forms of note-taking and consideration of relevant documentary evidence, alongside more creative or context-specific activities, have been adopted in response to evolving theoretical ideas and trends. I believe that by approaching the assessment of significance in this way we can arrive at more valid conclusions regarding how a place is conceived through what makes it meaningful for those closest to it. This knowledge can then assist in developing appropriate management strategies which seek to accommodate meaning.

To this end, I sought to develop a research framework which was context-specific, and locally shaped. Alongside increasing my own understanding of the Sikh community in

Britain through secondary literature, I undertook a period of exploratory research whereby a series of research questions and methodologies were developed. During February and March 2014 I visited all of the nine gurdwaras in Leicester. I arrived without prior notice simply to familiarise myself with the exterior characteristics of the buildings and their immediate locality. In all but one case (Namdhari gurdwara, Linden Street) the gurdwaras were open at the time of visit (during the day, mid-week). On entering or leaving the gurdwaras, people invited me to go into the gurdwara and would either speak with me themselves or introduce me to a member of the management committee. I told them about the project and explained the exploratory nature of the work I was doing at the time. Often, these initial visits became long conversations over a meal in the langar hall and this level of hospitality and welcome has generally continued throughout the course of the project.

Although conversations at this stage were not recorded, they did provide me with a fruitful starting point with which to put together a research framework around emerging research questions. I became familiar with the primary spaces within gurdwaras, and the expectations regarding behaviour, such as removing shoes and covering your hair, bowing before the Guru Granth Sahib and offering some change, washing your hands, and greeting people with 'Sat Sri Akaal' (blessed be the person who says 'God is Truth'). I was also told a little of where traditions began and why they are important today, such as the communal preparation of food and eating together in a statement of equality, alongside gaining a better understanding of the development of the Sikh community and gurdwaras in Leicester. Crucially, I was given the contact information of those I thought it would be imperative I speak to in the future undertaking of the fieldwork. In many cases, this was the president or other senior member of the management committee. The following months were spent establishing the following research questions and subsequent methods employed in exploring them.

#### *Research Questions*

**What is the character of Sikh places of worship in Britain, and what is the nature of their development?**

In order to gain an understanding of the character of gurdwaras across Britain, an overview at the national scale was necessary before themes and potential case studies to explore could be effectively established. Fieldwork began at the gurdwaras in Leicester, and, alongside the initial analysis of gurdwaras nationally (provided in section 2.4), further case studies were selected.

There is no overarching umbrella organisation either representing gurdwaras in England (or the UK) or documenting their development. Each gurdwara (aside from varying degrees of national and international spiritual and/or caste association or management) is managed on individual terms by an elected committee. As such, there is no definitive list of gurdwaras available. Numerous websites do list gurdwaras, alongside addresses and contact numbers, though none are entirely comprehensive. As a starting point, the various online lists were cross-referenced against Paul Weller's 2007-2010 directory of Places of Worship in England (Weller 2007).

It was then necessary to first establish if each building listed was currently in use. Google Earth was utilised to quickly establish if gurdwaras were at addresses listed, and if they were currently in use. This particular methodology was established following a similar exercise undertaken by Shahed Saleem in the early stages of his 'Mosque in Britain' project commissioned for English Heritage, prior to his selection of case studies and further fieldwork. For Saleem, viewing buildings through street view also presented an opportunity to quickly decipher both whether a mosque is purpose-built or in a re-used building, and the nature of its previous use (pers. comm). A brief analysis of the results of this initial data collection was presented in chapter two.

A Microsoft Access database was created to document each gurdwara in Britain (appendix one) alongside the buildings each has inhabited over time. Criteria which I aimed to establish are as follows:

- Name, address, post code, grid reference, date open, date closed, in use, heritage listed, purpose-built, level of conversion, type of previous use.

Each gurdwara is linked to respective buildings which have been used over time and although a thorough investigation into the individual history of every gurdwara was beyond the scope of the project, it is hoped the database can be utilised and updated in

any future studies of this type. There are also limitations regarding the use of Google Earth, where it is only possible to view an image of a building at a given time and any conclusions regarding its previous use and level of conversion are assumptions. Again it is hoped it can remain a useful resource in future research as more information can be gathered, and as situations change and buildings are unoccupied and rebuilt.

Table 4.1 lists those gurdwaras which were selected for potential in-depth research, involving the undertaking of walking interviews with members of the sangat, and investigation of planning documentation. These were selected in order to address themes highlighted in the database, such as the level of conversion, the nature of a previous use, heritage-listed status and reflection of diversity within Sikhism, to ensure those not represented in the Leicester case studies could be investigated. Sites were also chosen as a result of preliminary fieldwork where certain gurdwaras would come up in conversation as particularly impressive, important, or to demonstrate a point made.

**In what way are gurdwaras valued by those most closely associated with the buildings, and how are religious and social practices related to their physical form?**

The narrative approach discussed above was adopted to investigate the relationships between people and the places selected as potential case studies. Interviews took the form of walking interviews or bimbling, with the intention to open up experiences of gurdwaras related to respondent's own lives and activities. Respondents would guide me through the building as they wished, and tell me about the spaces they wanted to show. Wider behaviours of the sangat were also observed in order to highlight other practices not mentioned by the respondent, and to apply the behaviours they discussed to a wider context. In this way, meaningful practices could be deciphered and related to the physical form of the gurdwara, and supported by the actions of others. Notes on each visit were recorded in a fieldwork diary, which would be filled in as soon as possible following the visit. Observations during the course of a walking interview were noted, alongside sensory descriptions of the environment, such as visual aspects of the interior of the building, descriptions of practices, response of the Sangat and what cooking, cleaning or other seva was being undertaken.

Table 4.1: Potential case study gurdwaras

<b>Gurdwara Name</b>	<b>Address</b>
Guru Gobind Singh Gurdwara*	152-156 Bedford Road, Kempston, Bedford, Bedfordshire MK42 8BH
Guru Nanak Nishkam Sewak Jatha*	18-20 Soho Road, Handsworth, Birmingham, West Midlands B21 9BH
Gurdwara Sikh Sanghat	6 Harley Grove, Bow, London E3 2AT
Ramgharia Sikh Temple*	81-83 Chelsea Road, Easton, Bristol BS5 6AS
Sikh Sangat Gurdwara	26 Sydney Road, Chatham, Kent ME4 5PP
Siri Guru Nanak Darbar Gurdwara	Khalsa Avenue, Gravesend, Kent DA12 1AG
Guru Nanak Satsang Sabha Karamsar UK*	400 High Road, Seven Kings, Ilford, London IG1 1TW
Gurdwara Sahib Leamington & Warwick	Tachbrook Park Drive, Leamington Spa, Warwickshire CV31 3LZ
Guru Nanak Gurdwara*	9 Holy Bones, Leicester, Leicestershire LE1 4LJ
Guru Ravidas Gurdwara*	Harrison Road, Leicester LE4 6QN
Guru Amardas Gurdwara - Leicester Sikh Centre*	219-227 Clarendon Park Road, Leicester, Leicestershire LE2 3AN
Guru Tegh Bahadur Gurdwara*	106 East Park Road, Leicester, Leicestershire LE5 4QB
Gurudwara Guru Panth Prakash*	19 Ashford Road, Leicester, Leicestershire, LE2 6AA
Ramgarhia Board Gurdwara*	51 Meynell Road, Leicester, Leicestershire LE5 3NE
Shri Guru Dashmesh Sahib Temple*	Gipsy Lane, Leicester LE4 6RF
Namdhari Sikh Sangat Leicester*	68a Linden Street, Leicester, LE5 5EE
Gurdwara & Sikh Community Centre*	Wellington Avenue, Liverpool, Merseyside L15 0EH
Guru Tegh Bahadur Gurdwara*	36 Church Street, Lenton, Nottingham, Nottinghamshire NG7 1SJ
Central Gurdwara (Khalsa Jatha) London*	62 Queensdale Road, Shepherd's Bush, London W11 4SG
Sri Guru Singh Sabha Gurdwara*	Havelock Road, Southall, London UB2 4NP
Singh Sabha Gurdwara*	Cranbury Avenue, Southampton, Hampshire SO14 0ND
Guru Gobind Sikh Temple - Sunderland Sikh Association	Ashbrooke Hall, Mowbray Road, Sunderland, County Durham SR2 7BD
Gurdwara Sri Guru Singh Sabha	48 Kings Close, Watford WD18 0UB

\*denotes gurdwaras visited during the course of the research



**How are the internal and external features of gurdwaras negotiated during the development processes of purpose-built and previously used buildings?**

Although the development process was discussed during interviews through respondent's personal experience working with the buildings, it was also important to document the scale and nature of conversion of gurdwaras through building plans. These were obtained via planning departments of local councils, where information could be gathered regarding the formal and official process of change and development. Photographs were taken with the permission of the respondent during interviews, in order to document the physical form of the spaces discussed. The Historic England Archive was also consulted to ascertain historic photographs and information regarding any previous studies of the history of gurdwaras in England.

In exploring processes of change, the position of other stakeholders who may have direct influence over the way a building has developed was also considered. For example, attempts were made to contact architects, heritage professionals and relevant diocesan officers. In some cases, a recorded interview or other comment was requested, whilst others were able to provide information regarding different aspects of a building's history.

**How can this particular mixed-methods approach assist in our understanding of heritage significance and subsequent management strategies?**

Establishing meaning by addressing the questions above was necessary to explore this final research question. The following analysis has been related to the theoretical and practical background to the research outlined in chapters two and three. Chapters eight and nine address this question in detail, as a result of this project. Specifically, discussions consider the process of adapting or changing gurdwaras, what their value is for different stakeholders, and how this can be negotiated by individual sangats, heritage organisations or 'official heritage' dialogues.

## 4.2. Doing the research

### *Approaching gurdwaras*

The approach to organising interviews did shift over the course of the project. Initially I found it very valuable to visit a gurdwara and speak with people there about the project, before being offered the names and contact details of a relevant committee member with whom to discuss the project. It was then possible to arrange a further meeting where an interview could be recorded with them, or they could suggest another respondent they felt to be suitable. In all cases there were 'gatekeepers' with whom it was important a trusting relationship was built between myself and them over time. This was easier to achieve at gurdwaras within a short drive away, as return visits could be made over the course of the project. I built up a good relationship with members of Guru Teg Bahadur Gurdwara, Nottingham, for example, where numerous visits and conversations with people over cups of tea resulted in three interviews, a meeting with their architect and the chance to look at plans, grant applications and other documents associated with the history of the building.

In the case of gurdwaras further afield, initial contact was made either by email or over the phone, due to the need to organise a productive interview for a particular day to ensure travel and costs were within the scope of the project. This process was not always straightforward, either due to unanswered emails or phone calls, or a reluctance to be involved in the project. Schensul and Le Compte explain that what is more important in building the personal relationships that mark the entry process, than establishing an understanding of the aims of the project, 'is the researcher's appearance, use of language (including humour), perceived comfort level, growing knowledge of the setting, and reactions to difficult or challenging new situations' (2013, 30). Indeed, it was difficult to build this rapport over phone and email communication alone. Over the course of the project it became clearer that it was more effective to provide a brief account of the project and its aims over the phone, and arrange a meeting to discuss it further. This was the approach taken at Singh Sabha Gurdwara, Southampton, for example, where an initial meeting was set up over the phone with only a brief outline of the project, and following a short conversation at the gurdwara I was able to undertake an interview there and then. By contrast, in trying to arrange a

meeting at the Harley Grove Gurdwara, London, phone calls with various members of the committee resulted in the need to explain the aims of the project in more detail. I was told the website of the gurdwara had information about the history of the community and the building and that they wanted to avoid me making a 'wasted journey' from Leicester (pers comm).

Approaching gurdwaras away from the East Midlands without setting up an initial meeting also had its benefits and challenges. An impromptu visit to the Guru Gobind Singh Gurdwara, Bedford proved promising. The site offered an interesting case study as a building in a previously used commercial property, where the community were undertaking consultation with architects regarding a new façade for the building, complete with archways and lotus domes. Having had a brief conversation with a member of the management committee regarding their future plans, I obtained his contact details to organise a recorded interview in the future. When following this up it transpired that he had flown to India for a few months and would be unavailable.

On reflection, there was no complete formula for arranging meetings and interviews with members of gurdwaras which could be wholly relied upon. A flexible approach was necessary, alongside the expectation that not every case study identified would yield useful, or in fact useable, data. At times this was due to the unavailability of specific members of communities or 'gatekeepers', and at others, my own, perhaps unrealistic, expectations of the amount and quality of data I would be able to secure over the course of the project. In all cases, visits to gurdwaras where interviews were undertaken or not, have been useful and valuable in aiding my understanding of the way in which they are valued by the communities who use them, as well as furthering my own experience of undertaking such research.

### *Interviews*

When arriving for an arranged meeting or interview, the approach to beginning the recording was judged depending on the particular context. There were some respondents who I met with outside of the building or in the entrance-way who were happy to begin a recorded walking tour of the building straight away. Others I met in committee rooms or the langar hall and would often spend some time discussing the

project and the gurdwara before I suggested starting to record the conversation. There were some respondents who were elderly and it made sense to sit and record the conversation in one place for the duration or part of the interview. Over the course of the project I learnt that entering the gurdwara, removing my shoes, covering my hair, washing my hands and then going to pay my respects to the Guru Granth Sahib (by bowing my head and offering a donation) prior to asking to meet with someone was the best way to begin any visit. Immediately there was an understanding that I had a basic knowledge of Sikhism and awareness of expected conduct within a gurdwara, which was valuable in establishing trust and mutual respect.

Questioning was kept flexible, with the aim to allow the respondent to discuss their experiences of the building freely. Every interview is therefore structured differently with different questions asked, but based around a central core of questions or themes, around which I aimed to direct questions. Broadly they follow these main questions/themes:

- What was your first experience of the gurdwara?
- Why did you choose to attend this gurdwara?
- When do you visit the gurdwara and what do you do from the time you enter?
- Has the gurdwara changed in the time you have been attending?
- Have you been involved in the development/renovation/maintenance of the building?
- Are you aware of the previous use of the building?
- Why was the building chosen?
- Is there still development work to undertake?
- Do you attend other gurdwaras?
- What should a gurdwara look like? Does it matter?
- Would you like the building to look any differently/move to a purpose-built space?

As the interviews largely took place throughout different spaces in the gurdwara, conversation would revolve around specific rooms, objects, practices, or specific stories related to them. Discussion would also turn to stories around particular Gurus or events in Sikh history. Although relevant to an extent, the major difficulty in relation to

undertaking the interviews themselves was a desire to discuss Sikhism, which was often difficult to steer back to the aims of the research. Those respondents often deemed the most suited to interview, by gatekeepers, also had experience of guiding tours around the gurdwara (in particular school groups) and so approached the interview in a similar way, meaning I was the recipient of a mass of information about Sikhism that they felt they were expected to deliver. This was notable at meetings at the Karamsar gurdwara, Ilford, and Khalsa Jatha, Shepherd's Bush, where respondents were the main educators at the gurdwaras and provided guided tours on at least a weekly basis. On at least two occasions where I had hoped to record an informal interview, it was suggested I join an incoming tour group instead.

It is important to note that this issue was also evident in interviews in a broader sense, whether the respondent was involved in education programs or not. Schensul & LeCompte state that researchers 'should be encouraged by the knowledge that most people in a community...pay little attention to the explanation of the project' (2013, 30). This statement rings particularly true here, where respondents (often elderly or semi-retired) were happy to recount stories and knowledge of Sikhism for as long as I was willing to listen. The flexible nature of the walking interview and approach to questioning did lend itself to this difficulty and can be viewed as a limitation of the methodology.

### *Ethics*

In all cases, the project was discussed first and respondents were asked if they had any questions regarding the overall project or the individual recordings. Ethics guidelines of the University of Leicester have been followed and permission has been obtained from the ethics officer at the School of Archaeology and Ancient History to go ahead with the research. I went through a form with each respondent outlining the purpose of the project, recording and subsequent use (appendix three). In a number of cases it proved unfeasible to complete this form, where a service was underway or interviewee got called away. In these cases notes were taken and the respondent has been treated anonymously, though consent for their responses to be used in the research has been verbally agreed. Recording was undertaken using a hand-held digital dictation machine. Respondents were asked if they wanted the recording and transcript to be treated

anonymously (so no use of their name) and signed and dated the form as appropriate. They were also asked if they would be happy for the recording to be archived for public use in the future (though I have no formal plans for this at this point) and asked for their place of birth and age (if it seemed appropriate at the time).

Where possible, permissions were addressed before an interview or conversation began. Often, due to the fluid nature of conversation during visits to gurdwaras, this meant interrupting or breaking a conversation to explain the project in more detail and the nature of the audio recording I was requesting. Although this was problematic, it was understood that 'researchers need to remember that consent to do research is an ongoing process' and that there is a requirement to explain the research on an ongoing basis 'even though doing so can be disruptive at times, both for the researcher and for the people in the study community or setting' (Schensul & LeCompte 2013, 20).

In most cases, respondents had some role within the gurdwara and so were well known to the sangat. This meant they were often approached or called away from the interview to discuss other matters. Likewise, others often partook in the interview without any prior knowledge of the project or the purpose of the recording. Those included in conversations in this way have not been included in the following analysis.

#### *Documentary evidence*

Planning documents (plans, drawings, design and access statements etc.) for each of the case studies were requested from the relevant local council planning department. The ease of obtaining these documents varied hugely depending on the locality. Leicester City Council have digitised contemporary and historic planning documents and these are made freely available on their website. By contrast, Ealing Borough Council do not have digital access to planning applications made prior to 2007. A response to an email request to view documents was received after two months and specified a £30 charge to commence a request to provide copies. The issue of copyright was also quoted during a phone call to Liverpool City Council planning department. I was told I would first need to obtain copyright permissions from an architect who had drawn up original plans before a request for information regarding a planning application made in 1992 could be processed. In some cases, it was possible to obtain architects' plans

and drawings via the architect themselves, namely in the cases of Guru Tegh Bahadur Gurdwara, Nottingham and the Ramgarhia gurdwara, Leicester.

#### 4.3. Analysis and reflection

Each interview recording was downloaded and transcribed. O-Transcribe software was used to slow down and pause recordings to enable quicker transcription. Even so, each recording was between 15 minutes and 2 hours long, and averaged 56 minutes in length (based on an average of the 18 recorded interviews undertaken). This process was extremely time consuming, much more so than was originally expected. Recordings were generally of good quality but often carried out in noisy spaces. Due to the approach taken to walking through the building, often the recording is dominated by the clattering of washing up, hand dryers, or vacuum cleaners. When in the prayer hall, voices would also be lowered out of respect for the Guru Granth Sahib and those reciting the scriptures at the time. Likewise, Punjabi words would often be used, or the names of places in India or historic figures, which would be difficult to decipher when transcribing.

Each transcript was summarised and key themes were noted. These were cross-referenced across the transcripts in highlighting themes across the data and specific differences and peculiarities between case studies. This coding was done without the use of software. In this respect, I have adopted the view of Jackson, who highlights some problems of coding software for analysis in stating it can lead to the removal of quotes and key words from their context (2001, 203). He also suggests reading within individual interviews and then across 'characterising each according to prevalence or absence of specific themes' (2001, 206) in order to highlight common themes and meta-themes, and exclusions. The analysis of identified narratives involves more than just a recounting of interviewee statements. As Atkinson articulates, narratives are not 'immediately accessible' and may conceal as well as reveal meaning (2000). Here, the comparison of familiar and competing narratives are recognised as reflecting specific interests and understandings whilst their interpretation seeks to generate some sort of 'objective' knowledge (Bevir & Rhodes 2006, 28).

### *Position of the researcher*

As a white British female in my late twenties it is important to acknowledge my situation in respect to the communities I have researched. I differ in age, ethnicity, religious affiliation, and gender to most of the respondents in the project. This does present challenges and limitations, particularly in relation to language and cultural trends which are beyond my appreciation. Punjabi was spoken in every gurdwara I visited, amongst older and younger members of the sangat. Generally, respondents were fluent in English, though consistently, Granthis, who read from the Guru Granth Sahib and act as its guardian, were not, making it difficult to hear their experiences. There were however other things I had in common with respondents, and I felt there was enough mutual respect shown for fieldwork to be productive and the position of myself as the researcher to not impact negatively on results. Fairclough states 'there are many different ways of understanding and appreciation. Not all of these ways are 'scientific', objective and material. Many are personal, individual and subjective, or reflect intangible aspects of the environment' (Fairclough 2002, 25). I believe this is as relevant for myself as it was for respondents who were making sense of who I was and what I was doing. In many respects, the Sikh values respondents discussed were demonstrated in the hospitality I experienced as a visitor to gurdwaras. As a non-Sikh, it was assumed I had little or no knowledge of Sikhism and so more challenging issues such as caste and diversity were often discussed openly.

Attempts would often be made by respondents to present a comparison to practices or elements of gurdwaras to churches or Christian beliefs. Whilst I refrained from discussing my own religious leanings, there was an assumption that I did believe in God and understood what worship entailed. I am not religious, but did grow up in a Catholic family and so these past experiences certainly did impact upon the way both I, and respondents, approached the project. In examining the 'situated-ness' of the researcher, Denscombe states that:

Making sense of what is observed during fieldwork observation is a process that relies on what the researcher already knows and already believes, and it is not a voyage of discovery which starts with a clean sheet. We can only make sense of the world in a way that we have learnt to do using conceptual tools which are based on our own culture and our own experiences. We have no way of standing outside these to reach some objective



and neutral vantage point from which to view things ‘as they really are’. To an extent we can describe them only ‘as we see them’ and this is shaped by our culture, not theirs.

(2010, 86)

Finally, the presence of myself as a ‘heritage professional’ or ‘researcher’ placed value on those sites I visited and have included in the project and others are distinguished by the fact I did not. In some cases, there may be explicit results, both in the outcomes of this research or in the future efforts of a community to recognise their history as significant.

*Profiles summary, bias and presentation of the data*

Table 4.2 provides a breakdown of the interviews undertaken during fieldwork, and the interviewee names exhibited in the table will be used to reference the relevant interview in the following chapters. Those who requested to remain anonymous have been indicated with an asterix, and their names have been replaced in this table and in

Table 4.2: Details of interviews undertaken at gurdwaras						
City	Gurdwara	Interviewees	Age	Sex	Place of Birth	Recording or Notes
Birmingham	Guru Nanak Nishkam Sewak Jatha (GNNSJ)	Charnjit Kaur*	25+	F	England	Recording
		Amrit Singh*	21	M	Bombay	Recording
Leicester	Guru Amar Das	Baljit Singh*	72	M	Punjab	Recording
	Guru Nanak	Harinder Bin Singh	50+	M	Punjab	Recording
		Gurmel Singh	70+	M	Punjab	Recording
		Japjeet Kaur Khalsa	36	F	Belgium	Recording
	Guru Tegh Bahadur	Surinderpal Singh	70+	M	Punjab	Recording
	Ramgarhia Board	Kirpal Sagoo	50+	M	Kenya	Recording
		Inderjeet Singh Panesar	61	M	Nairobi, Kenya	Recording
	Sri Guru Ravidass	Bali Singh*	50+	M	India	Recording
	Namdhari	Sidak Singh*	50+	M	India	Notes
	Gurdwara Pranth Parkash	Saranjit Singh*	70+	M	Punjab	Notes
	Shri Guru Dashmesh	Arijit Singh*	70+	M	India	Notes
Liverpool	Guru Nanak Sikh Association	Hardev Singh Sohal	75	M	Punjab, India	Recording
Ilford, Greater London	Karamsar	Amandeep Singh Sandhu	32	M	Newbury Park	Recording

Nottingham	Guru Tegh Bahadur	Michael Singh	40+	M	England	Notes
		Sarjit Singh	50+	F	England	Recording
		Narinda Singh	50+	F	England	Recording
		Peter Rogan	50+	M	England	Recording
Southall, Greater London	Sri Guru Singh Sabha Southall	Navraj Singh	44	M	Wolverhampton	Recording
Southampton	Singh Sabha	Sukhbir Singh*	50+	M	Punjab, India	Recording
Bristol	Ramgarhia Sikh Temple	Tejinder Singh	30+	M	India	Recording
		Manmohan Singh	60+	M	India	Recording
Shepherd's Bush	Khalsa Jatha British Isles	Rajinder Singh Bhasin	60+	M	Amritsar	Recording
Bedford	Guru Gobind Singh	Harbajhan Singh*	60+	M	India	Notes
*Denotes participants treated anonymously						

the subsequent presentation of data. This project has not attempted to provide an in-depth study of the history of gurdwaras and the Sikh community on a national scale, nor to speak for the views and values of the Sikh community on such a scale. Although data has been gathered nationally, it is intended to provide a basis with which to try and understand the national situation, rather than define it. The focus of the project is on local studies and the following analysis is drawn from the limited dataset available. This is formed by the input of 25 individuals, alongside observations and documentary evidence. It is their input which has shaped discussion in the following chapters, and it is acknowledged that this may have evolved differently were 25 different individuals approached.

There are issues of bias in the interview profiles, as demonstrated in the table above. Respondents were largely male and over the age of 50. Due to the male dominated nature of management committees, the gatekeepers tended to fit this profile, and many were first generation migrants who had been born in India or East Africa. When suggesting others who may be suitable to take part, they would also often be elderly men who were viewed as particularly knowledgeable about Sikhism or were 'good Sikhs'. As such, a range of other experiences, notably of women or younger, British-born Sikhs were not heard as strongly and may have yielded different results. Likewise, those

who do not regularly use gurdwaras or have negative experiences of their use have not been heard.

Thus, there is notable partiality with regards information gathered in this research, due to the nature in which contact was made with gurdwaras, largely through administration and management committees. There was an attempt to offset this by visiting gurdwaras without a prior meeting set up, and continuing to visit after initial contact had been made, in order to meet with members of the sangat I would otherwise not be introduced. It is obviously difficult to predict with any certainty in what way results would have differed should a broader range of views and experiences been gathered. However, given the dominant role of men over the age of 50 in gurdwara management (and subsequently in the views gathered here), consulting women and younger Sikhs may have offered more focused discussion specifically on the impact this dominance has had on the development of gurdwaras (including design aspirations), and their day-to-day functioning. It may of course also have highlighted other themes which have not surfaced here and upon which I cannot speculate. Regardless, this particular dataset can shed light on the value of gurdwaras, particularly in relation to their early development and subsequent processes of change, which in the future will have a place in any successive studies of the history of the Sikh community in Britain. Such successive studies should work towards gathering a range of experiences, which may involve thinking creatively about ways to approach varied demographics both from within and outside gurdwara buildings themselves.

## Chapter 5: A distinctive sacred space?

This chapter will consider the function and use of gurdwaras in addressing how they are valued by those closely associated with them, and how religious and social practices are related to a gurdwara's physical form. As previously established, gurdwaras are understood to mirror the complex diversity of Sikh religiosity and the changing profile of the Sikh community in Britain (chapter two). Different management structures and styles, international spiritual leadership, gurdwara trusts, and local and national political structures, all influence the role of individual gurdwaras and the services they provide for their respective communities. Despite this apparent diversity, Singh and Tatla refer to the Akali Movement (1920-5) and the emergence of the 'Sikh political system' as a turning point in establishing the 'demarcation of a distinctive sacred space' (2006, 69). Although political, social and religious diversity of gurdwaras has been established, unifying factors have been identified through informants' responses and practice at gurdwaras in Britain. This chapter examines frequently occurring narratives in the description of the role and function of a gurdwara, in beginning to understand it as a place.

Analysis of interviews has revealed that the primary function of all gurdwaras is for the sangat to gather and learn from the teachings of the Guru Granth Sahib. Due to its presence, there are also specific expectations of visitor behaviours at the gurdwara. Research has also revealed a number of narratives related to the role and character of gurdwaras across Britain and the Sikh diaspora. Broadly, these narratives reference the following themes: an understanding that it is the presence of the Guru Granth Sahib which makes a place a gurdwara; that 'all gurdwaras are the same', despite aforementioned religious, social and political diversity; that Sikhs and non-Sikhs alike are encouraged to visit, particularly if in need of food or shelter; that they are social as well as religious places, where importance is placed on social and education programs, and wider civic engagement; and that voluntary contributions and the continuing performance of seva has had a direct influence on the development of gurdwaras.

This chapter will consider each of these themes in detail, presenting examples from across the interview data collected. In this way, it is hoped the themes established

represent as far as possible an indication of the perception of gurdwaras irrespective of religious, social or geographical diversity, within the limits of this research.

### 5.1. 'The Guru Granth Sahib is the gurdwara'

The gurdwara as a social and religious place is defined by the presence of the Guru Granth Sahib. Narratives related to the distinctive character of gurdwaras often describe the Guru Granth Sahib as the definitive requirement, and the sole sacred element of the building. Kirpal Sagoo, at the Ramgarhia Board Gurdwara in Leicester, explained the significance the Holy Book has for Sikhs:

Guru Gobind Singh gave this book to the Sikhs and said, right, I present you the Guru Granth Sahib, and after me...there will be no Guru. We Sikhs believe in Guru Granth Sahib to be the living Guru whose teachings we adhere to...that's why we treat this with very much reverence, as if it's a living thing.

Narinder Singh, at Guru Teg Bahadur Gurdwara, Nottingham, described the Guru Granth Sahib as 'the most amazing thing in the world I'd say right. Cause when you listen to it it's just such a beautiful beautiful...it's the tonic for the brain, tonic for the brain'. The focus on the Guru Granth Sahib as central to the role and spiritual character of the gurdwara was further exclaimed by Harinder Singh at Guru Nanak Gurdwara, Leicester, who remarked that:

Guru Granth Sahib is the gurdwara. Without [it] there is no gurdwara, then it is just a community hall. So once the Guru Granth Sahib is installed in a gurdwara then he is given pride of place and respect by anyone who enters; so the Holy Book is the pivot around which the whole gurdwara operates.

