

# The Villas Conservation Area Appraisal

*February 2007*



# Contents

<b>LIST OF FIGURES</b> .....	<b>3</b>
<b>1. APPRAISAL CONTEXT</b> .....	<b>4</b>
<b>2. THE STUDY AREA</b> .....	<b>6</b>
<b>3. HISTORY AND ARCHAEOLOGY</b> .....	<b>7</b>
<b>4. SPATIAL ANALYSIS AND APPRAISAL OF VIEWS</b> .....	<b>11</b>
4.1 FORM.....	11
4.2 VIEWS.....	12
4.3 OPEN SPACES .....	12
<b>5. BUILT FORM</b> .....	<b>14</b>
5.1 THE INFLUENCE OF USE PATTERNS AND PATRONAGE.....	14
5.2 ARCHITECTURAL CHARACTER, MATERIALS, COLOURS AND TEXTURES.....	14
5.21 <i>Style</i> .....	
5.22 <i>Plan, Form and Massing</i> .....	15
5.23 <i>External Walls and Façade Finishes</i> .....	16
5.24 <i>Roofs</i> .....	18
5.25 <i>Windows</i> .....	18
5.26 <i>Porches</i> .....	19
5.27 <i>Doors</i> .....	19
5.28 <i>Enclosure</i> .....	20
5.29 <i>Shop Fronts</i> .....	
5.210 <i>Details and Features</i> .....	
5.211 <i>Groundscape and Public Realm</i> .....	222
5.3 LISTED AND UNLISTED BUILDINGS OF IMPORTANCE .....	22
5.4 TREES, GREEN SPACES, EDGES AND ECOLOGY.....	23
5.5 DETRACTORS, NEUTRAL AREAS AND GAP SITES – ENHANCEMENT AND DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES .....	23
<b>6. PRESSURES AND THREATS</b> .....	<b>24</b>
<b>7. SUMMARY OF SPECIAL INTEREST</b> .....	<b>25</b>
<b>8. RECOMMENDATIONS AND PROPOSALS</b> .....	<b>26</b>
<b>SOURCES</b> .....	<b>28</b>

---

## List of Figures

- FIG. 1: Digitised version of George Lynam's map, 1848
- FIG. 2: No. 21 The Villas (1984)
- FIG. 3: Central lamp standard and turning circle (1984)
- FIG. 4: View of the entrance from London Road
- FIG. 5: Outbuildings to No. 8
- FIG. 6: Extraction from HR Hitchcock showing typical Italian Villa of 1805
- FIG. 7: 1878 OS map extract
- FIG. 8: Sandstone wall and York stone pavements adjacent to No. 9
- FIG. 9: Stone details
- FIG. 10: Roofs
- FIG. 11: Windows
- FIG. 12: Porches, doors
- FIG. 13: Railings
- FIG. 14: Gates
- FIG. 15: Historic street surfaces
- FIG. 16: Trees and gardens
- FIG. 17: Harmful modifications
- FIG. 18: Nos 17 and 17a (1984)
- FIG. 19: Nos 6 and 7

---

# 1. Appraisal Context

- 1.1 This Character Appraisal has been prepared for The Villas Conservation Area, whose original boundaries were designated in July 1970, Stoke on Trent's first. It follows the previous Conservation area Document published in February 1999.
- 1.2 Conservation Areas are designated by Local Authorities under fulfilment of duties imposed by Section 69 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. This defines Conservation Areas as:

*"areas of special architectural or historic interest the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance"*

Special interest may originate from a variety of sources, while character is defined in a holistic sense rather than deriving from the merits of any single building.

- 1.3 Production of Character Appraisals is required under the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister's *Best Value* initiative (BVPI 219b), though best practice has long required their preparation. The objective of an Appraisal is to analyse and define in depth the special interest and traits which make up the *character* of a Conservation Area, to identify the pressures and challenges facing its survival and to recommend courses of action which will aid in achieving sensitive management, preservation and enhancement (the latter points fulfilling duties imposed by Section 71 of the 1990 Act).
- 1.4 Conservation Area status is a material consideration in the evaluation of planning applications. Here Section 72 of the 1990 Act requires Local Planning Authorities to pay special attention to the desirability of achieving preservation or enhancement through their decision making. Appraisals represent an important resource in fulfilling such duties while Planning Policy Guidance 15, *Planning and the Historic Environment*, provides a principal point of guidance. Where new development is planned Appraisals may provide a useful design resource to those proposing it.
- 1.5 Conservation Area status curtails certain 'permitted' householder development rights requiring planning permission to be sought in these areas (outlined in the General Permitted Development Order 1995). Local Authorities have further powers to restrict permitted developments to the forward elevations of properties that front the highway through the introduction of Article 4(2) designations, while approval of the Secretary of State is required for more wide ranging 4(1) designations. An Article 4 designation restricting the rendering or cladding of buildings was introduced for Hartshill in 1977, an area now covered by general restrictions in Conservation Areas introduced by the GPDO 1995.
- 1.6 BVPI 219c requires production of distinct Management Strategy documents for each Conservation Area. The basis of these documents is the analysis contained within and recommendations arising from each Appraisal. These documents will provide a boost in efficiency while helping ensure fulfilment of statutory duties. In the context of the new Local Development Framework (LDF) these Management Strategy documents may eventually be adopted as Supplementary Planning Documents.

