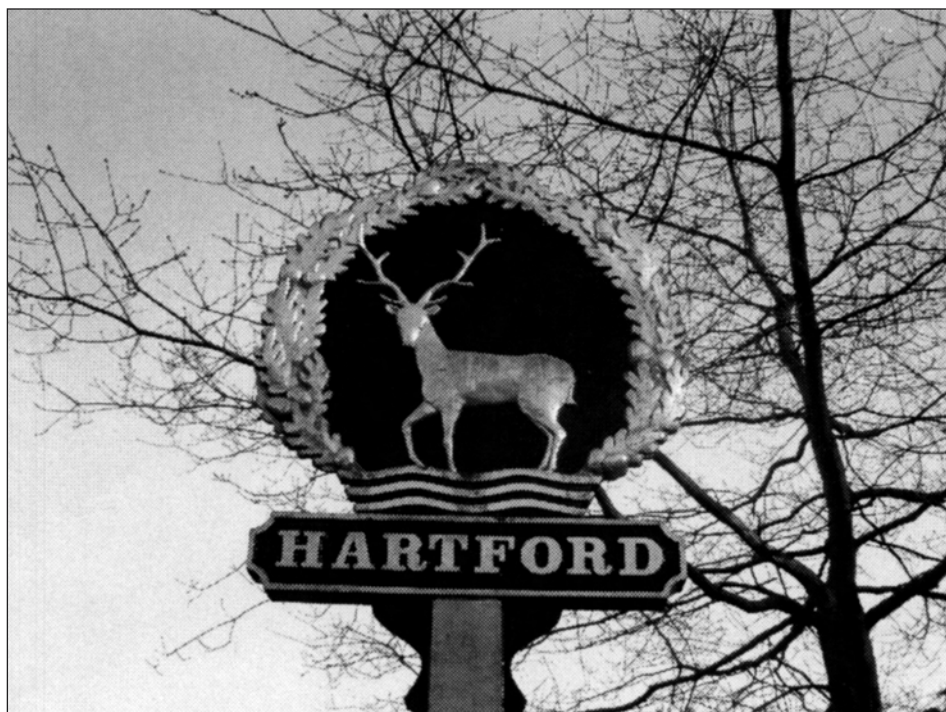


Vale Royal Borough Council

HARTFORD (EXTENDED) CONSERVATION AREA APPRAISAL



Conservation Areas were introduced by the Civic Amenities Act of 1967, and are now an accepted part of Town and Country Planning legislation and practice. Local Authorities are required to identify “areas of special architectural or historic interest, the character of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance”. They are also under a duty to review existing designations from time to time.

It has been recognised that if the special interest, character and appearance of a conservation area is to be retained, it must be managed. The first task in this process is to define and analyse the special characteristics that justify the designation of the conservation area. This is achieved by carrying out a Conservation Area Appraisal.

The character of an area depends upon its historic background, the architectural quality and interest of its buildings, their materials and detailing, the way they relate to each other, the line of the highway, the quality of the landscape, trees and open spaces and a variety of unique features.

A Conservation Area Appraisal provides a description of those elements that contribute to and define the character of the conservation area. It also provides the basis for development plan policies and development control decisions, both within and adjacent to the Conservation Area boundary. Subsequently the appraisal will provide the background for proposals to preserve or enhance the area. It may also identify development opportunities. Therefore the Government has stated that appraisals are considered to be essential for all existing and proposed conservation areas.

Vale Royal Borough Council understands the importance of involving the local community in the appraisal process. It has recognised that these studies are only valid if those people who are most closely affected by the designation of the conservation area accept the content of the appraisal. As a result, a public consultation exercise has been undertaken, the considered responses from which have been incorporated into this final version of the appraisal.

The Borough Council's methodology for conducting Conservation Area Appraisals has been accepted as an example of Good Practice In Conservation by the Royal Town Planning Institute. However the Council has resolved to continue to revise and improve its methodology for conducting conservation area appraisals whilst striving to maintain a degree of consistency between the various completed studies.

The principal effects of this designation are as follows:

1. The Council is under a duty to prepare proposals to ensure the preservation or enhancement of the area
2. In carrying out its functions under the Planning Acts, and in particular when determining applications for planning permission and conservation area or listed building consent, the Council and the Secretary of State are required to take into account the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of the area
3. Permitted development rights are more restricted within the designated area
4. Consent must be obtained from the Council for the demolition of any building in the area (subject to certain exceptions)
5. Special publicity must be given to planning applications for development in the area
6. Six weeks' notice must be given to the local planning authority before any works are carried out to trees within the designated area. It becomes an offence, subject to certain exceptions, to cut down, top, lop, uproot, wilfully damage or destroy any tree in the area without the prior written consent of the local planning authority

HISTORY

1. Historic evolution of the settlement

1.1 Origins and development of the settlement

- On main Northwich to Chester route
- Chester Road follows line of Watling Street – Roman road
- In Domesday Book of 1086 – the Manor was held by Gilbert de Venables – part of the Barony of Kinderton
- Over the centuries the Manor became dispersed into eleven parts – no one family held prominence
- By C18th – much of land owned by Lord Delamere – lived at Vale Royal House – two miles to south of Hartford on banks of River Weaver
- 1777 – Burdett map – records triangular road pattern at core of village



Extract from Burdett's map of 1777

- 1821 – population of just 772
- 1824 – Chapel-of-ease (St John's) built on site of present church
- 1833 – National School built in School Lane to south-east of village
- 1837 – London to Glasgow railway constructed to the west of the village – an impetus for expansion
- 1840 – Tithe map shows fields with dispersed groups of cottages and a longer terrace facing Chester Road to west of what is now the Red Lion Public House

