

## **CLAVERLEY CONSERVATION AREA APPRAISAL**

A review of Claverley Conservation Area has revealed opportunities to make alterations to the boundary, both for the purposes of clarification and to better preserve the architectural and historic character of the village.

### **Location and Population**

Claverley is set in an area of undulating farm land east of the River Worfe and halfway between Bridgnorth and Wolverhampton. There is a population of 1540 living within the Parish of which some 650 live within the village itself. Although it close to urban centres the village has a distinctly rural character situated in the Green Belt and accessible only by sinuous narrow lanes. Consequently there has been little development within the conservation area since its designation in 1973. Furthermore the historic core is well defined and little altered and there are many public footpaths linking the village with the surrounding countryside.



Church of All Saints

## **The Origins and Development of the Village, Topographic Framework and the Historic and Archaeological Significance of the Conservation Area**

Claverley, whose name may mean 'woodland clearing associated with clover', probably originated as a settlement in a clearing within the former Forest of Morfe. Claverley was listed in the Domesday survey as being within Staffordshire, but by 1154 was accounted part of Shropshire.

The village is situated on elevated ground that slopes to the north and overlooks the valley of the Claverley Brook to its west. The historic core of the settlement is located around the junction of the road from Aston to the east with the road from Farmcote to the south west. This junction, called the Bull Ring, and the triangular open area probably represents the site of a former market place. Along its west side is a mediaeval market cross that probably dates from the 15<sup>th</sup> century.

All the surviving mediaeval and early post-mediaeval buildings in Claverley, including the church, are clustered around the Bull Ring, High Street and Church Street. This area probably represents the mediaeval nucleus of the village. A second later mediaeval development formed at the north end of Church Street, where the road forks lead to Worfield and Ludstone which possibly grew adjacent to the nearby crossings of the Claverley Brook.

Post-mediaeval expansion in Claverley also occurred along the west side of High Street where two houses had been built by 1613 and further development occurred at the site of the mill to the south-west of the early village core where Pound Street crosses Claverley Brook. The present mill building is 19<sup>th</sup> century, though it presumably stands on the site of the mediaeval mill recorded in 1086. Immediately to the east of the mill is Powk Hall Farm, a large impressive 17<sup>th</sup> century timber framed building.

Claverley altered little until the post war period, since when the village has become a dormitory settlement to Wolverhampton and Bridgnorth. This has resulted in a considerable amount of infilling, particularly along Church Street in the north part of the village, which in turn served to give the present village the appearance of being linear in form. Recent large scale development has also taken place to the east of the village flanking the north side of Aston Road and also to the south and east side of High Street.

There are three mediaeval open fields around Claverley recorded in 1634 as Westfield, Eastfield and Southfield, reflecting their respective locations in relation to the village. Westfield occupied the area of high ground on the west side of Claverley Brook; Eastfield was located immediately to the east of the village, bounded on its north by Danford Brook and on its south by

the village and Southfield between the Claverley Brook and the road to Beobridge.

The special interest of Claverley is derived from its situation within the landscape, the local topography and from the historic buildings which line its streets. The Conservation Area is centred on The Bull Ring at the heart of the village and the roads that lead to it, Pound Street, Church Street, and High Street. Each part of the Conservation Area has qualities which are described in more detail below.

## **The Bull Ring**

The Bull Ring is the historic core of the village and the point at which Pound Street, High Street and Church Street converge. It occupies a small, almost level area with Church Street falling away to the north, Pound Street falling away to the south and High Street rising gently towards the east.

Most of the community buildings are located in and around the Bull Ring including the Church, the former school, shops and one of the village's three public houses. Although a junction between three roads, there is a sense of enclosure derived from the orientation of the surrounding buildings and the topography. The buildings provide a rich and diverse context for the village centre with a variety of styles, materials and periods represented here.



Former Church of England School, Bull Ring

Of the listed buildings, the Church of All Saints is situated on high ground and is set back slightly from the Bull Ring. This Grade A (equivalent to Grade I) listed building, built of local red sandstone, dates from the 12<sup>th</sup> century and includes Norman or Romanesque arches of the original church built by Roger de Montgomery. The South aisle, chancel and chapels are Decorated and Perpendicular (14<sup>th</sup> to 15<sup>th</sup> centuries). The tower makes a significant contribution to the skyline and the upper part dates from the 15<sup>th</sup> century. Internally there are notable wall paintings of circa 1200 and a good Norman font.

Other features of note are a 14<sup>th</sup> century churchyard cross (Grade II) situated on a graduated base of three stone steps, removed from the road and relocated in the churchyard and the boundary wall and gate piers (Grade II). Probably 18<sup>th</sup> century, this stone rubble retaining wall defines the Church Street approach to the Bull Ring.