- 
- 1.7 Work on the new LDF is currently proceeding. In the interim, policies included within the City Plan 2001 continue in force unless superseded by those arising from the Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Structure Plan 1996-2011 or Regional Planning Guidance. The City Plan reiterates the Authority's commitment to fulfilling statutory duties regarding Conservation Areas and listed buildings, sets design and development standards, while introduces two non-statutory 'lists' of relevance to this Appraisal: a *Local List* (Buildings of Special Local Interest) and *Areas of Archaeological Importance*.
- 1.8 When reading or using an Appraisal it is important to note that while every effort is made to provide detailed analysis the document can never be comprehensive. Failure to mention a particular element or detail *must not* be taken to imply that it is of no importance to an appreciation of the character or appearance of the Area and thus of no relevance in consideration of planning applications.
- 1.9 This Appraisal has been produced by the Directorate of Regeneration and Heritage (Urban Design and Conservation), Stoke-on-Trent City Council. Enquiries regarding this Appraisal should be addressed to:

Principal Urban Design and Conservation Officer  
01782 23 2477

Or

Senior Conservation Officer  
01782 23 2154

---

## **2. The Study Area**

- 2.1 “The Villas” is an estate of twenty-four houses, most dating from 1851-55, designed by prominent local architect, Charles Lynam. The estate was built by the Stokeville Building Society, and is referred to as “Stokeville” on early maps.
- 2.2 The Villas estate is located along the north side of London Road below Penkhull village on the outskirts of Stoke Upon Trent, and within the City Ward of Stoke and Trent Vale. Originally a distinct settlement set in green fields, it now merges with the late nineteenth-early twentieth century suburban sprawl of Stoke.
- 2.4 The Villas is still residential in character. Although many of the houses have been subdivided into apartments, or smaller houses, this has not led to a diminution of the special interest of the area. There are now approximately fifty separate dwellings on the site compared to the original twenty four.
- 2.5 The original houses were built in three distinct classes, offering different arrangements of accommodation and access. All provided accommodation for servants to “live in” and were clearly built for the 19<sup>th</sup> century middle classes.
- 2.6 The area has suffered from economic decline since its wealthy conception. It appears from census records that most houses were subdivided and rented out by the 1940’s and 1950’s. Many houses have been neglected and not maintained; the condition of the outbuildings has deteriorated, some to the point of demolition. No. 10 is the only house to have been demolished in the late 1960’s. However, for the last 20 years the middle classes have begun to restore the properties and the overwhelming majority are now back in owner occupation.

---

### **3. History and Archaeology**

- 3.1 The prehistory of the Area is currently vague though activity is known to have focused to the south in the vicinity of Penkhull. During the medieval period the area fell within the boundaries of Cliff or Clive Hay, a division of the vast Royal hunting reserve, *New Forest*. Records suggest the area was wooded. Cliff Hay remained a reserve until the early modern period, though disafforestation of the rest had occurred in 1205.
- 3.2 Stoke Upon Trent is shown as a small settlement in the Middle Ages; little more than a church and associated accommodation for the clergy. Penkhull is the main village, leaving Stoke undeveloped until the mid 18<sup>th</sup> century when the Trent and Mersey Canal, together with the Turnpike enlarge the commercial activity including the potworks ( later to become Spode).
- 3.3 In June 1850 a number of prominent inhabitants of Stoke formed themselves into an association which they called "The Stokeville Building Society". The purpose was to build and own houses on copyhold land outside the town of Stoke upon Trent.



FIGURE 1: *Digitised version of George Lynam's Map (1848)*

- 
- 3.4 The map above, an digitised version of George Lynam's map of 1848 shows the land chosen for the development (outlined). The site was then in open fields on the Turnpike road from the Black Lion Inn at Trent Vale to the town of Stoke and less than a mile from the railway station.
- 3.5 As stated in the Hartshill appraisal, during the 1840s-50s Herbert Minton and his nephew Colin Minton-Campbell attempted to impose some order, social and structural, upon the indistinct form of Hartshill. The means adopted were a clear display of status, with Gilbert-Scott employed as architect for the new church and associated cottages. Here too, the Minton family were influential in providing housing and establishing the status of the professional classes. Herbert Minton, pottery manufacturer in Stoke, was a founder member of the Society. The 10 acre site belonged to the Rev. Thomas Minton, brother of Herbert; he sold it to the Society for £200 per acre. This was an association of local people formed with the intention of financing and constructing new houses. The Society included master potters and local artists. A loan was obtained for the construction of the houses, and members of the Society then paid monthly subscriptions to repay it. Ownership of the houses was transferred to the Society members once the loan was repaid.
- 3.6 Initially many owners did not themselves live in the houses, but let them to tenants. As the properties changed hands there was a gradual reduction in the proportion of rented houses until by 1879 the majority were owner-occupied.



**FIGURE 2:** No. 21 The Villas (1984)

- 3.7 Herbert Minton suggested the choice of Architect, Charles Lynam who was only 21 years old. The houses were built in a succession of four contracts between 1851 and 1855. Ten Villas were built as first class houses (nos. 8-17) six more as second class

---

(1-4, 23 and 24) and finally eight as third class in the centre of the estate (5-7 and 18-22).

