

# UTTOXETER CONSERVATION AREA CHARACTER APPRAISAL



Final Edition March 2009





Aerial view of Uttoxeter



# CONTENTS

## 1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Background
- 1.2 Legislative context
- 1.3 Methodology

## 2. UTTOXETER: LOCATION AND GEOLOGY

- 2.1 Location, Geology and Building Materials

## 3. EVOLUTION OF UTTOXETER

- 3.1 Historical Development
- 3.2 Archaeological Evidence from the Conservation Area and to its North and West

## 4. TOWNSCAPE ANALYSIS

- 4.1 Setting
- 4.2 The influence of Uttoxeter's historic urban form
- 4.3 Sub-areas
- 4.4 Local Building Patterns
- 4.5 Summary of Distinctive Features

## 5. THE RELEVANCE OF THE CONSERVATION AREA

- 5.1 Coherence and Appropriateness of the Conservation Area and its Boundaries

## 6. EVALUATION OF THE CONSERVATION AREA BY ZONE

- 6.1 Schools (North East)
- 6.2 Dove Bank (North East)
- 6.3 Town Meadows (East)
- 6.4 The Church and Church Street (Central – East)
- 6.5 Blackshaw's Warehouse and Adjacent Yards (Central)
- 6.6 Bridge Street (South East)
- 6.7 The Maltings and the Maltings Car Park (Central)
- 6.8 High Street (Central)
- 6.9 Market Place (Central)
- 6.10 The Smithfield/Bradley Junction (Northwest)
- 6.11 Manor House and the Upper High Street (Northwest)
- 6.12 Trinity Walk and Furbecks Car Sales Site (South)
- 6.13 Balance Street (South West)
- 6.14 Carter Street/Hockley Road (South West)
- 6.15 Carter Street (West)

## 7. SYNTHESIS FOR CONSERVATION AREA

7.1 Wider Vulnerability and Threats

7.2 Changes in the Conservation Area Since Designation

## 8. RECOMMENDED STRATEGIES FOR ACTION

8.1 Restrictions of Permitted Development Rights

8.2 Statutory and Local Listing

## 9. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## 10. REFERENCES AND SOURCES

APPENDIX 1 Summaries of Archaeological Reports, provided by the Staffordshire Historic Environment Record Office

APPENDIX 2 Summaries of Archaeological Reports, provided by the Staffordshire Historic Environment Records Office

APPENDIX 3 Recommendations for Changes to Statutory Listing

APPENDIX 4 Recommendations for LOCAL LISTING

APPENDIX 5 Demolitions and Conservation Area Consents

APPENDIX 6 Local Plan Policies supporting sensitive design and the conservation



# 1 INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Background

- 1.1.1 Uttoxeter Conservation Area was designated by Staffordshire County Council 'in consultation with the District Council and local amenity bodies' on 24<sup>th</sup> November 1970 [Plan 1 overleaf]. It was the 39<sup>th</sup> such area to be established by the County Council in the 4 years following enactment of the Civic Amenities Act 1967. Currently, it is one of 25 Conservation Areas that have been designated within the Borough of East Staffordshire.



1: Uttoxeter's Town Hall and the former Cross Keys Hotel beyond

## 1.2 Legislative context

- 1.2.1 The establishment of Conservation Areas was first made possible by the Civic Amenities Act 1967. Thus, the Uttoxeter designation was a reasonably early one in national terms, although Staffordshire County Council was by that time well advanced in identifying and establishing its Areas. Conservation Areas are defined within today's current legislation as being 'areas of special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance' [Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990: Section 69(1)(a)].



2: Symbol of economic strength and international profile in Pinfold Street

- 1.2.2 It is important that areas designated in this way are genuinely of architectural or historic interest, rather than merely being attractive areas in which to live and/or work. Whilst this can be a fine distinction to make, the validity and integrity of the concept stands or falls upon it. The production of a written appraisal of each Conservation Area is consequently of some considerable importance, since this provides a record of the area's fundamental special interest and the core base of buildings of architectural or historical value that exist within it.

- 1.2.3 Designation potentially gives the local planning authority greater control over extensions and demolition, the display of advertisements, and works to trees. Special consideration has to be given to proposals for development or redevelopment within a Conservation Area to ensure that its character and appearance are preserved or enhanced. In most cases, Conservation Areas are living and working communities, with both residential and commercial uses.



- 1.2.4 The purpose of designation is not to stifle or prevent change and evolution, but to control it in such a way as to maintain and enhance character and local distinctiveness. In making decisions on future development within a Conservation Area, a council must '*pay attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of the area*' [Section 72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act, 1990].
- 1.2.5 This should ensure that harmful change is not allowed, although some changes, normally not requiring planning permission (known as permitted development rights) can continue to erode the special interest of the Conservation Area. These rights can be controlled by the serving of an Article 4 Direction, which enables a council to require a planning application for minor alterations, such as replacement windows and doors.
- 1.2.6 Section 71 of the same 1990 Act obliges councils '*to formulate and publish proposals for the preservation and enhancement of any parts of their area, which are Conservation Areas*', and, in part, this appraisal fulfils this statutory duty (but see also below).
- 1.2.7 Despite their importance, there is no *statutory* requirement placed on local planning authorities specifically to prepare Conservation Area appraisals. However, under the 1990 Act, such authorities are required '*from time to time*' to undertake a review of their Conservation Areas. This is to ensure that their designation and boundaries remain relevant, logical and defensible.
- 1.2.8 As the number of designated areas steadily increases at a national level, the criteria and justification for designation are coming under greater scrutiny and challenge. It is therefore important for local authorities to have confidence in the continued relevance of their Conservation Areas, particularly those that have been in existence for a number of years.
- 1.2.9 English Heritage has advised councils to carry out appraisals of Conservation Areas within their district to identify the key features of the area and how they combine to give the place its particular character. By establishing what makes a place special and distinct, the local planning authority can more effectively ensure that change through development, or through other changes resulting from its own actions or those of other statutory authorities, do not undermine this character and wherever possible can enhance it.



