

BECKBURY CONSERVATION AREA APPRAISAL

This appraisal was approved by Bridgnorth District Council's Planning Committee on 13 September 1999.

The Beckbury Conservation Area was designated on 5 January 1981. Revisions to the boundary were designated on 5 January 2000.

Beckbury is a small village 8 miles north-east of Bridgnorth and 5 miles south-east of Telford. The conservation area comprises the historic core of the village including High Street and the Church of St. Milburga, Beckbury Hall and its grounds, part of Badger Lane including the School and Nos. 27-28, part of Caynton Road up to and including Nos. 42 and 43, and Madeley Road up to and including The Lower Hall and its grounds.

Topography

Beckbury lies largely on the western side of a low sandstone ridge running north-south and with a shallower fall northwards towards High Street. This provides varied and attractive views both within the village and out into the surrounding countryside. Trees – individual, in groups and belts – make an important contribution to the strong rural character of the village.

History

The name Beckbury derives from 'Becca's burh (house)'. In 1086 Roger of Montgomery, Earl of Shrewsbury, held the manor of Beckbury. Between 1120 and the Dissolution in 1540 the lords of the manor paid rent to Much Wenlock Priory, and from 1540 to 1828 to the Crown. The village probably originated as a nucleated settlement around the church, which is of 13th-century origin. The earliest surviving houses, Beckbury Hall and the White House, are of 16th or early 17th-century origin.

The three open fields of the mediaeval system, north, east and south of the village, and the heath land had all been enclosed by the early 18th century. Since then the land surrounding Beckbury has remained chiefly in agricultural use. The population of the parish rose from 231 in 1801 to 307 in 1831, remaining at that level until the end of the century. In the 19th and earlier part of the 20th centuries Beckbury supported a variety of trades including food shops, blacksmith, wheelwright, carpenter, plumber, builder and draper, and beerhouse. After the Second World War Beckbury grew considerably as new houses were built in the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s. The parish population had fallen to 262 in 1921, but by 1951 it was 372; in 1997 it was 370. The pub remains but there are no longer any shops and there is little employment within the village.

Pattern of Settlement

Beckbury's historic pattern is largely linear, with buildings irregularly scattered and grouped along a number of roads. It changed little in size or plan between the mid-18th

and mid-20th centuries. Since the 1950s it has been consolidated to some extent by infill development, but remains largely intact. Its survival is an important element of the conservation area's historic character and shapes its appearance. The core of the village is the church in its churchyard and Beckbury Hall in its extensive grounds and parkland. There are two historic farmsteads within the village centre: Beckbury Farm remains in use, but Church Farm has been converted to residential and business use.

The roads are relatively narrow, with footways generally along only one side, emphasising the small village character. High Street follows an irregular rectangular plan skirting round three sides of the Hall grounds and the churchyard. The greatest concentration of buildings is on the section running southwards from Beckbury Farm to Madeley Road, where houses and cottages of varying dates and sizes are irregularly grouped more or less continuously along both sides. Elsewhere buildings are largely concentrated on the northern side, contrasting with long stretches of walls and high banks. Around the junction with Caynton Road a row of cottages and Church Farm on the north side form a concentrated grouping of buildings tight against the road contrasting with the much larger Beckbury Hall and church set well back in their own grounds.

Madeley Road also has scattered buildings along the northern side only. Most of Beckbury's 20th-century expansion has been concentrated to the north along Caynton Road and Ryton Road, outside the conservation area. The School, Beckbury Cottage and Nos. 27-28 (Hawthorn House) were once isolated buildings scattered on the fringe of the village, but mid 20th-century development of houses between has coalesced them as part of a secondary group of buildings almost separate from the rest of Beckbury.

Within this pattern there is considerable variety. Beckbury Hall, Beckbury Farm and Church Farm and the Old Barn comprise substantial groups of historic buildings of varying sizes. Beckbury Hall, The Lower Hall and the Old Rectory are large houses set in extensive grounds. There are numerous smaller detached and a few semi-detached houses such as Nos. 37-38 set in long plots with wide frontages; Nos. 54-5 and 57-8 have narrow frontages but very long and very short plots respectively. Nos. 47-50 Caynton Road and the Seven Stars, Oakwood Cottage and Hill Top in Madeley Road are the only rows of attached properties. Houses and cottages are generally of 2 storeys, or one storey and attic; the largest house, Beckbury Hall, is of 2 storeys and attic.

