

Vicarage Road (Penn) Conservation Area Character Appraisal and Management Plan



Client:
City of Wolverhampton Council

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1.0 Introduction

Summary

Vicarage Road (Penn) Conservation Area is within Upper Penn, a historic settlement which now forms part of the wider Wolverhampton area. Located along a ridge of land which extends west from the Colton Hills, the hilltop nature of the Conservation Area contributes to its rural village feel. There are wide views looking south, out of the Conservation Area, toward Penn Common.

The special interest of the Vicarage Road (Penn) Conservation Area is its traditional, rural appearance, which reflects the area's historic development. Vicarage Road retains a sense of open green space, despite modern twentieth century development which has infilled much of the Upper Penn area and absorbed Upper Penn into Wolverhampton.

Buildings within the Conservation Area date from the sixteenth to the twentieth century, creating a varied appearance within the streetscape, reflecting of the development phases of the area. St Bartholomew's Church and Penn Hall School bookend the core of the Conservation Area and are indicative of the area's historic appearance and development.

Conserving Wolverhampton's Heritage

The City of Wolverhampton Council appointed Place Services to prepare a Conservation Area Appraisal for Vicarage Road (Penn). This Conservation Area Appraisal and Management document is provided as baseline information for applicants to consider when designing or planning new development in Vicarage Road and its environs.

This report provides an assessment of the historic development and character of Vicarage Road and outlines its special interest. The appraisal will also consider the significance of heritage assets within the Conservation Area and the contribution that these, along with their setting, make to the character of the area. The understanding of significance will be used to assess the susceptibility of the Conservation Area to new development, highlighting key assets of importance.

This assessment will consider how Vicarage Road developed and how its character is reflected and influenced by the building styles, forms, materials, scale, density, roads, footpaths, alleys, streetscapes, open spaces, views, landscape, landmarks and topography within the Conservation Area. These qualities can be used to assess the key characteristics of the area, highlighting the potential impact future developments may have upon the significance of heritage assets and the character of Vicarage Road. This assessment is based on information derived from documentary research, site visits and analysis of the Conservation Area.

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) highlights good design as one of twelve core principals of sustainable development. Sustainable development relies on sympathetic design, achieved through an understanding of context, the immediate and larger character of the area in which new development is sited.

This assessment follows best practice guidance, including Historic England's revised Historic England Advice Note 1 for Conservation Area Appraisal, Designation and Management (2019) and The Setting of Heritage Assets (2017).

Purpose of Appraisal

This document should be used as a baseline to inform future development and design with regard to the sensitivities of the Historic Environment and its unique character. This includes the identification and assessment of Vicarage Road (Penn) Conservation Area's special interest and significance.

It is expected that applications for planning permission will also consult and follow the best practice guidance, some of which is outlined in the bibliography.

Applications that demonstrate an understanding of the character of a Conservation Area are more likely to produce good design and outcomes for agents and their clients. This Appraisal will strengthen understanding of Vicarage Road (Penn) and its development, informing future design.

Boundary Revisions

During the assessment of the Vicarage Road (Penn) Conservation Area for this appraisal document, sections within the original boundary were found to not contribute to the special architectural or historic interest of the Conservation Area. This document has determined a revised boundary line for the Conservation Area, the new boundary is illustrated in Figure 1.

To warrant inclusion within the Conservation Area, all elements must possess a level of architectural or historic interest, in accordance guidance produced by Historic England in the document Conservation Area Appraisal, Designation and Management. There are different types of special architectural or historic interest an area can possess, some examples of these are:

- areas with a high number of nationally or locally listed buildings,
- areas with a predominance of a particular style of architecture or materials,
- areas linked to a particular industry or custom which are locally important,
- or, an area with a high quality of designed public realm or space.

The fields to the south west of Penn Hall and the cemetery have been omitted as part of the revised boundary as they lack special architectural or historic interest and thus do not contribute to the significance of the Conservation Area. The cemetery was established in 1993, located on formerly agricultural land. Its appearance and function are not representative of the key elements which make up the special interest of Vicarage Road (Penn) Conservation Area, described in section 3.1 of this document. Whilst the cemetery holds communal interest and is important to the local community, this does not constitute sufficient historic interest that justifies its inclusion within the Conservation Area. The spatial planning of the cemetery is pleasant yet not unique or distinct; buildings on the site are built in a simple style in modern materials which lack either architectural or historic value.

The sections of fields and paddock on the southern edge of Vicarage Road between the cemetery and Penn Moor Farm are a visual link to the Conservation Area's rural setting and the agricultural landscape to the south. However, they should be

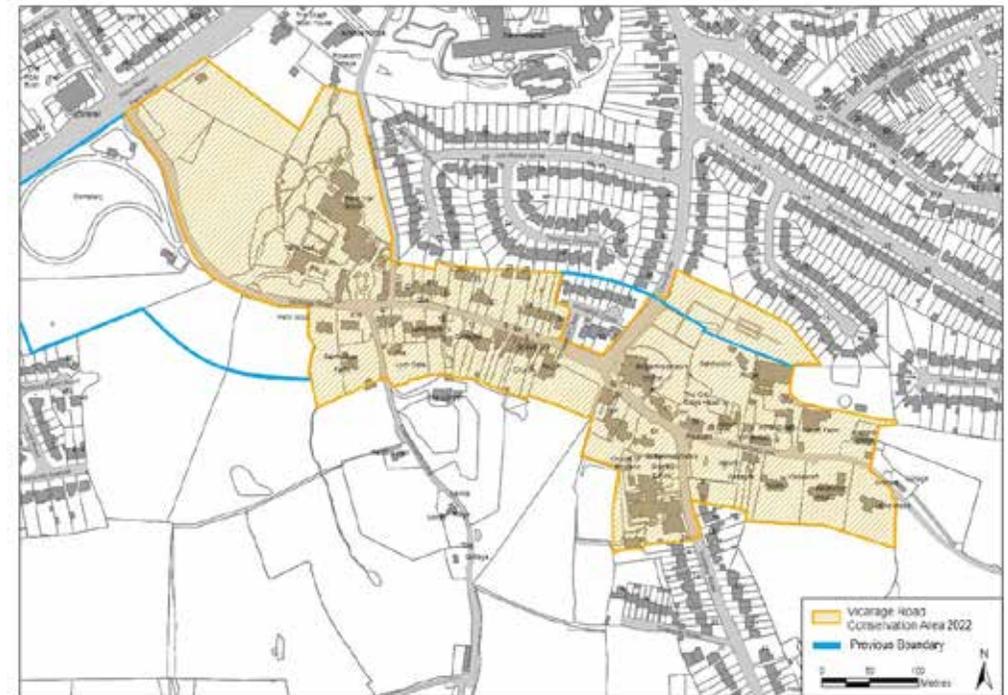


Figure 1 Map of the Vicarage Road (Penn) Conservation Area Boundary showing 2022 revised boundary line and previous boundary

deemed part of the wider rural landscape, not a contributing element to the Conservation Area's significance. There is no evidence of significant archaeological remains within these fields, nor is there evidence of any deliberate urban planning or design related to the development of Vicarage Road. The fields do not possess any historic or architectural interest and have therefore been omitted from the Conservation Area.

The properties on Wheathill Close have also been removed from the Conservation Area as part of the revised boundary. Properties within this cul-de-sac date from the latter half of the twentieth century and do not display building characteristics found throughout Vicarage Road (Penn). Materials used on the dwellings in Wheathill Close are not regionally specific, nor are their designs responsive to the prevailing architectural character of the street, featuring incongruous integrated garages, box dormers and cementitious Roman roof tiles.

Vicarage Road itself, the highway, verges and existing stone boundary walls, and a section of fields located to the west of Penn Hall are retained within the Conservation Area. The hedgerow, tree cover and walls have an aesthetic quality which reinforces a sense of difference and the rural aesthetic quality of Vicarage Road, comparative to other areas of Wolverhampton. The streetlamps on the southern stretch of the road have some architectural, local and historic interest as examples of traditionally styled electric lamps, manufactured by Revo, a now defunct manufacturing firm based in nearby Tipton, which operated in the twentieth century. Sections of stone walling along the road reinforce the palette of building materials used within the Conservation Area, as well as adding to the historic character of the road and emphasising the long history of the well-established route along Vicarage Road. There is an established historic link between the fields on the northern side of Vicarage Road, to the immediate west of Penn Hall, and the hall building which provides sufficient historic interest to justify their inclusion within the Conservation Area, as part of the setting of Penn Hall.

