

Shenstone Conservation Area Appraisal



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1 Summary of Importance

- **1.1** Shenstone Conservation Area is significant for the following reasons:
- It has a relatively complete and unspoilt historic core concentrated in Main St, Church Rd and parts of Pinfold Hill.
- It contains a range of buildings from different historic periods and in different architectural styles reflecting a wide range of social status in the historic village.
- Its layout illustrates clearly its origins as an agricultural settlement with surrounding land being farmed from the village.
- There is a consistency to the building materials which are chiefly local red brick and Staffordshire blue clay roof tiles.
- In spite of considerable 20th century development, the heart of the village retains a rural character the result of its cottage style dwellings but also of the presence of a significant amount of mature trees and hedgerows. These latter are of key importance to the character of the conservation area.

2 Summary of Historic Character

2.1 Shenstone Conservation Area contains buildings from different historic periods. However, it is possible to make some generalisations about its historic character (although it should be remembered that there are many exceptions to these):

- Buildings are often vernacular, that is they are not designed by a known architect but are built in a traditional cottage style from locally sourced materials.
- Buildings are often of two storeys with a horizontal emphasis and are often comparatively close to the roadway with little private frontage.
- Where curtilage walls are found they are of red brick with blue half rounded coping stones. Historically, there was little ornamentation to the curtilage of most houses.
- The most prominent building material is red brick; Staffordshire blue clay tiles are the most predominant roofing material.
- Several types of eaves detailing are to be found including dentilled brick, saw tooth brick and projecting brick courses.
- Rainwater goods are traditionally cast iron; windows and doors are traditionally painted timber.
- Lower status houses have casement windows; higher status houses sashes; dormer windows are not a common feature of the village.
- Lintel treatment of windows varies; stone, wood, and segmental and gauged brick are all to be found.



Picture 2.1 Detail, Edwardian property, New Rd



Picture 2.2 Boundary wall, Lincoln House.



Picture 2.3 Footherley Rd.



Picture 2.4 St John's Church.

3 Introduction

3.1 Shenstone Conservation Area was designated in 1977, first extended in 1989 (land enclosed by Footherley Rd, Holly Hill Rd and St. John's Hill) and then again in 1999 (the Trinity Methodist Church and the east side of New Rd).

3.2 When it was designated, a brief description of the conservation area was produced, "Shenstone Conservation Area", Lichfield District Council and Staffordshire County Council, (Designation No. 65). This appraisal updates and develops that publication.

3.3 Conservation areas are defined within the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 as "areas of special architectural or historic interest the character and appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance". When a conservation area is designated, the Local Authority has a duty to "draw up and publish proposals for its preservation and enhancement". This document fulfils that duty. The purpose of this conservation area appraisal is to provide a good basis for development control and for developing proposals and initiatives for the conservation area.

3.4 This appraisal should inform, through a consultation process, the production of a management plan for the conservation area. In addition, the appraisal will be used to help develop locally distinctive policies within the Local Development Framework and to update Lichfield District Council's historic resource.

3.5 In accordance with the English Heritage document "Guidance on Conservation Area Appraisals", it is important to note that no appraisal can ever be completely comprehensive. If a building, feature or space is not mentioned, this should not be taken to imply that it is of no interest.

3.6 Additional, more detailed, historic and archaeological information on the area can be obtained from the Historic Environment Record (HER) held at Staffordshire County Council. www.staffordshire.gov.uk/environment

3.7 The conservation area was surveyed in summer 2009 and consultation took place from October 2009.

4 Location & Context

4.1 Shenstone is located some 3 miles south of Lichfield and 13 miles north of Birmingham. The village lies 6 miles west of Tamworth and 7 miles east from Walsall. Its proximity to good communications has encouraged its development (the A5127 passes to the east of the village, the A5 passes a half mile to the north and the London and Midland Railway cross-city service between Lichfield Trent Valley and Redditch passes to the west stopping at Shenstone station).

4.2 Its convenient location and semi-rural character make Shenstone an attractive place to live and the village is subject to development pressures.

4.3 Formerly the village was a centre for the production of local goods and services; in the last few decades of the 20th century it became largely a commuter village.

