THE ALDERLEY EDGE
CONSERVATION AREA
APPRAISAL

Macclesfield Borough Council

June 2004

Figure 1

Figure 2

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Alderley Edge Conservation Area lies some eight kilometres to the north-west of Macclesfield and is dramatically situated on a steep sandstone ridge with rolling fields and woodland surrounding it. The village of Alderley Edge forms its north-western boundary, and was originally called Chorley, the settlement being renamed in the 1880s to differentiate it from Chorley in Lancashire.

Following the construction of the railway in 1842, the local landowner, Sir Humphrey de Trafford, of Chorley Hall, laid out an extensive estate of new roads and new houses were incrementally added, filling-in most of the available sites by 1910. Of these, nine are now listed grade II. The conservation area boundary largely reflects de Trafford's original estate boundaries although also included are properties along Congleton Road and Whitebarn Road, mainly built between 1910 and the 1930s.

The conservation area is notable for its heavily wooded streets and substantial Victorian villas set in spacious, well-planted gardens. Winding lanes are covered in their original sandstone setts and front boundary walls are usually built from the same local sandstone. The buildings, of which about 50 remain from before 1910, are very varied in style with examples of Tudor/Elizabethan, Italianate, neo-Georgian and Arts and Crafts designs. The wide range of materials used reflects this somewhat eclectic mix of styles, and include stone, brick (several colours) smooth render or roughcast for the walls, and Welsh slate or clay tiles for the roofs.

Modern development has inevitably impinged in places, but generally the many mature trees and thick shrubbery provide good screening and in only a few locations is the effect negative. However, the preservation of the character of the conservation area depends upon the careful control of all new development (including extensions to existing buildings) and Chapter 7 of this appraisal includes policies, which will provide guidance to owners and their agents about the suitability of their proposals.

Figure 3 Croston Lodge, Macclesfield Road
1 INTRODUCTION

Statutory background

1.1 The designation of areas (rather than individual buildings) of special architectural or historic interest was first set out in the Civic Amenities Act 1967, and since then over 9,000 conservation areas have been designated in England and Wales. More recent legislation has expanded on these early principles, and Section 69 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 obliges local planning authorities to determine which parts of their areas are of special architectural or historic interest and to designate them as conservation areas. Section 72 of the same Act also specifies that it is the general duty of local planning authorities, in the exercise of their planning functions, to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of these conservation areas.

1.2 Policies, which aim to achieve this, are set out in each Council’s Local Plan and in government guidance including most importantly Planning Advisory Note (PPG) 15, Planning and the Historic Environment.

1.3 The Alderley Edge Conservation Area was designated in September 1974 and extended to include buildings in Whitebarn Road in 1989. A further extension, to include buildings along Congleton Road, was added on 20 November 1997. To the immediate north, the Trafford Road Conservation Area includes mainly pairs of mid- to late-19th century houses, in a more modest suburban setting.

Planning background

1.4 All local authorities have an approved Local Plan which sets out each Council’s policies and which is used extensively for development control purposes. These plans are almost permanently under review, as central government guidance changes rapidly and local economic and social conditions require adjustments to the Council’s policies. The relevant document for the Alderley Edge Conservation Area (as at October 2002) is the Macclesfield Borough Local Plan December 1997 as amended by two documents: the Local Plan 1st Alterations, dated October 2000, and the Local Plan 2nd Alternations, (Revised Deposit Stage) dated January 2002.

1.5 Macclesfield Borough Council has 43 conservation areas and over 1,900 listed buildings. Policies, which seek their preservation and enhancement, are set out in the Local Plan in the Built Environment section of Chapter 3 Environment, and The Edge Conservation Area is specifically described and its chief characteristics noted on page 29. Chapter 13 deals with the Alderley Edge Village Centre, which has some relevance to the adjoining conservation area.
1.6 The advice on the control of conservation areas, including new development, provided in the Local Plan is inevitably quite general. In Chapter 7 of this appraisal can be found more detailed policy guidance, which will be of relevance to owners of buildings and sites within the Alderley Edge Conservation Area.

1.7 The Purpose And Format Of the Alderley Edge Conservation Area Appraisal.

1.8 This appraisal provides proposals for the preservation or enhancement of the Alderley Edge Conservation Area.

1.9 Conservation Area Appraisals have three purposes:

- To identify the particular characteristics of the conservation area that justify its designation as a conservation area and which should be preserved or enhanced.
- To provide guidance: to owners on the how they can preserve or enhance their buildings (including advice on changes for which no planning application is required) on the Council’s likely response to applications for planning permission.
- To identify works of improvement, enhancement or other initiatives which could be taken by the Council or other agencies.

Procedure

1.10 Once conservation areas are designated, councils are obliged under Section 71 of the 1990 Act to formulate and publish proposals for their preservation and enhancement, and to consult the public on these proposals before publishing the final documents, which should take these consultations into account.

1.11 The Alderley Edge Conservation Area Appraisal was subject to public consultation for six weeks between the 12th April and 21st May 2004; during this period the views of local amenity societies and residents were sought.

