

BONINGALE CONSERVATION AREA APPRAISAL

Boningale is a hamlet located in the flat open countryside some two miles to the south of Albrighton and gives its name to Boningale Parish. Roughly semi-circular in shape, Boningale Conservation Area was designated on 9th March 1981 and has largely escaped modern development. Its southern boundary runs the length of Church Lane and extends beyond it to encompass the dwellings and private gardens to the south of the lane in the main part of the settlement. Where Church Lane meets the A464 in the east, the Conservation Area boundary doubles back along the main road and runs due west past the junction with New House Lane before turning abruptly southwards through 90 degrees, running a short distance along Patshull Lane and meeting the opposite end of Church Lane well beyond the western extent of the hamlet.



History

The name Boningale is derived from the name of the noble family of Henry de Bolyngdale who was the manor's Lord in the twelfth century. In 1277 all lands belonging to the de Bolyngdales were granted to Lilleshall abbey, which retained those lands until the dissolution of the monasteries in 1538. The small settlement of Boningale then became attached to the parish of Stockton as a Chapelry until the two were separated in 1857 and the parish of Boningale was formed in its own right.

Although the settlement is not explicitly mentioned in the Domesday survey of 1086, the earliest elements of Boningale's St Chad's church are of Norman origin. The Taxation of 1291 valued Boningale as an interest of the Abbot of Lilleshall, comprising land, a mill, woodland and yearly rents worth £3.4s.8d. in total. The excellent loam and gravel soil indicates the land at Boningale has been cultivated for some considerable time, but there is no evidence to suggest the settlement has ever been anything other than small. In 1540-41 the manor generated only 1d in rent, and today Boningale remains (as it always has been) a small linear settlement comprising only a few scattered dwellings and the church.

Landscape

The immediate landscape of the Conservation Area is largely flat, with limited views across Lady Croft to Lea Hall and the A464 in the north, and more expansive ones towards Pepperhill and High Park in the south. Views beyond the settlement are generally restricted by the strong presence of private and agricultural boundary hedgerows and trees, which tend to cut across any potential vistas of the surrounding arable and pasture land. In the settlement itself the combination of mature



trees, hedgerows and the sweeping bends of Church Lane and New House Lane create an intimate sense of privacy and stillness, despite the constant background noise that is created by vehicles using the A464 to the north.

The unenclosed areas of the Conservation Area, particularly at its eastern end, are dominated by the panoramic sky which can appear almost continental in its scale and breadth. The local geology has resulted in the sandstone of Boningale, giving the stone walls and soil of the Conservation Area a warm reddish-grey colour. It is also responsible for the rolling sandstone ridge lying to the south east of the Conservation Area, whose partial tree-cover and scrub is silhouetted against the skyline. This ridge is also prominent because of the electricity pylons which extend in front of it along its length and detract from the view. A more distant plantation can be seen in the south, although the view of it is partly obscured by a nearer copse of mature trees at the edge of the field historically known as Church Meadow. A head-stream of the River Worfe also runs along this field boundary, and flows into the Great Pool at Patshull Hall.



Pattern of Settlement

The hamlet lacks an active focal hub: its church is the only public building within the Conservation Area and is located at the eastern end of the settlement. The settlement is linear in form with only one or two isolated dwellings being found in the fields in the west of the Conservation Area. The Conservation Area is bisected by New House Lane, which runs north to south joining Church Lane opposite The Old Farmhouse. This one-way road joins the A464 and has no dwellings along its length. Rather, most of the buildings in the Conservation Area are loosely located on either side of Church Lane and are generally detached, except for two terraces of twentieth century local authority housing and No's 4 and 5, found to the west and southwest of the church respectively. Access to Lady Croft behind the church is achieved by means of a footpath running along the edge of the walled graveyard and from this path some charming and unexpected views of the settlement may be glimpsed through the trees.



The buildings of the Conservation Area, with the exception of the Old Cottage, are informally set back from the lane behind hedges and stone walls, although the church and buildings nearest to the Grade II listed telephone box sit higher than the lane on earth banks. These are retained by walls of local stone where the lane dips slightly. There are no pavements or kerb stones, and grass verges segregate the black-top from property boundaries instead. Frequently, buildings are centrally sited on their plots, with planted gardens around on all sides. The large spaces between the buildings together with mature shrubs and trees reinforce the rural atmosphere of this settlement.