Most buildings are set back from the road behind front gardens, varying from the very narrow strips of No. 36 or Nos. 54-5 to large areas such as those of Quarry House, Poachers Moon Cottage and the School. The Old Barn in High Street, Oakwood Cottage and Hill Top, Hawthorn House in Badger Lane and Nos. 42-3 Caynton Road are unusual in fronting directly onto the highway. Most properties face the road, but Nos. 63-64 and 65 High Street are set at right angles to it, while No. 4/5 Madeley Road is isolated from the road behind other buildings.

Buildings

Beckbury has a varied mix of buildings, from mediaeval to modern. Many of them are of

considerable architectural and historic interest. The earliest is the Grade II* listed Church of St. Milburga. This is of 13th-century origin, with a 14th-century chancel, a Georgian nave and low tower of c.1731, a south aisle added in 1856 and a north aisle of 1880, and a porch of 1888. Its small scale and simple detailing perfectly complement the small village character of Beckbury.

A number of buildings are of 16th or early 17th- century origin. The Grade II listed Beckbury Hall is a large house remodelled in the early 18th century and enlarged and altered in the late 19th century: the contrast of the original gabled form and applied timbering (almost certainly over original framing), Georgian brickwork and details and late Victorian work gives the house interest and variety, and the group of 18th-century outbuildings including a stable block and a former laundry are also of considerable interest.

Nos. 63-64 and 65 High Street are partly 17th-century, with some exposed timber framing visible from the street, but other houses of similar date are less obvious. The 16th or 17th-century origins of Poachers Moon Cottage (Grade II) and The White House (listed Grade II) are almost entirely concealed from the front by 19th-century painted brickwork facing and additions. The White House's original roof pitch has been reduced to the front, but survives to the rear. The Grade II listed Church Farmhouse is a substantial 17th-century house with 18th-century additions, remodelled in the 19th century. The house and 18th and 19th-century former farm buildings including The Old Barn form a very prominent group in the centre of the village.

There are few obviously Georgian buildings. Quarry House (Grade II) is an early 19th-century house with a symmetrical 3-bay front and matching single-storey one-bay wings. Beckbury Farmhouse has a long, low irregular range which is probably 18th-century, and an early/mid 19th-century 2-storey formal range to the street. The house and extensive range of largely intact early/mid 19th-century farm buildings form another important group which makes an important contribution to the conservation area's historic character and appearance. The Old Rectory appears to be partly 18th-century, but was much enlarged and altered in the 19th-century, notably in 1891.

The Victorian period has had a more obvious impact on the village. Beckbury House is a symmetrical early Victorian house with some interesting details. The Grade II listed Primary School of 1852 has a quite unusual plan with the schoolmaster's house beneath the schoolrooms rather than attached to them. The Village Hall built in 1889 by Colonel Alfred Capel Cure is a plain and unobtrusive building, reminiscent of a Nonconformist chapel. There are also some distinctive mid/late Victorian small houses, both individual - Nos. 36 High Street and 50 Caynton Road, and in pairs – Nos. 37-38 High Street and 42-43 Caynton Road. All have blue brick dressings, decorative bargeboards to roofs, gables over 1st-floor windows and porches, and prominent chimneys. No. 65 has a taller mid 19th-century brick addition with decorative bargeboards and many-paned windows with 'Tudor' style brick hood moulds.

Beckbury also has some rather more unusual historic structures. The cast iron parish trough in High Street dated 1854 is listed Grade II. In the grounds of Beckbury Hall is a listed 19th-century ice house or beer cellar and a circular stone platform which is listed as a cockpit, but is more likely to be an 18th-century platform for a temple or summer. In

the churchyard is the Grade II listed Barnfield Memorial, an early 19th-century stone pedestal and vase with cast iron finial. Other structures are also important to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area, particularly the sandstone or brick boundary and retaining walls to many properties, notably the churchyard and Beckbury Hall. Beckbury Hall has several sets of good quality stone gate piers of various designs. There are also attractive iron gates and simple railings such as those to Nos. 54-55 High Street.

Many of the old buildings of Beckbury retain much of their historic character, and have largely escaped unsympathetic modern alterations. The designs of Nos. 39 and 40 High Street reflect some of the forms and details of Beckbury's traditional buildings, but other 20th-century buildings have made little positive contribution to the character and appearance of the conservation area.

