

Malvern Hills District Council

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## **Abberley**

### Appraisal and Management Strategy



**Planning Services February 2010**

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## Part 1 : The Appraisal

### 1.00 Introduction

#### 1.01

Abberley Village Conservation Area was designated by Leominster District Council in 1975 and although it was re-surveyed in 1995 the findings were not adopted. It is situated in countryside off the A443, the Tenbury to Worcester Road; four miles west of Great Witley and about half a mile from the adjacent village, Abberley Common.

The Conservation Area encompasses a small rural hamlet which includes two churches and a scattering of houses.

#### 1.02

This document aims to set out the special architectural and historic characteristics of the Conservation Area. The Appraisal will be of interest and use to those involved with development and use of the area, and that adjoining it, to preserve and enhance the village character.

### Background

#### 1.03

A conservation Area is an area of special architectural or historic interest, usually the historic part of a town or village, whose character and appearance we wish to preserve.

#### 1.04

The designation of a conservation area is no longer considered appropriate as an end in itself. For the designation to be meaningful, the process requires the preparation of an appraisal to define what is special, thereby justifying the status of the conservation area. This should also form the basis for making decisions about the future of the conservation area, ensuring its character and appearance is taken properly into account.

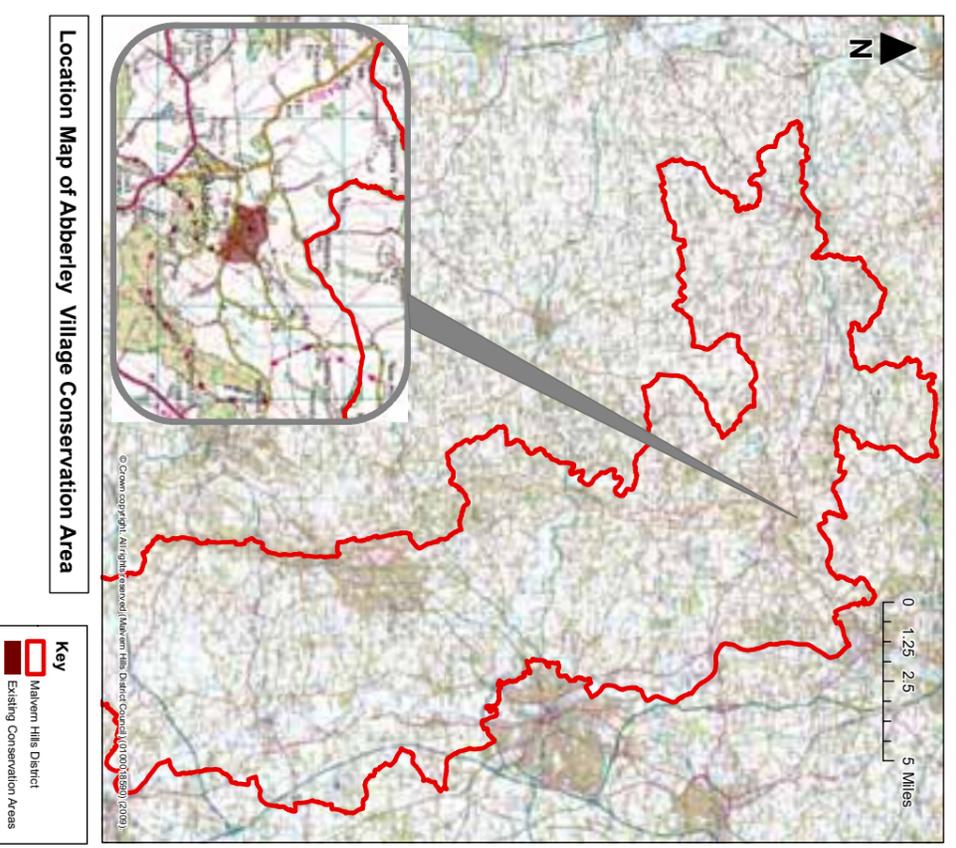
#### 1.05

This appraisal begins with a brief overview of the planning context and a summary of the

special interest before looking in more detail at the setting, historic development and spatial and character analysis. Key issues affecting the area have been identified and management proposals to address them are proposed. As part of the appraisal the conservation area boundary has been reviewed and as a result the boundary has been drawn more tightly around the settlement.

1.06 No appraisal can ever be completely comprehensive and omission of any particular building, feature or space in this document should not be taken to imply that it is of no interest.

1.07 This Appraisal has been undertaken in accordance with the recommendations of the English Heritage publications, Guidance on Conservation Area Appraisals and Guidance on the Management of Conservation Areas.



Location map of Abberley Conservation Area.

## **2.00 -Planning Policy Context**

### **2.01**

Conservation Areas were established by the 1967 Civic Amenities Act . This Act was superseded by the Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 . Section 69 of this later Act imposes a duty on Local Planning Authorities to identify areas that are of special architectural or historic interest, where it is desirable to preserve and enhance the character and appearance, and to designate them as conservation areas.

### **2.02**

Conservation Areas can vary greatly in size and character, but generally it is the appearance of the area, rather than individual buildings, that justifies the designation. They remain a particularly important way of conserving the built environment.

### **2.03**

The designation is seen as the first step in a dynamic process, and is intended to provide a basis for making sustainable decisions about its future through the development of management proposals. Designation gives the local authority additional powers to foster a spirit of good neighbourliness and to encourage sensitive new development and to stop, for example, removal of significant features. In conservation areas the demolition of any building and most parts of buildings is unlawful without Conservation Area Consent from the Council. All trees over a certain size are protected against felling, lopping or pruning without authorisation. A wider variety of extensions, including all roof alterations, require planning permission

### **2.04**

This appraisal should be read in conjunction with the national, regional and the local planning policy framework, particularly:

Planning Policy Guidance Note 15 – *Planning and the Historic Environment* (PPG15) which sets out Government Policy on the protection of conservation areas and other elements of

the historic environment.

Malvern Hills District Council's Local Plan which sets out the District's planning policies. These policies will influence how development proceeds throughout the district including Abberley Village Conservation Area.

However, the Malvern Hills District Local Plan covers the period 1996-2011. Under new planning regulations, the local plan system has been replaced by a 'Local Development Framework' system. Some local plan policies will eventually be replaced through the Local Development Framework process after full public consultation.

### **2.05**

Current policy relating to development within the towns and villages of the district, including Abberley Village, is set out in the Local Plan (Policy DS1). Abberley is one of the few villages in the district for which there is no settlement boundary. This means that, with the exception of minor extensions to properties for which planning permission will be required, new development within the village will only be permitted in exceptional circumstances.

Policy QL7 of the Local Plan sets out the criteria for new development in conservation areas and this is augmented by Policy QL8 which relates to demolition of buildings in conservation areas. Especially relevant is Policy QL9 which seeks to protect the setting of conservation areas.

