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**Feckenham
Conservation Area,
Feckenham,
Redditch**

Character Appraisal

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Character Appraisal for Feckenham Conservation Area

DECEMBER 2005

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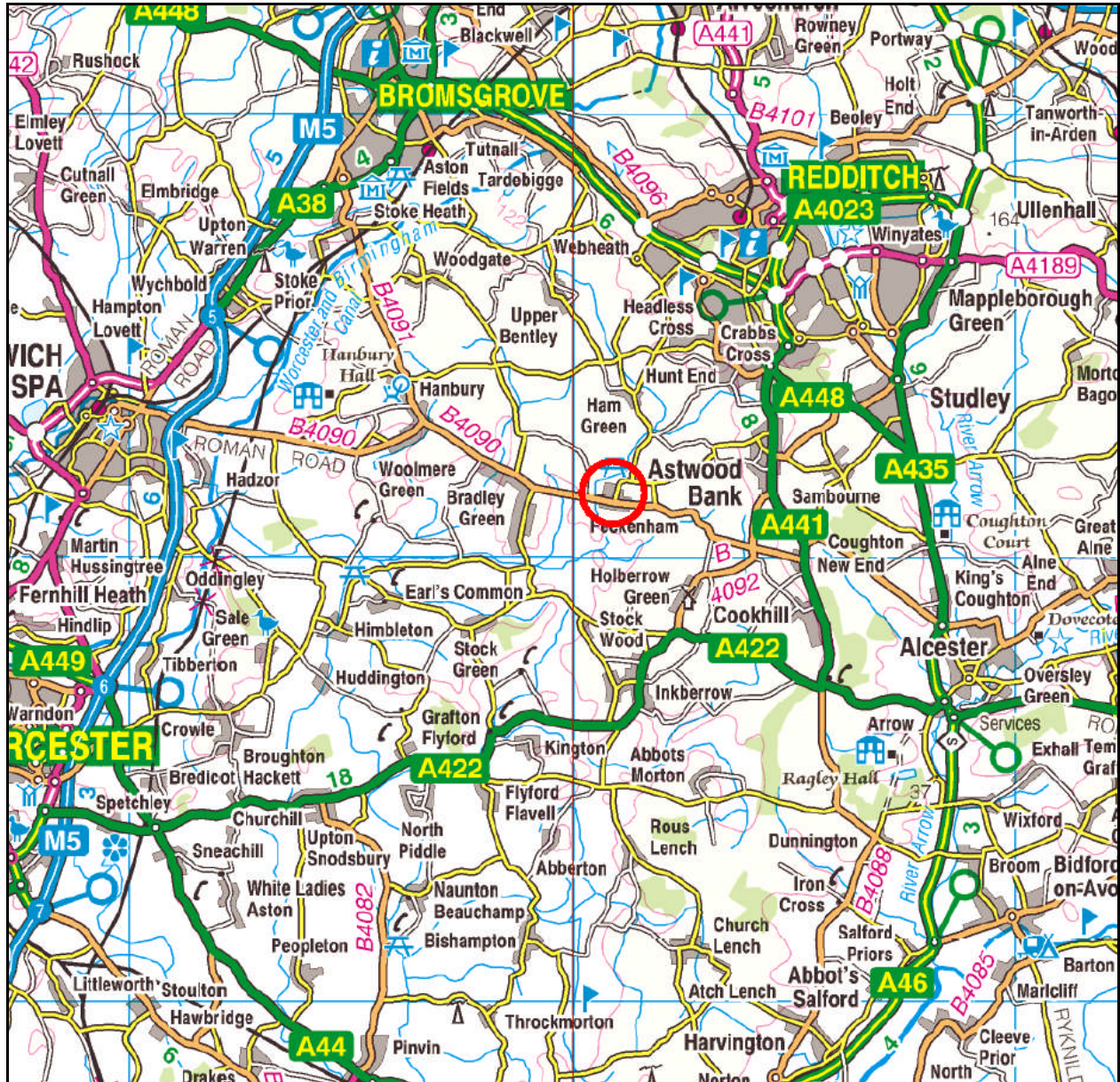


Fig 1: Location map of Feckenham

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

This character appraisal relates to Feckenham Conservation Area, which incorporates most of the historic village of Feckenham. The village is located just over 5 miles south-west of Redditch town centre in the north-eastern corner of the County of Worcestershire. The land to the north of the B4090 is designated Green Belt, the land to the south of the B4090 is open countryside.

The Conservation Area was originally designated by Worcestershire County Council on 10 November 1969 and was extended by Redditch Borough Council on 20 June 1995 to cover 14.2 hectares in extent.

The Conservation Area is roughly triangular in shape and is based around the two principal streets: the High Street, which runs north/south through the village, and the Alcester/Droitwich Road (B4090), which is set at right angles to the High Street and is aligned east/west. The remaining part of the Area is located largely to the north-west of these two streets and includes the parish church, the Square, the eastern end of Mill Lane and the site of the Royal Hunting Lodge, a scheduled ancient monument. Most of the buildings in the Area front onto the two main streets or onto the Square. They are almost all in residential use and vary in date from the sixteenth century to the present day.

This document is intended to define and analyse the special architectural and historic interest of the Area and, thereby, to assist all concerned with the use and development of land and buildings within and adjoining it in order to preserve and enhance its character in accordance with Policy CTL.11 of the Redditch Borough Council Local Plan No.2.

The Conservation Area boundary, together with a number of features referred to in this document is shown in Fig. 2.

2.0 LEGISLATIVE AND POLICY FRAMEWORK

Conservation Areas were introduced through the Civic Amenities Act in 1967. In 1971, Section 277 of the Town and Country Planning Act made it a requirement of every local planning authority to identify such Areas, the legal definition of which has since been defined as follows:

an area of special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance.

See Section 69 (a) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990

An Area can vary in size or form from a town centre to smaller groups of buildings, streets and squares and it may include an historic street plan, village green or other open space or an archaeological feature which may make a special contribution to its character. These Areas form an important element within the government's strategy and policies for preserving the Nation's heritage, which place considerable emphasis on the need to promote the enjoyment and understanding of the heritage as a reminder of our past, of how our forbears lived, and how our culture and society have developed. (See 'This Common Inheritance', White Paper on the Environment, September 1990)

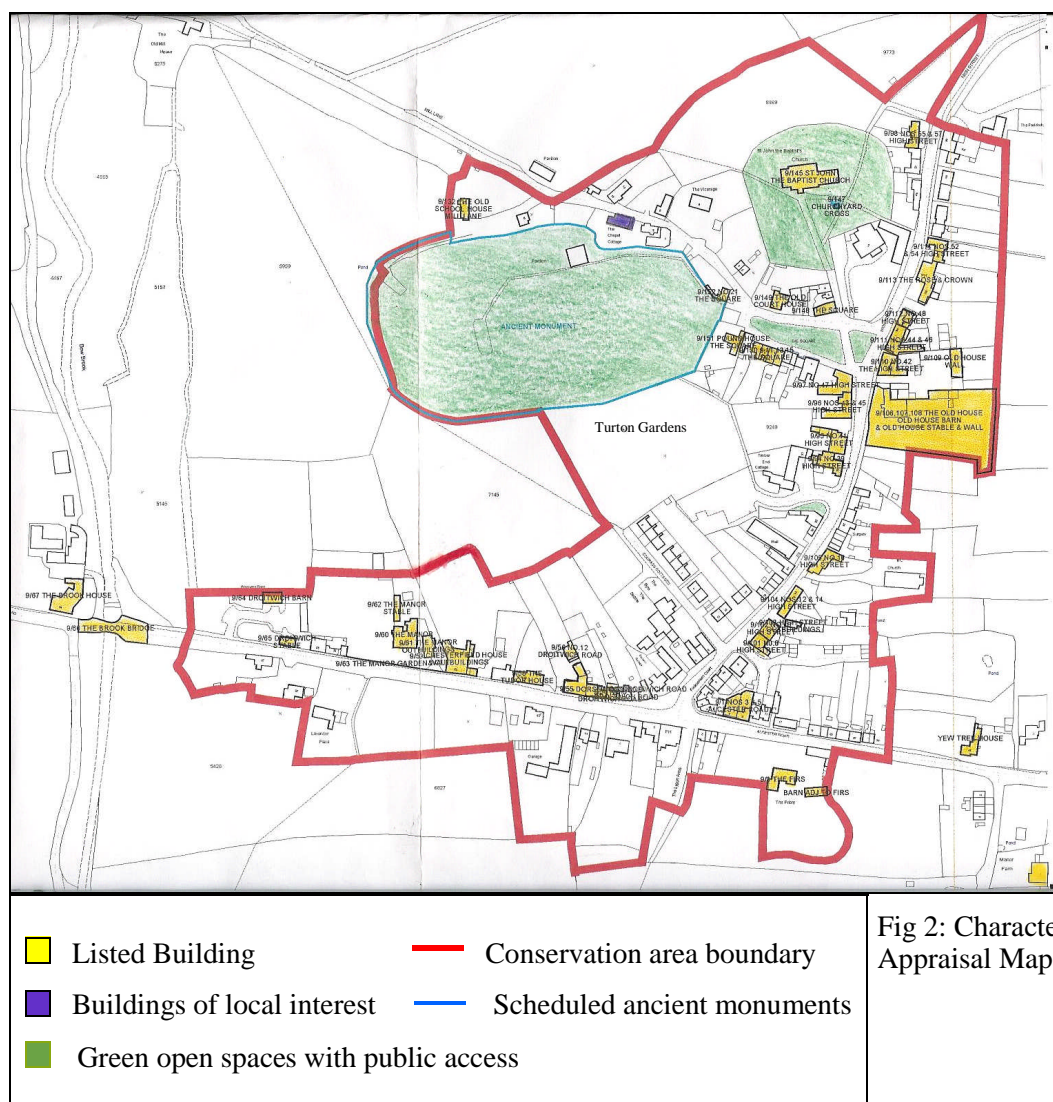
Conservation area designation brings certain duties to local planning authorities to formulate and publish proposals from time to time for their preservation and enhancement and to make decisions on proposals for development within conservation areas that will preserve and enhance their existing character and appearance. Although the word 'enhance' has come to mean 'to make attractive', the legal definition of a conservation area reveals that attractiveness is not the objective. In the document 'Conservation Area Practice', (revised October 1995, paragraph 8.1), English Heritage states that enhancement means the 'reinforcement' of the existing qualities that led to designation.