Materials

Traditional building materials are an important element of Beckbury's appearance. The local red sandstone is used in a variety of buildings, notably the dressed stonework of the church, churchyard walls and monuments, the 'Cock pit', and boundary walls to Beckbury Hall and No. 50. More irregular stone can be seen in parts of buildings at Beckbury Farm and in garden walls and retaining walls such as those of No. 65 High Street, Beckbury Cottage and Poacher's Moon Cottage. In some buildings sandstone is combined with other materials, as in some of the buildings of Beckbury Farm and the high plinth of sandstone below 18th-century timber-framing of the barn attached to No. 36 High Street.

Timber framing is an equally distinctive local material, although there are no buildings wholly of exposed framing. The largest visible expanse is to the barn attached to No. 36, which has brick infill and a small amount of weatherboarding. Nos. 63-64 has blackened framing with painted brick infill to the gable end, but the framing is concealed by render to the front of No. 64. Nos. 30 and 65 have some exposed framing with brick infill, combined with rebuilding and additions wholly of brick, and Church Farmhouse and The White House have timber framing exposed to the rear. Beckbury Hall has applied timbering concealing timber framing. Poachers Moon Cottage has an exposed corner post as the only visible clue on the exterior to the timber framing hidden inside, but otherwise appears to be entirely of painted brick and stone.

The most widespread material is brick. The earliest now visible is probably the red brick used for the remodelling of Beckbury Hall in the early 18th century. Quarry House is of a similar red brick. Beckbury Farmhouse and most of its buildings, like The Old Barn, are of 18th and 19th-century red brick, but a 2-storey range is largely of buff brick. A number of Victorian houses and cottages, notably Nos. 36, 38-39, 50 and 54-55, have contrasting dressings of blue brick including segmental arches and sills to windows and dogtooth string courses to walls and chimneys. The School has yellow brick chimneys and dressings including string courses and cornices, sills and hood moulds to windows. Brick is also used for garden walls such as those of Beckbury House and Nos. 57-58.

Some buildings and walls retain the lime mortar of traditional construction, in stonework as in the church or brickwork such as Beckbury House. However, in other cases

intrusive repointing in inappropriate cement mortar, as in the barn attached to No. 36 and the chimneystack and garden wall of No. 65, has harmed both their appearance and historic character. Other buildings have their basic construction partly or wholly concealed by render - such as Beckbury Cottage - or paint - such as The Old Rectory and Nos. 42-43 Caynton Road. Church Farmhouse has both sandstone concealed by later render and 18th and 19th-century brick beneath paint.

The predominant roof material is clay tile, found on the majority of buildings. The weathered old tiles of buildings such as Poachers Moon Cottage and Nos. 48-50 are particularly attractive compared to the dull and mechanical appearance of machine-made modern tiles on the roof of the church nave and late 20th-century houses such as Treetops in High Street. The School and No. 65 have bands of fish-scale tiles adding interest. A few buildings have shallow-pitched blue slate roofs, notably Quarry House, The White House and The Old Rectory. Most buildings have pitched roofs, generally running parallel to the front of the building, but some such as Beckbury Hall, Beckbury Farmhouse and No. 65 have gabled cross wings. Gables generally have mortared tile or slate verges. Some buildings have had their original roofs replaced with inappropriate non-traditional materials such as the concrete tiles of the Seven Stars, damaging the historic appearance of the conservation area.

Architectural Details

Historic details in traditional materials are an important element of Beckbury's special character. The church has an interesting mixture of Gothic details including window tracery, mostly 19th-century, and simple early Georgian classical detailing including string courses, moulded cornices and quoins to the tower and parts of the nave. Other buildings are generally relatively simple and modest, without elaborate details. The early Georgian detail of Beckbury Hall is limited to plain string courses, ramped copings and ball finials.

Some buildings have simple brick dentil cornices such as those of Quarry House and The Old Barn, or simpler still the plain corbelled cornice of Nos. 58-59. Victorian buildings including the School, and houses and cottages such as No.50 are enlivened by string courses or cornices of contrasting brick. Gables are generally simply treated, with plain verges or painted timber bargeboards such as those of the Village Hall, but Nos. 6-7 Madeley Road and Church Farmhouse each have a crow-stepped gable. The Victorian Nos. 36, 38-39, 42-43 and 50 have windows breaking through the eaves beneath gables with decorative bargeboards, finials and pendants. A variety of chimneys form important features of most houses, adding interest to the skyline. No. 65 has a particularly prominent stepped external chimneybreast, but the majority are ridge or end stacks. The large central stack with diagonally-set square shafts and corbelling to Nos. 54-55 is perhaps the building's most impressive feature.