- 3.8 The occupancy levels and type of owner did not change until the first world war. The character of the surroundings of the estate gradually changed between 1850 and 1914. Maps show that the green fields surrounding the Villas were developed to provide terrace housing. By 1914 all the land fronting London Road between Stoke and Oakhill had been built on, the exclusive nature of the estate was no longer enhanced by its immediate environment. In the 1920's and 1930's the higher land between Penkhull and London Road was also developed.
- 3.9 The houses were becoming out - dated and less attractive to the middle class who could move further towards the outer suburbs. The villa accommodation was originally designed to be maintained by servants, who became difficult to recruit. These factors led to a significant change in occupation. The first sub-division of the houses occurred in 1929, but the main decline of the estate happened during and after the second world war. The removal of the gates and ornamental ironwork in 1938 had a significant impact. The gate posts themselves may have survived longer, but the 1952 O.S. Map no longer shows them.
- 3.10 No. 1 the Villas became a boarding house and remained so for many years; its clear visibility from London Road presented the possibility of a commercial use not easily utilised by properties deeper within the plot. It is now owned by Stoke on Trent City Council and used as a hostel.
- 3.11 No. 24 The Villas has been used as a Doctor's surgery, again, its position adjacent to London Road offers the opportunity to use the property for additional functions. Maps indicate that the house was modified and a new block was built with access directly to London Road by 1924. This modification is still apparent in 1937 and by the 1974 O.S. map, it becomes a larger extension, which is currently in a poor state of repair. This very poor extension disfigures no. 24 and it is remarkable that the building was listed in 1972 in this state.
- 3.12 Interest in The Villas revived in the late 1970's and early 1980's when the houses were gradually brought back into owner occupation by the middle class. Sub-divisions were removed and some features restored.

---

## 4. Spatial Analysis and Appraisal of Views

### 4.1 Form

4.11 The layout of The Villas reflects a mixture of formality and picturesque informality. The principal roads through the estate are symmetrically arranged in the form of a **T**. Narrower side roads flank the development and link to the properties at the rear of the site in an increasingly informal layout, responding to the site boundary. The gardens although originally formally laid out, are now largely overgrown and obscure the frontages of some of the buildings. The Villas is built on an incline; this becomes more pronounced towards the rear (west) of the site. The elevation of properties towards the rear lends them prominence.



**FIGURE 3:** *Central lamp standard and turning circle (1984)*

4.12 The Conservation Area is set out formally; the plots for the dwellings are drawn symmetrically to each side of a central spine. The spine is punctuated by a turning circle in the form of a raised landscaped bed with a central lamp standard. The lamp is not original and no longer possesses an appropriate lamp or shade. An article in the Daily Mail dated 12 July 1956 includes a photograph of the original lamp on an impressive stone base, which survives but is in poor condition.

---

## 4.2 Views



**FIGURE 4:** *View of the entrance from London Road*

### 4.21 Views of quality out of the Area are limited:

- The growth of trees has closed most vistas, with the exception of the open field opposite nos. 9-12. which has remained undeveloped.
- The estate is essentially an enclave, a closed community, with perimeter walls. The surrounding development backs on to these walls presenting views of ad-hoc compositions of garden sheds and rear elevations of terraced houses.
- The view down towards London road has no focal point or landmark. The land immediately opposite the entrance gates, to the east side of London Road was part of the original plot purchased by the society, this remained open land without ornament; its intention being to limit development and to protect the exclusive nature of the estate. Terraced houses, optimistically named “Villa Street” were later developed adjacent to the open land and were effectively kept at arm’s length by the open plot. Minutes of the Building Society reveal that it was rented out for sheep in the first instance. Later it was enclosed by a “cinder” wall and landscaped. Records show it was used as a semi-public garden, sometimes used for flower shows and similar public events. Currently the wall no longer contains an entrance from London Road and is simply an enclosure to sports facilities.

### 4.22 Views within the Area are of the most importance:

- The view from the entrance towards the upper terrace
- The view from the terrace towards no. 12
- The views from the service roads of the coach houses, including impressive gate piers to the rear of no.21.



**FIGURE 5:** *Outbuildings*

### **4.3 Open Spaces**

- 4.31 The gardens have a substantial impact upon the character and appearance of the buildings and the conservation area as a whole. As discussed elsewhere in this document the architectural design of the houses depended greatly upon the size, location and outlook of the principal rooms. The gardens were similarly controlled, formal planting to the front and side of each property, the kitchen garden and service areas screened by a conservatory/greenhouse and fruit trees. These formerly controlled spaces are now mature dense groups of foliage which screen some of the houses on the higher parts of the plot. Whilst they give privacy to the owners they also obscure views of the houses from the central spine. This gives a different feeling to the estate to the one intended, and the full impact of the larger houses to the Terrace is now lost. Given that the impact of the landscaping is so powerful, regard must be paid to how the trees are to be managed in the future. The setting of the houses to the lower levels feels very different to that of the elevated areas.
- 4.32 The terrace is potentially a very formal area, almost a stage from which to view either the imposing houses or the roof-scape of those below. It is somewhat spoilt by the views of the rear elevations of neighbouring development.
- 4.33 The central turning circle and lamp standard is an important architectural device for the setting of the buildings. It is the focal point on entry, enforced by the lack of a similar feature at the centre of the higher terrace. Its appearance and condition has a marked effect upon the perception of the place. Photographs showing the central feature with no planting or controlled planting give a much more formal atmosphere.