- 
- 1.2.10 As well as identifying the positive features of a place, an appraisal can also highlight areas where there is scope for improvement. This could be in terms of new development or redevelopment, or more small-scale improvements to, for example, the appearance of street furniture or signage. The results of appraisals can be used to help prioritise available resources for environmental enhancement.
- 1.2.11 The Uttoxeter Conservation Area was last appraised formally in November 1971, a year after its designation. This re-evaluation has been prepared following fieldwork undertaken in August and September 2004 and in January 2008. In addition to acting as a review of the Conservation Area 37 years after designation, this re-appraisal has particular importance, given the recent adoption of a master plan for the future of Uttoxeter by the Borough Council.
- 1.2.12 Once adopted, the Conservation Area appraisal will constitute Supplementary Planning Guidance to the Local Plan, providing advice on the formulation of policies for the preservation and enhancement of the Area and assisting in the determination of relevant planning applications.

### **1.3 Methodology**

- 1.3.1 The approach adopted for the appraisal process followed that contained within English Heritage's published note '*Guidance on Conservation Area Appraisals*' (August 2005). Regard has also been taken to English Heritage's '*Guidance on the Management of Conservation Areas*' (August 2005) and the English Historic Towns Forum Report No 38 '*Conservation Area Management – A Practical Guide*'.
- 1.3.2 Site work for the initial appraisal of the Uttoxeter Conservation Area was undertaken on 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> August 2004, with follow up visits being made on 15<sup>th</sup>, 16<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup> September. A detailed reassessment of the area was made on 30<sup>th</sup> November 2007 and 10<sup>th</sup> January 2008.
- 1.3.3 The appraisal was conducted through means of a detailed site-based evaluation, backed up by research of appropriate secondary sources, including historic maps, trade directories, and web sites.
- 1.3.4 The archaeological potential of the Conservation Area has been examined in several ways. National and county archaeological archives have been consulted as part of a desk-based appraisal. English Heritage's National



Monuments Record Centre was visited during July 2004, with particular attention being paid to photographs, maps, archaeological archives and published sources held there. Subsequently, information was gathered from the county Historic Environment Record (HER) during August-September 2004.

- 1.3.5 The second element of the archaeological assessment was an important exercise in its own right, consisting of a rapid visual inspection and investigation carried out on 9 August 2004. The work allowed for a qualitative re-assessment of the current Conservation Area, and in particular the apparent desirability of extending it to both the north and west. Subsequently, an extended search of the HER was made, covering these latter areas. Finally, internet searches were carried out, using standard search engines such as Google, but also by way of bespoke archaeological internet sites such as the Archaeology Data Service and the British and Irish Archaeological Bibliography.



3: Uttoxeter from the air – although dominated by JCB’s works to the south and Fox’s Biscuits’ premises to the north, the town retains much of its early form



4: Auction in progress at the old Cattle Market in September 2004 before its closure - one of Uttoxeter’s most enduring economic mainstays



5: 33-39 Balance Street – three storeyed 19<sup>th</sup> century artisans’ dwellings

## 2 UTTOXETER: LOCATION AND GEOLOGY

### 2.1 Location, Geology and Building Materials

2.1.1 Uttoxeter (grid reference of Market Place SK 091334) is a historic market town lying in the north east of the county of Staffordshire close to its border with Derbyshire. The River Dove, with its historically important fertile meadows, lies about one mile to the east of the town, which sits on a dry and prominent rise overlooking this and the valley of Picknal Brook to the south. The River Dove forms the boundary between Staffordshire and Derbyshire for much of its length in this locality.

2.1.2 The landscape surrounding the town has played an important part in the latter’s development. In 1686, for instance, it was written that the rich meadows on the ‘famous’ Dove banks were “*esteemed by many the best feeding ground for cattle in England*”. Even allowing for enthusiastic parochial exaggeration, this is closely reflected in the economic strength of the town over many centuries as a sub-regional market place.

2.1.3 Geologically, the area is dominated by sedimentary clay and shales. Whilst there are small bands of limestone 10 miles to the north (and between Uttoxeter and Burton on Trent to the south east) and localised sandstone deposits to both the north and west, red brick is the principal walling material in the area, as indeed it is across much of the West and East Midlands.

2.1.4 As is typical of a town with medieval roots, a number of timber framed buildings survive, such as 4 Market Street and 30/34 Carter Street, although many are now hidden behind later brick facades.