Policies and proposals should thus conform to the established characteristic features that warranted designation in the first place so as to reinforce the Area's special interest. Only applications that conform to these requirements will receive the support of the local planning authority.

For such legislation to be fully effective, rational and consistent judgments need to be made that reflect a conservation area's special qualities and local distinctiveness. In pursuit of this aim, the government will, on occasion, issue Planning Policy Guidance Notes (PPGs) to guide the process of decision making, which carry considerable weight with both the Courts and the Planning Inspectorate. Of special relevance here is PPG 15,

'Planning and the Historic Environment' (1994), which stresses the need for local planning authorities to undertake a factual and objective analysis of a conservation area's character and appearance that will provide a sound basis for planning policies and development control decisions. (See 'Guidance Notes on Conservation Area Appraisals' English Heritage, August 2005)

It is, therefore, the aim of this appraisal to identify the principal features that give Feckenham Conservation Area its special character, identity and appearance.



3.0 ANALYSIS OF CHARACTER

3.1 Setting

The village of Feckenham is remarkable for having altered little in form or scale over the centuries, remaining relatively compact with its historic street pattern clearly defined. It is, therefore, both possible and desirable for the Conservation Area boundary to relate closely to the layout of the historic and existing settlement. Thus it includes all the historic buildings along the High Street and overlooking the Square, most of those on the Alcester–Droitwich Road and along Mill Lane, together with the parish church and also the site of the former Royal Hunting Lodge. These buildings, their associated plots, and the oval-shaped ancient monument site on the western perimeter of the village, determine the boundaries of the Area.

Notable features of the current setting are as follows:

- a) The close relationship between the Conservation Area and the historic layout of the settlement. (See 'Street Pattern and Movement' - section 3.4)
- b) The long narrow plots which have survived to the rear of most of the buildings and which back onto orchards and meadowland. These plots define the boundaries of the Area, in particular to the east and south.
- c) Views from the street through the spaces between the buildings towards the open countryside. Consequently there is a constant awareness of the form and extent of the settlement and of its rural surroundings.
- d) Green open spaces, including the sports ground and playing field on the site of the Royal Hunting Lodge
- e) Mature trees and walled gardens
- f) A combination of formal street frontage and terraces and informally- grouped buildings and organic growth.
- g) The new residential development south of the site of the Royal Hunting Lodge, which has access off the west side of High Street.
- h) Infill development along the south side of the Alcester Road, including a used car sales centre and motor repair workshop.
- i) The large camping, riding and outdoor activity equipment retail store just outside the Area on the eastern approach to High Street.
- j) The cricket ground immediately north of the Area.



Fig 3:
Northern end of High Street



Fig 4:
View from High St to open countryside



Fig 5:
Formal street frontage, High Street

3.2 Topography

There are four main topographical influences on the area:

- a) The earthworks that surround the site of the former Royal Hunting Lodge
- b) Bow Brook located to the north and west of the Area.
- c) The ridge of high ground that follows the course of the brook to the north and west.
- d) Rock Hill that forms a ridge on high ground east of the Area.



Fig 6: Site of Royal Hunting Lodge

3.3 Historical Background

A settlement has existed at Feckenham certainly since Roman times. This grew up alongside the Saltway, the Roman trading route that traced a straight path through the heart of Feckenham Forest and linked Droitwich with Alcester, Icknield Street and beyond. The settlement was established around its junction with a track that ran north from this road and joined the ancient Ridgeway at Astwood Bank. There is considerable evidence of Roman activity in the vicinity, including part of a Romano-British farmstead that has been discovered in the Mill Lane area.

By 804, it appears from an Anglo-Saxon charter that this settlement had become a well-established village. It seems probable that its name derived from Fecca's Ham, meaning a river meadow or, more specifically, a settlement or farmstead beside a water course, that belonged to Fecca, a name of Anglo-Saxon origin.

The Domesday Book refers to Feckenham as having a reeve, a beadle, a smith and a miller among its local officials, and the village also had special rights to the salt from Droitwich. More significantly, it appears that by around 1085 the King had regained full ownership of the Manor of Feckenham, and it was to remain a possession of the Crown, subject to various grants, until 1558.

Royal interest in Feckenham can be attributed to its location deep within the eponymous Royal Forest. This spread right across much of Warwickshire and Worcestershire during this period when it played a prominent role in the recreational life of the Kings of England for more than two hundred years. The village gained considerably from this interest, particularly after a Royal Lodge was constructed on a moated site not far from the parish church. The Lodge was originally a timber-framed building, but it was rebuilt in stone probably c.1200, and it included a private chapel and an associated fish-pond, later known as Feckenham Pool. By the 14th century, the Lodge was in a poor state of repair and, in 1356, it appears to have been demolished after it was sold to the Abbot of Evesham. However, some of the ancillary buildings remained in use for meetings of the Forest Justices and the Manorial Courts and also as a prison, where offenders in the Forest were tried and held.

Feckenham gained other more lasting benefits from this royal connection, not least when Henry III granted a market and fair to the village in 1237. The market had died out by the end of the 18th century, but cattle fairs continued to be held in the village twice a year well into the 19th century.

The village achieved further prominence during the 16th century as the birthplace of John Howman (c1515-85), who was to become the last Abbot of Westminster during the reign of Queen Mary.

However, it was also during the 16th century that royal interest in Feckenham itself waned and was ultimately severed. Disafforestation had reduced the Forest to a fraction of its former size, much of it used for charcoal for the salt industry and the very best timber had been felled for building purposes. Consequently, its value as a hunting ground and source of wealth was so greatly diminished that, in 1558, Queen Mary gave the Manor to Sir John Throckmorton. It then passed to Sir Thomas Leighton and, in 1632 it was acquired by Thomas, 1st Baron Coventry, Lord Keeper of the Great Seal. The present Lord Coventry remains the nominal Lord of the Manor. It remained in the ownership of the Coventry family of Croome until after the death of the 9th Earl in 1930.

In 1591, John Blagrave made his memorable map of the Forest and Manor of Feckenham, a copy of which was made in 1744 by John Doharty the Younger of Worcester for the 5th Earl of Coventry. (See Fig.7) This shows how much of the Forest had been felled and converted to agricultural land by this time, and also the scale and layout of the village which has altered so little to this day. The village pound, used for impounding stray animals can still be seen at the western end of the Square or village green. Blagrave notes that there were 51 houses in the village, which he refers to as a town, and about 200 houses in the Manor altogether.

Weaving had been an important local industry from around the 12th century and, for a brief period in the late 16th and early 17th centuries, tobacco was grown in the district until this became illegal after the Restoration. Glove making was another notable local industry from around 1600, and this trade survived as a minor domestic industry until the 1940s. Other small industries found in and around Feckenham included tanning, shoemaking and some nail making, but it was the arrival of the needle-making industry from nearby Redditch in the eighteenth century that had the greatest impact.