1.12 Following the consultation the document went before Cabinet on the 16th June 2004 for consideration of its merit. The document was approved by Macclesfield Borough Council and subsequently adopted as a Supplementary Planning Document.
2 LOCATION

Topography and setting

2.1 The Alderley Edge Conservation Area forms the easterly side of Alderley Edge village, located on the main A34 from Congleton to Manchester and some eight kilometres to the north-west of Macclesfield. The northern edge of the conservation area lies dramatically on a steep sandstone outcrop, some 182 metres high, and to the south, the rest of the conservation area lies principally on flattish or gently undulating land, heavily planted with mature trees. Steep hills rise up Macclesfield Road, Woodbrook Road and Swiss Hill, providing contrast with the flatter roads to the south and east.

Figure 4 Entrance to Swiss Hill

2.2 To the north-west lies the more built-up town of Wilmslow; to the west, the flat Cheshire Plain with fields and small hamlets; and to the south and east can be seen attractive woodland interspersed with fields and country estates, with numerous lakes and other water features. Much of this later area is designated as a “Site of Nature Conservation Importance” in the Local Plan.

Figure 5 Fields to south of Macclesfield Road
Geology

2.3 The principal feature is the steep scarp slope of the Edge, composed of keuper sandstone with conglomerates at its base, which are banded with mottled sandstone. This stone is visible in rocky outcrops on the hillside, and contains minerals, most notably copper and lead, which have been mined in the past. The rest of the conservation area sits on boulder clay, with the soils around Alderley Edge being ideal for grassland.

3 HISTORY

Archaeology

3.1 This part of north-eastern Cheshire provides proof of occupation since the Mesolithic period with flint implements being found along the line of the sandstone outcrop. Evidence for copper mining in the Bronze Age has also been discovered to the south of the conservation area, where a hoard of 4th century Roman coins was found in 1995. There are to date 13 recorded sites on the County Sites and Monuments Record (CSMR) in the settled area of Alderley Edge and 28 in Nether Alderley, with a further 44 along the Edge itself. There are no Scheduled Ancient Monuments within the conservation area, the nearest one being at Chorley Old Hall, with its medieval fishponds and moat.

3.2 The Alderley Edge Landscape Project was set up in 1996 under the auspices of Manchester Museum and the National Trust. This is a multi-disciplinary project, which includes archaeological fieldwork and a survey of historic buildings. A gazetteer of its findings is currently being prepared. Alderley Edge has also been the subject of the Cheshire Historic Towns Survey, prepared by Cheshire County Council between 1997-2001.
The Development of Alderley Edge

3.3 Early medieval settlements are recorded at Nether Alderley (to the south of Alderley Edge) and Chorley, which was renamed Alderley Edge in the 1880s to differentiate the village from Chorley in Lancashire. The name “Alderley” first appears in 1086 as Aldredelie. It is likely that this originated from Aldred and leah meaning Aldred’s Clearing. Similarly, Chorley has a long history with the likely derivation coming from ceorl and leah, meaning a peasants’ clearing, and although it is not mentioned in the Domesday Survey, it is included in a charter of c.1280. The principal manors were based on the 14th century Chorley Hall, which lies to the south-west of Alderley Edge, and the Old Hall, at Nether Alderley, a 16th century building which was burnt down in 1779.

3.4 The economies of both Chorley and Nether Alderley were dominated by agriculture with a market charter being granted at Nether Alderley in c.1253. The Nether Alderley corn mill dates back to 1391, although the present timber structure is only 16th century. The mill pond was adapted to form the moat which surrounded the Old Hall, the home of the Stanley family. Cheshire had its own system of taxes in the medieval period, the Mize, and in the records for 1405 Chorley was assessed at 20s 0d and Nether Alderley (clearly the larger settlement) at 27s 0d. There was no church in Chorley until 1852, when the expansion of the town demanded enlarged accommodation, but St Mary’s Church in Nether Alderley retains some 14th century work including a font.

3.5 Lead and copper mining on the Edge is documented in the late 17th and 18th centuries. After the destruction of the Old Hall in the late 18th century, the Stanley family relocated to Park House on the southern edge of Alderley Park, and both house and park were subsequently much extended. Throughout the 19th century Nether Alderley remained under the control of the Stanley’s and the lack of development pressure meant that the dispersed medieval settlement pattern was retained. The corn mill continued to be worked until 1939 when Lord Stanley was forced to sell it, along with the rest of his estate, to meet the cost of death duties. In the 1950s the National Trust bought the site and have since restored the building and opened it to the public.

3.6 In 1830 Chorley consisted of only a few cottages, the Trafford Arms Inn, a toll bar, and a smithy, straggling along the Congleton to Manchester road. Chorley Hall, to the south-east of the hamlet, was the principal building. However, in 1842 the construction of the Stockport to Crewe railway line, a branch of the main Manchester to Birmingham Railway, led to a demand for new housing for merchants and professionals working in Manchester, some 20 kilometres away. They were tempted by the offer of free railway season tickets to the owners of houses worth £50 or more, and throughout the later half of the 19th century the owner of Chorley Hall, Sir Humphrey de Trafford, sold off land in the village for housing development. The first villa was
therefore constructed in the early 1840s and by 1850 thirty “handsome residences” had been erected, some of them in what is now the Alderley Edge Conservation Area. The growth of Alderley Edge is recorded in the census returns, with the population rising from 561 in 1841 to 2856 in 1902 (the return for Nether Alderley shows a drop from 679 to 522 within the same period).

