

DONINGTON & ALBRIGHTON CONSERVATION AREA APPRAISAL

Albrighton has three separate Conservation Areas: ***Albrighton***, ***Albrighton: Station Road***, and ***Donington and Albrighton***. This statement relates to Donington and Albrighton Conservation Area.

DONINGTON & ALBRIGHTON CONSERVATION AREA

The Donington and Albrighton Conservation Area was designated on 26th October 1994.

LOCATION

Albrighton is a large village 10 miles north east of Bridgnorth and 7 miles west of Wolverhampton. Donington is an adjacent small settlement but is in a separate civil and ecclesiastical parish. The Conservation Area comprises the parish church of Albrighton and part of High Street from Bowling Green Lane to the Vicarage, part of Newport Road south east of Grange Park, Beechurst and 2-8 Church Road, White Ladies Court, Albrighton Pool, part of Rectory Road and the parish church of Donington.

TOPOGRAPHY



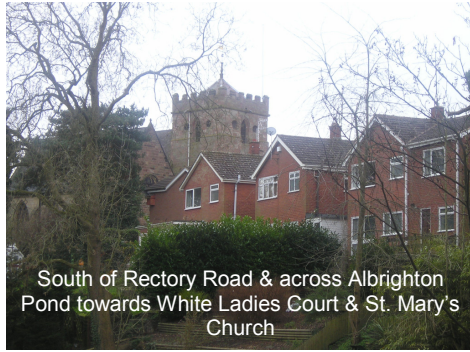
Lych-gate, St. Cuthbert's, Donington

Donington in the northern part of the Donington and Albrighton Conservation Area lies on fairly level ground. The parish church and Old Rectory are bordered on three sides by open countryside. On the western side of Rectory Road there are mature trees and views out across open fields. Along the road from the churchyard there are rural views out to the north. To the east are the lawns and a belt of specimen trees of the Old Rectory garden, with countryside beyond.

To the south is the major landscape element of the Conservation Area. The land drops down into a small, shallow wooded valley running east-west. Albrighton Pool to the east of the road created, long ago by damming the stream running through the valley, provides one of the most important features of the Conservation Area's unique character. West of the road, at a lower level, is a small pond and St. Cuthbert's Well, a natural spring. This area is tightly enclosed by quite dense tree cover, with no views out.



St. Cuthbert's Well & Pond



South of the Albrighton Pool there is a steep rise to the churchyard of Albrighton parish church and the rear gardens of houses in White Ladies Court. Rectory Road climbs more gently up to the junction with High Street alongside another striking feature, a large outcrop of the underlying red sandstone. The exposed and cut face of this forms a high “wall” curving round into High Street, diminishing in height as the road gradually rises

to the south east. Another sandstone face is exposed on the southern side of High Street, and is particularly visible in the excavated hollow around the War Memorial.

On the largely undeveloped north side of Newport Road there are limited views out across an open grassed area towards the stream, a line of trees and fields beyond to the north. However, the south western edge of the Conservation Area is tightly hemmed in by 20th century development, with no distant views. Fortunately much of this is screened from Newport Road and High Street by rising ground and belts of trees. Beyond the Shrewsbury Arms and the Vicarage on the eastern edge High Street is lined with 20th century housing.



HISTORY

Albrighton probably had its origins in the Saxon period. The name derives from “Alberic’s tun”, meaning Alberic’s farm. It was recorded in Domesday Book in 1085 as “waster”, cultivated land which had been allowed to fall fallow, and the surrounding area was royal forest.

The manor of Albrighton came into possession of the de Pitchford family. In 1232 a royal charter was granted making Albrighton a borough with its own Corporation and permitting markets and fairs to be held. Another charter regulating fairs was granted in 1303. The manor passed successively into the control of the Tregoz, de la Warr, Troutbeck and Talbot families. The Talbots became Earls of Shrewsbury; the Shrewsbury Arms public House, formerly owned by them, was originally known as the Talbot. Apart from the church and churchyard cross this is the oldest building in the village.

