

BADGER CONSERVATION AREA APPRAISAL

The Badger Conservation Area was originally designated on 5 January 1981. The Council approved an amendment to the boundary on 20 October 1993. The Conservation Area covers all of the village of Badger, Badger Dingle and the historic gardens to the now demolished Badger Hall.

LOCATION

Badger is a small village 6 miles north east of Bridgnorth and about 1 mile from the B4176 Telford-Dudley Road.

LANDSCAPE

The village lies at the junction of three narrow minor roads and is relatively unspoilt with stone, brick and half-timbered cottages set amongst densely wooded lanes.



The western part of Badger lies mainly on Upper Mottled Sandstone, the eastern on boulder clay, sand and gravel. A small area to the extreme northeast has deposits of peat. The Conservation Area includes the whole of Badger village plus various buildings and grounds associated with Badger Hall. These include the walled former garden and estate yard, some of the parkland and a substantial part of the wooded valley known as Badger Dingle, together with a series of pools. Much of Badger's special visual and historic character is due to the extensive landscaping carried out by the owners of Badger Hall in the 18th and 19th

centuries. Unusually, the village is at the heart of the landscaping, rather than forming a separate entity outside it. Its focal point is Town Pool, at the junction of the three roads. To the north, at a higher level, Church Pool and its surrounding trees form a very attractive setting for the Church. These pools, which form a major element of Badger's unique picturesque character, are part of the 18th century landscape improvements, continuing



through from the immediate surroundings of Badger Hall down to the Dingle. The open parkland dotted with specimen trees to the north and west of the Old Hall is not only of special historic interest as part of the 18th century

landscaped setting of Badger Hall, but is also of great visual importance as part of the distinctive character of Badger. The wooded embankment that tightly confines the eastern edge of the village was the route of the walk from Badger Hall over the bridge, which crosses the road to Pattingham to the restored classical temple overlooking Badger Dingle used as holiday accommodation. It makes a very strong physical and visual boundary, especially on the approach from the east. From this direction the village is hidden from view until the last moment as one emerges from beneath the bridge.

The landscaping included extensive tree planting, of which traces remain in the parkland trees, the yews along the embankment and specimen trees in the Dingle. Tree cover in the Dingle is now naturalised and consequently more dense than was originally planted. Badger is now largely hemmed in by trees and woodland, with hedges along the roads, giving a strong sense of enclosure. The dense woodland of the Dingle runs all along the southern edge of the village, forming a backdrop to it. From Badger Lane there is a view east of the parkland trees and the Old Hall beyond and a glimpse of the Old Rectory to the south, but sharp bends, hedges, trees and woodland effectively cut off views of the village. The approach along the Stableford road is largely similar. Any significant loss of trees and hedges would have a dramatic detrimental effect on the character and appearance of the Conservation Area.



Badger Dingle is a rare and important example of a distinctive type of late 18th century landscape gardening and is listed Grade II in the English Heritage Register of Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest. It retains many of the original features of interest, including buildings, caves, a tunnel and an icehouse. The Dingle forms a major part of the special character of Badger.

The parkland of Badger Hall and the field to the west of the Old Rectory form important open areas merging with the surrounding landscape, but the strong enclosure of Badger village itself makes it largely inward-looking. Nevertheless, within the village, views and open spaces are of great importance to its character. The pools form very attractive open areas with good views across them. The woodland of the Dingle forms a boundary to other significant areas of open land south of the Stableford and Pattingham roads.

