

# **ALMELEY CONSERVATION AREA**

## **APPRAISAL**

**June 2006**



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## **1. Introduction**

- 1.1 Almeley is a small village lying between the market town of Kington and Hereford City. It lies off of the main road network and is reached by a series of minor roads. Sitting on a plain rising from the River Wye, it has commanding views to the south overlooking that river's floodplain. Topography and other natural features curtail views in other directions. The hamlet of Almeley Wootton lies to the north
- 1.2 Almeley Conservation Area was designated in 1987 by the former Leominster District Council. It contains the south western portion of the village, extending westwards to incorporate the approaches to the village from that direction and northwards to include Almeley Wootton.
- 1.3 The designation of a conservation area is no longer considered appropriate as an end in itself. For the designation to be meaningful the process requires the preparation of an appraisal to define what is special, thereby warranting the status of a conservation area. This should also form the basis for making decisions about the area's future ensuring its character and appearance is taken properly into account.
- 1.4 An appraisal has now been carried out to review its special qualities; in particular, in the light of changes since the conservation area was originally designated. The scope of the appraisal has included reviewing whether new areas might be added to or some parts removed from the designation. At this stage, however, any proposals for boundary changes are put forward as the basis for further discussion and consultation. Any decision whether to change the boundary of Almeley Conservation Area will be taken at a later stage in association with the consideration of any management proposals.

## **2. Planning Policy Context**

- 2.1 There is a considerable amount of policy published by a range of sources about the use of and approach to designating conservation areas. A bibliography of useful publications is given at the end of this document.
- 2.2 Herefordshire Unitary Development Plan (UDP) sets out Herefordshire Council's planning policies. These policies will influence how development proceeds throughout the County including within the village of Almeley.
- 2.3 The UDP contains policies setting out criteria for designating and reviewing conservation areas (Policy HBA5) and how planning applications for development within such areas will be considered (Policy HBA6). The purpose of setting criteria against which the designation of a conservation area will be judged is to ensure consistency of approach and help avoid the inclusion of areas that would not be in keeping with the special character of the area. A conservation area is an area of special architectural or historic interest the character and appearance of which

should be conserved or enhanced. The criteria against which the importance of the area is judged are reflected in the analysis that follows in this document.

- 2.4 Almeley is defined in the UDP as a 'Main Village' where residential development can take place on allocated and windfall sites within a defined settlement boundary (Policy H4). Part of Almeley's settlement boundary also falls within its Conservation Area. However there is no site allocated for development within the village. The release of any windfall sites would need to comply with design and other policies set out in the UDP.
- 2.5 Almeley Wootton is not defined as a main village or smaller settlement for the purposes of the UDP. Any residential development within it would fall to be determined under Policy H7, which sets out very limited exceptions to the principle that no new development would be permitted.

### **3. Summary of Special Interest**

- 3.1 Almeley Conservation Area includes the historic core of Almeley Village and the outlying settlement of Almeley Wootton. Almeley dates to at least the 11<sup>th</sup> Century and includes the medieval church and churchyard cross, and the earthworks of the motte and bailey Almeley Castle. A second motte and bailey castle, Oldcastle Twt, is located in The Batch. Traces of both the medieval village layout and the open field system are discernible. Standing buildings and present-day boundaries indicate expansion and changing patterns of land ownership through the post-medieval period in Almeley Village, Almeley Wootton and The Batch. Industrialisation during the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, in the form brick and tile manufacture and railway infrastructure is also evident. The history of the two settlements remains visible through their settlement patterns, buildings and other artefacts together with the surrounding landscape, especially that to the north and west. These historic and architectural features are of special interest and warrant safeguarding through being designated a Conservation Area.

### **4. Location and Setting**

- 4.1 The conservation area is located approximately 12 miles (19km) north-west of Hereford City. It includes part of the village of Almeley, part of the hamlet of Almeley Wootton, and a narrow ribbon of land known as The Batch that links the two settlements.
- 4.2 The village of Almeley lies on the east side of the Wootton Brook on a gentle south facing slope, 125m above Ordnance Datum (OD). From this location there are extensive views of Hay Bluff and the Brecon Beacons to the west. The plan form is that of a linear village associated with an ancient monument, Almeley Castle. Almeley Wootton, a dispersed hamlet, is located half a mile (0.75km) to the north on level ground at a slightly higher elevation (140m OD). The Batch is a narrow, steep-sided valley with a fast-flowing stream. A number of cottages with gardens are located in this small valley in a ribbon-like development. The conservation area is located in an area of mixed farming. The Batch, however, is wooded with abundant undergrowth.