The royal charter was renewed by Charles II in 1664. As well as being a centre for markets and fairs for the surrounding agricultural area Albrighton had a variety of trades including button making in the 17th century and clock making in the 18th century. The historic focus of the parish remained the church of St. Mary Magdalene, and houses were built close by, but in the 18th and 19th centuries most of the development of the village took place some distance to the east along High Street.

Since the 1940s Albrighton has expanded dramatically with the construction of large

housing developments, some of them to serve RAF Cosford in the parish of Donington. The historic area around the church now forms only a small part of the village as a whole. Much of the eastern part of High Street now forms part of the separate Albrighton Conservation Area.

The parish of Donington was also recorded in Domesday book as “Donitone”. Its origins are also Saxon. The name derives from either Dunningtun (the farm of the Dunnings) or Dunnantun (the farm of Dunna). The manor was held by the Saxon earl Edwin. At the conquest it passed to Earl Roger de Montgomery, who probably founded the church between 1085 and 1094. The very close proximity of the two parish churches of Donington and Albrighton which is such an unusual feature of the Conservation Area is probably due to the fact that at that time this was an isolated and somewhat lawless area. Donington originally was no more than scattered small hamlets around common land, and the church was probably built at the edge of the parish for security, close to the main centre of population in Albrighton, and its church.

PATTERN OF DEVELOPMENT

The Conservation Area has two quite separate physical and historic nuclei, each focused on the parish church. The parish church of St. Mary Magdalene, Albrighton is set well back from High Street in a long churchyard.



Church of St. Mary Magdalene, High Street, Albrighton



St. Cuthbert's Church
Rectory Road, Donington

To the south west is a small irregular group of historic buildings clustered around the junction of High Street and Church Road. All of these buildings are immediately adjacent to the road or set back only slightly from it. The parish church of St. Cuthbert, Donington is also set back from the road in its churchyard.

To the south west and south are the Old Rectory, its former outbuildings and the 20th century Rectory, all set back from and above the road in spacious grounds.

The two groups of buildings are physically and visually separated by Albrighton Pool and the trees surrounding it, and by the late 20th century housing development of White Ladies Court. The houses are most prominent from the north side of the Pool.

BUILDINGS

The principal buildings of the Conservation Area, both in size and historic importance, are the parish churches. There are many similarities between them. Both are Grade II* listed buildings of mediaeval origin restored, rebuilt and enlarged in the 19th century. The church of St. Mary Magdalene, Albrighton, is the larger of

the two. It has a 12th century tower with battlements and gargoyles of about 1400, and a 12th century chancel, but the rest of the church was rebuilt in 1853 by H.J. Stephens. The church of St. Cuthbert, Donington has an early 14th century chancel and a nave of about 1635, and a tower, north aisle and porch added by John Norton during the restoration which took place in 1879-80.



St. Mary's Churchyard Cross

Each church is the focus of a group of structures of considerable architectural and historic interest. Each has a churchyard cross, also listed Grade II*. Both are restored and altered; the upper part of the Albrighton cross is early 20th century, and the Donington cross has been converted to a sundial. The churchyards have enclosing walls and stone and oak lych-gates which form prominent and attractive features of the street scene. Within the churchyards are a number of monuments of interest. They include a chest tomb of about 1840 at Donington and two chest tombs and a pedestal monument, all

early 19th century, at Albrighton; these are all Grade II listed structures. Close to Donington Church there is also the Old Rectory, a large house of Georgian origin which together with its outbuildings was altered and extended in the 19th and 20th centuries.



St. Cuthbert's Churchyard Cross (foreground) & the Old Rectory (background)



The Shrewsbury Arms, , High Street, Albrighton

At the junction of Church Road and High Street is another varied group of Grade II listed buildings vital to the character of the Conservation Area. The Shrewsbury Arms, in a very prominent corner position south of the church, is an irregular late 15th or early 16th century timber framed jettied and gabled house with extensive later additions and alterations. It makes a striking contrast with the neighbouring Georgian buildings, which are all themselves quite different in character.