The removal of the cemetery, the fields south of Penn Hall and Wheathill Close from the Conservation Area does not mean that development of these areas would necessarily be appropriate, as these areas still contribute positively to the wider setting of the Conservation Area. The fields and low scale of development on the cemetery site emphasise the wider green and rural appearance of Vicarage Road

(Penn) Conservation Area whilst also providing an important verdant view on the approach to the residential core of the Conservation Area. Moreover, the fields are also representative of the overall rural setting of the Conservation Area's southern edge. Thus, the undeveloped, agrarian quality of the fields between the cemetery and Penn Farm are acknowledged as an important part of the Conservation Area's setting.

Setting, and how it contributes to the significance of heritage assets, is defined within section 3.4 of this document. Further explanation of the setting of Vicarage Road (Penn) Conservation Area is also included in section 3.4.

Any redevelopment of properties on Wheathill Close should be appropriate and sensitive to the character of Vicarage Road, taking into account how incremental changes within its immediate setting can dilute or detract from the significance of the Conservation Area. Proposals which detract from the setting of the Conservation Area should not be supported by the local planning authority.

The revised Conservation Area boundary has been extended to include an area of land to the north of St Bartholomew's Church, consolidating the boundary around the entirety of the church's graveyard. This ensures the entirety of the Grade II* Listed church's curtilage is within the Conservation Area.



Figure 2 The church yard, St Bartholomew's



Planning Policy Context

The legislative framework for conservation and enhancement of Conservation Areas and Listed Buildings is set out in the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (HMSO 1990). In particular section 69 of this act requires Local Planning Authorities to designate areas which they consider to be of architectural and historic interest as Conservation Areas, and section 72 requires that special attention should be paid to ensuring that the character and appearance of these areas is preserved or enhanced. Section 71 also requires the Local Planning Authority to formulate and publish proposals for the preservation and enhancement of these areas. National planning policy in relation to the conservation and enhancement of heritage assets is outlined in chapter 16 of the Government's National Planning Policy Framework (DCLG 2021).

Policy HE15 Change of Use of a Listed Building
Policy HE16 Demolition of a Listed Building
Policy HE17 Development Affecting the Setting of a Listed Building
Policy HE18 Preservation and Enhancement of Local List Buildings & Sites
Policy HE19 Development Affecting a Local List Building or Site

Relevant Wolverhampton Unitary Development Plan Policies

The Vicarage Road (Penn) Conservation Area is located within the City of Wolverhampton. Local Planning policy for Wolverhampton is set out in the saved policies of the Wolverhampton Unitary Development Plan, adopted in 2006, and in the Black Country Core Strategy, adopted 2011.

Policy HE1 Preservation of Local Character and Distinctiveness (part)
Policy HE2 Historic Resources and Enabling Development
Policy HE3 Preservation and Enhancement of Conservation Areas
Policy HE4 Proposals Affecting a Conservation Area
Policy HE5 Control of Development in a Conservation Area
Policy HE6 Demolition of Buildings or Structures in a Conservation Area
Policy HE7 Underused Buildings and Structures in a Conservation Area
Policy HE8 Encouragement of Appropriate Redevelopment in Conservation Areas
Policy HE9 Relaxation of Normal Standards in a Conservation Area
Policy HE10 Removal of Permitted Development Rights in a Conservation Area
Policy HE12 Preservation and Active Use of Listed Buildings
Policy HE13 Development Affecting a Listed Building
Policy HE14 Alterations and Extensions to a Listed Building

2.0 Vicarage Road (Penn) Conservation Area

2.1 Location and Topography

Vicarage Road is in Penn, a small historic village, which is adjacent to the A449 and has been gradually coalesced into the greater Wolverhampton area. Penn is often known as Upper or Over Penn to distinguish it from Nether or Lower Penn, which lies 2.5km to the west.

The A449 runs from Stafford and Wolverhampton in the north down to Worcester in the south, passing through Stourbridge and Kidderminster. It is called the Penn Road in this area; today the main road skirts the village but perhaps originally passed through it. Penn is located along a ridge of land which extends west from the Colton Hills. Approaches to the Conservation Area, especially when heading north on Sedgeley Road from Penn Common, highlight this hilltop aspect of the village. The bedrock geology of the area is part of the Chester Formation of interbedded sandstone and conglomerates. The local environment was previously dominated by rivers, meaning that the geology of the area largely consists of sedimentary rocks.



Figure 3 Extract from 1901 Ordnance Survey Map showing the relationship between Upper and Lower Penn

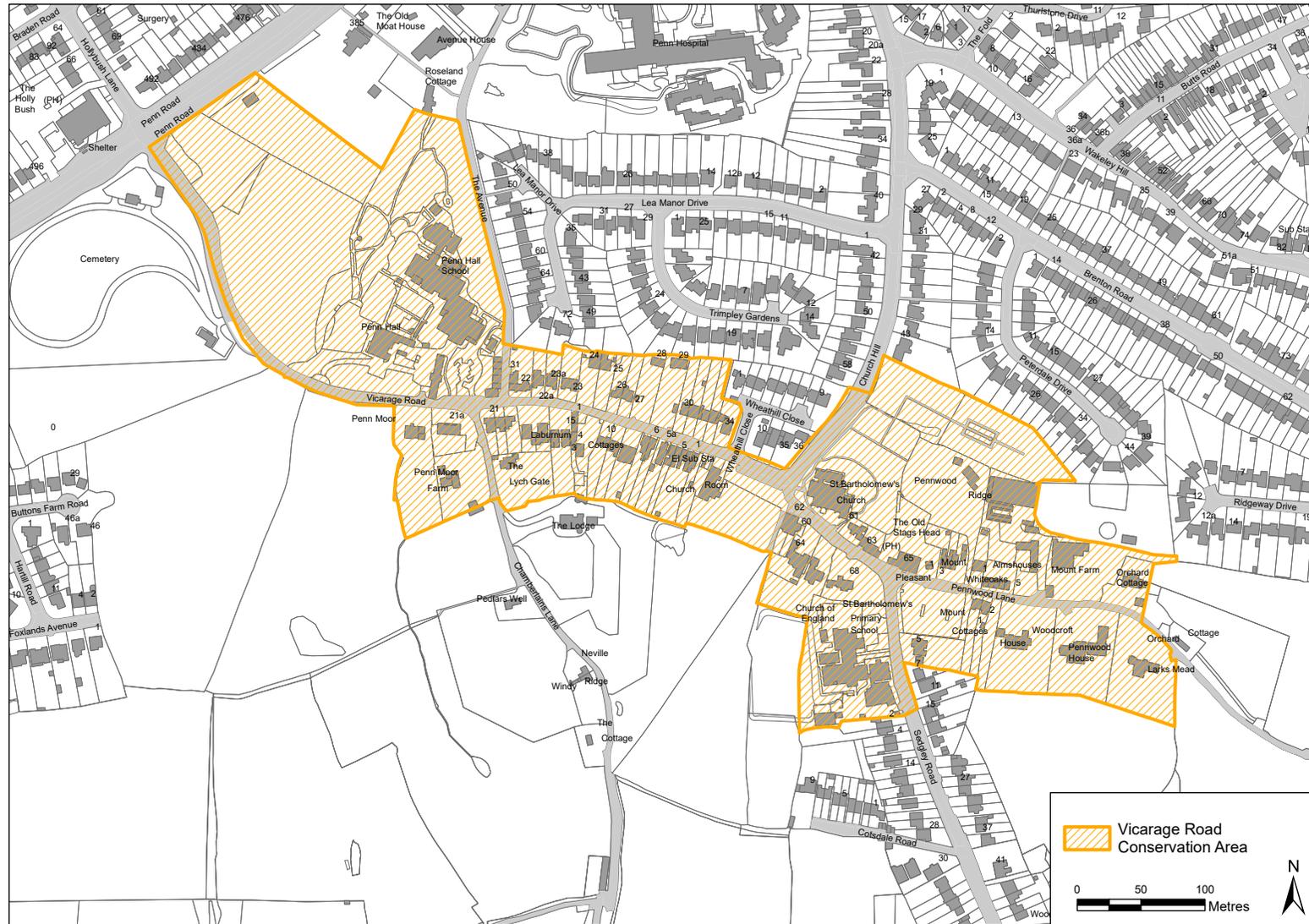


Figure 4 Vicarage Road (Penn) Conservation Area 2022 Boundary

2.2 Historical Overview

Timeline

The name 'Penn' likely originates from the Welsh word for summit, reflecting the settlement's location along the ridge. Within historic Staffordshire it is one of a few settlements with a Celtic name, and written records suggest Penn predates Wolverhampton as a settlement.