Figure 7 1871 Map
3.7 The First Edition Ordnance Survey map of 1871 (Figure 1) therefore shows “Chorley” (as it still was) with the new Queen’s Hotel next to the station, new shops and terraced houses along London Road, and a Post Office at the town centre, where Macclesfield Road meets Alderley Road. To the north are wooded areas with detached villas, but to the east is a much larger area, roughly approximating with the modern conservation area, where curving roads divide generous wooded plots, usually with its own house, although some plots remained undeveloped until much later. Of interest is the use of the names “Brickfield” and “Brick kiln” on a site to the north-east of Alderley Edge, suggesting a source for the local bricks.

![Figure 8 1899 Map](image)

3.8 The 1899 map (Figure 2) shows a similar footprint but it is much easier to make out the individual villas and their names – Holybank, Ashfield, The Larches etc. Also very evident on this map are the remains of the old mines towards and within Windmill Wood, immediately to the south-east.
3.9 In the 20th century, Alderley Edge continued to expand with much Post-War housing around the north-eastern and western edges. Nether Alderley has remained relatively unchanged apart from the sale of Alderley Park to Astra Zeneca, which now has a large research establishment based on Alderley Hall.

4 THE CHARACTER AND APPEARANCE OF THE ALDERLEY EDGE CONSERVATION AREA

General description

4.1 The Alderley Edge Conservation Area is notable for its cohesive, sylvan qualities. Prestigious, detached villas, mostly dating to between 1845 and 1900, sit in generous plots with mature tree planting largely hiding them from the public viewpoint. Stone setted roads, stone boundary walls, the mature shrubs and large trees, and the undulating topography provide an interesting and unique townscape.

4.2 The buildings are almost secondary in importance to their setting and provide a variety of architectural styles utilising many different materials. These are
glimpsed through gateways and across openings in the trees but their contribution is far less important than in the majority of conservation areas.

![Figure 10 Whitebarn Road](image)

4.3 Modern development has impinged in places, more noticeably negative where historic plot ratios have been ignored and the generous garden spaces obliterated.

**Activity and uses**

4.4 Most of the buildings in the Alderley Edge Conservation Area are in residential use, including some private old peoples' care homes. The Edge Hotel in Macclesfield Road is the only building, which is obviously in a commercial use. The former St. Hilary's School, on the Congleton Road, is now being redeveloped for new housing.

**Noise and quiet**

4.5 Noise is limited to the busy arterial routes along Macclesfield Road and Congleton Road, where cars and lorries impinge on the character of the conservation area. However, beyond these roads, and in the surrounding countryside, there is little to disturb the residents apart from the sound of wild birds and the swish of the wind through the trees.

**Townscape: morphology**

4.6 The Alderley Edge Conservation Area comprises a large number of private houses, with capacious, well-planted gardens. The most important of these buildings (of which there are about 50) date to the mid-to late-19th century and are usually two or three storeys high, with pitched roofs and a variety of ornamentation.
4.7 These buildings are usually set back along long entrance drives from the roads, which cross the conservation area, most commonly set on an east-west alignment. To the north the roads twist and turn as they climb the steep scarp slope of the Edge.

4.8 The conservation area is bounded by the busy Congleton Road to the west, and the more secondary Chapel Road/Mottram Road to the north. Macclesfield Road, another main route eastwards, bisects the conservation area and is notable for the hill rising from the village of Alderley Edge. Other roads are quieter and more rural in character, particularly Swiss Hill and Woodbrook Road.

4.9 Crossing the conservation area are narrow grassy footpaths, providing a pleasant route for dog walkers. Surrounding the conservation area are fields and patches of woodland, with the scarp slope of the Edge being characterised by its popular public footpaths, large trees, and views northwards.

4.10 Of note is the pathway leading along the Edge, approached from Swiss Hill by a footpath marked by stone posts. Another public footpath connects Macclesfield Road to the fields beyond, marked by attractive stone details – a line of vertical stone slabs forming a “kerb”, and chunky stone posts creating a gateway.

![Figure 11 Entrance to Conservation Area (along Congleton Road)](image)

The effect of historical development on plan form

4.11 The Alderley Edge Conservation Area lies just outside the junction of Macclesfield Road and Congleton Road, both being historic routes with at least medieval origins. The settlement of Chorley (which preceded Alderley Edge) is first mentioned in the 13th century, and Chorley Old Hall contains 14th century fabric. However, the layout of what would become the Alderley Edge Conservation Area was not undertaken until the coming of the railway in
1842 when new roads were set out, presumably under the orders of de Trafford, running roughly parallel to the existing Macclesfield Road.

4.12 The 1871 map (Figure 1) therefore shows the road system largely complete apart from Whitebarn Road. This was a farm track until at least 1910 and all of the houses facing this road date to after this, with examples from the 1920s and 1930s. Modern development has encroached with the creation of small groups of new houses but these are largely within historic boundaries and the new roads do not impinge on the layout of the older streets. Examples include Oatlands, off Macclesfield Road, and Hazelcroft Gardens, off Congleton Road.