Beechurst is a plain late 18th century house with a wide symmetrical 3-bay front and hipped roof, and a long irregular elevation to Church Road. Nos. 2 and 4 Church Road are a handsome pair of 3-storey 3-bay early 19th century houses with well-proportioned symmetrical fronts and good quality details. Much taller than their neighbours, they are a dominant element of the street scene. The Oaklands is an irregular late 18th century house with later alterations.



The Oaklands, High Street, Albrighton

MATERIALS

Traditional building materials are a major element of the Conservation Area's character and appearance. Sandstone is extensively used, most notably for the churches. This is generally the local red sandstone ashlar, though the chancel of St. Cuthbert's is of coursed rubble and the north aisle of St. Mary Magdalene is of a yellow stone. It is also used for most of the associated structures: the walls of the lych-gates, roadside boundary walls to the churchyards, churchyard crosses and monuments. The stone retaining walls running alongside the road from White Lodge south east to Beechurst are an important feature of the street scene.



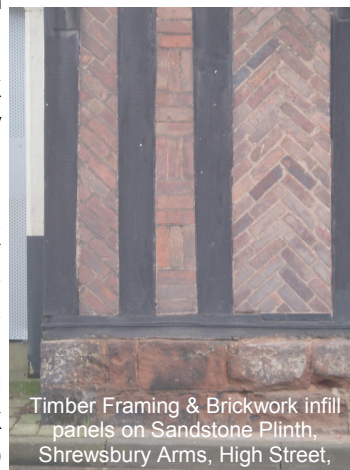
Sandstone Boundary Wall, Rectory Road, Donington



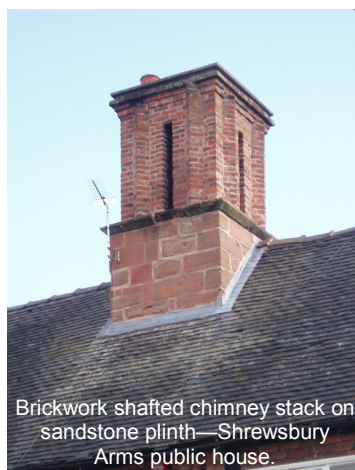
Diaper Brickwork, 6-8, Church Road, Albrighton

Other buildings are generally of brick with lime mortar. Nos. 2 and 4 Church Road and The Oaklands are in the Georgian red brick which can be seen throughout the Albrighton Conservation Area. Nos. 6 and 8 Church Road have mid 19th century diaper brickwork with contrasting dark headers producing a "chequered" pattern. The churchyards have 18th or 19th century brick boundary walls, and there is a high 18th century brick wall enclosing part of the Rectory garden along Rectory Road.

Some buildings have brickwork partly obscured by render or paint. The Old Rectory has a brick wing but is mostly rendered. Beechurst has a rendered front but the sides and rear are painted brick. The Shrewsbury Arms combines extensive timber framing with all of these materials: sandstone and brick plinth, brick infill, render and painted brick. The lych-gates are also largely constructed of oak.



Timber Framing & Brickwork infill panels on Sandstone Plinth, Shrewsbury Arms, High Street,



Brickwork shafted chimney stack on sandstone plinth—Shrewsbury Arms public house.

Roofs are of clay tiles. Most are gabled, some with gable parapets such as those of the churches and The Oaklands, other with plain verges or bargeboards, while some are partly hipped, such as Beechurst. Brick ridge or end chimneys are prominent features; the Shrewsbury Arms has a massive stone chimney with brick shafts.

ARCHITECTURAL DETAILS



Traditional materials are used for the architectural details which are an important element of the Conservation Area's special character. Stone is used not only for the construction but for the Gothic decorative details of the churches such as window tracery, mouldings

and carvings. Brickwork is exploited for decorative effect in details such as the dentil cornice of Beechurst, the gauged brick flat arches of Nos. 2 and 4 Church Road and, more ambitiously, the blind window in a blank arch on the front elevation of The Oaklands.