The landscape of the site to the north of Vicarage Road may have provided an appropriate location for a hillfort, however no conclusive evidence has been found.

The small Roman town of Pennocrucium was located a short distance to the north of what is now the Vicarage Road (Penn) Conservation Area and Greensforge, a Roman camp, was located to the south. A road connecting the two Roman settlements may have run through or past the existing Penn settlement although the route of this road has not been confirmed.

Early records state that both Upper and Lower Penn were owned by Mercian Lords.

Prior to the Norman Conquest parts of Bushbury and Lower Penn were owned by Lady Godiva - her son Earl Algar owned Upper Penn as recorded in the Domesday Book. Lady Godiva's standing cross in the church yard of St Bartholoew's Church on Vicarage Road is reputed to date to c.1050 and is a scheduled monument. It was discovered during excavations in 1912 to repair a later medieval stone cross in the Churchyard, which was superimposed above the earlier cross. During the excavations the later cross was moved, it is now located at the front of the church.

Prehistoric and Roman Periods

Early History



Figure 5 Lady Godiva Image:CoventryLive [<https://www.coventrytelegraph.net/news/coventry-news/coventrys-lady-godiva-myth-untrue-3033698>]

Medieval

The Saxon cross is to the right-hand side of the church yard and comprises a circular base of three steps, constructed from shaped sandstone holding a circular socket stone. An early twentieth century inscription reads 'This preaching cross was erected by Lady Godiva, Lady of the manor of Nether Penn and wife of Leofric, Earl of Mercia.'

The Domesday Book of 1086 suggests that there was a population of 50-100 people during the early period of the settlement. It is probable that Penn comprised of a village in the immediate vicinity of the church, set within a wider rural landscape of dispersed farms and small hamlets.

During the medieval period Upper Penn is believed to have formed part of the fief of the Lord of Dudley and the de Bushbury family. The medieval parish was large, with the settlement concentrated on the two villages of Upper and Nether Penn, where the manorial centres were located. Elsewhere in the parish were dispersed settlements, with farms or hamlets including Muchall, Lloyd Farm and Wood Farm.

The Grade II* listed Church of St Bartholomew was built by Sir Hugh de Bushbury in c.1200, although there may have been an earlier wooden structure on the site. It was substantially remodelled in the eighteenth century and the only medieval portions now visible are two early English bays in the nave arcade. The tower is fifteenth century in origin; original medieval encaustic tiles found in the church have been copied and incorporated within the nineteenth century chancel.

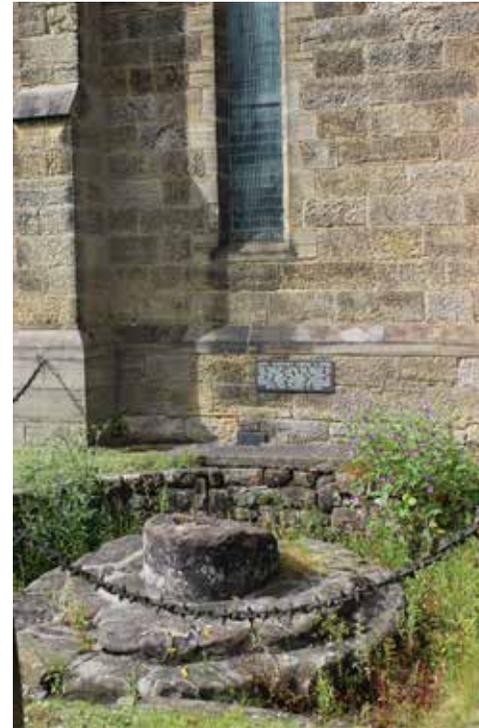


Figure 6 The remains of a Saxon cross in St Bartholomew's church yard

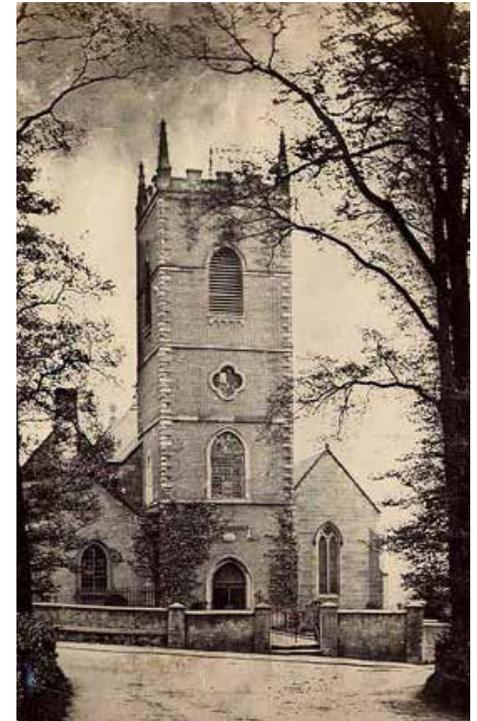


Figure 7 St Bartholomew's Parish Church pre 1887 (copyright: City of Wolverhampton Council [<http://www.wolverhamptonhistory.org.uk/people/faith/christian/cofe2/bartholomews>])

Post Medieval

The settlement developed slowly, records of the 1660 Hearth Tax state there were 54 hearths in the area, suggesting a population for Upper Penn of 200-300 at this time. The 1840s Tithe map shows two concentrations of houses; by St Bartholomew's Church and by Penn Hall.

At this time the land formed part of the Penn Manor; Penn Hall, at the western edge of the Conservation Area, was, and still is, the most substantial property within the area. Built in the seventeenth century, Penn Hall was later altered and re-fronted in the eighteenth century, resulting in an early Georgian appearance. The hall is currently in use as a school. Prior to this it had been a private residence then used as a residential home for police officers, following its sale to the West Midlands Police Authority after WW2.

A number of the outbuildings associated with Penn Hall also date from the eighteenth century, as do the almshouses on Pennwood Lane, also in the Conservation Area. The almshouses are reputed to have been built by Dr Raphael Sedgwick, the owner of Penn Hall at the time of their construction, in memory of his daughter Ann. A plaque on the front of the cottages states they were built to house five poor persons, who each received a sum of £5 per year from Dr Sedgwick.

In the post-medieval period the centre of the settlement moved away from its historic core by St Bartholomew's Church, toward Penn Road. The road was maintained by a turnpike trust, set up in 1761, and provided an ideal location for shops and other opportunities for trade. The trust was in



Figure 8 1840s Tithe Map (from The City of Wolverhampton archive – AP/152a)



Figure 9 Etching of Penn Hall by Shaw, 1801

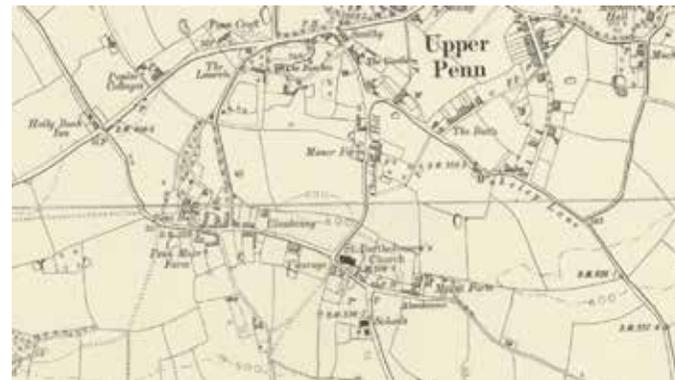


Figure 10 Extract from the 1921 OS Map

operation for 116 years and had an important role in the development of the village, which grew into a successful farming community in the nineteenth century.