Apart from Holly Lodge and a consciously modern extension at the Old Farmhouse there has been little modern development in the settlement, and certainly no infill development. Lady Croft to the north of St Chad's church remains an open field, and the traditional relationship between a small settlement and countryside context is very much in evidence.

The day-to-day workings of Church Farm are not readily visible from the road, being set back along a small driveway, and this adds to the stillness of the settlement. This Conservation Area retains all of the elements of the special architectural and historic interest, the character and appearance of which is desirable to preserve.

Buildings

The most significant building in the Conservation Area is the parish church of St. Chad, a Grade II* listed building of interest which is located in the east of the hamlet next door to Church Cottage. The interior has a low-pitched, panelled roof dating from the late 15th to early 16th century, with moulded beams and bosses. Pevsner mentions the church's Jacobean pulpit. The nave and chancel date from the twelfth century; later additions include a sixteenth century vestry and the south aisle which dates from 1861 and was probably built in response to the independence granted to St Chad's in 1857. A small, modest structure, the church is of coursed sandstone rubble with a plain clay tiled roof and an oak shingled belfry. Twentieth century additions include the timber belfry and spirelet, and west porch.



A number of Grade II listed tombs are to be found in the walled graveyard which surrounds the church, as are the remains of a medieval sandstone church cross whose octagonal shaft and square socket stone were converted into a sundial in the nineteenth century (also listed Grade II). The variety of mature trees adds to the lush tranquillity of the graveyard which sits above Church Lane and is entered from the lane through simple wooden gates or via the adjacent stone stile.

Church Farm is found further along Church Lane, west of the church and opposite the two local authority terraces. A handsome three-storey timber-framed building dating from the sixteenth century, its two symmetrical jettied gables are joined by a recessed central bay with a central red brick chimney stack above a tiled roof. Grade II listed, the building is an H-plan house with lozenge decoration, and its position above the road adds to its already dominant appearance.



Following the lane west a short distance, the nearest neighbour to Church Farm is the Old Farmhouse, which is also Grade II listed and has attached to it a former malthouse with stone mullioned windows which has now been incorporated into the main house. The 16th-17th century farmhouse is T-shaped and two-storied, with timber and brick noggin at ground floor level and render and some timber framing at first floor. Set back from the roadside behind a dressed stone garden wall and hedging, its main range is set at a right angle to the lane and a modern 20th century glass and tile extension extends westerly from this, parallel with the lane. Attached to the Old Farmhouse and malthouse is a Grade II

listed re-used cruck framed barn of timber, sandstone ashlar and redbrick with a dentilled eaves cornice.

On the south side of Church Lane, further along from the Old Farmhouse, is the Old Cottage, a vernacular Grade II listed building of one and a half storeys. The rectangular historic part of the property was added to considerably in the 20th century and has been marred by the visual impact of modern fenestration. It is half-timbered with painted brick infill on a sandstone plinth, and has a tiled roof, modern dormer and casement windows and brick end stacks.



Opposite this building behind a thick hedge on the north side of the lane is the Old Vicarage, an attractive unlisted two-storey Victorian redbrick building with polychromatic detailing as a result of the use of alternate courses of headers and stretchers in contrasting colours. With its hipped roof, very tall chimneys and an ornate conservatory, it is likely to have been built for the new resident incumbent of St. Chad's following the creation of the parish in 1857.

Building Materials

The primary building materials used throughout the Conservation Area are traditional sandstone in a variety of finishes and dressings, red brick and clay roof tiles. Timber framing is also used in a number of key buildings, with infill panels of both brick and whitewashed render. At the Old Farmhouse a combination of all these materials occurs on the same range of buildings. Sandstone boundary walls occur throughout the Conservation Area, and a small amount of decorative stonework can be seen in the church, which has a simple stringcourse, parapetted gables in ashlar and ornamental window mouldings.

More recent buildings use modern brick and roughcast whitewashed render with machined tiles. Engineering bricks are used in conjunction with red brick as a decorative feature at Church Cottage, and slate has been used for the roof of the Old Vicarage. Less common materials such as timber shingles are used to great effect on the belfry of St. Chad's church, and the glass extension at the Old Farmhouse serves to contrast with the traditional materials on display elsewhere in the building.

