
NORTH WARWICKSHIRE BOROUGH COUNCIL

The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990

Atherstone Conservation Area

On the 18th November 1995, the North Warwickshire Borough Council, by Minute No XX of the Planning and Development Committee, formally designated the area of Atherstone shown on the map appended to the Designation Report as a 'Conservation Area' in accordance with Section 69(2) of The Planning(Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.

In accordance with the Act, the Secretary of State for the Environment has been informed and a Notice of the Decision placed in the London Gazette and in the Coleshill Herald (being a local newspaper circulating in the area) on the 4th November 1994.

Atherstone Conservation Area

INTRODUCTION

1. The statutory objective of a conservation area is to preserve or enhance its special architectural character or historic interest. It is however the character of an area rather than individual buildings which should be the prime consideration in identifying conservation areas. That character is derived from a range of interrelated factors and in particular the geography, history and townscape of the particular place.
2. The Atherstone Conservation Area embraces the commercial centre of the town around Market Place, Long Street, Station Street and Coleshill Road and adjoining residential areas immediately to the south, and relates closely to the extent of the town at the turn of the century.
4. Two distinctive historic landscapes meet at Atherstone. Arden to the south and the Mease Lowlands to the north. These are more fully described in the Warwickshire Landscape Guidelines.
5. The rising wooded ground to the south-east makes an important contribution to the character of the town because it is visible from many points within the centre. Historically it has restricted the built area of the town to a narrow belt extending NE to SW.
6. The site of the town was further delineated by the River Anker to the north-east and the two streams flowing from the high ground to the south-west; Innage Brook to the north-west and The Brook to the south-east.

GEOGRAPHY

3. The town of Atherstone lies on a raised terrace on the south side of the River Anker. Immediately to the south-west the ground rises steeply to The Outwoods and Merevale Park. This marked change in topography coincides with the boundary between the soft rocks of the Keuper Marl underlying the Anker and Mease Valleys to the north and the much older and harder Silurian and Cambrian rocks forming the north-east rim of the East Warwickshire Plateau to the south, itself a segment of the much wider Birmingham (or West Midlands) Plateau.

HISTORY

Pre-Roman Settlement

7. There was certainly Iron Age activity in the vicinity of what is now Atherstone, but it appears to have been concentrated some distance away on the higher ground at Oldbury where the ditches and ramparts of a hilltop fort may still be seen.

The Roman Influence

8. The invasion of Britain in AD 43 by the Romans under Emperor Claudius had advanced to the line of the present Fosse Way by AD 45/47 and a military fort was established at Mancetter, probably as an outpost to this frontier.

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9. By AD 48 Watling Street had been extended westwards to Wroxeter, near Shrewsbury. The alignment of this road is characteristically straight but it is obvious that the route along the Anker Valley was carefully chosen to avoid both the high ground to the south-west and the river flood plain to the north-east. Another characteristic feature of Roman roads was the posting station, placed every fifteen miles. By AD 70 one of these had been established at Manduessum on the east bank of the Anker near Mancetter

The Saxon Period

10. After the departure of the Romans, around AD 410, documentary evidence is scarce but it appears that separate settlements emerged at Hartshill, Oldbury and Atherstone in addition to Mancetter where the parish church was established.
11. It is probable that in Saxon times Atherstone developed to provide rest and refreshment at the point where the route from Derby and Ashy to Coleshill and Oxford crossed Watling Street (at that time known as Gethling Street).

The Norman Conquest

12. Evidence from the Domesday book suggests that the settlement contained 13 families with a total population of about 60.
13. At the Conquest, the manor of Atherstone passed to the Earl of Chester who soon after granted it to the Abbey of Bec Herlouin in Normandy. No Priory was however established and Atherstone continued to be served by the Mother Church at Mancetter, although in 1125 there was an agreement for the Rector of Mancetter to hold thrice weekly

divine service in a chapel believed to have been located on the site of the chancel of the present Church of St Mary. Around 1375, the Friary of St Augustine took over the chapel which, following the Dissolution, became the grammar school

14. It appears that the Monks of Bec had no significant presence in the town at that time and the Manor was administered by visiting officials from the Priory of St. George at Ogbourne in Wiltshire, the revenues supporting the Abbey in Normandy.

The Burgage Plots

15. In the early 13th Century the Abbey of Bec., believing Atherstone to be in a good trading position on Watling Street and on the Oxford to Derby route, attempted to gain borough status for the village. In 1246, Henry III granted the right to hold a weekly market and an annual fair in September. By 1289 burgage tenancies had been granted on plots of land of equal size around the market and along Watling street. The tenants of these plots were free from the obligation of agricultural service to the manor and were able to concentrate on developing trade. In 1294, thirty-six free tenants were recorded, and by the 14th Century the market was held twice weekly but the town did not thrive (as had Stratford-upon-Avon and Evesham), and borough status was never achieved.
16. The establishment of the burgage plots represents an early example of positive town planning, although the layout was less formal than at, for example, Stratford-upon-Avon where a regular grid of streets was laid out.

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17. By the 16th Century the population of Atherstone had grown to some 600, occupying 135 houses located within the original burgage plots. By the end of the century the population had increased by 50% and there were serious problems of food supply and overcrowding. As a consequence there were recurrent epidemics and in 1604 alone 145 people died.
 18. At the beginning of the 17th Century, Sir John Repington acquired the manor of Atherstone and became the first Lord of the Manor to reside there, choosing the grounds of the former Austin Friary as the site for his new house. In 1663 when a tax was imposed on hearths, Atherstone Hall was recorded as having 13 hearths, at a time when the majority of homes in the town had two, three or even only one room. Although not occupied by Lords of the Manor after 1676, the Hall was reconstructed at the beginning of the 18th Century and survived until 1963.

Open Fields to Enclosure

19. Expansion of the town beyond the limits of the burgage plots was constrained by the surrounding open fields which were not enclosed until the 18th Century. The extent of these open fields was in turn restricted by the River Anker to the north, the high ridge to the south, Mancetter Manor to the east and Merevale Abbey to the north-west.