An 1870 directory suggests the settlement remained mostly rural at this time, with an economy predominantly based on agriculture. Two blacksmiths, two publicans, 20 farmers, 20 general tradesmen and 41 private residents are listed. Buildings dating from the Victorian period are intermixed throughout the Conservation Area and are typically constructed in brick.

Development of Upper Penn continued to grow slowly until the latter part of the twentieth century, when significant post-war residential development infilled areas of the settlement. Historic Maps of the settlement highlight the rapid change in the appearance of the Conservation Area at this time. A number of the properties date from the twentieth century, adding to the variety of built form.

Since the initial designation of the Conservation Area in 1972 there has been development along its boundary which has had both neutral and negative effects. The creation of a cemetery, to the west of the boundary, has introduced a formalised appearance to this area which is a notable contrast to the open fields to the south of the Conservation Area, toward Penn Common.

Adjoining the Conservation Area to the North, developments along Lea Manor Drive have encroached upon Vicarage Road, however the retention of garden plots and trees has enabled much of the village-like, rural feel of the area to be retained.

Modern



Figure 11 Extract from the 1955 OS Map showing how development has encroached upon the Conservation Area to the North



Figure 12 Extract from the 1966 OS Map



Figure 13 Vicarage Road Cemetery, which has been omitted from the Conservation Area as part of this appraisal as it does not display the characteristics of the rest of the Conservation Area



2.3 Heritage Assets

Designation History

Vicarage Road (Penn) was designated in 1972 and extended in 1976. The boundary has been revised again as part of this appraisal. This document supersedes the 1976 appraisal document for the Conservation Area.

Designated heritage assets

St Bartholomew's Church (list entry number: 1201886) and Penn Hall (1282460) and their associated outbuildings and monuments, some of which are individually listed, are the designated heritage assets within the Conservation Area. Both the church and hall are Grade II* listed.

Scheduled Monuments

There are two Scheduled Monuments within the Conservation Area, Lady Godiva's Churchyard Cross and the Churchyard Cross (west of the churchyard) located in the grounds of St Bartholomew's Church. Both are also Grade II listed

These are highlighted on Figure 13.

Non-Designated heritage assets

There are a number of non-designated heritage assets within the Conservation Area which would benefit from inclusion in a Local List, subject to further research.

These include:

- Almshouses on Pennwood Lane
- St Bartholomew's Primary School (part)
- Church Villas
- The Vicarage

Heritage at Risk

No heritage assets have been identified as at risk as part of this appraisal.

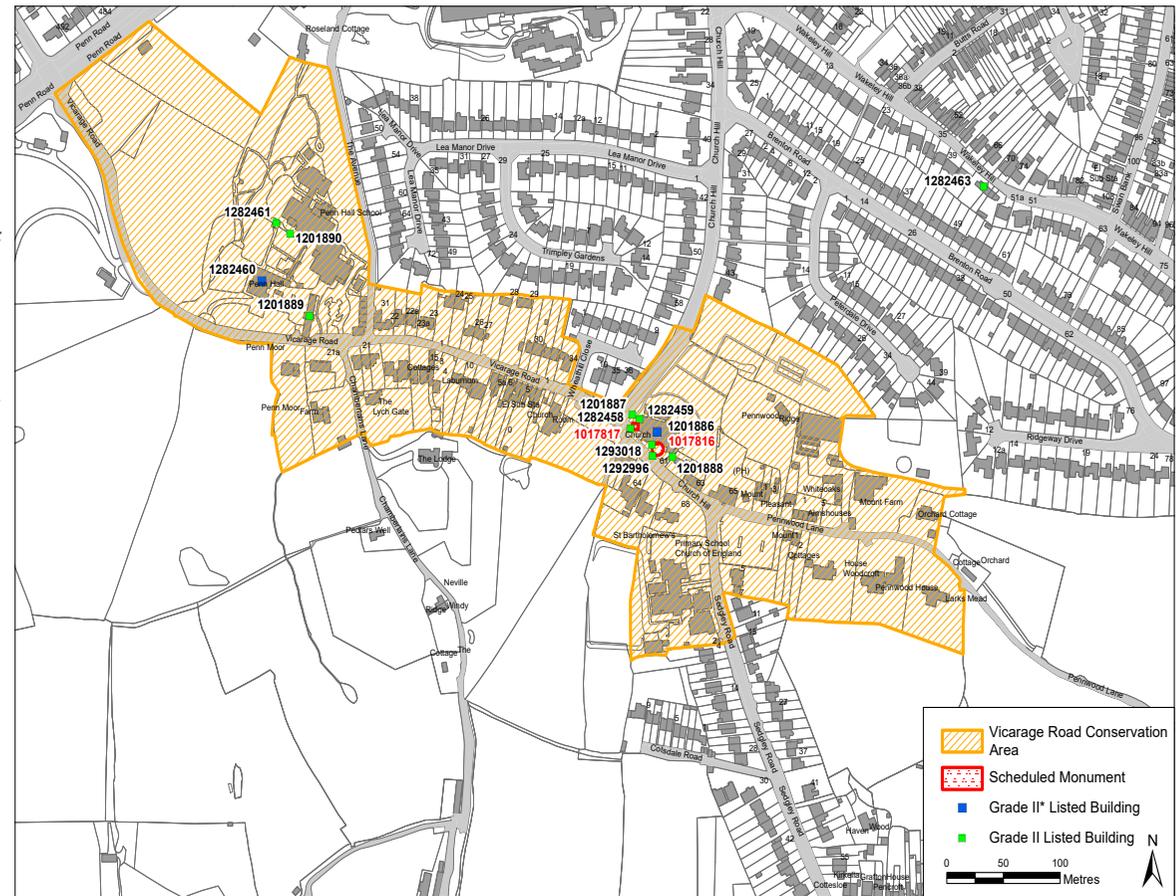


Figure 14 Map highlighting the designated heritage assets within the Conservation Area



Figure 15 Medieval Cross at the front of the Church, which was moved following the discovery of Lady Godiva's Cross.

2.4 Archaeological Potential

The Vicarage Road (Penn) Conservation Area has considerable potential for surviving archaeology. Excavations in 1912 in the graveyard recovered the base of a late Saxon cross-shaft. The presence of the cross suggests that a church was also present on this site by the Late Saxon period, and further archaeological remains, including building foundations and burials can be anticipated to survive in this area. The local geology is conducive to the survival of faunal remains.

It is also anticipated that archaeological remains relating to the medieval and post-medieval development of Penn Hall and Vicarage Road can be anticipated to survive. Archaeological evaluation to the north of the graveyard has recovered a small amount of medieval pottery and tile. There is also the possibility of earlier remains of later prehistoric or Roman date surviving in the area.

The route of the Roman road from the Roman fort at Pennocrucium (near Gailey) to the fort at Greensforge would have passed to the immediate west of the Conservation Area. It has also been suggested that the higher ground to the north of Vicarage Road would have been a favoured site for a hillfort in the later prehistoric period.

3.0 Character and Appearance

3.1 Summary of Special Interest

The special interest of Vicarage Road (Penn) is in its retained sense of rural seclusion, despite encroachment from modern development to the north. The area is representative of the historic appearance of Upper Penn, which developed slowly as a farming community. St Bartholomew's Church provided an initial centre to the settlement, and Vicarage Road is indicative of the earliest phase of development within the wider area, with evidence suggesting that there has been a church on the site since the late Saxon period.

Within the Conservation Area the variety of houses and built form represent the history of the area, from St Bartholomew's presence in the Saxon period, to the prosperous eighteenth century and Upper Penn's gradual coalescence with the Greater Wolverhampton area in the twentieth century. Residential dwellings dominate the streetscape; The Old Stag's Head Public House is the only commercial property within the

Conservation Area.

