

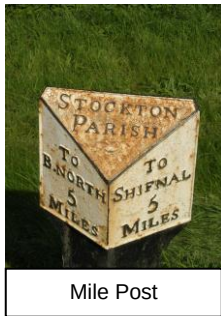


NORTON CONSERVATION AREA APPRAISAL

The Norton Conservation Area was designated on 9 March 1981 by Bridgnorth District Council.

LOCATION

Norton is a small village in the parish of Stockton and lies on the old turnpike road, now designated the A442, between Bridgnorth and Shifnal. This little settlement, situated five miles north of Bridgnorth, five miles south of Shifnal and ½ mile north of Stockton is predominately an estate village owned by the Apley Park Estate.



Mile Post

The village centre, adjacent to The Hundred House Inn and



The Hundred House Inn

the former Norton School, lies at a crossroads formed by the south-north axis of the A442 being intersected by Village Road running in an easterly direction and Cheswardine Lane a narrow rural lane running south-west in the direction of Apley Home Farm and the River Severn. Windmill Lane lies slightly north of the crossroads and runs parallel to Village Road, starting at Bridgnorth Road, the

A442, and terminating at the Apley Estate Yard and the open fields at its eastern extremity.

The Norton Conservation Area is cruciform in shape with its centre axis taking in the properties on both sides of the A442 from South Lodge in the south to No 1 Bridgnorth Road at its northern end. At the Hundred House Hotel the western arm of the cross runs in a westerly direction enveloping the rear boundaries of the properties fronting the south and north sides of Cheswardine Lane before terminating to the west side of Number 21. To the east of the A442 Bridgnorth Road the Conservation Area takes in all of Village Road, as far as The Thatch and number 8/9 Village Road, and Windmill Lane to a point immediately east of the Apley Estate Yard to form the second arm of the east-west axis.

TOPOGRAPHY AND SETTING

A small attractive rural hamlet, Norton is almost totally



A442 towards Bridgnorth

surrounded by open farmland, which despite being located near to a busy main road still maintains its rural character. The settlement is linear in pattern with its south to north axis straddling the A442 road. To the west and east of the main road the linear pattern continues, with the predominately estate properties sitting either side of narrow country lanes. The Bridgnorth to Shifnal road rises slightly to meet the village

boundary at a point approximately ½ mile north of Stockton. The Conservation Area, the centre of which is approximately 1 mile to the east of the River Severn, occupies a level plateau bounded by the cultivated field systems of the Apley Estate's Home Farm. The vast majority of Norton's dwellinghouses back on to farmland and, with the exception of Bridgnorth Road, are fronted by narrow country lanes. For the most part Village Road and Cheswardine Lane are lined by a mix of residential, farm and, occasionally, light industrial or commercial buildings or by hedgerows and mature trees. The enclosed atmosphere of the lanes opens out at their furthest points from the A442 as buildings give way to farm gates and hedgerows allowing fleeting glimpses of the open country beyond.



Village Road forms an almost separate nucleated settlement of mainly 19th to early 20th century estate workers cottages, a former Victorian School and Norton House together with its fully operational farm yard complex. To the south and east of Village Road farmland bounds the rear elevations of those properties abutting the roadside. Windmill Lane and the commercial units, housed in former agricultural buildings, separate Village Road

from cultivated fields to the north and north east of the settlement.

The majority of the older cottages, especially those in Village Road, still retain their former pigsties, allotments and outbuildings. Although the pigsties are no longer inhabited by their former occupants the allotments are still being



worked today for domestic vegetable production and chicken rearing. The lanes here are narrow and closed in, either by dwellings or hedgerows, and footpaths, where they exist at all, usually occur on one side of the roadway.

A narrow single track runs north from Village Road leading to numbers 13-16 where it terminates. A similar thoroughfare runs parallel to it, linking Village Road with Windmill Lane running east to west across its junction. Properties here are set back behind long frontages and separated from the road by low timber paling fences and clipped hedges. Redundant barns and



other agricultural buildings, now used as garages or for storage are dotted haphazardly between cottages. The farm complex to

Norton House on the other hand is a hive of activity, mainly accommodating the delivery, storage and distribution of vegetable produce.