Openings are for the most part simply treated, with doors and windows set beneath segmental arches or in simple rectangular openings. More elaborate variations include the Georgian keyed lintels of Beckbury Hall and gauged brick flat arches of Quarry House, and brick hood moulds of the School, while Nos. 37-38 have brick hood moulds combined with ornamented stone cambered lintels. The projecting timber architraves and cornices to the ground floor windows of Beckbury House are exceptional. Beckbury

House, Quarry House and Beckbury Farmhouse have painted timber classical doorcases. Some buildings have porches which are part of the original design, such as the open-fronted brick porches of the Village Hall, Nos. 37-38 High Street and 42-43 Caynton Road, and the trellis porches of Nos. 36 and 50 High Street and Church Farmhouse. Others, such as those of Nos. 54-55 and 57-58 High Street, are obviously 20th-century additions.

There is a wide variety of doors. Some of the simpler buildings such as No. 37 High Street have original ledged plank doors, or decorative variations such as the ribbed doors of numerous houses including Nos. 36, 48, 50 and 65 High Street. Some of the larger houses have more formal part-glazed and panelled doors such as the pair of doors to The Old Rectory's porch, Beckbury Farmhouse and Beckbury House's door with decorative margin glazing bars, and the part-glazed 6-panelled door of Church Farmhouse. The double-leaf 6-panelled door and fanlight of Quarry House is the most formal treatment of all.

Sash windows to an entire elevation are rare. Quarry House has the many-paned sashes characteristic of its type, while Nos. 54-55 High Street have paired small 4-pane sashes. Beckbury Hall and The Old Rectory have a mixture of sashes and casements. Painted timber casements of various traditional types predominate, generally with side-hung opening lights sitting flush or recessed within the frame and with matching fixed and opening lights. A few iron opening lights survive, as at Beckbury Hall, The White House and Beckbury Farmhouse. Some casements have many glazing bars and panes, such as those of the School, Beckbury Cottage and the exceptionally large number of small panes in the 19th-century addition to No. 65 High Street. More widespread still are casements with horizontal glazing bars, whether a single bar such as those of Poachers Moon Cottage and the large casements of Beckbury House, or more commonly with two or more such as those of Nos. 37-38 and No. 50 High Street.

The special character and appearance of the conservation area can be gradually eroded by the cumulative effect of apparently minor alterations or unsympathetic replacement of details. Many buildings have modern standard pattern front doors inappropriate to the building, such as the stained half-glazed door to No. 38 High Street contrasting with the original plank door of its pair No. 37. Non-traditional materials such as the UPVC windows of Nos. 47 and 49 Caynton Road are equally damaging. Other alterations are even more drastic, such as the late 20th-century doors and windows in altered openings of Oakwood Cottage and Hill Top in Madeley Road.

The Character and Appearance of the Conservation Area

Beckbury is almost wholly rural and residential. Its small size, location away from any major through route and absence of a major employment centre means that traffic is limited and the village retains a quiet, tranquil feeling. Church Farm is no longer in agricultural use, but conversion of some of the buildings to business use continues to provide some employment. There is little other employment within the village: most people travel out to work. Beckbury retains many of the facilities and institutions essential to its historic village character. The parish church remains in active use, there is a flourishing primary school, a village hall, and a public house; all are historic buildings within the conservation area.

St. Milburga's Church and Beckbury Hall

The church and churchyard, Beckbury Hall and its grounds form the historic and visual core of Beckbury. The church is very much part of the street scene. It is built of a warm pink sandstone, on a small, almost domestic scale with varied roofs and gables and a small Georgian tower contrasting with Victorian Gothic details. The churchyard has sandstone retaining walls with simple stone piers and 19th-century iron gates, old monuments including a prominent war memorial, many trees, and old stone and brick boundary walls. It rises eastwards and southwards behind the church to a boundary with the steeply-sloping grounds of the Hall. The overall effect is particularly attractive, with a very strong unspoilt rural character.

Beckbury Hall set in gardens and grounds extending east, west and south has the character of a minor country house. Although at the heart of the village it stands rather aloof from it at right angles to the road, screened by walls and trees, and can only be glimpsed from High Street. The current entrance beside the churchyard is relatively simple, with low sandstone walls and a tree which is particularly prominent in the street scene. The more elaborate principal entrance slightly to the west has a higher wall and piers with ball finials and iron gates forming a strong architectural feature to High Street.