4.4 The historic core of the village is located on and at the foot of St John's Hill. The tower of St John's Church, which crowns the hill, can be seen for some distance on approach. In contrast, the land immediately surrounding the village is flat.

4.5 The historic village lies on Keuper sandstone which contains marls (mineral clays) resulting in more a fertile soil; this contrasts with the surrounding flat land which, lying on Bunter sandstone, has a relatively infertile and poorly drained soil. Historically, outward growth would have kept to the richer Keuper sandstones first, e.g. towards Footherley and Woodend, and only after that to cross into the more 'difficult' lands of Stonnall.



Picture 4.1 St John's Hill seen from the north.

5 Conservation Area Boundary

5.1 As stated above, Shenstone Conservation Area was designated in 1977, first extended in 1989, and then again in 1999. The conservation area now covers some 11.7 hectares forming the historic core of the village.

5.2 In comparison with the overall size of the present village, the conservation area is relatively small reflecting the substantial amount of modern development. However, although modern infill can be found in the conservation area, the core retains its historic character and is relatively unspoilt.

5.3 The boundary of the conservation area will be amended to include the entirety of Doctor's Lane and the whole of the car park of the Railway Inn.

6 History & Archaeology

6.1 Despite its proximity to Watling St and the Roman camp of Wall, there is no hard evidence to suggest that Shenstone was settled during the Roman occupation. However, it would seem that the area was inhabited from the earliest times as a Neolithic axe was found near Owlett Hall, Lynn Lane and a Bronze Age flint is recorded as found at Shenstone Park Farm ⁽¹⁾.

6.2 Shenstone was recorded in the Doomsday Book under the name "Seneste" or "Scenestan" which means shining or beautiful stone the name probably originating from the sandstone upon which Shenstone is built.

6.3 The medieval moated site to the southeast of Shenstone was built on or near to the site of a Norman hunting lodge and the surrounding deer park, which was established by 1236, was still maintained in 1642.

6.4 At the foot of Pinfold Hill, and on the opposite side of the A5127, stands Shenstone Hall (formerly "The Moss") which belonged originally to the barons of Hook Norton and which was given to the abbey of Osney whose monks erected a grange. After the Dissolution of the Monasteries, the land passed to the Stanley family.

6.5 In the medieval period the village community farmed two open fields, "Church Field" and "Park Field", which were each approximately 50 acres in size, in strips. "The Waste", the surrounding flat lands, provided free grazing for sheep and pigs.

6.6 In 1792 Sanders noted that there were, in addition to the houses of the local gentry, 35 "pleasing houses" in the village with little courts or gardens.

6.7 The 1851 census recorded 79 dwellings in the village. A significant number of surviving buildings date from the early to mid 19th century indicating that the village prospered during this period. However, it did not expand greatly after this until post World War II.

6.8 Shenstone station was opened in 1884, when the London and North Western Railway extended their line from Birmingham to Sutton Coldfield northwards to Lichfield. The proximity of the railway undoubtedly encouraged development. In particular, the Shenstone Court estate built houses on New Rd (and also along Lynn Lane) and, in its sales catalogue of 1917, stressed the convenience of these properties for railway commuters.

6.9 Until the 20th century, agriculture was the principle source of employment in the village although the local gentry also provided jobs in the form of service. The 1851 census lists butchers, bakers, carpenters, plumbers, painters and a provision dealer. It also lists shoemakers, tailors, laundresses and dressmakers indicating that the presence of the local gentry also supported other forms of employment.

6.10 The former seats of local gentry, Shenstone Hall, Footherley Hall and the now demolished Shenstone Court lie outside the conservation area but have played a significant role in the history and development of the village. By the early 20th century, the Shenstone

1 The historic information in this section of the plan is taken from the Staffordshire Historic Environment Record

Court Estate owned a large part of the village and the surrounding area. The sale catalogue of 1917 lists 6 houses including Footherley Hall, Lincoln House and Haddon House, 12 farms and 68 cottages and gardens.

6.11 The prosperity of the village in the 19th century is indicated by the establishment of a reading room and a savings bank. Oddfellows Hall was opened as a reading room during the Crimean War in response to local enthusiasm for news. The savings bank, which was set up in 1818, operated from the vestry at the church but was later moved to the Oddfellows Hall.