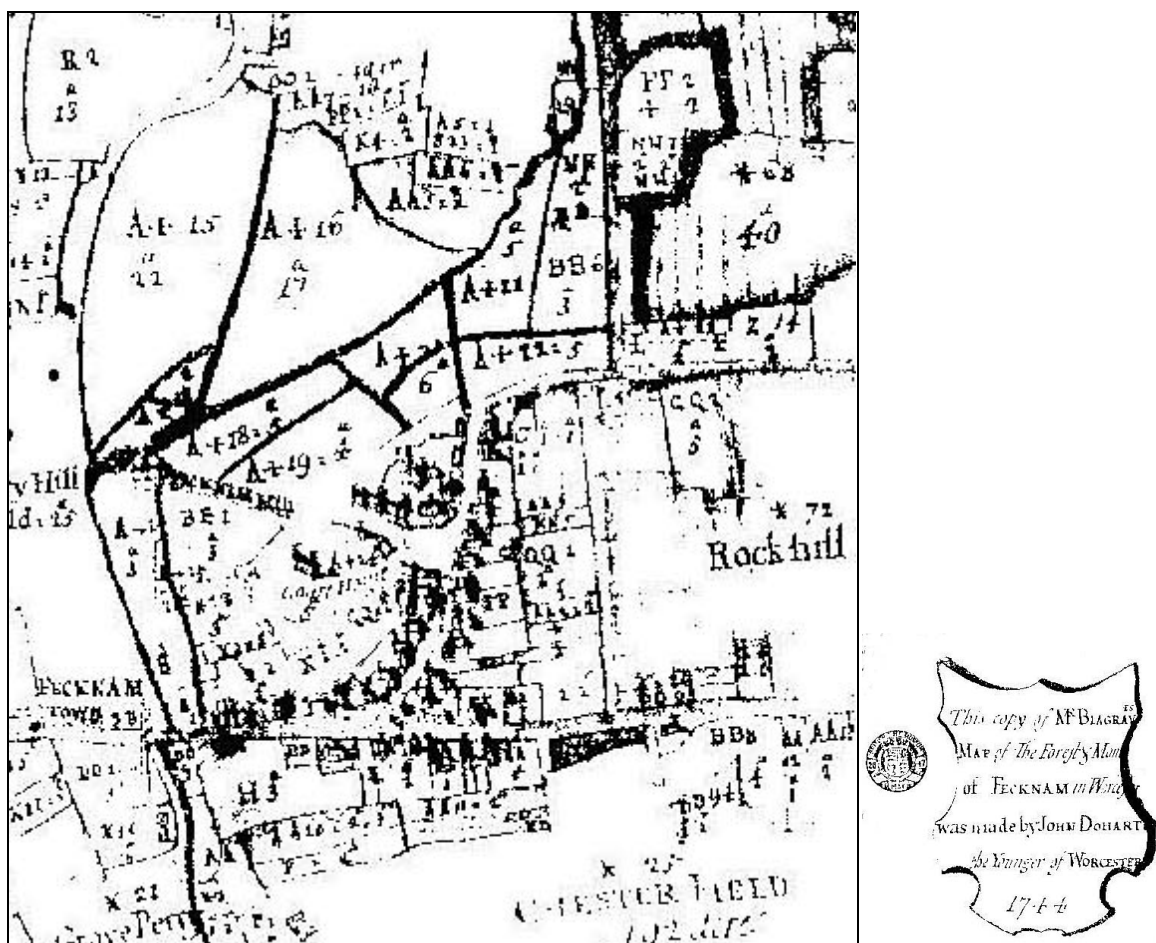


Fig 7:
Plan of Feckenham taken from a copy of Blagrave's map of Feckenham by John Doharty 1744

A needle scouring mill was established north-west of the town on Bow Brook, from which Mill Lane acquired its name. Another needle mill was built west of Bow Brook Bridge on the Droitwich Road, which now forms part of The Brook House, and other mills were established in the locality at Old Yarr and Astwood Bank. Many of the houses around the Square and elsewhere in the village were adapted to accommodate the needle makers, and several fine new Georgian houses were built and other houses were re-fronted and updated as witness to this new source of wealth. One of the more prominent families to arrive in the village was the English family. They lived at The Old House in the High Street and on the adjacent plot they erected an elegant stuccoed building to house the family needle and fish-hook business, John English & Co Ltd.



Fig 8: Receipt from William Bradley for payment to John English for steel wire for needle making

With the changing social and economic climate, new buildings appeared in the village to serve the local community. For a brief period in the latter part of the 18th century, a workhouse stood in the High Street. A Blue Coat school has existed from c.1611 in Mill Lane, but was later replaced in 1859 by a National School situated north-east of the village. It is now Feckenham Church of England First School. There was a Methodist chapel, the Ebenezer Chapel, built nearby in Mill Lane in 1861. Both these buildings are now in residential use, but the Catholic Church, built much later just off the High Street, continues to provide regular services. Other additions to the High Street in the earlier part of the twentieth century include the village hall, built on the site of six almshouses, and three pairs of semi-detached houses, built in a vernacular style, and set back from the street with large front gardens.

In 1894, as a result of the Local Government Act, Feckenham parish became divided into Rural and Urban Districts, the latter of which became absorbed within Redditch Urban District. The former parish is now reunited under the jurisdiction of Redditch Borough Council.

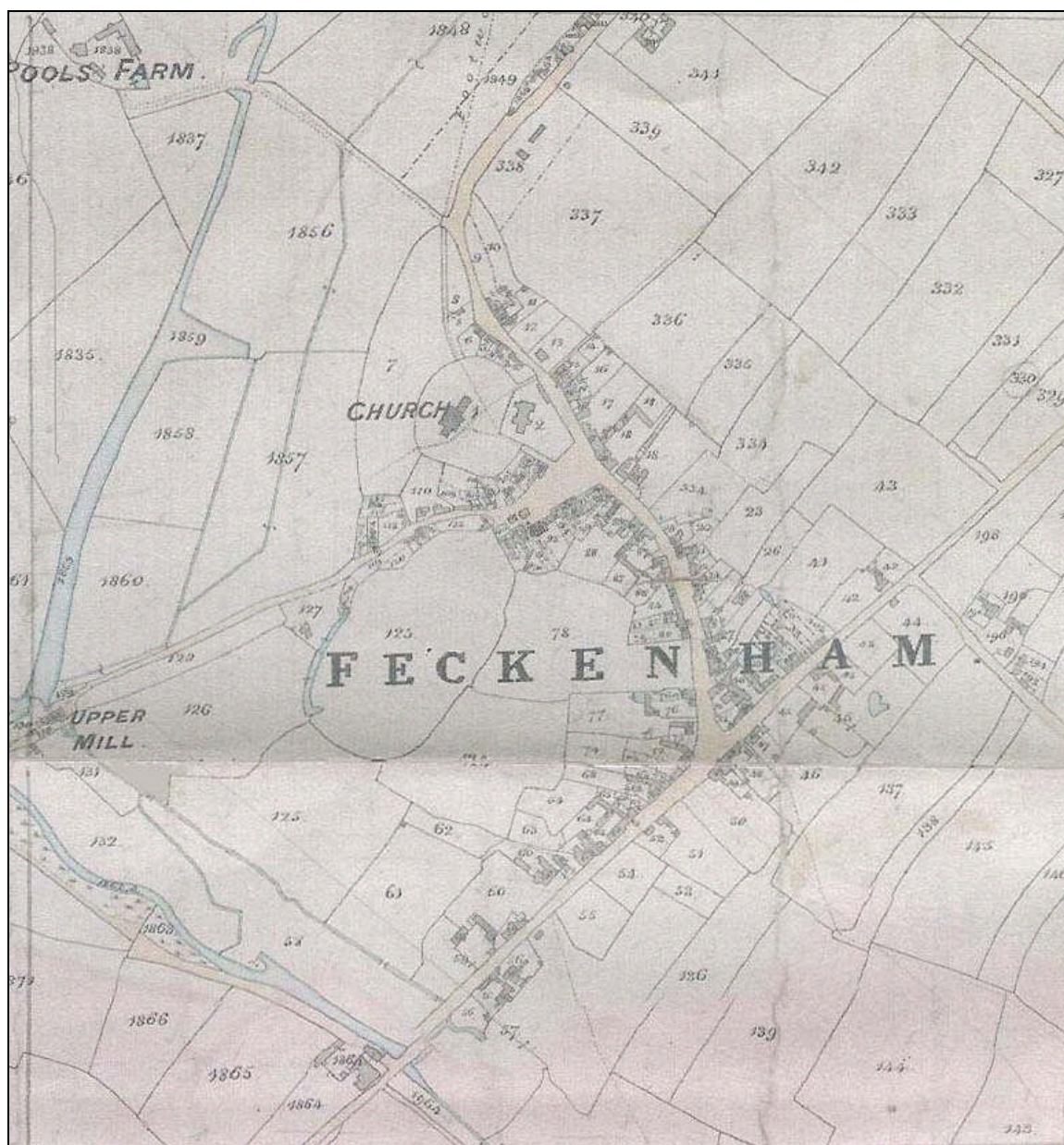


Fig 9: 1840 Tithe map

The latter part of the twentieth century witnessed remarkably little change within the village. Many of the outbuildings to the rear of the larger houses were converted to residential use and a few new houses were constructed on infill plots along the High Street and the Droitwich Road. The only changes of any significance have been the redevelopment of the corner site at the southern end of the High Street, and, most recently, the new housing known as Turton Gardens, built on a two-acre site to the west of the High Street. However, like many small villages, it is probably the increase in car ownership that has had the greatest impact of all upon the village. Feckenham has become an attractive and easily accessible base to many commuters, but the growing demand for car parking space and escalating traffic levels generally are creating considerable pressure on village life.