4.3 The underlying bedrock of the area consists of the Raglan Mudstone Formation of the Lower Old Red Sandstone. This material has long been used in the construction of a wide range of buildings and boundary walls throughout the area. The bedrock is overlain by deep, well-drained, coarse loamy soils (typical argillic brown earths) that support cereals and short-term pasture, and some fruit, potatoes and hops. In The Batch, superficial geological deposits include sand and clay suitable for brick and tile making.

## **5. Historic Development and Archaeology**

- 5.1 The place name, Almeley, is of Old English origin. The suffix, *ley*, originally referred to a clearing in, or on the edge of, woodland, and later came to mean pasture or meadow. The prefix is believed to mean elm, and may refer to the earlier woodlands of the locality.
- 5.2 The Domesday Book of 1086 records that the manor of Almeley (*Elmelei*) was held by Roger de Lacy. The manor comprised 120 to 160 hectares (300 to 400 acres) of arable land. No woodland was recorded, and no details of the local population were given. This may imply that the land had been cleared for settlement only recently, or had recently been re-occupied after having been laid waste as a result of border disturbances.
- 5.3 The church and castle at Almeley are likely to date from the early years of the 12<sup>th</sup> Century. The plan form of the site, a motte and bailey castle with the church adjacent to the bailey, is typical in this area of the Marches. It is likely that a settlement quickly developed near the site. The principle axis of the medieval settlement appears to be north-south, based on the evidence of extant property boundaries (also recorded on the Almeley Parish Tithe Map of 1840). Occupation would have extended outwards from the centre in a series of planned burgage plots. The long, narrow plots would have faced onto the road, and may have extended north as far as West View and south as far as Bridge Farm. Castle Frome farmhouse, located on the west side of the Kinnersley road between the castle and Bridge Farm, incorporates a medieval cruck framed structure that may have originally been a 14<sup>th</sup> Century hall.
- 5.4 The presence of a medieval stone cross in the churchyard implies that a market was held in the village. The market may have been located on the section of road immediately east of the churchyard since the roadway becomes narrower to the north and south of this location.
- 5.5 Contemporary field boundaries within, and to the east of, the conservation area, are indicative of the enclosure of the medieval open field system, mainly during the 18<sup>th</sup> Century. Spearmarsh Common, an open space just outside the conservation area, was formerly an important component of medieval agricultural organisation.
- 5.6 As the medieval period progressed, the strategic and economic significance of the castle declined, while the role of Almeley Manor increased. This timber-framed house dates to the early 16<sup>th</sup> Century and is evidence of the expansion of the settlement to the west.

- 5.7 Expansion of the village to the east was probably underway by the late 17<sup>th</sup> Century as a result of encroachment of common land associated with the parliamentary enclosure of open fields. The pattern of encroachment, in the form of cottages and gardens, and paddocks is still evident in the layout of plots around the edges of Spearmarsh Common. Further 17<sup>th</sup> Century development probably included the construction of a water mill (demolished) on the Wootton Brook to the south of the castle, and of a stone and timber-framed barn (Church House Barn) to the east of the church.
- 5.8 Evidence of 18<sup>th</sup> or early 19<sup>th</sup> Century development can be seen in the centre of the village. Located on the north side of the church is the brick-built Almeley House, and on the east side, the rendered Church House. The construction of these houses may have followed the sub-division of medieval burgage plots, resulting in the present layout of building plots. The Bell Inn, a two –storey stone building, also dates to this period. Further, a number of brick-built 18<sup>th</sup> or 19<sup>th</sup> Century cottages occupy earlier plots on the edge of Spearmarsh Common.
- 5.9 During the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, a new vicarage, now known as The Old Vicarage, was built north of Almeley House to replace an earlier vicarage. In 1874, a railway line was opened between Kington and Eardisley, replacing an earlier horse-drawn tramway used to transport coal, slate and building stone. The line passed Almeley to the west of the Wootton Brook. A small stone station and platform were constructed at this location, and a bridge with stone piers carried the line over the road that approaches Almeley from the west. The railway line was closed in 1962, and the track dismantled. The station and bridge piers, however, are still standing. Residential expansion in Almeley during the 20<sup>th</sup> Century occurred on the north and east sides of the village, mainly outside the conservation area.
- 5.10 A second motte and bailey site, Oldcastle (or Batch) Twt , is located 500m north of the village at The Batch (Old English *baece*: 'stream-valley'). A former settlement may have been located in a bailey (enclosure) immediately north of the motte. The relationship between Almeley Castle and Oldcastle Twt, and whether they were occupied simultaneously, is not well understood.
- 5.11 A timber-framed house located near the southern end of The Batch may represent the occupation of this area in the 17<sup>th</sup> Century. A number of small cottages are located in The Batch to the north of Oldcastle Twt. The cottages appear to date to the later 17<sup>th</sup> to 18<sup>th</sup> Century, and may represent encroachment of the commons following the enclosure of open fields.
- 5.12 Industrial activity in the form of brick and tile making was undertaken in The Batch during the 19<sup>th</sup> Century. A brickkiln was located south of the Oldcastle Twt taking advantage of local sand and clay deposits. The railway and nearby station were used to transport the finished products.
- 5.13 In the hamlet of Almeley Wootton (wootton, Old English *wudu-tun*: settlement near a wood), the oldest building is Summer House, a timber-framed farmhouse dating to 16<sup>th</sup> Century with evidence of an earlier, medieval, hall. The appearance of the building was altered considerably