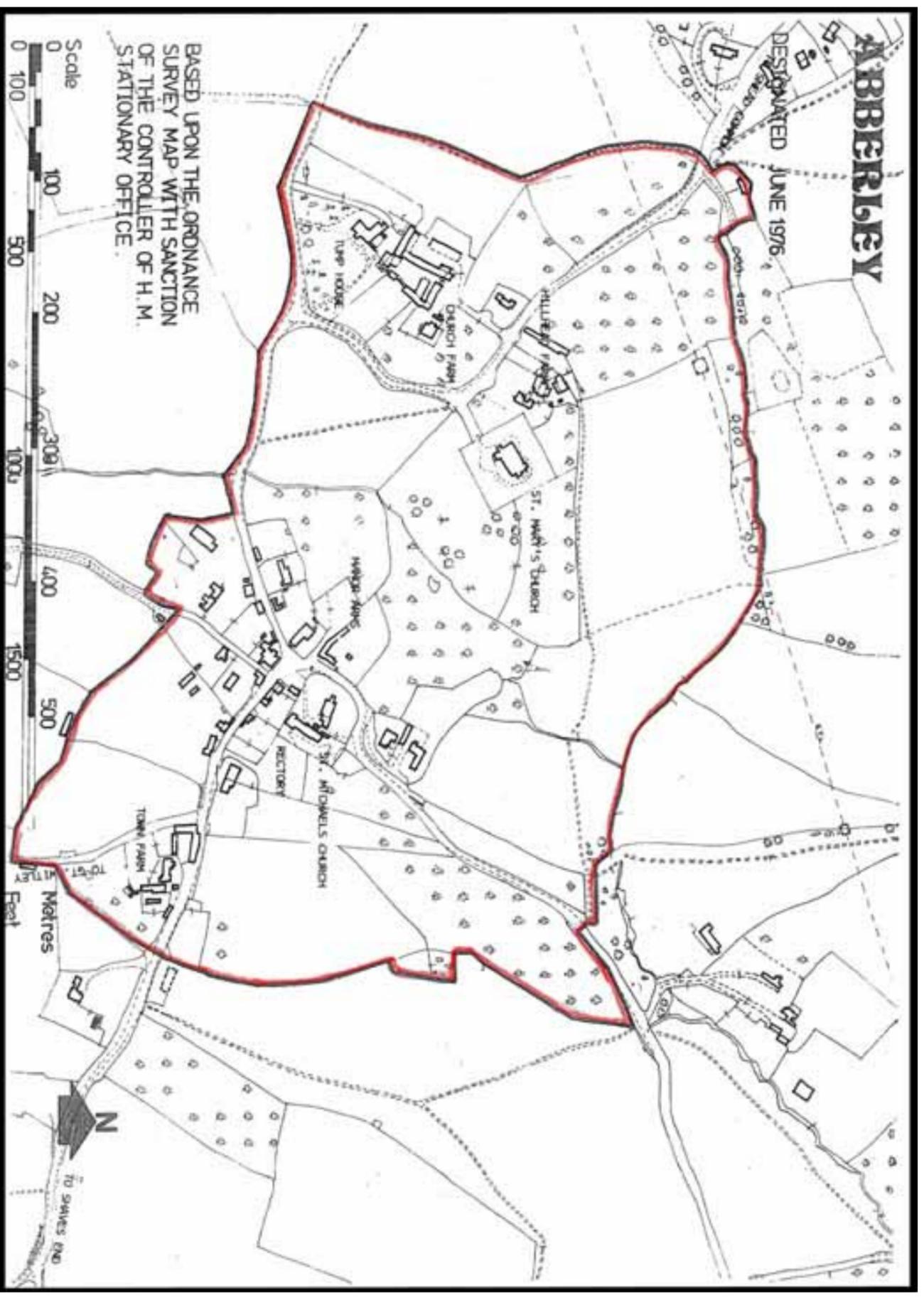
Other relevant Policies are QL3, QL4 and QL5 which control shop fronts, advertisement signs and walls gates and fences.

Generally speaking, these Policies seek to ensure that

- New development in conservation areas will be refused unless it can be demonstrated that it will preserve or enhance the character of the area.
- Demolition of buildings in conservation areas will only be permitted if they offer no visual contribution to the area or are beyond repair, and their replacement will be an enhancement.

- Development and advertisements outside the conservation area which will affect the setting of the area will not be permitted.
- Boundary treatments may not be removed where they contribute to the character of the area and new boundaries are to be appropriate for their location.

It should be noted that it is not only buildings that are protected when a Conservation Area is designated. Trees are also given some protection, and PPG15 advises that designation is not likely to be appropriate as a means of protecting landscape features. It also advises that highway work should reflect the need to protect the historic environment.



*Abberley Village Conservation Area, as designated 1976.*

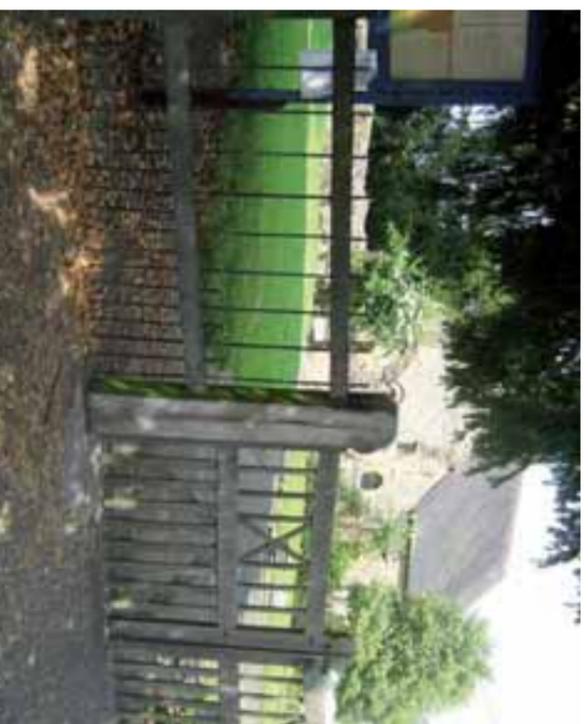
### **3.00 Summary of Special interest**

3.01 This tiny hamlet is set in undulating countryside north of the protective, wooded range of Abberley Hill but at the head of a small valley that descends eastwards towards the Severn plain. It is an old Saxon settlement. At its heart, the partly ruinous St Michael's Church gives evidence to its early beginnings.

3.02 But most unusually for such a small place, Abberley boasts two churches, each with their attendant group of buildings for, to the west of the early Church, is the Victorian replacement Church of St Mary's. Between them, and effectively separating them, is a stretch of communal garden and woodland so that the village is into parts; old St. Michael's and new, St Mary's.

3.03 The main characteristic of Abberley then, is its division. The two areas are each distinctly different from the other with older St Michael's attracting the bulk of the properties which are densely packed about it. This is the heart of the village where the buildings form a small, open square and where boundary walls conspire to create an intimate density. St Mary's Church, on the other hand, is something of an interloper among a couple of loosely placed farms and barns. Mature trees and orcharding are a feature in this part of the settlement.