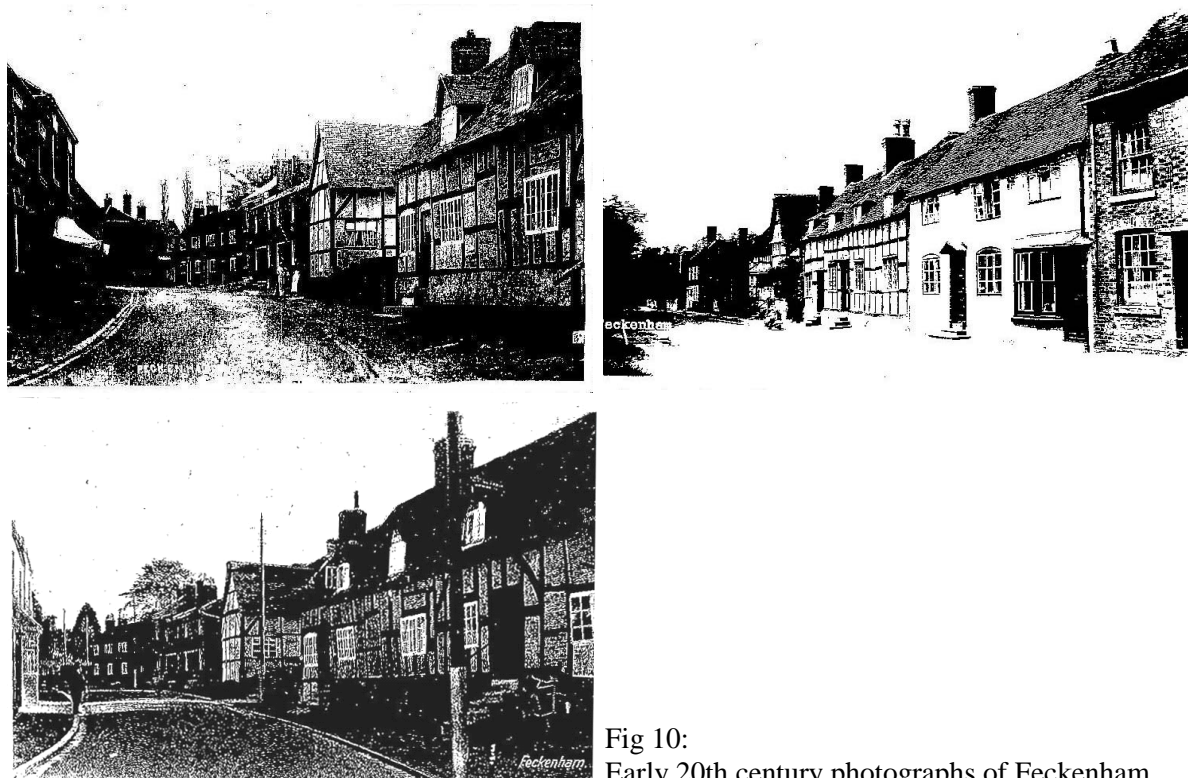
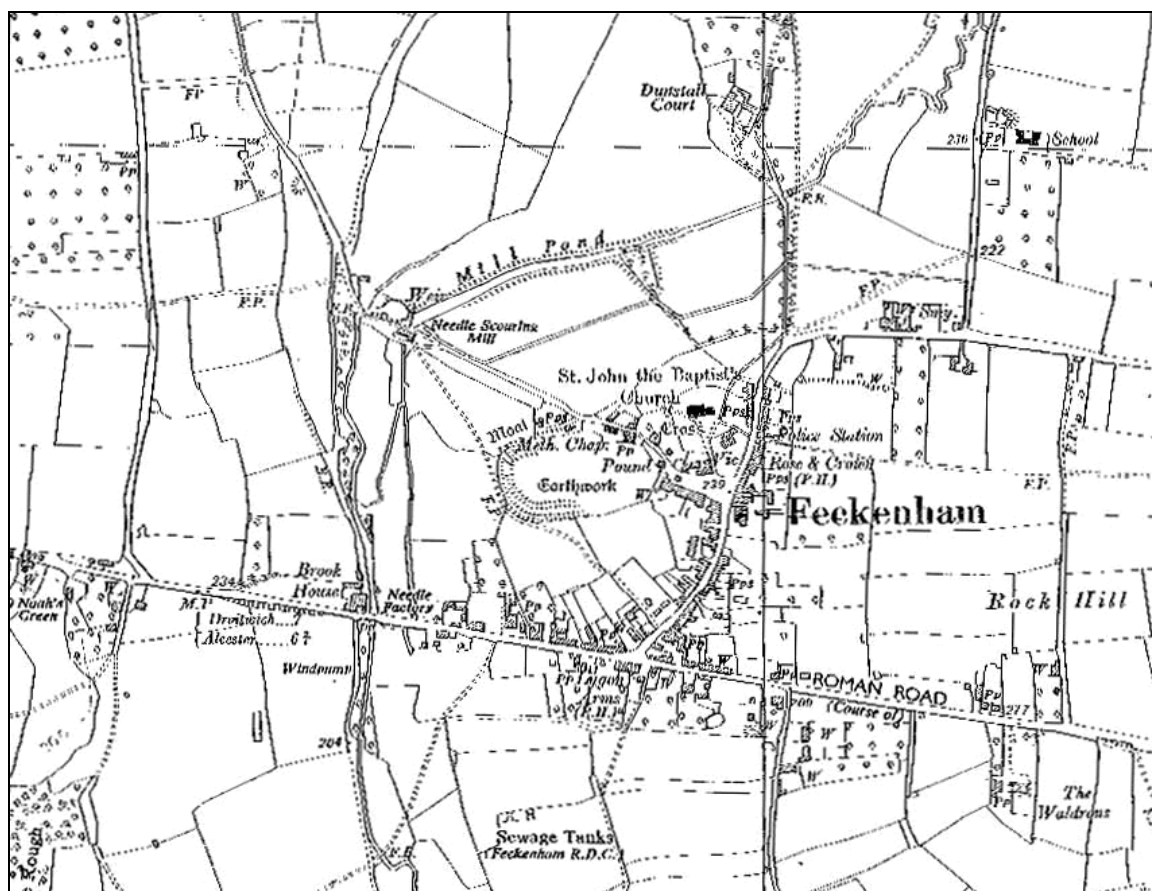


Fig 10:
Early 20th century photographs of Feckenham



3.4 Street Pattern and Movement

The two principal thoroughfares within the Area have existed since Roman times. Now known as Alcester Road/Droitwich Road and the High Street, they have remained the main vehicular and pedestrian corridors within the settlement. These roads provide access to, from and around the village as follows:

- The Alcester/Droitwich Road, the Saltway, runs across the southern end of the village and provides access to the village from both these towns, that lie to the east and west respectively, and also serves as an important lateral route across the county.
- The High Street adjoins the Alcester /Droitwich Road at its southern end and, at its northern end, it continues due north-east to Astwood Bank where it joins the Evesham Road, the Ridgeway, that runs south from Redditch.
- In addition, there are several minor vehicular access roads within the Area, including those around the Square and leading off the High Street. These include the roads to the new housing, to the Catholic Church, and to several converted outbuildings. The Area also includes the eastern end of Mill Lane, which runs from the western end of the Square due north-west out of the village past the cricket ground and then continues as a private road that provides access to The Old Mill House.

Movement is an important feature in parts of the Conservation Area as follows:

a) Vehicular

Vehicular movement occurs throughout the main and minor thoroughfares referred to above. However, the two principal thoroughfares are subject to different levels of use, and the width of the minor roads limits access and restricts traffic flow to a single lane.