The Hall's entrance front can only be clearly seen from the churchyard's western end. The irregular elevation with a mixture of Georgian red brick, Victorian applied 'timber framing' and gables forms a fine group with its outbuildings and stable block, excellent stone gate piers with timber and iron gates and clipped yew hedge. Along the southern side of High Street the house and gardens are hidden behind a high 18th or 19th-century sandstone wall, which then gives way to a 19th-century brick wall; the dense row of *leylandii* behind the walls is rather at odds with the village character.

To the south east a belt of trees on rising ground behind the stable block forms an important element of the Hall's setting. Beyond it the grassland rising steeply behind the churchyard is also part of the Hall grounds. At the top is the most unusual and intriguing feature of the Conservation Area, 'The Cockpit'. A holly hedge and opposing iron gates encircle a sunken amphitheatre about 30 metres across. In the centre is a circular stone platform with steps, probably built in the 18th or early 19th century as a base for a temple or summerhouse. There is also an icehouse partly cut into the rock, a well and yew trees on a mound. It has the slightly mysterious character of a secret place, reflected perhaps in its identification with the illicit sport of cock fighting. But it is unlikely to have been used for that: in 1839 it was recorded as a garden to Beckbury Hall, perhaps a private dell created from a former quarry.

From the high ground outside 'The Cockpit' there are good views in many directions across the Hall, the church and the village to open countryside. Around it are prominent groups of conifers, poplars and other mature trees which are visible from various points within the village, notably from Badger Road. To the south an overgrown holly and hawthorn hedge running beside the public footpath separates the Hall grounds from farmland and forms the Conservation Area boundary. The hedge follows the fall of the land westwards down to Higford Lane. It bounds a large area which has a strong parkland character, with stands and groups of trees, some surrounded by iron railings.

There are views northwards across it to the Hall and large mature trees in the gardens.

Caynton Road and High Street to Snowdon Road

The junction of High Street and Caynton Road is the geographical centre of Beckbury. Nos. 47-50 are a varied and picturesque row set back at an angle across the corner behind shallow front gardens, making them particularly prominent in views westwards along High Street. No. 50 is the largest and most dominant, a mid/late Victorian double-fronted house of red brick with blue brick dressings which retains all of its original details. Nos. 47-49 are smaller, lower and earlier, of whitewashed brick with dormers, with small 19th-century timber porches to Nos. 48 and 49. Unfortunately their character has been damaged by unsympathetic alterations including a taller extension to No. 47, UPVC windows and altered openings, removal of walls and paving over of front gardens.

No. 47 has a long garden frontage to Caynton Road with a clipped leylandii hedge creating a suburban effect. Havenside and Gemini are mid-20th-century houses of a standard non-traditional type and materials completely unrelated to their village location. The building line suddenly changes with Nos. 42-43 fronting onto the tarmac pavement. The pair of cottages has similar details to No. 50 but they have been painted and greatly extended to the rear. No. 42 retains some simple traditional brick and tile outbuildings visible from the road. Looking southwards the view is very attractively closed by the impressive piers and gates, the garden wall, gables and roofs of the Hall and large conifers in its grounds.

The long frontage of Church Farmhouse and its large garden dominates the south-eastern end of Caynton Road. Telegraph poles beside the drive entrance are intrusive. The front garden is enclosed by a series of walls, of sandstone marred by damaging ribbon pointing, poor 20th-century brickwork and much better quality 19th-century brick. The 17th-century Church Farmhouse is on a much larger scale than the adjacent houses, with a long 2-storey and attic range and a lower 2-storey wing converted from a former granary.

The former farmyard is enclosed by solid timber gates and a wall, splaying back towards the road between the former granary's gable end and brick and stone remnant of the original steps, and the largely blank rear wall of a 2-storey former stable to High Street. Adjacent is a low range also directly onto the road with an opening giving an intriguing glimpse of a courtyard beyond. This is part of the Old Barn, converted to a house in the 1970s from some of the 19th-century brick buildings of Church Farm, principally the large barn at right angles to High Street enclosing the east side of the farmyard. The conversion has largely preserved the appearance of the buildings from the street, with few windows inserted. The whole group of Farmhouse and buildings is a major element of the street scene, and the retention of much of its agricultural appearance has preserved an important part of the village's historic character.