3.04 The interest of the village also lies in the informal mix of building types that exist side by side. Mostly of red brick and with some stone, the ages of the buildings (with the exception of the ancient St Michael's Church) are from the 1700s onwards with several C18 houses and some C19 cottages and, on the village boundaries, some newer C20 properties. This creates a fairly homogenous mix that helps to bind the settlement together.



*Partly Ruinous St Michael's*



*St Mary's Church with communal garden and woods*



*Informal mix of building types*

## 4.00 Assessing Special Interest

### Location and setting

4.01  
Abberley Village is set amongst fine hill country countryside in the north of the District. It lies ten miles to the north west of Worcester on a plateau of high ground. Access to it is through country lanes and from the south, via a steep hill.

4.02  
The land to the south of Abberley Village rises steeply to form the range of Abberley Hills, a horse-shoe shaped range which effectively protects the village from the south and the west. These hills, which are an extension of the Malvern Hills, are of mixed woodland which in part is ancient and semi-natural.

4.03  
The main approach to Abberley Village is from Abberley Common which is a larger settlement to the west and which, being close to the main A443 road to Tenbury, Worcester and Kidderminster provides essential services such as school and shop.

### Landscape

4.05  
The Worcestershire County Council Landscape Character Assessment describes the area as a varied agricultural landscape of hedged fields, scattered farms, woods and wooded valleys associated with upstanding areas of undulating relief.

4.06  
Just below Abberley Hill, which is part of the Malvern-Abberley range, the geology is mainly Lower Old Red Sandstone comprising red marls, sandstone and unfossiliferous limestone, known as cornstones. Geologists think that the Old Red Sandstone folded over the Middle and Upper Coal Measures, parts of which appear close to Abberley Village, which extend northwards towards Bewdley.

4.07  
Despite sitting within high ground, some 140m above sea level, Abberley Village is not as prominent within the wider landscape as one would expect. Only from the east is presence of the Village noted by the prominence of Tump House and some modern farm buildings but thereafter, the trees tend to be more prominent than the buildings as the approach lanes twist and fall.



*Tump House with farm buildings heralding presence of the village*



*Thereafter the village is partly hidden...*

4.08  
The rolling nature of land means that from the main approach from Abberley Common, the St Mary's settlement is effectively by-passed so that the visitor's first encounter with the Village is one of surprise. The narrow lanes which, with the steep, wooded side of Abberley Hill, give a deep sense of rurality which is abruptly dispelled as the lane drops into the Village square.

## Views

### 4.09

Outside the Village, especially to the north east, the views open to a wide panorama which looks down and over the Severn Valley. Closer to the settlement views are more local and from the leafy lanes, vistas are directed towards the wooded hills or small valleys. Within the village itself views tend to be inward looking although there are occasional wider glimpses towards the wider landscape.



*But drops into the Village Square.*



*Views open to a wide panorama.*

## 5.00 Origins, Historical Development and Archaeology.

### 5.01

Although only a tiny hamlet, the history of Abberley Village can be traced to the dark ages but documentary evidence of its progress during the middle ages is scant.

### 5.02

Early names for Abberley include Edboldelega or Ealdbeald's clearing'. In the Domesday Book the village is named 'Edboldelege'. Together with the legend that the Saxon Chief, Eobald, settled in a clearing north of the River Temе during the 6th century, these place names give strong credence to the suggestion that Abberley was a Saxon settlement. Certainly, the nature of the undulating landscape with hidden valleys and the defensive range of wooded hills, which have played their part in the history of North Worcestershire, would make this a likely location for an early hamlet.

### 5.03

The booklet 'St Michael's Church' (unknown author) states that Offa, king of Mercia, built the first Church at Abberley during the 9<sup>th</sup> century but documentary evidence appears to begin during the 11<sup>th</sup> century at the time of the Domesday surveys. In 1086, the village which was held by Ralph de Toeni, had a population of 150 persons and a priest. A priest, of course, suggests a Church and as St Michael's dates from the C12, an early church here is likely although physical evidence appears to be elusive.

### 5.04

Appropriately enough, archaeological finds in the Parish include a late Anglo Saxon stirrup-strap mount with a lion decoration.

5.05 Early medieval history of Abberley is not well documented although it is clear that it was held by Guy Beauchamp, Earl of Warwick and then passed to the crown in 1487. During this time, archaeological evidence suggests that St Michael's was enlarged twice and the hall, solar and possibly detached kitchen of the timber-framed Rectory was constructed.

#### 5.06

Henry V111 passed the lands to the Walsh family in 1531 and it remained in their protective custody until 1640 when the village was mortgaged to provide funds for the younger family members. Interestingly, during the next twenty years Joseph Walsh (who fought in the Civil War on the Royalist side) and William Walsh tried to mortgage or sell Abberley several times to raise funds or pay off debts. During this century, timber-framed Town Farm and The Village Stores were built and St Michael's, whose walls contain monuments to the Walsh family, and the Rectory were altered.

#### 5.07

According to the Worcestershire Environment Record two coal mines, Beehive Colliery and Poolhouse Colliery both some distance from the village itself, date from the mid 1500s. The beds were of poor quality and were no longer working by the 1820s.

#### 5.08

In 1836 the village was sold to Mr Molliet of Geneva who built the notable Abberley Hall on the other side of Abberley hill and later, in 1850 his son oversaw the construction of St Mary's Church which was required because, by now, St Michael's was in a state of collapse and had been abandoned.

#### 5.09

Before the building of St Mary's this part of the settlement was occupied by two farms, Tump Farm and Hillhead Farm. The presence of the Church and, no doubt, a change in the agricultural finances encouraged some small additional development during the late C19. This western part of Abberley Village is a much later addition to the historic core centred on St Michael's Church.