Either side of Bridgnorth Road, the A442, the narrow sinuous lanes of Village Road and Cheswardine Lane gently snake east and westwards through agricultural fields. The lanes here go nowhere and terminate at cultivated countryside or park land. These lanes are closed in by hedgerows abutting the highway in most places, except that is where timber paling fences separate long frontage plots of estate workers' cottages and the few private dwellings along their edges. While a few dwellings such as 8/9 and 24 Village Road and 13-14, and 21 Cheswardine



Lane front directly onto the roadside, most are separated from thoroughfares by long frontage plots. Numbers 11-15 Bridgnorth Road front the public footpath adjoining the access spur beside the main road. Footpaths are few and far between in the Conservation Area and where they do occur they are black topped, short and narrow, and usually to be found on one side of the road. Grass verges are also found in short supply, giving those parts of the Conservation Area a quiet, rural feel.

The character of the Conservation Area east and west of the A442 is one of an ancient farming

community, cut off from modern life as if in some type of time warp.

Bridgnorth Road, the A442, on the other hand is a busy road carrying traffic between Telford to the north and Bridgnorth in the south. Either side of Norton this road is straight and fast moving. At the village's centre, however, there is a sharp double bend where the former Norton School closes the view northwards and the Hundred House Inn obscures the view southwards towards Bridgnorth. Hedgerows and embankments, together with a number of mature trees, close the views east and



westwards. Most of the passing drivers would be totally oblivious, therefore, to the tranquillity of the rural environment and country lanes on either side of the main road.

HISTORY

Norton, which derives from Old English meaning "*north farm/settlement*"¹, is not specifically mentioned in Domesday Book. It would appear, however, that it was an appurtenance² of Higford or Hugford, which the Anglo-Saxon thegn³ Godwin Earl of Wessex, held at the time of Edward the

¹ A Key to English Place-Names, Nottingham University

² Definition: "Belonging to by right; accessory" – Oxford English Dictionary.

³ Definition; "Thegns were the free-retainers and body-servants of the king or nobles" – see also "Thane".

Confessor.

Godwin died at Winchester in 1053. His place as possibly the most powerful Anglo-Saxon of the period was taken by his son, Harold who had become Earl of East Anglia in 1046. Harold and his cousin,



Saxon helmet

Beorn, shared his earldoms of Hereford, Gloucester and Oxford.

After the Conquest the Normans divided up the lands of the

vanquished Saxon Lords and by the 12th century Norton appears to have been held for the Norman baron, Roger de Lacy. Two hundred years after Domesday it was recorded to be in the hands of Sir William of Hugford, knight, as part of his manor of Hugford, which also included townships of Norton, Apley and Astall. It remained with the Hugfords for over four hundred years before passing to Alice of Hugford who became the wife of Sir Thomas Lucy of Charlecotte.

Stockton Parish, of which Norton is a part, was purchased in 1572 by Sir William Whitmore from Sir Thomas Lucy of Charlecotte Park⁴, the estate where, it is rumoured, William Shakespeare was caught poaching. The Whitmores were largely responsible for developing and building up the Apley Estate. The Parish remained in the family for over three hundred years until Douglas Whitmore sold Apley Park to William Orr Foster in 1867 for what is believed to have been a

record amount at that time. His uncle, James Foster, was a prominent Midland ironmaster, who in 1837 became the sole owner of John Bradley & Co., a successful iron works based in Stourbridge. James died a bachelor in 1853 and left his entire estate, which included the Stourbridge Iron Works, to his nephew William Orme Foster.

W. O. Foster was a successful businessman and on acquiring Apley in 1867 set about running the estate in a very businesslike manner. His first task was to carry out a full inventory of the estate and its assets and it is said that he knew every detail of his properties even down to things such as



William Orme Foster

porches attached to his workers' cottages. W. O. Foster was responsible for building Home Farm House as well as several cottages for his workers. Despite the depression in agriculture at the time he set about improving the estate and workers' dwellings. He also set about the reorganising field layouts, enclosing them with straight fencing into parcels of twenty acres. At that time half the fields were in permanent pasture and the rest in a four year rotation cycle thus producing the landscape we see today.