Beyond the Old Barn there is an abrupt change from a large range of former farm buildings directly fronting the road to houses set well back in large plots. Nos. 39 and 40 are 1970s houses which echo the gabled form, proportions and arched openings of traditional buildings in the village, although the very large garage door of No. 40 is rather

less sympathetic. Nos. 37 and 38 are an attractive, largely intact pair of late 19th-century brick cottages, with blue brick dressings, gables and windows similar to No.50, stone lintels and open-fronted porches. No. 38 has an original iron front gate. Low sandstone walls and hedges to the front boundary of all these houses make an important contribution to the street scene, and the absence of a paved footway is also part of the village character.

The long sweeping tile roof to the side of the Village Hall, set considerably further forward towards the road, is visible across the front gardens of Nos. 37 and 38. Built in 1889 as a reading room by the landowner Colonel Alfred Capel Cure, this is a simple brick building which fits well with the largely unspoilt simple village character of Beckbury. However the recent removal of the hedges flanking the gates, which partly screened the 1960s addition to the right of the building and framed the view of the building from the road, has regrettably destroyed an attractive feature of its setting and of the street scene. It has also made the high wall attached to the rear corner of No. 36 much more prominent. The low sandstone walls which survive, similar to those to Nos. 37-40, may pre-date the Village Hall.

The gable end of the converted barn forming part of No. 36 is very prominent due to its position almost right on the road, contrasting with the adjacent frontages. No. 36 is similar to 50 Caynton Road, but has lost some of its original character due to the insertion of asymmetrical double-glazed casements and the addition of unsympathetically detailed low garden walls in front. The attached 18th-century timber-framed and sandstone barn is marred by intrusive cement pointing. In front of it stands an unusual Grade II listed cast iron horse trough dated 1854.

Looking eastwards the road disappears from sight as it bends sharply to the south, and ahead the view is largely closed by the high bank and trees of The Old Rectory, with a big sycamore particularly prominent. This provides a strong sense of enclosure, but a narrow lane partly lined with dry stone retaining walls and large trees leads out to open fields beyond. Four Winds, entirely hidden from the road, comprises late 18th/early 19th-century cottages converted to a single dwelling and extended in the mid 20th-century; the flat-roofed extensions including garages unfortunately detract somewhat from its character. Whirlow Cottage and Woodthorne are large 1960s houses of unsympathetic non-traditional designs, but their secluded location impinges relatively little on the overall appearance of the conservation area. The south side of High Street is tightly enclosed by the churchyard extension and a small field rising eastwards on a bank high above the road, with a narrow tarmac footway at its base, contrasting strongly with the more open aspect on the north side.

This high bank continues as the road turns sharply and begins to climb steeply southwards, bringing a marked change of character. The road is tightly enclosed between high banks and without pavements, giving the impression that it is in a cutting, with the sandstone bedrock exposed and few buildings. Numerous large trees, especially in The Old Rectory grounds, increase the sense of enclosure and create an overshadowing effect. A low stone wall with unusual stepped coping and a hedge behind it runs along the road, interrupted by a small Gothic-style painted timber gate and stone piers. Stone steps ascend the bank to the painted brick side elevation of The Old Rectory looming high above the road.

White-painted iron park railings, painted timber gatepiers with ball finials and mature sycamores at the entrance to The Old Rectory are prominent features of the street scene. The house is relatively secluded from the village in spacious grounds with many trees make an important contribution to the Conservation Area's appearance. Its long, low front of The Old Rectory is an attractively irregular mix of painted 18th and 19th-century brick, render and slate roofs, sash and casement windows, hipped dormers and a porch with a Tudor arch. Its. To the east, barely visible from the road, is a group of 18th and 19th-century brick outbuildings and walls.

On the west side the narrow frontage of No. 30 with its elongated bay window and timber-framed gable is a prominent feature high above the road. The narrow path to No. 30, rising above the road on a dry stone retaining wall and lined with traditional iron park railings, is an attractive feature. Beyond it a narrow tarmac footway starts. As the road climbs the height of the banks reduces, but the sense of enclosure is maintained. The exposed bedrock beyond No. 30 eventually gives way to a high sandstone retaining wall which with the long, low, rendered 18th or early 19th-century front of Beckbury Cottage and its small range of 19th-century outbuildings forms another significant group of historic structures.