during the 19<sup>th</sup> Century with the addition of brick infill and a porch. Adjacent to the farmhouse is a barn of weatherboarded timber frame construction, dated to the late 17<sup>th</sup> or early 18<sup>th</sup> Century.

- 5.14 Earthworks in fields immediately north and east of the conservation area, in the form of building platforms or tofts, indicate that the settlement was previously more extensive and probably of medieval date. A house and garden occupies the site of a former toft. Contemporary field boundaries in the surrounding area indicate the enclosure of earlier common arable fields, and the nearby Green Common was a component of the medieval open field system.
- 5.15 The Friends' Meeting House, a 17<sup>th</sup> Century timber-framed building, is indicative of a local population large enough to support a non-conformist congregation at this time. The land on which the meeting house stands was part of the Summer House farm estate.
- 5.16 The Malthouse, an 18<sup>th</sup> Century building of sandstone and brick with a timber frame, stands on a large plot on the east side of Wootton Lane. The building is evidence of former commercial activities (brewing) in Amley Wootton. During the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, this plot was sub-divided. At this time, a Methodist Chapel was constructed in brick. Some years later, a Victorian villa-style residence was built, also of brick.
- 5.17 During the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, further development took place with the construction of agricultural buildings at Summer House farm.

## **6. Spatial Analysis AWAITS COMPLETION**

### Character and Interrelationship of Spaces

- 6.1 The relationship between the historic core of Almeley, the hamlet of Almeley Wootton and the landscape to the north and west of the main village reflects a pattern of historic development that is likely to have comprised small hamlets surrounding the main village. The Batch contributes a unique feature within this pattern linking the two settlements and emphasising their rural character.
- 6.2 The historic core of Almeley has developed around a staggered crossroad. The gradual increase in building density as you approach from the west avoids creating a hard edge to the village from this direction, enabling countryside and settlement to merge rather than jolt from one to the other. From the south there is a similar relationship that also emphasises the village's links with its agricultural hinterland as you pass by two working farms just outside the settlement boundary. The density of development within Almeley's historic core is low overall yet variable, generally increasing from west to east. To the west of the road passing north south through this historic core the properties tend to be larger sitting in their own gardens and with large gaps in the frontage. To the east of this road density is higher: the irregular juxtaposition of the older properties also gives way to more modern development both within and outside the Conservation Area boundary.
- 6.3 Almeley Wootton has its own particular character, being that of a working hamlet with a mix of buildings of different uses in close proximity. Narrow

roads and mature hedges contribute to a sense of enclosure and intimacy.

6.4 Settlement in The Batch followed a ribbon-like development of small cottages and gardens spread along the narrow valley bottom. The steep valley sides enclose the plots and thick vegetation promotes a sense of privacy and remoteness.