Development of Agriculture and Manufacturing Industry

20. In spite of these difficulties, trade expanded, both agricultural and manufacturing and in particular a thriving cloth and wool trade. By the 17th Century two felt makers were recorded. This presence later formed the basis of the 19th Century hat trade. It can be

assumed, however, that the varied trade was essentially local as the means of transport both in and out of the town was limited to pack horses.

21. In the 17th Century, Watling Street, although on the direct route from London to Holyhead, was by-passed by the road through Coventry which Olgilby noted was "one of the most frequented of the Kingdom", only carts going by way of Atherstone. Nonetheless, Watling Street continued to be an important national trunk route until a by-pass, opened in the early 1960s, took most through vehicular traffic out of the town centre.

Canal Construction

22. The 18th Century boom in canal construction brought enormous benefits throughout the Midlands and Atherstone was no exception. The Coventry Canal reached the town in 1771 and was extended to Fazeley in 1790, thus providing a link to Birmingham. Coal (from Nuneaton, Baddesley Ensor and Polesworth), lime and building materials could be carried more economically to the town and agriculture produce to the larger markets. The town benefited from a gas supply as early as 1841.

The Hat Trade

23. The hat trade in Atherstone flourished particularly in association with the slave trade, when the law required each slave to have a hat a year. Abolition of slavery in 1834 caused a decline in the hat trade. The wall around the town side of the Merevale Estate is locally attributed to this event. It was constructed in 1837 shortly afterwards from stone quarried from Gallopers Hill.

Railway Construction

24. The railway arrived in Atherstone in 1847 and gave further impetus to the development of the town. The present station building was erected shortly afterwards. The line was widened to four tracks in the early 1900s at the same time that a bridge was built to eliminate delays at the level crossing and "cattle arch" adjoining the station, which were a source of friction between users and the railway company which had led to a nationally significant lawsuit in 1899.

19th Century Growth

25. The population of the town was some 4,000 by the mid-19th Century and had grown to 5,000 by the turn of the Century. This increase can largely be attributed to the growth of the hatting industry which had originally started as a cottage industry. By 1851 there were four manufacturers, the largest employing nearly 200 people, although the next largest only employed 10. At that time only two builders and a tanner employed more than 10 people.
26. It was only at the beginning of the 19th Century that the town began to expand beyond the limits of the original burgage plots, along Coleshill Road to the canal. The original burgage plots were 120 feet wide and would probably have been occupied by a single dwelling with garden to the rear. Over the years the plots were subdivided into two or four and The Yards at the rear occupied by small houses for the "working" population. These houses with workspace above were regarded as slums by the end of the 19th Century but the majority were not cleared until the 1930s, and the last not until 1956.

The 20th Century

27. The town centre is now a small commercial centre largely serving residents of the town and other nearby settlements, providing retailing, banking, insurance, legal, local government and other services. Only a few manufacturing companies remain in the centre of the town, and new industrial estates developed on the north side of the town from the 1970s to the present day provide the main focus of manufacturing and other industrial uses.

LOCAL EVENTS

28. The Atherstone Ball Game has been played in Long Street every Shrove Tuesday since the 13th Century, when King John gave a bag of gold as prize money.
29. Before the Battle of Bosworth in 1485, soldiers from the rival armies stayed in Atherstone. Henry Tudor is believed to have received the sacrament at the Parish Church before the battle and may have stayed at the Three Tuns. At a meeting at Hall's Close (off Coleshill Road), Lord Stanley was persuaded to switch allegiance from Richard III, which was the decisive factor in Henry Tudor's victory. The area is identified today in local street names, Richmond and Stanley Roads.
30. Florence Nightingale had close ties with the Bracebridge family who occupied Atherstone Hall. Welcome street marks a visit to the town following her return from the Crimea.

HISTORICAL PATTERN OF DEVELOPMENT

31. The history of the town has dictated its characteristic street pattern:

- The Roman Road, now Long Street.
- Ancient trade routes to the south-west (Coleshill Road), to Ashby and the north, (Sheepy Road), and to the northeast, (Ratcliffe Road).
- The mediaeval burgage plots with the rear access lanes leading to the communal open fields, (North Street and South Street - the latter now in part named Station Street).

32. The burgage plots, most now sub-divided, still dominate the "grain" of the town centre with long narrow plots and some remaining narrow alleyways running at right angles from Long Street and to a lesser extent from the Market Place.

Spaces

33. The historical pattern has given rise to a number of distinct spaces within the town centre.

- The Market Place : now a well defined space dominated by the Church of St Mary but previously much more tightly confined by buildings in the area of the present churchyard and by a market hall in the middle.
- Long Street : over a mile long, (lined more or less continuously by two and three storey buildings in the town centre) is a space in its own right. Although apparently a characteristically straight Roman Road, it is gently curved so that

views along its length are always closed. The slight widening in front of the Red Lion Inn creates a subtle but important space at the heart of the town.

- Station Street (formerly Back Lane) : a wedged shaped area which was possibly the location of the early livestock market when it outgrew the original market place.

- Very few gardens remain on the burgage plots but the Victorian garden at the rear of the Borough Council's offices at Old Bank House is an important example to which there is public access.

34. The Meadow Street Garden off Meadow Street together with the nearby bowling green are important green oases in an authorwise built up environment. The open setting of Grendon Lodge and Atherstone Station buildings are similarly important on the north-eastern edge approach to the conservation area.

Trees

35. The limited number of spaces of any significant size means that there are few mature trees within the town centre, the most notable being around the Church of St Mary and on South Street at the rear of Old Bank House. At the west end of Long Street there is a concentration of trees in front of the Station and in the grounds of Grendon Lodge. In Meadow Street and the adjoining Meadow Street Garden there is a significant group of trees. The limitations on the numbers of trees make the existence of these areas that much more significant in townscape terms as a relief to the impact of the built development.