The traditional buildings generally have openings of vertical rather than horizontal proportions, with flat or segmental arches or lintels. Doors and windows are recessed within the openings, many with painted stone or rendered projecting sills. Nos. 2 and 4 Church Road have painted timber doorcases with pilasters and panelled reveals, and 6-panelled doors. The Georgian and Victorian buildings have painted timber sash windows: tripartite and also unusual 6-pane over 3-pane sashes such as those of Beechurst and The Oaklands, as well as the more usual 12-pane, 9-pane and 6-pane types.



There is also a variety of old timber casements in buildings such as Beechurst, the Old Rectory and the Shrewsbury Arms: a few retain original leaded iron opening lights, but most have timber glazing bars of varying patterns. Loss of these details damages character as Nos. 6 and 8 Church Road clearly demonstrate. This pair of mid Victorian cottages designed as a single unit with a central entrance retains the original 2-light casements with horizontal glazing bars to No. 6, but their replacement with leaded stained hardwood windows to No. 8 has destroyed the original unity of the design.

THE CHARACTER OF THE CONSERVATION AREA



Rectory Road towards the south & its junction with Newport Road/High Street

The original rural and historic character of Donington and Albrighton survives to a very considerable extent within the Conservation Area. The underlying topographical features are particularly important elements which literally shape much of that character and appearance. They provide considerable variety of scene within a limited area. The large number of trees, individually, in groups, belts and woodland, is also a vital characteristic which contributes a great deal to the rural and semi-rural effect. Most of the Conservation Area is covered by a Tree Preservation Order.

The rural setting of Donington remains little affected by the extensive 20th century development of Albrighton. Rectory Road is still a narrow, twisting country lane with grass verges, hedges and mature trees. St. Cuthbert's church, with its lych-gate, walls, churchyard with trees and old monuments and the former Rectory close by form an attractive rural scene marred only by a length of unattractive concrete block wall, fencing and tarmac footpath alongside the road beyond the bend.



St. Cuthbert's Well



White Ladies Court

The view south down Rectory Road is closed by the bend in the road and the mature trees surrounding Albrighton Pool. The combination of woodland surroundings and the expanse of water, with attractive views across the Pool, provide a tranquil rural atmosphere which makes this part of the Conservation Area particularly attractive. On the west side of the road the steep grass

banks, dense cover of beeches, yews and other trees, the pond and the picturesque stonework of St. Cuthbert's Well, a Grade II listed structure, are equally attractive. However, the effect is unfortunately marred by the inappropriate suburban landscaping in reconstituted stone, concrete and "wrought iron".



Rectory Road facing north



White Lodge, Newport Road, Donington

The southern part of the Conservation Area is less rural and more developed. While the northern side of Albrighton Pool is wholly wooded on the south side the gardens and rear elevations of modern houses in Whiteladies Court intrude somewhat on its picturesque character. Rectory

Road rises southwards towards the junction with High Street. This area has an enclosed heavily shaded feeling, dominated by the sandstone outcrop, trees at the junction and a dense belt of mature trees opposite, at the corner of Bowling Green Lane. On the opposite corner White Lodge, a picturesque 19th century building with 20th century additions, has an attractive belt of trees above its retaining wall along Newport Road.