Trees, landscape and open spaces

4.13 One of the most important features of the Alderley Edge Conservation Area is the abundance of mature trees, which form the boundaries and sit within the gardens of the 19th century villas. Some of these were probably planted when the estate was laid out so now, some 100 to 150 years later, they are reaching, or have passed, their prime. Oaks, beeches, silver birch, yew, horse chestnut and holly are typical. There are also specimen trees, including Wellingtonias, firs and other coniferous trees, confirming the Victorian taste in tree planting. All of the trees within the conservation area are automatically protected by their status within the designated area, but certain groups of trees have additional protection as they are covered by specific Tree Preservation Orders.

4.14 There are no public open spaces, the only communal areas being the public highway and the footpaths which join Whitebarn Road to Macclesfield Road, and Macclesfield Road to the fields to the south of Cherry Dene, following the alignment of Underwood Road. The wide grass verge along part of Macclesfield Road is a pleasant facility for the public as this part of the conservation area is very busy with traffic.
Boundaries and building plots

4.15 The planned layout of the 19th century estate is revealed by the straightness of the boundaries, which divide many of the older houses, although the boundaries facing the curving streets are softer in appearance. Typically, all of these boundaries are defined by mature trees and hedges, and thick holly or privet hedging is very much a local feature.

4.16 For the front boundaries, hedging is often combined with a low stonewall and in Whitebarn Road, the stone walls have huge pieces of stone, practically still in situ, forming the base of the walls. A similar feature occurs in Woodbrook Road, with the naturally occurring rock forming the base of the high stone walls where the road cuts through the crest of the hill. These walls look particularly attractive where the original 19th century setts have been retained. Another notable feature is the use of sandstone to form chunky gate piers, such as for the entrance to the footpaths off The Edge and to the south of Macclesfield Road. Also to the south of the buildings fronting Macclesfield Road, a notable red brick wall, visible from the public footpath, marks the boundary between the built-up area and the countryside beyond.

Figure 13 Entrance to footpath off The Edge

4.17 Historically, the buildings within the conservation area were positioned in spacious gardens and set back from the road. Regrettably, modern development has not followed the same principles, such as the 1970s West Bank, where 14 houses have been built on a plot which was previously occupied by just one house – noted as “West Bank” on the 1871 map. This development is (unusually) visible from the public viewpoint in Beechfield Road.

4.18 Oaklands is another modern development where plot sizes have been reduced but the setting-back of the development well behind the original front boundaries means that the more modern houses can barely be seen from the road. More recent development in Roan Way has however tried to recreate
this historic form of development, with large, detached houses set back from the road. Regrettably, the gardens are relatively small and the new buildings are therefore quite close to each other. Their appearance will be greatly enhanced when the new planting has developed.

![Figure 14 Modern development between Roan Way and Beechfield Road](image1)

Views and vistas

4.19 The winding roads, mature trees, and abundance of shrubbery and walling, means that there are few views within the conservation area other than those of the immediate vicinity. Glimpses of houses through the trees across the hilly area around Swiss Hill and Woodbrook Road are of interest. A particularly good view of The Penn, grade II, can be seen from Woodbrook Road. On the edges of the conservation area, stunning views from the Edge northwards are of note, with pleasant views from the public footpaths to the south of the conservation area towards Windmill Wood and Nether Alderley.

![Figure 15 Public footpath off Macclesfield Road](image2)
Public realm audit

4.20 The setted roadways within the conservation area date to the 19th century and are particularly noticeable in Woodbrook Road, where they combine visually with the stone walls which utilise the same, local sandstone. Other examples are in Tempest Road and Swiss Hill. Driveways are also marked out with setts, such as the entrance to Broomfield in Macclesfield Road. To the south, Whitebarn Road, a former farm track that was laid out after 1910, has attractive granite setts forming the gutter, sandstone kerbs, and a modern tarmac finish, somewhat worn, beneath which can be seen the original road surface. This appears to be a rough tarmac with small stones compressed into it. Otherwise, tarmacadam covers most of the road and pavement surfaces.

![Figure 16 Whitebarn Road](image)

4.21 Along Woodbrook Road can be seen some mid-19th century cast iron street lights, once gas, and now converted to electricity. Also within the conservation area are modern concrete street lights, fortunately small and simply detailed.
5 THE BUILDINGS OF ALDERLEY EDGE

Introduction

5.1 The buildings of the Alderley Edge Conservation Area are notable for their variety of style and materials, although their contribution to the character of the conservation area is almost secondary to the contribution made by the mature trees, planting, stone walls and setted roads. The first of the three historic maps show that by 1871 the estate had been set out with prestigious, individual houses set in large gardens, with some plots still undeveloped. By the time of the 1910 map, more of the plots had been filled, and of these early houses, some 50 properties remain (nine of which are listed grade II), including several which have been sub-divided or converted from coach houses. These houses were built to impress and they still retain most of their original features. Further development after 1910 along Whitebarn Road, until then a narrow farm track, added another group of detached homes, also set in spacious gardens.

5.2 Within the last 90 years another 150-odd properties have been built in the original part of the conservation area, but largely their effect is neutral, as many of the individual houses are hidden by planting or high walls. Also, the eclectic mix of architectural styles and materials used during the later half of the 19th century has provided a range of details to copy. Of greater significance is the relationship of building to garden, and building to road, with the historic form of development - large, individual houses set back from the road in spacious gardens - being the prevalent form. Less successful are the modern groups of houses, such as Broad Court or West Wood, both off Beechfield Road, where this relationship has not been reproduced.