BUILDINGS

Pattern

36. The frontages to both sides of Long Street and around the Market Place are almost continuously built up and the gaps that do exist have largely been created in recent years. The buildings are typically constructed without forecourts and are predominantly three storeys in height. Behind these frontages, ranges of buildings have been constructed mostly of two storeys, within the confines of the subdivided burgage plots. Only in recent years has there been a consolidation of the rear portions of the plots. The frontages to North Street, South Street and Station Street are much more varied, with buildings of differing scales and areas, some relatively large, cleared of buildings for car parking or to make way for anticipated development.
37. The residential development to the south of Station Street and South Street generally comprise two-storey terraced houses of the late 19th Century without forecourts but with rear gardens.

Density

38. The density of buildings particularly at the western end of Long Street is relatively high, although the demands of the motor vehicle have reduced this in the development of more recent years.
39. In the remainder of the area the density is somewhat lower, with most residential properties having rear gardens although the terraces with no front gardens maintain an urban character.

Type

40. The frontage buildings to Long Street and Coleshill Road are predominantly residential town houses of the 18th Century and early 19th Century, although many are now converted to shops and commercial use. In the Market Place and adjoining parts of Long Street the smaller buildings would have been shops with the owner's living accommodation above.
41. In the 19th Century other building types appeared, in particular schools and Non-Conformist Chapels but only one, the Albert Hall, on Long Street itself. The 20th Century, particularly since the War, has seen a greater variety - the Memorial Hall, the County Library and the offices and shops at Warwick House.
42. The residential properties in the southern part of the area are mainly typical late 19th Century terrace houses, paired with rear extensions.
43. The rears of burgage plots are occupied by industrial workshops at the west end of Long Street, with predominantly residential development at the east end.

Age

44. The buildings fronting Long Street date predominantly from the late 18th Century and early 19th Century. In Market Place they are thought to be earlier, and at least one is 16th Century and 17th Century timber framed and others may be similar with 18th Century brick fronts. There are relatively few late 19th Century or early 20th Century buildings but rather more from the post-war era.

45. The buildings in the area to the south of Station Street and South Street are predominantly of the late 19th Century. The municipal flats in St Benedicts Close date from 1970 and the housing association development in Meadow Street and Grove Road from 1993.

Style

46. The predominant style of Atherstone appears "Georgian" but in fact there are nearly as many early Victorian buildings with stucco facades maintaining the typical Georgian proportions. Some may, however, be earlier Georgian buildings re-faced in the then modern Victorian style. The buildings of the 1960s and 1970s are typical of their time, with their concrete framed structures clearly expressed. The buildings of the more recent decades have made some attempt to reflect the traditional form and character.

Listed Buildings

47. These are concentrated in the Market Place (and Church Street) and in the adjoining stretch of Long Street, and are predominantly Georgian in character. They formed the basis of the earlier Conservation Area. The other Listed Buildings are more varied in character and include Grendon Lodge, a free-standing house of circa 1820, the railway station of 1847, The Old Swan Inn from early/mid 16th Century, Trinity Church and the Britannia Works both in Coleshill Road and from the early 19th Century.

Materials and Techniques

48. The predominant building material is local stock bricks and plain tile roofs with stone dressings on the more important buildings. Stucco was used in the early 19th Century on

the main frontages. Later in the 19th Century imported bricks and Welsh slate were used but there is, however, little use of terracotta dressings and ornamentation.

49. There is evidence that a number of early buildings were built off large stone blocks placed on the ground possibly reclaimed from the construction of the Roman Road. Certainly the remains of timber framed buildings have been found in the divide between properties on Long Street during reconstruction work

50. The 1960/ 1970s municipal flats are typical of that period, with exposed concrete frames and brick infill panels.

51. The roofscape of the town is predominantly conventional pitched roofs and gable ends, the ridges aligned with the main street. At the rear, the ridges are at right angles with gables reflecting the varying roof spans. Hipped roofs are not common, the most notable exception being the Conservative Club. Many larger buildings have dormer windows in the roofs and chimney stacks are important features and can provide clues to their real age. Windows are predominantly of typical Georgian proportions. The roofscape of the buildings at the rear of the burgage plots is distinctive because of the parallel roof lines at right angles to Long Street and generally in close proximity.

SPECIAL FEATURES

52. A feature of special interest is the milestone outside the Red Lion Inn which records the distances to Coleshill, Tamworth and Lutterworth. The Ordnance Survey Map of 1897 notes that this spot is 100 miles from Lincoln, Liverpool and London. The cast iron plates displaying this information were removed some 20 years ago.

FLOORSCAPE

53. In 1994, within the main shopping area, the entire road and footway surfaces are being replaced as part of an environmental improvement and traffic calming project, introducing paving stone and granite setts in the Market Place and adjoining streets.

ACTIVITY

54. The busiest areas of the town are at present concentrated in Long Street between the Memorial Hall and the Woolpack Way car park, and in Station Street/South Street between the Cattle Market car park and the Council House. Except on market days, Market Street and Church Street are relatively quiet. The only really tranquil area of the town centre is the garden at the rear of Old Bank House.
55. Traffic movement, following the introduction of traffic management measures in 1994, is concentrated on Station Street, South Street, Woolpack Way, and the west end of Long Street. Apart from the Sheepy Road and Memorial Hall car parks, all car parking, the taxi rank and bus station are concentrated in Station Street, South Street, and Woolpack Way.
56. The main pedestrian movements are from the car parks and bus stops into the Long Street shopping area. From the south this movement is primarily through The Arcade, an alleyway and Coleshill Street and from the north via Church Street. There are other alleyways but they are very narrow and are little used.

VIEWS

57. Views within, into and out of an area contribute to its character. The long views along Long Street remind us of its Roman origins, but the closure of those views reinforces the impression that this is a town and certainly not a village. Conversely the views out to Merevale Park and The Outwoods remind us that Atherstone still has a rural setting and retains close links with the surrounding countryside.