William Foster's son, William Henry Foster, took over management of Apley Estate from his father and at his death in 1899 inherited a well equipped and well organised estate. W. H. Foster died in 1924

⁴ Apley Estate records

and A. W. Foster his son and heir, who had lost a leg while serving as a Major in "The Blues" in the 1914-1918 war, took over Apley. It was Major A. W. Foster who planted the oak tree on the village green by the stocks. He died a bachelor in 1960 and Apley Estate passed to his nephew, Major-General E. H. Goldburn who died a bachelor in 1980 and his brother Brigadier Cuthbert Goldburn of Ewdness who, in 1990, also died a bachelor. The Estate passed to the present owners the Lords Hamilton of Dalzell, via Amy Cecile Ricardo a cousin of the Goldburns.

PATTERN OF DEVELOPMENT

The Norton Conservation Area follows a linear form along both sides of the A442 Bridgnorth Road, Village Road, Windmill Lane and Cheswardine Lane, east of number 21 and up to its junction with Bridgnorth Road, the old Bridgnorth to Shifnal turnpike and now the A442.



7-12, Cheswardine Lane

Cheswardine Lane and Village Road form two original but separate nucleate settlements while Windmill Lane and much of Bridgnorth Road are more modern developments. Both Cheswardine Lane and Village Road contain one or two 16th-17th century dwellings. However, the majority are estate workers' cottages from the late 19th

century expansion of the Apley Estate.

At the northern end of the Conservation Area towards Shifnal is the 17th century, Grade II Listed, 1 Bridgnorth Road. On the southern end, towards Bridgnorth, is the 19th century South Lodge also Grade II. Between them both, with the exception of the 18th century Hundred House Inn and a small group of modern dwelling houses, is a predominately 19th century eclectic mix of houses.

The pattern of development in the Norton Conservation area is one of an isolated rural community that probably had its beginnings in the late 16th to early 17th centuries. During the 18th century there had



been some minor development of the settlement but it was the mid to late 19th and early 20th century that Norton expanded. This was the Foster era which resulted in the re-organisation and expansion of the Apley Home Farm and the Estate workshops in Windmill Lane. Elsewhere on the Estate new housing was constructed and existing workers' cottages refurbished. Although many estate houses still had very few or no sanitary amenities, piped water was brought to strategically placed stand pipes around the village. Much of the housing stock today originated during that period.

Similarly a second regeneration scheme started in the post war era of the late forties/early fifties when rows of council and estate housing were erected in Cheswardine Lane (nos. 7 -12), Village Road (nos. 17 – 21) and Windmill Lane (nos. 1 – 8). Isolated infill site developments in Bridgnorth Road and one or two new builds in Village Road and Windmill Lane occurred in the seventies and eighties.



1-8, Windmill Lane

All in all the pattern of the Conservation Area is one of a country estate village that has developed continually over the least three hundred years, commencing with the 17th century and reaching its zenith in the 19th but continuing on in to the 20th century.

BUILDINGS

A number of Listed Buildings are to be found in the Norton Conservation Area, including South Lodge, the Hundred House Inn (including the barn to the north-west of it) and number 1 Bridgnorth Road, 5 – 6 and 24 Village Road and 13-14, 17 and 21 Cheswardine Lane, all of which are Grade II. The stocks and whipping post on the village green are also Listed Grade II. Once the counting house of the Whitmores, the 18th century, Grade II Listed Hundred House Inn occupies a prominent roadside site

on the double bend in the Bridgnorth Road. It is one of the few Georgian properties in Norton. Elsewhere in the Conservation Area 17th century traditional timber framed estate workers' cottages sit cheek by jowl with their 19th and 20th century brick built counterparts.

The Victorian period has had an obvious impact on the village and mid 19th to early 20th century buildings predominate throughout the Conservation Area. The former Norton School of circa 1860 is rather idiosyncratic in style and architectural detailing. Occupying a prominent position on a bend at the junction of Bridgnorth and Village Roads the former Victorian Primary School has been described by Pevsner as being “an eccentric affair of buff brick with black dressings”⁵. It has a trompe l’oeil illusionistic coloured panel above its large east window.