- Mid/late C19th – Mid-Cheshire Railway Line crossed to the north of the area
- Early and mid C19th – wealthy salt manufacturers from Northwich built or extended properties in Hartford area (e.g. Hartford Manor and Hartford Beach – both outside the Conservation Area)
- 1875 – old chapel demolished – Church of St John the Baptist built by John Douglas -famous Cheshire architect
- circa 1910 - Brunner Mond company built houses for their directors in The Crescent
- 1920s and 1930s –
 - Hartford Grange demolished – though stable block remains
 - Brunner Bond built houses in Walnut Lane and The Grange for managers
 - Grange Park Recreation Ground established on part of former Hartford Grange garden
 - 1938-9 - Grange Kindergarten School built in Grange Park Recreation Ground
- Extensive new housing added to south and west of village after 1960s – Hartford now part of greater Northwich

1.2 Topographic elements that have influenced the settlement form

- Roman road lay on a slight ridge above flood plains of River Weaver to north and south-east – determined line of development

1.3 Influences of current or previous land uses on the area

- Line of Roman road – (Watling Street) defined initial linear settlement pattern
- Scattered buildings – including several farms – shown on 1840 Tithe map - confirms agricultural character of early village
- No single major house dominated C19th – many large houses noted in Bagshaw's 1850 Directory
- Pleasant landscape in proximity to industrial Northwich led to establishment of dwellings for wealthy local industrialists
- Provision of two railway lines in mid/late C19th encouraged commuter housing
- Nearby A556 facilitates good commuter access to adjacent major conurbations

2. Archaeological significance and potential of the area

- Conservation Area lies along the approximate route of the Roman road, Watling Street (now Chester Road)
- Otherwise, no known/recorded archaeological remains within the area

TOWNSCAPE

3. Form and structure of the settlement

3.1 Boundary of the Conservation Area

- Commencing in the north of the area and running clockwise –
- The boundary encompasses the whole of the tree lined Bowls and Tennis Club and follows its eastern boundary in a southerly direction to the centre-line of Chester Road where it turns south-west until it is opposite the boundary between nos. 257a and 259 Chester Road where it turns south-easterly
- It follows around the curtilage boundary of no. 259 Chester Road to that of no. 259a where it turns to the south-east and runs, adjacent to the course of a stream, until it meets the rear curtilage boundary of no. 5 Kingsley Close where it turns to the south-west, along the rear boundaries of nos. 267 to 269b Chester Road and of nos. 15 to 3 King Street – turning south along the western boundary of no. 3 to the centreline of King Street – then briefly to the west – then south again down the centreline of the passageway to the rear of nos. 23 to 37 School Lane – the latter section involving a dog-leg change of alignment
- It then crosses an access road and service-yard to meet the rear boundary of no. 45 School Lane and runs south-east then easterly – incorporating the various single storey outbuildings, porches and extensions attached to no. 49 and to nos. 39 and 41 – the latter being late C20th additions to the northern side of the rear wing to no. 49 – at the eastern end of the which it follows the curtilage round to the south until it reaches the centreline of Woodlands Road
- Turning westerly the boundary runs to the centreline of School Lane following it round to the north-west until it is opposite the western boundary of the Vicarage, no. 7 The Green which it follows southerly until it meets the tree lined perimeter boundary of the playing field – it follows this to the south-east, then south-west, then north-west along the rear curtilage of nos. 11 to 1 Abbey Lane and skirting that of no.1 runs to the centre-line of Abbey Lane where it turns north-west
- At the centreline of Chester Road it runs west-south-westerly until it turns southerly along the centreline of the passageway between nos. 351 and 353 Chester Road, towards the end of which it turns westerly along the rear curtilages of the Chester Road properties until that of no. 383, where it returns along its western boundary to the centreline of Chester Road and resumes its west-south-westerly direction
- The boundary turns north-west to follow the brick wall western curtilage of no. 282 Chester Road, then runs to the east along the rear its rear curtilage, across an access drive and along the rear curtilage of the sub-divided no. 280 to that of no. 278 where it turns to the north-west along the tree lined boundary between the properties of The Crescent (and Wilsbury Grange) and those of Chipstead Close and Hinchley Close
- It then runs north-easterly along the tree lined rear curtilages of the sub-divided no. 11 (Corner Brook), The Crescent and nos. 25 to 29 Walnut Lane, then around the edge of the open field to the north of Walnut Lane, returning in a south-easterly direction along a field boundary towards Chester Road until it meets the remains of the perimeter of the site of the demolished farm sheds and out-buildings of the former Grange Farm which it follows round first north-east then south-east
- It then turns to the north-east and follows the north and westerly facing tree lined rear boundaries of nos. 1 to 3 The Grange and then the small area of woodland to the north of no. 3 until it meets the western boundary of the site of the former Lambay, no. 14 The Grange – a new residential development underway in early 2004 – which it follows to the north then round to the east – across the

northern boundary of the small wooded area to the north-north-west of Spinneyside – then south until it meets the tree lined northern boundary of Grange Park Recreational Ground – it follows this in a generally easterly direction, crossing Bradburns Lane to meet the northern boundary of the Bowls and Tennis Club

3.2 Views within, into and out of the area

- Views are focused on the tower of St. John's Church and along Chester Road
- Notable views within Conservation Area:
 - From Chester Road northwards across the open fields adjacent to the former Grange Farmhouse
 - From Walnut Lane north-eastwards across the fields of Grange Farm to the bank of mature trees in the distance
 - North-eastwards along Chester Road from junction with Abbey Lane - repeated from outside the Red Lion Public House towards St. John's Church – taking in the high brick wall and trees to the rear of properties in The Grange



North-east along Chester Road – wall and Church

- Reverse view to the south-west from the traffic signals is closed by the row of small scale properties as the highway alignment sweeps gently to the right
- From each of the perimeter roads – across St. John's churchyard
- From the corner of Chester Road and School Lane, towards the Tennis Courts

- From the Playing Field across the roofs of nos. 13 to 33 The Green towards the tower of St. John's Church



Church tower from Playing Field off The Green

- Linear views in each direction along the tree lined residential streets of The Grange, Walnut Lane and The Crescent