- The Alcester/Droitwich Road is the busiest route and is used by a significant volume of heavy through traffic.
- High Street is subject to a smaller volume of through traffic and is the principal access route into and out of the village centre and is used by the majority of local residents.
- Mill Lane is primarily used by residents living in the immediate vicinity and by visitors to the cricket ground so it is subject to only light and occasional vehicular use.

b) Pedestrian

None of the above roads is pedestrianised. There is a narrow pavement set along one side of the Alcester/Droitwich Road, which is raised in short stretches at its eastern end, and also a pavement situated on both sides of the High Street for much of its length (see fig12).

An important feature of the Area is the number of footpaths and narrow alleyways of mainly historic origin that link different parts of the Area and form attractive routes into, and out of, the village centre.

3.5 Views

Important views into, out of, and within the Area are as follows:

a) Into the Area

Although the topography of the Area does not allow for extensive views across the whole settlement, the ridges of land to the east and west provide a good outlook along the length of the Saltway. Views into the Area worthy of note include:

- From Alcester Road looking west along the Saltway
- From Droitwich Road looking east along the Saltway
- From Mill Lane looking east across the cricket ground towards the churchyard
- From the site of the Royal Hunting Lodge looking east towards The Square

b) Out of the Area

There are no far-reaching views to the west and south-east. Having said this, an important characteristic of the Area is the attractive glimpses between the buildings in the main streets of the orchards and meadowland that lies behind them which provide a constant reminder of its rural context. Views out of the Area that warrant special mention are:

- Along Alcester Road looking west
- Along Droitwich Road across Bow Brook Bridge
- From Droitwich Road looking south across the open fields
- Across the fields that lie between the western boundary and Bow Brook
- Along Mill Lane from the western boundary
- From the churchyard to the north and west
- North from the High Street towards Dunstall Court across the meadowland
- From the rear of the plots along the eastern boundary across the orchards and fields .



Fig 12:
Raised pavement on Alcester Road



Fig 13:
From Alcester Rd looking west along the Saltway



Fig 14:
From Droitwich Rd looking east along the Saltway



Fig 15:
From the church yard looking north-west

c) Within the Area

There are numerous viewing points within the Area that are of interest as there are so many historic buildings and areas of green space that contribute to its special character. This is particularly true in the vicinity of The Square, around the parish church and churchyard, and along the southern half of the High Street where the quality of the local environment is probably at its best. The following views are deemed to be of specific merit:

- From the Square towards the churchyard
- From the Square down Mill Lane
- From the Square looking south down High Street
- From Mill Lane across the Square
- From the churchyard towards the Square
- West across the site of the Royal Hunting Lodge
- From the southern end of the High Street looking north
- From the southern side of Droitwich Road looking north-east towards the High Street and north-west towards The Manor

3.6 Illumination and Night Time appearance

The Area is lit principally by modern-style streetlights. These are mainly located along the High Street and the Alcester/Droitwich Road but there are also a few additional ones in The Square and in the off-street parking areas and access roads. These are in general of medium height and set some distance apart at regular intervals and they provide a soft orange light along the main thoroughfares without creating an oppressive glare. Also there are two traditional-style streetlights located in the churchyard, and, in Turton Gardens, there are streetlights that are a modern interpretation of a traditional style.

Otherwise night time illumination is mainly from the windows of the houses and, therefore, is at a low level that creates an attractive and intimate ambience appropriate to its context. The one significant exception to this is the two public houses which have externally-lit signs and wall-mounted lights that spill light either down the frontage or onto the pavement. However, these are not of sufficient brightness or range to detract significantly from the overall level of illumination, and so provide some security and safety without unnecessary light pollution.



Fig 16: From Mill Lane looking east into the Area



Fig 17: Looking out of the Area from Bow Brook



Fig 18: View along Mill Lane from the eastern boundary of the Area



Fig 19: View from the church yard to the Square

Although the low level of lighting is to be welcomed, lighting could be used more imaginatively and effectively around the Square and the churchyard to highlight special features.

Less welcome is the increasing flow of bright car lights, particularly along the straight Alcester/Droitwich Road where the speed of the traffic creates a distracting flashing effect.

3.7 Pattern and Density of Building

The pattern of building within the Area is clearly defined and reflects closely the historic street layout. Around one third of the Area is built upon and most of these buildings front onto the major and minor streets. Although the facades are not in continuous alignment, this irregularity has an appealing informality. Where gaps in the street line occur, a sense of continuity and flow is often maintained by the brick boundary walls, which contribute much to the street scene.

The plots to the rear of the buildings are in general quite narrow and deep and are located perpendicular to the street. However the variety in the size and types of the houses, from rows of small terraces to substantial detached buildings, means that the associated plots differ in overall size accordingly, and other irregularities occur due to subsequent plot divisions and amalgamations. The larger houses have retained their rear outbuildings, although in some cases these have been converted to residential use. Some of the plots along the main streets have been infilled and more densely developed since the nineteenth century, notably at the southern end of the High Street. However this has been achieved reasonably unobtrusively and in such a way as to reinforce rather than detract from the underlying pattern of building. The retention of the archways and pathways to many of these rear plots has also helped retain the Area's special identity.

Less sympathetic exceptions to this general rule are the twentieth-century houses built on the southern side of Droitwich Road. These houses are built on relatively large and irregularly-shaped infill plots and most are set well back from the street frontage. A more successful exception is the new housing development, known as Turton Gardens. As a group development, the terraced and detached houses are laid out in a relatively varied and informal manner that is in keeping with the general density of development elsewhere. The development also adopts materials and details that respect the local building traditions in general.



Fig 20: The north end of High Street



Fig 21: Terraced housing in High Street



Fig 22: Turton Gardens

3.8 Types and Uses of Buildings

The types and uses of buildings within the Area have remained predominantly residential. Indeed this use has steadily increased with the construction of new dwellings and the conversion of former agricultural and industrial buildings, such as Droitwich Barn and Pool Barn, and the needle mills, to residential use. Several buildings in the High Street have been used as shops or other commercial uses in the past i.e. as a post office, but these have since returned to residential use. Currently the principal types are as follows:

a) Religious

Church of St John the Baptist
Catholic Church

These are both still in use for religious services and also serve a community role. The Methodist Chapel in Mill Lane is now in residential use

b) Community

The Village Hall, High Street

This continues to fulfil the social and amenity role for which it was intended.

c) Commercial

The Rose and Crown PH, High Street
The Lygon Arms PH, Droitwich Road
Feckenham Used Car Centre, Droitwich Road

d) Residential

The remainder of the buildings in the Area are in residential use and were either constructed as dwellings or converted to that purpose. They range in date from the sixteenth to the twenty-first century and vary in size from small terraced cottages, to semi-detached houses and substantial detached dwellings within formal settings with attached outbuildings. This variety in the type and date of dwellings is indicative of the village's successful adaptation to changing social and economic circumstances over the centuries.



Fig 23: The Parish Church



Fig 24: The Catholic Church



Fig 25: The Village hall

3.9 Style of Buildings

The architectural style of the buildings in the Area varies according to their type and date as follows:

- The Church of St John the Baptist is a combination of medieval and Victorian Gothic. Norman in origin, it was rebuilt in the early 13th century. The chancel arch and lower part of the tower date from the 14th century, and the north aisle and west tower were replaced in the 15th century. During the Victorian period, William Butterfield rebuilt the chancel in 1853, and the south wall of the nave and south porch was rebuilt by Henry Day of Worcester c.1866-7.

Nineteenth-century Gothic is also in evidence in Mill Lane, in the detail of the polychromatic brickwork of the former Methodist Chapel and the arched windows of the former school house.

- A significant proportion of timber-framed buildings with plastered panels or brick infill survive in the Area that date principally from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Notable examples include No 12 (The Old Black Boy) and No 20 (The Tudor House) in Droitwich Road and Nos 12/14, No 16 (Forest Cottage) and No 39, High Street. Many timber-framed buildings in the village were remodelled or merely re-fronted in brick during the Georgian period.
- The village is noted for its elegant and well-proportioned Georgian brick houses. These include typical details such as broad moulded or modillion cornices, painted sash windows set beneath segmental arches, rubbed brick heads or rusticated flat arches, and panelled doors with fanlights, moulded architraves, and flanking pilasters. Some of the grander houses have rusticated quoins and classical porches, as at The Old House in High Street and Chestnut House, the Square.



Fig 26: 12/14 High Street



Fig 27: 20 Droitwich Rd



Fig 28: 41 High St



Fig 29: Georgian terrace, High Street

- During the 19th century, slate roofs of a shallower pitch become quite common. These have sash windows with a varied numbers of panes, many with rusticated lintels, or casement windows of two or three lights. Canted bay windows are also found, as at No. 6 High Street, which has a typically ornate doorcase, with a panelled door and canopy on console brackets.

Several of the larger 19th century buildings have stuccoed facades, notably The Old Needle Mill in High Street, which is a particularly elegant and refined building of its type, with a stuccoed façade, blind arcading, an impost band, arched multi-paned metal windows and lunettes set beneath the arcade arches.