2.1.5 The survival of plan and elevational form is essential to the character of the town. The area around Balance Street, for example, is defined by many brick buildings of three storey height with the second floor having much smaller fenestration denoting its original use as workshop space. This was a common style of later cottage industry, which developed with the boom in textiles in the late 18<sup>th</sup> Century, lasting until the early 19<sup>th</sup> Century.

2.1.6 Materials and their detailing are of great importance to the vernacular form of the town; many of the 18/19<sup>th</sup> century



buildings retain a richness of brick detailing, particularly to eaves courses and gables; there can be found, here and there, evidence of hierarchy in artisan dwellings (such as cottages in Silver Street); highly attractive Georgian houses remain, for instance, in Church Street/Dove bank and the High Street, reflecting the taste at their time of building for the higher vernacular style of Greek and Gothic revival; Victorian terraced houses in Carter Street have their façade embellished with brick banding, terracotta decoration, and plaques. More generally, a large number of buildings still have their regional clay tiled or slate clad roofs and decorative ridging. These have survived the nationally found trend for replacement with concrete tiles or manmade slates.

2.1.7 Accordingly, the value and importance of the local topography, geology and environment to historic Uttoxeter should not be underestimated. Industry too has played an important part to shape the present day town, with some interesting 20<sup>th</sup> century buildings, such as the JCB factory and former Bamfords office building, as well as those dating from the Industrial Revolution.



**6:** *Laythropp's Almshouses, Carter Street showing fine detailing to brick elevations*



**7:** *19th century facade to Leighton's engineering works in Pinfold Street*



### 3 EVOLUTION OF UTTOXETER

#### 3.1 Historical Development

3.1.1 The Domesday Book contains a short entry for Uttoxeter (*Wotocheshe*), in the Offlow Hundred. This clearly implies that there was a settlement here in the late Anglo-Saxon period. The entry reads:

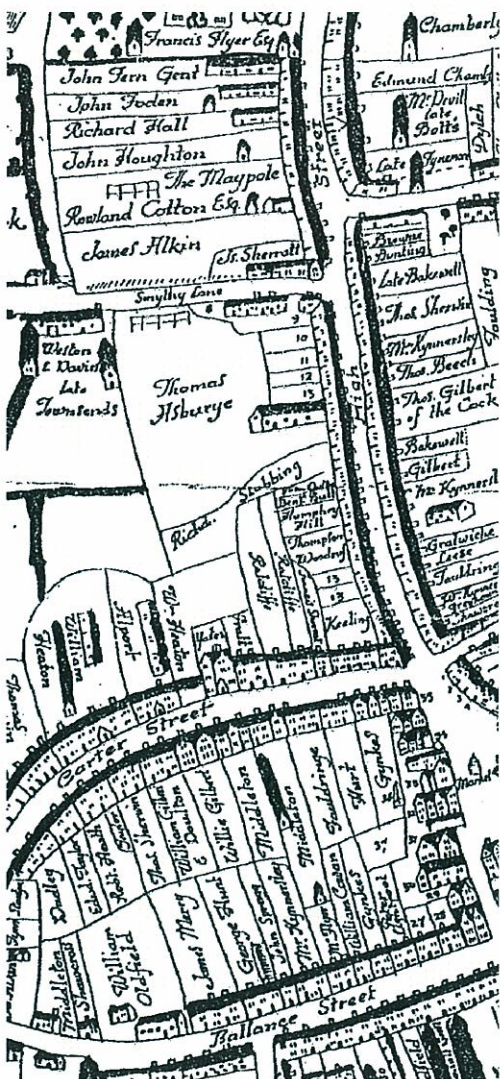
*The king holds Uttoxeter (Wotocheshe). Earl Ælgar held it. There is half a hide. There is land for 10 ploughs. In demesne are 2 [ploughs], with 1 slave, 24 villans and 11 bordars with 11 ploughs. There are 16 acres of meadow, [and] woodland 2 leagues long and as many broad. [In the time of King Edward] it was worth £7; now £8.*

3.1.2 Uttoxeter was apparently part of a substantial estate held by Ælgar in the middle of the 11<sup>th</sup> century. It seems to have been reasonably well populated, with a good mixture of land use (arable, pasture and woodland). The land value had increased slightly between 1066 and 1086, in common with many of the places recorded in Offlow Hundred.

3.1.3 In the early 12<sup>th</sup> century, the manor was given to the de Ferrers. The town's first market charter was granted to William de Ferrers, 3<sup>rd</sup> earl of Derby, in 1252, but, in the 1260s, he was forced to forfeit the manor for his involvement in the baronial rebellion led by Simon de Montfort against Henry III. Henry bestowed the lands on his youngest son, Edmund, Earl of Lancaster. A further charter for a market to be held every Wednesday was granted in 1308 along with permission for an annual three day fair.

3.1.4 Uttoxeter's wealth, local importance and growth from the 13<sup>th</sup> to 18<sup>th</sup> centuries were built on its ideal position as a market town in the fertile Dove valley. Lightfoote's invaluable plan of 1658 indicates the substantial amount of tenement land/burgage plots that were enclosed from an early date within the built up area – this constitutes a significant component of the urban form of the town today.