DISCORDANT FEATURES

58. Some buildings and other features are inconsistent with the character and history of the area described above. Examples include:
- the flat roofed block of shops and flats opposite the White Bear Public House
 - the front of the Co-op Supermarket
 - the front of the Gateway Supermarket
 - the single-storey shops in Coleshill Street
 - the Regal Court block of flats, which is of excessive scale
 - the gap created by the Woolpack Way car park
 - the Atherstone Garage (Wainwrights forecourt and premises)
 - the Scout "Hut".
 - the gaps created by the car parks off Station Street and South Street, and -
 - the public conveniences in Station Street.

CONCLUSIONS

59. Atherstone has retained much of its distinctive and predominantly 18th Century - character. Much evidence of its historical development and associations remains, and although an 18th Century town in terms of its architecture, no really fundamental changes have taken place since the 13th Century. A free tenant from that earlier time travelling "back to the future" might tell find much that was familiar.
60. The pressure for change may well increase in the future, particularly as a result of the comparatively recent disappearance of work places from the buildings behind the Long Street frontages. The extension of the boundaries of the Atherstone Conservation Area will ensure that an area around the town centre is subject to the Conservation Area Policies, and assist in attracting appropriate development and redevelopment in order to conserve that distinctive character.

PROPOSED BOUNDARY

61. The boundary of the Designated Conservation Area embraces all the property on both sides of the historic Long Street from Grendon Lodge in the west to Queen Elizabeth School in the east. Except at the south east end where the pattern of the burgage plots has been lost, the full depth of these plots are included between North Street and Long Street.
62. Further areas beyond the burgage plots have been included to reflect the growth of the town during the 19th Century,-
- The former school (now the Rowan Centre) and Independent Chapel (a Listed Building and a now converted to

flats - The Cloisters) at the corner of Ratcliffe Road and North Street.

- The Railway Station and Grendon Lodge - both Listed Buildings.
 - The south side of Station Street is included to ensure that the character of the old market space is enhanced.
 - The area generally to the south of Station Street and South Street extending to the railway and east to Stafford Street, reflects the growth of the town during the 19th Century following the arrival of the canal and the railway.
63. The former station yard which is proposed in the North Warwickshire Local Plan for retail development in the form of a supermarket is not included in the Conservation Area. It will be necessary for development of that site and any future redevelopment of adjoining industrial premises to take account of the Conservation Area and make a positive contribution to its character.
64. The Designated Conservation Area contains a number of sites which have been developed in recent years. Whilst some of these are not consistent with the general character, their inclusion does not invalidate the purpose of designation.
65. It is anticipated that at least part of Coleshill Road south of the railway will be included in the proposed Coventry Canal Conservation Area.

**PRESERVATION AND
ENHANCEMENT PROPOSALS**

66. In deciding to designate a Conservation Area, a Local Planning Authority must formulate and publish proposals for its preservation and enhancement.
67. The Borough Council intends that the primary means of protecting and enhancing the Atherstone Conservation Area is the implementation and application of Local Plan Policy E10 (Appendix A).
68. The Borough Council, in partnership with the County Council and with Grant Aid from the European Commission, is currently (1994) carrying out an extensive traffic calming and environmental improvement scheme in the town centre. This project is concentrated in the main shopping and commercial area at the western end of the Conservation Area and will provide an enhanced floorscape in Long Street, Market Street, Market Place, Church Street, Coleshill Street and Station Street; tree planting; and reduction in traffic levels.
69. It is unlikely, in the foreseeable future, that the Borough Council will be able to make further capital expenditure available for enhancements in Atherstone Town Centre.
70. In the short term it is unrealistic to expect that significant improvements to many of the discordant features referred to above can be achieved. Many can only be realised as a result of sympathetic redevelopment. Others require quite modest action, such as the replacement of shop fronts and fascias, or the planting of trees to recreate a sense of enclosure at the edge of some of the car parks (this has already been done at Woolpack Way Car Park and by the new Bus Station in Station Street as part of the Town Centre Scheme). Opportunities do unexpectedly occur and can be grasped, particularly through the control of new development. In the immediate future this will be the principal means by which improvements will be achieved.