- The Vernacular Revival style of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries is also represented in the roughcast walls, steep asymmetric gables and fenestration of the semi-detached cottages opposite Nos 8 and 10 High Street.



Fig 30: 6 High St



Fig 31: The Old Needle Mill, High Street



Fig 32: Vernacular Revival housing, High Street

3.10 Size and Plan of Buildings

The size and plan of buildings in the Area is largely determined by their use and plot size. As the majority of the buildings are in residential use they are therefore domestic in scale. Most are two storeys or two and a half storeys high and only a few of the larger houses and terraces are of three full storeys.

Their plan relates to their date and the shape and size of each plot, but it should be stressed that this allows for a considerable degree of variation and the consequent irregularities contribute to the sense of organic growth and informality. Despite these irregularities, many of the large and smaller houses that date from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries have symmetrical facades to present a formal street frontage.

The only exceptions to this within the Area are:

- The Church of St John the Baptist. This is the largest and tallest building in the Area and it is set apart from the historic street pattern at the centre of a large walled churchyard. It is aligned east/west and has a traditional plan form with a west tower, four-bay nave with north aisle and two-bay chancel.
- The Catholic Church. This is a large rectangular structure of a single storey in height set back off the main building line of the High Street within a plot of approximately twice its own footprint.
- The Methodist Chapel. This has retained the scale and external proportions of its original function, although it has been altered internally when converted to residential use.
- The Village Hall. This long, narrow, single-storey building is fitted tightly within its plot boundaries with one end fronting onto the High Street.
- The sports pavilion on the site of the royal hunting lodge, a square single-storey building adjacent to the football ground.

3.11 Morphology

The morphology of the buildings reflects the four main periods of development: pre-Georgian, Georgian, Victorian and modern. However the result is not as diverse as this implies, largely because the buildings share a similar domestic scale and function. Also, as mentioned previously, many of the earlier buildings were re-fronted or otherwise altered in Georgian times to conform to current taste, and this Georgian phase of building had a lasting influence on subsequent phases of development in terms of scale, symmetry and proportion.

- Plot frontages are of relatively regular width with the only consistent variations occurring in Mill Lane and the south side of the Alcester/ Droitwich Road.
- Buildings are predominantly of two main storeys.
- Their height is roughly equal to the width of the street
- There are considerable variations in the massing of the buildings, with terraces and semi-detached properties located alongside detached large houses with yards, alleyways and access roads between them.
- The street frontages are quite staggered in parts, but the walled gardens and plot boundaries give the overall impression of continuity.

- Profiles of many of the buildings are visible at roof level, which provides considerable visual interest throughout the Area.
- The predominantly regular distribution of sash and casement windows within each elevation, the quality and variety of the original doorcases, the striking combination of the soft orange brickwork and white-painted joinery, the geometric patterns of the timber framing and plaster panels, and the varied roof heights, gables, dormers and chimneys, all impart a rich and lively pattern to the streetscape, full of interest yet merging to form a homogenous whole.

There are notable exceptions to the above. These include the religious and community buildings referred to in Section 3.10, and also in Mill Lane and along the south side of the Alcester/Droitwich Road. Here the morphology differs markedly due to the date, uses, alignment and plot size of the buildings. For example, in Mill Lane, some of the buildings are set back some distance from the road within large irregular plots or are built with their main axis at right angles to the road. Similarly, along the south side of the Droitwich Road many of the buildings are relatively modern in date and spaced well apart within large plots so that any sense of continuity and flow is lost.



Fig 33: View to rear of Georgian terrace



Fig 34: 41 High Street



Fig 35: Street frontage with walled garden in High Street



Fig 36: Formal Street Frontages

3.12 Materials and Construction

Most of the buildings within the Area share the following similarities in their materials and construction:

Roofs

Roofs are mainly covered with small plain clay tiles, although some grey Welsh slate is used on nineteenth-century buildings. The clay tiles are traditional in the region and are in sympathy with the style and character of the buildings, although the natural slate also works well in the right context. A few buildings are roofed with large interlocking machine-made tiles, which lack the variations in tone and texture that contribute much to the visual qualities of the traditional materials.

Most of the roofs are gabled but hipped roofs are also found, particularly on the large Georgian houses and some of the nineteenth-century buildings. The roofs are generally of a single pitch with the ridge running parallel to the street. Rear wings have pitched roofs with ridges often lower in height and set at right angles to the street.

Chimneystacks are either ridge-mounted or set within the roof pitch and only in a few buildings is the chimneybreast externally exposed. They are almost all brick built, (a notable exception being the lower part of the externally chimneybreast at No. 5 High Street), multi-flued, rectangular in plan and generally of tall narrow proportions that give a strong vertical emphasis to the streetscape. Many have over-sailing top courses but are otherwise of simple detail, which does not diminish their valuable contribution to the lively roofscape.

At eaves level the brick buildings often have dentilled eaves courses, but some of the larger houses have more ornate moulded or modillion cornices. At the gable ends, the roof covering is terminated close or flush to the wall and usually sealed to it with a mortar fillet. Flashings are of lead and stepped into the brick courses where required.

Rainwater goods are traditionally of cast iron, but plastic replacements are in evidence on many historic buildings.

Walls

Walls are either timber-framed, or built of local brick.

The timber-framed buildings are of the post and truss type, the most common form where the main posts within the external wall frame support the wall-plates at eaves level and are joined by tie-beams, which form the base for the main roof trusses. They are constructed on sandstone or brick bases and have mainly square or rectangular panels with plastered or brick infill, although some close-set studding occurs, notably in the front elevation of Nos 12/14 High Street, and is an indication of wealth and status.

Most of the timber-framed buildings appear to be of a good size, a minimum of three bays in length, and several are of the hall and cross-wing plan type, most clearly witnessed at No 20 (The Tudor House) in Droitwich Road. Here the gable end of the cross-wing that faces the road is jettied, i.e. the upper storey overhangs the lower storey.

A jetty provided extra floor space, particularly useful in urban situations, but essentially they were another means of expressing the owner's wealth and status, hence their location in the most prominent part of the building. This building is also memorable for its particularly high sandstone plinth that accommodates its sloping site. Several timber-framed buildings in the village have been remodelled or just re-fronted with brickwork to update their appearance, as can be seen clearly at No 39, High Street.

The predominant building material is the local soft reddish-orange brick, which imparts a warmth and subtle tone and texture to the buildings. The bricks are usually laid in Flemish bond with narrow joints and lime mortar. A notable variation on this theme occurs at Nos 43 and 45 High Street, where blue brick headers are incorporated in the brickwork to create a chequered effect. Decorative patterning is also found at the former Methodist chapel, where polychromatic effects are used to accentuate the architectural features. Similar polychromatic brickwork is evident in contemporary buildings in Redditch and Astwood Bank. On the larger brick houses, rusticated quoins and lintels, cornices and other decorative detail provide an attractive foil to the brickwork.

Some of the brick buildings have been painted or rendered, notably the use of stucco on the façade and painted brick on the rear elevations of The Old Needle Mill, High Street, or the painted brickwork at the Rose and Crown PH, High Street. The use of stucco and painted brickwork can add variety and interest to the street scene, but where the brickwork is of a high quality it is not to be encouraged. Some roughcast is also in evidence, for example, at 11-17 High Street where it forms an acceptable element of the Vernacular Revival style, but less successfully on several buildings where it is used simply to mask structural alterations.

The only notable exception to the use of timber framing and brickwork is at the Church of St John the Baptist, which is constructed mainly of local buff and brownish-grey sandstone, with ashlar dressings.



Fig 37: 20 Droitwich Road



Fig 38: 39 High Street

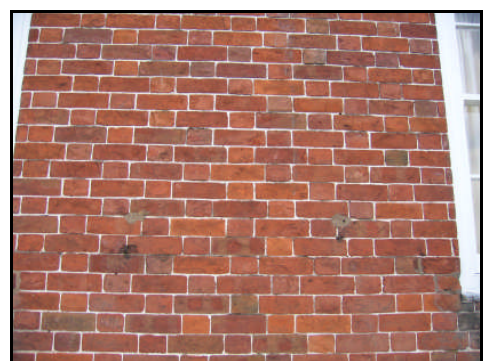


Fig 39: Brickwork

Doors and Windows

Doors are of either panelled or simply boarded hardwood, and most have moulded surrounds and shallow flat canopies above. Several semi-detached cottages have paired doors set beneath continuous canopies on shaped brackets, which are a special feature of the village. Higher quality buildings have entrances with semi-circular arched heads, traceried fanlights, panelled reveals and classically-inspired surrounds, and some also have pediments or flanking pilasters. A few buildings have classically-inspired porches too, such as that at Chesterfield House, Droitwich Road, which has a curved timber canopy on simple columns, or The Old House, which has an entablature upon Doric columns. The simpler boarded doors with their traditional ironmongery found on more modest buildings, many set beneath segmental-arched heads, are no less pleasing.