6.12 Today, there is an industrial estate to the west of the village but the businesses within the village, although they provide an important range of services, give employment to comparatively few people.

6.13 There is good potential for archaeological remains from all periods to be preserved in the area which contains a Roman road (the A5) and farmstead, a medieval moated site and medieval mill, and a deer park which belonged to the Crown and was still in use in the seventeenth century.

7 Typography, Layout & Landmarks

7.1 Shenstone does not have a strong, central focus, e.g. a village green or market place, the nearest feature to approximate this is the War Memorial at the meeting point of Pinfold Hill, Main St and Lynn Lane. Neither does the village radiate from the church which lies higher up Shenstone Hill overlooking the settlement. Rather development has been predominantly linear along the main routes in and out of the settlement.

7.2 However, although development was linear, historic Shenstone formed a discreet and fairly dense settlement within an agricultural landscape. It is now cut off from the surrounding countryside by a significant amount of 20th century development with a different layout and form from the historic core.

7.3 Many of the plots in the historic core are very large but are often irregularly shaped and properties often sit close to the roadway and sometimes at an angle to it.

7.4 Early roads, like Church Rd, often followed tracks around or into medieval fields; the sudden end of Main St and its division into a narrow lane and footpath is likely to have originated from such paths.

7.5 The 1838 tithe map shows, in addition to Main St and Church Rd, a Plank Lane (now Footherley Rd) and part of St John's Hill which existed from its junction with Church Rd as far as the present entrance to the churchyard. What is now Holly Hill Lane was, in 1838, a country lane which, with the exception of Haddon House, was bounded by fields. The present Pinfold Hill was called Lynn Lane and extended from its junction with the Birmingham Rd at Shenstone Mill up past the end of Main St and onwards following the same route that it does today.

7.6 At the end of the 19th century, New Rd was cut from Station Rd to its junction with Church Rd and Footherley Rd. There has been a substantial amount of 20th century development along all these roads yet their appearance is 'softened' by mature trees which, as mentioned, create a semi-rural feel.

7.7 The two church towers and group of trees upon Shenstone Hill act as landmarks for the village and the tower may be seen in distant views.

7.8 As stated above, Main St and Church Rd form the historic core of Shenstone although both have experienced some modern infill. Whilst that to Church Rd is largely screened by trees and set back from the road, the row of shops on Main St (which abuts the conservation area) has had a more noticeable impact and can not be regarded as a neutral development.

8 Quality & Character of Buildings

8.1 The earliest buildings in Shenstone are timber-framed some now hidden beneath later layers of brick and render. Brick would have been introduced into the village at some point in the 17th century although it would only have replaced timber as the material for lower status buildings in the 18th.

8.2 The dominant architectural style within the historic core is vernacular (although some higher status classical buildings are also to be found) with many buildings having a horizontal emphasis and, often, irregular rooflines. Many of the cottages on Main St are of two storeys and have a certain uniformity of style, for example they observe the same building line and are largely constructed of the same brick and tile.

8.3 As stated above, the predominant building materials are red brick and Staffordshire Blue clay roof tiles. A significant number of houses, particularly on Pinfold Hill, have been rendered or painted white. Timber windows and doors are still the norm within the conservation area but uPVC is noticeably present.

8.4 Shenstone contains many listed buildings; these include a surprisingly wide range of buildings of different ages, styles and status; this diversity is a key strength of the conservation area.

8.5 Main St lies at the heart of the village and has strong historic character. This is particularly so on the west side of the street where the majority of the buildings are two storey cottages built of local red brick and blue clay tile to a consistent building line at the back of the pavement. The similarity of the scale and materials employed in these buildings makes for a particularly attractive view up Main St from the War Memorial. Some of the properties here are rendered and a number contain timber-framing for example, 36-38 which is listed grade II. Windows are a mix of timber casements and sashes as appropriate although the use of uPVC is also prevalent. Parts of Main St retain stone setts to the pavement edge.



Picture 8.1 Looking down main St from Ivy House.