#### 5.10

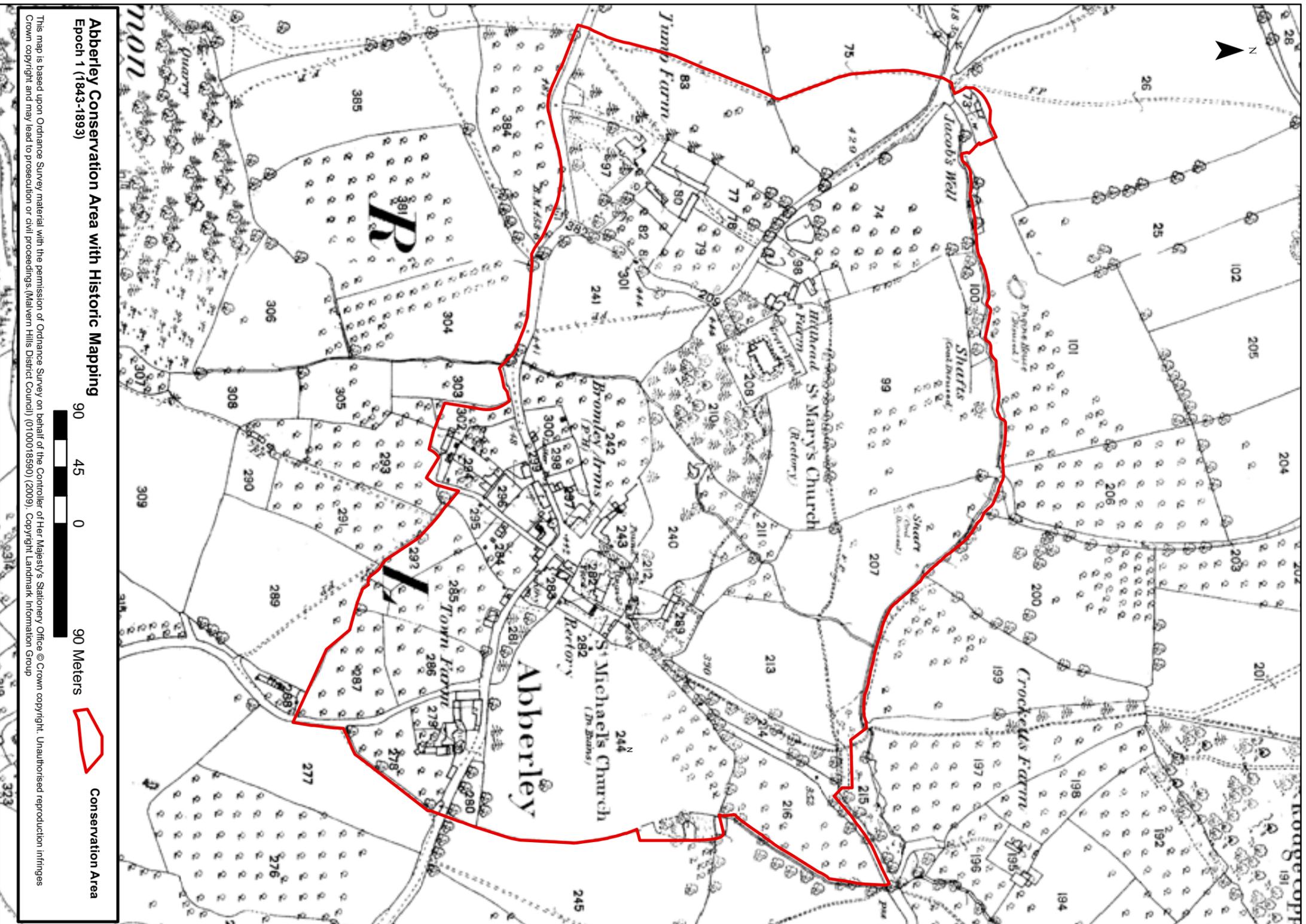
For over a hundred and fifty years, the built form of Abberley Village has barely changed. The churches, the Square and the most notable properties are still holding pride of place. Later development which dates mostly from the C20 is piecemeal and is generally, but not always, discrete.

#### 5.11

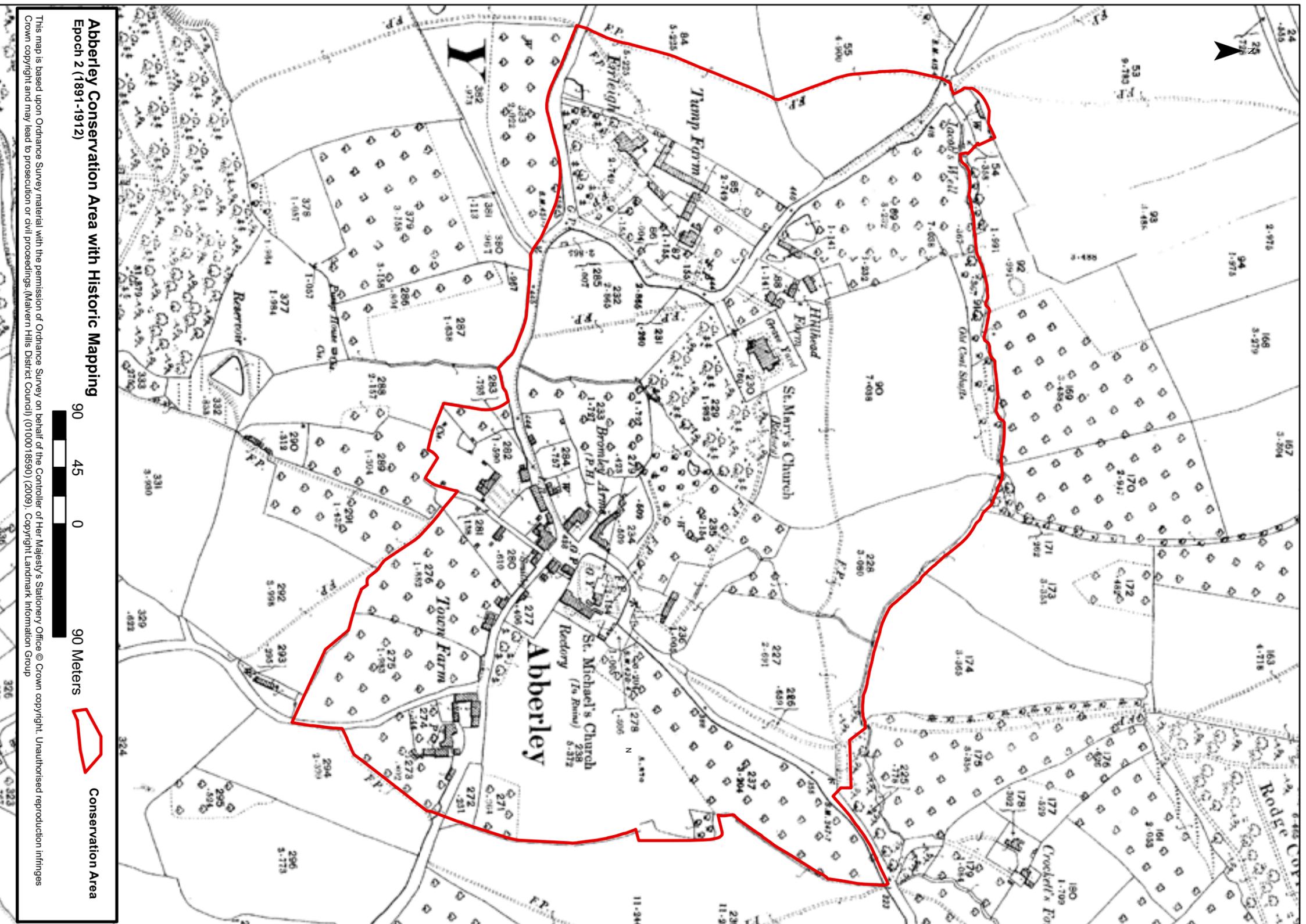
Sadly, and possibly inevitably, some former uses have changed. Early maps indicate that the hamlet was predominantly agricultural with extensive orcharding, and the older part was serviced by a pound, smithy, public house and later, a shop. Now, much of the orcharding has gone and of the businesses, only the public house remains. Most barns have been converted to residential use and agriculture is no longer a major occupation. Of the coal mines, little remains and there appears to be no evidence that their presence physically affected the village.