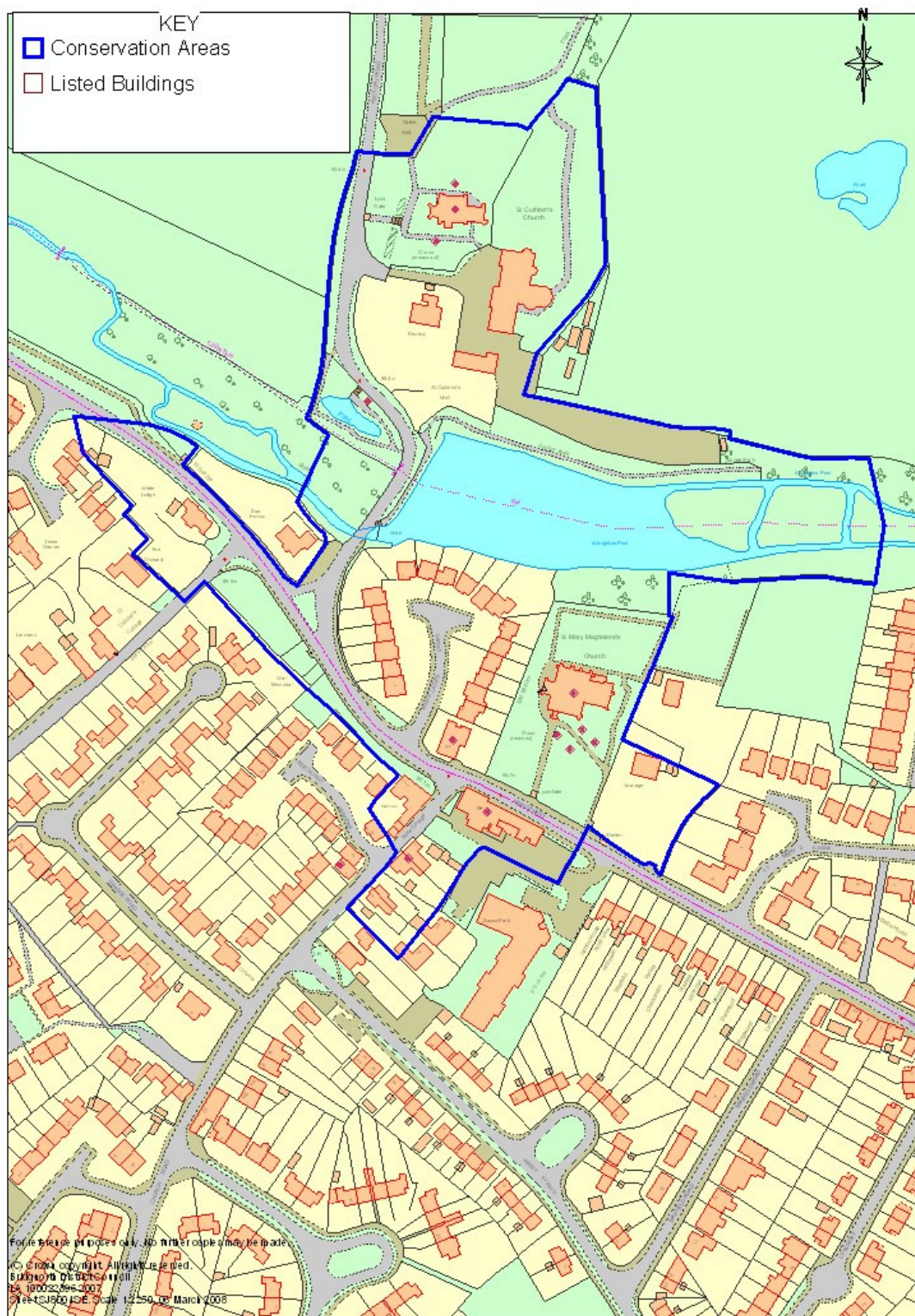


The character of High Street itself is quite varied. The War Memorial, a large oak crucifix set in a hollow in the sandstone, is an unusual and striking feature. 20th century housing development and loss of trees on both sides have damaged the character of this part of the area. However, the gentle curve of the road, rising to the south east, provides attractive changing views of the small but significant group of buildings around the junction with Church Road, buildings which form the historic core of this part of the Conservation Area. The parish church, with its lych-gate, walls and monuments, is part of this group, but is set back from it within a spacious churchyard, partly hidden from view by numerous trees. Together these buildings preserve a strong historic village character which contrasts powerfully with the surrounding suburban development.

APPENDIX 1

ALBRIGHTON & DONINGTON CONSERVATION AREA PLAN

ALBRIGHTON & DONINGTON CONSERVATION AREA PLAN



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