The dominance of residential properties within the Conservation Area is also indicative of the changing land use of the area, representing the rise and decline of agriculture within Upper Penn. Former farmsteads and agricultural units, including Mount Farm and the stables at Penn Hall, are now domestic dwellings. Conversion of such units, rather than demolition, has retained much of the historic appearance of the area and contributes positively to its significance.

A mixed palette of building materials add to the richness of the appearance of the Conservation Area and traditional materials are prominent. Red Staffordshire brick and local sand stone are dominant in older buildings.

The setting of the Conservation Area is important to its rural feel, with its location on the ridge allowing for views across toward Penn Common. The view from

Church Common and undeveloped portion of land south of the junction between Vicarage Road and Church Hill is key to this rural feel, as is the lack of back land development on the south side of Vicarage Road. The topography of the land has prevented over development of Vicarage Road and its relative seclusion is emphasised when approaching the Conservation Area along Sedgley Road.

Green space, preserved trees, hedgerow and well-maintained garden space further combine to enhance the rural appearance of the Conservation Area. This is emphasised by the loose grain of the built form, which allows for incidental views out into the countryside beyond, particularly when looking south and traveling out of the Conservation Area on Pennwood Lane.



Figure 16 The Old Stag's Head, Church Hill



Figure 17 Mount Farm



Figure 18 View from Church Hill. When entering the Conservation Area from Church Hill, the appearance of Vicarage Road and St Bartholomew's is largely concealed, creating a visual 'surprise' for the visitor

3.2 Character Appraisal

Elements of Vicarage Road (Penn)'s character defining features are found beyond the Conservation Area boundary and these contribute indirectly to the Conservation Area's setting and appearance. Key characteristics of the Conservation Area, which collectively contribute to its significance, are outlined below.

Land usage

Within the Conservation Area the properties are primarily residential. Public amenities include St Bartholomew's Church and church hall, St Bartholomew's Primary School, The Old Stag's Head Public House and Penn School. Surrounding the Conservation Area to the south, east and west are open fields, reinforcing the historic appearance and wider land use in the area.

Plan form, street pattern and layout

The main section of the Conservation Area follows a linear development plan, along the ridge of the hill and the line of Vicarage Road. Early OS maps (Figures 11-13) show that the Conservation Area originally had two focal points, with buildings clustered around the church and Penn Hall at this time. During the course of the twentieth century this gap has gradually been infilled, along the line of Vicarage Road, to give the Conservation Area the form it has today. Further development has also taken place along Sedgley Road, Church Hill and Penn Lane, expanding the settlement.

At the edge of the Conservation Area on Pennwood Lane, the grain of development becomes looser, gradually giving way to open fields as the road slopes toward the northern tip of Penn Common. Larger plot sizes in this section of the Conservation Area and the positioning of properties, which are mostly set back from the road, reinforces this open appearance. The break from built form into open landscape is also experienced at the west and south of the Conservation Area, however the change in landscape, from built form to arable land, is more abrupt when leaving the Conservation Area from these directions.

When approaching the Conservation Area from Sedgley Road, the sharp bend where Sedgley Road meets Vicarage Road, at The Old Stag's Head Public House, provides an important view into the Conservation Area. Here the road narrows considerably, indicating that you are approaching the historic core of the area, which is reinforced by the view of St Bartholomew's Church tower above the roofline of the pub. The pub's car park provides a reprieve from the density of Sedgley Road and allows for views out of the Conservation Area, beyond the school.

Church Meadow, the area of grass separating the vicarage and the church hall, is another important break in the



Figure 19 The Old Stag's Head Car Park features a water trough relocated to the site from the centre of Wolverhampton. Historic Ordnance Survey Maps mark a water pump in this area

line of development along Vicarage Road and contributes positively to the significance of the Conservation Area.

Landscaping

Grass verges and the presence of trees contribute to the rural appearance of the Conservation Area. Landscaping is generally kept to a minimum, which reinforces the gradual, un-planned development of the area. The presence of established hedgerow on Penn Lane and the western section of Vicarage Road create a sylvan appearance on the approach the Conservation Area which is a notable contrast to the surrounding highly residential and developed area.

Similarly, there is little pedestrian provision throughout the Conservation Area which further suggests the historic appearance of Vicarage Road and emphasises the rural feel of the area.

Boundary treatments within the older sections of the Conservation Area, by the Church and Penn Hall, include high stone or brick walls and defined boundaries. The walls surrounding St Bartholomew's Primary School and the church itself are particularly prominent. Elsewhere in the Conservation Area, particularly around the centre of Vicarage Road, boundaries are typically soft and include low lying walls and hedging. Some unsympathetic materials have been introduced into driveway areas, however front gardens, where surviving, are generally well maintained.

Scale, Materials and Built Form

The scale and mass of the buildings in the Conservation Area are representative of domestic and vernacular architecture. Buildings are typically one or two storeys high, therefore by contrast St Bartholomew's Church is a distinct marker of the Conservation Area, due to its location, size and tall tower. There is an informal layout of the properties, with some fronting the road, some set back behind front gardens or driveways and others at right angles to the street. Vicarage Road is inconsistent in width, opening out considerably around the church and Penn Hall as shown on the map of the Conservation Area, Figure 1.

Due to the topography of the area, some buildings on the north side are set back further from Vicarage Road, allowing for larger front gardens and a higher ridge height. This is particularly noticeable in the central section of Vicarage Road, between



Figure 20 Church Meadow



Figure 21 Pennwood Lane is a rural contrast to the urban appearance of Vicarage Road



Figure 22 Brick is the dominant building material within the Conservation Area and there are many examples of attractive brick detailing

Penn Hall and St Bartholomew's. Here the properties predominantly date from the twentieth century and are mostly detached bungalows or two storey dwellings with varied plot sizes.

Traditional materials dominate the Conservation Area and there is a prominence of red Staffordshire brick, indicative of the regional vernacular and the dominance of eighteenth and nineteenth century building stock within the Vicarage Road (Penn) Conservation Area. Older buildings, including sections of the church and part of the school, are constructed from stone or, in the case of Penn Hall, timber framed and refaced in brick. This material palette is typical of the region. Decorative brickwork and complex brick bonds indicate a hierarchy of dwellings within the village and there are examples of fine brickwork throughout the Conservation Area. Stone, where present, is local sandstone and often used as a coping stone on boundary walls, contributing positively to the richness of the area's aesthetic and varied visual palette.

Within the Conservation Area roofs are typically clad in slate or plain clay tiles. Decorative ridge tiles, chimneys and the variation in building heights due to scale and land levels, mean that roofs punctuate the sky line, and this contributes to the area's character. Buildings set higher on the ridge and those on the south side of Vicarage Road take advantage of impressive views out toward Penn Common.

There is no dominant building style within the Conservation Area which gives it a varied and visually interesting appearance. Modern buildings are often in a lighter brick, which does not match the historic appearance or material quality of the older buildings in the Conservation Area. Nonetheless, this contrast in building styles reinforces the staggered development of the area and is representative of the rapid expansion



Figure 23 Stone copings on brick walls provide visual interest



Figure 24 Stone boundary walls are found throughout the Conservation Area

of the wider West Midlands area post World War Two. The intermixing of older and modern properties adds an element of variety to the visual palette of the area, although the introduction of modern materials, such as uPVC windows or elements such as hanging tiles and cladding which are atypical for the region, does dilute the traditional appearance and local distinctiveness of the Conservation Area.

Where present, standard design houses constructed in the latter half of the twentieth century are neutral contributors to the significance of the Conservation Area. Their appearance could be improved to enhance the aesthetic and character of the Conservation Area, however the modern infill properties, due to their small scale, do not detract from the overall significance of Vicarage Road (Penn) Conservation Area.

Landmarks and Notable Building Groups

St Bartholomew's Church is an important landmark within the Conservation Area and is widely visible. Buildings associated with St Bartholomew's dominate the corner of Church Hill and Pennwood Lane and include the vicarage, church hall and Church Villas, a small terrace of nineteenth century houses.