### Key Views and Vistas

6.4 The following are important views

- The approach to Almeley Village from the south passes The Whitten Farm and the old Eardisley road (disused) on the west side, and Bridge Farm barn on the east, and continues as a sunken road (holloway) enclosed by mature hedges, opening out quite suddenly at the centre of the village where St Mary's Church provides a focal point surrounded by a broad churchyard.
- The approach to Almeley Village from the east focuses the view on Almeley churchyard enclosed by stone walls and mature hedges.
- The approach to Almeley village from the west focuses the view towards the small deeply cut channel of the Wootton Brook framed between the massive stone piers of the dismantled railway bridge, now covered with climbing plants and overhanging bushes.
- From St Mary's churchyard there is an impressive vista to the south-west of wooded hills and distant mountains.

## **7. Character Analysis**

### Character Areas

7.1 In this appraisal, Almeley Conservation Area will be discussed in terms of three character areas. Each character area reflects a particular aspect of the area's development, and all combine to create the total architectural and historic significance of the conservation area. The character areas are identified as:

- Almeley Village
- The Batch
- Almeley Wootton

### ***Almeley Village***

7.2 Almeley Village is the southern-most part of the conservation area, and the largest of the three character areas. This area is predominantly rural; it includes several large fields given over to pasture, and also includes the oldest part of the village. Within the area there are seven listed buildings and one scheduled ancient monument.

7.3 Almeley Castle (Scheduled Ancient Monument) survives as an earthwork monument only. The earliest standing building is the parish church of St Mary (Grade I Listed). The stone building dates to the 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> Century.



- 7.4 The earliest secular building, the Castle Frome barn, dates possibly to the 14<sup>th</sup> Century. This timber-framed building of cruck construction may have been built as a hall. The barn is now part of Castle Frome house (Grade II Listed), which was altered and extended during the 17<sup>th</sup> Century. Other timber-framed houses, dating to the 16<sup>th</sup> or 17<sup>th</sup> Century, include Almeley Manor (Grade II\* Listed), The Old Shop and Manor Cottage. Agricultural buildings (barns) dating to the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> Century were built of sandstone rubble with weatherboarded timber frame and pitched roof. These include Church House Barn and Bridge Farm Barn (both Grade II Listed).
- 7.5 Changes in design and materials are observed in houses dating to the 18<sup>th</sup> or early 19<sup>th</sup> Century. Almeley House (Grade II Listed) is dated to the late 18<sup>th</sup> early 19<sup>th</sup> Century. This imposing three-storey house is brick built. It is symmetrical in design with a central gable and outer hipped roofs. Church House appears to be of 18<sup>th</sup> or early 19<sup>th</sup> Century construction. This Georgian two-storey house is symmetrical in design with rendered front elevation where the central bay breaks forward, and with a shallow hipped roof.
- 7.6 Three notable 19<sup>th</sup> Century buildings include The Old Vicarage, The Whittern Farmhouse and the railway station. They are built of stone and slate. The availability and popularity of these materials is due to the construction of the railway (and the earlier tramway).
- 7.7 The earthworks marking the site of Almeley Castle lie at the centre of character area. The earthworks take the form of an impressive motte (earthen mound) surrounded by a wide ditch. On the north side of the motte lies the bailey, an open area formerly surrounded by a ditch and bank. On the east side of the castle is the site of two medieval fishponds originally fed by the Wootton Brook. The parish church and churchyard lie immediately to the north, on higher ground. The church and tower are built of sandstone rubble with sandstone dressings and stone slate roofs. The sandstone base and shaft of a cross (Grade II Listed, possibly of 14<sup>th</sup> Century date), surmounted by a short oak shaft (17<sup>th</sup> Century), is located in the churchyard.
- 7.8 The church and tower provide a focal point for the area. At this location, a sense of space is emphasised by sweeping views to the south-east, over the tops of trees lining the Wootton Brook, to distant hills. To the south, the view is punctuated by the wooded motte. To the east and north, however, there is a sense of enclosure.
- 7.9 Three buildings crowd onto the Kinnersley road to the east of the churchyard; all are now residential premises. The northern-most building is the 17<sup>th</sup> Century Church House Barn. The southern-most, Motte House, is a former public house built of brick and stone with a steep pitched roof. It is of at least 19<sup>th</sup> Century date, but has been altered. Between the two is Church House (18<sup>th</sup> to early 19<sup>th</sup> Century).
- 7.10 To the north of the churchyard is Almeley House. The house stands immediately behind a high brick wall with wrought iron gates and overgrown by abundant foliage.