#### 5.12

Of the field pattern surrounding the village the field called Town Meadow remains virtually unchanged from the 1842 tythe map. The early meaning of Town Meadow is 'belonging to the Town' (farm) which suggests that this field shape is of medieval origin. Similarly there is evidence that there was a Mill in Abberley during the medieval period and Mill Meadow, also unchanged in shape from the tythe map, is likely to relate to that early use. Other fields have seen much boundary change and are of lesser interest.



Abberley Village 1843 -1890



Abberley Village 1891 - 1912

## 6.00 Character and Appearance

### General

#### 6.01

Set in a rolling landscape where trees, fields and leafy lanes interact with buildings to contribute to the special characteristics of the place. The hamlet is in two parts but joined by a communal wood and Green; each part having its own special identity as well as having its own Church. Common features are few although each is historically linked to the other and both are inseparable from the landscape in which they sit.

#### 6.02

The larger part of the village, to the eastern side, is centred on a small open space (hereafter called The Square) which is formed by the widening junction of three roadways. Here, although the buildings appear to be randomly placed, there is a certain formality which dissipates as the lanes traverse outwards. This is the older part of the settlement.

#### 6.03

To the west, the new Church of St Mary's dominates and, in contrast to the earlier part of the village, the buildings about it have a scattered, unplanned layout which relates entirely to the adjacent farms and their agricultural outbuildings.

#### 6.04

It would be fair to say that Abberley's buildings generally have a traditional vernacular appearance, although it is the several, more notable status buildings that define the quality of the place. Red brick tends to predominate as a building material although there is sufficient variety of constructional forms and material to create character and interest. Several buildings are listed which underpins the special interest of the village.

#### 6.05

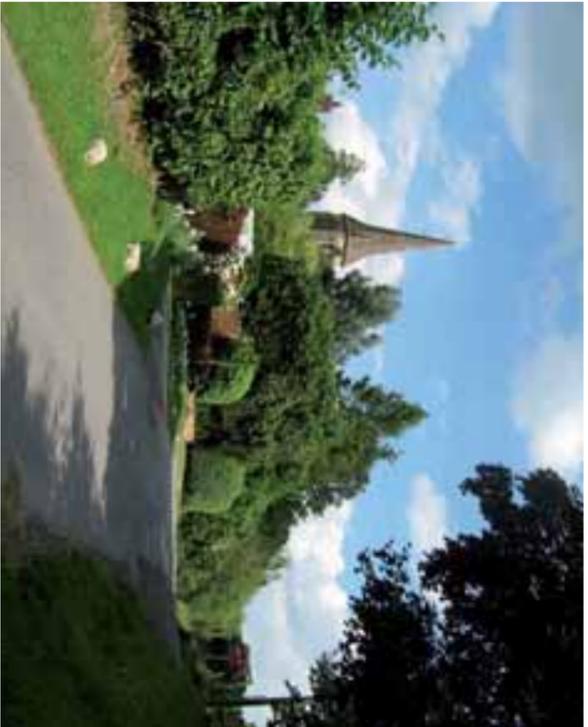
A backwater of a place, Abberley is quiet, but because of the narrowness of the lanes which necessitates low gears, traffic can be a disruption. St Michael's Church attracts tourists during the summer months which introduce busyness to the place. Distinctively pretty, it has a long history and is of notable built character that prompted its Conservation Area status.



*A widening of three roadways to create the Square...*



*... which has a certain formality to it.*



*Buildings about St Mary's have an unplanned layout.*

## **7.0.0 The Zones**

### **Zone 1**

#### **7.0.1 St Michael's**

This first Zone extends from Town Farm to the south east, encompasses the 'Square' The Manor Hotel, up to the Pleck at the north end and turning westerly to include Applegarth and Summerhill. In this area the most historic buildings group to form the Square and then spread more loosely outwards.

#### *General and spatial analysis:*

##### **7.0.2**

Unexpectedly, for such a small place, the roadside buildings and high garden walls that line the lane leading into the Square work together with an increasing density and intensity that heightens expectation and yet arrival at the heart astonishing. Astonishing, because this tiny open space is quite unlike any other place in this locality. Much of this is to do with the fact that it is on a small plateau so the approach from the west twists narrowly downwards into it while the lane from the east bends upwards towards it. From both directions this small open space is concealed until the last moment when its intimate architectural and spatial qualities are suddenly revealed.

##### **7.0.3**

Even from the south where the road is flatter, buildings gather to block forward vision so that the presence of the heart remains elusive. This is simply a junction of lanes, and yet the quality of the buildings and the way they group about it give the heart of Abberley village an enviable presence.



*Formality dissipates outwards.*

6.06 To appreciate the different parts of the village more clearly, the two areas are described separately and for the purpose of this appraisal are zoned as follows:

- **'St Michael's'** which is the historic core and where the oldest buildings group together to form the 'square'.
- **'St Mary's'** where the Victorian church stands above scattered farm buildings.



*High walls and roadside buildings work together to heighten expectation from an easterly direction...*



*St Michael's Church is revealed*

#### 7.0.4

And as if that were not enough, from this open, public space, beyond the stone boundary wall lies partly ruinous St Michael's Church and its attendant, early Rectory.

Here is the place of Abberley's beginning, an ancient edifice set in its circular, stone-walled churchyard which is also a public open space, but quite independent and distinct from the Square.

#### 7.0.5

Two minor access lanes, one to the Orchards and the other to the rear of the Public House, both leading off from the Square add depth to the village and although they do not go far, they invite exploration.



*... and from the west*



*From the south buildings create a jumbled effect and tend to block forward vision of the Square.*



*Minor lane leading from the Square invites exploration*

7.0.6 On the environs of the public space, development appears to have evolved piecemeal and generally, but not always, along the lane sides with a loosening planned structure until Town Farm. Here, to the south east this small complex comprising Farmhouse and barns creates a minor intensity of development.

7.0.7 Aside from two or three impressive buildings the built character is mixed with some new properties having been introduced and with some residential conversion of agricultural buildings. Not all of this later work is to the benefit of the overall appearance of the area. In addition there are several Victorian properties which line the lanes and these add variety to the historical development as well as the appearance of the area.

#### *Density and plot size*

7.0.8 The Square is clearly the dominant spatial feature of the village, but moving away from this centre the buildings increasingly become more relaxed in their density and in their architectural styling. Some buildings face the road, some are set back and others are gable-end on to the thoroughfare so there is an element of haphazardness in their layout.