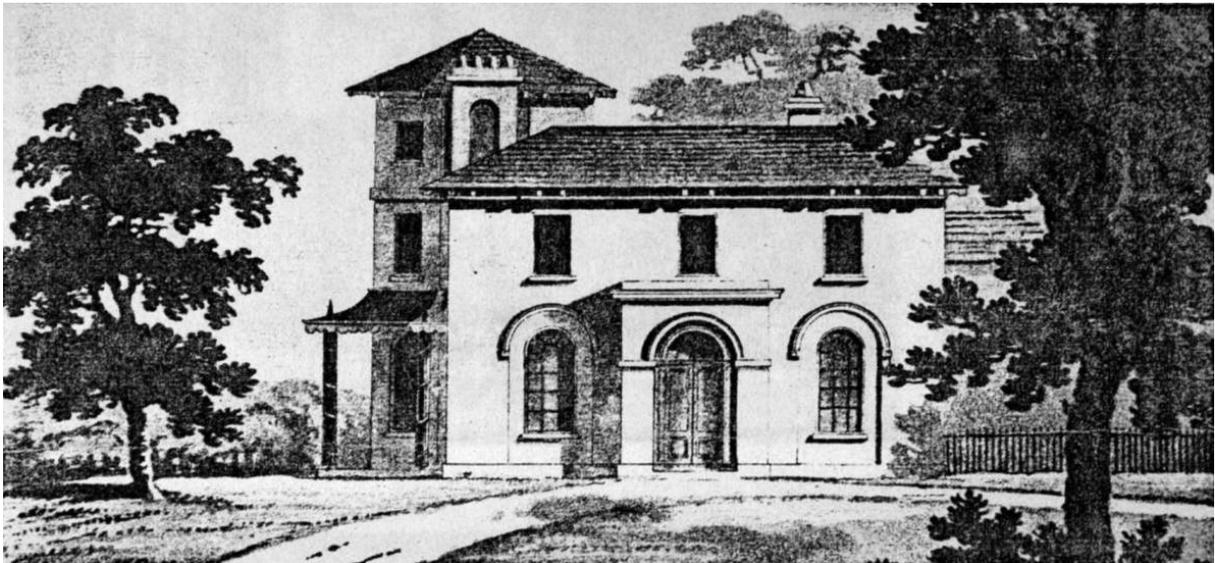
---

## **5. Built Form**

### **5.1 Style**

5.12 The design of all twenty four houses that were built at “Stokeville” are described as Italianate by Pevsner in his buildings of England series. He adds “(they) boast the short towers so typical of the Italianate of the 1840’s.” However, although the style may be that of the 1840’s, the houses were later. This is also discussed in the Historic Buildings Survey of no. 14 carried out in 1984 by the City Council as follows:

“Charles Lynam owed a great debt with his designs to a much earlier nineteenth century tendency in residential building which took the Italian Villa - via the paintings of Claude and Poussin – as its model. However, whereas this earlier interest in villas had been characterised as a means for providing a “modest retreat for gentlemen”, it had by the 1840’s also become one to which the suburban middle classes also aspired. This would indicate that Charles Lynam’s Villa designs were a very late contribution to an architectural fashion already in decline.”



**FIGURE 6:** *Extract from HR Hitchcock showing typical Italian Villa of 1805*

## **5.2 Architectural Character, Materials, Colours and Textures**

### **5.21 Character**

5.22 The footprints of the individual properties are very varied, providing a counter to the general formality of the estate plan. The houses also demonstrate variation and picturesque characteristics in their form and composition, within a general Italianate architectural language. No two properties are alike, but common characteristics including materials, window shapes and glazing details and roof pitch contribute to the “estate” or “group” identity. It is a concern that the statutory listing has isolated exemplars of the building types and not recognised the group value as a whole. The

---

overall composition is therefore vulnerable to un-characteristic change. The landscape in which the houses sit contributes greatly to the character of the conservation area. The topography of the site has been used to emphasise the importance of the largest houses and the commanding position of the terrace ensured that all visitors could be clearly seen by all. The original formal gardens gave a further tier of height; the houses are now more private but have lost their impact obscured by a comparatively wild and overgrown landscape. This air of romantic decay is further enhanced by the poor state of the boundary walls, pavements and road surface. This evident lack of control is in stark contrast to the original intention of public display and absolute control of public and private.

## 5.21 **Plan, Form and Massing**

The three classes of villa are defined by certain characteristics. The first class dwelling is the largest house type and is detached. With the exception of no. 8, nos. 9-16 are offset to the right of the plot of land in which they stand. This allows the facades to the front and left to form the strongest parts of the architectural composition; these are where the windows to the principal rooms lie, overlooking formal gardens. In contrast, the elevations to the right and rear are concerned with the service areas of the houses and a separate tradesmen's entrance with few windows. The kitchens and wash-houses are effectively separated from the "polite" accommodation and originally screened in the landscape of the garden by the use of walls and/or conservatories.

The yards and service entrances were served by path leading off the service road running around and across the estate, independent of the resident's access road. Some of the houses still retain coach-houses and stables immediately adjacent to this service road, originally designed to resemble small houses in their own right complete with chimney stacks. The architect's concern to separate the areas within the house is further enforced by the lack of windows to the rear façade from the principal bedrooms. Any window thus placed is obscured by stained glass.

The second class dwellings, 1-4, and 23-24 are smaller semi-detached villas, also offset within the individual plots to give exactly the same scope for social distinctiveness, albeit on a slightly smaller scale. These L shaped compositions allow for service yards to the rear, tradesmen's entrances and coach-houses serviced from the perimeter roads as before. Principal windows face the front and outer edges overlooking the (originally) formal gardens.

The third class villa is a detached house placed in the centre of its plot. These houses are less conscious of social separation, are less formally laid out and have smaller service yards.