On the east side the railings are followed by a thick hedge above bedrock and rubble walling. Looking northwards the distant front of No. 36 at the bottom of the hill closes the view. On the corner of Snowdon Road, the Rectory, a plain brick house with the metal windows and pantile roof characteristic of the 1950s, is largely screened by a dense hedge and conifers.

Badger Lane and Snowdon Road

Looking east down Snowdon Road the narrow lane descending between the banks, hedges and trees of the School and Rectory has a strong rural character and frames a fine distant view across open countryside. From Snowdon Road itself the playground is set above the lane on a retaining wall, and the irregular and utilitarian rear elevation of the School is very dominant. Hedges of native species to the field, Rectory and School boundaries are prominent features.

The School, set well back from Badger Lane behind a garden, is a striking two-storey red brick building of 1852 with simple 'Tudor' details and dressings of yellow brick, bands of fish-scale tiles and original painted timber windows. Its two-storey form with the classrooms above the schoolmaster's house is very different to the normal single-storey pattern of Victorian village schools. The hawthorn hedge and trees enclosing the school grounds are an important features, especially on the frontage to Badger Lane. The School's original relatively isolated setting on the edge of the village has been altered by the construction in the 1960s of a group of houses of non-traditional designs and materials at odds with the scattered rural character of this part of Beckbury. Behind and above them some of the fine trees in the grounds of Badger Hall are prominent.

Nos. 27-28 (Hawthorn House), formerly two 19th-century brick and tile cottages, extended in the mid-1990s, has a long frontage direct onto the road. Its picturesque variety of heights, roofs and gables is unfortunately marred by intrusive pipework and a

shiny metal flue. Its long narrow garden running alongside Badger Lane is enclosed by a high, rough hedge, trees including a prominent yew and iron railings, ending abruptly at an open field. It forms one of the most attractive approaches to the village, with distant views eastwards across the surrounding agricultural landscape as Beckbury comes gradually into view with first glimpses of the School's distinctive gable end.

High Street: Caynton Road to Higford Lane

Looking east from the junction the dominant impression is of trees, hedges and greenery, with buildings largely hidden and just a glimpse of the corner of No. 54 and distant countryside beyond. The south side is tightly enclosed by the long expanse of garden wall and hedging to Beckbury Hall. The north side is both more varied and more altered, and has no pavement. The eastern end is tightly enclosed by a carefully rebuilt sandstone garden wall to No. 50, followed by a lower dry stone wall and holly hedge.

The tight enclosure is interrupted by a double garage, of traditional details and materials, set back from the road. Collisway and Quarry House are detached buildings set much further back, but both largely screened by dense planting of conifers and holly along the road. Quarry House is a Grade II listed early 19th-century red brick and slate house with a symmetrical front elevation having one-storey flanking ranges and iron railings. Collisway, built very close in part of the garden, is an almost total contrast, an irregular late 20th-century bungalow built of non-matching bricks and concrete tiles not at all sympathetic to its setting.

Beckbury Farm is a particularly important element of the conservation area's character and appearance. The retention of a working farmstead within the historic core of the village maintains at least part of the original primarily agricultural character of the area. The galvanised gates are unattractive, but the random stone wall to the Farmhouse garden is very important in the street scene. The Farmhouse itself has a narrow 19th-century 2-storey formal front to the street but the earlier part facing the farmyard is long, low and irregular, and is attached to farm buildings. Together with a good range of mid 19th-century brick buildings and brick and stone walls they form an attractive and largely intact historic group. From the public footpath between the farmstead and a sandstone and brick wall there are interesting views of the farm buildings and across the open space of the allotments and the field beyond.

On the southern side the garden of No. 63 is largely hidden behind simple railings and leylandii, but the drive opens up an uninspiring view towards a close boarded fence and the backs of modern houses. Just as at the eastern end of High Street the road abruptly disappears from view as it turns suddenly through 90 degrees to run south, and a narrow track continues on westwards. There is a strong sense of enclosure created by buildings, walls, railings and trees, although the close-boarded fence splayed across the corner of No. 63's garden and the telegraph pole against it do little to enhance the conservation area. There is a particularly attractive view eastwards back to the churchyard, dominated by trees and greenery.