Harinder went on to explain that the Guru Granth Sahib should be positioned above the seated level of the Sangat in order to show its 'pre-eminence' and other practices within the gurdwara are dictated by the presence of the Guru Granth Sahib. Harinder described what people do when they enter the Guru Nanak Gurdwara in Leicester:

Obviously when you come in...there's a room where you need to take your shoes off and then there are washbasins where you wash your hands after that...you put a headscarf on your head if you're not wearing a turban. So then you enter the main hall where the Guru Granth Sahib is kept.

Harinder went on to explain why your shoes must be removed before entering the prayer hall:



Figure 5.1: Washing facilities at the main entrance of Guru Nanak Gurdwara, Leicester.

Respect is very important. You take off your shoes because you don't want to take dirty shoes inside where the Holy Book is kept. In India, the weather is pretty good most of the time so in the traditional Sikh temples people will remove their shoes as well as their socks and there's running water outside before you enter. So, you clean your feet as well as your hands when you enter into the holy gurdwara. But over here the weather is pretty chilly so [laughter] nobody insists on taking their socks off.

At the Guru Nanak Gurdwara, Leicester, there are facilities available to wash your feet at one entrance to the building (figure 5.1). Whilst some people do make use of this to wash their feet before continuing to the prayer hall or langar hall, it is by no means a requirement. At any gurdwara, a visitor is likely to see shoe racks immediately, whether entering from a main or secondary entrance, alongside a box of headscarves for temporary use. There are often signs indicating that you must remove your shoes, cover your head and wash your hands in the lobby area of the gurdwara, before entering the prayer hall (figure 5.2).

A visitor is then expected to pay their respects to the Guru, before proceeding to another part of the building, or taking their place in the prayer hall. Generally, when in the darbar sahib visitors will first walk up to the palki sahib and bow before the Guru Granth Sahib, touching their head to the floor. Some will walk around the palki sahib



Figure 5.2: A sign in the shoe room at Guru Nanak Gurdwara, Leicester.

without putting their backs to the Guru Granth Sahib and recite “Waheguru ii ka Khalsa, sri Waheguru ji ki fateh” (the Khalsa belongs to the Wonderful Guru, victory belongs to the Wonderful Guru!) (Kaur Singh 1995, 141). They may wave the Chauri, which is a type of fan used out of respect to wave away insects and keep the Guru Granth Sahib cool, and take (or be offered) prasad (flour and butter mixture) before taking their seat.

During the daytime, the Guru is present in the prayer hall and its pages are read or sang by Granthis or other members of the sangat (figure 5.3). At night, the Guru Granth Sahib is returned to the sach khand which is the bedroom of the Guru. At the Guru Teg Bahadur gurdwara in Nottingham, Sarjit Singh explained:

Upstairs there’s a little room, it’s called the sach khand. That’s where we place him to go to sleep at night time and then we wake him up in the morning with a prayer... And all the Guru Granth Sahibs are treated that way. So, that special room, all the gurdwaras will have one wherever the Guru Granth Sahib is.

The sach khand will have at least one bed (with some gurdwaras having three or four). The bed is dressed with bed linen, cushions, and a quilt which covers the Guru Granth Sahibs which are laid there. Often there are curtains, bedside tables with fresh flowers, and subdued lighting. Inderjeet Panesar at the Ramgarhia Board Gurdwara, Leicester, explained that ‘because we believe the Guru Granth is our living God, we kind of like





Figure 5.3 (above): The Guru Granth Sahib being read at the Ramgarhia Board Gurdwara, Leicester. Figure 5.4 (below): the Guru Granth Sahibs resting in the sach khand.



treat them as a living person'. Kirpal described the sach khand at the gurdwara (figure 5.4). He said 'as you can see it's a four-poster bed with all the trimmings and everything'. He also pointed out a heater and a dehumidifier in the room which demonstrates how the living Guru 'needs the reverence and the comfort that we can bestow'. Inderjeet also spoke of how each morning they 'wake [the Guru Granth Sahib] up with respect'. The Guru is ceremonially woken and brought into the darbar hall every morning by a Granthi.

Japjeet Kaur explained this daily practice at the Guru Nanak Gurdwara, Leicester, as follows:

You'll have the granthi [and] some of the sangat coming to the door...traditionally begging for tarshan. Tarshan means being blessed with the presence of somebody. So, because it's the Guru, Guru is the King of Kings for us. You wouldn't just walk in the room you'd stand outside for a while asking permission to come in... The granthi will come in, pick the Guru up and place them on their head then on the throne and open the verse.

When the Guru Granth Sahib is opened for the first time each morning, it is done so randomly. The first verse is read out and becomes the Hukumnama for that particular gurdwara, for that day. This is often written out on a notice board in a lobby area or corridor outside the prayer hall, or more and more frequently displayed electronically, and is the central message for visitors to consider each day.

Throughout the day, those paying their respects to the Guru Granth Sahib will donate money into a collection at the foot of the palki sahib. Others bring fresh flowers, or even milk, potatoes and rice for the langar kitchen. Inderjeet explained 'because we have a free kitchen you know the langar then the public will bring in milk, sugar you know lentils...there's a trolley ...here we'll just bow to the Holy Scriptures and leave them here then take them to the kitchen and that's utilised in the day to day cooking of the food you know'.

## 5.2. 'All gurdwaras are the same'

Another overriding theme of participant interviews was a recognition of the gurdwara as no different to any other, regardless of the diversity of the sangat or management committee. Some participants explained that the services offered by the gurdwara do differ. For instance, Harinder described the gurdwara as a place where 'people will meet, they will discuss, and they will do some activities that they might be interested

in, so that depends on the gurdwara and the committee and what they would like'. He continued 'there is no hard and fast rule about these things, the only hard and fast rule is where the Holy Book is kept and what the different functions throughout the day are'. And Navraj Singh (Nav), at the Sri Guru Singh Sabha Gurdwara, Southall, stated that 'we have a brotherhood with all the gurdwaras no matter what names they are'. Alongside the presence of the Guru Granth Sahib, there are other practices and spaces which informants relate to gurdwaras as distinct entities. Amrit Singh, who has spent the last 10 years attending the Guru Nanak Nishkam Sewak Jatha Gurdwara in Birmingham, discussed his experiences of moving to Leicester and familiarising himself with the gurdwaras in the city. He said 'what I know will be in every one is a prayer hall, langar and place to leave your shoes – three definite things'. Likewise, in discussing langar at the Singh Sabha Gurdwara, Southampton, Sukhbir Singh remarked that, 'any temple anywhere in the world, whether it's Canada, America, UK, Kenya, they've always got food, 24-7. So as long as the temple is open there is food available'. Often statements such as these, related to the unifying functions of gurdwaras, are expressed alongside a comparison to the Golden Temple, where Sukhbir stated 'they feed 100,000 people every day, and again it's all free, no charge to anyone!'

In an interview with Charnjit Kaur at the Guru Nanak Nishkam Sewak Jatha (GNNSJ) Gurdwara, Birmingham, she explained the significance of the Golden Temple complex, Akhal Takht and SGPC in the ongoing development and function of gurdwaras across the diaspora:

In Amritsar, where the Golden Temple is, is the Akhal Takht...So all Sikhs take guidance from the Akhal Takht which is kind of like the highest seat of authority under Guru Granth Sahib Ji... [it] looks after, if other gurdwaras are in trouble or in need of advice or are setting up...so it's kind of like in the Christian faith where people get guidance from the Pope from Vatican City, kind of like that.

While some gurdwaras display 3D models of the Golden Temple, most at least display images of the Golden Temple on the walls of the langar hall, or lobbies or corridors (figure 5.5). Almost every recorded interview included some mention of the Golden Temple in discussions of the function, history or layout of gurdwaras, and people's experiences of visiting the site were often discussed during other informal conversation.



Figure 5.5: An image of the Golden Temple outside of the prayer hall at Guru Gobind Singh Gurdwara, Bedford.

Generally, the site is regarded as an exemplar of Sikh values and practices, and is a perfect demonstration of what a gurdwara does and why, though on a unique scale. In the following extract, Harinder Singh analogises the Golden Temple within its complex, as the Guru Granth Sahib within a gurdwara. He stated:

The Golden Temple, it's in the middle of the holy lake and it is right in the centre. Then, there are various buildings all around the surrounding, which contain a place for the Sikhs to discuss various things. It also contains the building where people who want to come and want to stay for a night or two would be able to stay...it contains the langar hall, it contains the museum. So, there are various things, but again the central pivot is the Golden Temple. All the other buildings are part of the Golden Temple complex but they are secondary to the centre...where the Holy Book is kept.

References such as these were often accompanied by exclamations that all gurdwaras were the same, their function and significance differing only in terms of scale, with the Golden Temple being the one which serves the largest number of people. For example, at Guru Teg Bahadur Gurdwara in Nottingham, when asked 'how does this gurdwara compare with other gurdwaras in Nottingham?' Narinder Singh responded 'we don't compare gurdwaras, no, compare, no'.

Likewise, at the Singh Sabha Gurdwara, Southampton, I asked Sukhbir Singh if there were any differences between temples in Kenya and the UK. Sukhbir responded:

People in Kenya I would say are a bit more religious, people in UK have become a lot more westernised. I think that's the only difference really. But tradition is still the same. Any gurdwara you go to they'll still have the same places. They'll all have langar hall, they'll have sach khand, which is the resting place for Guru Granth Sahib at night, and they'll all have the main prayer hall. So those three things any gurdwara you go to you will find.

Similarly, at Guru Nanak Gurdwara, Leicester, when asked if his experiences at other gurdwaras differ, Gurmeh Singh pronounced the single overriding feature of gurdwaras: 'oh that, that [laughter], that is not the same, that is not the same. You go there [to any gurdwara] you know that...the Guru Granth Sahib is the same you know'.

The exterior physical characteristics of gurdwaras were not generally referred to in discussions of the role and function of gurdwaras, nor in demarcating them as distinctive places. In one interview, the nishan sahib was described as the sole architectural feature pertaining to all gurdwara buildings, visible to all:

With the flag, the nishan sahib flag which is the orange colour flag which is very, very high that is fluttering over every gurdwara. So you know like, the church bells you can distinguish that the church is over there when the bells ring. Similarly, with a Sikh gurdwara, every gurdwara will have a nishan sahib, which is very high and you can see it from far away. So, people who have never been to a gurdwara might say "oh the gurdwara's there" so they could make their way without too much problem.

Following discussions of the distinctive nature of gurdwaras, conversation would often turn to why informants attend particular gurdwaras over others. Amrit Singh referred to issues of access, with preference for a gurdwara within walking distance, and the types of programs on offer, including visits of various well-known kirtanias (hymn singers). Gradually getting to know the granthis and other members of the gurdwaras was also important in his choice. He recalled 'if you do immerse yourself in the temple, meet the people there...in the serving hall, by the stairs, by the shoe house, and just be there and have a talk and you make friendships...I do think that each gurdwara has a specific community attached to it'. In specific relation to why he first started attending the GNNSJ Gurdwara, Birmingham, Amrit explained:

My mum [laughter], she said "every Sunday you're gonna go temple now and I won't take no for an answer" ...so coming to the UK I forgot Hindi, I forgot Marathi, English was the only thing that stuck with me, and my mum said learn Punjabi so I went to lessons there. I remember I was 13 years old in a class of like, eight year olds and that was a bit strange.

But I thought it was fun...after a while when I took free time I went to the temple myself and just took it all in...started helping with serving the food with the elders or just going to the top. So, on the way to the dome there's a little L [-shaped] walkway and I used to just sit there and just mess around ...me and my friends.

He went on to explain that his participation, first in Punjabi classes and then in volunteering to help with cleaning the temple or with serving food, was the foundation to him staying there. Punjabi classes and other activities have also been cited as important services to offer the community in attracting and keeping younger Sikhs engaged with the daily functions of the gurdwara, and their future management. Narinder Singh explained that the gurdwara 'gives you a lot of discipline. The children, it stops them from drinking, drugs and all that, it puts them on the right road'.

For Harinder Singh the gurdwara should be a place 'where one can find spiritual solace and being calm and there being good music being played'. He recounted his first experience of Guru Nanak Gurdwara, Leicester:

There was nobody in the hall except the person who was doing the prayers and so I managed to sit there and quietly meditate... [I] also had langar that day, and then I found it was quite nice and peaceful and I decided that this would be my, you know, neighbourhood gurdwara...but of course on the weekend especially on Sunday the place becomes very busy, because the entire community sort of descends...there are at least 5 or 600 people here on Sunday. So, it's a religious as well as a social occasion for people to listen to the hymns, for people to mingle with other people who they might not have seen for some time.

Also speaking about her experiences of Guru Nanak Gurdwara in Leicester, Japjeet Kaur spoke of how she regularly attends because of its proximity to her house, where she also works from home. She also spends a lot of time visiting other gurdwaras in the country, particularly for specific programs. Originally from Belgium, Japjeet moved to the UK four years ago, first to Coventry and then on to Leicester. In discussing her experiences of gurdwaras she said:

When I was living in Belgium we only had four gurdwaras there, so in the beginning I would travel to England every weekend, then during the week I would go back to Belgium to work there. I would go wherever there was a program so I would go up and down the country ...that's why I know a lot of people in different cities. And very often because I'm white they want me to speak to the Sangat and explain how I came to Sikhi... [in Belgium,] the community there was very much focused on material survival still, and on their rights in Belgium as Sikhs for wearing the turban. I moved to the UK because I couldn't wear my turban in Belgium legally.

Specific programs or well-known Kirtanias do appear to attract Sikhs who would regularly attend other gurdwaras. Harinder Singh noted convenience as the main reason he attends Guru Nanak Gurdwara as opposed to others in Leicester, but did remark that 'sometimes if there's a function over there in the other gurdwaras where there's some nice hymns being sung by some good Ragis then I do go over there as well. I mean there's no hard and fast rule which gurdwara one needs to go'. In reference to the gurdwaras in Southampton, Sukhbir Singh also stated that 'although we say different parts of the community, everybody goes to all of the temples and I actually volunteer my services to other temples as well. Even though I'm based here I do a lot of work for other temples. There is no set place for us to go, they're all Sikh temples so we'll go anywhere'.

### 5.3. 'Everyone is welcome'

Another dominant narrative within informant interviews is the active encouragement of all members of society to attend gurdwaras. Beyond this being a welcome to visit and to improve wider understandings of Sikhism and Sikh places of worship, interviews revealed the notion of equality between genders, castes and creeds. The importance of service provision extending beyond Sikh communities to the whole of society, was consistently referenced. Inderjeet Panesar, who I spoke with at the Ramgarhia Gurdwara, Leicester, explained that 'it's not only the Sikhs who come to the gurdwara...any member of the wider community are welcome'. Again, the religious and historic significance of this fact was related to the Golden Temple. Inderjeet stated 'it has got four entrances and what that signifies is that any person from any walk of life is welcome to come to the gurdwara...that's the main principle'.

The requirements of entry to a gurdwara are that visitors behave respectfully to the Guru Granth Sahib, by not being drunk or bringing alcohol or tobacco products inside, and remove their shoes and cover their hair. Harinder Singh explained 'we have to welcome everyone who comes in as long as that person doesn't abuse the tenets of the gurdwara'. So, a visitor 'must remove his shoes to enter the gurdwara and he must not smoke and he must not smell of alcohol. So, if that is found then that person will be removed from the gurdwara'.

This feature of gurdwaras, as open to anyone, stems from religious understandings of Sikhism itself, as recalled by Hardev Singh Sohal: 'It doesn't matter what religion you [are], we all believe in one God'. Harinder Singh explained that 'the Gurus have always said that we all descend from the same humanity, so it doesn't matter what religion we come from whether Hindus, Muslims, Christians or Sikhs... that is the pivotal, the central message of Sikhism that we descend from the same God'. This message extends beyond religious difference in pronouncing gender equality and in dispelling the caste system. Again, these basic understandings of Sikh faith are demonstrated in practices at the gurdwara. Kirpal Sagoo, at the Ramgarhia Gurdwara, Leicester described how anyone can read from the Guru Granth Sahib:

There's no restriction. It's not restricted to only the Granthis, the ladies can do it, women, whoever...religion-wise Sikh religion has given equality to women from day one...[Guru Nanak said] "how can I call a woman not worthy...who gives birth to kings, princes and other big people...they're all born from a woman so how can you say...a woman is not worthy touching the scriptures or reading Gurbhani". How can you justify that?

Although less frequently discussed, there is also recognition that equality, as described in recollections of Sikh values, is not always necessarily demonstrated at gurdwaras. Kirpal did go on to state that 'that's the religious side but the social side...might show a slightly different picture'. The presence of continuing caste distinctions in the development of gurdwaras, and the remaining dominant position of men in management committees is enough to point to this fact (chapter two).

Regardless, the much more frequent narrative is one of equal status and welcome admission to the gurdwara. For example, Baljit Singh attends the Ramgarhia Gurdwara, Leicester, but chooses to attend Guru Amar Das a number of times a week in order to participate in an exercise class. Speaking from Guru Amar Das Gurdwara (figure 5.6), he described how 'there is no place in Sikhism for caste, class, you know lower class or high class, everybody come to the Sikh temple'. The open nature of gurdwaras as places where anyone can visit is often made explicit in discussions of langar and food provision. Baljit continued, 'and if there is food nobody can discriminate anybody because of their caste or colour or creed anything you know'. Likewise, Harinder Singh explained how





Figure 5.6 (above): Guru Amar Das Gurdwara, Leicester. Figure 5.7 (below): The langar hall on the ground floor of Guru Amar Das Gurdwara, Leicester.



‘you see people from, not just the Sikhs, but also Hindus, some people from Eastern Europe as well...the thing is the Sikhs must never refuse to give food to anybody irrespective of their religion and if they do then that is a sin and that person is not really a true Sikh’. And again, Sukhbir Singh stated:

It’s not just the Sikhs. [There are] a lot of homeless people around here, they come in, they have a meal here. Sikh gurdwaras are open to anyone; you do get a lot of people coming in. On a Sunday we’re looking at about three to four hundred people here every week, and again they all have a meal here.

Harinder Singh described how the langar tradition is itself a symbol of equality reflective of Sikh values: ‘this is an extremely important part of Sikhism to share with other people, not just wealth but food’. The tradition of langar goes back to the founding of Sikhism in the 15th century by Guru Nanak. Sukhbir told the story of Guru Nanak and the beginnings of the tradition:

When Guru Nanak was young...his father sent him away... with 20 rupees, and said “take these 20 rupees go and buy some goods and we’ll trade it and make a profit”. So he went on his way with one of his disciples, and on the way they met all these hungry holy men and he offered them the 20 rupees and what they said to him was “money to us is no good, if you want you can feed us”. So, he went to town and bought food with those 20 rupees and he fed those holy men. And so that’s the ritual where we started feeding everybody...what we still say is that those 20 rupees are still feeding the world.

Langar is usually eaten following a service in the prayer hall, or after going to pray and pay respects to the Guru Granth Sahib during a shorter visit to the gurdwara (figure 5.7). At larger gurdwaras, it is likely to be served at least at lunchtime and dinner time daily, though even if it is not available there is usually a provision for tea and biscuits. Today, the preparation and serving of langar is largely a voluntary pursuit, shared between many members of the sangat (figures 5.8 & 5.9). At the GNNSJ Gurdwara in Birmingham, Charnjit Kaur described how some people have been coming to the gurdwara to assist with food preparation at the same time every day for 40 years:

...in the kitchen there’s ladies who have been coming for nearly 40 years [laughter] and there’s some ladies who do the same thing every single day. So, they might come at six in the morning and, like, chop vegetables ‘til eight o’clock.

In some of the larger gurdwaras, one or two chefs may be paid a wage by the gurdwara, which Nav, at the SGSSS Gurdwara explained was in order to control such a large operation (where several hundred meals are prepared and served daily) whilst complying with health and safety standards. The Ramgharia Board Gurdwara in



Figure 5.8 (above): Langar being served at Shri Guru Ravidass Gurdwara, Leicester. Figure 5.9 (below): A serving of langar at Guru Nanak Gurdwara, Leicester.

Leicester also has a head chef, though Inderjeet noted how ‘all the ladies do all the hard work’ as they prepared hundreds of chapattis for lunchtime.

Other services are offered to the wider community too. In a discussion of the Nishkam Campus which includes nursery, primary and secondary schools, a pharmacy, a community co-op, and conference centre, the GNNSJ Gurdwara is just a part (figure 5.10). Charnjit stated ‘everything you see is open to the whole community and has staff members from the whole community...so it’s a very good mix of non-Sikh and Sikh people and it serves everyone. So, anyone can walk in. And even here, the gurdwara’s open to everyone’.



Figure 5.10: The Nishkam Primary school, Birmingham, part of the Guru Nanak Nishkam Sewak Jatha campus and opposite the gurdwara.

Narratives of equality were also evident in some descriptions of the development of gurdwaras as physical structures. In most cases these stories related to the participation or generosity of non-Sikhs in the setting up of gurdwaras. For example, the interior of the dome atop GNNSJ Gurdwara is adorned with a mosaic decoration created by a Muslim craftsman who wanted to offer his skills (figures 5.11 & 5.12). This particular



story was told in numerous informal conversations with Sikhs at gurdwaras across the country, not just at the site itself. For example, on an informal visit to the Sri Guru Gobind Singh Gurdwara in Manchester, a Sikh workman there suggested I visit GNNSJ Gurdwara in order to view its spectacular dome created by a Muslim (pers comm). Surinderpal Singh, at Guru Tegh Bahadur Gurdwara, Leicester recalled another story of the early processes of development at the Leicester gurdwara, converted from a shoe warehouse in 1988:

There [were] three potential buyers. One was a Muslim gentleman who had actually bought the building practically, but when he found out that actually the Sikhs wanted to buy it for a Sikh temple he said he'd be drawing out of it so it could be a place of worship...it's very generous of him.

Finally, Harinder Singh at Guru Nanak Gurdwara, Leicester spoke of the inauguration of the museum at the gurdwara by the Queen in 2003. He also explained that a descendant of Mian Mir, a Muslim *fakir* (a religious ascetic who only possesses the spiritual need for God) said to have inaugurated the Golden Temple and laid the foundation stone, was invited to the opening ceremony. Harinder said 'he was very pleased to be here and you know it was nice that a descendant of Mian Mir was in Leicester to be able to...start the museum in a way'. Such narratives, of participation by others, whether in the development of the building itself or in its day-to-day functions, demonstrate the religious messages so central to informants' understandings of both the Sikh faith, and in its practice.

#### 5.4. 'We're part of the community'

Education and wider civic engagement has been identified as another theme central to descriptions of the role and use of gurdwaras. Although to some extent, this overlaps with narratives considered above regarding equality within Sikhism and the services provided by gurdwaras, there appears a strong focus on education within and about gurdwaras. In reference to increasing competition to control gurdwaras, Singh and Tatla state that they, 'like most ethnic minority religious institutions in the contemporary inner city, have increasingly assumed an adjunct role to the local state and welfare service' (2006, 81). This is particularly evident in the serving of langar outside of gurdwaras, as charitable donations for the homeless (Singh, J. 2015). At SGSSS



Figure 5.11 (above): The Guru Nanak Nishkam Sewak Jatha Gurdwara, Birmingham. Figure 5.12 (below): The interior of the main dome at GNNSJ Gurdwara, decorated with a mosaic.

Gurdwara for example, food is sent by the gurdwara to homeless charities operating in the area. Nav felt that 'even the council acknowledge that if it wasn't for the langar as well then there would be a lot more deaths as well as homelessness in the area'. The community centre opened by the Ramgarhia Gurdwara in Leicester, also provides a wealth of activities and resources for both Sikhs and non-Sikhs. Inderjeet explained the reasoning behind the development of the centre:

A lot of the congregation is getting older now. The elderly didn't have anywhere to go to kind of socialise or whatever, so within our board what we've got is this Social Sisters group...who organise trips for the elderly within the community to the seaside or ...London, sometimes even...in European cities. They [also] invite speakers with a medical background to give them advice on women's issues or health in general...And then the senior citizens club [for men and women]...the community centre is used by them for just social gatherings, chit chat you know. Those that want to do exercise they get on with doing exercise. The others they just sit there reading or gossip really.

Many larger gurdwaras also lead educational tours of the gurdwara, either for interested members of the public, or for school groups of all ages, in line with the national curriculum. Sukhbir Singh also discussed welcoming schools to the gurdwara in Southampton. He explained that 'we get schools coming from as far away as Brighton and that's a secondary school...about 120, 150 of them each time. Twice a year they come and first thing they say, "Wow" ...that school's been coming here for the past ten years!'

Sarjit Singh also described more informal educational visits to the Guru Teg Bahadur gurdwara in Nottingham:

We get a lot of students here cause of the university....[they] will come but they'll bring their friends with them and they'll say "oh there's a free meal" and so "oh we'll go, we'll go"....if they want to learn [about Sikhism] then it's great, it's fantastic...I got a church in Lady Bay, I do a lot of work with them and I always say to them "oh you must come and visit us!" and they say "oh we will, we will!". We still haven't got round to doing it, and then it's not only educating younger people it's educating the older people who don't know about what happens in the gurdwaras, cause nobody ever enters another person's church do they?

Inter-faith work was also often discussed in interviews, particularly with those involved in the management of gurdwaras. At Khalsa Jatha British Isles, Rajinder Singh Bhasin described how he was a member of Interfaith Kensington and Chelsea and Westminster Faith Exchange: 'we meet over here to exchange views...every first of May we have a group of people from other religions, 200 [people], they visit us' and went on to explain

that 'all communities are welcome here. We try to welcome them with an open heart...Guru Nanak's faith is universal in such a way'. Hardev Singh Sohal also described how he has worked with an inter-faith police group committee in Liverpool. He worked as an independent monitoring board member for 27 years and still goes to various prisons as a chaplain as well. At the Liverpool Sikh Association gurdwara he stated 'we are in touch with people' and also cited the participation of the community in the remembrance celebrations in the city as just another example of how 'we're, you know, part of the community'.

Hardev also recounted a story related to the early development of the gurdwara in expressing the relationship between the gurdwara and its members, and the wider community. Following an earlier arson attack at an older property, where the Guru Granth Sahibs were destroyed, the gurdwara committee were closely in touch with the local fire and police services; 'they call us sometimes to talk about our religion and respect for our scriptures'. The current property, a previously used Methodist chapel, was later struck by fire. On this occasion, Hardev recollected:

When the smoke came out there were two policemen walking out on the road. They quickly called the fire people. So, the fire people came in straight away went down there [where] we had two Holy Scriptures Guru Granth Sahib. Two copies, they saved those...they knew about our respect for the scripture. They saved the two scriptures and the rest of it [gestured with hands in the air] only walls left, everything was gutted...so we honoured them...and we did a big function and we sort of gave them you know swords and the Sikh way of you know, honouring. And the next day in the Echo the police had two swords crossed like that on the front page saying the Sikhs honour the police [laughter].

Engagement with local services also extends to local councils and planning departments where consultation with gurdwaras and other religious institutions takes into account the changing needs and requirements of gurdwaras in their various localities. In Leicester, for example, the Ramgarhia Gurdwara management committee identified with the council a suitable plot of land for the development of a purpose-built gurdwara, in line with both the committee's wishes for more space and the local plan (more in-depth discussion of this case study follows in chapter six).



### 5.5. 'Seva is very important'

Many of the actions and practices described by interviewees and recounted so far in this chapter were directly related to Sikh values and the teachings of Guru Nanak. Most explicit were references to a duty to perform seva as a Sikh, constituting 'selfless service' or voluntary action. The importance of seva was reiterated by Harinder Singh at Guru Nanak Gurdwara in Leicester; 'It is something that has to be done and must be done by Sikhs themselves...this thing is really, really important'. Charnjit Kaur at the GNNSJ Gurdwara in Birmingham, described how 'voluntary service is a big part of the Sikh faith. So, you have to donate 10% of your time, a minimum of 10% of your time and of your money or your skills, to a good cause'. Thus, the practices of preparing and serving langar, of cleaning dishes, of donating money or supplies, and the performance and administration of social services within or beyond the gurdwara all fall in this requirement. At the Guru Singh Sabha Gurdwara, Southampton, in a discussion of the presence of vacuum cleaners in various areas of the building, Sukhbir Singh stated that 'a lot of people actually come here just to do the cleaning up. Everyone here, even those people you saw downstairs, they're all volunteers, they don't get paid.'



Figure 5.13: Drawers of cleaning materials for performing shoe seva.



At the shoe racks at Guru Tegh Bahadur Gurdwara in Leicester there is also a stack of plastic drawers, containing cloths, and brushes (figure 5.13). On one occasion, I observed an elderly gentleman cleaning the shoes left in the shoe racks by other visitors whilst they were inside the building. Japjeet Kaur remarked that 'you clearly just see them as places you leave your shoes but actually there's a lot of spiritual learning can be had through doing the seva of the shoes'. She described how this cleaning of the shoes is one of a number of ways you can perform seva at the gurdwara:

You would just get a brush or a cloth and you would just start cleaning the shoes of the community of the Sangat that comes, and as you clean them you would apply the dust of the shoes to your forehead. That's a spiritual practice to do...the feet of the Guru and the feet of the spiritual, when you put your forehead into their feet...it helps you in your spiritual journey and lessening your ego.

At GNNSJ Gurdwara some aspects of cleaning and maintenance are done routinely, en-masse. Amrit Singh stated that 'every Sunday at Soho Road at six o'clock, after all the prayers are done...the main hall is cleaned...the people who were doing the prayers clean the things [on the stage] and the people in normal clothes like ours, we get to clean the rest of the prayer hall...the walls, ceiling, the baubles...'. And at Khalsa Jatha British Isles, Rajinder Singh Bhasin, from Amritsar and who used to volunteer at the Golden Temple, discussed seva when recalling his first experiences of the gurdwara:

You know my experiences started as a volunteer serving the people coming from Amritsar. Somehow you know, in my genes I think [laughter], that is through being near the gurdwara, serving the people, service the community, that's what I'm trying to achieve and I feel very happy here after I've served...service for the community, that is what Guru Nanak taught us.

