

ALBRIGHTON: STATION ROAD CONSERVATION AREA APPRAISAL

The Conservation Area was designated on 14 June 1982.

ALBRIGHTON CONSERVATION AREAS

Albrighton has three separate Conservation Areas reflecting the history of its development: Albrighton, Albrighton: Station Road, and Donington and Albrighton. This statement relates to the smallest of the three, the Albrighton: Station Road Conservation Area. This one encompasses three buildings and is intended to reflect a facet of the social history of the settlement – its workhouse, school and school master's house.

LOCATION

Located near the Staffordshire border on the old road from Wolverhampton to Chester, Albrighton is a large village approximately 9 miles north east of Bridgnorth and 7 miles west of Wolverhampton.

The Albrighton: Station Road Conservation Area is to the north of the historic core of the village and comprises three buildings on the north west side of Station Road: Nos. 35 & 37 Station Road; the former National School; and No.39.



TOPOGRAPHY

Albrighton is set in an area of rural landscape between Wolverhampton and Newport. Bypassed by the main A41 Wolverhampton to Chester road, Albrighton is an attractive dormitory village settlement that has managed to preserve much of its mature tree lined Georgian elegance. Pevsner, however, in his *The Buildings of England, Shropshire* describes it as a “*spreading, complicated village, its spine the long winding High Street, but with much 20th century housing spawned by Wolverhampton to the east and RAF Cosford to the west*”.

The three buildings that make up the Station Road Conservation Area, are entirely surrounded by modern suburban residential development, thus obscuring views, from all aspects, of the rural landscape lying beyond it.

HISTORY

The origins of Albrighton can be traced back to the end of the sixth century, supposedly to 591 AD when one Alberic settled here after the Battle of Wednesbury. The name derives from the Saxon “*Alberic's or Aethelbeorht's tun*”, meaning Aethelbeorht's farm or settlement, an area cleared for cultivation in the vast Forest of Brewood. At the Conquest the manor of Albrighton came into the

possession of the de Pitchford family. It was recorded in Domesday Book in 1085 as “waste” (cultivated land which had been allowed to fall fallow); the surrounding area was reserved as a royal forest. By this date a village church had been established. Development proceeded gradually to the point in 1232 when a royal charter was granted making Albrighton a borough with its own Corporation and permitting markets and fairs to be held – a significant step in the evolution of a settlement. Another charter regulating fairs was granted in 1303. The manor passed successively into the hands of the Tregoz, de la Warr, Troutbeck and Talbot families; the Talbots becoming Earls of Shrewsbury. The royal charter was renewed by Charles II in 1664. As well as being a centre for markets and fairs for the surrounding agricultural area, Albrighton had a variety of small-scale trades, including button-making in the 17th century and clock-making in the late 18th century.



The focus of the parish remained the church of St. Mary Magdalene; the area around it is now part of the separate Donington and Albrighton Conservation Area.

Station Road was known previously as Workhouse Lane. The Workhouse was originally constructed on the local Poor's Land. Such charity land is typically the result of land purchased by bequests (in this case of 1682), the rental profits of which were then disbursed for the benefit of the needy of the parish. Money held in trust from these lands (some 20 acres) was sufficient by 1779 to pay for the erection of a building, initially known as the Parish House, (now Nos. 35 & 37) to be '*used for the reception of paupers*'. The Parish then paid a rent to the trustees of the Charity for use of the Workhouse. The Workhouse finally closed in 1835 and the poor were sent to Shifnal.

The main centre of the village developed in the 18th and 19th centuries along High Street east and west of its junction with Cross Road, away from the church. The construction of the Birmingham and District Railway to Chester in 1848 linked Albrighton directly with Wolverhampton and Shrewsbury. The station was opened in 1849, and the name of Workhouse Lane was changed to Station Road.



During the second half of the 19th century the village grew, and many of its public institutions were established. The National School was built in 1856 for 109 children, and then a year later the school master's house was constructed, both adjacent to the earlier workhouse. In 1893 an infant classroom was added for £300 and in 1896 the playground was enlarged.

Since the 1950s Albrighton has expanded dramatically with the construction of extensive housing estates surrounding the historic core of the village, as well as significant amounts of redevelopment within it.

Until the beginning of the 20th century Albrighton was essentially linear in form. The village grew mainly along the High Street, with open countryside close by to the north and south of this strip. This historic pattern of development is still clearly evident, where the vast majority of historic buildings are located on the High Street itself. During the 20th century development has filled in gaps within the centre and extended the village eastwards along High Street. The three buildings within this Station Road Conservation Area were at one point in open countryside just to the north of the village. Large-scale housing development to the north and south-west of High Street has effectively erased the rural setting of the village's historic core, bringing this historic group within the village envelope.