Listed buildings and other key buildings

5.3 There are ten listed buildings or structures in the Alderley Edge Conservation Area, all listed grade II. Just to the north of the conservation area, in Alderley Edge, St. Philip's Church is listed grade II* and was built in 1853 to the designs of J S Crowther, a Manchester-based architect. Another religious building, the Alderley Edge Methodist Church, lies in Chapel Road within the adjacent Trafford Road Conservation Area. This dates to 1863, and is similarly built from the local buff sandstone.

Figure 17 Franklyn Lodge, Macclesfield Road
5.4 The listed buildings within the Alderley Edge Conservation Area were all constructed as detached, family residences and most of them were built between 1845 and 1855. Macclesfield Road contains four of them: Franklyn Lodge, a modest sandstone lodge in the Tudor Gothick style of c.1850; Broomfield House, built in 1847 by J S Crowther’s pupil Thomas Worthington to a “Jacobethan” design which was copied from the Manor House at Great Chalford; Croston Cottage, another Tudor Gothick house of 1847; and The Penn, built in 1912 for Walter Milne of Kendall Milne Stores by Sir Percy Worthington.

Figure 18 The Penn, Macclesfield Road

5.5 This somewhat late addition to the estate followed a neo-Georgian style, with a symmetrical, seven-bay front important in views across the conservation area. Also in Macclesfield Road is the drinking fountain opposite the entrance to Trafford Road. This is dated 1888 and was probably built by Mr Westhead, who lived nearby in The Hurst, a large house sadly demolished in the 1950s.

Figure 19 Drinking fountain, Macclesfield Road
5.6 Woodbrook House is identified as no. 45 Trafford Road but the long entrance driveway separates the house from this road, and it is in fact more visible (but only just) from Woodbrook Road. This is probably the most important listed building in the conservation area, as it was built in 1846 but extensively altered and enlarged by C F A Voysey in 1906, a unique example of his work in Cheshire. Faced in cream brick or roughcast, the brown sandstone window mullions provide the most recognisable link with other Voysey houses. Internally, the house apparently retains many of its original fittings including a good staircase and several Voysey fireplaces. The entrance gates to Trafford Road are also listed and the wooden gates, which sit between red sandstone piers, have typical Voysey strap hinges and catch.

5.7 Further eastwards along Woodbrook Road, but also only just visible from it, Redclyffe Grange is a Gothick house built in 1853 by J S Crowther for himself. This time, the wall material is a purple-red brick, with buff sandstone dressings to the windows and doors, and a roof covered in both slate and clay tile.

5.8 Two further listed buildings lie in Woodbrook Road: The Cedars, a large Italianate villa of c.1850 which is built from cream brick with buff sandstone dressings, and Bollin Towers, of 1846. This is built from rock-faced brown sandstone with an irregular 10-bay gabled front. Both buildings have been sub-divided into several smaller houses.

Unlisted buildings, architectural details and building styles

5.9 Like the listed buildings, the more important unlisted buildings of the Alderley Edge Conservation Area are unusually varied in their detailing, use of materials, and overall form. Most of them date to between 1840 and the
1900s, and a number of them are locally listed, a designation which does not confer any special statutory protection but does mean that the Council will be particularly careful when considering applications to demolish, alter or extend them.

5.10 These buildings are shown on the Townscape Analysis map. They are usually two or three storeys high and set in large gardens with long entrance driveways. Examples of white, yellow or brown brick, roughcast, stone, and smooth render can all be found, along with steeply pitched Welsh slate or clay tiled roofs. Windows are timber, often with leaded lights, with decorative porches often reflecting a “medieval” revival style, including several with clear Arts and Crafts influences. Some examples of the more notable unlisted buildings, which demonstrate the huge variety of details and materials, are:

- The Gables in Woodbrook Road (c. 1850 rock-faced stone walls with prominent gables in the 17th century style)

![](image1)

*Figure 21 The Gables, Woodbrook Road*

- Underwood in Woodbrook Road (c. 1860 three storey, built from brown and yellow brick, with steeply pitched clay tiled roofs, gables, and large brick chimney stacks)

- No. 21 Congleton Road (c. 1890 former lodge built from brown brick with gabled façade and prominent slate roof)

![](image2)

*Figure 22 21 Congleton Road*
- Nos. 22-28 Congleton Road (an irregular pair of Italianate villas of c.1850 built from white brick, with shallow slate roofs and an Ionic porch)
- St Mary’s Cottage in Swiss Hill (c.1875 Tudorbethan gabled cottage with black-and-white timbering and brown brick walls)
- The Quinta and the Coachhouse, Beechfield Road (designed by Frank Mee in the early 20th century with a stone slate roof above rendered walls decorated with leaded-light windows - the coachhouse has a notable roof lantern and wind vane)*
- Springfield, Macclesfield Road (c.1850 with smooth stone facings and a very steeply pitched slate roof)
- Rock Side (c.1860’s yellow brick with Italianate details)

![Figure 23 Rockside, Macclesfield Road](image)