Charnjit Kaur explained how the performance of seva in general life was a responsibility of all Sikhs and that seva does not have to be undertaken at the gurdwara. She did believe, however, that 'because we all use this building we should all put something back into the building' and that seva is undertaken by most members of the community at the GNNSJ Gurdwara:

[The sangat] feel a sense of responsibility, and every single person that's a volunteer – no one has to chase them. You don't have to say "are you coming?" Everyone knows that it's their duty. They pick something to do and they will come whenever they come to do it...it's like a duty that you feel, because of your faith in your religion. We say 'tharam'. Tharam means your way of life. So, because of this faith you have, that's what makes you come in and do it.

She also stated that an important aspect of seva in relation to the building is that all of the renovation and building work was done by volunteers. Certainly, building and maintenance work has relied upon the monetary donations of visitors to the SGSSS Gurdwara in the past, and continues to do so. For example, in describing the development of the new SGSSS Gurdwara, Nav explained 'it was just all hands to the deck kind of thing and people donated generously and we got it built you know. Some people donated hundreds of pounds...and then some people donated a pound. You know for some people a pound is like a million pounds.' This was also the case elsewhere and will be considered more fully in a discussion of the tangible character of gurdwaras in chapter seven.

#### *Chapter summary*

The narratives recounted in this chapter have revealed the way in which Sikh communities perceive gurdwaras, in relation to their role and function for Sikhs and wider society. Often, narratives relied upon the participant's understanding of their faith and on the teachings of the Guru Granth Sahib, to describe how and why visitors experience gurdwaras in the way they do. In almost every case, the gurdwara was perceived as demonstrating Sikh religious values, through the practices of those making use and contributing to them, whether by cooking and cleaning, or the respect shown for the Guru Granth Sahib through the removal of shoes and covering of hair. The various spaces within the gurdwara reflect such values and related practices, and respondents have expectations of the various things they will find in all gurdwaras; the Guru Granth Sahib, langar hall and kitchen, and lobby area, in order to prepare for the prayer hall. Sinks are usually found in lobby areas, the langar hall and outside the prayer hall, and often also behind the Guru Granth Sahib or by the sach khand. Rows of shoe racks, hand dryers, and cleaning materials are further evidence of religious practice at the gurdwara. There are also likely to be sandals and flip flops at various points throughout the building, suggesting the presence of boundaries otherwise not recognisable.

The exterior physical characteristics of gurdwaras were generally not discussed beyond a specific consideration of the development of the gurdwara in question, or, as in the case of Guru Tegh Bahadur Gurdwara, Leicester and GNNSJ Gurdwara, Birmingham, in

demonstration of particular Sikh values such as the recognition of religious equality or performance of seva. Narratives do not point, therefore, to any expected aesthetic design in relation to the perception of places as gurdwaras. They are primarily valued as places which are home to the Guru Granth Sahib, and where daily practice is undertaken according to its teachings. Practices at the gurdwara show respect for the Guru Granth Sahib and service both Sikhs and the wider community.

The following chapters will consider these values in relation to the development of gurdwaras and their physical form. The findings presented in this chapter suggest aesthetic considerations are not particularly prominent beyond a consideration of the suitability of a building as a home for the Guru Granth Sahib. However, the increasing addition of façades or development of large-scale purpose-built gurdwaras, and the presence of carved stone and lotus-shaped domes, do suggest that a disinterest in elaborate materials or forms is too simplistic. The following chapter will consider the development of gurdwaras in a local context, succeeded by a further exploration of the relationship between the conceptual and physical, using national examples, in chapter seven.

## Chapter 6: Narratives of gurdwara development in a multicultural city

This chapter explores the physical and social character of gurdwaras in the city of Leicester through a consideration of the narratives associated with their development. Whilst acknowledging the relevance of previously established typologies, and investigating the physical alterations made to existing properties, the intention of this chapter is to explore nuances in the development of gurdwaras, including the influence of management committees, the diverse nature of Sikhism, local setting and local planning policy. More detailed discussions of national processes of physical development and architectural change will continue in chapter seven. Here, an introduction to processes of migration and the development of early Sikh places of worship in the city precedes a consideration of the ongoing use, adaptation and maintenance of gurdwaras within their local context. The focus here will be on the narratives of those involved with processes of development as well as the views of others who have more recently moved to the city. Such narratives are supplemented with information from related planning applications submitted to the City of Leicester Council. Clearly caste and migratory history have played a role in the development of Leicester gurdwaras, but there are also issues pertaining to individual management committees and their wishes, local planning policy, and the changing provision of social services. Attention is placed primarily on the three earliest and largest gurdwaras in the city; Guru Nanak Gurdwara, Guru Tegh Bahadur Gurdwara, and the Ramgarhia Board Gurdwara. Further attention will also be paid to later developments such as the Namdhari gurdwara, Guru Amar Das Gurdwara and Guru Ravidass Gurdwara. The decision was made not to focus fieldwork on the Sant Nirankari Mandal due to its position on the periphery of Sikhism and lack of Guru Granth Sahib.

### 6.1. Migration and early places of worship

Many of the respondents in Leicester, who were involved in the management of gurdwaras, were first generation migrants, and were born in Indian Punjab or East African states. Conversation during walking interviews, or sat drinking tea, often turned to their migration history and early experiences of Leicester. Gurmel Singh explained how he came to live in Leicester:

I was born in India in Punjab...at that time District Jalandhar...I was a teacher, then we read that there are need in the UK for the labourers and they issue us vouchers for teachers and military servicemen...so I came here in 1963 and since 1963 I'm in Leicester. I came Heathrow to Southall, my villagers were there and I stay there one week. Then I wrote a letter to my uncle brother and he brought me here.

This narrative is a familiar one, of a young man coming to the UK by invitation to work at a time of industrial growth, who already had friends and relatives in Southall and Leicester. Gurmeh made it clear the circumstances of his migration:

The voucher means you can come here for immigration purpose, nobody can say "oh you are not allowed there", the voucher was an invitation to come to this country that was not like that people were smuggling on the lorries and they are coming here, not that way. It was properly invited people...the natives were not doing the night shifts and there were problems, so the Government think that if we bring the foreigners in this country that will help the economy.

Surinderpal Singh, speaking from Guru Tegh Bahadur Gurdwara also came to the UK in 1963:

At that time there was only the males here, there were very few females. I myself came in 1963 as well and at that time there might have been about ten families. Apart from that it was all the men who just came over to better themselves and wanted to go back to India you know, had no inklings of settling down here at all. And then eventually everyone started coming.

Such recollections of the early experiences of Sikhs in Leicester, echo those understood in more general terms and described in chapter two, though they do offer insights into the presence of the Guru Granth Sahib, and of communal Sikh gatherings. Surinderpal recalled that when he moved to the city, in 1963, 'there was only one Guru Granth Sahib here in Leicester at the time, and that was in somebody's house...and he lived just down the road here, Gwendolen Road'. Surinderpal explained that the gentleman and his wife had moved to Leicester from Malaysia and had brought the Guru Granth Sahib with them: 'They had him at their house and they obviously did all the services themselves in the house. Then people got to know about it and started asking if they could go...every Sunday half a dozen lovely people would pop in and his wife would do the cooking, the langar.' Gatherings at the property on Gwendolen Road eventually became too big for it to remain a viable space, and so, as Surinderpal explained, church halls were rented for weekly services:

So then, obviously services were taking place regularly on a Sunday, and then obviously some money started coming in 'cause people wanted to pay respects to Guru Granth

Sahib... And in those days you wouldn't have any proper priests or anything like that. People who knew how to read Guru Granth Sahib. It was quite exciting. I remember reading and one or two others as well.

In 1968, enough funds had been collected for a new building to be purchased. Number 5 New Walk, a former school, was developed for use as the first permanent gurdwara in the city, and opened in 1970. For Gurmeh, his first experience of attending a gurdwara in Leicester was at Guru Nanak Gurdwara, and he described its development:

We used to meet in Charles Street. There was a church near the university road on the corner there, a big church. We used to meet there every week...that's it then slowly, slowly we started gathering and people donated money. We have money then we have a building there in New Walk...that used to be the first. And after that a few years ago, there was fire to the building and then we moved here...it was not purpose built building but it's alright.

Andrew Moore has noted that Guru Tegh Bahadur began operating from 58 Gwendolen Road in 1970, the same year Guru Nanak Gurdwara opened at 5 New Walk, in a former Catholic school (Moore 2008). Accounts above, from respondents regarding early worship in the city, suggest Sikhs were gathering with the Guru Granth Sahib many years earlier, at both the property at Gwendolen Road and at a church hall on Charles Street. It is unclear whether in the late 1960s these were two distinct worship spaces with separate sangats, but both did develop to take the form of Guru Tegh Bahadur and Guru Nanak gurdwaras. It is also clear that the property at New Walk is viewed to have served the Sikh community in Leicester as a whole, at least at one time, and is consistently referred to as the first gurdwara present in the city.

This is also understood to be the case with those who moved to Leicester more recently. Harinder Singh lived in London and Buckinghamshire before moving back to India to be with his aging parents. After six years, he returned to the UK, and moved to Leicester following an invitation from a friend:

When I came here I looked around, I liked the city quite a bit and it had a multicultural feel about it as well. So I thought, OK let's restart over here, because obviously London had become too expensive to stay ....

Japjeet Kaur, a yoga teacher from Belgium, also lived elsewhere in the UK before moving to the city:

I went to Coventry first and I hated it [laughter] and that's how I ended up in Leicester, it was the next option...I thought about moving to London, but it was one, way too expensive and there were so many yoga teachers. And I spoke to a couple of people who

I knew in the Midlands who said we don't have anybody up here so could you maybe move here and start teaching some classes. So like, OK, ended up in Coventry, stayed there for six months, absolutely hated the place and then somebody suggested Leicester so OK let's try Leicester. I've been here now three years and I quite like it.

For both Japjeet and Harinder, although they were not in the city at the time of the early development of gurdwaras, they both acknowledge that Guru Nanak Gurdwara was the first. Japjeet stated that 'I know the first temple here in Leicester was in New Walk yeah, exactly then this one was built, well occupied as a gurdwara sahib'. Harinder explained that:

It [Guru Nanak Gurdwara] was the very first gurdwara, so I believe this was a building which was used for some warehouse as well as office usage. And then the gurdwara, the committee, that was there at that time they got together and pulled in the resources from the community to buy this gurdwara. So since then it's been making steady progress.

In Leicester, as has been articulated in other research regarding the development of gurdwaras, groups with competing interests regarding the appropriate management of the gurdwara began to separate and establish other gurdwaras, where they could have more control over the nature of its political, religious and social function. Surinderpal recalled this early split between two such groups in Leicester, alongside the political situation in Punjab in the mid-1980s, which have shaped the development of gurdwaras in the city:

I think it was about two or three years after [opening at 5 New Walk] they had a bit of an in-fight, typical I suppose of an eclectic group of people who are not paid but doing what we call the seva, and they had a bit of a disagreement of what they need to do and how they need to do it. And then there was a breakaway group...I'd say it was about 1969 and there onwards it got developed. But then in 1988 because of the 1984 tragedy in Punjab it stirred up a lot of religious feeling within the country, to be more sort of aware and to be within the gurdwara themselves...and this building came up for sale in 1988...so it's been a long process since 1963.

Narratives point to conflict regarding the management of Guru Nanak Gurdwara which lead to the opening of Guru Tegh Bahadur, which moved to 23 East Park Road, a former sawmill, in 1976. In 1989 the gurdwara opened at 106 East Park Road, a former shoe warehouse (figure 6.1). The property at 23 East Park Road reverted back to industrial use and was later demolished (Moore 2008). In the same year, Guru Nanak Gurdwara



Figure 6.1: Guru Tegh Bahadur Gurdwara on East Park Road, Leicester; formerly a shoe factory and warehouse.



moved to a former bottling plant and warehouse at Holy Bones (figure 6.2). Both continue to function from these buildings at the time of writing.

Alongside these developments was also the breaking away of a group of Ramgarhia Sikhs in the city, who in 1972 opened the Ramgarhia Board Gurdwara in a former warehouse at 51 Meynell Road, not far from East Park Road (figure 6.3). Inderjeet Panesar, the current president of the gurdwara recalled his experiences of moving to Leicester:

I was born in Nairobi, Kenya. I came over to the UK in 1973 as a young 20 year old...I had no choice really. We were British subjects and when all the trouble in Uganda happened in 71 and Idi Amin chucked all the Asians out, although we were in Kenya there was all that insecurity at the time you know. So my family then sent me over, I was the first one to come and then a year later my family joined me, my two brothers and sister, mum and dad.

Inderjeet's paternal grandfather had worked for the British Army in Kenya, but he stated that a lot of early settlers worked on the railways there as craftsmen who had come from Punjab or Gujarat. In describing his early experiences of Leicester, Inderjeet recalled:

I think because my education was very much the same as what was being delivered here and we'd read so much about England as part of our education. You know like the history was based on the Tudors or the Victorians and all the literature was Charles Dickens ...I could speak the language you know...I guess I was one of the lucky ones who didn't experience any great problems. You know you hear about discrimination and you hear about being picked on and all that. And generally speaking you'll find a lot of the Asians, or the majority of Asians, who come from Africa they tend to integrate much quicker with the host community and all.

This perception of East African Asians becoming more integrated than others in the 60s and 70s is widely acknowledged, as Sato stated 'those who came to Britain as political refugees/asylum seekers via East Africa in the late 1960s and early 1970s, are economically more prosperous than those who came directly from India, and are more prominent in public life' (Sato 2012, 2). The ongoing explicit reference to Ramgarhianness as evident in the naming of Ramgarhia gurdwaras was explained by Inderjeet. He believed that Guru Nanak Gurdwara was actually started by people from Africa, before being overtaken by other communities, and thus the African Sikh community broke away to start another. He explained that one reason for the explicit naming of the gurdwara was political:



Figure 6.2 (above): Guru Nanak Gurdwara at Holy Bones in Leicester; formerly a manufacturing plant and warehouse. Figure 6.3 (below): The Ramgarhia Board Gurdwara on Meynell Road, Leicester.

There was an attempt back in the mid-1980s, you know when the Golden Temple was attacked, there was an attempt to take over all the gurdwaras in England by this extremist group of people. And in order to protect ourselves...we formed ourselves into the Ramgarhia Board, hence the structure. You've got a board of trustees, then the management team, and only the Ramgarhias can be on the trust board so that was our way of protecting it.

There exists then, a national structure for the management of Ramgarhia gurdwaras overseen by the Ramgarhia Council UK, unlike many others which are managed independently. The presence of pro-Khalistan politics (calls for an independent Sikh state) was recognised by Inderjeet within the management committees of other gurdwaras, though these were not identified. He added:

I know it [naming the gurdwara according to caste identity] goes against the principles of Sikhi, you know that there should be no caste or no difference between people, but this was sort of politically done to protect us being taken over. And over the years some of the other gurdwaras in Leicester have realised what was going on and they have now disassociated themselves from the extremists.

Alongside the various challenges with regards to the establishing of and management of these three early gurdwaras, Guru Nanak Gurdwara, Guru Tegh Bahadur Gurdwara and the Ramgharia Gurdwara, they have, since their conception in the 1970s and 1980s, also gone through various phases of physical change. Although each still currently resides in the former industrial properties outlined above, various management committees have submitted planning applications for structural alterations. Whilst some have been approved and undertaken, others have remained proposals which have never been realised. The following section will outline some of these developments.

## 6.2. Reinventing the industrial

Generally, conversation during interviews rarely considered the physical nature of gurdwaras. Often, responses were explicitly prompted, and questions were asked specifically about architectural features (see chapter four). Considerations of the suitability of spaces for the Guru Granth Sahib, and for prayer and langar, were central to discussions of the building itself, alongside community involvement in the works.





Figure 6.4: Ogee arches and ceiling panelling in the langar hall of Guru Nanak Gurdwara.

Guru Nanak Gurdwara in Leicester moved to its current location in 1989. The building was a former bottle manufacturing plant and warehouse and despite having undergone various phases of renovation work, it remains industrial in character. Harinder Singh stated that:

[It] is not purpose built so they had to do the interior adaptations and things like that. But they were stuck with the kind of building it was and within those confines they have created something which is quite decent for people to come.

Japjeet, who had been attending the gurdwara for three years, was not aware of the nature of the early use of the building. In a discussion of the decoration in the langar hall, Japjeet asked about the original purpose of the building (figure 6.4). After stating it had industrial uses, she responded: 'Oh I thought it was a place where they held parties because of this [the decoration]. Oh I didn't know that they did this purposely for the gurdwara Sahib'. Generally, interviews revealed little insight into the processes of adaptation of the building for use as a gurdwara, and the planning history of the site reveals that various internal and external renovations have been conceived throughout its life. For instance, following a change of use application to the City Council in 1988,

the gurdwara applied for permission to erect an entrance sign and external staircase in 1992. Other changes have been undertaken since then, including a first floor extension creating a canopy over the rear car park. Two more considerable building projects have also been conceived throughout its time as a gurdwara. The first was a proposal for a three floor extension to the property. The plans were given conditional approval in 1992 and again in 1997, and in 2004 a further application for the works was withdrawn. An application for a second floor extension with roof details was also first submitted in 1996, and renewed in 2001 (figure 6.5).

The internal addition of services such as a gym and museum have made use of existing spaces. Whilst on numerous visits I did see visitors using the exercise machines, and participating in exercise classes, the museum on the first floor tended to be locked. In 2002, £89,800 was awarded to Guru Nanak Gurdwara for the development of the museum (DCMS 2016b). Although interviewees at the gurdwara did not discuss this money or how it was spent, it has been rumoured there was mismanagement of these funds.

Harinder Singh explained that he guided school groups around the museum, where the paintings of the Gurus and their martyrdom assisted in bringing Sikh history to life for the children. The museum also houses a small collection of coins and swords from the Punjab, and several 3D models of historic Indian gurdwaras.

Japjeet recalled:

I used the gym a couple of times when I moved here cause they had ping pong tables. My housemate and I we came to play ping pong here. Upstairs I think I've only been in the museum I think once cause it wasn't really kept very nice up there...and I'm not sure how much of it is used.

Gurmel described how much of the funding for such services was attained through the city council, but that such sources were increasingly threadbare:

Many years ago, when the council had funds, we have children's school here, we have elderly people day care centre, we have gym...and now I think three years ago we got some grant and bought these five [exercise] machines. City council we got from them, and city council if they have funds then they would try to help you, but now the funds are not available so every, every group is suffering now.

At the Guru Tegh Bahadur, the gurdwara also offers such services, with a dedicated education space, gym and aerobics studio, museum and library (figure 6.6). Surinderpal

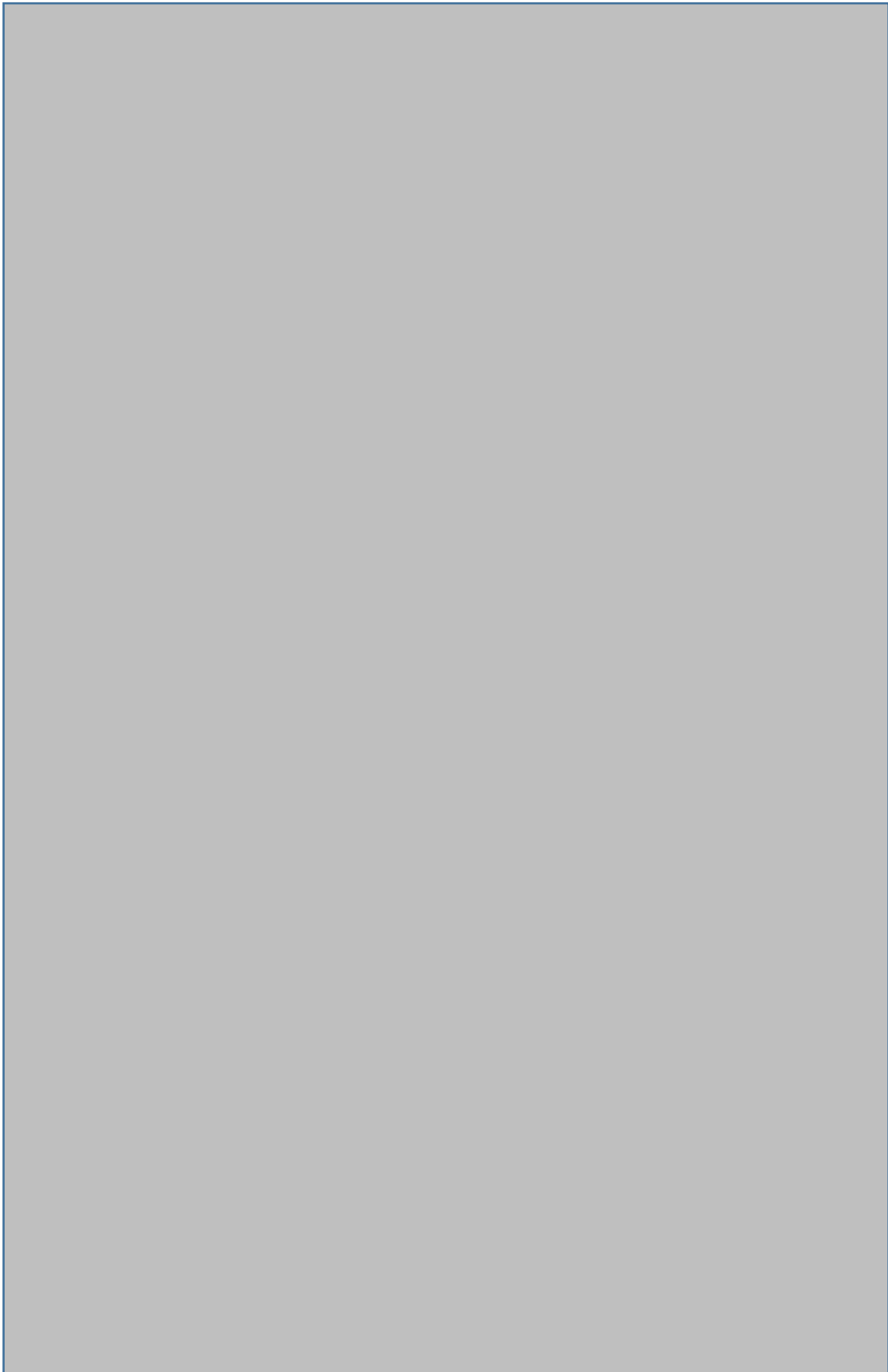


Figure 6.5: Illustration of proposed external changes to Guru Nanak Gurdwara, submitted for approval by Leicester City Council in 1996 and 2001. © GUG Architects 1996

Singh described the initial renovation of the shoe warehouse at 106 East Park Road, in adapting the building for use as Guru Tegh Bahadur Gurdwara:

It was a shoe warehouse, every single floor was full of wooden racks and all the wooden racks had to be taken out. And there must be, not now but at that time there must be quite a lot of houses in Leicester that had fencing and stuff like that with the wood that was actually taken out of this place you know [laughter]....we took a big loan out ...it was a big risk but there's never been a gurdwara that's started and failed ever in the world which we're quite proud of. Where there is a project to build a gurdwara or if it's conceived it has ended well and taken through to be.

He went on to explain that all of the work was done by volunteers 'they all used to come here and they used to go home totally black cause the building had been...ah I remember those days but it was a fantastic effort, a fantastic, fantastic effort'.

A change of use application from warehouse to place of worship was conditionally approved in January 1989. The planning committee report, dated November 1988, described the surrounding area as one of mixed industrial, retail and residential properties. It documents how use of the property as a warehouse has 'given rise to complaints in the past due to the number of large vehicles visiting the premises' and that the gurdwara's current premises were too small and had no parking facilities (Leicester City Council 1989).



Figure 6.6: The library at Guru Tegh Bahadur Gurdwara, Leicester, which was closed at the time of visit.



The application states the gurdwara would be home to 3-4 priests and a few volunteers would be present to carry out functions such as serving meals. The applicants estimated there would be no more than 'probably a dozen people on the premises at any one time' but in the evenings during services this was likely to rise to around 30, and to 300 for services on a Sunday. Given the property totalled 77,000<sup>2</sup> feet it was no wonder that, as Surinderpal explained, at the time 'it was felt it was far too big for what we was gona do with it'.

28 letters of objection were received on the grounds of an increase of traffic, and a petition against the proposal of 1026 names was submitted to the council. The committee report stated 'members should note that no grounds of objection are specified and the addresses of the objectors cover a wide area of North Evington and Crown Hills, and a significant number from elsewhere in the City and County' (Leicester City Council 1989, 2). A number of conditions given included the requirement for pedestrian access from East Park Road be retained, and the provision of more parking. Given the size of the property it was thought likely that there would be a higher number of attendees than specified by the applicants.



Figure 6.7: Stairs leading to the prayer halls at Guru Tegh Bahadur Gurdwara, Leicester.





Figure 6.8: Guru Tegh Bahadur Gurdwara, with the porch and dome at the rear entrance, completed in 2009.

Initially, work was dedicated to the provision of langar and of creating a suitable home for the Guru Granth Sahib, with much of the rest of the building developed as and when resources allowed. The ground floor is currently dominated by the lobby area, where visitors can remove their shoes; the langar halls and kitchen; and smaller rooms for health and education services, such as the gym and library. Stairs lead directly from the main entrance to the first floor, where the main darbar hall is adjoined by a further two which can be used for other services (figure 6.7). Development work remains ongoing at the gurdwara, whether in the addition of external elements, replacement of windows or complete rewiring of the property. For example, subsequent applications were submitted for the installation of the nishan sahib, boundary wall and rear and side windows in 1992, then front windows in 2000, followed by a two-storey entrance lobby extension at the rear of the gurdwara in 2009 (figure 6.8). This final development was completed in 2009.

When discussing the history of the Sikh community in Leicester, Surinderpal recalled:

I think the community [at Guru Nanak Gurdwara] was more in attachment with New Walk, but then eventually when this building was built and 1984 happened, as well for

convenience sake as people lived in this area as well, but this then became a hub not so much New Walk but this place became a hub, as it is today. And now it's the biggest gurdwara in the East Midlands. England-wise we're probably about the third or fourth biggest and in terms of footing we might be perhaps second after Gravesend or Southall.

The general decrease in attendance at Guru Nanak Gurdwara and increase at Guru Tegh Bahadur Gurdwara was also discussed by Japjeet:

I know that there used to be a lot of Sangat here, it would be so busy here. But over the past years everybody has moved to the Tegh Bahadur Gurdwara. So here we don't have anybody coming here now...apparently this was the busiest one before but it's really petered out. There's hardly anybody now even during the evenings. If you come for six or seven there's hardly anybody here.

Interviews revealed that the primary consideration when adapting a building for use as a gurdwara is on the suitability of the space for the Guru Granth Sahib, and on establishing a provision for the preparation, serving and consumption of langar. Secondary to this, interviewees point to the need to provide wider services for the sangat, and a requirement to remain relevant, purposeful and useful. Generally, exterior works such as the addition of the dome at Guru Tegh Bahadur, do not appear to be an overriding consideration when the gurdwara is first established. Likewise, in the case of Guru Nanak Gurdwara, such exterior works have been a later consideration, and in this case have not always come to fruition.

### 6.3. Continuing Adaptation

Further developments occurred elsewhere in the city from the early 1990s, when several other gurdwaras were established, reflecting the growing diversity of the Sikh population in Leicester. In 1991, the Shri Guru Ravidass Temple opened at the site of a workshop, later becoming the first purpose-built gurdwara in the city (figure 6.9). In 2006, permission was granted for the development of a two-storey temple. Bali Singh described Sri Guru Ravidass and the role of the gurdwara:

He was one of the old caste, so-called 'untouchables' so he worshipped God and he established himself as...spiritual, you know, and this gurdwara belongs to one of them communities...although it's not just his teaching followed here, the Guru Granth Sahib is being followed by all the community.

Like many respondents, despite the fact the gurdwara is explicitly aligned with a particular community, Bali did make it clear it functioned according to the values identified in chapter five:



Figure 6.9: The Shri Guru Ravidass Temple, the first purpose-built gurdwara in Leicester.

The way of worshipping is the same. To go to any temple the teachings are all, they all follow the Guru Granth Sahib. So that's why any gurdwara you go they all the same because they are based on Sri Guru Granth Sahib...Sikh religion is that welcome everybody, you can come to the gurdwara, you can participate in any way you want.

He did, however, note differences in the architectural style of gurdwaras in Leicester and elsewhere in the country, stating:

You look at different gurdwaras that are newly built, they brought their architects from India and maybe the domes and all that, and it looks like, you know, the temple as they are in India. Here, necessity, any building like old factory building, they turn into it and do some modification. But if you build it properly, you probably seen it in Southall, you see in Gravesend, you see in Birmingham, that's how a gurdwara should look...but people compromise.

As a purpose-built gurdwara, Bali noted that decisions regarding the architecture and design were based on the finances which were available to the community at the time. He believed that it was built within their means, and that it has served the community well. And, despite noting that gurdwaras should look a certain way, he also specified that it is what the gurdwara does which is important:

If you don't give proper service to the people, people will not be willing to come. There are a lot of different gurdwaras, they can go anywhere. If you want to bring people every

Sunday or daytime, you have to give proper service to the public, you want to meet their needs.