The scale of the buildings is not clearly evident within the estate because of the strong similarity between all the houses. It is only when the Conservation Area is viewed from areas such as Harding Terrace or Hunters Way that comparisons can be drawn. The houses within the conservation area are up to four times the footprint and three times the height of adjacent terraced houses.

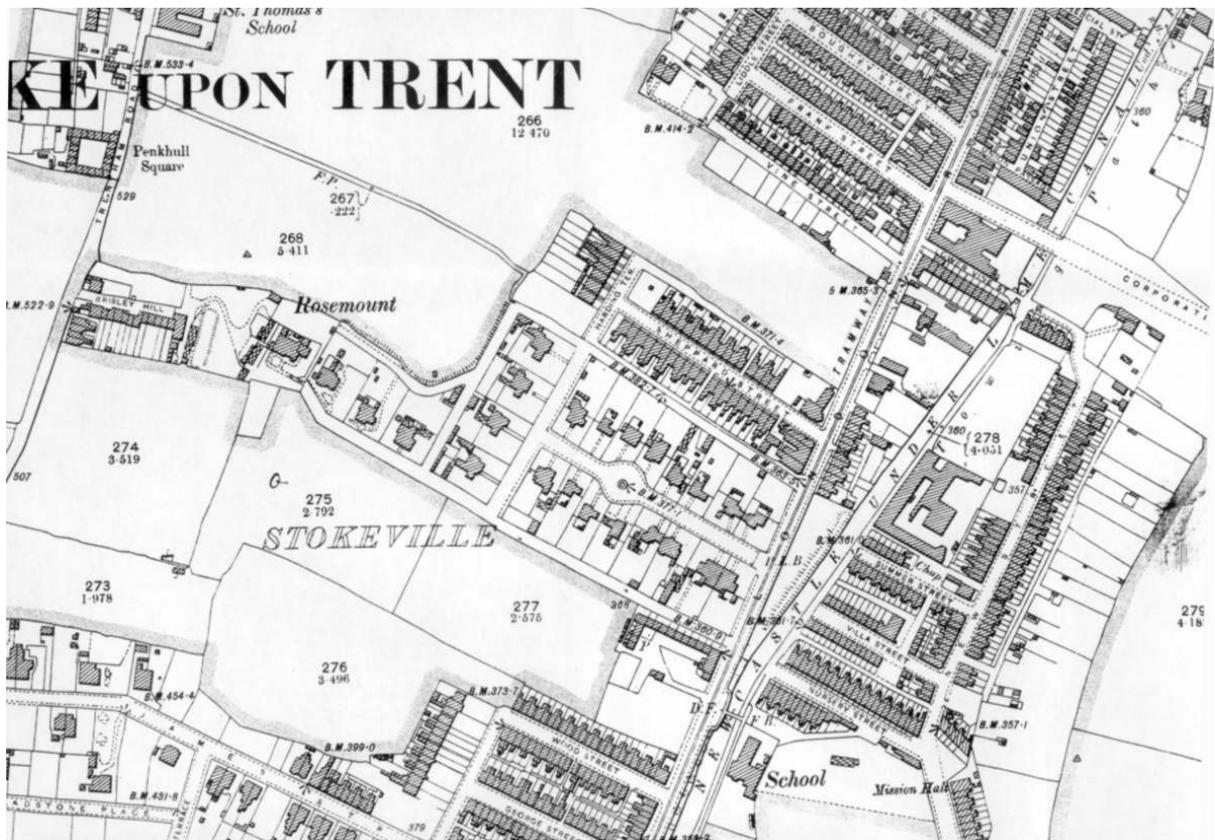


FIGURE7:.. 1878 os map extract

## 5.22 External Walls and Façade Finishes

### Stucco

The houses are constructed from brick that is rendered and painted to resemble stone. Some of the properties retain the external markings incised into the surface to resemble ashlar blocks, others have been more simply re-rendered with a smooth or slightly textured finish. Early descriptions describe the original colour to be similar to Portland stone, but the use of different colours for different houses has changed the character of the composition.

### Brickwork

Brickwork is reserved for the garden walls, Coach-houses and some laundry buildings. The walls to the front gardens originally carried railings which pierced York stone capping. The minutes of the Stokeville Building Society record that the bricks were made on site from the "dirt" which had to be moved during the landscaping works. The bond is generally English, with some English Garden Wall.



**FIGURE 8:** *Sandstone wall and york stone pavements adjacent to no. 9*

### Stonework

The window and door dressings, window bays and entrance porch details are constructed from a pale sandstone, possibly local. This has not weathered well and without exception is now painted with many layers of oil paint. York stone is used for the paving, gutters, kerb stones and steps to the central lamp standard. York stone is also used to form the capping for entrance gate piers, garden walls and garden steps.



**FIGURE 9:** *Stone details*

---

## 5.23 Roofs

- Material

All roofs were originally covered in clay pantiles, a strong visual characteristic associated with the Italianate style of the 1840's. Few remain today and there are now many variations in material; replacement roofs include concrete tiles and welsh slate.



**FIGURE10: Roofs**

- Pitch and Type

The shallow pitched roofs with their overhanging and bracketed eaves are a common unifying feature of the buildings in the conservation area. The roof surfaces are not a dominant characteristic of the area because the pitches are so shallow and the sightlines constrained within the site itself. It is the impact of the eaves and brackets which play the dominant role. Views from adjacent roads (especially at the north end) into the site give a stronger emphasis to the roof-scape.