October

1994

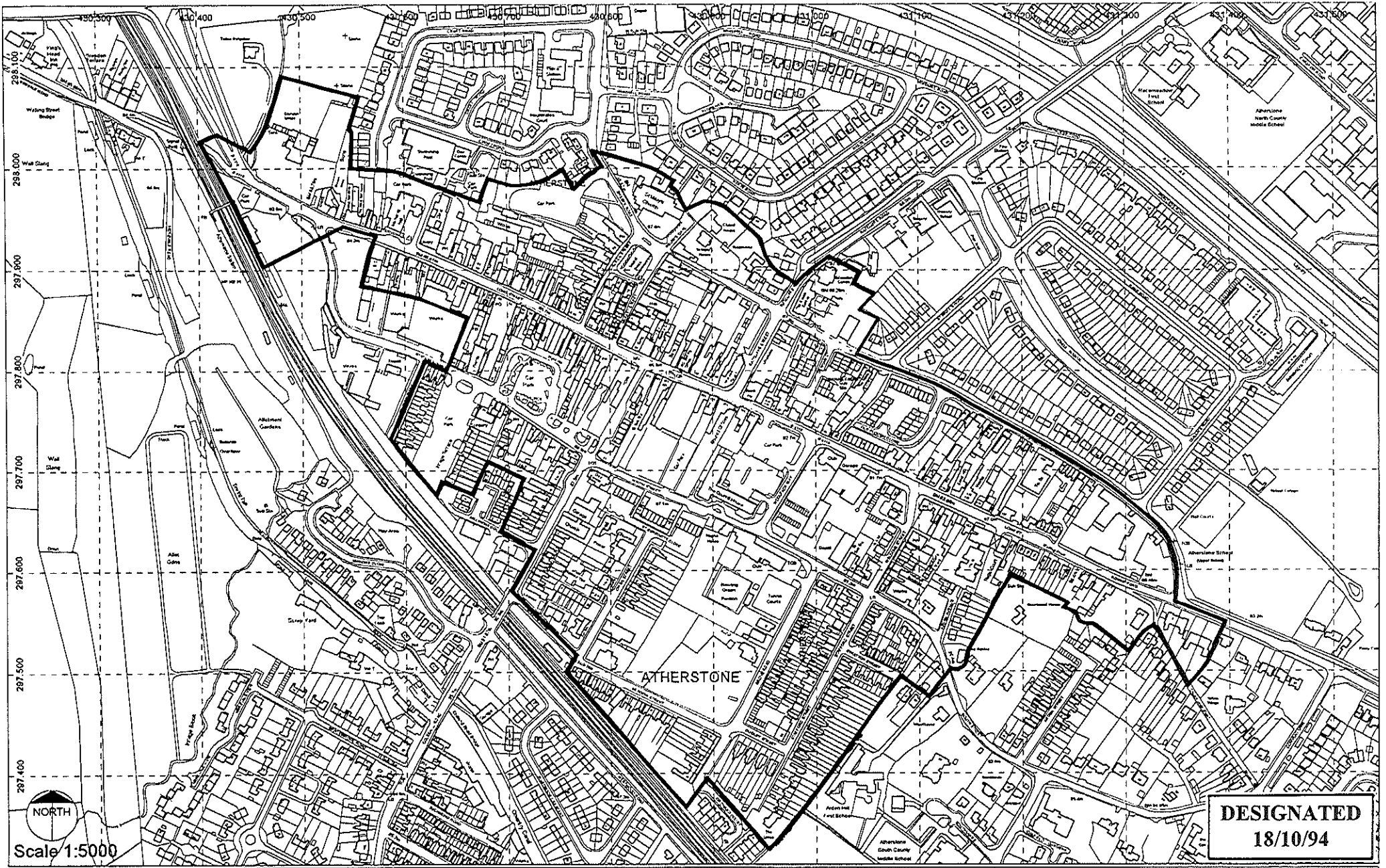
APPENDIX

North Warwickshire Local Plan, adopted on the 26th May 1995 contains the following policy:

Policy ENV14 : Conservation Areas

Conservation Areas will be protected and enhanced by the following means:

- (1) The demolition of un-listed buildings will not normally be permitted, except where they detract from the character of the Conservation Area, and the demolition is necessary to the implementation of development for which permission has been granted, and which will enhance its character.
 - (2) The felling of trees within Conservation Areas will normally only be permitted where they are dead, dangerous or dying.
 - (3) Development will not normally be permitted which would have a harmful effect upon the character, appearance or setting of a Conservation Area.
 - (4) New buildings will be required to harmonise with their setting, by following the historic street line: reflecting the scale form, fenestration and roof line of traditional buildings: and using the materials characteristic of the area.
 - (5) Alterations and extensions to buildings will be required to harmonise with their character and that of the Conservation Area: by retaining and where necessary restoring traditional features such as shop fronts, boundary walls, paved surfaces and street furniture: reflecting the scale, form and character of the building: and using materials traditionally characteristic of the area.
 - (6) New shop fronts and fascias will be required to be in proportion with the building and in character with the architecture of the building and its setting.
 - (7) Advertisements should normally be of traditional painted or engraved finish, with spotlighting as opposed to internal illumination.
 - (8) Encouragement will be given to the removal of eyesores, the replacement of inharmonious features by more fitting installations, and the proper maintenance of buildings and public areas.
 - (9) As resources permit, measures will be carried out to enhance the street scene.
- Existing Conservation Areas are shown on the proposals map.



2

Scale 1:5000

DESIGNATED
18/10/94

ATHERSTONE CONSERVATION AREA

A conservation area is 'an area of special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance'. There can be no uniform standard against which the character of an area can be measured, so it is necessary to evaluate separately the particular merits of potential conservation areas to establish whether they are worthy of designation.

1. The Case for Designation

Department of the Environment Circular 12/81 encourages local planning authorities to keep the designation of conservation areas under review and to consider whether more areas should be designated, especially when local plans are being prepared.

A local plan for the Atherstone area has already been prepared by the Council. It was adopted on 20th May, 1981 after extensive public consultation. This local plan contains a policy (paragraph 7.16) which states that:

'It is proposed to designate the area around the Watling Street Bridge, Watling Street (Merevale Road), a conservation area'.

The Council has therefore already identified the need to designate a conservation area.

This part of the town warrants special recognition for a number of reasons. It is a pleasant backwater of attractive older housing lying between the Euston to Glasgow railway line and Merevale Park, and traversed by the Coventry Canal. It comprises a group of largely late 19th Century domestic buildings, which although not yet included on the Statutory List of Buildings of Special Architectural or Historic Merit have a character which it is considered important to preserve and enhance. The majority of the buildings have not had any significant external alterations to their original appearance.

Within the area, Merevale Road crosses the Coventry Canal via Watling Street Bridge. South of the bridge there is a series of canal locks, one of which is included within the conservation area.

2. Conservation Area Boundary

The boundary of the conservation area has been drawn to encompass not only those properties considered to be of architectural or historic interest, but also the Bridge and important areas of open space - including the land between the Coventry Canal and Wall Slang. The existing trees, hedges and walls are of particular importance as these features can enhance views of open space or buildings and reduce the impact of unsightly vistas.

3. Legislation Applying to Conservation Areas

The Statutory Procedure for designation is set out in Annex A.

Within conservation areas the local planning authority has additional powers to control development and the demolition of buildings, and to protect trees and tree groups. This helps to ensure that any development which does take place does not upset the existing balance of elements which has evolved over the years. The legislation is intended to assist authorities in enhancing conservation areas not merely preserving them. These additional powers are outlined in Annex A.

4. Planning Policy

Existing planning policies for the area are contained in two statutory documents - the Warwickshire Structure Plan (Alterations No 3) and the Atherstone District Plan.