- 7.11 North of Church House Barn, houses on the Kinnersley road are more widely spaced. The most prominent is The Old Shop, located on the east side of the road. This house is of 17<sup>th</sup> Century date or earlier. Exposed timbers on the north gable indicate that the building has been enlarged several times. A flight of steps leads to a doorway on the west (street) side. Further north, on the edge of the character area, is The Old Vicarage, a large stone-built residence constructed c. 1837. The vicarage stands in extensive grounds and is effectively shielded from public view by mature trees and shrubs.
- 7.12 South of Motte House, the area has a very rural character. The Kinnersley road in this area is a deeply cut hollow way with pasture on either side (including the castle earthworks) bordered by mature hedges. On the west side of the road stands Castle Frome farmhouse. Outside the house is a cast-iron pump, probably of 19<sup>th</sup> Century date.
- 7.13 Two working farms are located at the southern end of the character area. On the east side of the Kinnersley road is Bridge Farm with its Grade II Listed barn. On the west side of the road is The Whittern Farm on the old Eardisley road (disused). The farmhouse is a symmetrical two-storey stone building with a fairly steep hipped roof, probably of late 19<sup>th</sup> Century date.
- 7.14 One of the most prominent buildings in the conservation area is Almeley Manor, located several hundred metres west of Almeley House. This two-storey house is timber-framed with brick infill, and with a two-storey porch at the central bay of the south facing elevation. The building is probably of 16<sup>th</sup> Century date, with later additions. The house and grounds are surrounded by agricultural land. To the south, an area of sheep pasture falls quite steeply to the Wootton Brook. A lynchet (terrace) following the contour of the slope indicates that at least part of this area was previously arable.
- 7.15 The course of the dismantled railway line extends along the western edge of the character area. The small stone railway station and platform are located alongside, and the stone piers of the dismantled railway bridge are located a short distance to the north. The station building is presently unoccupied and the area is predominantly agricultural (pasture).
- 7.16 Two types of boundary treatment are characteristic of the area. In the vicinity of the parish church and Almeley Manor, sandstone rubble walls are prevalent. Elsewhere, mature hedges are used, particularly as field boundaries. Some exceptions can be seen, including the high brick wall in front of Almeley House, iron railings between the castle field (used as pasture) and the extended graveyard, and wooden railings at The Whittern Farm.
- 7.17 A number of unlisted buildings and structures make a positive contribution to the special architectural and historical interest of the conservation area. It is proposed that the following be considered for designation as buildings of local interest:
- The Old Shop: 17<sup>th</sup> Century or earlier, single storey with attic, sandstone rubble and timber-framed with brick infill, roof raised and enlarged several times;

- Manor Cottage: 17<sup>th</sup> Century or earlier, single storey, timber-framed with brick infill, modern extension, replacement windows;
- Church House; 18<sup>th</sup> or early 19<sup>th</sup> Century, two-storey house, symmetrical front elevation where the central bay breaks forward, rendered, shallow hipped roof;
- The Bells Inn: 18<sup>th</sup> or early 19<sup>th</sup> Century, two-storey, stone built, pitched roof with slate tiles, extended;
- Motte House: 19<sup>th</sup> Century or earlier, former inn, two-storey, brick and stone construction, steep pitched roof, altered and extended;
- Railway Station, platform and bridge piers: 19<sup>th</sup> Century, stone built, station is single storey, brick stack, pitched roof, slate tiles, outshut building partially demolished.

7.18 Several other features, including street furniture, add to the rural character of the area and promote a sense of continuity. These include:

- A war memorial: a statue of a soldier set on a plinth in a small garden with iron railings, located near the parish church;
- A wooden bench with iron frame, and a cast iron pump and trough, on the grass verge near Almeley House;
- Two cast iron direction signs attached to Motte House;
- A 1930s Automobile Association enamelled sign attached to Church House Barn;
- A red cast iron telephone box, near The Old Rectory.

### ***The Batch***

7.19 This narrow, steep-sided valley with abundant tree and plant growth is, today, a Special Wildlife Site. Its nature conservation value stems from it being a wooded dingle with rocky outcrops, and a stream with adjoining wet areas. Notable species present include yew, opposite-leaved golden saxifrage and several species of fern. There is one Scheduled Ancient Monument within the character area but no Listed Buildings. A public footpath with several small bridges follows the valley floor beside a fast-flowing stream. A driveway gives access to Batch Cottage from the south end of The Batch. A trackway gives access to other cottages in the valley from the north end.