- Frog Castle, Macclesfield Road (c.1860 white brick with stone dressings, arched first floor window heads, original two-over-two sashes)
- Whitebarn Road also contains a number of good, post-1910 houses including:
  - Over Spinney (a “Voysey-esque” house faced in white roughcast and roofed with stone slates)
  - Nether Lodge (a rendered, painted house in the 17th century style with window mullions)
  - Windy Howe (a rough rendered house with Arts and Crafts details)

**Building materials**

5.11 The historic buildings of the Alderley Edge Conservation Area, which date to between 1840 and the 1930s, display an immense variety of building materials, according to the style adopted – medieval manor house, Tudorbethan, Italianate, neo-Georgian, or Arts and Crafts. The locally quarried sandstone is sometimes used for buildings and is more usually employed for building boundary walls, even (as in Woodbrook Road) being used in situ for the base of front boundaries. Bricks (some of which were made locally) are also common, and come in several colours: purple/brown,
yellow, and “white”. Whilst there are examples of external timber-framing for effect, there are no true timber buildings. Roofs can be stone slate (probably sourced from Kerridge, to the north-east of Macclesfield), Welsh slate, or hand-made or machine-made clay tile. Windows are also very varied, including leaded lights set in stone mullions, timber multi-paned sashes, or simple timber casements.

Figure 24 White brick Italianate detailing in Macclesfield Road

6 ISSUES

Introduction

6.1 The Alderley Edge Conservation Area is notable for its landscape features: trees, winding hilly lanes, setted carriageways, and stone walls; and less obviously for its fine collection of mid- to late-19th century buildings, all set in large, well maintained gardens. Modern development has impinged in places but the generous plot sizes and surviving 19th century planting shields much of it from view.

6.2 Threats to the conservation area are therefore largely limited to the protection of the existing historic buildings and their setting, including the many trees which are now becoming old and in need of treatment or replacement. This includes the protection of original boundaries and existing plot ratios, with single dwellings within large, landscaped gardens being the preferred form of development.

6.3 Traffic is obtrusive in some parts of the conservation area, but off the principal routes the area is generally very quiet.

Conservation Area boundary review

6.4 The current conservation area boundary was carefully assessed at the time of survey for this appraisal, and it was decided that no recommendations would be made for any changes, apart from a possible extension southwards along
Congleton Road (shown on the Proposals map) to include a number of early 20th century houses of some distinction.

**Negative features**

6.5 The Alderley Edge Conservation Area is an expensive residential area without any truly "negative" areas. The houses are generally well maintained and gardens and boundaries cared for. Somewhat detrimental, but understandable, are the various security features including high gates and metal railings. These railings are regrettable, as there is no precedent for railings in the conservation area, where stone walls and soft hedging historically provided the boundary details. The present poor appearance of the former St Hilary’s School site will soon be rectified when the building work is completed.

![Figure 25 Modern metal gates in Roan Way](image)

6.6 However, some improvements are needed to the roads, pavements and grass verges. The predominant material is tarmacadam and in a more rural conservation area, such as Alderley Edge, this is not inappropriate. Along Whitebarn Road, for instance, the surface is deeply rutted and resurfacing is required. The sandstone kerbs and gutters must be retained when any resurfacing is undertaken. Generally, grass verges, such as those along Macclesfield Road, are not worn and appear to be regularly cut, although the rougher verges along the sides of lanes such as Woodbrook Road add to the rural character.

![Figure 26 Grass verge/mature trees in Woodbrook Road](image)
6.7 A concern, and one which will only increase with time, is the age and condition of the many mature trees, which form the most important feature of the conservation area. Some of these trees are now 150 years old and will need replacing soon, although as they are largely in private ownership this will be difficult to control. However, the Council can insist on suitable replacement trees being planted when permission is sought for felling.

Pedestrian and traffic management

6.8 Throughout the conservation area, wide pavements or grass verges provide attractive walking conditions, although a notable feature of the Alderley Edge Conservation Area is the lack of pedestrians, apart from dog walkers. A footpath connects Macclesfield Road, Beechfield Road and Whitebarn Road, but is not much used. A further footpath, between Macclesfield Road and the fields to the south of the conservation area, is clearly more popular.

6.9 Traffic is only intrusive along Congleton Road and Macclesfield Road. Often the vehicles along these roads appear to exceed the 40 mph speed limit, and as lorries make up a large proportion of the traffic, this has a detrimental effect on the conservation area.

New development

6.10 New development provides the greatest threat to the Alderley Edge Conservation Area, with developers being attracted by the potential of the large gardens. For example, the new houses (1997) at the top end of Beechfield Road have been carefully designed but the scheme fails in that the gardens are too small and the houses appear somewhat cramped within the overall context of the conservation area. The sub-division of existing plots is another detrimental feature, such as has occurred at Hillside in Macclesfield Road, a pre-1875 house with a modern house (Hillside Hollow) now constructed in its rear garden.

6.11 Because of the somewhat eclectic mixture of architectural styles in the conservation area, which dates to before 1900, the use of modern materials, forms and details is not as harmful in the Alderley Edge Conservation Area as in some other conservation areas, especially since most of the buildings are in any case screened from the public viewpoint by trees and planting. In Beechfield Road, Cerin Amroth is a 1970s concrete blockhouse with a mono-pitched roof and black vertical panels. Clearly a modern design, it marks the beginning of a short cul-de-sac of modern properties whose impact is neutral due to the tree planting which surround the buildings.