In 1992, the year after the opening of Guru Ravidass Gurdwara, Guru Amar Das Gurdwara opened in a former Baptist church on Clarendon Park Road (figure 6.10). Baljit Singh explained that arguments related to the style of management of the Ramgarhia Board Gurdwara led to the breaking away of an outgoing committee which subsequently started the gurdwara. He explained that, unlike other gurdwaras where committee elections are held every few years, Guru Amar Das has had the same president since its inception:

This Sikh temple, you know that chap who came here, he was the president and he's like a permanent president. But in certain gurdwaras or Sikh temples they have a proper elections system. Constitutionally they have that every two or four years they're going to have actions. But there are certain Sikh temples where they just have trustees...there is a lot of argument amongst people. So they thought he's going to be a permanent president...so the president himself is the president for the last 22 years.

In this case it appears the style of management at the Ramgarhia Board Gurdwara, with its adoption of trustees, sparked disagreement with some members of the community. Guru Amar Das Gurdwara is not explicitly aligned with a Ramgarhia community therefore operating as a so-called 'mainstream' gurdwara. In a discussion of the physical characteristics of the building, Baljit explained that there had been few alterations made to the building, aside from some painting in blue and orange. He stated that at the time of purchase 'it was just like only walls and you know nothing else at that time because the church was not using it at all' and so it was not necessary to remove any pews or other church furniture. The original structure of the building therefore remains intact, and many original features such as the leaded windows and wooden doors are still in place (figures 6.11 & 6.12).

#### 6.4. Building anew: the Ramgarhia Board Gurdwara

Baljit Singh, who has been involved with the Ramgarhia Gurdwara in the past, also explained that gurdwaras in the city provide and finance all the facilities, like community programs, heating and bills, and that they require proper management to do so. He





Figure 6.10 (above): The main prayer hall on the first floor of Guru Amar Das Gurdwara. Figure 6.11 (below, left): original leaded light windows. Figure 6.12 (below, right): Original interior door with 'Ministers Vestry' signage.

explained that if they find themselves short of such facilities and no longer able to serve the needs of their communities 'and they need another space [then they] add space to another one'. He recalled an attempt made by the Ramgarhia Gurdwara committee in the 1990s to redevelop their gurdwara, but which never came to fruition:

During my time we thought our Sikh temple is much smaller we should go for a bigger one. And then I applied to the council and we were given a land of 3 and a half acres at that time...in 1996 I'm talking about. And there about 80 or 90 applications at that time but I had a very good team at that time and they just put up all the financial plans all the structure plans and everything. And our application came right on the top and they just given us that one.

The application Baljit referred to was instigated and supported by the City Council and involved a development comprising three different faith buildings in one complex, in Hamilton, in the suburbs to the north-east of the city (Leicester City Council 1999a). In 1988 land at Manor Farm had been approved by council planning committees for community use, and by 1990 they had approved the selection of three religious groups for development at the site (ibid). In 1992 Guidelines for development of places of worship were developed and in 1994 the local plan with the allocation of land at Manor Farm for community use was adopted (ibid).

The site comprised 48 acres of land roughly opposite Humberstone Village on land owned by the Council. The site was bordered by the A46-A47 link road to the north-east of the city and wooded on one side. Development at the site was not seen to be detrimental to nearest residents or the environment by the City Council, and proposals were invited from religious groups in Leicester who wished to establish purpose-built premises. An outline planning application for a police station adjacent to the site was approved in 1992 (which has since been built alongside a college).

Within development guidelines produced in 1992, the planning department outlined what they would expect in applications from the religious groups in the city wishing to put forward proposals:

The City Council seeks a very high standard of building design and materials from the start. 'Temporary' buildings of any kind and building materials that are not permanent and durable will be resisted.

(Leicester City Council 1999b, 8)

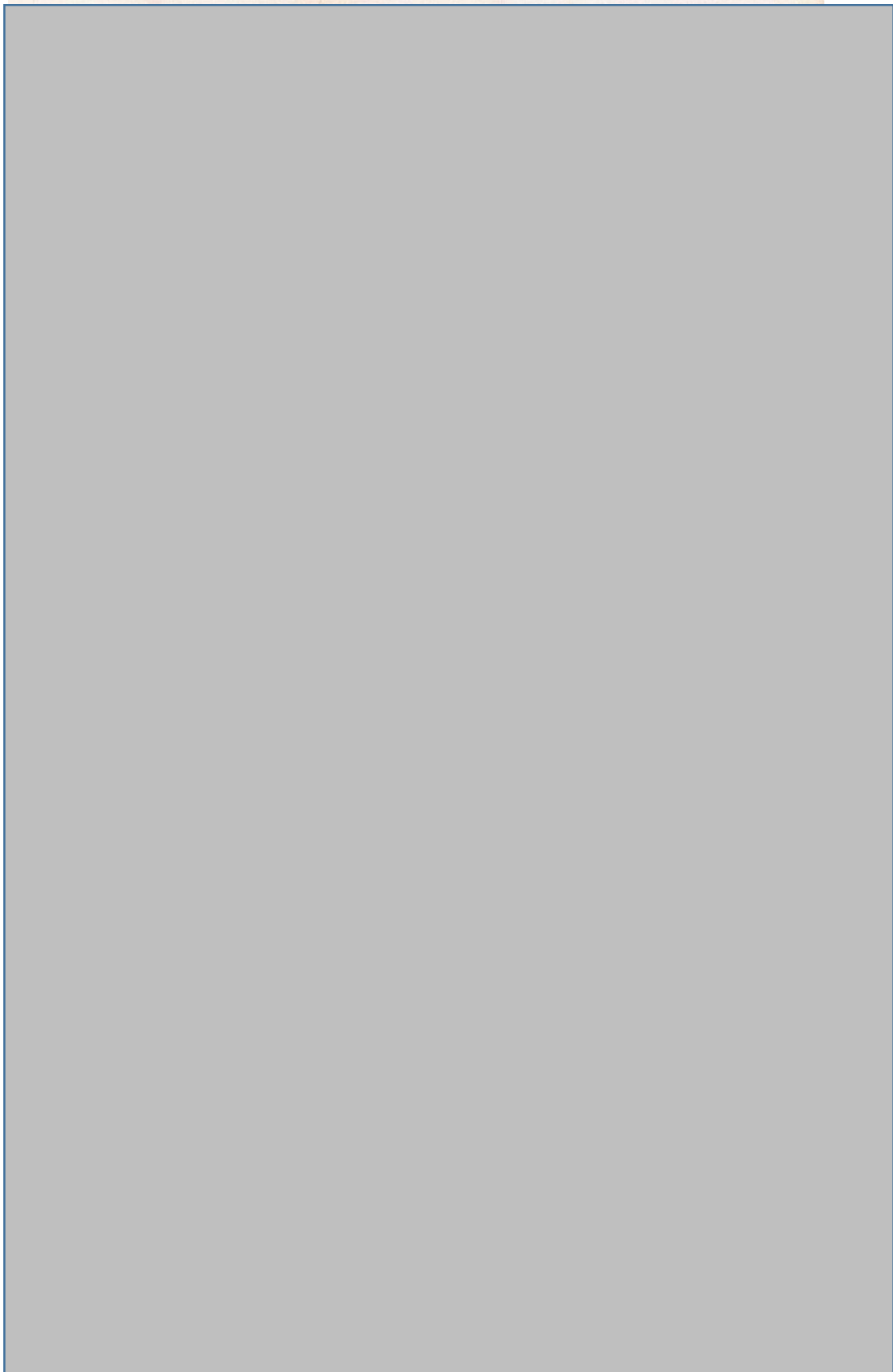


Figure 6.13: A plan detailing the proposed layout for a new Ramgarhia gurdwara, circular in form and surrounded by a water pool. © Agenda 21 Architects.

It also stated that interested groups should carefully consider financing and resources before putting forward a proposal and if they are found to be limited then consideration should be made to construct a smaller, but permanent, building 'which can be enlarged or added to when resources permit' (ibid). The City Council made it clear in the guidelines that they would 'not accept arguments at any stage that the developing group cannot afford anything but the cheapest materials' (ibid).

Furthermore the guidelines made suggestions for the design character of proposed places of worship in the scheme:

The City Council will welcome designs and materials for each building that projects a strong image of a place of worship in the distinctive cultural tradition of the user group. Highly visible features such as towers or spires, any kind of illuminated sign or proposals for the floodlighting of the buildings will be considered carefully in their context.

Here, the Council actively encouraged designs for places of worship which reflected 'distinctive cultural traditions' (ibid). The Ramgarhia Gurdwara was one of three groups accepted. The other two were the Swaminarayan Hindu Mission and Dawoodi Bohra Jamaat Anjuman-E Mosque. The gurdwara application is noted in the Committee Report as distinctive from the other two, in that it comprised of two buildings, the gurdwara, and a community centre for sports and social use to be available to the wider public. The description of the plans are as follows:

The gurdwara is a circular building 28m in diameter and 13m high. It comprises the main area of worship, an entrance hall, WCs and kitchen on the ground floor, and large prayer hall on the first floor. The gurdwara building is largely surrounded by pools and fountains through which is the main pedestrian concourse approach and covered porch.

(Leicester City Council 1999b, 2).

The gurdwara was designed to allow for 700 worshippers, though the application explained that maximum capacity was only likely to be reached during weddings and particular Sikh festivals. It detailed 'normal operation' to represent average usage of 50 people on weekdays and 210 on Sundays (ibid). The design proposal was produced by Agenda 21 Architects, who have since created designs for a number of gurdwaras in the UK (Karamsar, Ilford and a new East London Gurdwara). The nature of the design, in incorporating four entrances and a surrounding pool of water, suggest traditional forms as articulated in the Council's guidelines for development were aspired to (figure 6.13). There were no suggestions for design alterations in the report, aside from a call for the



addition of almost 100 car parking spaces, and the re-orientation of the community centre to minimise the outbreak of noise to future housing areas to the west. The addition of a separate community facility also corresponds with Baljit's accounts of the property at Meynell Road being too small and a desire for other facilities to suit the growing need of the sangat at that time.

Baljit explained that although the council fully supported the applications 'on the other side you know the council was facing a lot of problems and a lot of demonstration there shouldn't be any temple or mosque and this and that'. The joint application received a total of 692 letters of objection and the Committee Report listed the main grounds for objection as follows:

1. No evidence of local demand for a place of worship.
2. Increased traffic.
3. Increased noise and disturbance in a suburban area.
4. Loss of land which could be used for local community facilities.
5. Detrimental impact of local environment.
6. Proposals, by virtue of their size, scale, design and prominent location will dominate the local environment.
7. The council is seeking to concentrate the problems invariably associated with such uses elsewhere in the city, in one area.
8. Concern the three groups won't be able to exist harmoniously and with local population.
9. No consultation with local residents despite universal opposition.

(Leicester City Council 1999b, 9)

Roman Scuplak, Conservative City Councillor for Humberstone and Hamilton, also objected to the proposals. He cited the strength of local opposition, including two petitions submitted to the council in 1994 with over 5500 signatures and 'a further two petitions submitted in 1998 from the mainly Asian residents of West Hamilton' (ibid, 10). He also stated that 'the local Asian community are concerned whether the Hindu, Sikh and Moslem communities can co-exist harmoniously on one site' (ibid).

In response to the opposition, an internal memorandum from Jeevan Dhesi in the planning policy team to Mike Davis, compiler of the report, suggests the grounds for

opposition were unfounded, and that there was some misunderstanding with regards to the intentions of the City Council. Jeevan Dhesi stated:

This is definitely not an attempt at social engineering. It is a legitimate policy-backed initiative to provide for specific needs on agreed principles. Your report should be upbeat about the willingness of the three groups to work together and their cooperation in participation on joint initiatives. This is not the Council forcing a “modern day ghetto”!

(Leicester City Council 1998)

Despite the application receiving conditional approval in 1999 the Ramgarhia Board decided to call off the project, as Baljit explained:

There was a lot of opposition by the public...what I did at that time I just called a general meeting ...to explain, and that was outright rejected [and it was agreed] that we should not go there. In 1998 we told the council that we are just backing off that project.

As an alternative, the Ramgarhia management committee chose to pursue the development of a community centre at a site close to the established gurdwara at Meynell Road. In 1999 their application for change of use of a warehouse at Ulverscroft Road to a place of worship received conditional approval. In 2000 conditional approval was also given for the replacement of the roof and alterations to elevations. Baljit explained that ‘once we backed off that project [at Manor Farm]... financially we were sound, so we bought Ramgarhia Community Centre at Ulverscroft. So that was refurbished and we applied for funding from the lottery funding as well and we were given 100,000 pound so that helped us a lot’. I have not located evidence of an award for £100,000, but £5000 was given by Sport England towards activities at the centre in 2001 (DCMS 2016a).

Inderjeet Panesar, the current president of the gurdwara described the former function of the site:

This used to be the old timber yard and this part of the building was their display area you know. And they used to store the cut wood and all that and what we did was we opened it all up and we put an outer skin, a wall, to make it look really presentable.

And Baljit explained that they added the community centre ‘for the uses of every community not only the Sikh... we don’t discriminate any community if Muslims or Hindus or Christians if they want to hire that one they can hire it’. Despite the development of the community centre, a new application for a purpose-built gurdwara

at the Manor Farm site is again in the design stages. Inderjit stated that the plans were being developed for a number of reasons:

The fact we've got flats built there now we've got parking problems, lack of space, the building's falling apart. It doesn't matter how much money we spend on the roof, you know, it's always leaking. So as the community's growing the numbers from 1972 are I think we had a membership of only about 300 and now we've got over 1000 people, so we can't accommodate everyone.

He also mentioned that for bigger functions like weddings, people were choosing to go elsewhere, where the facilities can accommodate hundreds of guests. One of these gurdwaras is the Gur Parkash Panth Gurdwara on Ashford Road, which opened in 2005 in a former TA office building (figure 6.14). Adjacent to this gurdwara building is a large hall, developed specifically to accommodate weddings. Elsewhere in the city at Gypsy Lane, the Gurudwara Shri Guru Dashmesh Sahib opened in a former hotel, and was extended in 2010 (figure 6.16).



Figure 6.14: Gur Parkash Panth Gurdwara on Ashford Road, Leicester.



Figure 6.15 (above): Gurudwara Shri Guru Dashmesh Sahib on Gypsy Lane, Leicester. Figure 6.16 (below): Sri Sat Guru Ram Singh Ji Sahai (Namdhari Gurdwara), Linden Street, Leicester.





Figure 6.17 (above): the prayer hall at the Namdhari Gurdwara, Leicester. Figure 6.18 (below): Holes in the ceiling panels at the Namdhari Gurdwara, corresponding to those on a memorial in Mayerkolta, India.

On a smaller scale was the establishing of the Namdhari Gurdwara on Linden Street in 2007, which got a more permanent home following operating from a residential property in earlier years (figure 6.16). Now established above a working factory the gurdwara comprises a prayer hall, langar hall, shoe room and kitchen and welcomes visitors on Saturdays and Thursday evenings. Rather than sitting before the Guru Granth Sahib, visitors to the Namdhari Gurdwara sit before a plain, rolled out cloth demarcating where the Guru (as succeeded from Guru Gobind Singh) would be seated (figure 6.17). Whilst the cloth is unrolled, visitors show the same level of respect as in other gurdwaras, by covering their hair, removing their shoes and remaining seated on the floor. There is a small sach khand where there is a Guru Granth Sahib, which Sidak Singh stated is brought out when needed for certain prayers, or at the request of families who book the hall.

Specific practices related to Namdhari Sikhism are evident in the characteristics of the building. In the centre of the prayer hall a trap door can be raised to reveal a small fire pit, alongside a retractable ventilation flume from the ceiling, specifically referencing the traditional movements around fire during wedding ceremonies (elsewhere this is often considered as a Hindu practice and rotation instead takes place around the Guru Granth Sahib). Across the roof of both the langar and prayer halls there are ceiling panels with various sized circular holes, each revealing the skylights beneath (figure 6.18). Sidak Singh explained to me the significance of the whole gurdwara as acting as a memorial for the martyrdom of 66 Namdhari Sikhs in 1872 for protesting against the British. At the site of the killings in Mayerkolta, India, stands a sculpture with 66 circular holes, demarcating each life that was lost, and their age according to the circumference of each circle. The ceiling panels of the gurdwara here in Leicester replicate those holes.

### 6.5. Future architectures

At most gurdwaras in Leicester, there remain plans for the development of social services or for alterations to the buildings. At Guru Nanak Gurdwara, for example, Gurmel Singh described recent projects, and his future aspirations for the museum:

Every year or every two or three years we do some different project. Last two years we bought a place...there was [a] nice building, we bring it down and that is for parking place, about 30 to 35 cars now...now they have given me the duty, we applied for a grant to

update this museum...so we want it more attractive, more nice lights, more paintings. This is the thing.

Harinder Singh also discussed the importance of the museum at Guru Nanak Gurdwara for reflecting British-Sikh history, and the increasing requirements of gurdwaras nationally to provide such educational resources:

Now gurdwaras have realised they must portray Sikhism as well as Sikh history. Especially to the people in Britain because we have such a close association with the British during the first and second world wars and fighting all over Europe as well as in Asia...it's very important to have gurdwaras which reflect the Sikh heritage and the close cooperation between Britain as well as India.

Further consideration was also given as to how to attract younger Sikhs to gurdwaras, and to promote enthusiasm for getting involved with their management. In a discussion of the new plans for the Ramgarhia Gurdwara, Baljit stated that:

In all the Sikh temples all over England, the Sikhs never pay any respect for I would say our youngsters. They never provided for the youngsters...the youngsters don't go to the Sikh temples. Same as like Christians you know most of the Christian churches are mostly empty. But on top of it the Church of England itself is a very big institution which is still providing all the facilities, but in Sikhism that's not there. So all the Sikh temples they got their own budgets their own income but they're limited in so many aspects.

The self-sufficient nature of Sikh gurdwaras was evident in discussions regarding the voluntary contribution of the sangats, in both monetary terms and in their time and effort. Clearly, the Council had been able to aid with the financing of social services, particularly those related to sports and exercise, though several respondents did point to the fact that this money was no longer available. At the Ramgarhia Board Gurdwara community centre, Inderjeet told me they wished to develop an adjacent warehouse into a sports hall, for five-a-side football and other activities. When I asked why the facility was needed Inderjeet responded:

Well it's because they [the sangat] don't have access to it. And it's getting worse actually Clare because, I had a meeting with the council officers last week from the sports and recreational department and what they were saying was the council this year [2015] will be looking at further cuts to their budget...they said absolutely no chance of that [funding].

Instead, Inderjeet is looking to put in a building plan to Sports England, to help partially fund the development, a suggestion of Leicester City Council. The management committee had also been in touch with the council planning department for several years, in order to find an appropriate site for the development of a new gurdwara. The

site is again at Manor Farm, where the previous application was made in the 1990s.

Inderjeet explained:

It's more towards the outskirts of the city and it's all, it actually fits in with the city mayor's plans to actually get a lot of the city's places of worship out of the city centre because of all the parking issues and stuff like that you know...and it's only a mile away so it doesn't put our congregation out too much.

The design considerations and process of the new development will be paid further consideration in the following chapter, but it is of a contemporary design and development costs are due to total several million pounds (figure 6.19). The project, from the 1990s onwards, appears to have stirred debate within the community regarding the decision to spend millions of pound on a new building. Anonymous stated:

We...have been facing a big problem because if that is a five million project how we going to borrow the money, how we going to return it. That's the biggest problem. And the internal problems we are facing is such as if the community is united then there is the possibility that it could be achievable.

Inderjeet didn't suggest there were internal disputes regarding going ahead with the project, but did add:

I think already there is a huge amount of sentimental attachment to this gurdwara because if you were to speak to people who are now in their 70s or 80s they're the ones who were actively involved in building this place you know, so they've got a lot of attachment. But then there is also this recognition that we just can't carry on as we are you know.



Figure 6.19: Plans for a new Ramgarhia Gurdwara in Leicester, on display at the current Ramgarhia Gurdwara on Meynell Road.



### *Chapter Summary*

The consideration of gurdwaras within the city of Leicester has allowed a more nuanced appreciation of the processes involved in their social, religious and political development. Themes identified in chapter five are present in narratives of gurdwaras in the city, where the role and function of a gurdwara as pivoting around the Guru Granth Sahib and related practices hold true. Whilst understandings of the growth of Sikh places of worship correspond to those already established, with early gatherings taking place in residential and hired spaces prior to the purchase of bigger, pre-existing buildings, the narratives here reflect more complex circumstances than a growth in population and confidence. Disputes regarding styles of management both played a role in the early breaking away of groups to establish new gurdwaras, and continue to exist in relation to the ongoing maintenance and development of social services and structural changes. Religious and socio-political diversity of Sikhs in the city is also clearly reflected in the establishing of gurdwaras along particular caste, sect and religious practice lines, though perhaps not so clearly evident in the physical characteristics of gurdwara buildings themselves.

Local setting and planning policy has influenced both the range of services offered by gurdwaras, and their physical development. In contrast to the values espoused in the earlier chapter, there also appears to exist (at least in the past) forms of financial mismanagement. However, we have seen how the council has actively assisted communities in appropriating suitable spaces for worship, alongside actively promoting the creation of 'traditional' architectural forms. At Guru Nanak Gurdwara, plans for the addition of domes and embellished exterior decoration have been consistently approved, though have not come to fruition, and plans for a square-shaped, domed Ramgarhia Gurdwara were also eventually dropped by the gurdwara community despite continued support from the council. There is an awareness of the position of Leicester gurdwaras within a national understanding of them as places, with references consistently made to gurdwaras in Southall, Gravesend and Birmingham. The specific architectural character of gurdwaras in the city in relation to elsewhere in the country (and the diaspora) is also evident in narratives. Factories and industrial spaces are utilised specifically on account of one underlying reason: it is Leicester.

## Chapter 7: Architectures of adaptive-reuse: the gurdwara and significance

In 2007, the Guru Nanak Gurdwara in Bedford opened its newly built prayer hall. Attached to the existing property, a former working man's club, the development was completed for four million pounds following three years of building work (figure 7.1). The gurdwara is partly constructed from marble and granite imported from west India. A team of 20 craftspeople from India also contributed their skills for over a year and a half to the carving and construction of the stonework. The first anniversary of the new gurdwara was reported in the local press, which quoted the general secretary, Amrik Singh Jamu who exclaimed 'we are incredibly proud of this beautiful and unique Gurdwara – the first built in England in the traditional Sikh style' (Bedford Today, 2008). Amrik also described part of the inspiration for the project stemming from a desire 'to give people in the West and young Sikhs an experience of Sikh cultural heritage ... which would encourage people to visit India and see more' (Bedford Today, 2008).



Figure 7.1: Guru Nanak Gurdwara, Bedford. A former working man's club, to the right, continues to hold the langar hall.

Just over a mile away from Guru Nanak Gurdwara, Guru Gobind Singh Gurdwara opened at former commercial premises in 2004 (figure 7.2). Harbajhan Singh described how the management committee and community broke away from attending Guru Nanak Gurdwara due to a perceived need for a property situated closer to their homes in Kempston. Plans are currently in place for the further redevelopment of the building, complete with internal reconfigurations to allow for the inclusion of granthis accommodation on site, alongside a new façade. At the time of my visit, in September 2015, a wall on the first floor of the gurdwara was adorned with images of purpose-built gurdwaras in the UK, in finding inspiration for the new façade design (figure 7.3). Prior to this time, a planning application had been submitted to Bedford Council, which described the proposal and design concept (figure 7.4). The design and access statement states that ‘the design of the front elevation has been imperative as it needs to follow the form of traditional Sikh Temple Architecture’ (Archi-tekt partnership, 2013). It explains a requirement within Sikh temple architecture for a pattern of three elements, related to Guru Nanak and his two disciples, and to demonstrate, provides an image of the front of the Guru Nanak Darbar Gurdwara which opened in Gravesend in 2010 (ibid). This claim for an existing architecture of Sikh religious significance is at odds with the ways in which the great majority of gurdwaras have hitherto been created, and rather represents an aspiration for the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The ways in which adaptations to buildings involving a more overt Sikh style, have developed, and may have laid the foundations for this assertion is the subject of this chapter.

The re-use of a range of property, from churches to residential sites and factories, alongside little in the way of official architectural requirements (chapter two) suggests the outward architectural character of a gurdwara is not of prime significance. However, the processes involved in the ongoing development of both Bedford gurdwaras highlight the potential emergence of a British Sikh architectural style, where traditional forms, authentic materials and craftsmanship are important, yet concepts are influenced by the recent design history of gurdwaras in the UK. Harbajhan, at Guru Gobind Singh Gurdwara, explained that despite feeling like the wider community were aware of the gurdwara due to the nishan sahib, it was still important that the façade was altered ‘to look like a gurdwara’.

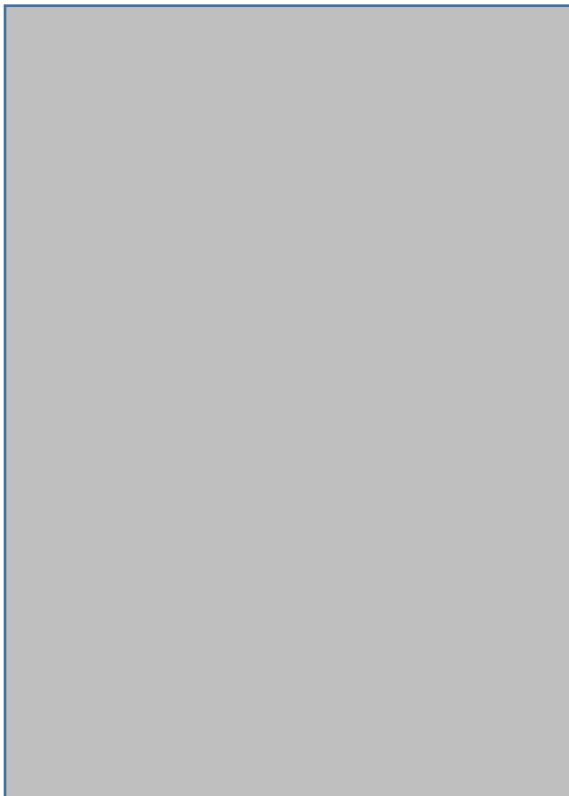


Figure 7.2 (above): Guru Gobind Singh Gurdwara, Bedford. Figure 7.3 (below, right): Images of purpose-built gurdwaras in Britain, pinned to the wall outside of the prayer hall. Figure 7.4 (below, left): Plans for a new façade and rear extension at Guru Gobind Singh Gurdwara, Bedford © archi-tekt partnership.

This chapter considers the negotiation of space when redeveloping a previously used building for use as a gurdwara. The former use and function of a building clearly dictates, to some extent, the demarcation of new spaces created as a result of new religious and social functions. As in Bedford, Sikh communities may also possess ambitious plans for the redevelopment of physical fabric. The first half of the chapter will explore the idea of the gurdwara as a custodian of physical fabric, and of religious and heritage significance. A number of case studies including gurdwaras converted from former churches and current heritage-listed buildings, address compromises made in gurdwara design in cases of ad hoc development and larger-scale renovation. The chapter will also question the relationship between the religious and social character of the gurdwara, and inherited religious, historic and communal values related to the earlier lives of buildings. The second part of the chapter considers the creation of value and significance in the development process of newly-built and previously-used gurdwaras. The role of the architect, and of seva and self-design are the focus here, where efforts are made by the immediate community to establish particular aesthetic and functional ambitions. The chapter will conclude with a brief discussion of the perceived heritage value of gurdwaras as part of the historic built landscape.

### 7.1. Gurdwara as custodian

The re-use of buildings as gurdwaras presents unique challenges for Sikh communities. Without any particular requirements for the architectural character of the gurdwara, attention is primarily given to the treatment of the Guru Granth Sahib, and each building differs in scale, material, and the internal configuration of space. Each building also exists within a specific landscape, and is often perceived in other ways by communities and individuals once associated, or continuing to be connected, with it. This section will consider the transition of buildings from their earlier uses, to their perception as gurdwaras by new Sikh communities. Particular attention is paid here to experiences of the development of religious and heritage-listed gurdwara buildings, as interviews have revealed a strength of feeling and wider stakeholder participation in developments of these types. Of course the gurdwaras do not solely act as custodians of such buildings, and the section will also begin to explore the significance of its current use in the life of the building, to be more closely considered in the succeeding section.

### *Inherited use and value*

Literature suggests the increasing numbers of gurdwaras in the UK is a result of growing Sikh populations in urban centres. Generally, interviews have related the move from residential property into religious, industrial or other sites primarily as a result of a growing sangat. The ease by which a place of worship can be established in buildings with specific use classes was not discussed in any interviews, and not given as an explicit reason for actively choosing a site to purchase and redevelop as a gurdwara. Rather the size and suitability of a space for the respectful treatment of the Guru Granth Sahib was the overriding consideration. For example, numerous respondents referred to a requirement to restrict walking above the Guru Granth Sahib on a higher floor. Thus, at most gurdwaras the prayer hall is found on a first or second floor. Japjeet Kaur, at the Guru Nanak Gurdwara in Leicester remarked that she found it odd that there was a storey above the prayer hall in the converted warehouse. She referred to the fact that there is no storey above the sach khand, which protrudes in an annexe space adjacent to the prayer hall, and stated 'that would be my main concern, for the sach khand. There should not be a storey on top of it.'

In the design of the new Ramgarhia Board Gurdwara in Leicester, this was also taken into account. The proposed building consists of three floors, the ground floor housing the langar hall and the upper floors for two darbar halls. Inderjeet Panesar, the current president of the gurdwara explained:

One of the things that we have to be very mindful of was...that there is nothing above [the Guru Granth Sahib] where people can walk you know either barefooted or whatever, out of respect ... which is why if you look at this design nobody can walk above it you see.