BUILDINGS



Buildings that reflect social life of a village make an important contribution to the character of any Conservation Area. It is recognition of this that provides reason for the designation, in this location. Two individual houses form the single most important and prominent type of historic building within the Conservation Area. Both of them are broadly similar: brick built of two-storeys. Nos. 35 & 37 Station Road were once the Workhouse, built in 1779/80 in a soft

orange brick, No.35 has been subsequently rendered. No.37 has had a large attached double garage erected and a brick porch.



The master's house (No.39) dates from 1857 and is of colour washed render. Two modern ground floor bay windows have to some extent altered its original appearance.

The larger of the three buildings is located between the two residential buildings, producing diversity of size, scale and

massing, height and rooflines, proportions and details. Dated 1856, the former National School is built in a simplified Tudor style of red brick with buff stone detailing. The gable of the projecting centre bay is the dominant feature, closely followed by the steep tiled roof. The front brick wall to the forecourt has stone coping and moulded capped gate piers, but has been altered to a significant degree.



All three buildings have been damaged by unsympathetic 20th century alterations, but their scale, massing and proportions, traditional materials and surviving details still make a significant contribution. It is still recognisably part of the historic character of the village. Inappropriately suburban mid-20th century surrounding residential development has had a rather more damaging effect on the setting of the Conservation Area.

MATERIALS



Local red brick—former School House

The principal building material within the Conservation Area is red brick. This is used for the whole range of buildings, from the better quality school building to the three properties surrounding it. Red brick boundary walls also contribute to the character of the Conservation Area.

Render or roughcast has been applied to part of the workhouse building and the school master's house at a later date, often in the 20th century, drastically altering their

appearance.

Stone is confined to the dressings around the windows and the quoins of the school.



Stone dressings—former School House



Traditional red clay roof tiles

Roofs are predominantly of tiles, both clay and concrete, mostly machine made, with steep roof slopes parallel to the street, plain verges and prominent brick ridge or end chimneys.

Painted timber joinery is another important element of a conservation area's architectural and historic interest. It is used for a wide variety of original features and details, including sash windows and casements, panelled doors, doorcases and porches.

However, these details have largely been lost, which has damaged the original character of the Conservation Area. These interventions, including the installation of PVCu rainwater goods and windows, have significantly reduced the historic interest of the group to varying degrees.

Architectural Details

Original details in traditional materials are an important part of a conservation area's character. Bricks are used not only for construction but to provide decorative details. The modern rendering has obscured some of the subtlety of the detailing. Many windows and doors in this Conservation Area have been replaced with incongruously detailed non-traditional styles and inappropriate materials. Much more damaging is the alteration of the size and



Non-traditional window design

shape of openings that drastically alters the proportions and character of buildings, destroying much of their architectural and historic interest. In this Conservation Area, all four properties have been heavily altered through the insertion of modern timber or PVCu windows.

The Character of the Conservation Area

Although Albrighton has grown to the size of a small town, the historic core retains a strong village feeling. However, this particular conservation area on Station Road was originally located in open fields away from the historic centre of the settlement but has now been engulfed by the post war residential development. Whilst this modern housing is pleasant enough, there is no real relationship evident with the small number of historic buildings that comprise this conservation area, creating an 'island' of older buildings in a sea of suburbia. This isolation and lack of context is compounded by the close proximity of the entrances to three cul-de-sacs: relatively wide bellmouths on three sides of the conservation area, creating large gaps in the streetscape.



Within the Conservation Area there are the three buildings that should be of special architectural or historic interest in order to justify conservation area status. None are of outstanding architectural quality, although the National School is of some local historic interest. The prevalence of traditional materials, forms and detailing and the small domestic scale of most buildings providing much of the visual interest and character of a conservation area are largely missing or damaged.



The Albrighton: Station Road Conservation Area thus does not have a sufficiently extant special architectural interest or character. However the three very different buildings, each with their own form and appearance, have made their own mark on the social history of the village. The rapid and considerable expansion of the settlement in the post-war period has made such survivors of the pre-National Health Service public system all the more valuable as contributors to local memory.

That contribution to local social history is in itself the major element of the special interest which designation as a Conservation Area seeks to protect.

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APPENDIX I

ALBRIGHTON STATION ROAD CONSERVATION AREA PLAN

