



HANDLEY

CONSERVATION AREA APPRAISAL JANUARY 2008



Maps can be seen on the following link: www.chester.gov.uk/conservationareareview

HANDLEY CONSERVATION AREA APPRAISAL - JANUARY 2008

DESIGNATIONS

Conservation Area	First designated in 1973, reviewed in 1996
Listed Buildings	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Church of All Saints (II*)</i>, <i>Whitchurch Road East</i>• <i>Langford House (II)</i>, <i>Whitchurch Road East</i>• <i>Oak Cottage (II)</i>, <i>Whitchurch Road West</i>
Scheduled Monuments	None
Registered Parks and Gardens	None
Archaeological Priority	None
SSSI	None
Article 4 directions	None
Regulation 7 directions	None
Any other designations	
Area of Special County Value (ASCV)	None
Site of Biological Interest (SBI)	None
Site of Nature Conservation Value (SNCV)	None
Area of Nature Conservation Value (ANCV)	None
Other	None

HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

Handley is listed in the Domesday Survey as Hanlei (1086 DB), Hanleye in 1182 and finally Handley around the beginning of 18th century. This name would mean “high clearing”, from *heah* and *leah*.¹

Handley is an agricultural settlement of medieval origin, built along the major road linking Chester to Whitchurch. Its fortune seems to have been closely bound on one side to its agricultural use with the majority of the land formerly in estate ownership. On the other side, its strategic situation along the main



Whitchurch Road, Handley

road linking Chester to Whitchurch seems to have contributed to a small scale trading activity. Calveley Arms Public House was already mentioned on the 1822 Handley township map. Later, a local quarry on the 1838 first Ordnance Survey Map is evidence of a small trading activity.

Handley has changed very little in its layout as a hamlet since early 17th century. With the recently built A41 (circa 1985), Handley has been distanced from the main passing trade route, returning to a peaceful rural atmosphere that adds positively to the bucolic character of this settlement.

¹ J.Mc.N. Dodgson, *The place names of Cheshire*, part IV, p. 90, University Press, Cambridge, 1972.

KEY FEATURES OF THE CONSERVATION AREA

General:	Strong rural influence
Topography:	mainly flat with undulating ground
Streetscape:	one road crossing the settlement, from Southeast to Northwest, i.e. Whitchurch Road
Settlement layout:	linear along Whitchurch Road
Built environment re: residential units:	Individual and semi detached houses two storeys high, slate or clay tile pitched roof, brick sometimes rendered, dating from early 17 th century to 20 th century
Building setting:	detached and well spaced houses with uniform setback (approximately 5 metres from the highway)
Boundary treatment:	low to medium height sandstone walls
Historic floor surface:	no significant floor surface
Trees and hedgerows:	presence of medium hedgerows bordering properties and fields. Mature trees bordering fields and properties.
Open spaces:	no significant open spaces
Change of conservation area boundaries:	none

CHARACTER OF THE CONSERVATION AREA

Handley is a rural hamlet on slightly undulating ground located 8 miles southwest of Chester. Surrounded by fields, it enjoys a linear layout, stretching along the former road heading to Whitchurch.

Most of the houses are detached, two storeys high, brick built and pitch roofed. Their style is varied, containing a mixture of vernacular styles, stretching from the early 17th

century, i.e. Langford House and Oak Cottage, being the last timber framed houses known to the mid 20th century.

Handley's houses' grounds are often generous, providing important space between houses that adds significantly to the pastoral character. The presence of sandstone walls and hedges along Whitchurch Road draw the properties visually together, highlighting the winding shape of the main road. Whitchurch Road was widened unsympathetically prior to the A41 by-pass.

POSITIVE ELEMENTS WITHIN THE CONSERVATION AREA

Listed Buildings

The listed elements within the conservation area form the key features of its overall character. These include a church - Church of All Saints - and two houses - Langford House and Oak Cottage. Both houses were built around the beginning of 17th century, timber framed with slated pitched roofs. They are located in the centre of the village, facing each other. Their distinctive architectural qualities as well as their position within the conservation area confer on them a landmark status, adding much to the firmly established rural character. The Church of All Saints, a grade II* listed building, has also retained its prominent role in Handley. Dated 1512, its profile forms part of Handley's skyline. Its slightly higher setting bordered by a majestic curved low height sandstone wall with its traditional yew tree at the entry, considerably adds to Handley's streetscape.

Unlisted buildings of merit

Like the listed buildings, unlisted buildings of merit are varied in their detailing, use of materials and overall form. Most of them seem to date between the early 18th century and the 20th century. When special circumstances arise and for more effective built environment protection in conservation areas, it may be appropriate to consider the provision of article 4 directions and making use of a local list for Handley's unlisted buildings of merit.

Local views

Local views that are considered important and which contribute to the character and appearance of the conservation area should be preserved. It is essential that full consideration be given to the impact of development proposals upon these views. Important local views include:

- The church tower - a landmark within the village combines with the other village buildings to provide a picturesque townscape



Northern entrance of the Conservation Area, Whitchurch Road

- when entering the village from the south.
- The turn in the road on entering the village with its small millennium memorial and winding hedgerow on the right hand side helps create a definite point of entry/exit.