In this case the community were able to design a gurdwara specifically to suit their needs and requirements. In others, respondents have discussed the need for compromise when renovating a previously used building for use as a gurdwara. Ultimately though, as stated in chapter five, it is the presence of the Guru Granth Sahib which makes a place a gurdwara. I asked Baljit at Guru Amar Das Gurdwara in Leicester, originally built as a Baptist church, whether the community there wished to make any further cosmetic alterations to the exterior of the building. Baljit Singh responded 'no I don't think so, I don't think so no. Their main purpose is to come to the Sikh temple and listen to the Guru Granth Sahib. That's all, no need to do any change at all'.



Interviews revealed the restrictions of re-using commercial and industrial property for the development of a gurdwara. Harinder Singh at the Guru Nanak Gurdwara in Leicester, which was originally a manufacturing plant, discussed the compromise made in using the building as a place of worship. He spoke of pillars in the main prayer hall obstructing the view of the Guru Granth Sahib if you were sat in particular areas (figure 7.5):

Most gurdwaras which are not purpose built definitely have pillars because you couldn't possibly have old buildings where there weren't supporting pillars around. So you just have to work around that and accept that, OK there are some restrictions in this which we have to accept.

The undesirable presence of pillars within the darbar hall was also discussed at the Guru Gobind Singh Temple in Bedford. Harbajhan Singh stated that when the building, previously used for office space, was developed, parting walls needed to be removed but supporting pillars were required. He explained that it was not ideal as they would like a big open space like other gurdwaras, but that 'that's what you get when you can't build one'.

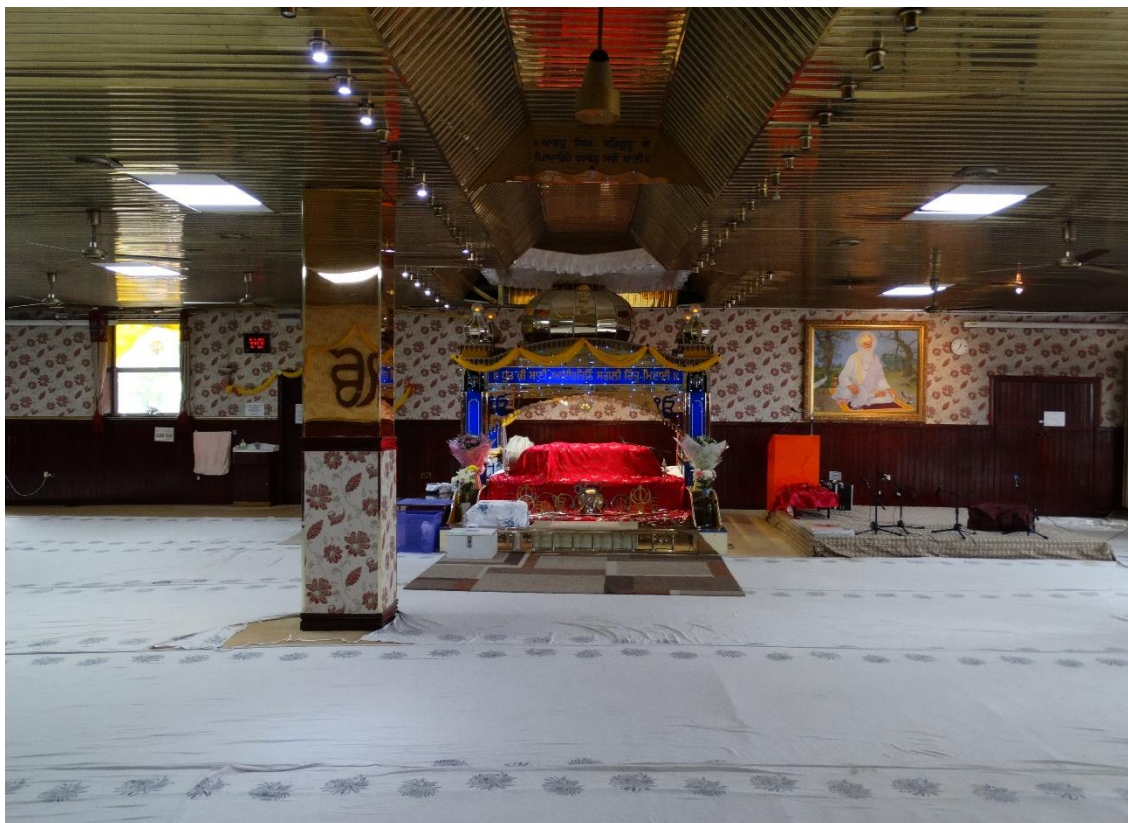


Figure 7.5: The prayer hall at Guru Nanak Gurdwara, Leicester, where pillars are necessary to support the building.

### *Re-using a religious place*

Interviews undertaken at gurdwaras with previous religious uses consistently highlighted a specific appreciation of the earlier function of the building. Hardev Singh Sohal, speaking from the Liverpool Sikh Association gurdwara, which was once a Methodist Chapel, explained:

We are happy with this place because it's a place of worship. I believe this building was opened in 1904 as a Methodist church, and then in 1983 we took it over after about 79 years and kept it as a place of worship. So now it's 2015, that long and it's still a place of worship. Because we believe it doesn't matter what religion you know, you are, we still believe in one God.

Likewise, when I asked Sukhbir Singh at the Singh Sabha Gurdwara in Southampton if the former Anglican church served its purpose as a gurdwara, he stated 'oh yeah I think it has oh yeah, the way I look at it it's always been a place of God so it's good it stayed that way'. Despite the perceived suitability of the former use and the structure of religious buildings for use as a gurdwara, structural alterations in previously used religious property are commonplace. In both the Liverpool Sikh Association Gurdwara and Singh Sabha gurdwara, Southampton, a mezzanine floor has been created splitting the buildings into, primarily, a langar hall on the ground floor, and a darbar hall on the newly created upper floor (figures 7.6 & 7.7). Both are also grade II listed, restricting certain major changes to the building, as discussed in more detail in the following sections.

The Singh Sabha gurdwara in Southampton was bought from the Diocese of Winchester by the Sikh community in 1983, and opened as a gurdwara in 1990 (figure 7.8). This Sikh community had previously worshipped at a residential property nearby, since sold to another Sikh community and now used as the Ravidass gurdwara. The building, formerly St Luke's Church, is grade II listed. The listing description states it was built in the 1850s, with later work completed in 1860 and 1875, and notes it was listed for its group value, as part of a group of neighbouring buildings (mostly residential) deemed of special interest. In this case, it is not specified in the listing description which other buildings make up the group value, or in what way they have special interest, nor is there any mention of its use as a gurdwara.





Figure 7.6 (above): the newly created first floor at the Liverpool Sikh Association Gurdwara. Figure 7.7 (below): The Guru Singh Sabha Gurdwara, Southampton, where the original church windows are now split between the ground and first floors.

At the time of sale, the diocese made decisions regarding the items of Christian symbolism within the church, which needed to be removed before another religious group could use the space for religious worship. Covenants of the sale list the items which were to be removed on condition of sale, and include the font, stained glass windows, and a memorial cross from the church yard. Sukhbir described this process, and the conditions placed on the gurdwara:

We had meetings on what we could do and what we couldn't do. There were the windows, [they] were originally the stained glass windows which the Church of England actually removed before they sold the property, so we had no choice but to change the windows. There used to be two graves in what is now the car park, they were moved as well.

In 1983 permission was granted for the replacement of the windows with plain leaded lights. This application was made by the Diocese of Winchester, who made clear that work would not be undertaken until the exchange of contracts had taken place, but did not specify if they would fund the works or the new owners. At some point afterwards the windows were replaced with double-glazed PVC, for which Sukhbir explained they were given verbal permission from the council:

Although we had verbal permission to change them there was nothing written down and the council a few years ago picked up on that, simply because we wanted planning permission for a lift and they picked up on the windows as well. Even though we proved that they said yes verbally, what the conditions now are [is] if we change the windows they have to go back to the old stained glass windows, not to stained glass but with the leads on...which will be very expensive. So I would have said if the Church of England wanted to take those windows then they should have replaced [them] for us being a listed building.

The stained-glass windows of St Luke's were judged of value by the Diocese of Winchester, whilst the council requested plain leaded windows were required to preserve the significance of the building. Evidently, the stained-glass windows were of value to the church community too. Canon Jack Holden wrote to the Southern Evening Echo to express his concern for the windows, which he explained 'were the gifts of the faithful people of St Luke's in memory of loved ones'. He asked 'will they end by decorating some public house as has happened in some cases?' and continued 'I fear the Church is such an untrustworthy guardian many people will hesitate to give memorial gifts in future' (SEE, 20.04.1983). The Diocese of Winchester responded and explained where the windows will be preserved. And later it was reported as 'happy

and appropriate news for those with fond memories of St Luke's Church' that memorial windows depicting General Gordon, an attendee of the church, would be moved to the chapel at Gordon's Boys School near Woking (SEE).

Despite the removal of Christian symbols from the church, the previous function of the building remains highly visible. Covenants in the sale of the church include 'not to demolish or permit to be demolished any building on the said property' and 'not to make or permit any architectural or structural changes in any building...except in accordance with plans to be previously approved in writing by the Commissioners' (1983). The church bell remains, though strictly unused, arches visible on both floors signify the holistic structure of the original interior, and the original heavy wooden doors continue to welcome visitors to the building (figure 7.9).

At the former altar, mosaics were removed and replaced with plaster (figure). The area is now part of a small room dedicated to registering marriages. Sukhbir wasn't exactly sure what was there prior to removal and stated 'it would be interesting to know what was there. If it was a mosaic it must have been something special cause they left everything else here so I don't see why they didn't leave that there, you know?'. The area has now assumed a new significance as the space where newly married couples sign the marriage register and have their photographs taken. Sukhbir referred to the original pillars in the room, where the couples wish to have photographs taken with them in the background (figure 7.10).

Sukhbir was not aware of what happened to any of the interior fixtures of the church but believed that they were special and of value to the community who previously used the building. During my visit to the Singh Sabha Gurdwara, Sukhbir also told a story about an elderly gentleman who had previously attended St Luke's who visited the gurdwara one day. He was welcomed and asked if he would like to be shown upstairs to the darbar hall, but he declined as he found the experience too upsetting. In a letter written to the Southern Evening Echo Miss Marion Jackson stated that:

Few realise the heartbreak of having to witness the deliberate running down of one's spiritual home...we would have continued to work hard and give generously had we been allowed to preserve our wonderful heritage. Church officials have said that it would be tragic if St Luke's were not sold to the Sikhs. Surely a far greater tragedy occurred when it ceased to be used for the purpose for which it was built. (SEE, 18.04.1983)



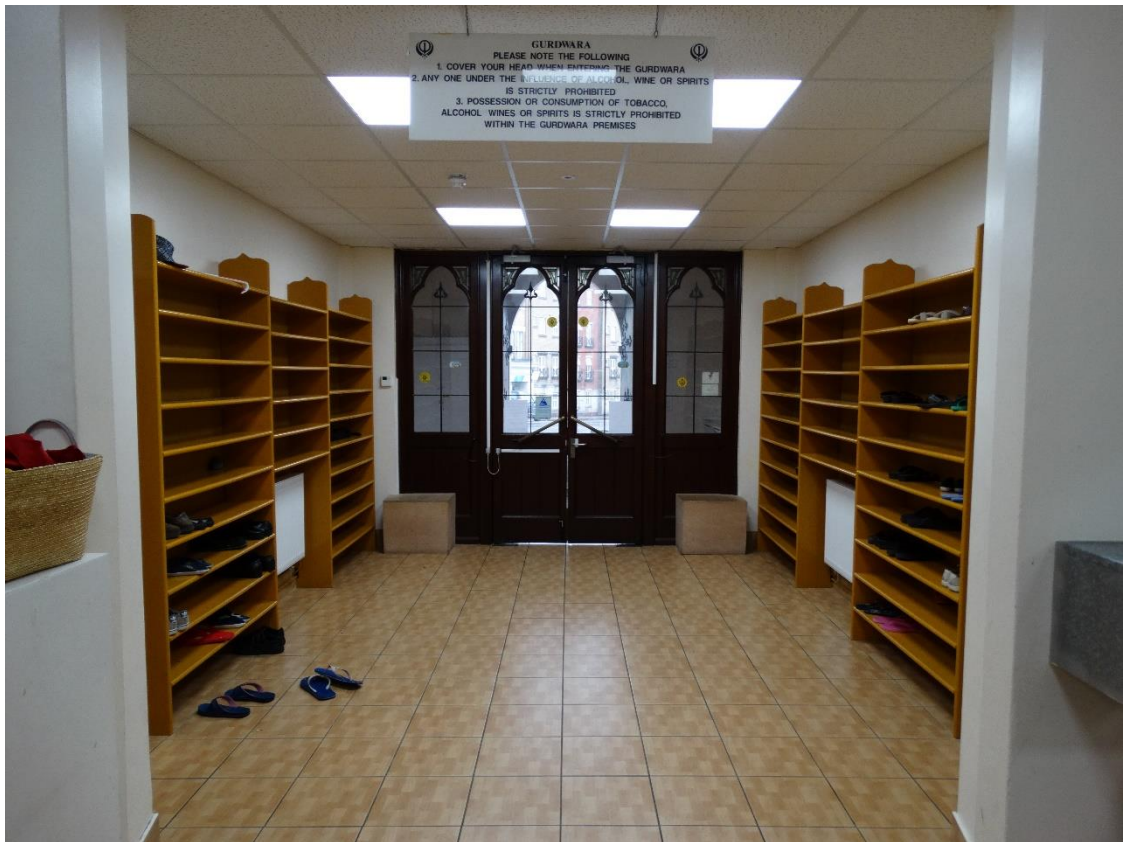


Figure 7.8 (above): Singh Sabha Gurdwara, Southamptn; formerly St Luke's Church. Figure 7.9 (below): the entrance lobby to Singh Sabha Gurdwara, with original wooden doors.





Figure 7.10: The original alter-place at Singh Sabha Gurdwara, Southampton, formerly St Luke's Church. To the left of the image, mosaics have been replaced with plasterwork, and the area has assumed a new significance as the room where newly married couples sign the marriage register.



Such recollections and local media reports point towards a painful separation of the former church-going community and the church building.

*Re-using a heritage place*

The Guru Teg Bahadur Gurdwara in Nottingham opened in a church school in 1983 (figure 7.11). The building is grade II listed and noted for its group value, alongside nearby Trinity Church designed by Sir Henry Isaacs. Originally, the gurdwara functioned from the ground floor, which was split into two forming the langar hall and prayer hall. In the mid-2000s, the management committee contacted Peter Rogan, an architect, to draw up plans for a disabled toilet. He stated ‘that was the first project, they wanted a disabled loo basically...and fair enough, it’s a fine ambition to have. But I sort of visited there and looked at the condition of the building and the water pouring in and the stains everywhere’. He went on to explain that the building required a much larger scheme of work. They worked together to apply for a Heritage Lottery Fund Project Development Grant, and set about replacing the roof and undertaking a series of internal renovations.



Figure 7.11: Guru Teg Bahadur Gurdwara, Nottingham; formerly a church school.

Peter described the hammer beam roof, which had been hidden by a suspended Artex ceiling (figure 7.12), which he believes was installed as part of a 'hasty and cheaply done conversion in the late 70s, done by DIY and goodwill'. He said it had been forgotten about by the gurdwara community who had no idea it was there until Peter surveyed the building. In a discussion of the alterations to the building, Sarjit described the discovery of the beams:

We didn't even know we had that space upstairs...when we went upstairs the beams are original you know... and then we thought we've got this space let's use it. So they brought down the main ceiling and then we just went upstairs and it's just worked out alright for us 'cause we were trying to look for another place a lot bigger cause our sangat is getting really, really big, lots of people come.

Alongside repairs to the roof, and the creation of an upper floor for the prayer hall, windows were replaced, brickwork was conserved and a kitchen extension was created with a glass conservatory roof (figure 7.13). Peter referred to various structural changes to the building since it was built in 1841:

The front part was extended out within five years but they moved the date stone forward so [laughter] you can't tell...then they extended one end to create a bigger classroom then they extended the other way...so it's been extended in every direction but you wouldn't really necessarily know that.

He also discussed the unique requirements of the work:

It was getting a bit chaotic because there were several consents in the end and we had quite a lot of conditions attached to consents about materials and all sorts of things that had to be approved – probably more than there needed to be. I think they [the planning officers] got a bit scared and confused by it all and attached a whole string of consents.

Peter went on to state that the process was a learning experience for everyone involved, 'I think for the local authority as well because they tend not to be involved with places of worship at all. Because gurdwaras are not exempt from listed building consent'. For the management team working on the project, the heritage-listed status also presented challenges. Peter described them as a fantastic team, full of ambition and enthusiasm, but perhaps unaware of the listing and its implications for development. Comparing the building to a church development Peter explained 'as with all these sorts of [things] people move on. You know you get a church warden for two years and they hand over the files and say good luck kind of thing. So the knowledge isn't necessarily passed on or the significance isn't passed on'.





Figure 7.12 (above): The prayer hall with hammer-beam roof at Guru Teg Bahadur Gurdwara, Nottingham. Figure 7.13 (below): A kitchen extension to the ground floor of the gurdwara.



This perceived lack of knowledge was evident on one visit to the gurdwara, where Peter recalled 'I remember my jaw dropping because they'd basically replaced all the front windows with new PVC and rendered part of the front elevation [laughs] without consent'. Apparently a similar, unlisted, building down the road had made the same changes and so the gurdwara community did not anticipate there being any issues if they did the same. Despite the conditions and challenges, the community rallied behind the developments and contributed thousands of pounds to complete the works. The final product is one they are happy with. Sarjit described how proud they were of the building and Narinder exclaimed 'it's amazing the way it's antique...you know people come a long, long way to come and look at our gurdwara'. And when asked if the community wished to make further changes to the exterior character of the building Sarjit responded: 'I don't think so, cause it's beautiful as it is and it's really nice. I mean why would you spoil something that's so nice? And it's original and you don't get that anymore do you?'

## 7.2. Self-design and the role of the architect

With regards to the physical fabric of the gurdwara, respondents positively recounted community involvement in its funding, transformation and ongoing repair, maintenance and development. As already established, the performance of seva is recognised as important in processes of gurdwara development, and narratives often include personal stories of physical effort and contribution of skills, which can be pointed out in the very fabric of the place. This section considers processes of development by communities themselves, alongside the involvement of 'professional' services such as architects and craftspeople. On the one hand there appears to exist some tension in cases where the community has to hand over responsibility for building works, whilst there also exists a sense of accomplishment in projects where the sangat and other stakeholders have worked cooperatively, such as at Guru Tegh Bahadur Gurdwara in Nottingham. Generally, narratives of development of gurdwaras in previously used buildings reveal continuing ad hoc change, as opposed to large scale renovation. Increasingly though, gurdwaras are purpose-built or extended to at least double the size of an existing property. Such cases are considered here, first in relation to the practice of seva and

the creation of interior objects, followed by an examination of 'professional' development.

#### *Seva in gurdwara development*

Interviews consistently cite seva and the contribution of volunteers as integral to the ad hoc development and transformation of gurdwaras. In recalling the work undertaken in Southampton, Sukhbir Singh explained 'it was quite a major project really and everything was done by volunteers who came to work here in the evenings...virtually everything was done by volunteers...the only costs we paid was for the equipment'. He recalled a story of the work done by the community:

Different people did anything they could to help out...the current president and my dad were actually up on the roof once ...and I remember them saying both of them slipped [laughs] and they were very lucky. They still mention it sometimes. So yeah you have mishaps. The problem with our people volunteering is they won't think of safety first, whereas now the youngsters will think safety first, the older generation didn't think that.

The work of volunteers was often related to the ongoing reading of the Guru Granth Sahib during phases of construction work. In the case of Guru Teg Bahadur Gurdwara, Nottingham, Sarjit told me 'we managed to keep it open cause we needed the money. We needed people to come in and give the donations. People still used to come, we opened it on Sundays, we still made the Prashad, we still made langar'. And at the Guru Nanak Nishkam Sewak Jatha, Birmingham, Charnjit Kaur explained 'this gurdwara is quite different. It's open 24 hours a day and it's been open 24 hours a day for forty years ...and the two things which are constant for those 40 years are the reading of the scriptures...and also the serving of langar'. The gurdwara began operating from one property, at number 18 Soho Road, formerly a Polish nightclub. Over time, neighbouring property was bought and gradually demolished in the building of the new gurdwara (figure). Charnjit stated that the 48 hour cycles of reading the Guru Granth Sahib had been unbroken during this development work:

So every 48 hours a new reading of our scriptures starts and that's been going on since that first day that the building was opened, since that first house was opened. So we couldn't demolish the whole ten houses and start fresh, it was a gradual demolition...making sure that the prayers in some way, in some area, were always continuous.



Figure 7.14 (above): The Ramgarhia Gurdwara, Bristol. Figure 7.15 (below): The langar hall of the gurdwara following internal renovations designed by community members.



Figure 7.16: The entrance lobby of Sri Guru Ravidass Temple, Leicester.

She also noted that alongside the continuous reading was that all of the work had been done by volunteers, exclaiming that ‘it was built by volunteers and it’s now run by all volunteers, no one is paid to be here’.

This voluntary contribution of management committees and gurdwara communities allows for the gradual self-design of space to suit the needs of particular communities. In Bristol, at the Ramgarhia gurdwara on Chelsea Road, once a leather-goods workshop and formerly a church, a team of engineers, part of the sangat, designed the internal renovations to the building (figures 7.14 & 7.15). Manmohan Singh navigated around the building and pointed out where supporting pillars had been installed, in broadening the open spaces of the ground floor langar hall and first floor darbar hall. Although in this case the specialist skills of the engineers resulted in a building the community felt suited their needs, elsewhere, respondents referred to ‘mistakes’ in the redesign of internal space. In Southampton, Sukhbir stated ‘they very much made a mistake’ when they designed the first floor to sit at two different levels, and added:

[If] they had thought about [the floor] before this could have been saved as one level across, cause they didn't look at it properly. We've had to put stairs here as well. If everything was the same level it would have been a lot better...and we could have got our windows there a lot bigger as well.

He believed the insertion of the mezzanine level was ill thought out by the committee at the time, and that had it been lower, more light could have entered the first floor darbar hall as more of the original windows would have been visible. At Sri Guru Ravidas Gurdwara in Leicester, Bali Singh also made reference to mistakes in the design, notably in the lobby area where he said there isn't enough room for people to move around and remove their shoes (figure 7.16). He stated:

We have a big problem, there's not enough room for people to come through, take their shoes off. I am trying to alter this, asking the council and trying to get funds. But we made a mistake [back] then. The person who organised that wasn't very educated so he done all the wrong things.

He also highlighted the errors made in the design of the purpose-built Sri Guru Singh Sabha Southall Gurdwara: 'there we still got a parking problem. It's the building is really big, they spent about £30 million but they're still not serving, you know it's not easy to get access to it, there's no parking'. The Ravidass gurdwara, although on a smaller scale to the SGSSS gurdwara, was also purpose-built, and has a number of domes above the entrance to the building. They have recently changed colour, from gold to bronze. Bali explained that 'they were plated because we bought them from India, they didn't last in this weather so we had to...contact a painting company and they're a different colour now cause we couldn't get the gold one'.

#### *Interior Objects*

At the Ravidass Gurdwara in Leicester, the palki sahib was also made in India and transported for installation at the gurdwara. Bali again stated that this was a mistake: 'this is from Amritsar, we made a mistake. They promised us something different. We bought all that from one place, it's not very shiny so probably in the future we'll have to change it'. Despite these ongoing issues, he did believe the gurdwara was built within the means of the community and that it had served them well, and conceded that if interior objects like the palki sahib were to be built in England 'it would cost you a fortune'.





Figure 7.17: The palki sahib with marble surround at Singh Sabha Gurdwara, Southampton.

At the Singh Sabha Gurdwara in Southampton, Sukhbir described the newly designed palki sahib and surrounding area (figure 7.17), which was, in this case, made in the UK:

This is recently redone and the railings have been redone, about two years ago. [We] spent about 40 thousand pounds on that, that's marble at the back and the railings you see are gold plated 24 carat gold, again all done by donations ... the guy who came and did it for us came from Coventry.

Within a gurdwara, the palki sahib is likely to be dedicated more aesthetic consideration than elsewhere, as the place where the Guru Granth Sahib rests throughout the day. Respondents describe the palki sahib as a kind of throne, as Japjeet Kaur explained, for their king of kings and queen of queens, the Guru Granth Sahib. At SGSSS, Nav described the significance of the Palki Sahib and its relation to the domes on the exterior of the building:

What the canopy means is to show that this is a throne. Because going back to the traditions of the Indian subcontinent, was that if you were a king you would be seated under a canopy, sheltering from the heat and the sun and so forth. To show this person's really important for us, there's no-one more important than our scriptures so the scriptures' kept in a glorious way, under the canopy. And the dome itself is a further kind of aura like of that ideology as well, and from the outside you can see that aura.

At the Ramgarhia gurdwara, Leicester, the palki sahib saved the destruction of the Guru Granth Sahib there during a storm in 2014. When lightning struck the gurdwara the wall behind the palki sahib, and the roof above it, collapsed. Inderjeet described how ‘we had to make a new one because the original one that’s been here since 1972 was damaged you see’. Kirpal Sagoo told me how he had gradually decorated the new Palki Sahib:

It was all plastic and it was without anything on the top, just like a structure. And then over a period of time you know I started modifying it...and I made that canopy, fitted that frill, the lighting, you know the Khanda and the front you know. [I] did all that to make it look presentable, to make it look good.

At the Ramgarhia gurdwara in Bristol, a member of the sangat, a mechanical engineer, requested that he could design the palki sahib there. The final construction was made from fibreglass, and designed to suspend effortlessly from the ceiling above the Guru Granth Sahib (figure 7.18).



Figure 7.18: The palki Sahib at the Ramgarhia Gurdwara, Bristol. The canopy is made from fibreglass, designed by a member of the sangat to suspend effortlessly from the ceiling.

The presence of other objects in the gurdwara can be a little more contentious. In November 2013, for example, the Akal Takht issued a Hukumnama stating that no sofas or chairs should be permitted inside the gurdwara, in either the darbar hall or the langar hall (Sri Akal Takhat Sahib 2014). Whilst this is largely adhered to, there is normally, at least, a small provision of chairs made available for the elderly or disabled. Other objects in the gurdwara include cooking equipment and utensils for serving and eating langar, the styles of which do not tend to differ between gurdwaras. Improvements in the kitchen are also continuous, and at the Guru Tegh Bahadur Gurdwara in Nottingham, Sarjit noted that eventually they would like to get another tandoor and a pizza oven, in order to provide for the children and other visitors to the gurdwara. She showed me what they had in the kitchen currently:

We got a chapatti flour machine that we make chapattis in here, food prep sinks here, we got cookers all the way along cause that's for making loads of things at the same time, so we need them...so we got one, two, three, four gas cookers, smaller gas cookers, there, and we use those as well.

The kitchen was redeveloped within a small extension at the gurdwara, as part of the bigger scheme of work. Sarjit added that they were putting signs up that day so that newcomers and the existing sangat could get used to the new space 'cause you don't know do you when you [go] to somebody's kitchen, where do I put the pots? Where am I supposed to put the pots!?'

#### *'Professional' involvement*

The Sri Guru Singh Sabha Southall opened in 2003 for a cost of £17 million. Nav told me how the architect who designed the building 'actually went to India trying to take in ideas of how a gurdwara will, you know, represent the faith and at the same time be up with the times'. The resulting design attracts thousands of visitors, particularly for large events such as weddings and performances by well-known Kirtanias, as well as Government figures and members of the royal family. The building was often referenced in discussions elsewhere in the country, particularly as an example of large-scale purpose-built gurdwaras and what they looked like. Nav explained that 'the only input the sangat had was financial not material labour' and since its opening there has been no further structural change at the gurdwara. Nav described how:



No walls have been knocked down, no extensions been added [laughs] all the things you might expect to find in an Indian house [laughs]. So none of that, there's no real room to be honest, we have maximum square footage, and meterage from border to border has been used...we can't build inside, we can't build out.

Nav continued, 'I personally would make changes, I personally wouldn't have designed it in this way right. So there's a lot of community feel like that you know cause they feel like it was built too big and not fit for purpose'. He cited the lack of classrooms and lack of sinks outside the prayer halls for visitors to wash their hands, as examples of errors in the design. Nav was also unhappy with the positioning of the committee offices on the second floor:

If you manage the committee, you shouldn't be away from the congregation. If you're the president and you're up here and there's some older person who wants to have a word with you, they've got to climb all the way up the stairs just to have a word. So it's impractical.

The President now sits at the other Sri Guru Singh Sabha Gurdwara, formerly industrial premises utilised during the building of the new gurdwara to enable the community to continue worship. Nav stated that the community members too, remain at the temporary premises as opposed to regular attendance at the new gurdwara.

[It's] out of practicality, but honestly the other gurdwara is all ground level, the toilets, the prayer hall, the kitchen...so even during the daytime you get the elderly coming and so forth. And you've got the train station, it's nearer to the shopping areas of Southall, it's more of a hub kind of area. So people tend to pop into the gurdwara there and the elderly tend to prefer it there.

Nav also showed me a first floor room, nicknamed the 'sniper room' due to the floor to ceiling length window offering views across Southall. He said that youngsters enjoyed sitting and singing hymns in the room when it had got dark at night, but it was also available for rest, and has an adjoining shower. He added that the shower wasn't used very much: 'imagine having a shower and coming out, half of Southall [would see], you know? [Laughter] yeah, we don't really use that shower...it's one of the bad designs'.

