

Ashbourne

Conservation Area Appraisal

5. Setting of the Conservation Area



SETTING OF THE CONSERVATION AREA

Historic Context

Ashbourne consists of the main town north of the River Henmore (also known as Henmore Brook and Compton Brook). The sub-urban areas to the south of the river were originally the civil parishes of Clifton and Sturston, the boundary of the two dissecting Compton Street. The fringe of the town north of the river was known as Offcote and Underwood.

The original town core has changed little since the 13th century and the main east-west arterial route running parallel to the river has always been known as Church Street / St. John's Street. From this the market opened up as a triangular space and ascended the slope of the valley to the north. Plots on the north side of Church Street stretched up to Hillside and Back Lane (now known as Belle Vue Road) which ran parallel to Church Street across the top of the Market Place Belle Vue Road continued along Union Street (known originally as Gaudy Lane) and the continuation of this into the market then continued eastwards to Mutton Lane, (now King Street). This continued into Dark Lane (now the Green Road) and formed the turnpike road to Wirksworth and Alferton. St. John Street also continued east on the line of Cockayne Avenue to join the Green Road

The area to the east beyond the old town boundary known as Cockayne Avenue, was closed in 1745 to incorporate land into the Park for Brooke Boothby of Ashbourne Hall. It was not reopened until 1922 and its closure forced traffic to use the Green Road or Hall Lane and pass by the rear of Ashbourne Hall.

From the northern part of the Market Place, the steep upward slope to the top of the ridge was known as Low Top (now Buxton Road) which after the late 18th century formed the turnpike road to Buxton and Bakewell. A rural lane adjoined this junction and led east to join the Wirksworth Road (probably Windmill Lane).

Three roads led out across the valley bottom connecting Ashbourne with the suburbs in Sturston and Clifton each crossing the river via 18th century stone bridges. These roads were Sandy Lane (now Park Road), Church Lane (now School Lane) and Dig Street and its continuation Compton Street. Compton had originated as a mediaeval suburb and formed the main entrance to Ashbourne from Derby and the south. It was approached by a steep

winding road descending from the hillside known as Spital Hill. In 1785 Derby Road (originally New Road) was opened as a 'bypass' for Spital hill. From the foot of this hill Clifton Lane (now Station Street and Clifton Road) led west to Clifton and became a turnpike road to Lichfield. In the opposite direction Sturston Lane (now Sturston Road and Belper Road) became the turnpike road to Belper.

With the exception of Mayfield Road to the west, all roads approach the town via a descent. This is particularly steep on Buxton Road and Derby Road

In the late 1700s and early 1800's two areas of waste common land were developed with brick terraces (on the east side of Dove House Green and the north side of King Street). Further west King Street has been developed with late 19th century terraced property and early 20th century villas.

South of the river there was further development on the old hill and Clifton Road, and Sturston Road, but the majority of development was in the yards either side of Compton Street (around five yard areas) where speculative owners could develop their own small plots with the maximum number of houses

In 1899 the railway line extended through the tunnel under and behind the town into the Peak District and Buxton. Station Road was constructed across the old paddocks and the tunnel was made under Church Street. As such it is the only substantial alteration to the mediaeval street plan. The decline of coaching coupled with the competition from the railways led to a decline in Ashbourne's social and commercial prominence as the town was bypassed by main line routes.

The considerable building boom at the end of the 1700s was a result of the expansion of the population and the desire for housing after 1780. The Georgian population explosion saw little further change until the 1890's and it was the greatest rate of growth Ashbourne experienced between, and up to, the 20th century.

East and north of the Conservation Area

To the far north-east of the town 'The Green' still survives as open space, originally common pasture and creates an open space that heralds the arrival to the market town. Lands to the north were generally in use for lead mining, sheep and cattle rearing on the limestone plateaus and fulling mills were located nearby, producing cloth. Hence lead merchants, butchers and textile establishments in the town were appropriately located.

The area around the Green Road is predominantly host to 20th century property. This has mostly taken the form of housing estates to the north; to the east of the new Grammar School; and between King Street and Cockayne Ave.

The parkland adjacent to Ashbourne Hall was of older origins than the 18th century and was a creation for the Cockayne family for hunting purposes in the early Tudor period. It was developed as an ornamental park by the Boothbys in the late 17th century and enlarged to around 40 acres in the 1780s. The original park stretched across the Henmore probably as far as Belper Road. In 1784 the Wirksworth Road divided the Hall and Park but Brooke Boothby gained powers to have it stopped up where it passed the Hall. The diverted route was not restored until the creation of Cockayne Avenue in 1922 on a slightly altered route to pre 1785.

Ashbourne Hall and its associated parkland survives today, but in a much altered and reduced form. The park land mainly now serves as a setting for the War Memorial Gates and as a public recreation ground. A large extent of the park disappeared with the development in the early 20th century of both Council and private house building in both Cockayne Avenue and the Green Road and in the extensive Park estate towards the Belper Road.



Ashbourne Hall as currently remains.

The continuation of Buxton Road northwards, saw the construction of an Anglican church – Church of St. John the Baptist in 1870, along with a small number of Victorian villas on the fringes of the town, most notably along the crest of ridge on North Avenue. Modern development has violated the skyline on the north side of the town and on the south, but Ashbourne still has the appearance of a town cradled by hills. Further north along Buxton Road the urban form changes dramatically,

as 20th century detached properties have been constructed to the east side of the road on the site of the old cattle market. Roads serving the properties retain names which characterise its previous use – Drovers Way and Auction Close. Just beyond the brow of the hill there are spectacular views of extensive open countryside to the north.

To the north and west property to the north of Belle Vue Road land beyond the confines of the conservation area is mainly 20th century, with some notable exceptions close to Dove House and to the far eastern end of the Road. Land to the north-west is relatively undeveloped particularly to the rear of St. Oswald's Hospital and back along Dark Lane to the junction with Mayfield Road.



20th century properties lying along the north side of Belle Vue Road (looking east).

West and South of the Conservation Area

At the end of the 1800s terraced properties appeared especially on the western approach roads. In the early 20th century industrialisation of Ashbourne progressed with the development of a corset factory and the Nestle development. To the west of the town, a new southern bypass was constructed in the 1990s and a link road established between this bypass and Mayfield Road. The latter part of the last century saw substantial development, especially on this southern perimeter of the town, some of which is still taking place, particularly on the Nestle site, which is currently being re-developed as housing and a large-scale retail park to the south-west of the town.



View from Belle Vue Road looking south-west.

It is this area to the south and west of Station Road that is currently 'under construction'. A new doctors surgery and Ashbourne Leisure Centre have recently been constructed and a new hospital is proposed. Development has been planned to minimise any direct impact on views from the southern approach into the Conservation Area particularly in relation to views of St. Oswald's Church.



Entrance to Ashbourne Leisure Centre, with Kingdom Hall to the left of the photograph.



Doctors Surgery, Clifton Road – its form respects the gentle slope down to the brook.

Late 19th and early “20th century development occurred around Compton and on Clifton Road, the latter stepping up the sloping hillside in linear rows. Terraced housing also developed along Mayfield Road to the west of the town.



Linear development to the south of Clifton Road – Ashbourne Leisure Centre – to left of photograph.



Open areas of land used for car-parking adjacent the Leisure Centre / Kingdom Hall present a rather 'soul-less' appearance.

Extensive housing development has occurred to the south of the town off Derby Road. Views below look across the town from the higher ground of Derby Road and they demonstrate the built-up areas of the town in contrast to the surrounding countryside.



Above & below - views from Derby Road – an amorphous jumble of warm reds and browns, framed by the green hills and interspersed with trees.