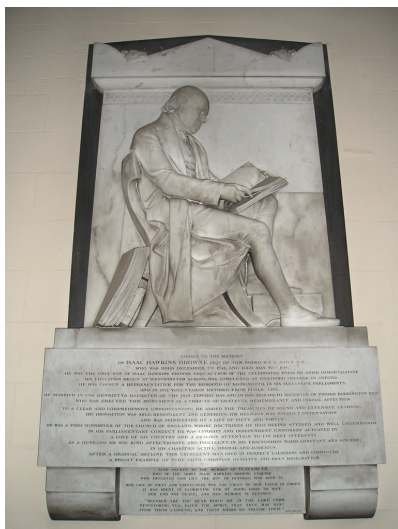
Some of the buildings have large gardens of varied character that form significant open spaces in their own right, such as that west of Nos. 6 to 8 which opens up a view from the road towards the Dingle. The garden of the Old Rectory, though more enclosed, forms an important space with some fine trees. Still more enclosed but of considerable historic interest is the large, brick walled former kitchen garden of Badger Hall. The walls can be seen from many points, including across the pool and glimpsed between the houses. Between other houses there are views through to the backdrop of the Dingle.



HISTORY

The name Badger is believed to have derived from the Old English elements **Baegi's** or **Baecg's**, a personal name, and **ofer** which can mean a river bank, ridge or border. In 1066 Bruning (Bruniht) held Badger. Badger was recorded in Domesday Book as being held in chief by Roger de Montgomery and that Osbern fitz Richard, Baron of Richard's Castle held it for him. There was a church by the 12th century. The settlement pattern has changed little since the Middle Ages, with Hall, church and rectory lying close together near the centre of the parish, and houses extending east-west along the road to Pattingham.

The Petit family owned the manor and estate of Badger in the 15th century. The Kinnersley family succeeded them in the 16th century. About 1719 John Kinnersley demolished an existing moated and half-timbered house immediately west of the church and replaced it with a new stone-fronted house 150 metres to the north.



In 1774 the estate was sold to Isaac Hawkins Browne, M.P. for Bridgnorth from 1745 to 1818. Browne rebuilt Badger Hall between 1779 and 1783 to designs by James Wyatt, incorporating parts of John Kinnersley's house as the service wing. In about 1780 Browne also began extensive landscaping around the Hall and in the Dingle, to designs by William Emes. It included laying out parkland, rides and walks, tree planting, and possibly also enlarging the pools to the west and south west of the church that drain into the Dingle.

The Dingle, a natural steep-sided valley scoured by the Snowdon brook, was laid out in the fashionable Picturesque 'natural' style. The brook was dammed to create pools and cascades; two miles of winding paths and a connecting walk to Badger Hall were laid out; a temple and rotunda probably designed by Wyatt were erected, and trees and ornamental shrubs were extensively planted.



After Browne's death the estate passed first to the Cheney and then to the Capel Cure families. They carried out further landscaping and building, including the creation of additional features in the Dingle. Badger Dingle became a much admired picturesque landscape, and by 1851 it was open to the public.

Since the latter half of the 20th century the settlement has expanded. A number of modern housing developments have almost doubled the number of houses in the village.

BUILDINGS

In the 20th century the Badger Estate fell into a decline. The contents of Badger Hall were sold in 1945, and the estate was subsequently sold to the Swire family. In 1952 most of Badger Hall was demolished. The Dingle had become overgrown and its buildings had fallen into disrepair. In the early 1990's a revival of the landscape and buildings was started and in 1995 the Temple (the Bird House) was reconstructed for the Vivat Trust to be used as a holiday cottage. Also in the Dingle, a few hundred metres up a sandstone track running at right angles to the Stapleford road, is the original icehouse, partly hewn out of the natural sandstone and brick lined. A metal barrier now bars entry to the icehouse.



The village itself has also undergone some changes in recent years. Until the mid-20th century Badger village comprised the Hall and its associated buildings, the church and rectory, and a small number of scattered houses. Since the demolition of Badger Hall only its former service wing remains. It is now a private residence, named The Old Hall and is Listed Grade II.

The Church of St. Giles is separated from the village by a pair of large pools. Of red sandstone ashlar, Francis Halley built it in 1833-4 on the site of a medieval church. It is described by Pevsner as being in a "poor Gothic style".

There is, however, no particularly strong pattern to the layout of buildings within the village envelope. A few front directly onto the road, but most are set well back. Houses are mostly detached or semi-detached, and of varied size; the largest blocks are of no more than three. Most buildings have largely unbroken frontages to the road, with wings and projections restricted mostly to the rear. The spacing between dwellings is very generous, and there is no backland development. With the exception of the Old Hall and estate buildings, most buildings are sited on the original roads.