7.0.9 Garden plots also appear to be haphazardly determined. There is no indication of the medieval burgrave plot in their shape or form but it is worth noting that several seem to share a common boundary, for instance, the properties to the rear of Applegarth, so that the garden and fields beyond have a clear demarcation. Generally, plot sizes are small. The Churchyard to St Michael's is nearly circular as would be expected for an ancient holy place.

7.0.10 The loosening outward density means that the spaces between some buildings are wider than others. These are a characteristic of the piecemeal development of the village and are not necessarily 'gap' sites in developmental terms.

#### *Architectural and historical quality of the buildings.*

7.0.11 For such a small settlement it is remarkable that Abberley's major buildings are of such high architectural quality. Admittedly, there are only three or four of them, but together they depict the quality of the place and they create a lasting impression of importance.

7.0.12 The buildings that line the Square are arranged in a way that might be described as 'loosely formal'. The impressive C18 Jaylands faces the open space, while on the opposite corner, 'The Stores' faces away, almost turning its back, and yet its walls contribute form one side of the public enclosure. The public house, undeniably Victorian, forms the northern flank while the more humble cottages to the south complete the setting.

From the south east it is relevant to note that the configuration of buildings create a jumbled effect, with an increase in scale towards the Square.

7.0.13 Aside from those notable exceptions, most of the buildings are small-scale; generally one or two stories high and on the whole, they display a simple cottage-style architecture although some later properties depart from this characterisation. Some, by their size and/or their positions in the village, tend to stand out and these are identified as key buildings whose contribution to the character of Abberley Village is significant.



*The Rectory*

*Contribution made by listed buildings*

**7.0.14**

One of the most important buildings in the village has to be St Michael's Church. Now with the nave picturesquely ruinous, its presence in this green churchyard expresses the foundation of the beginning of Abberley. Its Norman doorways and the steep roof of the Chancel are not particularly prominent from the lanes and the Square but nevertheless the configuration of village buildings, walls and signs make sure that its presence is obvious. The survival of early 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> century fabric is recognised by its grade 11\* listing status. By the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, the church was no longer used but restorations during the twentieth century, notably the 1960s, consolidated the structure.

**7.0.15**

Just behind the Church lies the Rectory. Formerly a hall house and partly timber framed, although now rendered externally. With a construction date of probably the late 1400s, this is Abberley's second oldest building.

A pre-reformation parsonage, the Rectory has seen much change over its lifetime and particularly during the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Its pleasing long, low shape and whitened elevations contribute very positively to the setting of St Michael's.

**7.0.16**

One of the most notable houses in the village must be The Jaylands. One of the few distinguished properties in the area, its presence is powerful. At two stories high, but with basement and attic, its imposing height is exaggerated by the fact that the surrounding land slopes away from it. This early 18<sup>th</sup> century high status property, with its highlighted and decorated central gable, sets the tone of the Square. Its balanced architectural style typifies its date of construction and later 19<sup>th</sup> century changes have not reduced it. The Jaylands plays a major part in creating the character of the heart of Abberley.



*Jaylands*



*The Stores, facing away from the Square.  
Note Dutch gable and garden high walls.*

#### 7.0.17

The Stores, although earlier in date than its neighbour, is not quite so prominent. With the rise in the road and with attic stories, the property is admittedly tall and it too faces St Michael's, albeit obliquely, but it is the distinctive Dutch-style curvilinear gable that is most notable. That, and the tall boundary walls which lead into, and form, the northern side of the square are very important features in the creation of the public open space.

#### 7.0.18

The other listed building in this part of Abberley is the Town Farm. This large timber framed farmhouse of about 1600 is slightly earlier than The Stores and its architectural quality is indicative of the wealth of Abberley's inhabitants of that time. Town Farmhouse and its barns create an interesting grouping and although they are some distance from St Michael's Church, they add much character and interest to the village.



*Timber framed Town Farm on the southern edge of St Michael's.*

#### *Contribution made by key unlisted buildings*

#### 7.0.19

Number 38 The Village is possibly the most important of the unlisted buildings. When entering the Square from the west, this is the first building that comes into view; not St Michael's or its Rectory which is shielded by trees; not impressive Jaylands or The Stores but this fairly humble whitened cottage. It is a focal point in the heart of Village.

#### 7.0.20

Neighbouring 34 and 36 the Village, although with a humble demeanour befitting Victorian cottages, contribute to the setting of the square and its grouped buildings. The cottages are prominent and could be classed as 'key buildings'.



*38 The Village. A key unlisted building.*



*Manor Arms, forming one side of the Square.*

7.0.21

'The Manor Arms at Abberley', the village's pub, must be equally important. Squarely solid, it faces the Square and is highly prominent in this small space. With its height and stature, it compliments the other buildings about it.

Other notable buildings are:

7.0.22

Number 42 The Village: a heavily changed property whose roadside position coasting the hill heralds the approach to the heart; and little 43 The Village; a pretty, whitened roadside cottage on the edge of the village.



42 The Village, heavily changed but an important location on approach to the Village.



43 The Village



Number 43 again

**Key Issues for St Michael's zone:**

- The heart of Abberley Village around the Church is very sensitive to change. To maintain the architectural and special quality of this area any additional development, however minor, will be viewed with extreme caution. The rest of the village, away from the heart, is less sensitive to change but development should respect the scale of existing properties and the loosening outwards density
- Changes in height and massing of existing buildings will be invasive, especially close to the Square.
  - Boundary walls should be retained and changes in their height or material will affect the character of the area.
  - Opportunities for new development are firmly limited and changes, including minor additions, will have the capacity to impact on the setting of St Michael's.
  - Spaces between buildings are as important as the building themselves

## **Zone 2**

### **7.1.0 St Mary's**

This area is centred upon St Mary's Church, extends to the north to encompass The Barn and then drops south to enclose Church Farm and Tump House. This is a small area with a cluster of buildings that formerly related to farming. Here the density is loose and, with the exception of the Church, the buildings are informally placed.

#### **7.1.02**

In contrast with the St Michael's part of the village, the unstructured layout and the close proximity of fields, trees and leafy lanes give this zone a distinctly rural character.

*General and spatial analysis.*

#### **7.1.03**

From Abberley Common, the lane to Abberley Village takes a winding, undulating course and, being lined with high hedges, it gives the impression of being in deep countryside. Indeed under the watchful eye of wooded Abberley Hill, this is not far from the truth. Upon passing the sumptuous Tump House the lane branches and this branch, which is easily missed, curves around to double back into the Common. It is in the crook of this curvilinear branch that this part of the Abberley Village nestles. Partly hidden from the main approach, but being set on rising ground, this little group of buildings faces and looks over towards the older part of the Village.

#### **7.1.04**

This part of the village is dominated by St Mary's Church: a Victorian building but designed in a 13<sup>th</sup> century style. On the brow of a small rise and off-set from the curving lane, its distinctive tower with broach spire is visible from some distance, especially from the St Michael's, although from the leafy westerly approach lane, it is almost hidden.