Architectural Details

A variety of window types are on display in the Conservation Area and they are located in a mixture of vertically and horizontally proportioned openings. Original stone mullioned and wood mullioned windows are found at the Old Farmhouse and Church Farm respectively. Modern painted timber casements have been used to the detriment of the appearance of the Old Cottage, Church Cottage and No's 4 and 5, although no uPVC has as yet been used in the Conservation Area other than Velux windows in a modern garage behind the Old Cottage. Dormer windows are extant on a number of buildings, and a sole instance of the use of horned sash windows can be seen at the Old Vicarage where the window openings vary tremendously



in size. Doors are generally recessed or are associated with a porch or hood. Those that can be seen are generally modern and the few that are original are boarded and painted.



Chimneys are all made of brick found both on the ridges and gable ends, and they are an important feature of the Conservation Area as some are substantial and make a strong impact. Roofs are generally gabled with plain verges. The only hipped roofs to be seen are those of the 20th century local authority housing and The Old Vicarage. Most of the roofs are at least 40 degrees in pitch, however the Vicarage's slate and lead hipped roof is extremely shallow. All ridge tiles are unadorned except for those at Church Cottage which are of a trefoil design, though largely damaged.

The Character of the Conservation Area

Boningale has a strong and largely unspoilt rural character, despite its proximity to the busy A464 and Albrighton. The hamlet is located entirely within the Conservation Area boundary, and is linear in form, following the route of Church Lane along its length. Its character and appearance is at odds with the landscape in which it is found because Boningale is largely enclosed by high hedges and tree cover, and has limited views out beyond the settlement. Conversely, the surrounding countryside is one of broad, flat fields bounded by low hedges and low, planted ridges in the distance. Although the hamlet is small in scale, the position of the church at its eastern end and the informal scattering of its few buildings leave it without a focal point.



The eastern entrance to the Conservation Area is from the A464 onto the hedge-bounded, single track Church Lane. Views are limited by the succession of bends as the grass-verged road winds its way into the hamlet. Rounding the bend the gable end of No. 5 comes into view immediately ahead and the hedges diminish, reducing the feeling of enclosure and opening views to the south. Beyond Church Cottage on the left is St Chad's Church, sited higher than the road behind the stone wall of the graveyard. A number of mature trees add to the serenity of the scene and partially obscure the small church from view. Thick holly hedges form the boundaries to the gardens of several properties in this part of the Conservation Area and hide any sight of the local authority housing at this point.



Overhead power lines following the line of the lane slightly mar the hamlet's appearance as Church Lane proceeds west. Likewise, electricity pylons can be seen to the south. As another bend in the lane sweeps to the right, Church Farm suddenly comes into view in its imposing position above the lane and again imposes shade and a sense of enclosure on it. This is despite the undefined boundary of a recently extended terrace of local authority housing to the north. The hedge and mature trees beside the phone box, which are tall and obscure any views out of the settlement across Lady Croft, swiftly

reimpose the boundary, as does the tall sandstone wall on the left hand side. It is here that the historic character of the settlement is most pronounced, with Church Farm, the Old Farmhouse and the Old Cottage all successively located on the left hand side of the road, separated from the tarmac by grass verges and stone walls.

At the junction of Church Lane with New House Lane a short distance ahead, the sense of enclosure diminishes temporarily. Views are of the tree bounded New House Lane and its 'no entry' sign to the north and a less attractive one of two galvanised grain stores at the end of the concrete drive to the south, beyond which there is no southerly view. The red brick gable end of the Old Farmhouse is extremely prominent at this point and contrasts most attractively with the other materials used in the building and the vegetation around it. The sense of enclosure is restored once again as the lane proceeds around another gentle bend, bringing the Old Cottage on the left and part of the Old Vicarage and an outbuilding on the right into view.



As the western extent of the Conservation Area is approached at the junction with Patshull Lane, thick hedging and trees on both sides of the road inhibit views out of the settlement other than the one straight ahead which is of rolling open countryside. One brief glimpse of Lea Hall across the field to the north can be seen through a gateway beside Holly Lodge, a secluded modern bungalow on the right. The grass verges prevalent throughout the hamlet become much wider at this point, and together with the damp ditch on the right provide a peaceful corridor habitat for wildlife.



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