



ADMASTON CONSERVATION AREA

Town and Country Planning Act 1971

East Staffordshire District Council

At its meeting on the 27th of February 1989, under the provisions of Section 277 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1971, the Full Council of the East Staffordshire District resolved that the area shown on the enclosed plan be designated as "Admaston Conservation Area", and used as the policy basis for development control.

cover : School Lane, Admaston

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INTRODUCTION : CONSERVATION AREAS

Legislation has existed since the Town and Country Planning Act of 1932 to preserve buildings of architectural or historic interest and the 1944 Act set up a system for listing them. The system has saved many fine old buildings from destruction or mutilation but demolition and redevelopment of other buildings has shown that the preservation of single buildings alone is not sufficient to preserve the character of an area, and often the overall character is more important than any individual building.

The character of an area is compound of many things : individual buildings of interest, spaces between buildings, street patterns, trees, groups of buildings and consequently the 1967 Civic Amenities Act allowed local authorities to designate those "areas of special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance". The 1967 and subsequent Acts have been consolidated and re-enacted in the Town and Country Planning Act 1971.

There is an important difference between preservation, by the listing of buildings, and conservation. Preservation implies freezing, as in a museum, but conservation is more dynamic and has been described as "not only maintaining in good repair but also regenerating and enriching" and "preserving purposefully ; giving not merely continued existence but continued useful existence". In Conservation Areas the element of change cannot, and should not, be ruled out, but should be controlled to maintain and enhance the character and feel of an area.

Department of the Environment Circular 23/77 states that there can be no standard specification for Conservation Areas. They may be large or small, ranging from whole town centres to squares, terraces, and smaller groups of buildings. Often they will be centred on Listed Buildings, but pleasant groups of other buildings, open spaces, trees, an historic street pattern, a village green or features of archaeological interest may also contribute to the special character of an area.

The effects of designation of a Conservation Area on property owners, on the local authority and on the community in general, are described later in this document. In due course, detailed proposals for the enhancement of the area will be prepared, but the ultimate success of the Conservation Area depends on the active interest and support of the community.



St. Leonard's Church

THE AREA

Admaston, a rural hamlet in the parish of Blithfield, lies at the Southern boundary of the District, adjoining Blithfield Reservoir, about 3 miles from the village of Abbots Bromley.

It is surrounded on all sides by grazing land, with the wooded parkland of Blithfield Hall to the North.

The hamlet consists of two culs-de-sac, a lane to the South and a by-pass road connecting the Reservoir viaduct to the main B5013, diverting heavy traffic away. The only vehicles entering the village are for access purposes only, allowing the area to remain tranquil and secluded.

School Lane, so named because Blithfield House, at the end of the lane, was formerly a school and school-master's house, has an informal cluster of houses at both ends, with woodland areas and allotments in-between. Farm buildings and three cottages form the equally sparse development on the adjoining Old Road.

The hamlet is situated at the entrance to Blithfield Hall, the tarmac drive stretching away to the North-West. The Hall is concealed from view by dense tree-cover.

Blithfield Hall, its associated buildings and gardens and the parish church set in ancient parkland, form a most attractive and historically very important group. The Grade I Listed house, one of the most important historic buildings in Staffordshire, has been the home of the Bagot family since 1367. It is of mediaeval origin, but is largely a 16th century timber framed building with 18th century additions. It consists of 4 ranges surrounding a rectangular courtyard with extensions to the north-east and east. Between 1820 and 1824 it was rendered over and remodelled in the Tudor Gothic style and the matching gateway and stables were built. The house was saved from dereliction in the 1950s by Lord and Lady Bagot. In 1985 the stables were converted to dwellings, and in 1988 work began on converting part of Blithfield Hall itself into separate houses. Lady Bagot still lives in another part of the house.

Numerous other listed structures associated with Blithfield Hall include the classical orangery of about 1760 by James 'Athenian' Stuart, a game larder, fences and walls, and a sundial. Close by is the Grade I Listed Church of St. Leonard, a mediaeval building dating from about 1300. In 1829-30, a vestry was built, and the porch by G. E. Street was added in 1860. The Church contains many monuments to the Bagot family. From the house there are fine views of the wooded parkland and Blithfield Reservoir, which was built in the 1950s and greatly enhances the setting of the area. Features of the park include the Grade II Listed well house, a water tower and an ice house.