Nav did speak fondly of the overall aesthetic design of the new gurdwara, and particularly the stained-glass windows (figure 7.19). He described the window behind the palki sahib in the darbar hall as 'a beautiful window that makes the splendour of the scriptures stand out even more' (figure 7.20). He also explained that the gurdwara has an influential political role, particularly as members of the management committee are

also active in the Sikh Council UK and use the committee room to sit with representatives from other gurdwaras to discuss 'Sikh' issues abroad and at home. The gurdwara is also regularly visited by political figures, likely to acknowledge the Sikh contribution to the UK (figure). Zac Goldsmith, for example, visited the gurdwara in March 2016 during his campaign to be elected Mayor of London (Asian Voice 2016). In the langar hall is a plaque stating that the building was opened by Prince Charles and Nav recalled that 'Tony Blair's been here, when he saw this table he said "wow what a table, even we don't have one like this in the cabinet office" [laughter], so there you go'.



Figure 7.19: Sri Guru Singh Sabha Gurdwara, built at a cost of £17 million in Southall, Greater London.



Figure 7.20: The main prayer hall at Sri Guru Singh Sabha Gurdwara, Southall.

In this case, the design of the building was influenced by a management committee which had since moved on, and, at least in Nav's case, had left a building widely admired but not wholly functional for the community it was built to serve. It had also been conceived in such a way as a holistic structure, and the potential for either internal or external change is limited.

In Nottingham, the grade II listed Guru Tegh Bahadur Gurdwara already existed, but was wholly renovated including the addition of a small extension. It was clear the architect worked closely with the management team to redesign the gurdwara according to both their needs, and the requirements of conditions regarding physical changes to the property. Peter explained that he didn't have previous experience of designing gurdwaras and so, along with the gurdwara team, visited several other gurdwaras for inspiration. One such gurdwara was newly built in the Peartree area of Derby, which Peter described as 'the kind of all singing all dancing thing to aspire to'. For him personally, he explained how the process was about 'trying to understand how, cause obviously Sikh worship is quite specific. You have the langar and darbar hall and certain

kind of formats...it's important to understand what's involved and the importance of a langar kitchen'. Through this learning process, Peter described the most important and useful thing he learned:

What was useful was to see the amount of space...I mean we had circulation issues because of a constrained entrance area in particular. And you know, people obviously have to stop and take their shoes off and prepare, you know, before they go into the prayer hall. So there's quite a lot of movement flow. Whereas in churches everybody goes in, sits down for a while and comes out again. People arrive all the time, move around all the time, and they'll sit in the prayer hall for a while and listen to prayers, and then they'll move out.

Once the design was finalised, the team went ahead with lots of enthusiasm for the project. Peter referred to the great team they had at the gurdwara but stated part of his role was 'basically trying to direct the enthusiasm'. He went on to describe how:

There's lots of people who know somebody who can help you know, do something cheap or they can get some windows sorted, they can do a bit of rendering. But you have to sort of say "I'd rather you filled in forms [laughs] and applied for grants" and do things like that.

Obviously, the experience was new to Peter, who, as a conservation architect, specialised in the repair of historic churches and so generally worked on projects where the specific requirements and processes involved in such conservation work were well understood. And although his relationship with the management team remained a good one, he did back away from the project prior to its completion.

In Leicester, the potential enthusiasm of the sangat to contribute to the ongoing design process, and to the materials to be used in the new Ramgarhia gurdwara, was acknowledged during the early design stages. In a meeting between the architect and design team, and the management committee of the Ramgarhia gurdwara, the architect asked if they knew of anyone who wished to provide materials and expertise. Inderjeet explained that the architect working on the project, 'is a Sikh you see so he knows'.

#### *Attachment to gurdwara buildings*

The previous sections have related the value of gurdwara buildings to their communities as a result of religious and social practices intertwined in the development and maintenance of gurdwaras, and ongoing associated symbolic narratives. As explained in chapter two, feelings of pride are dispelled in Sikh religious teachings, and this has been evident in interviews where respondents do not take ownership of gurdwara

buildings, or the physical work which has often been carried out by the community in their development. Clearly, however, although not often explicitly stated, there is a sense of attachment to places where communities have invested heavily. For example, at the Ramgarhia Board Gurdwara in Leicester, where plans are in place for a new purpose-built gurdwara, Inderjeet Panesar explained that when they move they will have to 'dispose' of the current building. It will likely be converted or demolished to make way for further residential developments in the area. Whilst Inderjeet stated that this was necessary in order to help fund the new-build, he did acknowledge that there is 'already a lot of sentimental attachment amongst the older community who helped to set up the place'.

At the Khalsa Jatha British Isles in Shepherd's Bush, Rajinder Singh Bhasin also spoke of the attachment the sangat have to the gurdwara. In this case, he believed feelings of attachment were related to the long history of the gurdwara in Shepherd's Bush:

In this area I know two families live near, within a mile. The rest of our congregation, the people come from distant places. As this being the first gurdwara in the country...people are attached to this one, people on Sundays travel 25, 30 miles as they love the place.

The Khalsa Jatha British Isles opened in 1911 in a terraced property, which later moved to a former Salvation Army hall in the 1960s. Despite the fact the gurdwara is no longer in the original property, and that the sangat has largely moved outside of central London, Rajinder cites the fact it was the first in the country as the reason people continue to travel from large distances to visit it on Sundays. In this case, the gurdwara as a place is highly valued, and although the value is not explicitly related to the building, it is related to the gurdwara as a place, remaining within the same locality.

Rajinder also later suggested that the terraced property at 97 Sinclair Road should be marked with a blue plaque as the first gurdwara in the country. Within the interviews, this is the only instance of a call by an interviewee for the national recognition of gurdwaras specifically as heritage places in Britain. Generally, there was very little discussion of the history of gurdwara development in relation to calls for any official heritage recognition. Rather, a focus on Anglo-Sikh history was prominent at gurdwaras across the country. Whilst many displayed small scale or educational exhibitions on Sikh

or Anglo-Sikh history, two gurdwaras in Leicester also have dedicated museum spaces for education work; Guru Nanak Gurdwara and Guru Tegh Bahadur Gurdwara, though again these are limited to images of the Gurus, models of Indian gurdwaras, or small collections of coins and weaponry. An appreciation and recognition of the history of individual gurdwaras is evident on gurdwara websites, where a space is sometimes dedicated to describing the history of their community and their building.

### *Chapter conclusion*

This chapter has considered the development processes of gurdwaras; both those in buildings with former uses, and those purpose built for use as a gurdwara. Whilst in numerous examples, a 'Sikh' or 'traditional' style of architecture is referenced by interviewees, there is no consensus as to what this is, besides perhaps the presence of domes or stained glass windows. The chapter also demonstrates that there is little consensus on the level of architectural change a building with a former use should undergo, and that progression from a formerly used property to a purpose built development is not necessarily an end goal for most Sikh communities, nor are major aesthetic changes always a concern. As discussed in earlier chapters, the primary requirements of a gurdwara lie in religious and social function, with the focus of the gurdwara being to remain useful, purposeful and relevant. However, what this chapter has demonstrated is that there is value in the physical properties of gurdwaras in Britain, as related to the religious and social functions they both enable and symbolise.

In contrast to the perceived function and value of a gurdwara, easily identified from the data in chapter five, the value of the gurdwara building itself, or of components within it, is highly contextualised. An emphasis on narratives related to development processes and the investment of the community through finances or physical labour are commonplace, though the elements of the buildings these relate to differ on a case by case basis. For example, the GNNSJ Gurdwara was rebuilt holistically, though through a gradual process performed by the community, whilst the palki sahib at the Ramgarhia Gurdwara, Bristol, is valued as a singular object specially designed by a skilled member of the sangat. In other cases there is also significance in the choice of materials used in construction, the location and history of the gurdwara, dimensions of rooms, or in the provenance of an object.

The consideration of both former religious and heritage-listed buildings also reveal how particular former uses are valued, or how their relation to the current use of a building itself is of value. At both Liverpool Sikh Association Gurdwara, once a Methodist church, and at Singh Sabha Gurdwara in Southampton, formerly an Anglican church, respondents spoke positively of the gurdwara as enabling the continuity of the buildings as places of God. At Guru Teg Bahadur Gurdwara in Nottingham, interviewees were instead pleased that they had refurbished an older property, stating that they would not wish to make further aesthetic changes to the existing structure because of its beauty and original features.

What the cases considered in this chapter also reveal is levels of understanding regarding gurdwaras, their use, development processes and value are not necessarily understood by architecture or planning professionals. Likewise, as in the case of Guru Teg Bahadur Gurdwara, Nottingham, nor are the implications of a heritage-listing and requirements regarding structural alterations to such buildings.

What this chapter demonstrates, above all else, is that gurdwaras act as both custodians of formerly used property, often imbuing buildings and locations otherwise redundant, with life and vibrancy, but also as creators of new significance. New transitional boundaries and spaces are created in the re use of a building as a gurdwara, evidenced by rows of sandals left in corridors, or alterations in sound and the movement of people. New materials are introduced and investment through seva intertwines religious and social practice with any development or ongoing maintenance at both formerly used and purpose built property.

The following discussion considers, in more detail, the relationship between the social and religious value of the gurdwara in Britain, and the physical fabric of the gurdwara building itself. It will also look to how the methodology adopted in this study has assisted in this understanding, and its implications for further research and heritage practice in this area.



## Chapter 8: Discussion

The aims of the thesis, as presented in the introductory chapter, have been to relate and analyse the findings of the PhD project. The project has sought to consider the value of gurdwaras within the context of the historic built environment in Britain. More specifically, the research has explored the value of gurdwaras to Sikh communities and others, alongside questioning the relevance of current value-oriented research approaches in identifying heritage significance. Within the thesis, an overview of relevant previous and current research was first presented, alongside a brief exploration of Sikhism and the state of knowledge of gurdwaras in Britain and across the Sikh diaspora. Current approaches to the identification of heritage value and significance were then considered in chapter three, concluding that a more nuanced appreciation of the meaning and value of places for people was necessary, in order to appropriately identify and understand heritage significance in the future management of the built environment.

A consideration of previous research across the social sciences revealed that approaching the understanding of people's relationship with place may be best achieved through a mixed-methods approach, collating data from planning records and personal testimony. Taking scale into account and considering the concept of authenticity with regards to built-design and practice, was also important, particularly in the recognition of shared and competing narratives. Narratives related to people's experience of gurdwaras were recorded through semi-structured interviews, largely undertaken within gurdwaras themselves. The rationale behind this approach was outlined in chapter four, followed by an account of the way in which the fieldwork was undertaken.

The succeeding analysis of data across chapters five to seven has presented the results of the fieldwork undertaken during the PhD project. The aim of this chapter is to discuss these findings, in relation to the wider context of the research presented in chapters two, three and four. In doing so, the value of gurdwaras in Britain will first be addressed, followed by an exploration of the relationship between meaning and physical fabric. The limitations and implications of the research are then outlined. Finally, suggestions for further research are offered prior to the conclusions of the thesis.

### 8.1. The value of the gurdwara

Prior to this research, little was known about gurdwaras in relation to the experiences of Sikhs involved with their development, and ongoing use and management. The research was therefore designed to focus broadly on exploring the value of gurdwaras according to the terms in which they were discussed during interviews. Thus, whilst social, communal, aesthetic and historic values were all considered within the research, their relative importance was dictated by the data itself. As stated in chapter three, despite a call for the recognition of wider social and communal values, the expert voice continues to precede an understanding of what makes places meaningful to those who use them, in considerations of heritage significance. Original use and aesthetic value also continue to be afforded higher levels of importance. Here, listening to the narrative experiences of Sikhs themselves was the starting point in exploring how a gurdwara is perceived, allowing for new conceptions of place and meaning to come to the fore. In this way, the gurdwara as a place could be considered as perceived by those who find it meaningful, as opposed to according to preconceived ideas.

This section will draw together findings from the previous chapters to explore how gurdwaras in Britain are valued. How we can relate meaning to the physical form of the gurdwara is considered, before a more in-depth focus on the materiality of the place and the perception and impact of the earlier use of some gurdwaras on its value for current users.

#### *How are gurdwaras in Britain valued?*

The data overwhelmingly revealed that a gurdwara is defined by the Guru Granth Sahib. It is the presence of the Guru Granth Sahib which for many Sikhs gives the place its meaning, and the acknowledgement of its contents as a physical embodiment of the Guru, that dictates associated religious and social practices. Such everyday practices include the removal of shoes, covering of hair and washing of hands when entering the gurdwara, out of respect for the Guru Granth Sahib. Langar is prepared and served, and eaten together in a statement of social and religious equality, whilst other services are provided to support the immediate and surrounding community.

In chapter five, four other dominant narrative themes were outlined which also highlight how gurdwaras are perceived and valued by Sikh communities in a general sense, and all are related to the presence of the Guru Granth Sahib. There is a recognition that all gurdwaras ultimately do the same thing, practising and symbolising Sikh religious and social values; that everyone is welcome to visit them, regardless of religious belief, gender or social standing, and that everyone will be treated equally; that gurdwaras are part of wider communities, seeking to build relationships with other religious or civic groups; and that the practice of seva is very important, both within and outside of the gurdwara.

Thus, gurdwaras are places largely valued for what they do and what they symbolise. The committees and communities who use and manage them strive for them to be useful, purposeful, relevant, and a place of Sikh values, as demonstrated by the dominant narrative themes listed above, and explored in chapter five. The physical characteristics of the gurdwara were not usually an explicit focus within interviews. The dominant narratives identified, reveal what a gurdwara is and how people behave in the presence of the Guru Granth Sahib, as opposed to how the physical character or aesthetic image of the building's exterior is meaningful. Discussion of physical properties of the building built up from exploring everyday practices within it. Thus, internal physical and conceptual boundaries exist to form the sach khand, for example, or separate the lobby area from the prayer hall or langar hall. Distinctive rooms and associated objects, such as sinks, hand dryers, shoe racks, and kitchen equipment, are present because of the practices which rely on them. In short, the gurdwara exists around the Guru Granth Sahib, and related practices and objects are movable according to its placement.

Suitability of a building for the Guru Granth Sahib and related practices, is, therefore, the primary consideration during the development and relocation of gurdwaras. Questioning during interviews regarding the architectural diversity of gurdwara buildings was frequently dismissed as 'all gurdwaras are the same', suggesting the architectural character of the gurdwara is of little significance. However, although in general terms there is no consensus on what a gurdwara should look like, or the materials which are preferable in its construction, narratives related to its aesthetic

qualities, materiality, process of development, and previous use, are significant and present ways in which the value of a gurdwara as a place of Sikh practice is related to the physical building it inhabits.

*How is the value of gurdwaras related to their physical form?*

Practices which occur at the gurdwara both dictate the design of purpose built gurdwaras and influence the perceived suitability of previously used property. Everyday practice also continues to shape the nature of gurdwara buildings of any kind, from the offerings of flowers and food to the Guru Granth Sahib, to the donation of a new carpet for the redevelopment of the prayer hall. The gurdwara as a physical manifestation is entwined with the principle of seva, consistently described as an important part of everyday life. The everyday cleaning and maintenance of the gurdwara is generally undertaken by members of the community, offering their time and skills to the work as part of their duty as a Sikh. Skilled individuals also dedicate their time to language teaching, IT training or cooking, for example, for which classrooms have been formed or annexed.

In many cases, individuals have performed seva in the refurbishment of previously used buildings. At the Guru Tegh Bahadur Gurdwara in Leicester, narratives of its early development include the removal of thousands of wooden shoe racks by members of the community, in making the former shoe warehouse suitable for the Guru Granth Sahib. At Guru Singh Sabha Gurdwara in Southampton, former members of the management committee performed electrical work, whilst engineers who visit the Ramgarhia Gurdwara in Bristol offered their skills to the internal redesign of the building. Often, development is ongoing, consistently shifting the use of internal space or need for external extension, depending on the needs of the community and the services the committee wish to develop. Of course, community contribution to such development has often been necessary for financial reasons, but the ongoing willingness of communities to continue to contribute labour and skills to development projects highlights the importance of participation in a religious and social sense.

Even in cases where physical work has not been performed by members of the community, their input is clear in the narratives associated with the development of the

gurdwara and buildings it has inhabited. For example, at Sri Guru Ravidass Gurdwara in Leicester, the community donated funds for a purpose-built building, completed in 1992. Committee members responsible for its design are no longer in management positions, and 'mistakes' regarding the size of the lobby area highlight the unique nature of gurdwara design. Even now there is little consensus on what the dimensions or aesthetic characteristics of gurdwaras should be, and the development process continues to be one specifically tailored to individual gurdwara communities, by independent management committees.

The one defining exterior element of a gurdwara, applicable across the country and the diaspora, is the nishan sahib, and respondents in the interviews described it as demarcating the gurdwara in the landscape, compared by one interviewee to a church spire. The nishan sahib, in plotting the gurdwara in the landscape, highlights it as a home to the Guru Granth Sahib, where people are welcome to visit for support, food and shelter if they are in need.

Other elements of gurdwaras have come about through the performance of seva, and continue to demonstrate the values of the gurdwara in the narratives associated with their development. The palki sahib at the Ramgarhia Gurdwara, Bristol is made from fibreglass, designed by a member of the community, whilst the palki sahib at the Ramgarhia Gurdwara, Leicester was bought following damage to the original. It has since been decorated ad hoc by a member of the management committee, making it more suitable as the throne for the Guru Granth Sahib.

At Guru Nanak Nishkam Sewak Jatha Gurdwara in Birmingham, perhaps the most striking physical translation of the values of the gurdwara is the main dome. Within it is a small prayer hall, where the interior has been decorated as a mosaic, created by a Muslim gentleman who wished to offer his skills to the gurdwara. This narrative was told at the gurdwara, and elsewhere in the country, as a demonstration of social and religious equality valued in Sikhism and performed at gurdwaras.

The meaning of a gurdwara, then, is in the words of the Guru Granth Sahib, and the practices of the people who put their perception of those words into action. The translation of these actions into physical form occurs in ad hoc development, the

creation or decoration of individual elements, or in the holistic refurbishment or design of buildings. Whilst the gurdwara as a place has the potential to exist anywhere, providing the Guru Granth Sahib and related practices are present, it is hard to imagine, for example, that the mosaic dome at the Guru Nanak Nishkam Sewak Jatha Gurdwara, Birmingham, is not significant enough to be a permanent and highly valued physical element of the building.

#### *Materials and aesthetic authenticity*

In chapter two, the significance of historic gurdwaras in India by William Glover was explored. He concluded that great pleasure was gained by people in the processes of demolishing older gurdwaras to make way for more spectacular buildings, adorned with elaborate decorative elements and made from expensive marble (Glover 2012). This research certainly reveals that there is value in the processes of development and redevelopment of gurdwaras in Britain too, even on small scales or in individual contributions to particular objects, as discussed above. Generally, narratives did not reveal that specific materials or aesthetic styles were sought during such development processes, though exploring themes related to materials and aesthetic authenticity do reveal their importance, though contextually specific.

At some gurdwaras, there is an emphasis on the quality of materials used in the design of interior objects, particularly if directly related to the Guru Granth Sahib. At the Singh Sabha Gurdwara in Southampton, thousands of pounds have been invested in the gold-plated and marble surround to the palki sahib, where the Guru Granth Sahib is present. At the GNNSJ Gurdwara in Birmingham, the silk tassels on the curtains of the domed prayer hall were pointed out, whilst significance was placed on the colour and quality of paint on the exterior domes at Sri Guru Ravidass Gurdwara in Leicester. Elsewhere, and particularly at larger scale purpose-built gurdwaras, there was an emphasis on the materials used in the construction of the building. Marble had been imported from Spain and Italy in the development of the lobby at Gurdwara SGSS Southall, whilst stone from Gujarat had been imported and crafted in the UK for use in the façade of the Karamsar Gurdwara, Ilford.

At Ilford and at Guru Nanak Gurdwara, Bedford, importance was not only placed on the materials used in the construction of purpose-built gurdwaras, but teams of craftspeople were also employed from India on a temporary basis, to style the stonework on or close to site. Though these cases are disparate, they demonstrate that materials and development processes do have significance in the ongoing use and refurbishment of gurdwaras in Britain. What is also clear is that there is little consensus nationally, regarding the nature of this significance. The nature of physical effort and financial investment, or preference for particular development processes and materials, varies from gurdwara to gurdwara. What may be viewed as authentic at one may be deemed unnecessary at another.

Indeed, often, decisions regarding design style and redevelopment lie with individuals and management committees, and may not reflect the wishes and desires of the gurdwara community as a whole. In many cases, refurbishments have been undertaken under the leadership of teams which no longer have management responsibilities at the gurdwara. At Gurdwara SGSS Southall, for example, little was related about the decision-making process for the design of the new gurdwara. The research reveals that in this case, some members of the community, and more widely in Britain, feel the building is unfit for purpose, due to a lack of parking spaces, the layout of rooms across several floors, and unavailability of washing facilities at certain points in the building, and so they continue to make use of the 'temporary' gurdwara originally intended for use until the new building opened. Elsewhere, at Guru Nanak Gurdwara, Leicester, past planning applications reveal that there were plans for domes and other exterior additions, but that these have never been carried out, despite permission being granted by the council. Interviews did not reveal any further expectation that they would happen. Plans for a new Ramgarhia Gurdwara in Leicester were also abandoned in the late 1990s. This specific case highlights not only the role of management committees at specific points in time, but also of wider neighbourhoods and local authorities. The 'traditional' style of the proposed design was actively encouraged by the council, yet the development of the gurdwara was rejected by nearby residents. Presently, the current management committee, having gone through periods of consultation with gurdwara members, are undertaking the development of a contemporary building.



Aesthetic ambitions have changed over time, and time will tell if those of the council and nearby residents have shifted also.

Whilst the management committee of the Ramgarhia Gurdwara in Leicester are pursuing a style of building which they say is not seeking to emulate a 'traditional' style, elsewhere in Britain there is a desire to build gurdwaras which are felt to relate to a gurdwara style more akin with historic gurdwaras in India, though responses do not identify an explicit or consistent idea of what that tradition is or should be. Within gurdwaras, images of the Golden Temple and scaled down models of historic Indian gurdwaras are often found. In chapter seven, the Guru Nanak Gurdwara, Bedford, was briefly discussed, which the General Secretary claimed was the first built in England in the 'traditional Sikh style' in the hope that younger people could experience Sikh cultural heritage and wish to visit India. Less than a mile away, the Guru Gobind Singh Gurdwara is making plans to redevelop the façade of the former commercial premises so it 'looks more like' a gurdwara, drawing on the designs of purpose-built gurdwaras across Britain, as opposed to directly from Indian examples. These cases reveal an interest in a Sikh architectural style, which is felt to be authentic and rooted in tradition. Style, choice of materials, construction processes, and even nationality and religion of a chosen architect are given varied levels of importance in different cases. They also may reveal that early and large-scale purpose-built gurdwaras, constructed around the turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, may be influencing both the design of further purpose-built buildings, and exterior changes to existing properties.

It is important at this point to state that an eventual move to a purpose-built gurdwara is not necessarily an end goal for gurdwara communities and management committees. Whilst the generalised typology previously developed by Peach and Gale (2003), and others, placing faith buildings in one of three or four categories (largely residential conversions, to redevelopment of larger previously used property, to the development of a purpose-built building) still holds true to a certain extent, development processes are more complex and nuanced than previously documented. Firstly, many communities are happy that their gurdwaras are fit-for-purpose, even if they have a previous use, and often there is little desire for external changes such as the addition of domes or other decoration. Secondly, the influences on style and aesthetic design are

more nuanced than an increase in confidence to exert a more 'traditional' style; it may have more to do with the nature of development processes themselves, or the negotiation of competing opinions within management committees and sangats, than on the willingness of local authorities and gurdwara communities to be bolder in their aesthetic ambitions. Finally, this research suggests that the ongoing capacity for change, extension and adaptation remain important even where gurdwaras have been built or redeveloped in a holistic sense. So-called 'mistakes' in design have only been referred to at purpose-built gurdwaras, where there is also perhaps less potential for change and adaptation than at many formerly used buildings. Again, only time will tell how gurdwara communities respond to these challenges, but it would not be surprising for large-scale, purpose-built, architect-designed gurdwaras to be redeveloped once again, in ensuring they remain useful, relevant and purposeful.

#### *Value and earlier use*

As mentioned above, it is often the case that members of gurdwaras are happy that the gurdwara building is fit-for-purpose, regardless of its former use. The results of the research have revealed that the primary consideration for the reuse of built space as a gurdwara is focused on suitability for the Guru Granth Sahib and related practices. Often this means large, open spaces, highlighted in the use of former places of worship, built for large gatherings of people, and former industrial buildings, with large open spaces for machinery and storage. Interviews at such buildings do reveal an element of compromise is present when converting property for use as a gurdwara. At Guru Nanak Gurdwara in Leicester, for example, the presence of pillars in the prayer hall was noted, though the general feeling was that the community had built something quite decent for people to come and visit. At Guru Gobind Singh Gurdwara in Bedford, pillars also had to be introduced into the prayer hall when the first floor was opened up for prayer.

This sub-section considers the perception of former use on the function of the gurdwara, and the way it is valued as a part of the life of the building. Two specific examples will be briefly discussed, the first is the gurdwara making use of a former place of worship, and the second of a gurdwara developed in a historic property.

At Liverpool and Southampton, former church buildings have been repurposed for use as gurdwaras. Liverpool Sikh Association Gurdwara was once a Methodist chapel, now grade II listed, and the Singh Sabha Gurdwara, Southampton, also grade II listed, was formerly owned by the Church of England. In both cases, respondents expressed satisfaction about the fact that buildings originally intended for religious services continue to be places of God. Furthermore, their use as a gurdwara appears to also symbolise the religious equality felt by many to be a basic tenet of the Sikh faith. Thus, the past function and continuing architectural character of such buildings as Christian places of worship, now used as gurdwaras, are themselves symbols of Sikh religious and social values.

Certain levels of change have been undertaken at both buildings, most notably, the introduction of a first floor for use as the prayer hall, with the langar hall and administrative spaces occurring on the ground floor. With respect to architectural characteristics, little other change has taken place. Though this may be partly due to building restrictions imposed by the heritage listed status and, in the case of the Southampton gurdwara, covenants of sale, there remained little desire to make alterations to the aesthetic character of the buildings. There was also little knowledge of the significance of Christian elements of the buildings, aside from an understanding that they were of value to the previous religious community. The gurdwara then, may be viewed as an extension of such buildings as religious places, and recognised as such by the Sikh communities who value them. Local media reports do however suggest that this sense of feeling and value of place may not be mirrored by former religious communities, or indeed wider local populations.

The historic value of the Singh Sabha Gurdwara, Southampton, although evident in respondents' perceptions of the building, was not understood in terms of an explicit awareness of the complex administrative structure of consent for building works. Whilst retrospective planning permission had been given for the replacement of leaded windows with PVC, following a misunderstanding with the local authority, one respondent asked for clarification regarding how to go about getting permission to undertake some conservation of stonework damaged by weathering. At Guru Teg Bahadur Gurdwara in Nottingham, too, the terms 'English Heritage', 'Heritage Lottery'

and ‘the planners’ were used interchangeably when the process of refurbishment of the grade II listed property was discussed. Here, a former church school, windows had also previously been replaced with PVC, when the community was unaware of the unique permissions which are required to be sought at such a property.

In this case, respondents loved their building, and showed great pleasure in the fact they had brought an older building, along with its original features, back into use. The architect who assisted with the refurbishment project, did however stress that the ‘significance’ of the building hadn’t necessarily been passed down by subsequent management committees, and so knowledge of the listing, and the requirements of listing, if they had been there in the past could easily have been forgotten. Peter Rogan, a specialist in the restoration of historic churches, likened this to processes at churches, where wardens are replaced without knowledge being passed on. He also stated that this lack of knowledge was matched by the local authority, who, being unused to dealing with such cases, imposed a string of consents due to a perceived lack of understanding. However, an understanding of the Guru Teg Bahadur Gurdwara building as historically significant was certainly understood and valued by the sangat. Rather it was specifically the implications of such regarding planning development works and administration requirements which were not known.

#### *Place, people and narrative*

Discussion so far in this chapter, considers how gurdwaras in Britain are valued by first establishing how they are perceived as places by the communities who use, maintain and develop them. In doing so, new conceptions of place and value have come to the fore. For instance, it is possible to understand gurdwaras as places distinct from the individual buildings they inhabit. Much like the conclusions drawn by O’Sullivan and Young regarding religious buildings as translations of faith rather than representations of faith, the sacred elements of gurdwaras (the Guru Granth Sahib and related practices) are movable, with much of the value of the gurdwara movable according to their placement. In a consideration of the relationship between gurdwaras and the physical fabric related to them, this research has also revealed that value is to be found in this relationship, though contextually specific. Social and religious values are entwined in the development practices of buildings or interior objects, in the everyday practices

performed within the gurdwara such as cleaning and cooking, or in the former use and character of a building.

Using narrative and storytelling has allowed for the understanding of Sikh gurdwaras as places, according to the everyday experiences of those who use and manage them. As opposed to place being either entirely removed from the physical fabric, or existing solely within the confines of a building, this research has revealed a complex relationship between place, as it is perceived, and associated physical fabric. This has thus allowed for a wider consideration of heritage value, beyond those values specifically associated with the fixed physical fabric of a building (Townend and Whittaker 2011). Thus whilst narratives primarily point towards a definition of the gurdwara as a place of the Guru Granth Sahib, related social and religious practices do then interact with physical form. A fluid relationship therefore exists between social and religious values, and physical forms of gurdwaras, in some cases meaning social and religious values are themselves tangible, identifiable through narrative.