A particularly appealing characteristic of the Area, and indeed of the village in general, is that many of the entrances are raised above street level and are approached by a flight of several stone, and less often brick, steps. These are flanked occasionally by elegant iron railings, which lend a particular elegance and charm, as at No.26 High Street.

Windows are usually slightly recessed from the wall. The openings have either segmental-arched brick heads or flat heads often with rusticated stone lintels and some have painted stone sills too. The windows themselves are traditionally either vertically sliding sashes or casements. The vertically sliding sashes are divided into usually twelve or more, vertically-arranged panes, held with narrow glazing bars. The height of the top floor windows is often less than those on the lower floor and at The Old House, High Street, there are tripartite sashes on the ground floor. Canted bay windows with sash windows are also in evidence and No 10, High Street, is also worthy of note as it has two-storey canted bay windows flanking the central entrance bay. Casement windows are of two or three lights, and again smaller openings may sometimes occur on the upper floors. Although in general the windows are traditionally of painted timber, there are some painted metal casements to be found, most notably at The Old Needle Mill which has retained its 19th century multi-paned metal windows, a familiar feature of the industrial vernacular, and a striking and elegant accent is provided by the striking series of lunettes set within the arches of the blind arcading.

Regrettably, an increasing number of buildings in the Area have replaced their traditional windows with Upvc and stained timber substitutes. These lack the subtle proportions, reflections and refinements of traditional joinery and detract from the special character of the buildings.

Several of the larger houses have blind windows to add interest to an otherwise blank façade or gable end, and some can be seen within the Area painted to resemble windows.

Dormer windows occur quite frequently within the Area, lending an attractive variation and rhythm to the roofscape. They might be gabled or hipped and they vary considerably in size, but generally have either single or two-light casement windows, as may be seen on the buildings that overlook the Square.



Fig 40: Selection of doors

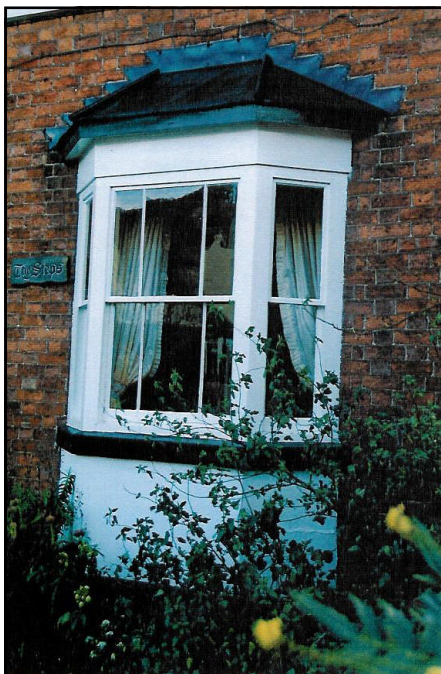
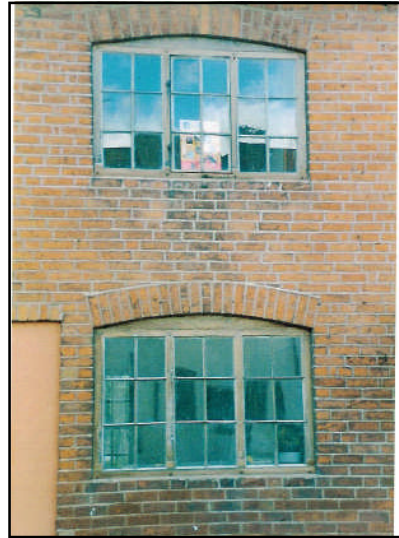


Fig 41: Selection of windows



Fig 42: Blind windows



Fig 43: Blind windows painted to resemble glazing



Fig 44: Dormer windows

3.13 Scheduled Ancient Monuments

The Area includes two Scheduled Ancient Monuments:

Feckenham Courthouse	Scheduled Ancient Monument No.30004
Churchyard Cross	Scheduled Ancient Monument No.29866

Details of non-scheduled sites and structures recorded in the Feckenham area may be obtained from the County Historic Environment and Archaeology Service.

3.14 Buildings of Special Architectural and Historic Interest

The Area includes 47 Listed Buildings and Structures. These are all of Grade II status with the exception of the Church of St John the Baptist and The Manor, which are Grade II * buildings. A complete list of addresses is given in Appendix I.

3.15 Buildings of Local Interest

The Area includes one building which is not statutorily listed but which is considered to be of local interest and may in future be included in the Local List:

Chapel Cottage, Mill Lane *Former Methodist chapel*

3.16 Survival of Architectural Features

Many architectural features have survived within the Area, including the following:

- Traditional roof profiles and coverings that are uninterrupted with inserted roof lights or dormers
- Chimneystacks that provide vertical emphasis and a lively and varied skyline
- Good examples of the local timber-framed building tradition
- Fine local brickwork that has not been painted or rendered
- Original pointing with narrow joints and lime mortar
- Original joinery, including casement and sash windows and panelled doors.
- Architectural refinements, such as rusticated quoins and lintels, moulded door surrounds and decorative cornices
- Steps and railings leading to the main entrances
- Cast iron rainwater goods
- Brick boundary walling, often with stone coping and prominent gate piers
- Stone kerbstones in the Square



Fig 45: Former Methodist Chapel



Fig 46: Buildings on the Square



Fig 47: Buildings in High St



Fig 48: Garden to rear of No 12 Droitwich Rd

3.17 Street furniture

There is a variety of modern and traditional-style street furniture found throughout the Area. This includes:

Traditional/traditional style

- Several iron gates leading into the churchyard
- Circular iron benches around the trees on the Square
- Post box on the High Street at the end of the access road to Turton Gardens
- Seating at the east end of the Square, at the end of the access road to Turton Gardens, and elsewhere in the village
- Street lighting in the churchyard and Turton Gardens
- Litter bins

Modern

- Street lighting on the main thoroughfares
- Phone box on The Square
- Square timber planters on The Square
- Timber posts serving as bollards at the junction between High Street and Droitwich Road
- Planters at above and on the Square
- Traffic signs
- Railings along the raised pavement, Alcester Road

The modern-style street furniture is in general of an inferior design quality and is unsympathetic to the character of the Area. In addition, the modern signage is intrusive and unsympathetically located. (See 3.24)

3.18 Open Spaces

The Area has several relatively large areas of open space that make a valuable contribution to the character of the Conservation Area. Throughout most of the Area there is an awareness of green open space, from the large gardens and orchards that run behind the buildings, from the glimpses of open countryside beyond the Area, and in particular from the three main areas of green open space that dominate the northern half of the Area: the churchyard, the Square, and the site of the Royal Hunting Lodge.



Fig 49: Seating on the Square



Fig 50: Seating on the Square



Fig 51: Gateway into the church



Fig 52: Seating on access road to Turton Gardens

All these green open spaces provide a sympathetic and attractive setting for the historic buildings within the Area and around its perimeter. The churchyard is essentially informal in character, punctuated by yew and other mature trees, and it is criss-crossed by narrow tarmac footpaths that link the gateways within its brick boundary walls. The Square is similarly informal in character and distinguished by many fine mature trees grouped at its east end, which have been supplemented by young oaks and chestnuts. Its eastern end is crossed by a narrow access road, and this divides the main part of the Square from a car parking and amenity space, equipped with a public phone box, a notice board and public seating area, that is set beneath the trees. Both the churchyard and the western end of the Square provide a sense of peace and seclusion away from the main thoroughfares.

The site of the Royal Lodge leads off the Square but has a very different character. It forms a large area of grassland that serves as a sports ground and general recreation area. A modern sports pavilion has been built on its northern boundary and children's play equipment is set at its western end. It merges with the countryside beyond and extends the rural setting right into the very centre of the village.

In addition to these principal spaces, a small seating area has been created at the junction of the High Street with the access road to Turton Gardens. Here ornamental trees and shrubs surround a small seating area created on a curve in the road. This has the effect of 'softening' the street corner, and provides visual interest and also an amenity space at the southern end of the High Street.

Apart from the green spaces, there are also various large and small car parking areas located behind the main street frontages, in particular behind the Village Hall, the Lygon Arms, and also a substantial number of the private houses. These serve a useful visual and practical role in reducing the amount of on-street parking, although as large areas of tarmac they have little aesthetic value in themselves.