Boundary walls, hedging, simple iron railings alongside Church and Town Pools and the absence of pavements all add to the strong and largely unspoilt rural character of the Conservation Area.

CHARACTERISTICS

Although the country house that for centuries was its focal point has gone, Badger still has the appearance of a remarkably attractive and picturesque small estate village. It has many special qualities, which are inextricably linked. Badger's strong visual character derives from its rural setting on narrow lanes away from main roads; its strong sense of enclosure created by physical features and extensive tree cover; the 18th and 19th century landscaping which provided many of its most attractive features; its varied layout in which the spaces between and around buildings are as important as the buildings themselves, and the attractive and varied views from many different points within the Conservation Area.

Badger has a variety of buildings in a range of traditional materials. Local red sandstone was used for the church and cross, part of the Old Hall and Nos. 6 to 8, and for boundary walls to the churchyard and some gardens. Nos. 3 and 4 have sandstone mixed with timber framing and brick. Brick and timber framing are also used together in other buildings such as Hunters Bridge and the former cartshed and granary nearby.



Nevertheless, the dominant material is brick. The demolished Badger Hall was brick, as are the kitchen garden walls and estate buildings, and most of the houses. In recent years some brickwork has been painted, but this can drastically alter the appearance and character of a building, and of the village as a whole.

Most roofs are hipped or gabled with clay tiles, but several buildings are thatched with deep eaves and swept dormers and the Old Rectory and buildings at the Old Hall have low pitched slate roofs. These are all traditional materials that contribute to the character of the Conservation Area; the concrete or machine-made clay tiles of some 20th century buildings are less appropriate.



Buildings such as the church, the Old Rectory and Nos. 6 to 8 are carefully designed compositions. Others such as Nos. 3 and 4 and Hunter's Bridge have evolved over time and reflect the local vernacular tradition. Original features and varied details such as arched window heads and decorative glazing patterns provide interest and should be retained.



This very strong visual character cannot easily be separated from Badger's special architectural and historic interest. Many of its buildings are of considerable individual interest. Some, such as the high garden walls, are important surviving elements of the former country house complex of Badger Hall. All of them also make an important contribution to the appearance of the Conservation Area.

The distribution of buildings is in itself of considerable historic interest, for although little survives pre-dating the 17th century, the original medieval pattern of settlement can still be discerned, and later historical development is equally apparent. Some of the buildings were designed as an integral part of the landscape improvements of the 18th and 19th centuries. As well as having an enormous visual impact on Badger, this landscaping is of very considerable historic interest, especially as it includes one of very few surviving examples of a rare type of late 18th century Picturesque design in the creation of the Dingle.

All of these elements combine to create the visual, architectural and historic character that is unique to Badger. It was to ensure the preservation and enhancement of this character that the Badger Conservation Area was designated.

COMMERCIAL AND INDUSTRIAL USES

There are no shops or other commercial buildings within the village, except for a small number of offices housed in some of the former estate buildings located in the grounds of the original Badger Hall and adjoining the present Hall. Other estate buildings in this walled off complex include cottages, some of which have been converted from former outbuildings.

DEVELOPMENT

Small modern housing developments include the social housing centred on the Crescent and a small number of private dwellings immediately to the east of it. These appear unsympathetic and uncharacteristic in construction and materials when compared to those of the traditional properties in the village. The use of modern PVC-u windows and concrete roofing tiles are in particular out of character with the timber casements and plain clay roof tiles that characterise properties in Badger. A considerable amount of re-use of former agricultural buildings has occurred with their conversion to residential use. This, in the main has been successfully carried out. There are, however, one or two conversions where attention to detail in respect to window frame design and materials has been less than sympathetic. The existing built environment of the village is relatively compact and is centred around Badger Hall in the north of the Conservation Area and stretching in a broad line along east side of Badger Lane as far as footpath bridge spanning the road on the eastern boundary of the Area.

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