Adjacent and immediately south of the Church is The Vicarage (Grade II\*). This 15<sup>th</sup> century timber framed house has close studded timbers with diagonal decorative braces and a jettied or overhanging first floor. To the north west corner of the Vicarage a 19<sup>th</sup> century Lychgate defines the entrance to the Churchyard and provides an architectural focal point to the Bull Ring.



Detail of Jettied first floor at The Vicarage

The local topography also serves to enhance the setting of the former Church of England school which occupies an elevated position, the road falling away to the south. This early/ mid 19<sup>th</sup> century red brick building (Grade II) has tall narrow windows and raking hood moulds extending above the eaves to form gablets.

The north west side of The Bull Ring describes a convex curve leading the eye down towards Church Street to the north and up towards High Street to the east.



View east towards High Street from the Bull Ring

It is characterised by a series of historic buildings, mainly cottages and vernacular in character. Most are built at the back edge of the footpath, Nos 6 and 7 Bull Ring are two Grade II listed houses dating from the 18<sup>th</sup> Century and tied with the adjacent Kings Arms Public House. These are of painted brick with clay tiled roofs and timber casement windows typical of the area.



Nos 6 and 7 Bull Ring

The 18<sup>th</sup> century Kings Arms public house is also Grade II listed, with painted brick, tiled gabled roofs and sash windows.

For a village of this size Claverley is unusual in supporting three public houses, all occupying historic buildings and situated relatively close to each other with large car parks linking a broad segment of land to the rear of The Bull Ring, High Street and Aston Lane.

## High Street

High Street is a road of two parts. The first section rises and curves in an easterly direction away from The Bull Ring. There is a sense of enclosure here derived from the buildings which are mainly pavement fronting. The south side of the street has an almost continuous built frontage and although there is no one architectural style predominates, this part of High Street has significant historic character.



High Street looking west

Of particular interest is Church House and Upper Church House. Probably late 17<sup>th</sup> century, and formerly used as a workhouse, this 3 storey red sandstone building has a pivotal character in that its frontage turns from The Bull Ring up into High Street.

Nos 4 and 5A High Street (Grade II) are 17<sup>th</sup> century timber framed cottages, single storey with an attic. Opposite is the Crown Inn, a 17<sup>th</sup> century timber framed public house with limewashed brick infill panels and a clay tiled roof. Cornerways is another 17<sup>th</sup> century timber framed 2 storey cottage (Grade II) occupying a well landscaped corner plot, the garden somewhat lower than the road and set behind a retaining wall. Next to this is No7, Ivy House, a narrow three-storey late 18<sup>th</sup> century house of red

brick with distinctive multi-bar sash windows with segmental heads to ground, first and second floors.

Nos 12 and 13 High Street (Grade II) are early 19<sup>th</sup> century two storey red brick buildings situated at the junction with Aston Lane. Unusually, the principal road becomes Aston Lane at this point and the second part of High Street continues from the junction up a side road to the south.

This part of High Street is more residential in character. Properties are typically set back from the road behind walls of stone and brick within mature landscaped gardens. The road is characterised by a number of significant trees, including Ash and Copper Beech.



High Street showing mature trees

Further up High Street there is more post war development and the historic interest of the street diminishes. Nos 16 and 17 High Street (Grade II), a picturesque pair of 17<sup>th</sup> century timber framed cottages and No 21, a two-storey house dated 1779 (Grade II) contribute to the character of the conservation area here. For the purposes of clarification, the stone retaining wall to the West of Hall Farm is retained in the revised conservation area boundary.

## **Pound Street**

Pound Street is the south western approach to the village ultimately leading to the A458 Bridgnorth to Stourbridge road. A short terrace of picturesque 19<sup>th</sup> century brick cottages defines the western edge of the village facing towards the village at the junction of Pound Street with the lane to Chyknell.



View west down Pound Street

The north side of the road is largely undeveloped permitting views across open fields towards the church situated on higher ground to the east. The setting of the church, the architectural focal point of the village, is complemented by the open green pasture, mature hedgerows and trees to the west and for this reason is included in the conservation area. Agricultural buildings, although not visible from the road, occupy the skyline when viewed from the north.



View towards the church from Pound Street

The road rises as it turns north up towards its junction with The Bull Ring at the centre of the village. Buildings of interest include Powk Hall and its outbuildings on the southern side of the road. Powk Hall is a fine close studded timber frame building dating to the 17<sup>th</sup> century or earlier.



Powk Hall, Pound Street

Set back from the road within mature gardens its impact is diminished when approaching from the west due to the proximity of a large range of road fronting agricultural buildings. These are predominantly of brick with iron framed windows although timber and iron is used throughout the site to create an eclectic group. Further west this frontage is bound by a formal stone wall of alternating bands of red and buff coursed stone. This wall continues in a westerly direction and bounds the grounds of Sandford Hall, a late 19<sup>th</sup> century house and originally defined the gateway to a water mill.