Around Penn Hall, the historic stable blocks remain and mark the entranceway to the school. These buildings also serve as a prominent edge to The Avenue, a rural lane which connects the Conservation Area to Penn Road, the main thoroughfare from Stafford to Wolverhampton. Pennover Cottage, a small whitewashed building is located on the junction between The Avenue and Vicarage Road and its vernacular appearance, coupled with the row of cottages opposite this junction, provide an attractive, traditional viewpoint when entering the Conservation Area from this direction.

Public realm

The public realm is largely confined to pavements, roads and street signs. Public footpaths connect the Conservation Area to the wider landscape, leading to Penn Common, Gospel End and the countryside beyond.

Church Meadow, the area of green space opposite the church, is an important reprieve from development on the south of Vicarage Road and reminiscent of a village green.



Figure 25 Decorative ridge tiles provide visual interest to the skyline



Figure 26 Modern infill provides a notable contrast to the older buildings within the Conservation Area



Figure 27 Victorian lamp posts

The post box and benches on the island of grass separating the car park from Vicarage Road provide a formalised amenity use to this area which is beneficial to residents. Parking in this area is a detractor from the view south toward Penn Common, although the infrequent use of the car park allows the open appearance of the green to remain largely intact.

Street furniture within the Conservation Area is inconsistent, and in some areas there is an over proliferation of signage, in part due to the needs of the two schools. Victorian lamp posts contribute positively to the appearance of Vicarage Road, especially on the approach from the A449, although these are not present in all areas of the Conservation Area.

On-road parking in some sections of the Conservation Area detracts from its character, narrowing the appearance of the streets and adding to traffic congestion. Off road parking, where in place, does prevent the over congestion of the road, at the sacrifice of the front gardens and the introduction of aesthetically intrusive hard standings. Where in place, driveways are not consistent in appearance and there are a variety of materials, some incongruous, such as gravel, cement and paving surface.

Noise and Tranquillity

Overall the Conservation Area is quiet and has a tranquil, village-like quality, distinct from the more urbanised feel of the northern section of Upper Penn. The presence of two schools within the area does impact upon the way in which the Conservation Area is experienced during peak drop-off and pick-up times, when the relatively narrow roads can become congested with school traffic.

Seasonal changes, such as tree cover, also have an impact upon the Conservation Area. This provides an interesting variation in the

views afforded both out and into the Conservation Area, altering its prominence within the wider landscape as tree coverage increases during the summer months.

3.3 Views

There are important views both in and out of the Conservation Area, these are marked on Figure 27. This list of views is not exhaustive and there are other incidental and planned views not listed here which will contribute positively to the way in which the Conservation Area is viewed and experienced. Development which obstructs any of these views would be detrimental to the setting of the Conservation Area.

On the approach to the Conservation Area from Penn Common and Gospel End, St Bartholomew's Church is extremely prominent, and the hilltop location of the Conservation Area is highlighted. The views from Sedgley Road are important in understanding the historic relationship between Upper Penn and the surrounding landscape. Despite its coalescence with Wolverhampton, from this viewpoint in the south, Vicarage Road (Penn) retains its sense of isolation and distinction from surrounding settlements.

When inside the Conservation Area, views toward St Bartholomew's and the wider landscape, whether incidental or planned, further this sense of seclusion from the rest of Upper Penn. Combined with the high hedgerow and country lanes that lead into the Conservation Area, the arrival at the formalised, residential appearance of Vicarage Road provides an interesting viewpoint which contrasts with the rural appearance of the wider area. This is most prominent at the junction between Pennwood Lane and Sedgley Road, where the roads narrow significantly.

A few markers, such as large chimney stacks, hint to the region's

industrial past when looking out of the Conservation Area toward the south. The decline of mining and manufacture within the region has restored much of the agricultural appearance of the wider landscape, but the few remaining structures visible along the ridge to the south are an important reminder of the recent past. Views outward from the Conservation Area toward the south positively reinforce the rural character of the area and its wider setting.

3.4 Setting

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) defines the setting of a heritage asset as:

‘The surroundings in which a heritage asset is experienced. Its extent is not fixed and may change as the asset and its surroundings evolve. Elements of a setting may make a positive or negative contribution to the significance of the asset, may affect the ability to appreciate that significance or may be neutral.’



Figure 29 St Bartholomew's Church and the Conservation Area gradually appear on the approach to Vicarage Road from Sedgley Road



Figure 30 View toward St Bartholomew's when looking east down Vicarage Road

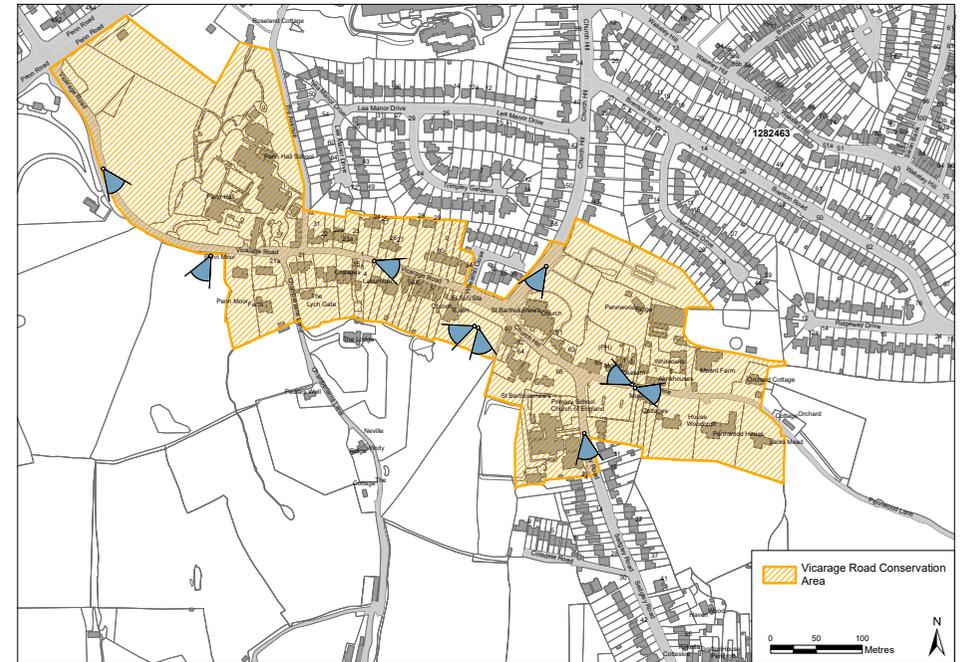


Figure 28 Important views within the Conservation Area – these are not exhaustive



Figure 31 Chimney stacks in the distance hint at the area's industrial past

All heritage assets have a setting, although the setting cannot be designated in itself because, as defined in the NPPF, its extent is not fixed and can change. The importance of setting is dependent on the relationship between a heritage asset and its setting, and the resultant contribution this relationship makes to the significance of the heritage asset. In the case of conservation areas, the setting is often a crucial component of how a conservation area is viewed or understood, affecting how its significance is experienced and appreciated. The setting of a conservation area can contrast or complement its special interest and may be linked in both tangible and less obvious ways, such as visual connections or by historic association, as well as physical links.

The setting of Vicarage Road (Penn) Conservation Area is predominantly rural, with the Conservation Area located at Wolverhampton's southern edge. Modern development has encroached upon the Conservation Area's setting to the north, yet much of the southern and eastern edges of the Conservation Area retain a rural character where the boundary of the Conservation Area adjoins open agricultural fields. The presence of the A449, Penn Road, separates the Vicarage Road (Penn) Conservation Area from development to the north west.



Figure 32 Views looking out of the Conservation Area reinforce its rural setting

Tree cover, gaps between buildings and large gardens belonging to the properties on the northern section of Vicarage Road emphasise this rural character despite the presence of twentieth-century housing within the Conservation Area's immediate setting, on Lee Manor Drive and Trimpley Gardens. This is due to a combination of the modern housing being set back (both on Vicarage Road and Trimpley Garden), the narrowness of Vicarage Road, undulating land levels and the presence of gardens which ensure that from street level, the conservation area appears self-contained. Any views looking outwards from public areas of the conservation area feature the wider landscape and green elements, and conceal the housing to the north, meaning the setting of the conservation area imposes a sense of detachment and green, natural seclusion often experienced in rural areas.