8.6 Main Street opens out at its lower (or northern) end and this section includes a row of modern (1960s) shops and facilities. Whilst this development is set back from the otherwise uniform building line of the street, it is of sufficient mass to create a major, 'visual disturbance'

in the street scene. For this reason, it can not be considered as having a neutral impact on the character of Main St although its appearance is somewhat bland. The area in front of the shops is much used for car parking. It may be possible to improve the appearance of the public realm here. This is particularly desirable as there is a lack of public open space in the heart of the village.

8.7 The upper part of Main St (the south end) is narrower and more enclosed. Lincoln House and a large copper beech tree punctuate the view towards the top and Ivy House, with its distinctive tall, irregular roofline closes the view at the end. These properties are clearly shown on the both the 1818 Enclosure Map and the 1839 Tithe Map.

8.8 This section of Main St also includes the Fox and Hounds pub and Lonsdale House (which is, strictly speaking, in Church Rd) both listed grade II. The remaining properties on the west side, numbers 46 and numbers 50-58 also date from 1700-1840. There is very little modern infill to the upper part of Main St and what there is, i.e. the library, has been designed to respect the scale of surrounding buildings.



Picture 8.2 Doctor's Lane from outside the BT building.

8.9 The character of the conservation area changes as one enters Doctor's Lane. Although the properties at this point are mainly modern, there is a semi-rural character to the lane which is lined, in part, by generous hedges and contains front gardens with mature trees. The lane also has a significant section of historic brick wall which is an attractive feature and should be retained. This may have been the boundary of the walled garden belonging to the White House (number 68, now substantially altered). It is suggested that the CA boundary might be extended here to include all of Doctor's Lane as far as and including the site occupied by British Telecom at the lane's end.

8.10 Church Rd leads from its junction with Main St at the Fox and Hounds pub up towards the church but sweeps round to the right and along to the junction with St John's Hill and Footherley Rd. This bend in the route creates a sense of 'mystery' and some anticipation on the approach from St John's Hill.

8.11 The appearance of the lower half of Church Rd is somewhat marred by the extensive area of parking behind the Fox and Hounds pub. This large area of tarmac was once the site of the village bakery which included a shop and an extensive range of outbuildings all now demolished except for one store. It is arguable that a certain amount of sensitively designed development on part of this large plot would improve the appearance of the conservation area providing a consistency to the grain of the place which is seen elsewhere but is lacking at this point. The pub itself is a listed building of some character which makes a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the conservation area and brings life to the village.



Picture 8.3 Car park, Fox and Hounds pub.

8.12 The upper part of Church Rd, a green, tree-lined route with historic buildings of mellow, local brick, is extremely attractive and makes a major contribution to the village's semi-rural character. A number of historic properties in the village are found on this stretch of the road: Stowe House, Stowe House Barn and Spindle Top Cottage. Vine Cottage is also a property of some age, appearing, like the others, on the tithe map of 1839, but it is now in need of refurbishment; a planning application has been received and approved (2009).



Picture 8.4 The grade II listed Stowe House, Church Rd.

8.13 Newer properties are also found on Church Rd, for example on the land opposite Stowe House formerly known as "Weston's Croft". These properties are on generous sized plots and are of an unremarkable, late 20th century, suburban appearance. However they

are partially screened from the road by trees and, being set back from the roadway, they do not overshadow their historic neighbours in spite of being located on higher ground. They may be considered to have a neutral effect on the conservation area.

8.14 The conservation area extends from the junction with Church Rd, New Rd and Footherley Rd up St John's Road to include the Church of St John the Baptist and its extensive churchyard. The hilltop church of St John the Baptist stands on a sandstone outcrop overlooking the village and feels quite separate from it although it can be approached via a footpath leading from Church Rd. This path was once a formal lane and the main access to the church. The former medieval church was demolished in 1853, when the existing church was constructed, but its tower (listed grade II * and currently a building at risk), some former footings and associated stonework may still be seen in the churchyard. This earlier church was located closer to the village and Church Rd than the present building.

8.15 The churchyard provides the only significant open space in the conservation area (although there is a small sensory garden in the grounds of the Shenstone Trinity Methodist Church in New Rd). Intermittent views over the surrounding landscape may be had from the edge of the burial ground which overlooks the houses in Eastridge Croft and Church Close and better views are to be had from the new burial ground.