The Grange



Walnut Lane

- Views into many of the large, pleasantly landscaped gardens in Walnut Lane, The Crescent and The Grange make significant contributions to the local character
- Entering the conservation area from Bradburns Lane in the north, and to a lesser extent along Chester Road from the north-east, there are a broad range of views facilitated by the openness of this area
- From School Lane in the south-east, the terminal view is to the small triangular space with modern hard landscaping and rear metal artwork screening
- Relatively flat topography means that there are no long distance views out of the Conservation Area

3.3 The importance of spaces within the Conservation Area

- Chester Road is the most significant space in the conservation area but its impact is reduced by the constant flow of traffic – a number of other important spaces relate to this open linear spine
 - The small field to the west of Grange Farm provides a sense of space and openness which is reinforced by the direct links to large fields to the north – outside the conservation area



Across fields north of former Grange Farmhouse

- Bowling green and tennis courts along Chester Road and nearby Grange Park Recreation Ground cumulatively provide an openness to the north-eastern end of the conservation area

- The triangular churchyard is the most important open space of character, with many trees, graves, shrubbery and flowers – also areas of grass
- Smaller more formal gardens to the north and south apexes of this feature are separated but related spaces of local significance
- The Playing Field off The Green is a hidden but important open space, although somewhat devoid of any special features
- The many large, pleasantly landscaped gardens in Walnut Lane, The Crescent and The Grange make significant contributions to the open character of these streets

3.4 Enclosure within the settlement

- Most of the buildings in the conservation area, especially those on modest sized plots, have retained their original boundaries
 - There are some exceptions within The Crescent where new development has been introduced within gardens
- The high brick wall backed by trees to the rear of properties in “The Grange” but fronting Chester Road is the most significant enclosure feature in the conservation area
- St. John’s churchyard is notable for its variety of boundary treatments
 - The most important walls are around the western end of the churchyard, facing Chester Road and part of The Green –



Churchyard railings and wall – Chester Road

made from large blocks of coursed red sandstone with a low plinth course and

sloping stone coping – terminated by substantial piers

- Simple metal railings to churchyard facing Chester Road probably late C19th
- There is timber fencing and hedging to south and east sides of churchyard
- Small front gardens to residential houses – with a variety of front boundaries – create pleasant, though private, spaces along the north-eastern side of Chester Road, and along The Green and School Lane
 - The boundary treatments include - stone and brick walls, timber fencing, and a great deal of informal or trimmed hedging. Sometimes, as for no. 5 School Lane, hedging is used in conjunction with a low sandstone wall



Hedge above sandstone wall – School Lane

- Timber fencing is also occasionally used, such as the very informal palisade fence to no. 273 Chester Road, on the corner with School Lane, or the picket fence around the rear section of the churchyard – both are combined with trimmed hedges
- There are some examples of metal railings, such as no. 27 The Green, but these do not appear to be historic
- The boundaries of the field adjacent to Walnut Lane are poor quality hedging and post and rail fencing – that along Walnut Lane is mainly poor quality timber post and rail with barbed wire attached
- Farm gate at Chester Road/Walnut Lane junction adds to rural character

- The unity of original boundary treatments in the early C20th residential areas of The Grange, Walnut Lane and The Crescent is being eroded by increased personalisation
 - Original timber fencing styles, such as vertical, spaced, variable height cleft oak pales is common, especially in The Crescent



Cleft oak pale fencing – no.1 The Crescent

- Vertically lapped and capped sawn pales – common in Walnut Lane and now being introduced into The Crescent
- However there are a number of more recent, inappropriate examples in Walnut Lane, such as: bow tops, low palisades or set between concrete posts
- Other unsympathetic recent introductions include modern brick walls incorporating railings
- The majority of frontage boundaries in The Grange are of mixed evergreen and beech hedges reinforced by taller bushes behind
- Some examples of chestnut pale fencing are found scattered throughout the conservation area – although perceived as temporary features they are very appropriate in their context
- Modern low impact metal fencing has been erected around the refurbished former Grange Kindergarten School – looks rather ineffective and of a temporary character
- Hartford House is hidden behind tall coniferous boundary hedging

3.5 Urban form

- Form of the Conservation Area is dictated by the long straight road (Chester Road) and the triangular green around St John's churchyard
- Chester Road roughly divides the Conservation Area into two:
 - To the north-west - fields and trees around Grange Farmhouse; tree lined streets of The Grange, Walnut Lane and The Crescent; mature trees in gardens of The Crescent and in particular (hidden) back gardens of houses in The Grange; and trees and open spaces in Grange Park Recreation Ground, and Bowls and Tennis Club recreational areas, all create a rather rural and sylvan character to the conservation area despite being the more recent development
 - The continuous (though varied) building form along the south side of Chester Road around The Green and School Lane, generally creates a more tightly knit more traditional urban form
- The three separate areas of former Brunner Mond housing to the north of Chester Road represent an important record of industrial/residential social history
- Along the south side of Chester Road, the Red Lion Public House, the commercial properties (nos. 277 to 307) and a small terrace of cottages (nos. 313 to 323) create an almost continuous terrace of two storied buildings, without front gardens, which form a group despite being of different ages



Red Lion and former wine-shop – Chester Road

- Residential properties facing the northern and southern ends of School Lane are either detached or semi-detached with deep front gardens and generally of midC20th date
- Nos. 15 to 21 School Lane are a small terrace of early C19th two storey houses, now partly in a commercial use, without any front gardens



School Lane shops

- Nos. 23 to 37 School Lane are another C19th group, mostly in residential use, with the Co-op Supermarket at the southern end, set back some distance from the road
- Nos. 13 to 33 The Green are the only example of a unified historic terrace in the whole Conservation Area, with very small front gardens