3.1.5 The present day Uttoxeter, like many other towns and cities, has also been shaped by past disasters. Whilst medieval land divisions and street patterns may survive major fires, buildings and other historic structures frequently do not. The 1971 Conservation Area appraisal noted that “partly



8: Extract from Lightfoote's town plan of 1658 showing narrow early burgage plots



due to the great fires of 1596 and 1672, no secular buildings...remain of earlier date than the sixteenth century". It is certainly the case that relatively few early buildings survive today, but examination of photographs of various parts of the town taken between 1900 and 1970 indicates that a regrettable number of 16<sup>th</sup> century and earlier structures were demolished in the 20<sup>th</sup> century and especially in the 1950s and 1960s.

3.1.6 A 13 mile branch of the Trent and Mersey Canal from Froghall to Uttoxeter was opened in 1811 with a wharf/basin to the north of the town and its High Street. In its early years, this was considered to have "contributed much to the prosperity of [the] small but flourishing town", but the rapid growth of the railways in the 1840s led to its abandonment in 1847. New railway lines passing through Uttoxeter and connecting it to Stoke, Stafford, Leek and Derby were built in the late 1840s. Parts of these were built over the drained canal. By 1850, the town had three railway stations serving passengers - at Bridge Street, Dove Bank, and a Junction station close to the present day racecourse site. These were eventually consolidated in a single large station with four platforms south east of the town centre in 1881.

3.1.7 The increased prosperity brought by first the canal and then the railways resulted in the Uttoxeter's expansion and considerable redevelopment of sites in the town centre. As the 1971 appraisal noted, this period of expansion and change produced the greater share of buildings in the Conservation Area. Major developments in the first half of the 1850s gave rise to the Town Hall and then the large cattle market to its west, representing a major period of civic investment, growth and pride.

3.1.8 The economic strength, appearance and heritage of today's Uttoxeter have also been dramatically moulded by the arrival of one family, the Bamfords, into the town through marriage in the mid-1840s. Their ironmongery business started in 1845 led first to small-scale agricultural engineering, then to the opening of a foundry, and eventually in the 1870s to the development of the Leighton Ironworks on a large parcel of land between Balance Street and the North Staffordshire railway to the south. Twenty years later, H Bamford & Sons was regarded as being in "the front ranks of English agricultural engineers and implement makers". Further expansion, development and metamorphosis of the company have resulted in today's multi-site operation known as JCB Ltd. The presence of the company in the town over this period has greatly influenced the development of certain key sites and areas.



9: Medieval timber framing exposed to the rear of 32 Market Place



10: Workers' housing close to the Wharf in the early years of the 20th century - this district currently lies outside of the Conservation Area, although it has considerable historic interest



11: The former Leighton Ironworks off Pinfold Street



3.1.9 More recently, the town and the Conservation Area have been much influenced and altered by a period of uncertainty and economic and physical transition. This is well-reflected by comparison of comments made in the text of the 1971 Conservation Area appraisal with the physical grain and condition of parts of the town centre today. The main commentary on Uttoxeter in the 1971 report starts with the observation that “*during the last decade extensive areas of [the] town centre have been cleared to make way for schemes of urban renewal*”. This is clearly indicative of decline in the state of the town in the post-War years. However, the perceived need for major clearance as part of urban renewal was a hallmark of town planning philosophy in the UK in the 1960s and present day Uttoxeter is to a degree a product of this thinking. The 1971 appraisal predicted that “*Uttoxeter is to pass through a period of transition*” and it closed anticipating that the newly designated Conservation Area would “*enable a revitalised town centre to be achieved while at the same time striking a balance between the old and the new*”. At that time, it was perceived that a coherent phase of planned change would take place, combining a new town centre that exploited the historic urban grain of the town, with improvements in the road system (by implication involving re-routing of through traffic along a bypass). It was envisaged that this regenerative phase would lead to new economic growth and substantive reuse and rehabilitation of older buildings on the perimeter of the new town centre. In the event, this coherent phase of planned change was not implemented in the forecast manner and timescale. The bypass was not completed until 1998 and many of the key sites cleared in the 1960s have yet to be redeveloped beneficially or successfully. The master plan for Uttoxeter adopted in 2004 seeks to trigger such activity in a co-ordinated way.

## **3.2 Archaeological Evidence from the Conservation Area and to its North and West**

3.2.1 Staffordshire County Council’s Historic Environment Record (HER) is the principal source of information for archaeological remains in the county. The HER has been searched for references within the Conservation Area and in adjacent areas to the north and west. The results are presented in two tables in Appendix I and will only be summarised in this section. Appendix II contains a summary of available archaeological reports on Uttoxeter.