Picture 8.5 Glimpsed view of surrounding countryside.



Picture 8.6 Damaged tombstone, St John's Churchyard.

8.16 The tree cover in the churchyard is extensive providing a green setting for the church and a backdrop for Shenstone village. However, in certain parts, the dense shading created by the trees has created a slightly gloomy atmosphere. Some areas of the churchyard look a little uncared for with damaged gravestones, unkempt areas of planting and weed growth.

8.17 The properties to either side of the road are chiefly from the mid-late 20th century and whilst not of historic interest, they form an attractive group within the conservation area. However, the road does contain a building of historic importance - the former Vicarage which, although not statutorily listed, is of local historic importance. The building contains an 18th century core but was developed at various stages in the 19th century. Within the curtilage are a barn and stable, attributed, by Stebbing Shaw, to one Samuel Hill.



Picture 8.7 The Old Vicarage, off St John's Hill

8.18 From the junction of Church Rd and St John's Rd the conservation area sweeps down to include the north side of New Rd and returns along the east side of Lynn Lane to the War Memorial. The upper part of New Rd contains a row of Edwardian semi-detached houses; these are untypical of the area and give a distinctly suburban character to the road;

this contrasts strongly with the rather more rural character of Church Rd. A pair of inter-war semis (named "Defiance" and "Victory") sits between these houses and the Trinity Methodist Church (1926) at the bottom of the hill.



Picture 8.8 Edwardian houses, New Rd retain their historic character.

8.19 The section of the conservation area from the junction of Pinfold Hill and Lincoln Croft up to the War Memorial is visually interesting; it contains properties from pre-1700 (numbers 5 and 7 which are listed grade II), from 1700 - 1840 (the Plough & Harrow, numbers 1, 2 and 6 -12) and from 1840 - 1910 (number 4 and the Railway Inn); it also contains more recent properties such as numbers 1a, 2a and 2b.



Picture 8.9 5-7 Pinfold Hill, listed grade II.



Picture 8.10 The Plough & Harrow, Pinfold Hill.

8.20 Pinfold Hill is major route and, at times, very busy with traffic. It has a number of public buildings including two pubs, a post office and the Richard Cooper Reading Room. It joins Main St and Lynn Lane at the War Memorial. Despite some associated flowerbeds and paving, the War Memorial is, perhaps, a little understated for its focal location.

8.21 The properties on the approach up Pinfold Hill from the A 5127 are largely of red brick with clay tile roofs; many have been painted white or stuccoed. Roofs are simple gables many having brick, gable- end chimney stacks. Pavements are modern tarmac with standard edging. A number of properties have had uPVC replacement windows. Most properties have small, landscaped areas to the front whilst a few are set back from the road behind generous gardens. Front boundaries are defined mainly by low walls and hedges although number 1 has a high wall and 1a, 2a and 2b are open to the front.

8.22 This area, bounded by Holly Hill Lane and Footherley Road, is included in the conservation area not so much for its built environment, which consists largely of mid-late 20th century houses, as for the impressive number of beautiful, mature trees which edge the roads; a particularly good example of this being Footherley Rd (see section 7).

9 Natural Elements

9.1 There is comparatively little public open space in Shenstone but the many trees & hedges give it a green setting and rural feel. Most of the prominent trees within Shenstone are situated on private land - predominantly within gardens. Many of these trees are protected by virtue of being within the Conservation Area or are protected by Tree Preservation Orders. Conservation Area status and the use of Tree Preservation Orders will ensure that important trees are retained.

9.2 The core of Shenstone is characterised by mature trees. The bulk of these trees was planted during the Victorian and Edwardian eras and is now fully mature. Footherley Rd is a particularly good example with large horse chestnut, sycamore and beech trees planted within the front gardens of the houses and thus lining the road. Other large specimens include a very large sycamore on Richard Cooper Rd, a large beech within the grounds of Haddon House, the trees found along Holly Hill Rd and the very prominent trees within the churchyard of St John the Baptist. In addition there are many parkland trees within the grounds of Shenstone Court which form a very distinctive landscape.