At the entrance to Blithfield Park are the Admaston Lodges flanking the drive to the Hall. They were built about 1820, in a Tudor Gothic style, similar to that of the house. They are single storey cubic buildings of ashlar stone with 5 light windows with trefoiled lights and heraldic shields to the gables on all four sides. In 1985, the lodges were rescued from dereliction, sensitively extended and converted into dwellings, now known as Friary Lodge and Bagot Lodge.



Blythe Moor

Sedge Cottage and The Smithy, at the southernmost end of School Lane, are a pair of Grade II Listed cottages, built in the early Nineteenth Century with later additions. Like most of the buildings in Admaston, they are of red brick with a tile roof. The cottages have casement windows with shutters to those of Sedge Cottage.

Further up the lane on the same side stands Blythe Moor, formerly known as Blithmoor. The house is probably Seventeenth Century in origin but extended and largely rebuilt in the 1900s. It is timber-framed with brick infill and has a plain tile roof. The casement windows are latticed and the interesting brick-ridge stack is of cruciform section. It is a Grade II Listed Building.

Blithfield House, at the top of the lane, is an imposing building standing in a concealed position, fronted by a gravel drive. This former school and master's house was built in 1856-7, by Street, and is of Tudor-Gothic style. It is of red brick with ashlar dressings and has slate and fishscale tile roofs. The brick off-ridge stacks have octagonal shafts with tumbled brickwork, and the windows to the ex-school rooms have chamfered mullion and transoms. It is a Grade II Listed Building.

The redundant Admaston Farm buildings, at the bend in Old Road, comprise a courtyard of brick and tile cow sheds, stables and granaries of mid to late Nineteenth Century, standing alongside a large farmhouse. The buildings, although not outstanding, are of a traditional character and have considerable landscape importance due to their prominent hill top position overlooking the Reservoir. The buildings may be retained and adapted into dwellings following the granting of planning permission. These buildings, together with the cottages opposite, are important in creating visual enclosure.

Further down the hill towards the Reservoir, is an L-Shaped, mid-Nineteenth Century brick barn, currently being converted into a dwelling. This building is also prominently located and stands isolated from other buildings within the area. Although the conversion scheme involves considerable refurbishment and alteration, it will reflect the scale and character of the original barn and also that of the surrounding buildings.

School Lane forms an informal meander with verges spilling out into the roadway and hedges and trees creating seclusion and density, contrasting sharply with the expansive, rolling views of the surrounding countryside and the adjoining Reservoir. The lane's intrinsic character also contrasts with that of the adjacent track to Blithfield Hall, which cuts a formal line through the sedate, well wooded parkland/pasture, with its equally neat and formal Lodges and gardens, shrouded from one side by tall Cedars of Lebanon. The hedge along the Western side of Old Road acts as a dense screen to that part of the village, whilst on the Eastern side the hedges and fences are low enough to reveal areas of land all around.

The area owes much of its aesthetic significance to the dense areas of woodland to the West of the area, which are high in nature conservation value and a source of wildlife habitat. Two areas of woodland to the West of School Lane are prominent and visible from a considerable distance and contribute significantly to the character and amenities of Admaston and the surrounding area. The areas, which are covered by Tree Preservation Orders, consist of mature, semi-mature and young sycamore and ash to the North of School Lane; mature cedar, holly, sycamore, yew, beech, sweet chestnut, oak, lime, young Norway maple, willow and laburnum either side of the entrance to Blithfield Hall; and several sycamore, yew, holly, oak, beech, lime and chestnut overlooking the central section of School Lane. These areas provide vital ground cover of otherwise open land, and should therefore be retained complete. The visually unified effect of the hamlet would be destroyed if sections of the woodland were to disappear. The combination of scrub, young, semi-mature and mature trees of native species makes it of particular importance as wildlife habitat.



THE CONSERVATION AREA

The designation of the Conservation Area at Admaston would allow for the preservation of the character of the area and provide for positive action to enhance its appearance as and where necessary.

The plan shows the boundary of the Conservation Area and also the physical features which are particularly important to the visual aspects of the area.

The main focus of the area is School Lane and its adjacent woodland area, but also included is an area to the East which, because of its prominent position and areas of open space may be particularly vulnerable to development and other pressures in the future.

In order to conserve the special character of the Conservation Area, these undeveloped, open sites should remain in their existing or similar use.

These tracts of agricultural land, adjoining the Reservoir, form an important visual link with the village and surrounding areas, and are an important asset to its general character and setting.

The adjoining parkland and buildings to Blithfield Hall are of landscape value and the Hall itself of great architectural merit. It is considered appropriate to include the Hall and its grounds within the Conservation Area because of its historical links with the hamlet.