6.12 In Roan Way, a group of houses has been built since 1980, which provide amusing and adventurous designs with a traditional character. There are six
properties including Holly Rise, a neo-Italianate house and Beechbank, similarly dated and detailed. With their generous plot sizes, stone boundary walls and well planted gardens, these modern houses now merge into the conservation area extremely convincingly. Less attractive is the use of iron security gates although the more “see-through” types (such as for Beechbank, Forest Glades and Knight’s Keep) are preferable to the more solid versions (Limetree House – dated 1986).

6.13 A few isolated modern developments are less successful: nos. 1-5 Swiss Hill is a small group of possibly 1970s terraced houses, located uncomfortably close to the road; no. 55 Trafford Road, is another 1970s building also located far too close to the road; Hazelcroft Gardens, a small group of 1960s bungalows squeezed onto a site which was still fields in 1910, and which severely affects the setting of Hazelcroft Lodge, no. 21 Congleton Road; and Broad Court, a 1970s development off Beechfield Road whose terraced form is not in character with the surrounding area.

![Figure 27 Number 55 Trafford Road](image)

**Building extensions and alterations**

6.14 With large gardens and a good location, many homeowners in the conservation area have chosen to extend their properties, sometimes lavishly. Usually this is achieved with minimum impact on the character of the conservation area as the mature trees and planting provide good cover to the newer buildings. A more obvious threat is the sub-division of the large, 19th century houses into several units, such as Earnscliff in Woodbrook Road (now Dormer House etc.) which has been divided into four, and High-Lea in Macclesfield Road, divided into three. Such sub-divisions can result in future pressure for extensions, such as porches, and also in a multiplicity of fencing and walling to provide private gardens. Inevitably, the creation of more houses also generates a considerable amount of additional traffic and noise.
Potential development sites

6.15 There are no potential development sites in the Alderley Edge Conservation Area, although the large plots might suggest that further buildings could be absorbed into the conservation area without causing demonstrable harm. Certainly, the loss of any of the pre-1910 buildings identified on the Townscape Analysis map should be resisted, as their demolition would result in the incremental loss of historic fabric. Any new development should therefore follow the design guidance in the following section.

7 THE FUTURE MANAGEMENT OF THE ALDERLEY EDGE CONSERVATION AREA

Local Plan policies

7.1 Macclesfield Borough Council is committed to preserving and enhancing the character of the Alderley Edge Conservation Area and this appraisal should be read in conjunction with the Macclesfield Local Plan 1997 (as amended by the Local Plan 1st Alterations dated October 2000 and by the 2nd Alterations dated January 2002).

7.2 Policy BE12 states that in the Alderley Edge Conservation Area:

The Borough Council will seek to preserve and enhance:

1. The sylvan low-density housing.
2. The interesting and individual design of the large houses set in spacious grounds with mature trees.
3. The winding setted lanes.
4. The boundary enclosures, comprising boundary walls, shrubs and trees.

7.3 Policy H9 also provides some guidance on the form of new development in the Alderley Edge Conservation Area:

Low Density Housing Areas:

Within the low density housing areas new housing development will not normally be permitted unless the following criteria are met:

1. The proposal should be sympathetic to the character of the established residential area, particularly taking into account the physical scale and form of new houses and vehicular access.
2. The plot width and space between the sides of housing should be commensurate with the surrounding area;
3. the existing low density should not be exceeded in any particular area;
4. the existing high standards of space, light and privacy should be maintained;
5. Existing tree and ground cover of public amenity value should be retained; and
6.-------(not relevant)
7 In the Edge, Alderley Edge, both the new housing plot(s) and the remaining plot should be approximately 0.3 hectares (0.7 acre)........(not relevant)

Reason:
Pressures for new development in the low density housing areas are of a scale that the low-density high quality character of the established residential areas is seriously threatened. The criteria above are designed to ensure that any new development is in keeping with the character of the areas and does not cumulatively harm the existing high quality residential areas.

Design guidelines for new development

7.4 New development should therefore follow the guidance set out in the Local Plan and in addition, should be carefully designed using good quality materials and detailing. The following constraints apply:

- Buildings should be set back from the public highway, reflecting the local building line
- Generally new buildings should be two storeys high, with pitched roofs (although three or single storey buildings may be appropriate in some locations)
- Wall materials should be confined to sandstone blocks, render or roughcast, or brick
- Roof materials should be stone slate, natural Welsh (not imported slate such as Chinese or Iberian) slate, or clay tiles (machine or handmade)
- Chimneys should be provided
- Doors and windows should be made from timber and painted
- Existing boundaries should generally be retained
- New boundaries should be built in stone (where they face the highway) or consist of hedging and trees
- Entrance gates should be metal or timber
- Gate piers should be stone or brick, with simple details and a lack of ornamentation
- Driveways should be paved using tarmacadam, preferably with a sandstone aggregate rolled into it
- Every new development will be required to provide a full landscaping scheme, including the provision of new trees and hedging where appropriate

Density of new development

7.5 Historically, the buildings of the Alderley Edge Conservation Area were laid out in generously sized plots, surrounded by hedges and trees, which have now reached maturity and make a valuable contribution to the streetscape. It is therefore very important that all new development respects these historic precedents and any new buildings are provided with a suitable setting. Every new building should therefore have a suitably-sized garden and the proposed access should not impinge on the street scene. Proposed development
which encroaches into existing gardens will not be supported by the Council, unless such development can be accommodated without damage to the setting of the original building or to existing mature trees and planting.