## 5.24 Windows

- Type and Fenestration

Across the Area sash windows remain the most common window type providing a vertical emphasis to facades. A few broader casements do however occur as either components of original designs or as later alterations on a number of properties. Windows are single or paired; composite or tripartite arrangements separated by ornamental mullions or balusters in stone. Bay windows are a common feature on

---

the ground floors of most of the houses, these doubled up at first floor level in two or three instances but look unconvincing. Arrangements vary, though repetition within the facades maintains a sense of regularity. It is common for windows to carry a heavy rectangular stone cill and lintel though some are framed completely by a raised stone band, both arch and square headed. There is an evident hierarchy in design cost and size, the principal rooms having the largest and most intricate designs. The original sashes do not have horns, the most impressive have margin lights. These are not further embellished by the use of different glass, although there are examples of both stained and painted glass in front doors and to windows in rooms or spaces that overlook the service areas. The most common form of replacement is an Edwardian casement window but unfortunately there are also late 20<sup>th</sup> century alterations which represent a clear loss of detail and character.



**Figure 11:** *Windows*

### **5.25 Porches**

The entrance to individual villas varies a great deal. In some compositions the entrance door is well recessed inside a projecting porch, which then becomes the most important feature of the ground floor. Porches provide opportunity for Minton tiled pavements and (possibly later) wall tiling to dado height. Other houses have front doors are simply fitted to the side of a projecting bay and do not in themselves feature on the front elevation; these have simple projecting hoods to protect the visitor.

### **5.26 Doors**

Few original or unaltered front doors survive, though most houses retain altered doors that have been adapted to accommodate larger panes of glass in the upper panels.