Land to the North and East of the Conservation Area boundary is included in a Site of Special Scientific Interest, surrounding Blithfield Reservoir and the whole area has a landscape conservation area policy protection. These policies can have a marked influence on decisions regarding future proposals which might affect the character of the area.

PROPOSALS FOR ENHANCEMENT

The Local Planning Authority has a responsibility to formulate and publish proposals for the enhancement of designated areas and to submit them to public meetings, so that the views of local people can be heard and considered.

The plan identifies two areas which are in need of visual improvement. In both cases this merely entails clearance of weeds and replanting where necessary. Some sort of maintenance is also needed to prevent the intrusion of scrub and weeds to the woodland areas, but this should be minimal to prevent damage to wildlife habitat. The hedges lining Old Road and School Lane should be retained and replanted where necessary, as they are important to the setting of the buildings on School Lane.

The public footpaths shown on the plan are an important feature of the area, as they afford many views of the surroundings and allow access to an otherwise private part of Blithfield, as one footpath skirts around Blithfield Hall. It would be useful to walkers and other members of the public, to have these footpaths sign-posted, according to the advice given by the Countryside Commission.

Untidy and unsightly structures such as concrete garages, Calor Gas tanks and greenhouses should be screened or replaced where possible, and signs, telephone boxes and fencing should be refurbished and replaced where necessary.

The grassed 'islands' separating the by-pass from the hamlet could be planted with slow-growing shrubs and plants, in order to remove the present monotony of their character.

Due to the preponderance of telephone poles and lines, it will be necessary to encourage any future developer to provide these and other power lines underground.

The character of the area has changed little over the years, apart from refurbishments necessary to the general maintenance of the dwellings. But pressures for development are becoming more apparent, especially the conversion of buildings which are regarded by the developer as redundant. Due regard must be paid to the present structure of the village, the quality of its buildings and their relationship with each other. It would be detrimental to the visual amenities of the village for vacated but not necessarily redundant buildings to undergo unsympathetic alterations or renovations, and for new development to take place, in an area which cannot accommodate the intrusion of modern or neo-vernacular structures, by the infilling of open areas of land within its confines.

Development Control Policies

Policies which will be adopted are as follows :

- 1) Development will be controlled to maintain or enhance the character of that area.
- 2) Proposals for demolition or insensitive alterations of buildings which would adversely affect the character of the Conservation Area will be resisted.
- 3) Alterations, extensions and other minor development within the Conservation Area will be required to pay special regard to the character of the surrounding buildings and the Conservation Area, in matters of detailed design and in the use of traditional materials or acceptable modern substitutes.



Admaston Lodges

THE EFFECT OF DESIGNATION

The immediate effect of designation is that greater publicity is given to applications for planning permission for development which in the opinion of the planning authority would affect the character or appearance of the Conservation Area. Particulars of the application must be advertised in a local newspaper and a notice displayed on the site. The plans and documents must then be open for inspection for 21 days before the application is determined. This gives local people the opportunity to consider the proposed changes and to comment on the effect on the character of the area.

Any representations received must be taken into account by the planning authority when reaching its decision.

In considering applications for development affecting a Conservation Area, special attention will be paid to such matters as the height, scale, massing, detailing and materials of any new buildings proposed, in order to ensure a sensitive relationship with the site and neighbouring development.

Building and planning standards that would normally be applied to new buildings may need to be relaxed to ensure that new development will harmonize with its surroundings, and also to assist in preserving the character or appearance of an existing building.

"Outline" planning applications will not normally be acceptable. The local planning authority will require detailed design drawings and particulars, including plans showing the relationship of any new buildings to adjoining development.

It should be noted, that some types of development which would normally not require planning permission, may require permission or consent in a Conservation Area.

If they feel that there is a special need to do so, the planning authority may apply for a direction under Article 4 of the General Development Order. Such a direction would bring any particular class or classes of development at present permitted by the Order, under planning control.

Small extensions to private dwellings, or the painting, rendering and colour-washing of buildings, are examples of permitted development. Such work, if unsympathetically or unimaginatively undertaken can ruin the character of an area and an Article 4 direction would require them to be the subject of applications to the planning authority.

With certain exceptions, the demolition of a building or part of a building in a Conservation Area requires Conservation Area Consent from the planning authority. This gives the opportunity to consider the effect that demolition would have on the visual character of the area. The thoughtless demolition of a building can create an unsightly gap in the local scene. Normally consent is not given unless there are acceptable and detailed plans for redevelopment.