Fig 53: Car parking at Turton Gardens

3.19 Ground Surfaces

The principal ground surfaces in the Area are as follows:

- a) Grass- usually contained within boundary walling, hedges or stone and concrete kerbing.
- b) Black tarmac on the roads, pavements, driveways and car parks
- c) Gravel on some driveways, paths and in and around The Square
- d) Some blue brick setts around the access road on The Square
- e) Concrete kerbstones
- f) Some stone kerbstones in The Square

3.20 Trees and vegetation

The numerous trees within the Area and the wealth of vegetation in general form a most important characteristic of the Area. They contribute much to its appeal and add interest and seasonal variety to the streetscape.

Many of the trees, hedgerows and other vegetation are found within private gardens, in the green spaces referred to in Section 3.18, (i.e. in the churchyard, on The Square, and on the site of the Royal Lodge), or they form a backdrop with the surrounding orchards and countryside.

Groups of trees and areas of vegetation of particular note are:

- a) The trees in the Square, both mature and immature deciduous trees
- b) The deciduous and coniferous trees in the churchyard
- c) The deciduous trees and the hedgerows in Mill Lane
- d) The hedgerows, shrubs and gardens fronting onto the Alcester/Droitwich Road, at The Manor and The Priory
- e) The gardens and mature deciduous trees at The Old House
- f) The tall deciduous trees that surround the Village Hall car park
- g) Hedging along the footpaths

In addition, there is a limited amount of formal planting in the public amenity spaces i.e. on The Square, beside the access road to Turton Gardens and at the southern end of the High Street. However, with the possible exception of the planting on the access road, this is generally quite sparse and the formal concrete and timber planters contrast unfavourably with the luxuriant informality of the vegetation found elsewhere in the Area



Fig 54: Ground surfaces, The Square



Fig 55: Pavement, Droitwich Road



Fig 56: Garden at No 39 High Street



Fig 57:
Garden adjacent 12/14 High Street

3.21 Landmarks, Focal Points and Special Features

The focal point of the village and of the Area is undoubtedly the Square or village green, located off the High Street. This attractive area of grassed open space, surrounded by historic buildings and enhanced by several fine mature trees contributes much to the overall quality of its surroundings.

There are also a number of landmarks and special features within the Area as follows:

- The ancient Saltway that defines a dead straight route across the southern boundary of the Area
- The Church of St John the Baptist
- The Churchyard Cross
- The Pound
- The Old Needle Mill
- Site of the Royal Hunting Lodge
- The Old House and its quadrant walls.
- The Manor House and its walled frontage and garden.
- Listed buildings grouped along the High Street
- Listed buildings along the north side of the Droitwich Road
- Trees, green spaces and gardens within the Area
- Main entrances raised above street level and approached by stone and brick steps
- Footpaths forming important pedestrian links with the Area and to the countryside beyond.



Fig 58: footpath adjacent High Street



Fig 59: Yard adjacent No 41 High Street

3.22 Tranquil and Active Areas

a) Tranquil Areas

Tranquil areas within the Area are located away from the two main thoroughfares and fall into three categories:

- The areas of green open space to the west of the High Street, i.e. The Square, the churchyard and the site of the Royal Hunting Lodge, except when in use for sporting functions.
- The large gardens that run behind the houses along the main street frontages.
- Mill Lane, which is used only for access and is flanked by gardens, brick walling, hedgerows and trees

b) Active Areas

The active areas relate entirely to the two main streets in the village, the High Street and the Alcester/Droitwich Road, where there is a steady flow of traffic. The pavements along the High Street, in particular, are in regular use by pedestrians.

3.23 Noise and Smells

a) Noise

- The main source of noise in the Area is the traffic using the two main streets and especially the Alcester/Droitwich Road, which is in regular use by heavy goods vehicles during and after daylight hours.
- Human noise from pedestrians, and at specific times of day from visitors to the two public houses and to the village hall, and at weekends from sporting functions.
- Birdsong makes a welcome background noise in the more tranquil areas referred to in 3.22.

b) Smells

Traffic fumes are present on the Alcester/Droitwich Road

3.24 Alien Features/ Neutral Areas

Alien features and neutral areas, which either detract from or make no positive contribution to the special character and amenity value of the Area are as follows:

- a) Unsympathetic alterations to historic buildings, in particular the insertion of inappropriate replacement windows and doors.
- b) Parking at the eastern end of The Square
- c) On-street car parking in the High Street
- d) Excessive use of road markings, which create visual clutter.
- e) An excess of prominent TV aerials detract from the roofscape
- f) Telephone poles and wires are intrusive within the historic street scene
- g) Shabby street lights
- h) Tarmac pavements in a poor state of repair
- i) Car parking on the concrete forecourt and the sheds of the used car sales centre on the Droitwich Road
- j) Neglected gardens on Droitwich Road
- k) Area of tarmac with timber bollards and signage at the southern end of the High Street is unimaginative and creates visual clutter presenting an unappealing and unwelcome entrance to the village centre.
- l) Similarly the excessive signage near the entrance to Dunstall Court, the retail store and the open views of the stable yard and conifer planting opposite detract from the rural quality of the northern approach to the High Street.
- m) The public amenity space at the eastern end of the Square is cluttered and unimaginatively planned.
- n) Modern infill, which pays minimal respect to the local building traditions.
- o) Traffic along the Alcester/ Droitwich Road. The speed and volume of this traffic poses a risk to pedestrians, to the adjacent buildings and to village life in general in this part of the village.



Fig 60: Replacement window



Fig 61: South end of High Street



Fig 62: Used car sales site



Fig 63: Signage at the entrance to Dunstall Court, Astwood Lane.

3.25 Sites that would benefit from Enhancement

There are various sites within the Area that would benefit from enhancement and which presently detract from its character and appearance. These are:

- a) The eastern end of the Square would benefit from sympathetic parking controls and a well-designed amenity area that incorporates some public seating, the public notice board and the public telephone box within an attractive scheme of hard and soft landscaping.

4.0 Concluding Statement

As Feckenham Conservation Area incorporates almost the entire village within its boundaries, it is able to make a particularly valuable and coherent contribution to its preservation and enhancement. This is possible and desirable as the settlement has altered so little in size and layout since the sixteenth century and has retained so many high quality historic buildings. The Area is also memorable for its green open spaces, its attractive walled gardens and mature trees, its network of footpaths and glimpses throughout of the surrounding countryside, which provide constant visual and physical links with its rural location. It is the special combination of these historical associations and topographical and spatial relationships that give the Area its distinctive character and appearance and provide clear and distinct guidelines for any future development.

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- E Atkins Various unpublished occasional papers on behalf of Feckenham Forest Local History Society including: 'Feckenham in the Sixteenth Century-A View', an extract from an unpublished dissertation 'The Disafforestation of the Forest of Feckenham in the 17th century'
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APPENDIX 1

Listed Buildings and Structures

Alcester Road (north)

Nos 3& 5

Alcester Road (south)

The Priory

Barn 6yds east of The Priory

Alcester Road

Yew Tree House

Droitwich Road (north)

No 2

No 6

No 8

No 10 (Dorset Cottage)

No 12 (The Old Black Boy)

Stables about 10 yds north west of above

No 20 (The Tudor House) formerly listed as 16,18,20 as separate items

No 22 Chesterfield House and attached wall and outbuilding

The Manor (formerly listed as No 24 The Manor House) II*

Domestic outbuilding and wall about 4yds south-east of The Manor
(formerly listed as Barn 80yds west of No 24)

Stable about 5yds north west of The Manor

Garden wall about 10yds south of The Manor

Barn about 30yds north west of No 28

Stable about 10yds west of No 28

High Street (west)

No 39

No 41

Nos 43 and 45

No 47

Nos 55 and 57

High Street (east)

No 8 (The Little House)

No 10

Outbuilding about 4yds north-east of No 10

Nos 12 and 14 (formerly listed as separate items)

No 16 (Forest Cottage) (formerly listed as No 16 Catholic House)

The Old House and quadrant walls (formerly listed as the Old Courthouse)

Barn about 50 yds north-east of The Old House

Stable and adjoining garden walls immediately to rear of The Old House

Wall about 10 yds west of The Old House

No 42 (The Old Needle Mill)

Nos 44 and 46

No 48 (Enstone Cottage)

The Rose & Crown PH and attached outbuilding (formerly listed as Eight Bells PH)

Nos 50 and 52

Mill Lane (south)

The Old School House

The Square (north)

Church of St John the Baptist II*

Beach Eades memorial about 20 yds north east of chancel of the Church of St John the Baptist

Churchyard Cross about 15 yds south of the chancel of the Church of St John the Baptist

Chestnut House

The Old Court House

The Square (south)

Nos 1 and 3

No 5

Nos 9,11,13,and 15

Pound House

The Square (west)

No 21

In addition, there are several listed buildings and structures adjacent to the Area boundary as follows:

Droitwich Road

Bow Brook Bridge

The Brook House

High Street

Dunstall Court

Moors Lane

Manor Farmhouse