- The following constraints on new development will therefore apply:
  - New development should respect historic plot ratios (usually one detached dwelling within a large garden)
  - Plot sizes for each individual dwelling should be no smaller than 0.3 hectare or 0.7 acre
  - (this means that terraced or semi-detached buildings will not acceptable)
  - New development should not impinge on the setting or mature landscaping of adjacent properties

**Design guidelines for extensions to existing properties**

7.6 Where they are listed, extensions and alterations will be controlled by the usual criteria adopted by the Council, as set out in the Local Plan 1997 Chapter 3 “Built Environment”, policies BE16, BE17, BE18 and BE19. These policies seek to preserve the spatial architectural or historic interest of the listed structure or building, and should be read in conjunction with government guidance contained within PPG (Planning Policy Guidance Note) 15.

7.7 Extensions to unlisted buildings in the Alderley Edge Conservation Area, particularly the substantial 19th and early 20th century houses of definite architectural and historic merit, will be judged on the following criteria:

- The extension should not reduce the garden space to below the size recommended in the Local Plan (0.3 hectare or 0.7 acre)
- Extensions should respect the height, bulk and general form of the original building
- Extensions should be secondary in character to the original building
- Matching materials must be specified
- External joinery details should match existing

**Improvements to the public realm**

7.8 The Council could undertake a number of improvements to the public realm including:

**Tree survey and management plan**

7.9 Some of the trees in the conservation area are now reaching the end of their lives and will need to be replaced. A Management Plan should be provided in consultation with local residents to identify those trees most “at risk” and to implement a long-term strategy for their replacement. A survey of every tree within the conservation area would be practically impossible, but consideration might be given to a survey of a representative sample of properties; perhaps at the sites of the listed buildings.
Street surfaces

7.10 The setted carriageways must be protected and repairs carried out using matching materials. Sandstone kerbs and gutters must similarly be preserved, particularly in Whitebarn Road. Roads should be resurfaced using tarmacadam with a local aggregate rolled into it, reflecting the colour and texture of the stone boundary walls.

Street lighting

7.11 Some historic gaslights remain (e.g. Whitebarn Road) although they have been converted to electricity. These must be retained. Modern concrete street lights (e.g. in Trafford Road) could be incrementally replaced with more appropriate “heritage” lamps.

Pavements

7.12 The existing pavements are mainly black tarmac and repairs should be carried out on a “like-for-like” basis. Existing sandstone kerbs and gutters must be retained.

Front boundaries

7.13 Private owners should be encouraged to maintain their stonewalls, repairing them using the appropriate lime-based mortar. Trees and shrubs should also be replanted where disease or old age has removed them.

8 CONCLUSIONS

How residents can help

8.1 The retention and enhancement of the character and appearance of the Alderley Edge Conservation Area can only be achieved by the residents of the area and the Council working together.

8.2 Whilst the Council can provide design guidance, and control new development, the daily maintenance and repair of individual buildings is a matter for their owners as is the need to look after the trees and shrubbery which form such an important part of the townscape.

8.3 The co-operation and enthusiasm of local residents therefore provides a vital constituent to the future successful management of the Alderley Edge Conservation Area.

8.4 This appraisal has been adopted as Supplementary Planning Guidance and will be used by the Council to guide the control of change in the conservation area.
8.5 It has been the subject of public consultation and it is hoped that local residents will find it both useful and informative. It will also be of interest to potential developers who are considering submitting planning applications in the conservation area.

8.6 The guidance contained within Chapter 7 is intended to inform the planning process and will be a material consideration when applications for new development in the Alderley Edge Conservation Area are received by the Council.

9 FURTHER INFORMATION

For more information about the Alderley Edge Conservation Area, please contact:

The Conservation Officer,
Planning Department,
Macclesfield Borough Council,
Town Hall,
Macclesfield,
SK10 1DP.
Tel: 01625 504666
Fax: 01625 504675

For further information relating to listed buildings and conservation areas, contact:

English Heritage,
23 Savile Row,
London W1X 1AB.
General telephone inquiries: 020 7973 3000
Customer Services 020 7973 4916.
For the “Care for Victorian Houses” leaflet, contact:

The Victorian Society,
1 Priory Gardens,
Bedford Park,
London W4 1TT
Telephone: 020 8994 1019

For an excellent range of technical advice leaflets, contact:

The Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings (SPAB),
6 Fitzroy Square,
London W1P 6DY.
Tel: 020 7377 1644

Further reading:

The Buildings of England: Cheshire
N Pevsner and E Hubbard

Cheshire Historic Towns Survey
Cheshire County Council
Alderley Edge Conservation Area
Listed Buildings in Alderley Edge

Red = Listed Buildings
Blue = Buildings constructed before 1910
Green = Twentieth Century buildings which make a positive contribution to Conservation Area character