Where a "Listed Building" is involved, then the Authority would wish to see a full justification for such action, and evidence that all reasonable attempts had been made to preserve the building through conversion or the consideration of alternative uses.

To carry out any demolition works without the prior consent of the Council is an offence. Applications for demolition are required in addition to any other approvals that are required to carry out any new development on a site.

To maintain the contribution which trees make to the environmental quality of a Conservation Area, a quality which can so easily be lost by felling or damage, it is an offence to lop, top, uproot or fell any tree, unless notice has been served on the planning authority and consent has been given, or six weeks have elapsed since the date of the notice. This gives the planning authority the opportunity to make a Tree Preservation Order if it so wishes.

LISTED BUILDINGS

The Secretary of State for the Environment maintains a list of buildings of architectural or historic interest. In the listing of buildings, attention is paid to their special architectural or historic value, for example, if they represent outstanding examples of past technological innovations, or are associated with well-known characters or events. Other buildings may be listed because of their contribution to a group of other buildings. The buildings listed are classified into grades, indicating their relative importance. Grade I buildings are limited to those of only exceptional national interest. Grade II includes the remainder, though particularly important buildings with special qualities are described as Grade II*.

Alterations to a listed building require a special form of consent from the Local Authority called 'Listed Building Consent'. Before any works may be carried out which might affect the historical interest or architectural quality of the building, an application must be submitted. This consent though, does not convey any planning permission for any new development, as this has to be applied for separately.

The Statutory List of Buildings for East Staffordshire can be inspected either at the District Council Offices, Burton, or the County Offices at Stafford.

BUILDINGS IN NEED OF REPAIR

Many old buildings are threatened by neglect and decay. Where a building has fallen into disrepair, the Local Planning Authority can issue a 'Buildings Repairs Notice', requiring the owner to take the necessary steps to prevent the building decaying further. In other circumstances, urgent repairs can be executed by the Authority for the preservation of an unoccupied Listed Building. Compulsory purchase powers can be used to acquire a building if it is not being properly preserved.

GRANTS FOR WORKS IN CONSERVATION AREAS

a) Conservation Area Grants

Staffordshire County Council and East Staffordshire District Council have powers under certain circumstances, to offer grants towards the cost of eligible works in Conservation Areas which preserves or enhances the area's character.

b) Listed Building Grants

Both the County Council and the District Council provide grants towards the repair and maintenance of buildings of architectural and historic interest in cases where the public can be said to derive some benefit.

The grant is not a subsidy to the owners of such buildings, but is intended to help the owners with the additional costs of repairing these buildings in a manner which is appropriate for their special character. The amount of grant offered is at the discretion of the Council. Applications should be made to either the County Planning Officer, Stafford or the Head of Public Services, East Staffordshire District Council, Town Hall, Burton-upon-Trent from whom application forms are available.

c) Historic Buildings and Monuments Commission - Grants

These grants, made under the Historic Buildings and Ancient Monuments Act 1953, by the Historic Buildings and Monuments Commission, are offered for repair works on historic buildings of outstanding national importance, i.e. Grade I and occasionally Grade II* Listed Buildings. Further information may be obtained from the Public Services Department.

d) Home Renovation Grants

These grants may be available for certain houses that require the provision of basic amenities and certain other improvements and repairs, rather than those which are of some architectural or historical interest. Further information is available from the District Council's Chief Health and Housing Officer.

LEGISLATION

The powers relating to the designation of Conservation Areas, and the listing of buildings of special architectural or historic interest, are contained in the Town and Country Planning Acts 1971-74. Reference should also be made to Circular 8/87 Historic Buildings and Conservation Areas - Policy and Procedures. Copies can be obtained from Her Majesty's Stationery Office or their agents.

NOTES ON BUILDING MAINTENANCE

So many costly building repairs could be avoided if a few simple rules of maintenance were followed.

A watchful eye and an understanding of how buildings work pays dividends. Very often buildings which are unused or underused are left by their owners without even the most elementary degree of maintenance. Some of these essential maintenance jobs cost nothing.

Water is the most common agent of destruction and water penetration can lead to hundreds, and in the long run, thousands of pounds worth of damage when left untreated.

Ten simple, and mostly inexpensive, rules of maintenance are given here.

Check them off against your own building and save yourself money.

REGULARLY CLEAN OUT ALL GUTTERS AND GULLEYS

Continual leaks from gutters, hopperheads and downpipes will throw water against specific parts of outside walls. As well as producing unsightly stains and encouraging vegetable growth these points will become saturated and any timber built into them will rot.