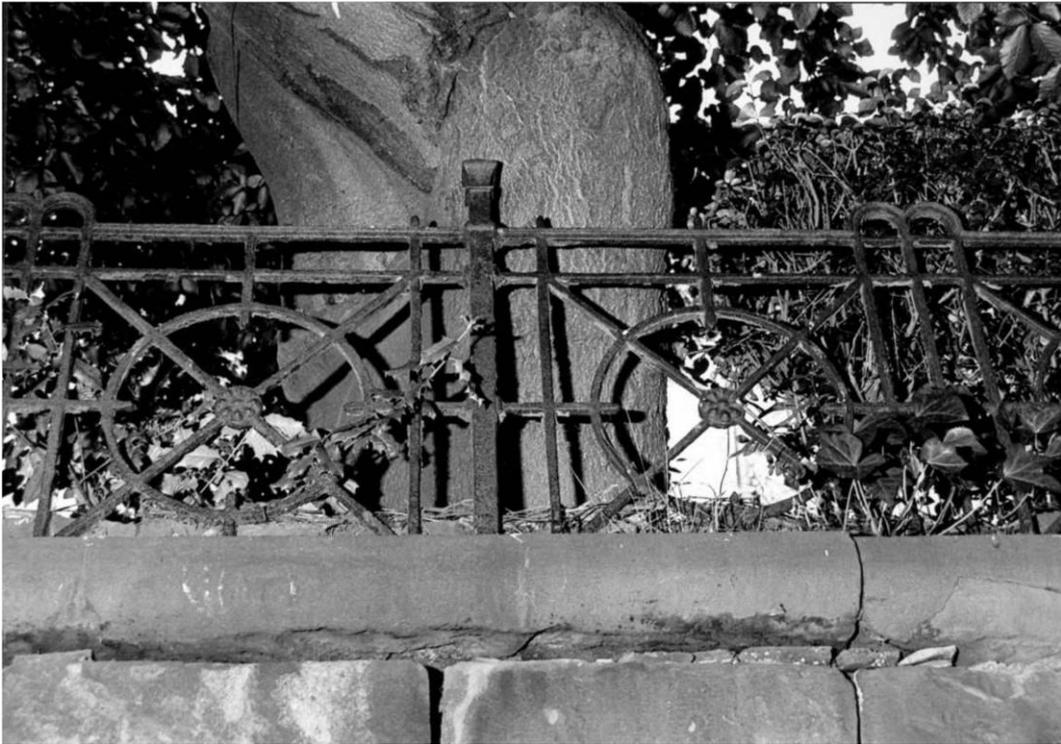
**FIGURE 12:** *Porches, doors*

### **5.27 Enclosure**

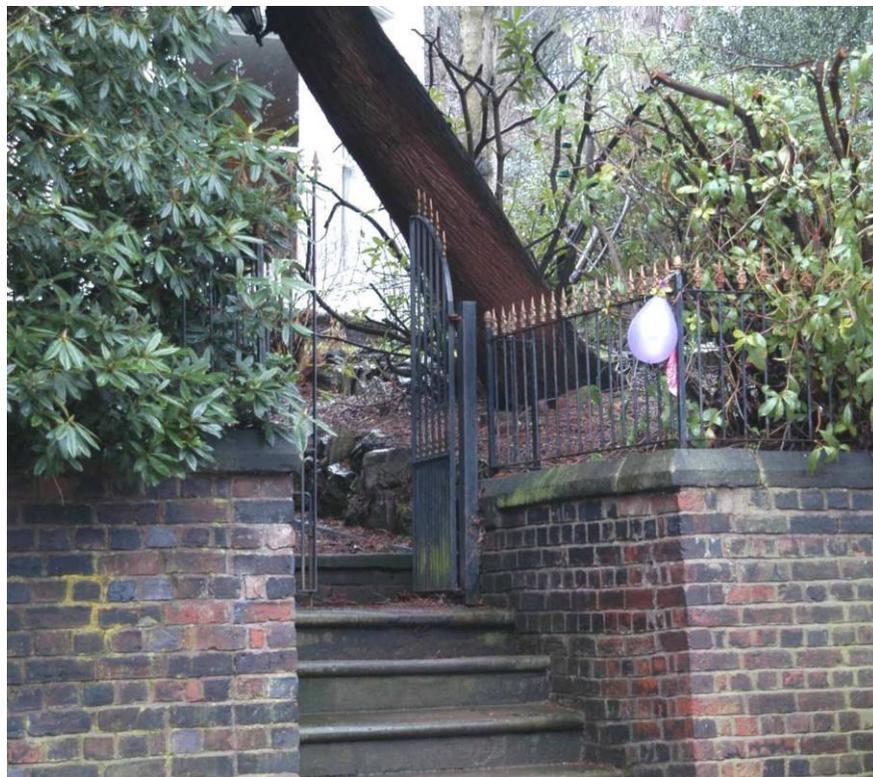
In all cases private space to the front and rear of properties was historically enclosed by brick walls, though in many cases to the rear these have been breached, replaced or swept away without provision of alternative following redevelopment or simple decay. Railings were a historic feature of the properties at the front and sides. Photographic evidence exists of original railings to no. 14 The Villas, although it is unclear from inspecting the property if remnants survive under the vegetation. The design was based on repeated square sections into which were placed elliptical spoked wheels. “Stokeville” was unusual not only because it was built as a middle class estate with a consistent architectural style designed by an architect as a “set piece,” but also because it was built as an enclosed estate – a gated community. This was the first of its type in North Staffordshire and emphasised – as would do today- the exclusive nature of the development. Photographic evidence shows the gates as viewed from London Road in 1919. There was a pair of carriage gates, with stone pillars, flanked by two smaller pedestrian gates opening onto the pavements. These were of a simple design, the railings topped with arrow heads. The service roads were also gated at London Road but access to the rear service road was in fact a public right of way, from Penkhull to London Road. This is clearly shown on the 1848 map, although it was part of a much earlier footpath to Boothem. The rear of the site was not enclosed until the late 1920’s when the land to the rear was developed for housing which removed the path entirely. Photographic evidence provided by Edwardian postcards, confirmed by site inspection shows that the railings to the front walls were formed by sets of 5 or 7 simple iron spikes of 3 or 4mm diameter interspersed with larger 50mm square sectioned posts. All uprights united with one horizontal bar. Railings to the party fence walls running

---

perpendicular to these have wider spaced square sectioned posts only. These are more likely to have had railings similar to no. 14 shown below.



**FIGURE 13:** *Railings*



**FIGURE 14:** *Gates*

---

## 5.29 Groundscape

- Gutter, pavement and kerbing in York stone have survived - but are in an appalling start of repair.
- There are surviving kerbs in the service road to the north.
- The original road surface may have been topped with gravel, but the existing surface is compacted earth and hardcore now lacking any bound surface to shed the rain.



FIGURE 15: *Historic street surfaces*

## 5.3 Listed and Unlisted Buildings of Importance

### 5.31 Buildings on the Statutory List

- 1 The Villas Grade II
- 2 The Villas Grade II
- 3 The Villas Grade II
- 4 The Villas Grade II
- 5 The Villas Grade II
- 15 The Villas Grade II
- 17 The Villas Grade II
- 18 The Villas Grade II
- 23 The Villas Grade II
- 24 The Villas Grade II

### 5.32 Buildings of Special Local Interest Listed in the Local Plan

- 6-9 The Villas (inclusive)
- 11 The Villas
- 12a and 12b The Villas
- 13 The Villas
- 14 The Villas
- 16 The Villas
- 19 The Villas

- 
- 20 The Villas
  - 21 The Villas
  - 22 The Villas



**FIGURE 16:** *Trees and gardens*

## **5.4 Trees, Green Spaces, Edges and Ecology**

5.41 Large mature gardens mean that trees tend to be concentrated along boundaries between properties. Other decorative specimens are placed in the front and side gardens to give scale. Several Tree Preservation Orders have been made, but the majority are also protected by the Conservation Area Status. Trees play an important role in landscaping, however the formal layout of the gardens has been lost and the trees have not been pruned or cared for. The result is that many trees to the rear of plots have become overgrown and the general impression is that of romantic chaos. The resulting density blocks inward views obscuring the relationship of individual houses to their plots and to the rest of the Area.

## **5.5 Detractors and Neutral Areas – Enhancement and Development Opportunities**

5.51 Features which detract from the character and appearance of the Area include:

- Loss of entrance gates and insensitive enclosure at the entrance now gives a poor impression
- Off-road parking in the central area has become congested
- Replacement windows and doors, particularly those made of PVCu. These are often of varied design within terraces, spoiling their harmony, while plastic windows are intrinsically harmful to the appearance and fabric of historic buildings.

- 
- Loss of original gates and railings to fronts of properties
  - Loss of original boundary walls
  - The poorly designed extension and alterations to nos. 1 and 24 The Villas disfigure the buildings and spoil the approach from London Rd.
  - Poor signage at entrance and poor replacement lamp standards of a variety of designs within the estate, especially at focal points such as the centre of the terrace and at the centre of the turning circle.
  - The loss or replacement of original chimney stacks
  - The loss or replacement of original roofing tiles
  - Poor condition of road surface, pavements, gutters and boundary walls especially those to the rear
  - Poor condition of original outbuildings



**FIGURE 17:** *Harmful modifications.*

5.52 Gap sites are currently limited. They appear to be no new development opportunities between plots, or, given the topography, at the rear or the gardens. Planning constraints are unlikely to enable the surviving service buildings to be in separate ownership.