There are a few obviously Georgian buildings, notably the Hundred House and 8-9 (The Old Shop), Bridgnorth Road. Properties of an earlier period include Number 1, Bridgnorth Road, 13-14, 17 and 21 Cheswardine Lane, The Thatch, 8-9 and 24 Village Road and are of 17th century origin. Small groups of post WWII housing occupy sites in Windmill Lane, Village Road and Cheswardine Lane and represent the social housing styles of their time. Some 20th century developments are to be found in Village Road and Windmill Lane which appear, on the face of it, not to be too much at odds with their neighbouring properties. However,

⁵ The Buildings of England Shropshire – John Newman and Nickolas Pevsner; Yale University Press

it would be difficult to justify the



Bridgnorth Road

small row of chalet style houses lining the west side of Bridgnorth Road just north of the Hundred House Inn as being at one with the rest of the Conservation Area in terms of architectural styling.

Many of the earlier Apley Estate workers' cottages situated in Village Road and Cheswardine Lane still retain their original brick built detached outbuildings, including former pigsties.

MATERIALS

Throughout the Norton Conservation Area traditional materials are a major characteristic. Plain red roof tiles, either handmade clay or machine made, predominate. Thatch, however, does appear on a small number of 17th century buildings, namely the barn adjacent to Hundred House Inn, Bridgnorth Road, The Thatch and number 24, Village Road and on 13 and 14 Cheswardine Lane, all of which are timber framed. 17 and 21, Cheswardine Lane, unfortunately, have since lost their original thatch covering and now sport modern plain tiles of an indiscriminate colour and texture. Small numbers of gabled dormers and half-dormers are to be found throughout the conservation area. The treatment to gables and verges of gable ends and dormers is

generally in plain cement pointing, although a number are finished with wide timber bargeboards, either plain finished or decorative.

Many of the properties in the Norton Conservation Area are either of red clay face brickwork construction or, in the case of timber framed building, have similar brickwork infill panels. Others have had their brick facades colour washed or rendered over. The amber brick built 22-23, Village Road and buff brick finished chalet bungalows on Bridgnorth Road are exceptions. 11-15, Bridgnorth Road



22-23, Village Road

have external walls of either red or amber brickwork and occasionally a mix of both in the same elevation.

The unconventional Victorian architectural style of the church-like Norton School has a dramatic impact on the locality. Its position on a sharp bend in the busy A442 main road at its junction with Village Road makes it visually imperious. The school's buff coloured brickwork, contrasting black brick dressing, shouldered arch lintols, cast iron window frames, saddle back clock turret and the trompe l'oeil decorated tympanum of its east window are a complete departure from the surrounding buildings. However, its one off eccentricity somehow allows this land mark building to be assimilated into the Norton

streetscape.



Norton School

ARCHITECTURAL DETAILS

Norton contains a varied mix of building styles ranging in date dating from 17th century workers cottages to modern houses. In most instances the varied architectural detailing of its buildings is an important element of Norton's special character. Except for a few 17th century timber framed buildings, the majority of Norton's housing stock is of brick construction chiefly dating from the mid to late 19th century, a period of major expansion and development in Norton. The late 18th/early 19th century Arts and Crafts inspired architecture of Jubilee Cottages, Windmill Lane, together with numbers 2-3 and 15-16, Cheswardine Lane incorporate fine building craftsmanship and the use of natural materials that personify the style of the period. The use of natural materials such as bulk oak timbers, metal casements, clay



1 – 3, Jubilee Cottages, Windmill Lane

brick and tile embody the vernacular and complement the neighbouring 17th century timber framed architecture.

Eaves details are, in the main, left plain or are of the modern boxed variety supporting fascia boards and soffits. An exception is the former Norton School which has eccentric modillion style eaves detailing of contrasting brickwork. A small number of 19th century dwellings encompass corbelled and/or dentilled brickwork eaves courses and a few have contrasting coloured brickwork dressings.

Monogrammed date stones on Estate owned dwellings signify the exact date of their construction as well as the name of the benefactor.