The view westwards is closed by the front of Nos. 54-55 set almost on the road behind hooped-top railings. These are a simple pair of late 19th-century brick cottages with a very prominent central chimney and half-hipped gables unlike anything else in the

village. The track has a strong rural character, running between hedges, gardens and traditional small fields within the conservation area which contrast with the much larger fields beyond. The shabby timber garage to the rear of No. 54 unfortunately detracts from the largely unspoiled appearance.

The southern section of the street has a varied character, with a mix of old and recent buildings. The Old Post Office, an irregular gabled building of painted 18th or 19th-century brick with old and modern windows, is set far back partly behind Nos. 57-58. It can only be glimpsed from the road past tall hedges of leylandii which are somewhat alien to the traditional village appearance. Nos. 57-58 are considerably altered late 18th or early 19th-century cottages with shallow front gardens. The telegraph pole and web of cables is intrusive. In contrast Poachers Moon Cottage is a low, picturesque brick and timber-framed cottage with a taller rear range, retaining many historic features and set much further back. The front garden walls, of 19th-century brick to Nos. 57-58 and sandstone to Poachers Moon Cottage, are very important features of the street scene.

Nos. 63-64 are set at right angles directly onto the pavement which runs only along the east side. They are an interesting mixture of periods and materials comprising a timber-framed one-storey and attic cottage, 18th and 19th-century 2-storey brick additions and a late 20th-century link to the timber-framed and brick outbuilding converted to form part of No. 63. The tall box hedge along the road adjacent to no. 63 makes a major contribution to the street's appearance, but the close-boarded fence with concrete posts along the return boundary is unsympathetic and intrusive in views northwards.

20th-century development has not enhanced this part of the conservation area. Orcroft House, built in the 1950s, is at best bland, although the railings and box hedge enclosing its frontage contribute to the quality of the street scene. The two late 20th-century houses opposite, Tree Tops and Brandreth, are on a much larger scale than neighbouring buildings, taller and with much greater roof spans, of different bricks and tiles and non-traditional dark-stained joinery, and with unenclosed frontages with large areas of paving which disrupt the general pattern.

These and other buildings further south are set at varying angles rather than parallel to the road. No. 65, a 17th-century timber-framed cottage with a mid 19th-century 2-storey brick addition, has its main elevation facing south but its gable end and large sandstone external chimney are picturesque features towards the road. Its long sandstone garden wall, disfigured by ribbon pointing, and a large tree in the garden are equally prominent. Beckbury House has a very different character: its early Victorian front elevation is symmetrical, with formal architectural detailing, set behind a shallow forecourt with brick wall and yew hedge. The White House's long frontage of painted brick has an early/mid 19th-century appearance belying its much earlier origins. Its holly hedge and trees are another significant contribution to Beckbury's leafy character.

Beyond No. 65's garden is an area of trees and ivy, with a stone retaining wall to the road, bordering the parkland to Beckbury Hall. The view southwards is partly closed by a hedge and gateway on Madeley Road, with glimpses of distant countryside beyond. The area around the junction with Higford Lane is marred by dilapidated board fencing and railings. Views open up across the parkland to the extensive tree cover on the ridge to the south-east of Beckbury Hall, and southwards along Higford Lane.

Madeley Road

Madeley Road runs westwards, and has scattered development along the north side only. At the junction with High Street the entrance and car park of the Seven Stars public house abruptly open out the frontage, with a view across the car park to timber and corrugated iron outbuildings and No. 4/5 to the rear, isolated from the road. The wide expanse of tarmac, lighting columns, beer garden area with concrete crazy paving retaining wall, and unsightly concrete bollards are very intrusive, introducing a hard urban element wholly unsympathetic to the village character.

The buildings are generally of historic origin but much altered. The Seven Stars, Oakwood Cottage and Hill Top form an irregular early/mid 19th-century block fronting the road. They are constructed of brick, now painted, altered and extended, with few surviving historic features. Only the large crow-stepped gable ends with big external chimney stacks of Nos. 6 and 7 are visible from the road. The formation of parking areas to several properties has opened out frontages and created some visual intrusion.

Lower Hall is of 16th or 17th-century timber-framed origin but drastic alterations including 20th-century windows have destroyed much of its interest and are harmful to the conservation area's historic appearance. A very large flat-roofed garage block is particularly unsympathetic. The road begins to descend rapidly, and a very long run of recently constructed sandstone retaining wall, with glimpses of Lower Hall's extensive gardens and grounds above, dominates this part of the conservation area. It contrasts dramatically with the softer rural appearance of the bank, hedge and field on the opposite side of the road.

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