Views gained from sections of public open space within Vicarage Road (Penn) Conservation Area also reinforce the rural setting of the Conservation Area, from which wide views across an undeveloped, undulating rural landscape can be gained. The position and topography of Vicarage Road at the crest of the hill affords high visibility of the Staffordshire countryside, with the view from the church green of particular importance. From here it is possible to see Penn Common, an historic area of common grazing land, the presence of which contributed to the development of Vicarage Road.

The Conservation Area's relationship to Penn Common, to the south of the Conservation Area and accessed via Sedgley Road, contributes positively to the understanding of the Conservation Area's history and significance, and reflects the settlement's agricultural origins. The loosening of built form along Sedgley Road towards the common, combined with the topography and the lack of development to the rear of dwellings within the southern section of the Conservation Area, allow for a sense of a gradual approach to the rural landscape beyond Vicarage Road, highlighting its distinctive character comparative to its surroundings. This also occurs on Pennwood Lane. The rural setting therefore adds to the significance of the Conservation Area as it allows for an understanding of its development, providing context to the buildings within it, and linking to an agricultural heritage which is now difficult to distinguish as no working farms exist within the Conservation Area at present.

Chamberlain's Lane Conservation Area adjoins part of the southern section of Vicarage Road (Penn) Conservation Area and is part of its setting. Chamberlain's Lane is part of the South Staffordshire district and maintained by South Staffordshire Council. No appraisal document exists for the Chamberlain's Lane Conservation Area, however it forms part of the green belt and has a notable landscape character closely linked to the historic usage of the area.

Any proposed development within the setting of Vicarage Road (Penn) should respond to the character and significance of the Conservation Area, with the suitability of all proposals assessed on a case by case basis. Due consideration should be given to the risks of cumulative harm, whereby a series of small incremental changes, although not harmful in themselves, can combine to have a negative effect upon the setting of the Conservation Area. Special care should also be given to maintain important views both into and out of the Vicarage Road (Penn) Conservation Area, as the loss or diminishment of these could be damaging to the Conservation Area's significance.

Further information on setting can be found in Historic England's Good Practice advice note 'The Setting of Heritage Assets', published in December 2017. This document provides advice on how to understand and assess the setting of heritage assets and explains how setting can contribute to, or detract from, a heritage asset's significance.



Figure 33 Footpaths leading out from the Conservation Area to the surrounding countryside reinforce the rural setting of Vicarage Road (Penn)

4.0 Identification of Issues

4.1 Site, Layout and Space

Layout

Modern infill has disrupted the historic layout of Vicarage Road, merging the two focal points by the church and Penn Hall. However, this ribbon development follows the line of the road, with the lack of back-land development to the south of Vicarage Road allowing the Conservation Area to maintain a traditional village feel. Where modern development has encroached upon the Conservation Area to the north, spacious gardens and green boundaries prevent this development from being overbearing or harmful to the Conservation Area's overall significance. Maintenance of the undeveloped nature of these back-land plots is important in retaining the appearance and character of the Conservation Area, which is not as densely developed as surrounding areas to the north. Development to the rear of properties should not be supported.

Further infill would be harmful to the Conservation Area. The variety of the plot sizes and built form of the twentieth century development along Vicarage Road reflects the overall unplanned appearance of the Conservation Area and there are few sites which would be viable for further development.

Modern houses on Pennwood Lane, whilst larger than those on Vicarage Road, are set in large grounds with minimal boundary treatments, maintaining the rural feel of the Conservation Area. The positioning of properties within plots in this section of the Conservation Area, with larger properties set substantially back from the road also minimises their aesthetic intrusion on streetscapes. The redevelopment of plots on Pennwood Lane, to create a higher density of development similar to that on Vicarage Road, would disrupt the rural, loose grain of this section of the Conservation Area and would be harmful to its overall significance.

Open Spaces

Church Meadow and The Old Stag's Head Car Park provide important reprieves from development within the Conservation Area and allow for extensive views out to Penn Common below. Development of these areas should not be supported as



Figure 35 Solar Panels, whilst environmentally positive, do detract from the character of the Conservation Area. Placement of these panels to the rear of properties would lessen their negative impact upon the Conservation Area.



Figure 34 The flat roof of St Bartholomew's Primary School minimises its impact upon views out of the Conservation Area.



Figure 36 Unsympathetic signage detracts from the rural character of The Avenue



Figure 37 Unsympathetic bollards outside Penn Hall School

it would erode the rural character of the Conservation Area.

Setting

The wider setting of the Conservation Area is a positive contributor to its significance. Development which removes the Conservation Area's rural, isolated feel to the south should be discouraged and will cause indirect harm to the overall significance of Vicarage Road (Penn) Conservation Area.

4.2 Buildings

Unsympathetic materials have been introduced in to the Conservation Area which are harmful to its character and appearance. Whilst adding visual variety to the area, uPVC windows, poor boundary treatments and non-typical features, such as cladding and hanging tiles on later properties which do not reference the local vernacular, have partially diluted its character. Replacement or redesign of these elements with traditional materials, for example replacement of uPVC windows with timber framed units, is encouraged.

Expansion of St Bartholomew's Primary School has been harmful to the appearance of the Conservation Area, introducing intrusive elements such as its flat roof and the use of metal panelling as a building material. The low height of the extension to the school minimises its impact upon views out from The Old Stag's Head's car park but efforts could be made to make its overall appearance reflective of the original school building and the wider Conservation Area.

The introduction of solar panels to the front of properties, as well as satellite dishes and TV aerials, further diminishes the historic character of Vicarage Road and the removal of these elements would be positive. Further installation of additional incongruous features, such as satellite dishes, should not be supported. Solar panels are not discouraged, however care should be taken to place them in areas which are not prominent or visually dominant, such as on concealed rear roof slopes, in rear gardens or on ancillary buildings such as garages, not the primary elevation of dwellings.

Any new development should seek to reference the character of the Conservation

Area and be sympathetic in terms of form, appearance and mass. Extensions and alterations to properties should not detract from the character of the Conservation Area, instead they should seek to enhance and better reveal its significance, in line with the National Planning Policy Framework.

4.3 Public Realm

Within the public realm, maintenance of existing features is key to preserving the appearance and character of conservation areas. In some areas of the public realm, the removal or consolidation of some features would be beneficial and these are outlined below.

Street Furniture (Lamp posts, benches, signage, bins, bollards etc)

Street furniture within the Conservation Area is inconsistent. Victorian lamp posts line Vicarage Road and Pennfold Lane and contribute positively to its character. Modern lamp posts are present at the junction of Vicarage Road and Church Hill and are notably contrasting in scale and appearance. Should there be an opportunity, this should be rectified and be aesthetically improved.

Unsympathetic traffic signs detract from the Conservation Area's appearance. Efficient traffic management, through alternate methods should be employed to minimise the impact of signage in pressure points, such as around both schools. A reduction in the amount of signage, to avoid the over proliferation of incongruous elements, could also be considered.

Bollards, railings and other parking deterrents throughout the Conservation Area detract from its overall appearance due to their urbanising appearance. Rationalisation of these elements, combined with a new unified approach to traffic management would help to lessen their impact upon the overall character of Vicarage Road (Penn).

Boundary Treatments and Hard Standing

The introduction of new hard boundaries should be discouraged as it will damage the open appearance of the Conservation Area. New railings, gates, fences, high



Figure 38 Changes to hardstanding should be accompanied by a planning application, to ensure the character of the Conservation Area is not harmed as the result of any changes



masonry walls and the loss of existing trees or hedgerow are not considered appropriate. Similarly, the introduction of additional hardstanding will reduce the green appearance of the area. Changes to the landscaping at the front of properties and driveways should be avoided, due to the potential harm that could be caused by the removal of open boundaries and the introduction of inappropriate surfacing materials.

Bollards and railings, where present and necessary, are inconsistent in appearance. Around the schools the appearance of these elements detracts from the overall appearance of the Conservation Area. Consolidating their appearance to one consistent design would minimise their visual impact.