Agricultural buildings at Powk Hall, Pound Street

Towards the village the road turns to the north, there is a sense of enclosure from the mature trees and steep escarpment on the south side, a pair of iron gates defines the entrance to the former village Pound. On the north side the levels also rise and the road is overshadowed in places by mature trees.



View towards The Bull Ring from Pound Street

Of architectural interest here is Clarecott (Grade II), an early 19<sup>th</sup> century house of red brick with casement windows and a tiled roof. The street rises towards the junction with The Bull Ring.

## Church Street

Church Street begins at the village centre at the junction with the Bull Ring and leaves the village towards the north with gentle curves down towards Claverley Brook. For much of its length the road appears to be in a hollow with buildings occupying higher ground to either side.



Church Street looking south

At its junction with Bull Ring the east side of the road is defined by a range of 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century cottages. Constructed of timber frame with later brick elevations and tiled roofs, these cottages reinforce the rural character of the village, built at the back edge of a narrow footway with their low eaves, small windows and simple timber panelled doors. The cottages face the church, which occupies high ground and is set back from the road in a churchyard that bounds the road with a retaining wall.

Church Street has an arcadian character derived from the mature trees that line the road. The east side is defined predominantly by two storey brick houses with clay tiled roofs. Windows are typically painted timber casements or vertically sliding sashes, doors are flush panelled or boarded. Most buildings are houses, either detached or short terraces, set back from the road frontage behind gardens. The tennis club with its tall fencing and floodlighting is an unusual feature in a village of this size and inconsistent with the overall character of the road. The adjacent village hall has been extended recently. This brick and tile building is built at right angles to the road – Wapping Alley, a public footpath to the front, leads up from the road in an easterly direction passing several properties including Old Hall Cottage, a Grade II\* listed timber framed and brick building built circa 1600.

The path crosses an open field providing views to and from the conservation area towards The Wold, a housing development built some 40 years ago.

The West side of the road is defined by larger houses set in mature landscaped gardens. Older properties include Spicers Hall, a large two storey house set back behind a walled frontage and the adjacent late 19<sup>th</sup> century farm buildings.



View north showing farm buildings in Church Street

These include a two storey brick and tile barn that bounds the road frontage and beyond this is Oundle Cottage, presenting a gable to the street and defining the northern boundary of the conservation area.

## **Aston Lane**

Aston Lane is a continuation of High Street and leaves the village centre in an easterly direction. The road rises to the a gentle crest and the conservation area includes the 17<sup>th</sup> century timber framed Plough Inn to the north side and a range of two storey brick and tile cottages to the south side. Some of these are a recent development in the conservation area but acknowledge local materials and detailing. The Plough Inn has a large tarmacadam car park to the side set behind an open frontage. A scheme of soft landscaping here would provide a significant enhancement to this approach to the village.



Aston Lane looking east

## **The prevailing or former uses of buildings in the area and the influence of this on plan form and building types.**

Claverley has grown from its nucleus around the church primarily with frontage development along the roads which converge on the Bull Ring. There is little evidence of formal mediaeval town planning here, many of the historic plot boundaries have been altered and the character is predominantly of informal 'organic' development. Apart from the community and religious buildings at the village centre the conservation area is characterised by residential development, typically cottages and small houses with a mix of vernacular and polite 'rural Georgian' styles. The largest domestic buildings within the conservation area are farmhouses

and include Claverley Farm on High Street and Powk Hall farm on Pound Street.

**The extent of loss, intrusion or damage sustained by the area and sites where change would be encouraged.**

The historic core for the conservation area has not experienced significant change since first designation. The tennis courts on Church Street provide a valuable local facility but the high net fencing and floodlights seem incongruous in a village context.



View to the Tennis Club, Church Street

The car park to the Plough public house on Aston Lane has a large tarmac car park to the side and a wide, open frontage that would benefit from soft landscaping along the road boundary.



Aston Lane showing frontage to the Plough Inn

## The use of distinctive and traditional materials

There is a good range of traditional building materials represented throughout the conservation area including red sandstone, a mellow red/orange brick, timber frame (both close studded and square panel), renders and paint finishes for walls, clay plain tiles predominate for roofs although there is some use of slate and lead.



17<sup>th</sup> Century square panel timber frame, High Street

The topography has resulted in a number of prominent road fronting retaining walls, these typically being of rubble construction and sandstone (High Street and Bull Ring) or polychromatic ashlar (boundary wall to Sandford Hall-Pound Street). Joinery is mainly timber with traditional sections for sash and casement windows. There are some examples of iron windows including the decorative cast iron units in the Pound Street agricultural buildings.



Decorative iron window, Pound Street

Shropshire Council  
Shirehall  
Abbey Foregate  
Shrewsbury  
Shropshire  
SY2 6ND

01743 252586

[historic.environment@shropshire.gov.uk](mailto:historic.environment@shropshire.gov.uk)