- 3.2.2 There have been a few discoveries of prehistoric and later artefacts in Uttoxeter, mostly made during the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The finds are scattered around the town centre and the outer areas around it, and do not suggest much more than the general dispersal of material to be expected from low-level settlement and agricultural activity. Substantial monuments such as Bronze Age (c 2000-800BC) round barrows (burial mounds) commonly appear as features in legal documents such as land charters during the Anglo-Saxon period and later. The apparent absence of any such references in and around Uttoxeter does not necessarily prove that no such monuments existed here, but it does suggest this. HER reference 02034 [Appendix I; Table 1] is enigmatic, in that the relevant artefacts were originally described as Roman, but subsequently it has been suggested that they might be medieval instead. In neither case, however, does this alter the overriding impression of low-level activity. The remaining HER entries relate to buildings and features of the historic period, many of them no longer extant. The date of the fishponds is unknown, but both they and several other features such as the pillory and supposed bear-baiting site might have had a medieval origin. Other features such as the canal and the cricket pavilion have a more securely documented - and more recent - origin.
- 3.2.3 Uttoxeter town centre underwent considerable redevelopment during the 1960s and 1970s, especially in the north half of the central block bounded by High Street, Bradley Street, Silver Street and Church Street. Lightfoot's map of 1658 shows that all these street frontages had been developed by then, and those on High and Church Streets at least seem likely to have been built on during the medieval period. Early Ordnance Survey maps demonstrate that not only the frontages but also the rear areas of properties continued to be developed intensively through into the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. It is perhaps surprising, therefore, that no archaeological work appears to have been carried out either before or during the redevelopment. At least, the HER contains no references to fieldwork or discoveries dating from the 1960s-70s. Unfortunately, post-war redevelopment of English historic town centres was often carried out with little or no allowance for archaeology, despite the emergence of pressure groups such as Rescue and the publication of various reports highlighting the potential and actual loss of evidence involved. It is difficult to judge the extent of lost information in Uttoxeter, although the results of more recent work allows for some consideration of this issue.

- 
- 3.2.4 Planning Policy Guidance note 16, *Archaeology and Planning*, was issued in 1990. Local planning authorities subsequently applied more stringent policies on archaeology within the development control process, and this has been the case at Uttoxeter. The HER lists a series of reports on desktop assessments, excavations, watching briefs and building surveys (abstracts of the reports are presented in Appendix II). Many more such projects and reports will be required before anything approaching a definitive statement of Uttoxeter's archaeological significance and potential can be attempted, but a few observations can be made already.
- 3.2.5 Surprisingly little evidence for medieval activity has been found below ground so far, with only a single site having produced evidence from this era so far. No evidence of Anglo-Saxon activity has been reported yet. In both cases this may represent little more than the highly localised circumstances of the sites involved. Archaeological projects in historic urban centres are usually driven by commercial prerequisites (in other words, redevelopment) rather than an academic research agenda. The sites excavated so far might not be those one would choose from the latter perspective, though admittedly the High Street and Market Place would both be high priorities for research. It may be significant, therefore, that some medieval material has been found on the High Street. The quantities, however, have been very small so far.
- 3.2.6 Post-medieval to modern activity is evident on virtually all sites examined to date. Not only domestic, but also commercial/industrial activity, has been found – for instance, bone and horn working. The evidence is unsurprising, given the cartographic evidence for development of the town centre from the 17<sup>th</sup> to the early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries.
- 3.2.7 Most projects carried out so far have found evidence of extensive damage to (or even removal of) earlier archaeological levels through later historical activity. The construction of deep underground cellars and the truncation of existing ground levels in preparation for new buildings are both common features of urban development during the 18<sup>th</sup> to 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, and they are much in evidence in Uttoxeter. Unfortunately, this means that below-ground medieval remains will have suffered damage on virtually every tenement in the Conservation Area and beyond. This somewhat reduces the potential for medieval archaeology, but it is important to stress that it does not remove it altogether. Medieval archaeology should still be highlighted as a high priority throughout Uttoxeter.



- 3.2.8 There are no Scheduled Ancient Monuments, registered parks and gardens, or battlefields within the existing Conservation Area; however, there are 56 listed buildings [Plan 2 overleaf]. Statutory listed building consent procedures will apply to these buildings in addition to normal planning controls.
- 3.2.9 Surprisingly little archaeological information exists for Uttoxeter given its known history as a medieval (and possibly Anglo-Saxon) urban settlement. This is partly because of limited opportunities to carry out archaeological work in the post-war period despite the extensive redevelopment of parts of the historic core. Desktop appraisals, excavations, building surveys and watching briefs have finally become a routine part of redevelopment projects in the last few years. This is because the local planning authority has been able to use the provisions of Planning Policy Guidance Note 16 (*Archaeology and Planning*, published in 1990) to require such work as part of the development control process. Few discoveries of major interest have been made yet, and indeed it would appear that archaeological remains over much of the historic urban core have suffered extensive damage later in the historic period, eg through the construction of underground cellars.
- 3.2.10 County and local plan policies highlight the importance of archaeology and the historic environment within the county and district. Uttoxeter is one of the most important historic towns within the county, and, despite a rash of unsympathetic developments in the urban core during the post-war period, it retains much of its medieval grain and feel. Most of the listed buildings (and indeed very many unlisted ones) are extremely important as exemplars of the settlement's long history of urban development, and they are, bar one or two, worthy to a greater or lesser extent of protection (and in many cases of enhancement, both of the buildings, private spaces, and associated public realm).
- 3.2.11 Below-ground remains are just as important as the standing buildings. Indeed for the earlier periods of Uttoxeter's development, the buried archaeology is the primary resource for our knowledge. It is therefore unfortunate that:
- ♦ on the one hand, there have been so few opportunities until very recently to examine that resource by archaeological means (for example, by excavation or watching briefs), and,
  - ♦ on the other, the evidence from those recent projects suggests that there has been extensive damage or

destruction of earlier archaeological remains across much of the town centre.

- 3.2.12 Nevertheless, it is clear that archaeological remains do survive below ground in Uttoxeter, and that in some cases they will date back to the medieval period at least. The local planning authority will therefore be right to expect archaeological work to be carried out on new development sites in the town centre and beyond. The nature and extent of mitigation required will vary from site to site in accordance with the development involved and expectations of the site.