7.20 The landscape of The Batch has the appearance of 'Wild Nature', and a sense of intimacy and enclosure is pervasive. The Oldcastle Twt (Scheduled Monument) survives as a small steep-sided hill thickly covered in trees and shrubs with streams flowing around two sides. Very little obvious evidence remains of the industrial activities of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century.

7.21 Cottages and gardens dotted along the valley add to the charm of the character area. They also promote a feeling of remoteness that may bring to mind the hardship of rural life in previous centuries, particularly at the time of the enclosure of common open fields.)

7.22 Several unlisted cottages make a positive contribution to the special architectural and historical interest of the conservation area. It is proposed that the following be considered for designation as buildings of local interest:

- Batch Cottage: 17<sup>th</sup> Century, single-storey with dormer windows, timber-framed, steep pitched roof, may have originally been thatched, altered and extended;
- Ross Cottage: 17<sup>th</sup> or 18<sup>th</sup> Century, two-storey, sandstone rubble and light timber frame, stone chimney at north gable, steep pitched roof, may have originally been thatched.

### ***Almeley Wootton***

7.23 Almeley Wootton is the northern-most part of the conservation area, and the smallest of the three character areas. It consists of a cluster of buildings—residential, agricultural and ecclesiastical—set in an agricultural landscape that extends beyond the conservation area. The character area contains five listed buildings or features.

7.24 The character of the area is essentially rural. There are, moreover, no broad vistas or focal point. The narrow country roads lined by mature hedges generate a sense of intimacy and enclosure. Generally, the buildings are effectively screened by trees and hedges, and can only be seen from the immediate vicinity.

7.25 The most prominent building is Summer House (Grade II Listed). From the east, its gables can be seen just above the hedgerows. This large, two-storey farmhouse is of timber-framed construction with brick infill, and with a brick wall at the main entrance to the site. The cobbled yard in front of the farmhouse contributes significantly to the historic setting of the buildings. The Friends Meeting House (Grade II\* Listed) stands nearby. This timber-framed house continues to play an important role in the historic landscape Almeley Wootton.

7.26 The Malthouse (Grade II Listed) stands opposite the Summer House farm site. This single-storey building, with 19<sup>th</sup> Century cast iron pump and mature hedges and plantings, is fairly unobtrusive. The sandstone rubble boundary wall has an attractive texture that, together with its overhanging plants, enhances the rustic appeal of area.

7.27 On the north-east side of the area is an unexpected Victorian influence. The red-brick Methodist Chapel and Ladylift Villa, both with polychrome dressings and brick boundary walls, add to a sense of historical continuity.

7.28 The characteristic boundary treatments of this area are mature hedges and sandstone rubble walls. Brick walls can also be seen at Summer House, the Methodist Chapel and Ladylift Villa. At several locations, flowers have been planted along boundaries, and shrubs overhang walls. All contribute to the rustic charm of the character area.

7.29 Two unlisted buildings or structures make a positive contribution to the special architectural and historical interest of the conservation area. It is proposed that the following be considered for designation as buildings of local interest:

- Methodist Church: 19<sup>th</sup> Century, brick with sandstone and polychrome brick dressings, steep pitched roof, brick boundary wall at front entrance;
- Telephone Box: 1930s, cast iron, painted red, K6 design by George Gilbert Scott

7.30 Several items of street furniture add to the rural character of the area and promote a sense of continuity. These include:

- The red cast iron 1930s telephone box, near The Malthouse;
- A red cast iron Victorian post box, set in the boundary wall of Summer House.

### Prevalent Building Materials and Local Details

7.31 The buildings of Almeley are constructed of two vernacular styles and materials. In Almeley village there is a concentration of stone buildings that would appear to date from the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries although the church is much earlier. The other style which is predominant throughout the area is that of timber framed buildings which follow the English vernacular developments from the 15<sup>th</sup> century onwards although there is possibly some Welsh influence due to its proximity to the Welsh border. The occasional brick building with typical 19<sup>th</sup> century detailing can be found in both Almeley and Almeley Wootton.

## **8. Pressures and Capacity**

8.1 Only a small proportion of Almeley Conservation Area comprises buildings and their curtilages, and an even smaller proportion sits within Almeley's settlement boundary. No particularly unusual pressures for development appear to exist as a consequence. Nevertheless the density of development within the Conservation Area is lower than that within the village development outside. The character of this part of the conservation area is formed significantly by its present density and there is no capacity to accommodate other than minor extensions to properties where these can satisfy the test of maintaining the character and appearance of the area, or such other requirements, for example in relation to Listed buildings.