Across the interview data, individual experiences and expectations of gurdwaras pointed to an established and accepted perception of what they were, and how they functioned. Very rarely were these narratives directly and explicitly dependent on defining physical characteristics of gurdwaras. However, narratives allowed for stories of development to be recounted, for example that it was the creation of the mosaic dome by a Muslim that makes it significant, or the physical effort of the community removing wooden racks from a warehouse that was valued in its creation. At the heart of the narrative approach adopted in this research, was the emphasis placed on people and democratic heritage-making. Conducting interviews whilst walking around gurdwaras revealed the values of religious and social practices at the gurdwara. Often this meant values otherwise latent in practice came to the fore (as suggested by Jones & Leech 2015), challenging general national narratives of the significance of gurdwaras and their buildings. Narrative understandings of gurdwaras also reveal that these practices are part of many people's understandings of Sikhism and their individual identities as Sikhs to perform seva, or show compassion for those of other religious backgrounds.

Such an approach was adopted in response to criticisms of the heritage sector regarding a focus on original built fabric, and calls for non-official heritage narratives which may complement or resist current ways of understanding place and value by heritage professionals (Excell & Rico 2013; Jones 2017; Townend & Whittaker 2011). In the context of this PhD research, the methodological framework was successful, within the limitations of the research as discussed in chapter four. The following section will discuss in what way this research can provide a basis for a national framework for the understanding of the significance of gurdwaras.

## 8.2. Establishing a national framework

As has been established, there is more agreement within the data about what a gurdwara should do, the services it should offer, and the way in which the Guru Granth Sahib should be treated, than the physical character of gurdwaras themselves. Nationally, the significance of gurdwaras is related to shared religious and social practices and expectations of use and function. It is the home to the Guru Granth Sahib, and related religious and social practices such as langar and seva. How such practices are translated into physical form is more context specific, and requires an understanding of the use of individual gurdwaras by members of the sangat and management committees. The development of a local Sikh community and related gurdwaras, alongside the approach of local authorities and residents to the establishing of gurdwaras is of influence. Within this research, a focus on the city of Leicester has revealed that complex historic relationships exist between gurdwaras on a local scale, related to migration histories, religious and cultural diversity, and local vernaculars.

Thus, beyond its significance as the home of the Guru Granth Sahib, a gurdwara may be valued differently by different individuals. For instance, a gurdwara may be valued as a community hub for everyday use, developed ad hoc by the community or in a temporary space; as the first gurdwara of a particular sect or within a given area; or valued because of its aesthetic form, appeal and media presence, or ability to hold special, one-off events. They are not necessarily place-based, but exist in networks dependent on religious management and migration histories, and are often fluid with regard to religious diversity and the development of social services.

Any attempts at drawing up a national framework should focus on understanding this nuance and the multi-layered way in which gurdwaras in Britain are valued. Significance is not necessarily primarily about everyday use, or about aesthetic appeal. Depending on the gurdwara, it could be both, or either. The following sub-section will consider two gurdwaras used as case studies in this research, to highlight how each may be identified as a heritage place.

#### *Gurdwaras as heritage places*

The gurdwaras considered in this sub-section represent two of the largest in the country, but have developed in different ways; the Guru Tegh Bahadur Gurdwara, Leicester is an example of the re-use of a building, which has undergone relatively little aesthetic change; and the Sri Guru Singh Sabha Gurdwara, Southall is an example of a completely purpose-built gurdwara, designed and built holistically.

Guru Tegh Bahadur Gurdwara, in Leicester, has retained the industrial character of its original design and function, and the surrounding industrial landscape. It was bought at a time when the attending community was much smaller, and thus internal spaces have developed gradually, according to the changing needs of the sangat over the past 25 years. Narratives of its development focus on the generosity of another potential buyer, who backed away when hearing it could be redeveloped as a temple, and of the community, who dedicated time and effort to the removal of thousands of wooden shoe racks in establishing the building as suitable for the Guru Granth Sahib. Locally, it is known as the largest in the city, and the East Midlands, and is consistently used by diverse Sikh communities, including individuals who would not consider it to be their neighbourhood gurdwara. It is listed locally, and members of the management committee extend social services beyond the Sikh community, to the wider population of the city. The gurdwara is relevant, useful and purposeful, and narratives of the building's development are valued for their association with Sikh religious and social practices.

By contrast, Sri Guru Singh Sabha Gurdwara in Southall is perhaps an anomaly in the research. It is a building valued for its aesthetic appeal, and as a beacon of the presence of Sikhism nationally. In this way, it is important and attracts thousands of people for

special events and weddings. Day-to-day, however, it may not operate or be valued in the same ways as others, as the local community for which it was built, including management, continue to use a temporary property. There is little capacity for ad hoc or major built changes. Sinks are not present outside of the prayer hall as in other gurdwaras, and the committee room is on the top floor, meaning it is not suited to those wanting to pop in for a chat with management, and remains unused. There is also not enough parking on site, a narrative expressed nationally. The gurdwara, though, is known nationally, and narratives regarding it being built unfit for purpose are often told alongside, and in contradiction to, positive remarks regarding its design and use of materials.

The gurdwara is, therefore, not perceived as being useful, relevant and purposeful in the way expressed in the rest of the data, but it may perhaps be perceived as all of those things but on a national scale, as a media focus and visible demonstration of a British-Sikh presence. In both cases, value was primarily focused on the gurdwara as home to the Guru Granth Sahib and related practices. In Leicester, the actions of a potential buyer and of the community in preparing the building for use reveal the social and religious values entwined with the building. In Southall, the presence of domes situated above areas of the building where the Guru Granth Sahib rests act as further, elaborate, canopies, emphasising the importance and beauty of the words inscribed. Both gurdwaras are important and are highly valued by local and national communities, though scale, and the multi-layered and context-specific way in which they are valued, may present challenges in any consideration of them as heritage places requiring recognition and management.

#### *Implications and recommendations*

Democratic heritage-making processes have already proved difficult to integrate within current policy and statutory remits (see chapter three). Whilst professional understandings of place and value continue to precede those of communities who find them meaningful, calls have been made for a closer relationship between professionals and communities, in considering different interpretations and manifestations of value and significance. This research recognises a need to undertake more qualitative research focused on understanding a place as it is meaningful to those who use and



manage it. An awareness of both scale and cultural diversity is necessary in order to recognise the religious and social beliefs embedded in social and physical structures. Within this research, integral to such understandings is an allowance for the recollection of narrative as related to practice, and the subsequent analysis of shared, individual, and unspoken experiences. This is joined by a recognition of the complexity of development regarding religious management and potential religious affiliations nationally and internationally, as well as the built and social presence of the gurdwara in the local and national landscape.

Current policy programs such as Enriching the List (Historic England 2017b) are certainly relevant in this case, where gurdwaras in listed buildings do not feature in listing descriptions. Emphasising the current value of such properties could both recognise the role of the gurdwara as a custodian and creator of significance, and instigation of this by gurdwara communities may also assist in increasing the knowledge of heritage and planning sectors, and related administrative systems. However, the implications of this research, and related projects focused on broadening official recognitions of heritage places in the UK, should not simply rely on either 'educating' communities about how heritage is conceived, nor on opening up official built heritage registers to 'other' heritages, but rather prompt the understanding of new conceptions of place and value in the first place. For example, this research reveals that pride is not explicit in Sikhism and thus in narratives of gurdwaras, but may be expected in relation to establishing the significance of a place. Value judgements are not related to 'pride' in the building, but functionality, and often a humble or unspoken pleasure in contributing to successful projects, built-design, and services. Listing a gurdwara may, therefore, be fundamentally at odds with the religious and social value of a gurdwara, particularly in relation to the fluid nature of space and need for capacity for change in order to remain useful, relevant, and purposeful.

However, listing may be sought by both heritage-policy and decision-makers, and Sikh communities. It is possible to consider GNNSJ Gurdwara, Birmingham as an example of a gurdwara suitable for listing. Development processes are entwined with seva and the community, and valued for the ongoing reading of the Guru Granth Sahib throughout 40 years of development work. Religious and social values are translated into the

physical fabric of the building as a whole, and especially in the mosaic dome, known to Sikh communities nationally. The gurdwara is successful, operating within the Nishkam Campus valued by the wider Handsworth and Birmingham community (Birmingham Policy Commission 2014). It is also part of an international network of gurdwaras, with partner gurdwaras in India and Kenya, which mirror its architectural character. However, what this research shows is that any decision-making of this kind should be done in consultation with the Sikh community and management. The ongoing significance of the gurdwara may well rely upon a continued capacity for built, religious and social change, and for the involvement of kar sewaks. There should be an awareness too of the nature of management of the gurdwara, and its place within an international network of gurdwaras and spiritual communities.

Generally, gurdwaras are perceived as places of Sikh values, and respondents often referred to their role in teaching Sikh history, and Sikh-British history to both younger generations of Sikhs and the wider British public. Often, related exhibitions and gurdwara tours were focused on religious and social practices at the gurdwara, and their relation to Sikh history and the teachings of the Gurus. Rarely was the subject of the development of gurdwaras in Britain present in this landscape. In one case, that of the Khalsa Jatha British Isles, official recognition of the first building used as a gurdwara in the country (a residential property in Shepherd's Bush) was requested by a respondent in the form of a blue plaque (following the end of a recorded interview). In this case, the gurdwara's unique position as the first in the country, and continued use despite the lack of a local Sikh population is viewed as historically important for the national Sikh population. Elsewhere, there is also an appreciation of the first gurdwaras to be developed in a particular locality, adherence to a particular sect, or as purpose-built or 'traditional' in style. Finally, there is also generally an understanding and appreciation of historic, communal, and religious values of previously used property, though not expressed explicitly in the language of the planning and heritage sectors.

More broadly, it may be agreed that listing and protection of physical fabric is not the most effective or appropriate way in which to recognise the significance of gurdwaras in Britain. Simply fitting gurdwaras into already established policy, which this research has acknowledged does not necessarily capture value, is not ideal. Closer engagement

between heritage professionals and communities who make places meaningful is necessary in order to more appropriately define, recognise and manage heritage value and significance. This may involve, for instance, working more closely with local amenity groups, universities or the Heritage Lottery Fund. Qualitative research as undertaken in this study may present challenges for Historic England, though perhaps working with HLF funded oral history and community-based projects, with elements related to built-heritage, could present a way forward.

#### *Further research*

This PhD project, whilst aiming to allow for the establishing of a national framework related to the recognition of the development and significance of gurdwaras nationally, has done so within limitations. The undertaking of a local study in the city of Leicester revealed the complex relationships between diverse religious and social groups, local authorities and local vernaculars in the development of gurdwaras. Similar studies elsewhere in the country may be helpful in demonstrating the shared and conflicting narratives of development on local scales. Research focused on particular localities, socio-religious groups, and the experience of women and younger Sikhs may also have much to add to the current literature on experiences of gurdwaras in Britain.

Stories of migration and development processes of gurdwaras have also been integral to understanding the value of gurdwaras for individuals and communities in Britain. This research has revealed the importance of capturing these stories and narratives through the recording of personal experiences, where little documentation currently exists. During the course of this research the general trend shows that this is beginning to be acknowledged. The HLF has recently confirmed funding for a migration story project led by GNNSJ Gurdwara, focused on the experiences of those in Birmingham and the Black Country (Nishkam Media Centre 2016). A BBC documentary also aired in December 2016, narrating the experiences of several generations of Sikhs in Smethwick, with some focus on the role and development of local gurdwaras (BBC Four 2016).

Elsewhere, Jasjit Singh has also focused academic research on the religious and social diversity of gurdwaras in Britain, moving the recognised complex typology of gurdwaras beyond a focus on aesthetic development. Within this research comments regarding

Sikh 'extremism' and its presence at gurdwaras was sometimes alluded to, but rarely elaborated on, though does seem to have had some impact on their development. Jasjit Singh has also embarked on a project with CREST (Centre for Research and Evidence on Security Threats) into the state of Sikh radicalisation in the UK, exploring the extent and channels by which Sikhs learn about 'ethno-national' and 'religio-cultural' events and their impact. Further research into the relationship of gurdwaras to others in the diaspora, particularly in relation to management, funding, and conservation work will also be helpful.

## Conclusion

Generally speaking, gurdwaras are perceived by those who use them as places of Sikh religious values. They are open to everyone, and are viewed as places of respite for anyone in need of shelter, food or assistance. The nishan sahib, in demarcating a gurdwara, is a symbol of the presence of these values, indicating one can find refuge there. A gurdwara is not spoken of as a sacred place, limited to those with an understanding of the words inscribed within the Guru Granth Sahib, though it is defined by its presence, and thus the religious and social practices undertaken as a result of what is inscribed in its pages. Interviews with those who regularly visit gurdwaras were full of discussion of the way in which the buildings are used, and the relation of these practices to the stories of Sikhism which founded them.

Within the thesis I have highlighted those practices entwined with the physical fabric of the building;

- The performance of seva is both undertaken in everyday life and within the gurdwara. People contribute money, time, skills and effort to the ongoing functions of the gurdwara, and to help and serve others in statements of humility and equality.
- The processes of development of gurdwaras are also important. Community contributions to both the social and physical building and adaptation of gurdwaras was often also referenced in discussions of seva.
- And just as important as bigger developments are the ongoing reading of the Guru Granth Sahib and other functions during times of physical development and disruption. Everyday activities such as cleaning dishes, hoovering the prayer hall, making chapattis and serving langar are indispensable to the successful operations of the gurdwara.
- The gurdwara also exists to serve the wider geographical community. Learning and teaching programs, alongside charitable missions, demonstrate the desire of gurdwara communities to participate in wider civic and social life. Generally, gurdwaras have future aspirations, either in terms of the physical development of

the property or related activities. The aim of all is to remain relevant, purposeful and useful to the immediate community and wider society.

In this way, I have argued that identified values are often intangible, and evidenced through social and religious practice, and aspiration, through the performance of Sikh values. Crucially, the practices above are social and religious, and are undertaken due to the presence of the Guru Granth Sahib. Within the gurdwara, the shoe room, wash basins, lack of chairs and elaborately decorated palki sahib all point to the respectful treatment of the Guru Granth Sahib, whilst the kitchens with burners, hot plates, sinks and serving places indicate the preparation and communal consumption of food. And the presence of gyms and libraries demonstrate the value placed on physical and mental wellbeing. However, the social and religious practices within the gurdwara, and related to such items as the wash basins and kitchen burners, are only imbued with meaning in the presence of the Guru Granth Sahib. As one interviewee stated, without the Guru Granth Sahib 'it is not a gurdwara, then it is just a community centre'.

In many cases, social and religious values are entwined with the physical being and character of a gurdwara, as revealed through shared and individual narratives. The story of the mosaic dome at GNNSJ gurdwara, for example, designed and made by a Muslim craftsman, is told in demonstration of Sikh values of acceptance and equality between faiths, and stands as a physical translation of such Sikh values. In this case, meaning is attached to both the act itself and the ongoing telling of the act both at the gurdwara and elsewhere in the country. The money, effort and skill in producing the unique fibreglass palki sahib at the Ramgharia gurdwara in Bristol is also evident in its physical form, reflecting the position of the Guru Granth Sahib sitting below as the focal point of the gurdwara. Generally, though, the physical fabric of the gurdwara was not a focus of conversation. Interviewees did not reference the architectural nature of the gurdwara, aside from the community contribution to its physical development, and so more explicit questioning was often required, as discussed in the methodology chapter.

Perceptions of the aesthetic and architectural features of gurdwaras varies hugely. I have argued the physical character of a gurdwara is context specific, influenced by a myriad of different actions and desires. These range from the wishes of individual

management committees, ad hoc changes made through ongoing practice, design aspirations of architects, local planning policy, perceptions of local communities, and nature of local vernaculars. Through the analysis of narratives in interviews with users of gurdwaras, members of management committees and architects, alongside planning data, the nature of the development of gurdwaras, and their emerging physical character was explored.

One conclusion of these enquiries is that the knowledge and understanding of the previous use of gurdwara buildings, and the perception of their value, depended on the type of previous function of the building. The previous use of a gurdwara as a religious building was overwhelmingly viewed in a positive way. Interviewees at the Liverpool Sikh Association (once a Methodist Chapel) and the Singh Sabha Gurdwara, Southampton (formerly St Luke's Anglican Church) were happy the original and intended religious function of the building was ongoing. Even at the former church school, Guru Tegh Bahadur Gurdwara, Nottingham, the perception of it as once a religious place was based on the style of the building and hammerbeam roof. Although it had not been a church, interviewees remarked on a feeling of religious character within the building. This is not just related to the ready-made suitability of such buildings for large gatherings, which may well have been the overriding consideration at the time of purchase, but recognition of spiritual continuation as a place of God. At others, interviewees were usually aware of earlier functions, but the focus of such discussions was often limited to the development process and a greater awareness of change rather than continuity. At Guru Tegh Bahadur Gurdwara in Leicester, for example, an interviewee discussed the immense voluntary effort of the community in removing thousands of wooden racks from the former shoe warehouse. Likewise at GNNSJ, interviewees discussed the original Polish nightclub and neighbouring properties being demolished in the gradual process of gurdwara creation.

Other conclusions can be made from discussions of the ongoing physical development of gurdwaras. At the heritage-listed gurdwaras featured in this study, issues and complications regarding making changes to the property had been experienced. It is clear that Sikh communities and gurdwara managers are savvy in terms of construction and the planning system, but there does appear to be a gap in knowledge and

understanding as far as the conservation of listed property is concerned. These cases demonstrate that the reuse of a heritage building as a gurdwara can present challenges for all stakeholders involved. Where management committees may not understand the necessity for specialist contractors, conservation specialists (architects and Historic England officers, for example) do not necessarily understand what a gurdwara is or how it functions. In all cases, there is work to be done in improving knowledge, understanding and communication. And ideally, this should take place in the early stages of development of such properties. In a planning environment, where need must outweigh harm to significance, and public benefit carries a lot of weight, it is imperative that why something is needed by a community for the way they work and worship is appreciated, even where there may still be debate about how.

In terms of the overall development and position of gurdwaras as cultural, religious and political institutions in Britain, research has revealed certain 'known narratives' extending beyond localities and community groups. The political influence of management committees and disputes over management are viewed as a large contributor to development. As one interviewee remarked 'it is known in our community, one group will fall out and go and open another gurdwara'. Much of this is related to disputes over styles of management, and interviewees often make note of diversity regarding caste and sect in influencing the breaking away of groups to open other gurdwaras. References have also been made to the presence of 'extremism' or those committed to homeland politics and an independent Khalistan. These are issues frequently recounted but rarely elaborated on, and not explicitly clear in the physical character of a gurdwara, nor in the everyday practices taking place within it.

Regardless, religious and political diversity is evident in narratives of development, and certainly understood within Sikh communities. In some cases, such as the Namdhari gurdwara in Leicester, diversity of religious practices is evident and physical traits within the building reflect this. Elsewhere too, the overall architectural scheme of a gurdwara is closely related to the spiritual management and practices of that particular community. The GNNSJ Gurdwara, for example, shares physical traits with the GNNSJ Gurdwara complex in Kenya, with which it is closely aligned.



The architectural style of gurdwaras in Britain is far from uniform. In some cases desires for more perceived 'traditional' schemes have been developed, as in Bedford and at the Karamsar gurdwara in Ilford, and great effort has been invested in ensuring aesthetics, materials and craftsmanship are 'authentic'. Authenticity with regards to choice of materials and development processes is likewise undefined and context-specific. What is considered 'authentic' at one gurdwara may differ entirely to the perceived authenticity of another, and may be more to do with the social and religious practice of which it is a translation, than the material or process of development itself; where one may be valued, in part, because of the community contribution to development work, another may have previously functioned as a church, and is now valued because of its past and ongoing religious function. What is clear is that authenticity is grounded in a community (or individual) perspective, the recognition of which (and in line with the conclusions made by Alivizatou 2012, and discussed in chapter three), depends upon an awareness of cultural diversity. Authenticity is therefore negotiated within local contexts, which may be problematic within existing frameworks aiming to recognise and manage heritage significance through positioning places within local, national and international hierarchies of value and special interest.

In some cases, there is no desire for aesthetic change, to either the façade of a previously used building or for the development of a purpose built one. Major aesthetic change is not necessarily wanted, and a purpose-built gurdwara is certainly not clearly an end desire for gurdwara communities. In other cases, communities may have compromised in the aesthetic character of the gurdwara. An interview with a member of the management committee of the Ravidass gurdwara in Leicester, for example, revealed that access to funds was a limitation, and spoke about the British climate forcing changes to the use of materials originally requested as exterior elements to the building.

Other 'known narratives' recount the development of gurdwaras elsewhere in the country and even diaspora. Interviewees generally made reference to gurdwaras such as the GNNSJ Gurdwara in Birmingham, Southall gurdwara, Gravesend gurdwara, and there was certainly an awareness of Shepherds Bush as the first to open in the country. Southall gurdwara, for example, was referenced as both a structural and aesthetic

beacon of the Sikh community in Britain, but also as reminiscent of its short-sightedness. It could be argued the building is both viewed as a success and used as an example of mistakes made in gurdwara design. Several interviewees also spoke wholly positively of the Dubai gurdwara, both in terms of its design and due to the fact it has been built with the special permissions of the Islamic government. Again, much like the story of the GNNSJ dome, the building of the Dubai gurdwara represents the values of Sikhism and the sharing of one God.

The consideration of the development of gurdwaras at the local scale also demonstrates how the desires of Sikh communities change over time, and this is in flux with local policy and perceptions of local communities. The case study explored here focusing on the city of Leicester reveals drawn out planning activities and aspirations. In some cases, such plans have spanned decades without coming to fruition, and altered and morphed depending on the wishes of the gurdwara community, aspirations of the management committee, local government policy, and perceptions and sensibilities of local residents. The services offered by gurdwaras also continue to shift alongside continued development work, mirroring both the fluid nature of the words inscribed in the Guru Granth Sahib, and the necessity for gurdwaras to remain useful, purposeful and relevant in servicing the Sikh and wider community.

The adoption of a mixed-methods approach, incorporating an understanding of gurdwaras as places through the shared and individual narratives of those who use and manage them, has revealed that value primarily lies in the everyday practices at gurdwaras, which in some cases are translated as physical fabric. Values are not necessarily evident in physical form, nor are they explicitly expressed in discussion with respondents. Undertaking interviews at gurdwaras themselves helped to unlock narratives which assisted in the understanding of the ways in which social and religious practice, and value, is entwined with physical form. Within the discussion, it has also been established that the consideration of gurdwaras as heritage places within current heritage policy and statutory remits may not be suitable or appropriate in the recognition and potential protection of gurdwaras. However, if gurdwaras remain meaningful through narratives of the social and religious values entwined with them, and in remaining useful, relevant, and purposeful, perhaps protection may allow for this

to remain despite pressure for change. Where on the one hand, protecting the built fabric itself may not effectively recognise this value or perception of place, it may be important for the visions and achievements of the Sikh community to be visible in the near and far future within the political climate of the UK.

The research has also revealed that there is an appreciation of historic, communal, social and religious values entwined in both purpose-built gurdwaras and those with previous uses, though this may not be articulated in the language of significance and preservation espoused in the heritage and planning sectors. Implications of this research include the necessity for new understandings of place and value, and the creative consideration of how best to actually recognise significance by heritage professionals and others involved in the study of the built environment. It is also important to acknowledge that even within this research, the narrator of understood value and perception of gurdwaras is not a member of the community who know them best, and the heritage sector will continue to be required to deal with this challenge in developing effective ways for professionals to undertake research which places the meaning of places for their communities before their own conceptions of place.

Finally, implications of this research do not amount to enabling communities to learn about heritage significance or processes of management, but rather to instigate new conceptions of place and value which may ultimately challenge current and past understandings of heritage and heritage management. There is undoubtedly an opportunity for greater engagement, understanding, and communication on all sides, for all stakeholders. What perhaps remains unresolved is whether such terms as value and significance continue to be helpful in understanding how places are meaningful for diverse communities, and individuals each with their own set of experiences, beliefs, expectations.

## Bibliography

- Akagawa, N. 2016. Rethinking the global heritage discourse – overcoming ‘East’ and ‘West’? *International Journal of Heritage Studies* 22(1), 14-25.
- Alivizatou, M. 2012. Debating heritage authenticity: *kastom* and development at the Vanuatu Cultural Centre. *International Journal of Heritage Studies* 18(2), 124-143.
- Avery, T. 2009. Values not shared: the street art of Melbourne’s city laneways. In L. Gibson & J. R. Pendlebury (eds) *Valuing Historic Environments*, 139-156. Farnham: Ashgate.
- Avrami, E., R. Mason, M. de la Torre (eds) 2000. *Values and Heritage Conservation*. Los Angeles: The Getty Conservation Institute.
- Atkinson, R. 2000. Narratives of Policy: The Construction of Urban Problems and Policy in the Official Discourses of the British Government, 1968-1998. *Critical Social Policy* 20(2), 211-232.
- Asian Voice 2016. Zac Goldsmith visits Gurdwara Sri Guru Singh Sabha, Southall. *Asian Voice*, 8 March. Available at: <https://www.asian-voice.com/News/UK/Zac-Goldsmith-visits-Gurdwara-Sri-Guru-Singh-Sabha,-Southall> (Accessed 24 November).
- Australia ICOMOS 2013. *The Burra Charter: The Australia ICOMOS Charter for Places of Cultural Significance*.
- Ballard, R. 1994. Differentiation and Disjunction amongst the Sikhs. In R. Ballard & M. Banks (eds) *Desh Pardesh: The South Asian Presence in Britain*, 88-116. London: C. Hurst & Co.
- Ballard, R. 2000. The Growth and Changing Character of the Sikh Presence in Britain. In H. Coward, J. R. Hinnells & R. B. Williams (eds) *The South Asian Religious Diaspora in Britain, Canada and the United States*, 127-144. Albany: State of University of New York Press.
- Bance, P, Paul, S. S., Sidhu, A. S. and Anand, G. S. 2008. *Khalsa Jatha British Isles 1908-2008*. London: The Central Gurdwara/Khalsa Jatha.
- BBC Four 2016. *The Sikhs of Smethwick*, 2 December. Available at: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b0845kls> (Accessed 7 December 2016).
- BBC Radio 4 2016. *Analysis*, 28 February. Available at: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b071459c> (Accessed 18 October 2016).
- Bell, H. 2011. Listing, ‘significance’ and practised persuasion at Spa Green housing estate, London. *Social and Cultural Geography* 12(3), 223-242.
- Bevir, M. & R. Rhodes. 2006. *Governance Stories*. Abingdon: Routledge.

- Bhachu, P. 1985. *Twice Migrants: East African Sikh Settlers in Britain*. London: Tavistock Publications.
- Bhat Sangat Sandesh 2011. *Bhat Sikh Gurdwara Council* 67. Bhat Sikh Gurdwara Council.
- Birmingham Policy Commission 2014. *Healthy Ageing in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: The Best is yet to Come*. Birmingham: The University of Birmingham.
- British Sikh Report 2013. *British Sikh Report 2013*. London: British Sikh Report.
- Byrne, D. 1991. Western hegemony in archaeological heritage management. *History and Anthropology* 5(2), 269-276.
- Byrne, D. 1995. Buddhist stupa and Thai social practice. *World Archaeology* 27(2), 266-281.
- Canada's Historic Places 2016. *Abbotsford Sikh Temple National Historic Site of Canada*. Available at: <http://www.historicplaces.ca/en/rep-reg/place-lieu.aspx?id=9358> (Accessed 21 October 2016).
- Cantle, T. 2001. *Community Cohesion: A Report of the Independent Review Team*. London: Home Office.
- Carman, J. 2005. *Against Cultural Property: archaeology, heritage and ownership*. London: Duckworth Debates in Archaeology.
- Carver, M. 1996. On Archaeological Value. *Antiquity* 70, 45-56.
- Catsadorakis, G. The Conservation of natural and cultural heritage in Europe and the Mediterranean: a Gordian Knot? *International Journal of Heritage Studies* 13(4-5), 308-320.
- Change.org. 2014. *To Delete the name of Sri Harmandar Sahib, Amritsar Sahib from the world heritage nomination list (Tentative) sent by IndiaGovt. in 2014*. Available at: <https://www.change.org/p/unesco-world-heritage-committee-delete-the-name-of-sri-harmandar-sahib-amritsar-sahib-from-the-world-heritage-nomination-list-sent-by-india-govt-in-2014> (Accessed 12 January 2016).
- Chiles, P. 2005. What If?.. A Narrative Process for Re-Imagining the City. In P. Blundell-Jones, D. Petrescu & J. Till (eds) *Architecture and Participation*, 187-206. London: Taylor & Francis.
- Ching, F. D. K. 2014. *Architecture: Form, Space, and Order*. Hoboken, New Jersey: John Wiley and Sons.
- Clark, K. & Maeer, G. 2008. The cultural value of heritage: evidence from the Heritage Lottery Fund. *Cultural Trends* 17(1), 23-56.
- Council of Europe 2000. *European Landscape Convention*. (Florence Convention).
- Council of Europe 2005. *Council of Europe Framework Convention on the Value of Cultural Heritage for Society*. (The FARO Convention).