## 4 TOWNSCAPE ANALYSIS

### 4.1 Setting

4.1.1 Mention has already been made of the Town's slightly elevated position on a plateau edge overlooking the River Dove. Flippantly, yet not entirely inappropriately, Uttoxeter's siting and morphology have been compared to that of an historic Mediterranean hill town.

4.1.2 The approaches to the town and its Conservation Area are greatly influenced by this setting. Access from the southwest, south and east involve rises from one or other of the two river valleys. A new eastern approach below the Dove escarpment has been created in recent years by the construction of Town Meadows Way. This affords a distinctive inward view of the church and neighbouring buildings, silhouetted against the skyline on the plateau edge. Conversely, access to the town from the west and north brings the visitor towards this edge: consequently involving a gradual downhill journey from the higher land behind. As a result, there are medium to long distance views over Uttoxeter and its cattle market from parts of the residential quarter to the north west of the town. This should always be borne in mind in the planning of any major redevelopment sites.

4.1.3 Approaches to the Conservation Area have changed significantly on the southern and eastern sides in recent years from those that existed at the time of designation by the construction of the two elements of the town's bypass – namely, Old Knotty Way and Town Meadows Way.

### 4.2 The influence of Uttoxeter's historic urban form

4.2.1 The preceding section has established that the character of the approaches to and edges of the Conservation Area, and the medium and short term views into it, are dependant upon topographical setting. The permanent richness of the Dove river valley has also determined the extent of urban growth in historic times and, in many ways, the urban morphology of the town as well. Even cursory comparison of historic and modern town maps illustrates clearly that the layout of streets and often of individual plots has remained significantly unchanged in the core of Uttoxeter since early times. However, whilst layout has been so constant,



12: The Bridge Street approach to the town looking north towards Bear Hill and the parish church



13: The Dove Street approach to the town centre viewed from its junction with Town Meadows Way

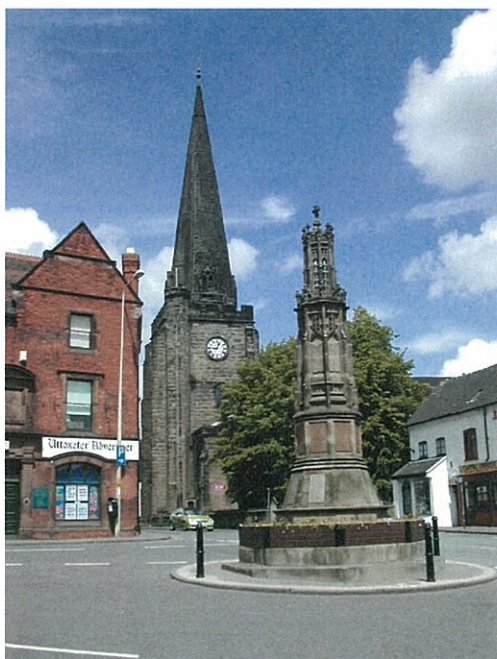


14: The Church, former mill and plateau edge viewed from Town Meadows Way



catastrophic fires in the post medieval period, along with inevitable redevelopment of sites, have meant that relatively few medieval buildings survive.

- 4.2.2 The Domesday reference tells us little of Uttoxeter's layout in either the Anglo-Saxon or medieval periods. Fortunately the town was surveyed in 1625 and 1658, in the latter case by Lightfoote [Plan 3; see also detail in figure 8 and compare with figure 2]. Though somewhat diagrammatic, the 1658 map is important because it was intended to show the location and extent of all land ownerships in the town and its immediate rural by hinterland. While some inaccuracy and distortion is inevitable in comparison with modern Ordnance Survey maps, the quasi-legal intent of the survey means that a faithful rendition of the situation on the ground would have been intended. Indeed, comparison of the 1658 plan with 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century maps demonstrates very clearly its general accuracy in the outline form of the street pattern and major features such as the church and Market Place. The date of the survey is also crucial, in that Uttoxeter had probably not changed very much since the late medieval period (ie. the late 15<sup>th</sup>/early 16<sup>th</sup> centuries). In other words, Lightfoote has probably provided us with a fair picture of Uttoxeter's early urban form, and thus a baseline with which to assess its subsequent development.



15: St Mary's Church viewed from the eastern end of the Market Place (also known as Bear Hill) in 2004

- 4.2.3 The principal features of the medieval town can easily be listed, as they are extremely common elements – church, manor house, market, and (burghal) tenements arranged around a more or less regular street pattern. Lightfoote's map shows most of these elements, and they are all known from other sources as well. A few comments can be made about each of them:



16: Market day in the Market Place - the vitality that the weekly market brings to this central architectural space is of fundamental importance to the maintenance of the character of both the town and its Conservation Area

- ♦ The church occupies a crucial position on the eastern edge of the town centre, with a strong terrace sloping down immediately to its east. The Vicarage lies just to the east of the church. Parson's Yard School House may be associated with the church, and the road to it was known as School House Lane in 1658 (now Bridge Street).
- ♦ The market lies immediately to the west of the church. Market places commonly developed in close proximity to urban churches and monasteries. Indeed in many places fairs and markets were traditionally held in churchyards. A separate development, as at Uttoxeter, seems to have been a sign of growing urban confidence. It is interesting to note that Lightfoote clearly shows the existing row of buildings in the centre of the Market Place in 1658. The market would probably have started out



---

as a large open area, but clearly this had been encroached upon by the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Such an occurrence is by no means uncommon – Salisbury (Wiltshire) provides a good parallel.