3.6 Road pattern

- Chester Road, the A559, running in a north-east to south-west direction, is the main road between Northwich and Chester, it carries a significant amount of traffic that can effectively dissect the area into two
- In the north-east of the conservation area, lies a significant traffic junction
 - The north-south route of Bradburns Lane to School Lane crosses Chester Road at a traffic signal controlled junction – the School Lane section being one-way for the majority of its length within the conservation area
 - The Green acts as the one-way return route for north bound traffic to Chester Road – and creates a triangular traffic

island containing St. John's Church, the church hall and churchyard



The Green at its exit onto Chester Road

- Although The Green and School Lane are secondary routes, they are greatly overloaded since they serve as a popular link to the A556 Northwich bypass and there are also minor roads and service access points off both these roads
- Off the adjacent section of Chester Road - The Grange is a culs-de-sac complex leading to early C20th garden suburbs housing, the converted outbuildings of the long demolished (Hartford) Grange and a small new residential development (underway in early 2003)
- Chester Road is joined at its approximate mid-point within the conservation area by Abbey Lane from the south-east, although only the road junction is included within the conservation area



Abbey Lane junction/Chester Road to north-east

- Walnut Lane and The Crescent are two residential culs-de-sac in the south-west of the conservation area – north of Chester Road – serving both early and late C20th housing
 - The Crescent – a winding road – possibly takes its name from the curved double access arrangement to Chester Road
- The 30 mph speed limit on Chester Road appears to be frequently ignored, although the traffic lights at the junction with School Lane/Bradburns Lane, do create a degree of traffic calming
- The shops along Chester Road attract a lot of passing trade, so car parking, servicing and pedestrian activity can cause problems whilst also being a form of traffic calming
- School drop off and other peak times also create major congestion along the main roads of the Conservation Area
- The access road to Grange Farmhouse has been used as a footpath and unofficially gives access across the fields to the north
 - The gate at this access is locked and access is only afforded through a narrow unplanned gap at the side of the gate
 - There is also a stile from the end of The Grange which connects through to it
- A narrow footpath connects the north-west ends of Walnut Lane and The Crescent

4. BUILDINGS

4.1 Age profile

- Properties range from the early C19th to the late C20th – several examples of good quality mid C19th houses, contemporary to the expansion of Hartford when the railways were built
- Pre-1840 buildings, all shown on the 1840 Tithe Map:
 - Grange Farmhouse (locally listed building) of c1800
 - Nos. 309 to 311 Chester Road (may contain early C19th fabric)
 - Nos. 301 to 303 Chester Road (possibly – much altered)
 - The former Wine Cellar and no. 279 Chester Road

- The Red Lion Public House, no. 277 Chester Road



Red Lion Public House – Chester Road

- Nos. 13 to 21 School Lane
- Nos. 23 to 35 School Lane
- Elmfield, no. 269 Chester Road
- No. 267 Chester Road (parts of)
- Nos. 261 and 265 Chester Road (parts of)
- Hartford House, School Lane (locally listed) and said to date from 1830
 - The former stables block to The Grange is not shown on Tithe Map despite appearing to be of some age
- There are also two mid C19th terraces of note:
 - Nos. 23 to 33 The Green date to 1864 (date plaque) with nos. 13 to 21 being slightly later
 - Nos. 313 to 323 Chester Road date to 1857 (date on door lintel)



Mid C19th Chester Road properties

- St. John's Church dates to 1875 with a tower built in 1889 also has a modern, late C20th extension to the south-west



St. John's Church tower from south

- Brunner Mond Housing built early C20th
 - The Crescent, built in 1910s, said to be for directors of Brunner Mond
 - Walnut Lane and The Grange, both built circa 1920s, said to be for junior and senior managers at Brunner Mond
- Of note are; the Edwardian house nos. 1 to 3 School Lane and other good quality Victorian properties such as nos. 278, 280 and 282 on Chester Road
- Also of note is the former Grange Kindergarten School built in Bradburns Lane between 1938 and 1939, and extensively refurbished in 2003

4.2 Dominant architectural styles and types

- There is a mixture of detached, semi-detached and terraced buildings, the majority of which are two storey and remain in residential uses
- The Victorian Gothic St. John's Church – the only building of any size – focus of the best group of historic buildings, together with nos. 13 to 33 The Green; Red Lion Public House; former Wine Cellar and no. 279 Chester Road

- Of special note are the three residential areas of early 20th garden suburbs style housing built for the directors and managers of Brunner Mond



The Grange – housing on north side

- Hartford House – an example of a classic neo-georgian gentlemen's residence with its white stucco finish and porticoed entrance
- C20th development, mainly along Chester Road and School Lane is largely neutral in its impact
- Some substantial new houses amongst the residential streets to the northern side of Chester Road - attempt to capture the spirit of the existing adjacent garden suburbs style units with only limited success

4.3 Building materials - texture and colours

- Majority of the houses are constructed in brown brick



C19th housing – The Green – in Flemish bond

- Those of the C19th in Flemish bond
- Those in the early C20th garden suburbs areas are of rustic brickwork
- Grange Farmhouse is the only example of red brick with blue headers
- St. John's Church is in dressed coursed buff sandstone with red sandstone dressings
- Nos. 13 to 33 The Green have stone lintels, sills and cornicing, and some original front doors with simple door-cases with pilasters and moulded door-hoods
- There are examples of white stucco and render throughout the conservation area
 - Nos. 15 to 21 and Hartford House on School Lane, also no. 267 Chester Road are stuccoed buildings
 - The southern extension of the Church Hall, the converted former stables to The Grange and many elements of the properties in The Crescent and The Grange are rendered and finished white
- Modern timber-framed effect buildings tend to have white render infill panels
- There is no evidence of any traditional timber framing in Hartford
 - Modern timber-frame effect detailing is found on The Village Hall, The Church Hall and Church extension and also on the first floor and gable details of many early C20th residential properties
- Grange Kindergarten School was built pre World War II in an innovative timber-framed construction and was a forerunner to the "Clasp" school system, popularised in the 1950's
- Vertical cladding to northern extension of church hall – alien, bland and unattractive
- Roofs are generally shallow and finished with blue Welsh slates, sometimes with large slates (e.g. nos. 313 to 323 Chester Road)
- St. John's Church and modern extension is roofed in red handmade plain clay tiles
- Modern roofing materials are present but largely innocuous apart from some obvious examples of concrete roof tiles (e.g. nos. 297 to 299, and 301 to 303 Chester Road)
- No. 307 Chester Road, a 1950s building, has a shallow copper roof, now green, very visible in views along the road
- Some leaded roofs are found over bay windows in The Grange