- Coyle, D. 2010. *Public value in practice: Restoring the ethos of public service*. London: BBC.
- CREST 2017. *Ethno-National, Religio-Cultural Or Anti-Muslim? Investigating Sikh Radicalisation In Britain*. Available at: <https://crestresearch.ac.uk/projects/sikh-radicalisation-britain/> (Accessed 3 March 2017).
- Dalal, R. 2010. *The Religions of India: A Concise Guide to Nine Major Faiths*. London: Penguin.
- Darvill, T. 1993. Value Systems in Archaeology. In J. Carman, M. Cooper, A. Firth & D. Wheatley (eds) *Managing Archaeology*, 38-48. London: Routledge.
- Darvill, T. 2005. "Sorted for Ease and Whiz": Approaching Value and Importance in Archaeological Resource Management. In C. Mathers, T. Darvill & B. Little (eds) *Heritage of Value, Archaeology of Renown: Reshaping Archaeological Assessment and Significance*, 21-42. Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida.
- Denscombe, M. 2010. *The Good Research Guide for Small Scale Social Research Projects*. Maidenhead: Open University Press.
- Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) 2012. *National Planning Policy Framework*. Available at: [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/6077/2116950.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/6077/2116950.pdf) (Accessed 21 October 2016).
- Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) 2016a. *Lottery Grants Search*. Available at: <http://www.lottery.culture.gov.uk/GrantDetails.aspx?ID=AAE%2f2%2f010022560&DBID=SE> (Accessed 29 November 2016).
- Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) 2016b. *Lottery Grants Search*. Available at: <http://www.lottery.culture.gov.uk/GrantDetails.aspx?ID=RF-02-00379&DBID=HM> (Accessed 29 November 2016).
- Dinham, A. & V. Lowndes 2008. Religion, resources and representation: Three narratives of faith engagement in British urban governance. *Urban Affairs Review* 43(6), 817-845.
- Dwyer, C., D. Gilbert & B. Shah 2012. Faith and suburbia: secularisation, modernity and the changing geographies of religion in London's suburbs. *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 38(3), 403-419.
- English Heritage 2008. *Conservation Principles*. Available at: <https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/conservation-principles-sustainable-management-historic-environment/> (Accessed 18 October 2016).

- English Heritage 2011. *Designation Listing Selection Guide: Places of Worship*. Available at: [https://content.historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/dlsg-places-worship/places\\_of\\_worship\\_final.pdf/](https://content.historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/dlsg-places-worship/places_of_worship_final.pdf/) (Accessed 21 October 2016).
- English Heritage 2013. *Collaborative Doctoral Award: Religious Heritage in Transition: Sikh Places of Worship in England*. Available at: <https://content.historicengland.org.uk/content/docs/research/cdpy1sikh-places-of-worship.pdf> (Accessed 18 October 2016).
- Fairclough, G. 2002. Archaeologists and the European Landscape Convention. In G. Fairclough & S. Rippon (eds) *Europe's Cultural Landscape: archaeologists and the management of change*, 25-37. Brussels: Europae Archaeologiae Consilium.
- Farnsworth, R. 1989. Urban planning for ethnic minority groups: A review of initiatives taken by Leicester city council. *Planning Practice and Research* 4(1), 16-22.
- Fergusson, J. 1899. *History of Indian and Eastern architecture*. New York City, NY: Dodd, Mead and Company.
- Gaines, S. 2007. Leicester Heads for Diversity Milestone. *The Guardian*, 11 September. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2007/sep/11/communities.politics> (Accessed 24 November 2016).
- Gale, R. 1999. Pride of Place and Places: South Asian Religious Groups and the City Planning Authority in Leicester. *Papers in Planning Research* 172. Cardiff: Department of City and Regional Planning, Cardiff University.
- Gale, R. T. 2005. Representing the City: Mosques and the Planning Process in Birmingham. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 31(6), 1161-1179.
- Gale, R. T. and S. Naylor. 2002. Religion, Planning and the City: the Spatial Politics of Ethnic Minority Expression in British Cities and Towns. *Ethnicities* 2(3), 387-409.
- Gallo, E. 2012. Creating *Gurdwaras*, Narrating Histories: Perspectives on the Sikh Diaspora in Italy. *South Asia Multidisciplinary Academic Journal* 28(6).
- Ganeri, A. 2003. *The Guru Granth Sahib and Sikhism*. London: Evans Brothers.
- The Getty Conservation Institute 2017. *Research on the values of heritage 1998-2005*. Available at: [http://www.getty.edu/conservation/our\\_projects/field\\_projects/values/](http://www.getty.edu/conservation/our_projects/field_projects/values/) (Accessed 17 February 2017).
- Gibson, L. 2009. Cultural landscapes and identity. In L. Gibson & J. R. Pendlebury (eds) *Valuing Historic Environments*, 67-92. Farnham: Ashgate.
- Glover, W. 2012. Shiny New Buildings: Rebuilding Historic Sikh Gurdwaras in Indian Punjab. *Future Anterior* 9(1), 32-47.

- Graeber, D. 2001. *Toward an Anthropological Theory of Value: The False Coin of Our Own Dreams*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Guha, K. 2015. Why Sikhs don't want the Golden Temple to be declared a World Heritage Site. *Scroll.in*, 28 April. Available at: <http://scroll.in/article/723097/why-sikhs-dont-want-the-golden-temple-to-be-declared-a-world-heritage-site> (Accessed 21 October 2016).
- Harley Grove Gurdwara 2016. *Gurdwara Sikh Sangat Harley Grove: A Journey Through Time*. Available at: <http://www.gurdwarasikhsangatharleygrove.co.uk/Aboutus.asp> (Accessed 21 October 2016).
- Harris, J. 2011. Guerrilla art, social value and absent heritage fabric. *International Journal of Heritage Studies* 17(3), 214-229.
- Harrison, R. 2010. Heritage as social action. In S. West (ed) *Understanding Heritage in Practice*, 240-276. Manchester and Milton Keynes: Manchester University Press in association with the Open University.
- Harrison, R. 2013. Forgetting to remember, remembering to forget: late modern heritage practices, sustainability and the 'crisis' of accumulation of the past. *International Journal of Heritage Studies* 19(6), 579-595.
- Harvey, D. 1997. The New Urbanism and the Communitarian Trap. *Harvard Design Magazine* Winter/Spring, 68-69.
- Harvey, D. C. 2015. Heritage and scale: settings, boundaries and relations. *International Journal of Heritage Studies* 21(6), 577-593.
- Hayden, D. 1995. *The Power of Place: urban landscapes as public history*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Hewison, R. & J. Holden 2014. "To hell with targets": Ten years of the cultural value debate. Available at: <http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/research/warwickcommission/futureculture/resources/blog/hewisonholden/> (Accessed 17 February 2017).
- Hillier, B. & J. Hanson 1984. *The social logic of space*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Historic England 2016a. *Religious Buildings of World Faiths*. Available at: <https://historicengland.org.uk/research/current-research/assessing-significance/faith-and-commemoration/world-faiths/> (Accessed 22 November 2016).
- Historic England 2016b. *Mile End and Bow District Synagogue*. Available at: <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1357838> (Accessed 24 November 2016).



- Historic England 2017a. *Heritage at Risk*. Available at: <https://historicengland.org.uk/advice/heritage-at-risk/> (Accessed 24 November 2016).
- Historic England 2017b. *Enriching the List*. Available at: <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/enrich-the-list/> (Accessed 30 March 2017).
- Holden, J. 2006. *Cultural Value and the Crisis of Legitimacy: Why culture needs a democratic mandate*. London: Demos.
- ICOMOS 1964. *The Venice Charter for the Conservation and Restoration of Monuments and Sites*. IInd International Congress of Architects and Technicians of Historic Monuments, Venice, 1964. Adopted by ICOMOS in 1965.
- ICOMOS 1994. *The NARA Document on Authenticity*.
- Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage (INTACH) 2004. *Charter for the Conservation of Unprotected Architectural Heritage Sites in India*.
- Jackson, P. 2001. Making Sense of Qualitative Data. In M. Limb, and C. Dwyer (eds.) *Qualitative Methodologies for Geographers: Issues and Debates*, 199-214. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Jacobsen, K. A. & K. Myrvold. 2012. (eds) *Sikhs Across Borders: Transnational Practices of European Sikhs*. London: Bloomsbury Academic.
- Jacobsen, K. A. & K. Myrvold. 2016. (eds) *Sikhs in Europe: Migration, Identities and Representations*. London: Routledge.
- Jaspal, R. 2012. British Sikh Identity and the Struggle for Distinctiveness and Continuity. *Journal of Community and Applied Social Psychology* 23(3), 225-239.
- Johnston, C. 1994. *What is Social Value? A discussion paper*. Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Service.
- Jones, S. 2017. Wrestling with the Social Value of Heritage: Problems, Dilemmas and Opportunities. *Journal of Community Archaeology and Heritage* 4(1), 1-17.
- Jones, S. & D. Baker. 2013. The Religious Life of a 'Plural City'. *Public Spirit*, 19 September. Available at: <http://www.publicspirit.org.uk/the-religious-life-of-a-plural-city/> (Accessed 18 October 2016).
- Jones, S. & S. Leech. 2015. *Valuing the Historic Environment: A Critical Review of Existing Approaches to Social Value*. London: AHRC.
- Jowell, T. 2004. *Government and the Value of Culture: a personal essay*. London: DCMS.
- Kalsi, S. S. 1992. *The Evolution of a Sikh Community in Britain*. Leeds: Department of Theology and Religious Studies, University of Leeds.
- Karlström, A. 2009. Preserving Impermanence: the Creation of Heritage in Vientiane, Laos. Diss. Institutionen för arkeologi och antik historia.

- Kaur, K. R. 2008. Sikh women gain voting rights at Bristol gurdwara. *The Sikh Times*, 31 August. Available at: [http://sikhtimes.com/news\\_083108a.html](http://sikhtimes.com/news_083108a.html) (Accessed 6 January 2017).
- Kaur Singh, N. G. 1995. *The Name of My Beloved: Verses of the Sikh Gurus*. San Francisco: Harper.
- King, C. 2011. 'Strangers in a Strange Land': Immigrants and Urban Culture in Early Modern Norwich. In C. King & D. Sayer (eds) *The Archaeology of Post-medieval Religion*, 83-106. Woodbridge: The Boydell Press.
- King, C. & D. Sayer. 2011. Conflict, Community and Custom: The Material Remains of Post-Medieval Religion. In C. King & D. Sayer (eds) *The Archaeology of Post-medieval Religion*, 1-18. Woodbridge: The Boydell Press.
- Knott, K. 2009. Becoming a 'Faith Community': British Hindus, Identity and the Politics of Representation. *Journal of Religion in Europe* 2(2), 85-114.
- Leicester City Council 1977. *Places of Worship in Leicester*. Leicester: Leicester City Council.
- Leicester City Council 1987. *Places of Worship in Leicester*. Leicester: Leicester City Council.
- Leicester City Council 1989. *Applications Recommended for Approval: Committee Report to Planning Officer 3<sup>rd</sup> November 1989*. Leicester: Leicester City Council.
- Leicester City Council 1998. Planning Application 980896 Internal Memorandum from Jeevan Dhesi to Mike Davis, 24 July 1998. In Leicester City Council *Places of Worship/Community Centres; Planning Applications at Manor Farm, Hamilton. Report of the Director of Environment and Development 12<sup>th</sup> January 1999*. Leicester: Leicester City Council.
- Leicester City Council 1999a. *Places of Worship/Community Centres; Planning Applications at Manor Farm, Hamilton. Report of the Director of Environment and Development 12<sup>th</sup> January 1999*. Leicester: Leicester City Council.
- Leicester City Council 1999b. Committee Report: Application 980896 Keyham Lane Manor Farm. In Leicester City Council *Places of Worship/Community Centres; Planning Applications at Manor Farm, Hamilton. Report of the Director of Environment and Development 12<sup>th</sup> January 1999*. Leicester: Leicester City Council.
- Leicester City Council 2014. *Leicester City Core Strategy – Adopted June 2014*. Leicester: Leicester City Council.
- Maeer, G. 2017. [A People-Centred Approach to Heritage: The Experience of the Heritage Lottery Fund 1994–2014](#). *Journal of Community Archaeology and Heritage* 4(1), 38-52.

- Making Suburban Faith 2016. *Making Suburban Faith*. Available at: <http://makingsuburbanfaith.org/> (Accessed 24 November 2016).
- Mathers, C., T. Darvill & B. Little. 2005. Introduction: Archaeological Value in a World Context. In C. Mathers, T. Darvill & B. Little (eds) *Heritage of Value, Archaeology of Renown: Reshaping Archaeological Assessment and Significance*, 1-18. Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida.
- McLeod, W. H. 1970. *The Evolution of the Sikh religion*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- McLeod, W. H. 1997. *Sikhism*. London: Penguin Books.
- McLeod, W. H. 2002. *Who is a Sikh? The Problem of Sikh Identity*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- McLoughlin, S. 2013. Re-narrating the model multicultural city. *Public Spirit*, 25 September. Available at: <http://www.publicspirit.org.uk/re-narrating-the-model-multicultural-city/> (Accessed 18 October 2016).
- Moore, A. 2008. *Where Leicester Has Worshipped*. Leicester: Laurel House Publishing.
- Morris, D. M. 1967. Caste among the Indians in Uganda. In B. M. Schwartz (ed) *Caste in overseas Indian communities*. San Francisco: Chandler Publishing Company.
- Mydland, L. & W. Grahn. 2012. Identifying Heritage Values in Local Communities. *International Journal of Heritage Studies* 18(6), 564-587.
- Nasser, N. 2003. South Asian Ethnoscapes: the changing cultural landscapes of British cities. *Global Built Environment Review* 3(2), 26-39.
- Natural England 2009. *Guidelines for implementing the European Landscape Convention: Part I: What does it mean for your organisation?* London: Land Use Consultants.
- Naylor, S. & J. R. Ryan. 2003. Mosques, Temples and Gurdwaras: New Sites of Religion in Twentieth-Century Britain. In D. Gilbert, D. Matless & B. Short (eds) *Geographies of British Modernity: Space and Society in the Twentieth Century*, 168-184. Malden, MA: Blackwell.
- Nesbitt, E. 1990. Religion and Identity: The Valmiki Community in Coventry 1. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 16(2), 261-274.
- Nesbitt, E. 2005. *Sikhism: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Nishkam Media Centre 2016. Birmingham & Black Country Sikh Migration Story project up and running thanks to Heritage Lottery Fund. *Nishkam Media Centre*, 1 November. Available at: <https://nishkammediacentre.com/2016/11/01/birmingham-black-country-sikh-migration-story-project-up-and-running-thanks-to-heritage-lottery-fund/> (Accessed 3 March 2017).

- O'Brien, S. J. C. 2008. Well, water, rock: holy wells, mass rocks and reconciling identity in the Republic of Ireland. *Material Religion: The Journal of Objects, Art and Belief* 4(3), 326-348.
- O'Sullivan, D. M. & R. L. Young. 2012. A world apart? Translating the archaeology of the sacred in the modern world. *World Archaeology* 44(3), 342-358.
- Oakley, K. 2004. *Developing the Evidence Base for Support of Cultural and Creative Activities in the South East*. South East England Development Agency.
- Office for National Statistics 2016. 2011 Census aggregate data. Available at: <https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/census/2011>
- Orange, H. 2011. Exploring sense of place: an ethnography of the Cornish mining world heritage site. In J. Schofield & R. Szymanski (eds) *Local Heritage, Global Context: cultural perspectives on sense of place*, 99-118. Farnham: Ashgate.
- Parker Pearson, M. & C. Richards. 1994. Ordering the World: Perceptions of Architecture, Space and Time. In M. Parker Pearson & C. Richards (eds) *Architecture and Order: Approaches to Social Space*, 1-33. London: Routledge.
- Peach, C. & R. Gale. 2003. Muslims, Hindus and Sikhs in the New Religious Landscape of England. *Geographical Review* 93(4), 469-490.
- Pendlebury, J., T. Townshend & R. Gilroy. 2009. Social housing as heritage: the case of Byker, Newcastle upon Tyne. In L. Gibson & J. Pendlebury (eds) *Valuing Historic Environments*, 179-200. Farnham: Ashgate.
- Pocock, C., D. Collett & L. Baulch. 2015. Assessing stories before sites: identifying the tangible from the intangible. *International Journal of Heritage Studies* 21(10), 962-982.
- Puri, H. K. 2003. Scheduled Castes in Sikh Community: A Historical Perspective. *Economic and Political Weekly* 38(26), 2693-2701.
- Psarra, S. 2009. *Architecture and Narrative: The Formation of Space and Cultural Meaning*. Abingdon: Routledge.
- Raizada, M. 2015. Is it right for Sikhs to oppose the inclusion of Golden Temple in World Heritage Site list? *Newsgram*, 28 April. Available at: <http://www.newsgram.com/is-it-right-for-sikhs-to-oppose-the-inclusion-of-golden-temple-in-world-heritage-site-list/> (Accessed 21 October 2016).
- Rana, Y. 2015a. SGPC against including Golden Temple in UNESCO world heritage list. *The Times of India*, 22 April. Available at: <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/chandigarh/SGPC-against-including-Golden-Temple-in-UNESCO-world-heritage-list/articleshow/47007473.cms> (Accessed 21 October 2016).

- Rana, Y. 2015b. Unesco confirms Golden Temple not to be considered for world heritage list. *The Times of India*, 1 May. Available at: <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/Unesco-confirms-Golden-Temple-not-to-be-considered-for-world-heritage-list/articleshow/47115596.cms> (Accessed 21 October 2016).
- Rapoport, M. 2011. Creating place, creating community: the intangible boundaries of the Jewish 'Eruv'. *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 29(5), 891-904.
- Reddy, D. & J. Zavos. 2009. Temple publics: Religious Institutions and the Construction of Contemporary Hindu Communities. *International Journal of Hindu Studies* 13(3), 241-260.
- Robertson, I. & T. Hall. 2007. Memory, Identity and the Memorialization of Conflict in the Scottish Highlands. In Y. Whelan (ed) *Heritage, Memory and the Politics of Identity: New Perspectives on the Cultural Landscape*, 19-36. London: Ashgate.
- Samuels, K. L. 2008. Value and Significance in Archaeology. *Archaeological Dialogues* 15(1), 71-97.
- Sato, K. 2012. Divisions among Sikh Communities in Britain and the Role of Caste System: A Case Study of Four Gurdwaras in Multi-Ethnic Leicester. *Journal of Punjab Studies* 19(1), 1-25.
- Schensul, J.J. & M.D. LeCompte 2013. *Essential Ethnographic Methods: A Mixed Methods Approach*. Plymouth: AltaMira Press.
- Shah, B., C. Dwyer & D. Gilbert 2011. Landscapes of Diasporic Religious Belonging in the Edge-City: The Jain Temple at Potters Bar, Outer London. *South Asian Diaspora* 4(1), 77-94.
- Sheringham, O. 2010. Creating 'Alternative Geographies': Religion, Transnationalism and Everyday Life. *Geography Compass* 4(11), 1678-1694.
- Singh, A. 2016. *Lost Heritage: The Sikh Legacy in Pakistan*. New Delhi: Nagaara Trust.
- Singh, G. 2006. A City of Surprises: Urban Multiculturalism and the Leicester Model. In N. Ali & S. Sayyid (eds) *Postcolonial People: South Asians in Britain*, 291-304. London: Hurst and Co.
- Singh, G. & D. S. Tatla. 2006. *Sikhs in Britain: The Making of a Community*. London: Zed Books.
- Singh, J. 2012. Global Sikh-ers: Transnational Learning Practices of Young British Sikhs. In K. A. Jacobsen & K. Myrvold (eds) *Sikhs Across Borders: Transnational Practices of European Sikhs*, 167-192.
- Singh, J. 2015. From the temple to the street: how Sikh kitchens are becoming the new food banks. *The Conversation*, 22 July. Available at:

- <http://theconversation.com/from-the-temple-to-the-street-how-sikh-kitchens-are-becoming-the-new-food-banks-44611> (Accessed 26 October 2016).
- Singh, K. 2014. *Understanding Sikh Architecture through the Sikh Shrines in East Punjab*. PhD thesis, Guru Nanak Dev University. Available at: <http://hdl.handle.net/10603/29793> (Accessed 24 November 2016).
- Smith, L. 2006. *Uses of Heritage*. London: Routledge.
- Sri Akal Takhat Sahib. 2014. *Directives of the Sri Akal Takhat Sahib*. Available at: <http://www.akaltakhtsahib.com/english/akal-adesh.php> (Accessed 21 October 2016).
- Stephens, J. 2014. 'Fifty-two doors': identifying cultural significance through narrative and nostalgia in Lakhnu village. *International Journal of Heritage Studies* 20(4), 415-431.
- Stephens, J. & R. Tiwari. 2015. Symbolic estates: community identity and empowerment through heritage. *International Journal of Heritage Studies* 21(1), 99-114.
- Thandi, S.S. 2012. Migration and Comparative Experiences of Sikhs in Europe: Reflections on Issues of Cultural Transmission and Identity 30 Years On. In K.A. Jacobsen & K. Myrvold (eds) *Sikhs Across Borders: Transnational Practices of European Sikhs*, 11-35.
- Townend, S. & K. Whittaker. 2011. Being accounted for: Qualitative data analysis in assessing 'place' and 'value'. In J. Schofield & R. Szymanski (eds) *Local Heritage, Global Context: cultural perspectives on sense of place*, 65-78. Farnham: Ashgate.
- UNESCO 2003. *Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage*.
- UNESCO Bangkok 2004. *UNESCO Asia-Pacific Awards for Cultural Heritage Conservation*. Available at: <http://www.unescobkk.org/culture/wh/asia-pacific-heritage-awards/previous-heritage-awards-2000-2013/2004/award-winners/2004dt2/> (Accessed 21 October 2016).
- University of Leicester 2016. *Mapping Faith and Place*. Available at: <http://www2.le.ac.uk/departments/archaeology/research/projects/mapping-faith> (Accessed 24 November 2016).
- Vertovec, S. 1996. Multiculturalism, culturalism and public incorporation. *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 19(1), 49-69.
- Visram, R. 1986. *Ayahs, Lascars and Princes: Indians in Britain 1700-1947*. London: Pluto Press.
- Visram, R. 2002. *Asians in Britain: 400 Years of History*. London: Pluto Press.
- Wang, S. Y. 2011. In search of authenticity in historic cities in transformation: the case of Pingyao, China. *Journal of Tourism and Cultural Change* 9(1), 18-30.

- Waterton, E. 2005. Whose sense of place? Reconciling archaeological perspectives with community values: cultural landscapes in England. *International Journal of Heritage Studies* 11(4), 309-325.
- Waterton, E. L. Smith and G. Campbell. 2006. The utility of discourse analysis to heritage studies: The Burra Charter and social inclusion. *International Journal of Heritage Studies* 12(4), 339-355.
- Waterton, E & L. Smith. 2009. *Taking Archaeology out of Heritage*. Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Publishing.
- Weerasinghe, J. 2011. Living sacred heritage and 'authenticity' in South Asia. In Anheier, H. & Y. R. Isar (eds) *Cultures and Globalization: Heritage, Memory and Identity*, 139-147. London: SAGE.
- Weller, P. 2007. *Religions in the UK: a multi-faith directory 2007-2010*. Derby: MultiFaith Centre.
- Wijesuriya, G. 2000. Conserving the Temple of the Tooth Relic, Sri Lanka. *Public Archaeology* 1(2), 99-108
- Winter, T. 2014. Beyond Eurocentrism? Heritage conservation and the politics of difference. *International Journal of Heritage Studies* 20(2), 123-137.



## Appendix 1 – Example of database entries

GeneralInUse TblGurdwaras													
Gurdwara IC	Gurdwara Name	Country	County	City/Town	Email	Website	Contact Sur	Contact Nar	Contact Nur	Date Establi	In Use		
1	Guru Nanak Gurdwara	England	Bedfordshire	Bedford					01234 266531		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
Building ID	Address	Postcode	CoordinatesX	Eas	CoordinatesY	Nor	Date Open	Date Closed	Purpose Bui	Classification	Type A		
1	84 Ford End Road, Bedford, Bedfordshire	MK40 4JX	503730		249148		2014		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	1.1 Purpose-built: Newly Built			
*	(New)						<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>				
2	Sri Gurdwara Sahib Ji Ramgharia Sikh Society	England	Bedfordshire	Bedford					01234 304455		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
4	Guru Gobind Singh Gurdwara	England	Bedfordshire	Bedford					01234 294099		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
5	Shri Guru Singh Sabha Gurdwara	England	Bedfordshire	Bedford							<input type="checkbox"/>		
6	Bhagwan Valmik Mandir	England	Bedfordshire	Bedford			<a href="http://www.bysbedford.org">http://www.bysbedford.org</a>				<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
7	Guru Nanak Gurdwara	England	Bedfordshire	Luton			<a href="http://www.gngluton.com/">http://www.gngluton.com/</a>		01582 721072		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
9	Shri Guru Ravidass Bhawan	England	Bedfordshire	Luton			<a href="http://www.gururavidass.org">http://www.gururavidass.org</a>		01582 450 053		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
10	Ramgarhia Sabha Luton	England	Bedfordshire	Luton							<input type="checkbox"/>		
11	Guru Nanak Satsang Sabha	England	Berkshire	Maidenhead	info@maidenhead-		<a href="http://www.maidenhead-readinggurdwara.org/">http://www.maidenhead-readinggurdwara.org/</a>		01628 780330		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
12	Singh Sabha	England	Berkshire	Maidenhead							<input type="checkbox"/>		
13	Ramgharia Sabha Reading	England	Berkshire	Reading	rsr@khalsa.com		<a href="http://www.readinggurdwara.org/">http://www.readinggurdwara.org/</a>		01189265432	1976	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
14	Sri Guru Singh Sabha	England	Berkshire	Reading	singhsabhareading@gmail.c		<a href="http://readinggurdwara.org/">http://readinggurdwara.org/</a>		0118 966 5500	1967	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
15	Ramgharia Sikh Temple Slough	England	Berkshire	Slough					01753 525458		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
16	Sri Guru Singh Sabha Gurdwara	England	Berkshire	Slough	info@singhsabhareading@gmail.c		<a href="http://singhsabhareading@gmail.c">http://singhsabhareading@gmail.c</a>		01753 531826		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
17	Sri Guru Gobind Singh Marg Gurdwara	England	Berkshire	Slough							<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		



## Appendix 2 – Case study gazetteer

### **Guru Amar Das Gurdwara**

Address: 219-227 Clarendon Park Road, Leicester LE2 3AN

Date open: 1992

Previous use: Baptist church



## **Guru Tegh Bahadur Gurdwara**

Address: 106 East Park Road, Leicester LE5 4QB

Date open: 1989

Previous use: Shoe factory and warehouse



## **Guru Nanak Gurdwara**

Address: 9 Holy Bones, Leicester

Date open: 1989

Previous use: Manufacturing plant and warehouse



## **Ramgarhia Board Gurdwara**

Address: 51 Meynell Road, Leicester LE5 3NE

Date open: 1972

Previous use: Garage/factory



## **Sri Guru Ravidass Gurdwara**

Address: Harrison Road, Leicester

Date open: 2006 (the gurdwara has been present at the site since 1991, in a former industrial building).

Previous use: Purpose-built





## **Sri Sat Guru Ram Singh Ji Sahai (Namdhari) Gurdwara**

Address: 68a Linden Street, Leicester LE5 5EE

Date open: 2007

Previous use: Ground floor continues to be used as a clothing factory



## **Guru Nanak Nishkam Sewak Jatha Gurdwara**

Address: 18-20 Soho Road, Handsworth, Birmingham B21 9BH

Date open: 1970s

Previous use: Purpose-built (on the site of a Polish nightclub and commercial buildings)



## **Sri Guru Singh Sabha Gurdwara**

Address: Havelock Road, Southall, Greater London UB2 4NP

Date open: 2003

Previous use: Purpose-built





## Guru Teg Bahadur Gurdwara

Address: 36 Church Street, Lenton, Nottingham

Date open: 1987

Previous use: Church school



## Central Gurdwara (Khalsa Jatha) London

62 Queensdale Road, Shepherd's Bush, London W11 4SG

Date open: 1969

Previous use: Salvation Army Hall



## Ramgharia Gurdwara

Address: 81-83 Chelsea Road, Easton, Bristol

Date open: 1990s

Previous use: Church; leather-goods factory





## **Guru Nanak Satsang Sabha Karamsar UK**

400 High Road, Seven Kings, Ilford, Greater London IG1 1TW

Date open: on site since the early 1990s and reopened in 2005

Previous use: Previously a Labour Party Hall but since rebuilt



## **Singh Sabha Gurdwara**

Address: Cranbury Avenue, Southampton

Date open: 1990

Previous use: Church of England parish church.



## Liverpool Sikh Association Gurdwara

Address: Wellington Avenue, Liverpool

Date open: 1983

Previous use: Methodist church





## **Guru Gobind Singh Gurdwara**

Address: 152-156 Bedford Road, Kempston, Bedford

Date open: Early 2000s

Previous use: Commercial offices



## Appendix 3 – Copy of interview consent form



### Religious Heritage in Transition: Sikh Places of Worship in the UK

#### Informed Consent for Participation in Recorded Interviews

This project is the focus of three years of doctoral study, jointly supervised by the University of Leicester and Historic England. The aim of the research is to increase the level of understanding of gurdwaras in the UK in these main broad areas:

- Highlight the nature of the historical development of gurdwaras in the UK.
- Establish criteria by which gurdwaras can be understood as a specific building type.
- Investigate the values (religious and social) attributed to gurdwaras in assessing significance.
- Promote the understanding of the significance of gurdwaras to support informed policy-making.

The purpose of recorded interviews is to ensure the views and experiences of a range of people associated with gurdwaras in the UK are heard. Narratives related to migration, the development of gurdwaras, management, prayer, social activities and festivals are all extremely helpful in contributing to greater appreciation of the role Sikh places of worship have played in the UK, and how this has changed over time.

---

Information provided and views expressed in the interview may be used in any work related to the PhD project. This may include excerpts reproduced in the thesis (final PhD report), published academic reports, online articles, presentations or any other material. A copy of the recording will be saved onto the University of Leicester server.

Do you wish for the recording and excerpts used to be treated anonymously (no use of your name)?

Y ☐ N ☐

Would you be happy for the recording to be archived for public use in the future?

Y ☐ N ☐

Following the interview, should you wish for any part of the interview to be deleted or not used in any published material then please make contact with the interviewer.

I confirm that the above has been explained prior to interview and I have been offered the opportunity for clarification of the purpose, use and storage of the interview. I hereby give my permission for the interview to be recorded and for it to be used and stored as specified above.

Signed \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Printed Name \_\_\_\_\_