The Structure Plan contains strategic planning policies for the whole of Warwickshire. So far as Atherstone is concerned, the town is identified as a growth settlement for future housing development. The Atherstone District Plan contains the detailed planning proposals for the town. It identifies specific sites for new development, and also defines a development boundary around the built-up area of Atherstone and Mancetter which sets the limit to future peripheral expansion. This boundary includes the properties within the conservation area but excludes the land to the south of Merevale Road between the Coventry Canal and Wall Slang. The Atherstone District Plan states that within this development boundary planning applications for new housing on infill sites will be treated on their merits. However, to prevent uncontrolled peripheral expansion, applications for residential development on sites outside the present limits of the town will be resisted.

Several other policies in the Atherstone District Plan apply to the conservation area and these are quoted in the following paragraphs and subsequent explanatory sections:

- 7.21 - Planning Applications in Conservation Areas
- 7.23 - Planning Applications adjacent to Conservation Areas
- 7.25 - Demolition of Buildings in Conservation Areas
- 7.28 - Listed Buildings and Buildings in Conservation Areas
- 7.39 - Road Signs and Street Lighting

5. Future Action

As stated earlier in this report, the designation of a conservation area not only enables the local planning authority to take steps to preserve its appearance, but also to draw up measures for its enhancement.

Whilst the major aim is to preserve the existing character of the Watling Street Bridge Conservation Area, it is considered that local action should

be taken to improve its appearance wherever possible. In particular, opportunities to provide enhancement schemes for individual properties may present themselves when planning applications are submitted for development.

At present there is an established coal yard operating to the rear of Merevale Villas, while land further to the south, alongside the canal, has had temporary planning permission for coal stocking. This coal stocking operation appears to have declined in scale recently, to be largely replaced by a haulage business.

The activities occurring on these areas of land are considered to be inappropriate in this location because of their relationship to residential properties, the shape of the site and the position of the access. It is considered that they need to be relocated elsewhere, especially as plots are now available on the nearby Holly Lane Industrial Estate. Since the land to the rear of Merevale Villas lies within the development boundary of the Atherstone District Plan, some new housing would represent an acceptable alternative use.

The emphasis within the conservation area, so far as future development is concerned, should be on ensuring that any new building or alterations accord with the architectural and visual qualities of the group. Although designation of a conservation area does give the local planning authority certain additional powers, the Council considers it essential to seek to ensure that those buildings scheduled in Annex B are included on the Statutory List. This will ensure that the architectural and historic qualities of these properties are not downgraded. Efforts have been made in the past to secure the listing of Merevale Villas which were possibly railway cottages. As the Department of the Environment did not consider them worthy of inclusion at that time, the Council is not to pursue the matter. Nevertheless the importance of the group is emphasised by its inclusion within the conservation area.

LEGISLATION APPLYING TO CONSERVATION AREAS
STATUTORY PROCEDURE FOR DESIGNATION

Section 277 of the Town and Country Planning Act, 1971 places a duty upon local planning authorities to determine which parts of their area are 'areas of special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance' and to designate them as Conservation Areas.

The Secretary of State must be notified of such designations, but his confirmation is not necessary. Notice of the designation is published in the London Gazette and in at least one local newspaper. The date of designation is the date of the Council's resolution.

Additional Powers in Conservation Areas

(i) Control of Demolition

Section 277A of the Town and Country Planning Act, 1971 provides control over the demolition of buildings in Conservation Areas. In general, buildings in conservation areas cannot be demolished without obtaining listed building consent from the local planning authority. There are certain specified exceptions to this requirement - for example, buildings of less than 115 metres cubic content, buildings whose demolition is required by an enforcement notice served under Section 87 or 96 of the 1971 Act or which are in a clearance order or compulsory purchase order made under Part III of the Housing Act, 1957.

(ii) Enhancement Schemes

Section 277B of the Act requires local planning authorities to formulate and publish, from time to time, proposals for the preservation and enhancement of Conservation Areas. The Secretary of State may direct local planning authorities to formulate and publish such proposals. These are required to be submitted to a local public meeting to which members of the authority, amenity groups, residents associations and the Chamber of Trade would be invited, and whose views must subsequently be taken into account by the local planning authority concerned.

(iii) Protection of Trees

Under Section 61A of the Town and Country Planning Act, 1971 trees in Conservation Areas are given protection, though to a lesser degree than trees the subject of a Tree Preservation Order. Anyone proposing to do any work on trees in a Conservation Area (topping, lopping or felling) must give the local authority notice of their intention. This gives the local planning authority the opportunity to make a Tree Preservation Order, if it considers it appropriate to do so, or to give consent for the proposal to be carried out. In the absence of either, and after the expiry of a period of six weeks from the giving of notice, the proposal may in any case be carried out.

(iv) Publicity for Planning Applications

Section 28 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1971 requires the local planning authority, in the case of a planning application where the development would, in their opinion, affect the character of the Conservation Area, to advertise the proposal both on site and by a notice in the local press.

(v) 'Permitted Development'