- ♦ The medieval manor house appears to have lain opposite the White Hart Hotel, that is, on the south side of Carter Street, a little to the west of the Market Place (see HER ref 00692, Table 1 below). As such, it would have been widely separated from the parish church. Medieval manorial sites were commonly located either adjacent to the church or, as here, at some distance from it.
- ♦ Tenements and roads are carefully laid out, with the High Street – Carter Street – Market Place junction being the dominant feature. The relationships between Carter Street and Balance Street, and between High, Bradley and Church Streets are also crucial, providing a series of very large central blocks of land for tenement developments, with further important blocks around the ‘outer’ edges of the streets. The tenements themselves are predominantly narrow (at least by 1658), mostly running straight back from the street frontage and terminating on a common line that runs centrally through the block. The ‘outer’ tenements run back to lanes linking up with the open fields around the town. As shown on the 1658 survey, these fields look to have been enclosed at an early date; they certainly do not have the characteristic form of medieval ridge and furrow strips. This may be a distortion on the part of the surveyor, but this seems unlikely.

4.2.4 Early post-medieval development was largely restricted to the existing urban area. There is little evidence of significant extension outwards to the north, south and west (the drop off the terrace edge to the east of the church was a natural restriction to expansion in that direction).

4.2.5 Early modern development of the medieval plan included the canal basin and associated settlement to the north of the town, and incremental/planned development westward (but only partly influenced by the railways).

### **4.3 Sub-areas**

4.3.1 One of the principal attributes of the Conservation Area is the variability of its character across even small areas. Although other divisions might be identified, it is



**17:** *The Uttoxeter Advertiser building at the north east corner of the Market Place - a well-detailed solid building in dark red brick and with a fine tiled roof covering and decorative ridge. This building occupies a key site and provides a focal point at the head of the Bridge Street approach to the Conservation Area. It should be locally listed.*



**18:** *The importance of good brickwork and detailing to the character of individual buildings and the local streetscene. Here in Church Street, the effect is marginally diminished by the presence of a poorly matched panel of infill brickwork within the former arch*

convenient to describe this variability in terms of 15 zones [Plan 4 overleaf]. Some of these encompass small areas currently outside the Conservation Area boundaries. Each of the zones will be described in greater detail in a subsequent section – the remainder of this section concentrates on characteristics and features that define the Conservation Area as a whole.

## 4.4 Local Building Patterns

4.4.1 Putting aside later 20<sup>th</sup> century structures, the architecture of Uttoxeter is heavily dominated by dark red brickwork and blue/black clay roof tiling. Interest is added to many buildings with brick or stone dressings and detailing, whilst occasional structures are rendered and painted. Roofs are mostly of ridged form, sometimes enlivened by dormer structures and decorative ridge cappings. The parish church is constructed of regionally-won sandstone and is one of the few stone buildings and structures within the Conservation Area.

4.4.2 Inevitably, most buildings are of two storey domestic scale, although various approaches and parts of the town centre are enriched with grander structures either of civic form or simply of larger scale. Most, although not all, of these key buildings are listed. Arguably, they should all be statutorily protected because of their positive contribution to the Conservation Area and streetscapes within the individual zones.

4.4.3 Occasionally, one-off features are to be found around the town: for example, cast iron used in imitation of stone for gate posts and the front door surround to 27 Church Street, an unusual 19<sup>th</sup> century addition to an earlier refaced 16<sup>th</sup> or 17<sup>th</sup> century timber framed building.

4.4.4 Regrettably, survival of the town's industrial heritage within the Conservation Area itself is poor. Blackshaw's Old Mill towards the western end of Church Street is an important structure. Beyond this, little remains.

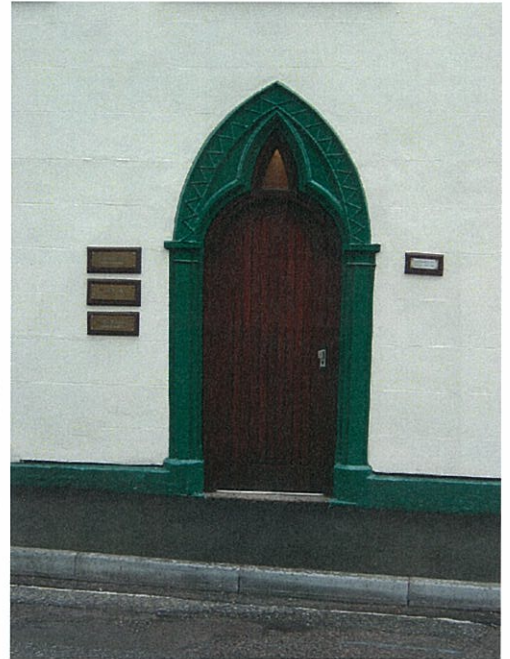
## 4.5 Summary of Distinctive Features

4.5.1 A number of facets define and characterise Uttoxeter Conservation Area. In summary, these are:

- i. Today's urban morphology represents a substantial survival of the mediaeval pattern of the town.