- Chimney stacks –prominent throughout – on virtually every property
- Rustic lapped timber features on the gable of some modern housing on Chester Road – a detail typical of its time that should not be repeated



Rustic timber gable treatment – Chester Road

- Some original sash windows remain (side elevation of The Red Lion Public House, Grange Farmhouse, many examples in nos. 13 to 33 The Green)



The Green – original doors, casings and windows

- Original C19th casement windows occur in nos. 25 to 35 School Lane
- Small pane casement windows to the early C20th garden suburbs style housing – strong pattern of white finished glazing bars
 - Some PVCu windows starting to appear as less interesting replacements – usually as single pane – without glazing bars – sometimes leaded

4.4 Key buildings - listed and unlisted

- Conservation Area has two listed buildings:
 - St. John's Church (grade II): 1875 – Sandstone walls in the Victorian Gothic style with a battlemented tower added later – all by John Douglas, Cheshire's famous architect, who was a pupil of Paley in the late 1840's



St. John's Church, extension and War Memorial

- Late C20th modern extension to the south-west
- Former Grange Kindergarten School, in Bradburns Lane (also grade II). A low, timber-frame building, fully glazed south elevation and flat roof. Designed by Sir Leslie Martin, famous for being co-architect of the Royal Festival Hall - 1951
 - Extensively rebuilt 2003 with new red brickwork cladding



Rebuilt and refurbished Kindergarten School

- Also four locally listed buildings/groups:
 - Grange Farmhouse (c.1800, two storeys, 3 windows wide, stone lintels and sills, sash windows, red brick with blue brick headers, slate roof and simple Georgian door-case)
 - Derelict and greatly at risk



Increasingly derelict former Grange Farmhouse

- Nos. 13 to 33 The Green (dated 1864 and later; two storey “polite” terrace of well detailed houses, two windows wide, six-over-six sash windows)
- Red Lion Public House (dark red brick, modern and some original sash windows, slated roofs, good Georgian door to the side elevation)
- Hartford House (c.1830 with a shallow slated roof, some original windows, and a good quality portico supported on slim columns, and front door with eight fielded panels)



Hartford House on School Lane

- Other buildings of townscape merit:
 - No. 259 Chester Road – small electricity sub-station bungalow with Tudorbethan details



No. 259 Chester Road – electricity sub-station

- Nos. 261 and 265 Chester Road (early C19th two storey brown brick building with steeply pitched slate roof, modern extensions)
- No. 267 Chester Road (c.1835 *cottage orné* with three gables and very pretty decorative bargeboards, white painted stucco and modern windows, modern extensions)



Veterinary Surgery – no. 267 Chester Road

- Elmfield, no. 269 Chester Road. (Early C19th brick villa, two storeys high with some original sashes and slate roof, now extended)
- The former Wine Cellar and no. 279 Chester Road (c.1835, brown brick with slate roof and late C19th alterations)

- Nos. 313 to 323 Chester Road (1857, terraced group of three houses now six flats, dark red brick, shallow slated roof – prominent chimney stacks, late C19th windows and ground floor extensions)
- Nos. 1 to 3 School Lane (pair of Edwardian red brick houses with steeply pitched slate roof, sash windows and white painted quoins to the corners)



Nos. 1 and 3 School Lane

- Nos. 15 to 21 School Lane (early C19th painted brick houses under shallow pitched slate roof)
- Nos. 23 to 37 School Lane (early C19th cottages, brown or painted brick, original casement windows and slate roofs - late Victorian buildings either end)
- The early C20th garden suburbs style Brunner Mond properties – always set back from the road with a staggered building line in generous gardens and with:
 - Small pane casement windows (glazed to Georgian proportions) – finished in white (but some recent PVCu replacements are destroying the unity)
 - Steeply pitched roofs in red or brown small clay tiles
- In The Crescent
 - Large detached houses – many now sub-divided – well set back on spacious plots – some hidden down long winding driveways
 - Some Tudorbethan details – half-timbering with white render over red brick
 - Some properties in red brick or white render or differing proportions of each –

interesting details – string and dentil courses – also timber-frame elements



Substantial property in The Crescent

- In The Grange – set in large gardens with mature trees and hedge boundaries
 - Substantial Lutyens-style detached houses with prominent brick chimneys



Typical property – The Grange north side



Typical property – The Grange south side

- Of red or brown brick with first floor in white painted render to the north side
- Of white render above low brown brick plinths to the east and south sides
- In Walnut Lane
 - Simple detached and semi-detached red brick houses – affected by later alterations such as re-windowing and flat roofed garages



Walnut Lane – east side semi-detached housing

- Some neo-Georgian details, such as white painted semi-circular arched heads above three light windows at no. 10
- Walnut Cottages, nos. 268 to 274 Chester Road
 - A terrace of four cottages in the Arts and Crafts style – with original stables and coach houses to rear off Walnut Lane built between 1846-73 and part of now demolished Walnut Cottage Estate
 - Built for the gardeners and grooms servicing the Brunner Mond 'estate'



Walnut Cottages – Chester Road

- Red and brown brick – pebbled dash above – red brick detailing to openings
- Nos. 278, 280, and 282 Chester Road – three good quality Victorian houses
- Nos. 353 to 383 Chester Road – eight pairs of attractively detailed, two storeys Edwardian houses – Tudorbethan gable details over bay windows



Edwardian properties along Chester Road

- Modern timber-frame effect 1920's Bowls and Tennis Club pavilion in the north-east of the area – now The Village Hall



Bowls and Tennis Clubhouse – Village Hall

4.5 Interesting and unusual details

- Red brick with blue brick headers on front elevation of Grange Farmhouse (c.1800), and the surviving Georgian doorcase
- Ornate barged boards, finial and bay dentil detailing and semi-circular rubbed brick arch to no. 276 Chester Road