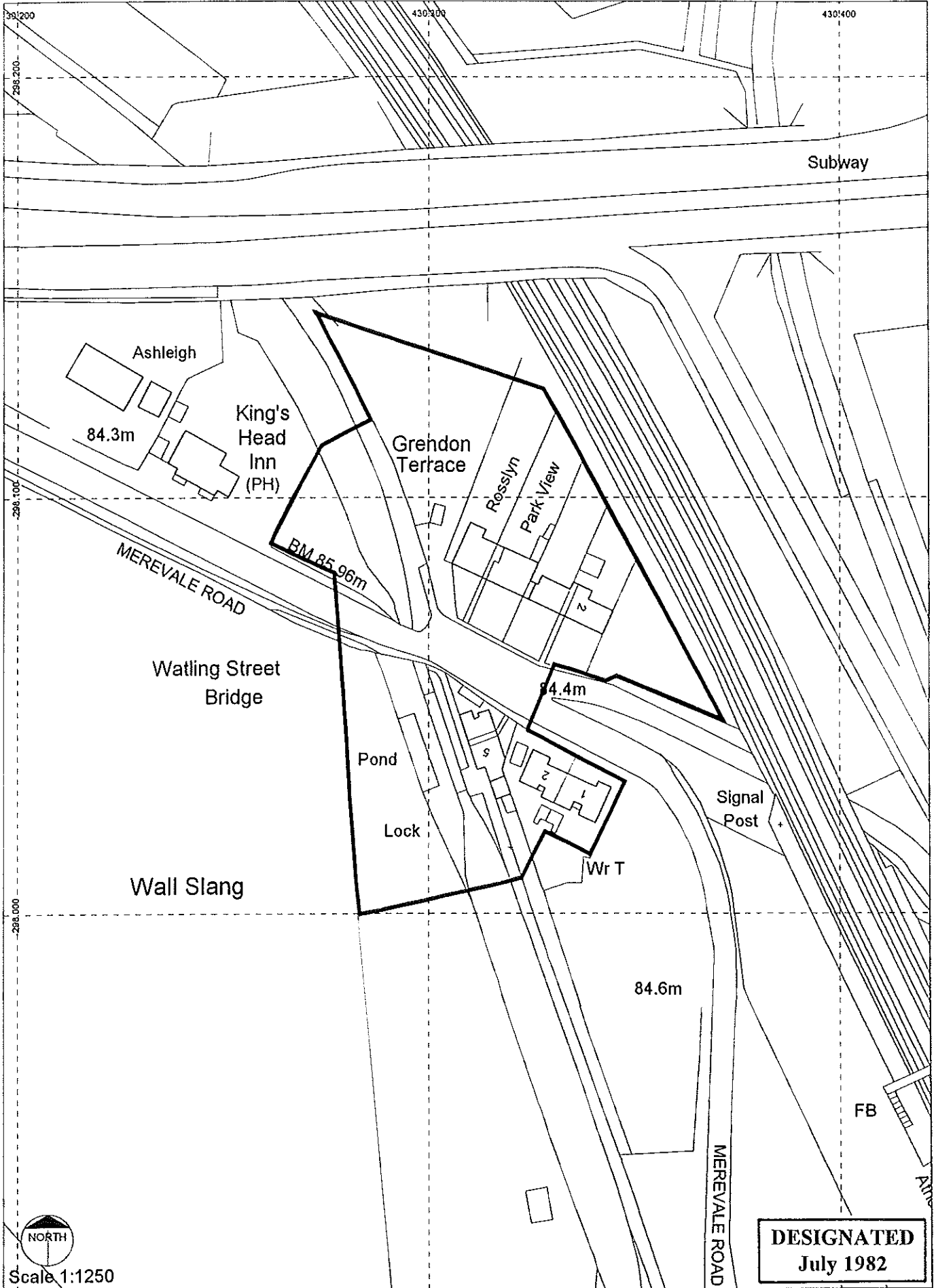
The Town and Country Planning General Development Order, 1977 grants planning permission for the enlargement, improvement or other alteration of a dwellinghouse subject to certain limits. If, however, the dwelling concerned is a listed building, listed building consent may still be required.

(vi) Grants and Loans

Section 10 of the Town and Country Planning (Amendment) Act, 1972, as amended by the Local Government Planning and Land Act, 1980 enables the Secretary of State to make grants or loans for schemes to preserve or enhance Conservation Areas. Grants are payable at the Secretary of State's discretion, and may be subject to conditions.

SCHEDULE OF BUILDINGS WITHIN THE CONSERVATION AREA
WHICH MERIT INCLUSION ON THE STATUTORY LIST OF
BUILDINGS OF SPECIAL ARCHITECTURAL OR HISTORIC INTEREST

| Property | Description |
|--|---|
| <p>The properties listed below are important because of their group value.</p> <p><u>GRENDON TERRACE</u></p> <p>Roslyn</p> <p>Park View</p> <p>Adjacent Park View</p> <p>2 Grendon Villa</p> | <p>A group of early Victorian dwellings.</p> <p>Two-storey brick building with plain tile roof. Three original light casement windows with small panes. Oversailing dentil brick course. Gauged brick arches over windows and door. Two board doors.</p> <p>Three-storey brick building with central entrance later garage entrance. Small pane sash windows, rendered lintels and projecting keystones. Plain tile roof. Circular headed fanlight to door. Later porch addition. Wooden pilasters with triangular pediment over.</p> <p>Two-storey brick building, small paned casement windows. Plain tile roof, rendered lintels with projecting keystones. Oversailing dentil eaves.</p> <p>Two-storey brick built. Plain tile roof. Small pane casement window with semi circular arches - rendered lintels.</p> |
| <p>5 Lock House</p> <p>5 Lock Cottage</p> | <p>Two-storey canal side cottages. Plain tile roof rendered brickwork. Three light casement windows with small panes. Original passageway between cottages to give access between the canal towpath and Merevale Road now unfortunately closed.</p> |



DESIGNATED
July 1982

WATLING ST. BRIDGE, ATHERSTONE C.A.

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North Warwickshire Borough Council

APPENDIX A

APPRAISAL OF THE SPECIAL ARCHITECTURAL AND HISTORIC INTEREST OF THE PROPOSED 'WINDMILL HILL CHARACTER AREA' EXTENSION TO THE ATHERSTONE CONSERVATION AREA.

1 Location and topography

The proposed extension lies immediately to the south east of the current conservation area. It comprises land mostly on the south sides of sections of Church Walk and South Street that occupy the crown and northern slope of a hillock, Windmill Hill, rising to some 95m above sea level. The area is shown on the attached plan.

2 Historic Development and Interest

Up to the time of enclosure this area formed part of the open field system of Atherstone. The Hewitt Plan of 1716 shows only a footpath on the line of Church Walk running through regular field strips belonging to the Windmill Hill Field on its way to the parish church at Mancetter. (The windmill stood just outside the study area on a site close to the present-day junction of South Street and Arden Street; the field itself was mentioned as 'Wyndemyneffelde' in 1546¹).