Topography, townscape and landscape details

The relationships between topography, local townscape and landscape details often contribute to the sense of local distinctiveness and are often unique to a particular conservation area. They can range from specific building detailing, characteristic building elements and boundary treatments, to the quality of the streetscape. Individually and collectively they contribute to the overall quality of Handley as well as enhancing individual areas of character within the settlement.

Topography

The topography is slightly undulating, gently sloping down to the west a few metres lower

Townscape details

Local townscape details contribute to the sense of local distinctiveness and may be unique to a particular conservation area.

Handley conservation area has no typical townscape details but more an eclectic mix of architectural styles of the village's older buildings. Nevertheless the following factors contribute strongly to the overall local distinctiveness:

- The prevailing walling material in the village is brick
- All roofs are pitched, slated or covered with clay tiles.

Landscape and streetscape details

Landscape and streetscape details have a significant impact upon the setting of properties, the coherence of a group and the overall character of a conservation area. Traditional and appropriate treatments will preserve or enhance the appearance of the conservation area. They range from boundary treatments, hedgerows, trees, private driveways, historic floor surface.

Boundary treatments, hedgerows and trees

Boundary treatment is a significant distinctive feature of Handley conservation area: almost all the properties



All Saints Church, Whitchurch Road

bordering the main road enjoy characteristic low to medium height sandstone wall (300 mm to 900mm high), most often with medium height hedgerows (approximately 800 to 1200 mm) behind them. Both help to enhance the streetscape of the area by defining the edge of the main road and strengthening the general layout of the conservation area.

The Old Rectory sandstone wall with its distinctive triangular coping stones adds significantly to the majestic setting of this property as well as to the general character of the area.

A couple of mature trees along the northern entrance of the village and within the setting of the church add to the rural character of the settlement.

Historic floor surface

Except the Old Rectory property entrance paved with setts, there is no substantial historic floor surface in Handley.

Open Spaces

There is no open space as such, but the space between the Calveley Arms Public House and the Thatched Cottage across the road, creates a kind of visual centre to the village as a result of the grouping of the buildings.

General layout, buildings and their setting in the landscape

Within the conservation area, houses are generally two storeys high, spread out and lined evenly along the main road with a uniform set back (approximately 5 metres set back from highway). All those features add unity to this settlement.

Handley's overall rural character owes a lot to the balance between well-spaced houses, linear layout and essentially flat topography. Any further development should seriously take into consideration those substantial key features.

Boundaries

The boundaries have been reviewed and no changes have been proposed.



The Oak Cottage, Whitchurch Road

NEUTRAL OR NEGATIVE ELEMENTS WITHIN THE CONSERVATION AREA AND ENHANCEMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Negative elements

Townscape

Sunnyside, located in the village centre, has poorly designed doors and windows with inappropriate material (UPVC), detracting from the character of the area.

Streetscape

The Calveley Arms car park suffers from a lack of landscape design and appropriate materials (tarmac), detracting from the character and appearance of the area.

Both Fort House frontage and Rose House driveway suffer from a lack of landscape design, adversely affecting the character and appearance of the area.

Enhancement opportunities

Streetscape

Calveley Arms car park would benefit from an appropriate landscape design. Traditional materials such as reclaimed sets, cobble stones and surface dressing would be welcomed. Trees could also easily be incorporated in the landscape scheme of the Public House.

Both Fort House frontage and Rose House driveway suffer from a lack of landscape design. They would also benefit from a landscape design that includes traditional materials.

Townscape

Sunnyside, located in the village centre, would benefit from doors and windows constructed from traditional materials

It is hoped that funding to achieve these enhancements may be explored locally in due course.

NB: These are suggestions for improvement, but owners should note that the Planning Authority has no powers to implement those recommendations.

THREAT

Increasing car traffic - mainly due to commuting - with its side effects such as street widening, road signs, tree cutting, poorly designed garages and drive ways, inappropriate traffic calming measures, etc. often seriously and irreversibly affects the character of a conservation area.

It is therefore important to foresee and manage very carefully the design and material impact of traffic on new developments, in order to maintain the essential features that make a conservation area special, in accordance with the latest guidance on streets published by the Department for Transport (Manual for Streets, March 2007, www.communities.gov.uk).

SURROUNDINGS OF A CONSERVATION AREA

Developments on properties located in the surroundings of a conservation area should also be considered with great care, in order to maintain the essential features that make an area special.

APPENDICES

- Map of the conservation area as existing, scale 1:2,500

FURTHER READING

Chester City Council - 1997 *Living in a Conservation Area - A Guide to Householders*
Chester City Council - November 2006 *Chester District Local Plan*

Relevant Local Plan Policies

- ENV21 Protection of trees and woodland
- ENV24 Preservation of key features within the landscape and its overall character
- ENV37 Preservation or enhancement of conservation areas
- ENV38 Protection of local views
- ENV45 Preservation of the special interest of listed buildings
- ENV46 Appropriate changes of use to listed buildings
- ENV47 Protection of unlisted buildings of merit