All rainwater goods should be inspected once a year to make sure that leaves and silt do not collect and cause blockages, and to make sure that all joints are watertight.

Start from the top and work downwards.

Finally, at ground level, make sure the gully and drain are free from blockages.

REPLACE SLIPPED ROOF TILES AND CHECK ALL COPINGS AND FLASHINGS

Make sure replacement tiles match. Rosemary (Staffordshire Blue) tiles are still made but demolition contractors can often supply good second-hand tiles - if you find a good supply buy enough to keep some spares.

Check battens are sound before laying new tiles. Most repairs to old roofs require expert skills - especially repairs involving joints and flashings.

REMOVE BANKED EARTH FROM THE FOOT OF WALLS

One of the simplest and most beneficial maintenance jobs is the removal of banked earth from the foot of walls. If a building has a damp proof course (d.p.c.) the outside earth level should be at least 6" below it. Even if there is no d.p.c. (and most houses built before about 1875 do not have one) it is sensible to keep the outside ground level below the inside floor level so that the parts of walls abutting floors can 'breathe' and dry out.

VENTILATION

If the free-flowing of air is impeded in roof spaces, in cellars, under suspended timber floors and in disused chimney flues there will be a danger of damp leading to rot. Because of this air bricks or vents should be inspected and cleaned annually to ensure they never become blocked.

REMOVE IVY FROM BADLY POINTED WALLS AND REMOVE ANY PLANTS WHICH ARE GROWING OUT OF A WALL

In walls, copings, gutters, chimney stacks and elsewhere is an obvious elementary task that is nevertheless often left undone.

If left to grow the roots of saplings and the aerial roots of ivy can cause severe cracking and, eventually, structural failure and collapse.

When cutting down ivy sever it at the roots and leave it for a season so that it is quite dead before ripping it off. This way any damage to the wall will be minimised.

PAINT EXTERNAL WOODWORK EVERY FOUR YEARS

Exterior woodwork and ironwork should be painted about every four years if the protective coat is to remain effective. Basically the process should include washing to remove dirt, rubbing and scraping down to remove flaking paint, stopping up cracks, painting all bare wood or metal with the correct primer, then an undercoat, which is rubbed down before the application of a top coat. Remember to paint the tops and undersides of doors and windows and sills.

RE-POINT WALLS AND CHIMNEY STACKS WHEN NECESSARY

Repointing is important when necessary but so often it is done badly and sometimes it is carried out when not necessary. ALWAYS obtain professional advice before repointing. Contact the Head of Public Services, East Staffordshire District Council, Town Hall, Burton-upon-Trent Tel: (0283) 45454.

TO CLEAN STONE AND BRICK, WASH IT - DO NOT BLAST IT

The use of sand blasting as a technique for cleaning stone and brickwork is growing in popularity but in most cases it is a bad choice since it has two basic drawbacks. Firstly, it removes the surface skin or crust of stone and brick which can vastly increase the vulnerability of the materials to weather attack, and secondly, it blunts sharp edges thereby spoiling any architectural details the building may have, such as mouldings around doors and windows. Please seek professional advice before cleaning brick and stone. Contact the Head of Public Services, East Staffordshire District Council, Town Hall, Burton-upon-Trent Tel: (0283) 45454.

AVOID CHEAP SUBSTITUTE MATERIALS - THEY MAY COST YOU MORE IN THE LONG RUN

A stop-gap repair job using a cheap substitute material rather than the proper thing usually leads to a waste of money in the long run. For example there is no real substitute for lead for flashings. Cheap alternatives soon need to be replaced. To take another example - contrary to some popular advertising, blue clay tiles and stone slate roofs, once laid, will outlast concrete tiles.

Also there is the likelihood of spoiling the appearance of a building if a 'proper' job is not done. A good example of this is the use of "off the peg" replacement doors and windows instead of obtaining reproductions of the originals from a joiner. Admittedly this usually costs more but often the real price of a factory made substitute is the loss of the building's character.

DO NOT ALTER LISTED BUILDINGS WITHOUT PERMISSION

If you own a 'listed' building or think your building MAY be listed, always check with the local planning authority before you get involved in detailed building plans. Not only can this save you from prosecution (in cases where work is carried out without consent) and from planning delays, but it can also save you time and money since you will be able to obtain expert advice upon the best way to tackle the problem.

If you intend to undertake any major works you should retain the services of an architect. You will be likely to recoup the cost of professional fees in the long run by obtaining an attractive and trouble-free job.