## **9. Issues**

### ***Boundaries***

- Spearmarsh Common, in the eastern part of the village, is an important open space today. The common was a significant component of the medieval farming system. Encroachment of the common by cottages and gardens probably took place during the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> Centuries, and the pattern of encroachment is still evident today in the layout of houses and gardens, and paddocks. A number of 18<sup>th</sup> or 19<sup>th</sup> Century cottages occupy original plots. It is suggested that consideration be given to including this part of the village in the conservation area.

- In the southern part of the conservation area, the boundary:
  - (i) crosses a field to the east of the Eardisley Road
  - (ii) cuts through Bridge Farm
  - (iii) crosses a field south of The Whittern Farm.

It is suggested that the boundary here be re-aligned to follow recognisable boundaries without any significant loss to the conservation area.

- On the north side of the village a small part of a housing development encroaches the conservation area. This development post-dates the designation of the conservation area in 1987. It is suggested that consideration be given to re-aligning the boundary to exclude this small area of modern housing, which is not in character with the conservation area. At this time, consideration should be given to including in the conservation area the Victorian coach house of the Old Vicarage.
- In the northern part of the conservation area is the hamlet of Almeley Wootton, a shrunken medieval settlement. It is suggested that consideration be given to re-aligning the boundary of the conservation area to include Green Common, and The Green house and water pump.
- The boundary in the vicinity of the Bell Public House was defined before the houses at Bells Orchard were built. There is some confusion over the actual alignment of the boundary at this point. The opportunity should be taken to clarify the boundary in the vicinity of Bells Orchard, to include the Bells Public House and all its curtilage, and to follow a realistic and rational boundary that is visible on the ground.

### ***Buildings at Risk***

- Summer House (Grade II Listed), Almeley Wootton: This building appears structurally sound as in fair condition but shows some signs of a lack of general maintenance, including paintwork, some slipped tiles, the stack on the north-east side tilts slightly, some re-pointing required. The building may be unoccupied. How might the future of this building be assured?

### ***Parking***

Two public buildings are located on the south side of Spearmarsh Common, Almeley Primary School and the village hall. Both are likely to attract large numbers of vehicles as a result of parents picking up their children and people attending functions. It is suggested that consideration be given to providing additional or alternative parking facilities that do not detract from the character of the area.

### **Sources**

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### **Maps**

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Almeley Parish Tithe Map, 1840.

## **Appendix 1: List of Heritage Assets**

### ***Listed Buildings***

Grade I: Buildings of national importance and exceptional interest (approximately two percent of all listed buildings).

- Church of St Mary, Almeley

Grade II\*: Particularly important buildings of more than special interest (approximately four percent of all listed buildings).

- Almeley Manor, Almeley
- Friends' Meeting House, Almeley Wootton

Grade II: Buildings of Special Interest

- Churchyard Cross, Almeley
- Almeley House, Almeley
- Pump 20 yards east-south-east of Almeley House
- Barn attached to north side of Bridge Farmhouse, Almeley
- Castle Frome, Almeley
- Pump 3 yards north of Castle Frome
- Church House Barn, Almeley
- The Malthouse, Almeley Wootton
- Summer Wootton, Almeley Wootton
- Barn 10 yards west of Summer House

### ***Scheduled Monuments***

- Oldcastle Twt
- Almeley Castle

### ***Herefordshire Sites and Monuments Record***

- Churchyard Cross, Almeley
- Manor House, Almeley
- Almeley Castle
- Oldcastle Twt, The Batch
- Vaynor House, Almeley
- Castle Frome, Almeley
- Summer House, Almeley Wootton
- Fishponds, Almeley Castle
- St Mary's Church, Almeley
- Neolithic Axe (find), Almeley
- Romano-British Pottery (find), Almeley
- Post-medieval House, Almeley
- Shrunken Village, Almeley
- Mill (site), Almeley



- Church House, Almeley
- Almeley Station, Almeley
- The Vicarage, Almeley
- Primitive Methodist Chapel, Almeley Wootton
- Friends' Meeting House, Almeley Wootton
- Brick Kilns, The Batch
- Mill Leat, Almeley
- The Malthouse, Almeley Wootton