#### **7.1.05**

Almost opposite St Mary's is Church Farm which, with its range of agricultural buildings and sheds, is set above the lane; prominent in the orcharding around it. To the west of the Church is the Hillhead farmhouse and several residentially converted barns which retire into their mature gardens. The aforementioned Tump House, once a farmhouse, stands out alone as a property of distinction and it is the first building encountered that indicates the presence of Abberley Village.



*Distinctive Victorian St Mary's Church*



*Church Farm - opposite the Church but set in orcharding.*



*Hillhead Farmhouse with its converted barns.*



*Agricultural type buildings*

7.1.06 Garden shapes tend to be generous and boundaries appear to be amorphous. Only those properties close to the Church appear to have any distinct line and the boundaries to Church Farm and Tump House generally follow the curving lines of the lanes although there are some individual plot demarcations closer to the properties.

#### *Architectural and historic quality of the buildings*

7.1.07 With the exception of The Church and Tump House, the buildings in St Mary's Area tend to be agricultural in origin although most barns have been subject to conversion which has changed much of their character. The relationship of buildings with each other and their setting within the landscape is nevertheless attractive and coherent enough to justify Conservation Area Status. Heights are mostly one-and-a-half or two stories high and brick is the predominant building material.

7.1.08 There are just two listed buildings here: St Mary's Church and the older Tump House.

7.1.09 Impressive St Mary's was built by the Moilliet family during the 1850s to replace St Michael's which, by then was seriously neglected and unusable. The family, who also developed nearby Abberley Hall, donated both money and land. It was designed by Architect John Cole and was rebuilt after a fire in 1876 but it is the aspect of the church that is most interesting; angled in such a way that looks out over the intervening landscape towards ancient Abberley Village thus belonging to and calling that ancient place.

### 7.1.10

The only other listed building is Tump House, a rendered and whitened Country house with a balconied projecting bay which is named on earlier maps as Tump Farm. This mid 1700s property, built when farming was a profitable business, was designed to impress although now, mature trees give it some screening from the lane. Even the side elevation which is visible even from Abberley Common, has an imposing appearance.



*Tump House, a property of distinction.*

### *Contribution made by key unlisted buildings*

#### 7.1.11

Only one building in this zone is noted as a key building and that is the prominent Church Farmhouse. This impressively large 19<sup>th</sup> century house sits on high ground on the opposite side of the lane to the Church. Of red brick and mock timber framing to its gables, it compliments Church in its position and bearing and so clearly contributes to the setting.



*Church Farmhouse - a key unlisted building, contributing to the setting of St Mary's Church.*

**Key Issues**  
**New development will be firmly controlled to ensure that the loose density and spaces between buildings, which defines its rural character, is maintained.**

## **8.00 Contribution made by open spaces, green spaces and trees.**

### *Open and green spaces*

#### **8.01**

Abberley's landscape setting makes an overwhelming contribution to the character of the village. Had the settlement been surrounded by development, its architectural and historical importance would have been radically diminished for only few of the buildings here are notable and significance of the village layout relates almost directly to the hills, fields and trees about it.



*Slopes of Abberley Hill form a protective backdrop*

#### **8.02**

To the south and east the wooded slopes of Abberley Hill form a great curve of protective, visual as well as physical, background. To the north east the land falls down towards Netherton and beyond, out into the vast Severn Valley. The combination of distant views and the shielding hillsides are why this defensive location was chosen for the early settlement of Abberley.



*Abberley's landscape setting*

#### **8.03**

It had already been noted that from the twisting lanes that parts of Abberley Village are not particularly prominent. This also true of the two parts of the village from which only glimpses of the one can be seen from the other, and vice versa. It is only on the edges of each part does the significance of the other become apparent for between them is a belt of land that serves to separate and yet unite them.

The land falls from St Mary's to a small tree-lined brook and then rises again up to the Square. The woodland to the east of St Mary's and The Green below it are owned and cared for by the Abberley Village Green Trust. The Green is a public open space that perfectly sets off the Church and being well planted and with footpaths within, it is an important uniting feature for Abberley.

#### **8.04**

The other open space is, of course, the Square which is a small inward-looking, enclosed space. The open space of the Churchyard is different. Here the space encloses a structure, St Michael's Church, rather than buildings enclosing a space. Both these area are at the heart of Abberley Village.

8.05

Other spaces are by default, being unplanned and random. Spaces between buildings, especially on the south easterly route towards Great Witley, are simply undeveloped fields and are part of the characteristic of loosening density as the village spreads outwards.

*Trees*

8.06 None of the trees in Abberley Village are protected by a tree preservation order. Nevertheless, trees play a huge part in ensuring that Abberley blends with the wider landscape and in maintaining Abberley's rural feel.



*Mature trees about the Stores and Jaylands...*

8.07 Mature hedgerows leading into the village contribute to the effect of heightened expectation, especially about the public house and St Michael's Churchyard. The individual trees and green boundaries at the Jaylands and The Stores help to define the open space of the Square and by reminding it of its early name – a clearing – their presence contributes to a sense of place.



*... and around the churchyard*



*Contribution of trees in framing the Square.*



*Softening effect from Town Farm...*



*... towards the Village.*



*Trees about the Tump House*

8.08 Roadside trees from the Town Farm down towards the Forge soften the approach to the Square and help the transition from open country to the built formality at the heart.

8.09 In the St Mary's part of the village, trees tend to shield and frame buildings. The tall trees about Tump House are noteworthy in that they herald a property of distinction and form a visual stop to the easterly end of the village. Similarly, mature trees at the entrance to Church Farm create a distinctive entrance and the trees at the entrance to St Mary's Church have a framing effect. Mature trees bordering the lane in front of the Hillhead and the Willows have, on the other hand, a screening effect so that the Church remains dominant above them.



*Framing Church Farm and...*



*... and Hillhead*

8.10 Between the zones the strong visual significance of the small woodland to the side of St Mary's has already been noted in this appraisal the tree-bordered stream creates an important venue for wildlife. There are no sites of special interest in the area although Abberley Hill to the south is a site of Regional or Local Wildlife importance.

**Key issues:**  
**The Local Authority will require formal notice before works to trees (over 75mm in diameter) may be undertaken.**

## **9.00 Views in and out of the Conservation Area.**

### **9.01**

Views form an important component of any conservation area and they help to define the special interest of the place. Alterations to individual properties can cause major changes and can have a detrimental affect on the area. Identifying particular views of importance can highlight those aspects that are important and can help ensure their preservation.

Other chapters in the appraisal have noted that in St Michael's views are inward looking and intimate. However, views into it nearly almost frame a building to create, in town planning terms, a 'visual stop'. It is these views and 'stops' that underpin the sense formality of the space and changes to them can alter the appearance of the village.