Fine quality detailing on no. 276 Chester Road

- Dated door lintel (1857) to no. 317 to 319 Chester Road
- Fine quality stonework and decorative windows to St. John's Church
- A clearly modern extension to the front of St. John's Church, with stone base and heavy timber framing, which complements the original building

- War Memorial fronting St. John's Church – cross set on heavily fluted column above inscribed octagonal base rising from three octagonal steps – in buff sandstone



War Memorial in front of St. John's Church

- Original lychgate to the church from The Green, with curved timbers and tiled roof



Lychgate from The Green

- Original casement windows to nos. 27 to 33 School Lane
- Large bay windows to nos. 1 to 3 School Lane
- Decorative barge boards to no. 267 Chester Road
- Original casement windows to nos. 263 to 265 Chester Road

- Early C19th six panelled side entrance door to the Red Lion Public House



Red Lion – original side door and window

- Stone plaque to no. 17 The Green saying “Green Villas 1864”
- Attractive door-cases, stone steps, panelled doors, and sash windows to nos. 13 to 33 The Green



Door and casing to no. 31 The Green

- Pioneering timber-frame detailing to the south and west elevations of the former Grange Kindergarten School
- Good, warm colour flood-lighting of St. John’s Church
- Ordinary, but effective bright white fluorescent eaves lighting of Red Lion

5. Street Scene

5.1 Street furniture, wirescape, water pumps/troughs

- There are several public amenity areas with street furniture – usually modern:
 - Mainly grassed area to north-east of junction between Chester Road and Bradburns Lane – modern metal seats and litter bins, and “Hartford” village sign with stag emblem – all positioned behind a stone drinking fountain inscribed “The Gift of Agnes Bertha Platt 1890”



New seats and bin north-east of traffic signals



Stone drinking fountain

- Triangular area on junction of Chester Road with School Lane, north-east of the

churchyard – modern seats in green, cast iron litter bins with Vale Royal logo

- Paved area to south-east of churchyard at junction of School Lane with The Green – with metal screen sculpture to rear, decorative stone balls set on low bases and litter bins – modern seats unfortunately removed to store in order to curb unruly behaviour



Paving and features south of churchyard

- Abbey Lane/Chester Road junction – pleasant small grassed area with timber seat and trees
- Simple timber seats in St. John's churchyard
- Modern bus shelter in Chester Road – modern and low key – occasionally vandalised
- Two brick built bus shelters opposite each other on either side of Chester Road north of St. John's Church – adequate but of rather clumsy design
- Plethora of street signs at junction of The Green with Chester Road and to a lesser extent – School Lane and The Green
- Tall modern concrete street lights are standard along Chester Road
 - Lower ones of exposed aggregate are found in the residential streets north of Chester Road
 - Metal replacements are now gradually being introduced
 - Private Victorian style lamppost in grounds of no. 9 The Crescent
- Litter bins found frequently along Chester Road in a variety of styles

- Modern cast iron bollards with Vale Royal logo linked by horizontal rail as boundary fence to side of the Post Office



Bollard style railings by Post Office

- Simple cast iron bollards to side of the Red Lion Public House
- Best kept village plaques dated 1975 and 1983 located on wall to north side of Chester Road opposite the junction with The Green



Best kept village awards – Chester Road wall

- Most street furniture is in black – some white detailing – Vale Royal logos in gold
- Limited wirescape – not very intrusive other than telegraph poles and associated wiring noticeable on Chester Road, near Abbey Lane junction

5.2 Shop fronts, advertisements

- Most of the shops in Hartford can be found in a group between the Red Lion Public House and no. 307 Chester Road, in modern or altered historic buildings

- They have varied modern shopfronts, of no particular merit, some with canvas or plastic blinds and hanging signs
- Despite the use of differing colours, no single shopfront stands out



Chester Road shops – roadside parking

- Illumination of signage is not common
- Tia Beauty Studio at no.33 The Green has an interesting and well detailed shop-fronts finished in blue and white – as a good example for others to follow it should be retained



No. 33 The Green – Beauty Studio shop-front

- The former off-licence on Chester Road has an interestingly detailed shop front and angled projecting fascia above
- Hartford Post Office in The Green is set back and has discrete painted shop-front with hand painted name to fascia
- Co-op Supermarket in School Lane has more colourful signage and blocked-up windows, providing a “dead” frontage

- St. John’s Church notice boards close to Chester Road are prominent but tasteful – in need of attention – that by the Lychgate on The Green is commercial in nature
- Parish notice board – modern standardised – inconspicuously sited just off The Green at the access to the Playing Field

5.3 Landmarks and focal points with historic connection or visual interest

- St. John’s Church (particularly its tower) is the most important landmark, visible from almost everywhere in the Conservation Area
 - Modern extension to the church provides interest
 - Stone war memorial on stepped plinth to west of St. John’s Church extension - draws the eye
- Grange Farmhouse is important in views on entering the village from the west – however, its boarded-up elevations and derelict appearance is a negative feature



Former Grange Farmhouse – Chester Road

- Former Grange Kindergarten School is important, as it is an early example of the work of Sir Leslie Martin, co-architect of the Royal Festival Hall in London
 - Has higher profile since 2003 rebuild/restoration and opening up of frontage to roads by selective thinning of shrubbery and tree cover and installation of footpath
- Stone drinking fountain at the Bradburns Lane/Chester Road junction has a high profile due to the relative openness of the area and its local background setting

5.4 Floorscape - materials, colour and texture

- Pavements generally tar-macadamed with concrete kerbs, often in poor repair with considerable patch reinstatement
- Some interesting details, which should be retained:
- Blue stable paviors are found in some places, such as to the side of no. 33 The Green, also with sandstone kerb



Blue stable paviors by no. 33 The Green

- Sandstone setts to lychgate entrance to churchyard from The Green
- The Crescent, Walnut Lane and the Grange all have grass verges separating the road from the pavement