## **6. Pressures and Threats**

6.1 A buoyant housing market is evident within the Area at present with prices fairly high. There is a significant risk that incoming residents will modify their properties, removing unprotected original features including the windows, doors and boundary walls which play such an important part in providing the Area's special interest.

6.2 The ownership of the road is at present unclear and there is no registered owner at the Land Registry. The original provisions to ensure that the road was kept in a good state

---

of repair appear to have lapsed with the original Trust. The City Council have made it clear that they are unwilling to adopt the road in such a poor condition. This may have had the unintentional but welcome effect of preserving the high quality stone on site which may have otherwise disappeared. Negotiations must continue between all interested parties to secure a solution.

## **7. Summary of Special Interest**

Architecture The Villas Conservation Area holds within it the highest concentration of both statutorily listed and locally listed buildings within Stoke-on-Trent. It is the first example of a gated community in north Staffordshire and contains buildings with high and consistent architectural merit.

History The Area has strong associations with the Mintons, its chief patrons and one of Stoke's celebrated dynasties; built on land formerly belonging to the family, Herbert Minton and his nephew Michael Daintry Hollins were founder members of the "Stokeville" society. The association between the firm and the estate was maintained when Leon Arnoux (pottery designer) came from France to work for Mintons and moved into no.13. He was joined in 1870 by Louis Marc Solon (ceramic artist) who moved into no. 1 The Villas and eventually married Maria, daughter of Leon Arnoux. .

Character and Appearance The Area has a strong visual identity which is unlike any other in the vicinity. Whilst housing for the wealthier classes does exist, it is often for the most wealthy pottery manufacturers and takes the form of individual houses on a grand scale. What makes this special, is the composition of the buildings within a composed landscape. The Villas being the only example of an architectural "set-piece" for domestic architecture within Stoke-on-Trent.



**FIGURE 18:** Nos 17 and 17a in 1984

## **8. Recommendations and Proposals**

- 8.1 It is not proposed to alter the existing boundaries of the Conservation Area (CA). The CA covers the entire “Stokeville” estate.
- 8.2 As recommended in the 1998 Conservation Area Document, an Article 4 (2) direction should be declared to protect doors and windows on the unlisted properties. This should also extend to protect garden walls to protect existing boundaries and preserve front gardens which add greatly to the character and appearance of the area.
- 8.3 With regard to painting the houses, railings, lamps and other street furniture, the residents should be encouraged to choose a palette of colours that enhances the similarities between the buildings and reinforces the group value of the buildings.
- 8.4 Work needs to be done to improve the entrance to the estate. No. 1 and 24 both suffer from large inappropriate extensions which can be modified to improve their appearance. Landscaping could be beneficial here. The cinder wall opposite the entrance would benefit from a central feature.
- 8.5 Restoration of lost railings and gates could be an informed conservation project or grant scheme, as photographic evidence survives showing the original designs.

- 
- 8.6 The house exemplars that are listed and unlisted should be reviewed as recommended in the survey of 1984.
  - 8.7 Although the majority of trees are protected, a comprehensive survey should be undertaken to establish the number, type and rarity of specimens present in the gardens. This could be done by the residents association with initial help from the tree officer. This would help with any emerging management plan concerning replanting, see below.
  - 8.8 Specific advice needs to be drawn up to address the continuing problem of the historic importance of the trees when in conflict with the historic importance and structural stability of boundary walls.
  - 8.9 Consideration should be given to reintroducing appropriate lamp standards to the conservation area, with special emphasis on the central feature where a “feature” lamp could be provided.
  - 8.10 Provision of an information point giving detail about the area and its history might be considered. This could be incorporated into the design of a central feature were this course followed.
  - 8.11 Participation in the “Heritage Open Days” scheme might be considered by the residents’ committee to improve public access and possible grant eligibility.



**FIGURE 19:** Nos 6 and 7

## **Sources**

### **Books/Pamphlets**

Baker, D, 1991: *Potworks*. RCHME.

Dobraszczyk, A. *Social History Walks: The Minton Family and Hartshill*. Keele University.

Dobraszczyk, A. *Social History Walks: The Villas Stoke-upon-Trent*. Keele University

City of Stoke on Trent Historic Building Survey : 14 *The Villas*

Joan B. Turner "*The Stokeville Building Society 1850-1886*" Keele University dissertation.

H.R. Hitchcock : *Early Victorian Architecture in Britain*. Yale University press 1954, 1972.

Victoria County History Vol. VIII.

### **Maps**

Hargreaves Map 1832.

OS various scales: 1877, 1900,1924, 1937,1952,1974.

### **Photographs**

Original pictures (Hartshill Conservation Area Photographic Survey).

(Stoke City Archives):

Staffordshire Past-track.

### **Policy documents to which reference made**

DoE, 1995: *PPG15: Planning and the Historic Environment*.

*General Permitted Development Order 1995*.

Government Office for the West Midlands: *RPG 11 Regional Planning Guidance for the West Midlands*.

*Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990*.

Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Structure Plan 1996-2011.

Stoke-on-Trent City Council: *Local Plan 2001*.