9.3 Many of the older trees are at, or past, their best and as they are removed (in most cases for safety), replacement trees are being planted. It will inevitably be many years before these replacements make the same contribution as their predecessors. However, the age structure of the current population is weighted towards mature trees and to a certain extent this will dictate future planting opportunities. Every effort is made to secure replanting as part of tree removals and new planting as part of development proposals.

10 Neutral Buildings

10.1 Much of the 20th century development in the heart of historic Shenstone is neutral in character that is to say it does not detract greatly from its historic neighbours; good examples of this are, as previously stated, the library in Main St and the modern houses in Church Rd.

11 Areas for Improvement

11.1 The character of the conservation area is determined by more than the appearance of its buildings. Spaces between buildings are also important and the quality of elements such as boundary treatments (walls, fences etc.) hard landscaping (paving, kerb edging, and road surfaces) and natural features affect the way in which the conservation area is perceived. Small improvements, taken cumulatively, can make a significant impact and, conversely, the incremental loss of traditional features and their inappropriate replacement can have considerable detrimental effect.

11.2 Survey work and local consultation have identified a number of areas of concern:

- Recent unpainted galvanised steel lampposts on Main St.
- Poor surfacing to pavements e.g. outside the Fox and Hounds on Church Rd.
- The forecourt of the modern shops on Main St which appears bland.
- The large open area of parking to the area of the Fox and Hounds pub has potential for enhancement through a more sensitive and appropriate choice of hard landscaping, planting and, possibly, screening.
- The land to the side of the Railway Inn and that to the side of the Plough & Harrow (although the latter is less noticeable) is also a large area of open parking which might be improved.



Picture 11.1 Galvanised steel lamp post on Main St.

12 Opportunities & Constraints

12.1 There are a number of positive buildings which are not listed but which contribute to the special character of the conservation area. These are proposed for inclusion on the Register of Buildings of Special Local Interest (also known as the 'local list', see map). These buildings should be given special consideration when making decisions that may affect them.

12.2 An Article 4(2) directive will be introduced to tighten controls over important historic buildings that are not protected as listed buildings.

12.3 Appropriate traditional materials such as, but not exclusively, brick, clay tiles, painted timber windows and doors, should be used when extending or developing properties within the conservation area.

12.4 Important individual trees and groups of trees should be retained (see map).

12.5 Any future development in the conservation area needs to preserve or enhance its character and appearance.

12.6 Parking on Main St is at times an issue; too many parked cars lead to 'visual clutter' that detracts from the appearance of the conservation area and causes obstruction.

12.7 A co-ordinated and sensitive approach to the installation of street furniture such as lampposts, bins etc. would benefit the appearance of the conservation area.

12.8 The immediate environment around the group of modern shops would benefit from improvements to hard landscaping and the provision of seating and, possibly, further soft landscaping.

13 Effects of Conservation Area Designation

13.1 The important, overriding policy regarding a conservation area is that new development should pay special regard to the character or appearance of the conservation area; additional controls also exist to protect existing buildings and features from adverse change.

13.2 The other effects of conservation area designation are:

- 1. It is necessary to obtain Conservation Area Consent for the demolition of all but very small structures.
- 2. There are stricter controls on permitted development that is minor works that are usually automatically permitted.
- 3. Notice has to be given to the Council before works to trees are carried out.
- 4. Special consideration is given to maintaining the qualities which give the area its character by:
 - a. carefully considering new development proposals;
 - b. permitting the demolition of buildings or the removal of trees only in fully justified circumstances and where appropriate redevelopment is proposed;
 - c. advising owners, occupiers and other interested individuals and organisations on the care and maintenance of trees and property (including alterations to doors, windows, providing advice on the siting of satellite dishes and other antennae apparatus, boundary and other walls, as well as gateways) however minor in nature;
 - d. where appropriate, preparing proposals for enhancement of the conservation area;
 - e. co-operating with other authorities and conservation organisations in activities designed to promote conservation generally or to assist conservation projects within the District, for example through exhibitions, town schemes or facelift proposals;
 - f. respecting the aims of conservation within the Local Authority's own activities and development projects and
 - g. monitoring change and development in order to assess how best to retain the special character of the areas.

Appendix A Appraisal Map



Appendix B Map of Views