Original road edge setts and driveway access

- In these areas some of the original sett-stones are visible along the road sides and to drive entrances
- At the Chester Road end of Walnut Lane, a redundant field access has stone kerbs and sett-stone radii edgings
- Hard paved area at junction of School Lane/The Green includes pattern of modern red clay and reproduction silver granite setts
- Yellow hoggin between wooden edging has been introduced into the two accessible wooded areas to the south and west of the Grange Park Recreation Ground
- Unattractive modern concrete paviors – used in traffic island at junction between The Green and Chester Road
- Access to the Playing Fields is hardcore in poor condition with water filled potholes
- Forecourt to the Post Office, no. 9 The Green is unattractive, worn out macadam

LANDSCAPE

6. Landscape setting

- Situated within flattish Cheshire Plain – on a slight ridge above broad valley of River Weaver – which lies to both east and north
- Pastoral setting to the immediate north with open fields and woodland
- Suburban context on the other sides, with Post-World War II development
- Part of the Greater Northwich ribbon of development to the west of the town
- The large front gardens to properties at the south-eastern end of The Green make a significant contribution to the open character setting of that part of the conservation area

7. Green spaces, trees, hedges

- Green spaces of note:
 - Fields north of Chester Road, behind and to west of former Grange Farmhouse
 - Field by Walnut Lane has good display of wild flowers in summer
 - Playing Field off The Green, with its allotments around the perimeter although hidden from general view
 - Some encroachment into allotments from neighbouring gardens

- St John's churchyard – important – attractive trees, planting and gravestones – the heart of the conservation area



St. John's churchyard

- Grange Park Recreation Ground, with its open grassed area and trees



Grange Park Recreation Ground

- The Bowls and Tennis Club grounds although hidden behind mature hedging



Failed reinforced grass car parking area

- hides car parking on reinforced grass – normally a reasonable compromise solution but has failed in this instance
- Trees are very important in Hartford – most notable groups:

- To north-east of Grange Farmhouse, including those outside the current conservation area boundary
- Along boundary of churchyard, facing Chester Road, The Green, and School Lane
- In churchyard, a line of trees marking the boundary between the original churchyard and the later open grassland extension



Trees along line of churchyard extension

- In rear gardens of properties in The Grange, seen from Chester Road (under tree preservation order)
- Along southern, western and northern sides of Grange Park Recreation Ground
- Around traffic signal controlled junction of Chester Road/Bradburns Road/School Lane – especially on land to south of former Grange Kindergarten School and mature trees on grassland fronting Bowls and Tennis Club site
- In front gardens of houses in School Lane, most notably the large tree at no. 5 School Lane
- In front gardens of houses of Chester Road – (many of those on each side – south-west of Grange Farm access – are under tree preservation order)
- Species include chestnut, sycamore, Scots pine, beech, silver birches and oak

- The Crescent, Walnut Lane and The Grange are lined with chestnut trees in grass verges to each side of the road (often with daffodils planted in them)
- Trees in The Crescent front gardens are under tree preservation order
- Walnut Lane is said to be named after the poor specimen walnut tree at its Chester Road entrance
- Significant small wooded areas – north-east of entrance to The Grange – west of Grange Park Recreation Ground – south of former Grange Kindergarten School – (latter two sites have recently introduced footpaths through them)
- Hedges are important along School Lane, around the churchyard, along the north side of Chester Road close to Grange Farmhouse and within The Grange
 - That along the boundary of the field adjacent to Walnut Lane is poor quality, reinforced by timber post and rail
 - Generally evergreens - species include hawthorn, holly, laurel and beech
- Tall leylandii hedge to south-west of the former Grange Farmhouse helps define the location of this historic property

8. Water features

- No conspicuous water features within conservation area
- Stream shown on boundary with no. 259a Chester Road marks edge of the conservation area

OTHER FACTORS

9. Negative Factors

- The derelict appearance of former Grange Farmhouse – an eye sore when coming into the area from the west
- A variety of badly designed PVCu windows, mainly along Chester Road (e.g. former Wine Cellar and no. 279, nos. 299 to 305 and 313 to 323 Chester Road)
- Introduction of PVCu windows to early C20th garden suburbs style housing – adversely affecting their character
- Variety of shopfronts –

- on Chester Road – little quality or character – in School Lane – low key – Co-op is unattractive exception



- Poor quality pavements throughout



Footpath outside the Church along The Green

- Unattractive macadam forecourt to the Post Office, no. 9 The Green
- Varied and damaged street furniture, particularly litter bins and seating – in need of rationalisation



Unattractive low volume bin on Chester Road



Litter bin at the entrance to the Crescent

- Traffic congestion and ad hoc parking along Chester Road and The Green



Car parking along Chester Road

- Church Hall has been extended twice and that to the north is unattractive, poorly detailed and includes a large flat roof



Church Hall – unsympathetic extension to north

- The boundary hedge of the Church Hall along School Lane is in very poor condition



Poor hedge boundary to Church Hall site

- Plethora of traffic signs – many damaged



Chester Road highway signs opposite The Green

- Boundary fence between churchyard and sitting area at junction of Chester Road and School Lane is of concrete posts and panels with peeling brown paint



Amenity area south-west of traffic signals

- Poor state of small areas of grassland at junction of Chester Road/ Bradburns Lane/ School Lane due to effect of tree canopies above – alternative treatment needed
- Increasing pressure for car parking now affecting grass verges
- Telegraph poles and overhead wires generally obtrusive

10. Neutral areas

10.1 Areas which neither enhance nor detract from the character or appearance of the area

- Modern housing has impinged in places but has a neutral effect to date



Recent modern housing – north of Walnut Lane

- Some substantial new houses within The Crescent, Walnut Lane and The Grange – attempt to capture the spirit of the existing adjacent garden suburbs style units with only limited success and are of no special architectural interest
- Two modern bungalows between nos. 274 and 276 Chester Road
- Nos. 248 to 258 Chester Road – two modern dormer style houses and a terrace of four (possibly dating to the 1930s) all well screened by deep front gardens and planting