Typical Date Plaque

Window openings, in the main, are horizontal and of casement proportions and are the dominate window type. Sash windows, however, do occur in the Conservation Area, albeit infrequently and can be seen in Norton House, South Lodge and Norton Villa. Elsewhere, evidence suggests that vertical sliding windows have been replaced by timber opening casements. The majority of the casement windows in Norton are of timber, with or without glazing bars, although a number of metal framed casements can be seen. Those cast iron casements of Norton School and



Yew Tree Farm House, to the rear of The Hundred House, with their decorative glazing bars and small panes, are especially notable. The timber frames with metal opening casements on the Grade II listed, 5-6 Village Road have unfortunately been lost but others occur on the Jubilee Cottages, Windmill Lane, and on 21 and 24 Village Road alongside standard timber casements. Many of the modern dwellings have plastic windows while the majority of the post war Council and Estate housing have had PVCu replacement windows installed.

Gabled front entrance door canopies appear on the row of the 19th century estate cottages, 12 -15 Bridgnorth Road, and the 20th century constructed Spoonacre in Village Road sports a plain tiled, pent roofed canopy supported on timber gallows brackets, while Norton House, also in Village Road, has a hipped roof version over a rear doorway. Norton House also has a very fine early 19th century decorative, cast-iron, open porch under a lead covered swept hipped roof adorning its front door. Elsewhere in Norton



brickwork door porches, both enclosed or open under gabled tiled roofs, are to be found but these are in the minority. Those attached to Norton School, Village Road and the retro fitted one on the 50's council houses in Cheswardine Lane are the closed variety. The brick porches of the post war workers cottages in Windmill Lane are open as is the simple timber panelled version on the Grade II Listed 21 Cheswardine Lane. Doorcases and frames are generally plain and unadorned and doors by and large are fairly functional affairs of either timber panelled, planked or glass & timber panelled.



Norton House, Village Road

THE CHARACTER OF THE CONSERVATION AREA

This Apley Estate Village has a very distinctive character of its own. The special character is a result of a combination of many factors including its self-containment, topography, trees, architectural styles, materials, hedgerows and boundary fences. Sinuous, hedgerow lined lanes, domestic palisade fencing terminating directly on to the roadside, the working farmsteads and industrial units all contribute to Norton's

strong self sufficient, rural community character. The presence of the former primary school, albeit now redundant, coupled with the dominant 19th century Estate property architecture adds to this independent quality. The materials used in the construction of its buildings; plain roof tiles, large chimney stacks, gabled roof and dormers, stone and red brick; together with the surrounding rural countryside of tree planted parkland, hedgerow enclosed farmland and a self containment all contribute to a character that epitomises the quintessential *olde* English country village. There are few visible commercial ventures in



Commercial Unit – Village Road

the Norton Conservation Area apart from the presence of the Hundred House Inn, working farms of Norton House and nearby Apley Home Farm and two or three discrete offices and workshops housed in the old school and adjacent workshop buildings. The Apley Estate yard and workshops in Windmill Lane lie on the north eastern boundary of the Conservation Area. A nearby and less discrete commercial unit occupies former agricultural buildings, just beyond the yard and outside the boundary line. The village itself has no shops and very few public amenities, save for a village hall.



Village Road

With few exceptions the vast majority of the buildings in the Norton Conservation Area are Apley Estate built workers' cottages. Occupying fairly sizable plots they are generally set back from the roadway and separated from it by timber palisade fencing and long frontages. Its rural aspect, distinctive architecture and boundary delineation are, therefore, major features of the Conservation Area.

Immediately north of Norton School and accessible from Windmill Lane, the former school playing field now serves as children's play area and public open space. This space opens up views from Windmill Lane towards the rear elevation of Norton School and 6 & 7, Village Road. Adjacent to 8/9, Bridgnorth Road, a bowling green and pavilion, obscured from public view by high hedges, is situated. While in Cheswardine Lane, immediately north west of number 12 a sports ground opens up the vista across farmland to the north of the Conservation Area, typifying the independent character of the settlement.



Play/Sports Field Windmill Lane

NORTON CONSERVATION AREA PLAN