Pedestrian and Vehicular Traffic and Parking

Traffic management plans, reducing the congestion during peak periods (particularly during school pick up and drop off times) would help to preserve the character and experience of the area, which is significantly disturbed during these times. On street parking should be kept to a minimum, however this should not be at the expense of existing green spaces or gardens.

Pedestrian provision in the Conservation Area is poor and inconsistent. Whilst this does contribute to the rural feel of the Conservation Area, more consistency in the treatment of pavements should be considered, either through maintenance or the upgrading of existing footpaths.

No Article 4 Direction is currently in place to control these aspects but should be considered by the local authority as a measure to prevent unsympathetic development. Consultation the Local Planning Authority and the Local Highways Authority would also be beneficial to formally assess the traffic constraints and issues within the Conservation Area and wider locality.



5.0 Management Proposals

5.1 Positive Management: Short Term

Enforcement

Harmful development and alterations to properties both within the Conservation Area and its setting following designation has led to a dilution of Vicarage Road (Penn)'s overall character. To maintain and enhance the Conservation Area, a strong implementation of the NPPF is recommended.

In Conservation Areas, permitted development rights are more restricted, therefore planning consent may be required for minor works such as boundary wall changes and installation of satellite dishes which would not otherwise require planning permission. The local planning authority must be informed before trees over a certain size are lopped, topped or felled. In order to protect the character of the Vicarage Road (Penn) Conservation Area it is recommended that an Article 4 Direction is introduced to bring in further controls, as set out in sections 4.2-4.3 above.

Any application affecting the Conservation Area, or its setting will also need to be accompanied by a thorough Heritage Statement. The Heritage Statements should reference this appraisal document and assess the impact (positive or negative) upon the character and significance of the Conservation Area. The Conservation Officer of the Local Authority will then be able to review the Heritage Statement, assess the merits of the proposed scheme and advise the Planning Officer as to the acceptability of the scheme from a heritage perspective.

In order to ensure the special interest of the Conservation Area is not diminished through poor design, planning applications which fail to enhance or preserve the special interest of the Conservation Area should be refused. Failure to comply with planning permission, eg. not building to the permitted plans, is not permissible and the Local Planning Authority should take appropriate enforcement action when this occurs.

Local Listing

A locally listed building is one that is not statutorily protected (ie not Grade I, II* or II Listed), but is designated by the Local Authority because it is deemed to be of historic

or architectural significance and makes a contribution to local character and distinctiveness. Locally listed buildings are therefore worthy of protection and conservation in their own right. At present none of the buildings within the Conservation Area are locally listed; undesigned buildings of particular historic interest within the Conservation Area are highlighted in section 2.2. Further study of each building highlighted should be conducted prior to their inclusion within the Wolverhampton Local List.

Tree Management

Effective tree management, including Tree Preservation Orders, is integral to maintain the sylvan, rural appearance of the Conservation Area. Any reduction or removal of trees or established hedgerow should be accompanied by the relevant planning application. The Local Authority has a duty to effectively monitor these applications and ensure that any works are not harmful to the Conservation Area.

Residents also have a responsibility to maintain trees and hedgerows on their properties. Details of resident legal rights concerning overhanging trees can be obtained from the Local Authority.

Key Features for Retention and Reinstatement

Church Meadow and The Old Stag's Head car park are the only areas of public open space within the conservation area and need to be retained. Development of these sites would be harmful to the significance of the Conservation Area.

Improved Understanding and Awareness

Information set out in this document provides an overview of the significance of the Conservation Area and the issues which will both harm or enhance its significance. A clear understanding of the benefits and constraints of designated conservation area status will be beneficial to both residents, planners and developers to maintain and improve the overall character of the area, whilst ensuring that it remains a pleasant place to live in.



5.2 Positive Management: Long Term

Future Policy

Future policy outlining the long-term protection afforded to the Conservation Area could be outlined in a Supplementary Planning Document for Vicarage Road (Penn). This will show how the Local Authority intends to manage the area in the long term.

Design Guidance

To guide future development, the Local Planning Authority should consider producing a Design Guide for residents. This could provide information regarding appropriate materials, details and features which could be reinstated to enhance the overall significance of the Conservation Area. This could provide examples of how to design appropriate extensions to dwellings, make changes to boundaries, windows or doors and other minor alterations.

Article 4 Directions

An Article 4 Direction is made by the Local Planning Authority to restrict the scope of permitted development rights and can increase the protection of designated and non-designated heritage assets and their settings. If an Article 4 Direction is in effect, a planning application will be needed for any development that would otherwise have been permitted development. Article 4 directions are therefore a useful control in relation to any works that could threaten the character or special interest of a conservation area.

An Article 4 Direction removing permitted development rights for the removal or alteration of front boundary treatments and the creation of areas of hardstanding at the front of properties could be particularly beneficial within the Vicarage Road (Penn) Conservation Area. The addition of satellite dishes and other unsympathetic development could also be controlled and prevented by an Article 4 direction, to ensure the significance of the Conservation Area is maintained.

Monitoring and Review

The long-term monitoring of the Conservation Area is recommended in order to assess any gradual changes or cumulative detrimental harm to the character of the area. Review documents assessing and identifying any threats to the character and special interest of the Conservation Area would be a useful tool in the long-term management of the Heritage Asset. This document should be updated every 5-10 years.

6.0 Appendices

6.1 Bibliography

Historic England	2017	The Setting of Heritage Assets(Advice Note 3)
Historic England	2018	Conservation Area Appraisal, Designation and Management (Advice Note 1)
Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government	2021	National Planning and Policy Framework
Wolverhampton Borough Council	1976	Vicarage Road and The Woodlands Conservation Areas Penn
Nikolaus Pevsner	1974	The Buildings of England: Staffordshire

6.2 Legislation and Planning Policy

LEGISLATION/POLICY/GUIDANCE	DOCUMENT	SECTION/POLICY
Primary Legislation	Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990	66: General duty as respects listed buildings in exercise of planning functions. 72: General duty as respects conservation areas in exercise of planning functions.
National Planning Policy	National Planning Policy Framework (July 2021) DCLG	Section 16; Annex 2
National Guidance	National Planning Practice Guidance (2019) DCLG	ID: 18a
National Guidance	Historic England (2017) Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning Note 3 (Second Edition): The Setting of Heritage Assets	
National Guidance	English Heritage (2008) Conservation Principles, Policies and Guidance.	
Local Policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Black Country Core Strategy (February 2011) Wolverhampton Unitary Development Plan (2006) 	



6.3 Glossary (National Planning Policy Framework)

Term	Description
Archaeological interest	There will be archaeological interest in a heritage asset if it holds, or potentially may hold, evidence of past human activity worthy of expert investigation at some point. Heritage assets with archaeological interest are the primary source of evidence about the substance and evolution of places, and of the people and cultures that made them.
Conservation (for heritage policy)	The process of maintaining and managing change to a heritage asset in a way that sustains and, where appropriate, enhances its significance.
Designated heritage asset	A World Heritage Site, Scheduled Monument, Listed Building, Protected Wreck Site, Registered Park and Garden, Registered Battlefield or Conservation Area designated under the relevant legislation.
Heritage asset	A building, monument, site, place, area or landscape identified as having a degree of significance meriting consideration in planning decisions, because of its heritage interest. Heritage asset includes designated heritage assets and assets identified by the local planning authority (including local listing).
Historic environment	All aspects of the environment resulting from the interaction between people and places through time, including all surviving physical remains of past human activity, whether visible, buried or submerged, and landscaped and planted or managed flora.
Historic environment record	Information services that seek to provide access to comprehensive and dynamic resources relating to the historic environment of a defined geographic area for public benefit and use.
Setting of a heritage asset	The surroundings in which a heritage asset is experienced. Its extent is not fixed and may change as the asset and its surroundings evolve. Elements of a setting may make a positive or negative contribution to the significance of an asset, may affect the ability to appreciate that significance or may be neutral.
Significance (for heritage policy)	The value of a heritage asset to this and future generations because of its heritage interest. That interest may be archaeological, architectural, artistic or historic. Significance derives not only from a heritage asset's physical presence, but also from its setting.

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