10.2 Areas and opportunities for development and/or enhancement

- Constrained plots along Chester Road, School Lane, and The Green tend to reduce potential for new development
- Further infill development within the large gardens of the properties in the Crescent, Walnut Lane and The Grange would have an adverse impact on the character of the conservation area
- Playing Field, Bowls and Tennis Club and Grange Park Recreation Ground are important amenity spaces for local residents and should be protected
- Grange Farmhouse is currently derelict and a scheme should be negotiated for its restoration, without compromising its setting



Derelict rear of former Grange Farmhouse

- Potential development sites exist to the north-east and south-east of the existing dwellings on the east side of Walnut Lane

- These could eventually be developed sympathetically – in the prevailing Walnut Lane style – without having an adverse impact on conservation area character – subject to the traffic generation impact on Chester Road
- However any form of development to the Chester Road frontage of the former Grange Farmhouse would have an adverse impact on conservation area character
- Replacement of northern extension of Church Hall with a more appropriately design would be welcome in the future
- Improvements to corner sites on junction of Chester Road/Bradburns Lane/School Lane could include:
 - Replacement of concrete panel wall
 - Provision of new seating and litter bins – to coordinate with modern designs introduced nearby
 - New tree planting
 - Replacement of standard highway safety barriers and chain-link fencing with more sympathetic designs
- Character of whole area would benefit from the under-grounding of all overhead wires and cables
- Phased improvements to street lighting would be advantageous – perhaps replace concrete columns with less obtrusive modern equivalents
- Standards of maintenance to pavements need to be improved, with better quality tarmac – perhaps using special surface treatments in sensitive areas such as around the Church
- Access to Playing Fields from The Green needs to be upgraded

11. Ambience/Uniqueness

11.1 Sounds and smells

- Busy traffic along Chester Road – intrusive – creates difficulties for pedestrians
- Fields to north of Chester Road, close to Grange Farmhouse, provides link to more peaceful green spaces and woodland

- Large churchyard with its many trees attracts wild birds and provides a quiet area in the centre of Hartford
- Sounds of children playing in the popular Grange Park Recreation Ground
- Sounds of tennis players audible along Chester Road and Bradburns Lane
- Bird song is significant in the more rural setting of The Crescent, Walnut Lane and The Grange and squirrels – apparently quite tame – are found searching amongst leaves



Tame? squirrels

11.2 Vitality and vibrance of the area

- There are no schools in the conservation area but The Grange School to the north and Hartford Campus to the east are generators of significant traffic movements early in the morning and in the late afternoons of term time
- Vehicular and pedestrian activity is concentrated along Chester Road
- Chester Road shops provide an important local amenity and are also popular with passing motorists due to the facility for on-street parking – despite its limitations
 - Shops include: chemist, hairdressers, shoe shop, florists, newsagents, and beautician – food shopping is catered for with bakers and small supermarket – an off-licence has recently closed
 - Red Lion Public House is at the centre of the village – no other pubs or restaurants in immediate vicinity
- Other shops within the conservation area include a post office in The Green and dry

cleaners, barbers, hair stylist, TV and video repairers and Co-op on School Lane

- St John's Church with its Church Hall is a focus for many community activities
- Grange Park Recreation Ground is a popular destination with young families
- Hartford Bowls and Tennis Club and Village Hall is a popular destination for youths and adults
- A busy veterinary practice operates from no. 267 Chester Road

11.3 Historical associations with unusual crafts, famous people and events

- Former Grange Kindergarten School is an early design of Sir Leslie Martin, co-architect of the Royal Festival Hall, London
- St. John's Church was designed by local architect John Douglas – a pupil of Chester based architect Paley – famous for churches – designed in partnership with Austin
 - New church benefactors included the Warrington millionaire soap magnate Sir Joseph Crossfield and successful local salt works owner Sir Joseph Verdin
- The Prince of Wales (later Edward VII) is rumoured to have once been a guest at a property in The Crescent

11.4 Other characteristics which make the area unique

- Grange Farmhouse provides an important link to Hartford's agricultural past
- Open fields and parkland close to the village centre – fairly unique in mid-Cheshire
- Garden suburbs style housing for senior Brunner Mond staff - an interesting example of early C20th patronage

Hartford Conservation Area Appraisal
(one of a series to be produced)

Revised after public consultation
VRBC Cons 7/X Feb 2004

Whilst an appraisal aims to identify the essential elements that give an area its character, it can only be a 'snapshot' in time.

Elements and details of an area may be important even if they are not specifically referred to in the document.

This document should be read in conjunction with "Conservation Area Appraisals", produced by Vale Royal Borough Council in July 1997.

Based on an initial survey and evaluation by
The Conservation Studio, 1 Querns Lane,
Cirencester, Gloucestershire, GL7 1RL

Hartford Conservation Area was designated by Cheshire County Council on 12 February 1974. It was reviewed in 2003/4 and the boundary was revised and extended.

This appraisal relates to the revised Hartford (Extended) Conservation Area that was designated by Vale Royal Borough Council on 26 February 2004 when the appraisal was adopted.

David M Hayes
Conservation and Design Manager
Environmental Policy
Vale Royal Borough Council
Wyvern House, The Drummer,
Winsford, Cheshire, CW7 1AH
Tele: 01606 867721
Email: dhayes@valeroyal.gov.uk

Hartford Conservation Area Proposed Extensions






Bowls & Tennis Club



Grange Park
Recreational Ground

Playing Field

1:3000

-  Extended Conservation Area Boundary
-  Area of no Special Architectural Interest
-  Unlisted Building of Townscape Merit
-  Locally Listed Buildings
-  Listed Building



VALE ROYAL
Borough Council

The heart of Cheshire

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LICENCE NO LA 079 863
 Vale Royal Borough Council
 Wyvern House, The Drumber, Winsford
 Cheshire, CW7 1AH
 Tel No (01606) 862862
 Web www.vale-royal.gov.uk