- ii. The core of historic Uttoxeter, its Market Place, is of singular shape and presents a strongly defined public open space.
- iii. Two major and dramatic blocks of land formed by the medieval street pattern dominate the centre of Uttoxeter and make up the greater part of the Conservation Area. Bounded respectively by Carter Street, Balance Street and Market Place/Market Street and High Street, Bradley Street/Silver Street and Church Street, these medieval land parcels remain undivided by roads and are highly distinctive and unusual within a modern town centre.
- iv. Former burgage plots and narrow passageways giving access to the hinterland remain as definitive components of the character of large sections of the Conservation Area today.
- v. Remarkably, besides St Mary's Churchyard, there is no public green space anywhere within the present Conservation Area. This is quite unusual for a historic town centre of Uttoxeter's size. As a result, trees and vegetation do not play a major part in establishing the character of much of the Area. Conversely, where mature trees do exist, they are of significance, contributing positively to character, and making their survival of great importance to the local streetscape.
- vi. Several prominent sections of the Conservation Area have been defined by 19<sup>th</sup> century wealth, piety and civic pride. For example, the High Street and its environs today have been shaped by investment and development of the 1850s, with the imposing though somewhat stolid Town Hall and its archway to the north leading through to the site of the former almost contemporaneous cattle market. The parish church of St Mary was largely rebuilt in 1828, but saw further repair and alteration in the late 1840s and 1870s. The Catholic Church in Balance Street, built in 1839, was extended again in the 1870s. The United Reformed Church (formerly the Congregational chapel) in Carter Street, built in 1827/28 (at the same time as the reconstruction of the parish church), was extended in 1848, whilst the Methodist chapel in Carter Street had been built in 1841 and was then rebuilt in 1878.



**19:** 19<sup>th</sup> century door surround applied to the refaced 27 Church Street



**20:** The green environment provided by St Mary's churchyard



**21:** The Grade II listed former Congregational Chapel in Carter Street



- 
- vii. In some equal, though arguably less positive way, today's Conservation Area has also been characterised by social and political ambitions and planning policies of the 1950s and 1960s. The 1971 appraisal remarked on the 'extensive' clearance that had occurred in the town centre in the preceding decade. This has fundamentally affected its appearance and its future shape. Demolition of the central brewery buildings has hollowed out the large medieval block of land immediately to the east of the High Street, permitting the visually intrusive Maltings shopping mall development almost opposite the Town Hall and destroying the urban grain of much of Bradley Street, Silver Street and parts of Church Street. Redevelopment of a number of individual town centre sites such as that on Bridge Street immediately opposite the end of Market Place has almost universally produced architecturally inferior structures which degrade their local environment and the character of the streetscape.
- viii. One final fascinating characteristic of the Uttoxeter Conservation Area should be mentioned. Each of its boundaries is dominated and defined by a distinctive historic use that is critical to or reflects fundamentally the history of the town and its regional import. Along the entire southern edge of the Area lie the former Leighton engineering works, a powerful reminder of perhaps the most significant element of the economic base of the town for the past two centuries. Until very recently, the western fringe of the Area was heavily dominated by the now-demolished Victorian cattle market site (and accesses to it) – again, a commanding symbol of the town's economic base since the medieval period. The northwest side of the boundary leads on to residential districts, mainly of workers' housing, that were intimately connected to these two economic mainstays. Almost all of this type of housing can be found clustered against the edge of the Conservation Area in this quarter of Uttoxeter. Beyond these streets lie the town's principal later estates of larger and wealthier housing. To the north east of the town, the edge of the Conservation Area is strongly defined by education, with schools immediately within and outside the boundary and playing fields leading northwards towards the countryside. Until recently, to the east, the town's edge was defined by the escarpment on the west side of the Dove valley and below this were playing



fields and open agricultural land which more latterly became built on for business parks and other usage. However, the construction of Town Meadows Way in recent years has redefined the sensible edge of the Conservation Area and it is inevitably bringing construction with a mix of residential and commercial uses to this part of the boundary. Nevertheless, it remains true to say that each edge of the Conservation Area boundary is strongly defined by distinct historic elements which generally are only interrupted by fingers of residential development formed along the principal historic approaches to what is now the Conservation Area (especially along Hockley Road, Smithfield Road, Dove Bank and to a lesser degree Bridge Street).

## **5 THE RELEVANCE OF THE CONSERVATION AREA**

### **5.1 Coherence and Appropriateness of the Conservation Area and its Boundaries**

- 5.1.1 The boundaries of the Conservation Area, defined in 1970, reflected the characteristics described in the preceding section. The 1971 appraisal makes no attempt to explain the rationale behind the designation and the establishment of the boundaries of the Conservation Area beyond noting generally that Staffordshire had been strongly influenced by the effects of the industrial revolution and consequent growth of industry and population; that potential Conservation Areas often centred on historic buildings, features of archaeological importance, historic street patterns and/or areas of particular character; and that designation of the Conservation Area would form the basis for “positive action”.
- 5.1.2 Perhaps because of the strong but individual characteristics of all adjoining lands, today, by far the greater part of the Conservation Area maintains an internal logic, coherence and relevance. However, small anomalies in the boundaries do exist.