At the enclosure of the open fields in 1765, Church Walk was referred to as a 'public and church road'², and although still a footpath it was required under the enclosure award to have a width of at least twelve feet.

A 'back road' was also to be maintained to the south of Long Street for the use of the lord of the manor for the transport of clay sand and bricks produced in the 'Claypitts' and 'Cowpasture'³ (these areas are shown on the Hewitt Plan immediately south and west of Windmill Hill). This became the present South Street connecting Windmill Hill and the clay pits with Coleshill Road and the medieval livestock market in what is now Station Street.

It was not until the early-mid 19th century that the area began to develop as a residential suburb on the outskirts of the town for its prosperous merchant class. From the early 19th century onwards they had the financial means to afford the high prices demanded by important local landowners for land on the town's fringe that could be accessed off the 'back road'. Here they were away from the dirt and disease of the Yards and factories, where they could enjoy their large gardens and the benefits of the countryside while being within easy reach of their town centre businesses.

¹ Victoria County History Vol IV page 127

² The History of Atherstone B Watts & E Winyard 1988 p 70

³ Ibid.

It was along the south side of South Street near the crown of the hill that the characteristic house type of the Victorian middle-class - the detached house or villa set in its own landscaped grounds - began to appear from just after the mid-century. Together these could create something approaching the gardens and the privacy of country houses. By the 1880s a line of six such villas in various fashionable styles had been built comprising, from west to east :- Arden Hill, Oakfield (now demolished), Mancetter Cottage, The Orchard, Vicarage, and Rose Hill (also demolished). Owners included George John Sale JP a linen draper and farmer who built the Orchard c.1862 moving from his house over a shop in Long Street; William Bourne, draper, corn and wool merchant who built Oakfield also in 1862; and the Willday family, hat manufacturers in Long Street who built Rose Hill villa at about this time.

To the north along Church Walk there was little building before the 20th century. It began with two vernacular-style houses dating from the early-mid 19th century – the White House (no. 26) and Bardon Cottage (no. 30) on the south side of Church Walk. These were sited on the north slope of Windmill Hill to take advantage of views over the fields and distant spires of rural Leicestershire. At the north end of Church Walk, to the rear of the two substantial semi-detached villas Brereton Place and Holte Villas facing onto Witherley Road, were a pair of small semi-detached cottages called Oakfield cottages. These had been built by 1888. They were joined by an identical pair immediately to the south after 1903. Subsequently Church Walk was developed with mainly interwar semidetached housing characteristic of that period, and some post-war infill development.

3 Architectural Interest: Townscape

South Street

The street has a decidedly rustic character in the vicinity of Mancetter Cottage, the Orchard and Orchard Cottages (PI.) The contribution of the grounds and gardens of villas and other buildings to the quality of the street at this point is as important as the buildings themselves. They contain some magnificent specimen trees including mature beeches whose lofty canopies extend fully over the carriage way and both footpaths.

There are some attractive views along the street when looking south eastwards towards the Orchard Cottages and the Orchard itself. Here the grouping of these buildings creates, intentionally no doubt, the impression of a substantial country-house with its associated outbuildings. The collection of roofs and chimneys to the Orchard and Orchard Cottages adds significant skyline interest. (PI)

A little further east along South Street ground levels begin to fall away towards the north allowing elevated wide vistas over attractive private rear gardens to properties lining the south side of Church Walk and their medley of rear extensions and outbuildings which add to the visual interest of the scene(PI)

Church Walk

This is a quiet narrow back lane of intimate character and strong enclosure at its northern end defined by hedges, brick walls, fences and coniferous trees on boundaries (PI) and the elevations of flanking buildings set behind these. (PI)

4 Architectural Interest: Key Building Groups

- Orchard Cottages , The Orchard, and 71 South Street

These make an attractive grouping in approach views from the east along South Street as described above.

- Mancetter Cottage, The Orchard, and The Old Vicarage

These form part of a looser grouping of Victorian detached villas along South Street that are significant historically as described above

5 Architectural Interest: Key Buildings

South Street

- *Mancetter Cottage*

Victorian villa in a cottage orne style, informal asymmetrical composition, substantially extended to the west in the 20th century which has detracted from its interest. Colour-washed rendered elevations with prominent fretted bargeboards, small leaded windows (some changed in the 20th century), and lattice porch.

- *71 South Street*

Early - mid 19th century vernacular one-and-a half storey red brick building set directly on the back edge of a narrow footpath at the bend of South Street. The windowless front elevation without dormers adds to the rural vernacular character of the building and rustic feel of the street

- *The Orchard*

Italianate villa built c. 1862 in yellow brick with sandstone dressings. Some alterations in the mid 20th century but it retains much of its original character. It was, until recently, set in an attractive 'pocket park' garden, but the grounds are in the process of redevelopment for housing.

- *Orchard Cottages*

Row of cottages probably built c. 1862 with the Orchard in a late Georgian style with vertical sash windows and slate hipped roof with deep eaves. Evokes the impression of substantial service buildings to a country house.

Church Walk

- *The White House*
Probably a mid -19th century building of brick (subsequently painted white) in a rustic vernacular style, of two storeys but with the first floor sash windows breaking through eaves to give the effect of eyebrow dormers. Sashes have Gothick style glazing bars. The eaves course has large projecting brick dentils. Substantial rear ranges make this a deceptively sizeable house but one designed to look like a small rural cottage as seen from Church Walk.

Vicarage Close

- *The Old Vicarage*
A substantial mid 19th century house in a picturesque Tudor Gothic style retaining many original and characteristic architectural elements such as square-headed mullioned windows with hood-moulds and label-stops, four-centre arch doorways, tall brick chimneys, and an array of steeply pitched gables with deeply projecting verges.

Witherley Road

- *9 Witherley Road*
Late 19th century detached house showing Arts and Crafts influences. It retains nearly all of its original features intact including an elaborate bracketed door case and original door. The elevations are typically half of rough-cast render and half of brick, with small sized panes to the upper portions of windows, and tall chimney stacks with moulded bricks.