*Tree-lined view into St Mary's from the west*

### **9.02**

Occasional outward views may be glimpsed from between properties, such as 34 The Village; from the garden of Manor Hotel and from Town Farm. These views on the outward edges of the settlement are important in maintaining the relationship of the village to the surrounding countryside.

### **9.03**

From the west side of St Michael's, there are important views eastwards to St Mary's and Church Farm. Equally, views from St Mary's back towards the older part of the village, across the Green and encompassing the lower slopes of Abberley Hill, are delightful.

### **9.04**

Outward views from the public footpath close to Tump House towards the west and, further along to the, north and east help to reinforce the visual and rural setting of the place.



*Number 38 The Village from a 'Visual Stop', on approach to the Square.*



*... and again from the Manor Arms*



*Jaylands stopping views at the Square*



*Timber framed part of The Stores forms 'visual stop'*



*View eastwards between houses.*



*Southwards out of the Village*



*Eastwards from Town Farm.*



*View from Town Farmhouse. St Mary's spire  
in the distance.*

## 10.00 Local Details and Architectural Decoration.

10.01 With such a wide range of building types in Abberley, ranging from Norman St Michael's and 15<sup>th</sup>, 17<sup>th</sup> 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century buildings to the present time, it is difficult to define a distinct building type although the most noteworthy properties are the timbered buildings of the Rectory and Town Farm followed by the brick buildings of the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries.

10.02 Of the earlier properties that have survived, all are of high quality and status, having been built to impress and having been designed according to the fashion of the time. Some later buildings such as the Manor Hotel and Church Farm also exhibit strong period characteristic features and design detail. A few smaller 19<sup>th</sup> century cottages tend to have seen some change although several retain their vernacular character. The residential conversion of agricultural buildings has generally respected the form of those buildings and later 20<sup>th</sup> houses are relatively low key.

10.03 Some interest is found in minor details; eaves decoration with dentil brickwork, for instance, a variety of doors and window patterns.



*Interesting entrance and doorway.*



*And another at the Manor Arms*



*A slatted window*



*and a wealth of detail at the Manor Arms.*



*Simple doorway with decorative gable behind.*



*Juxtaposition of buildings*



*Coping stones upon churchyard wall*



*Interesting brick verge detail,*

## **11.00 Prevalent local building materials.**

### **11.01**

In villages throughout west Worcestershire locally available materials have determined the method of construction. The palette of building materials is fairly mixed, but timber framing was clearly an early form of construction followed by brick and some stone.

### **11.02**

With the exception of the Churches which are built from the local stone, St Michael's in coursed rubble and St Mary's dressed ashlar, the presence of some timber framing in the village is not unsurprising as this was ancient woodland.

### **11.03**

Stone appears mostly in the construction of boundary walls, especially around the churchyard and on the approach lane from the west. Some outbuildings, particularly at The Jaylands and at 33 The Village are built partly of random rubble stone. Red brick has been used widely, especially for the 18<sup>th</sup> and nineteenth century buildings and for the later barns. The most noted brick buildings being the Jaylands and the Stores.

### **11.04**

Painted brick and render feature frequently; the Rectory having both rendered elevations and painted brick panels and 38 The Village being of painted brick.

### **11.05**

With the exception of the Rectory which sports slate, plain clay tiles are the dominant roofing material in the Village. However, many of the 20<sup>th</sup> century properties are roofed with the cheaper and less attractive, interlocking concrete tiles.



*Timber framing and brick, side by side.*



*Local stone (Much patched)*



*Brick and timber framed walls, clay plain tile roofs.*

## **12.00 Boundary Treatments and the Public Realm.**

**12.01**  
As with all villages, boundary treatments can make a considerable impact on the character and appearance of the area. Several properties have no roadside enclosure, but close to St Michael's there are many high brick boundary walls. Some garden walls are in stone and there is the occasional picket fence. Ranch-style fencing figures highly in the St Mary's area where properties are closest to the surrounding fields.



*Mellow brick wall boundary*

**12.02**  
Mature hedges are also prominent throughout the areas but are especially notable close to the Square where they erupt above boundary walls.

**12.03**  
Occasionally there are railings. These range from the heavy protective rail at the Manor Hotel to the decorative, and perfectly fitting railings at St Michael's. Other, newly introduced railings about the more recent properties are untraditional here.



*Brick and stone garden wall topped with hedge - a characteristic.*

**12.04**  
Gates are not particularly numerous, but the most prominent tend to be simple, timbered structures.

**12.05**  
Kerb edgings, signs and seats can add character to the appearance of the Conservation Area. Close to The Stores, there are some interesting chamfered blue-brick road edgings and the Square is enhanced by a cast road sign.

**12.06**  
There are no street lights in Abberley. This allows the village to retain its sombre rural quality at night.



*White picket fence gives 'cottagey feel'*



*More picket-type fencing at St Mary's. Note stone wall.*



*More ornate wooden gate with brick kerbs at roadside.*



*Railings and gate at St Michael's*



*Simple wooden gate*



*Victorian Road Sign - (pity about the notices)*

### **13.00 Negative and Neutral and Areas.**

Although Abberley retains much of its character and appearance there are some intrusions that compromise its special interest.

#### *Modern Development*

##### **13.01**

Some of the new houses within the St Michael's are constructed in a style and with materials alien to this part of the Village. Bungalows, for instance are an untraditional building form in an historic environment. Snaefell and Applegarth, with their long, unbroken concrete tiled roofs and Upvc features depart radically from the type of buildings that surround them. Although they are set back from the road and their boundaries help to ensure that they are not heavily prominent, this building type is not appropriate in the conservation area.

##### **13.02**

Similarly, the materials of construction and open frontages of the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century houses, Tarren and, Towncroft depart from the more traditional properties. Brick colour, roofing material and choice of fenestration introduce a discordant features. But, because they take their lead from other, older properties in height and massing, their intrusion in the village is not untoward and they have a neutral effect. Also, mature roadside trees have a shielding and softening effect, especially from the south east.

##### **13.03**

Even though most of the modern development was in place during the first Conservation Area designation in 1976 it is relevant to highlight them here so that their appearance does not set a precedence for any future changes.



*Bungalow made less intrusive by boundary treatment.*



*Brick colour, roofing material and fenestration are discordant features.*



*Wide dormer windows and integral garage introduce an urban appearance.*



*Boarded house.*

### *Conversion of outbuildings.*

#### 13.04

Although the conversion of some outbuildings has been successful in some locations, the appearance of others has caused some loss of character. During the conversion process, it is important to retain traditional features such as an unbroken roof line, original materials of construction and window detail. Loss of these features produces a negative effect.



*Character of original building has been lost.*

### *Untidy areas*

#### 13.05

Although Abberley is a farming area and farm buildings are to be expected, some modern agricultural buildings can have a damaging effect on the conservation area. The buildings themselves are often out of scale and the materials of construction are non traditional. In addition, the paraphernalia of the business, such as general storage can create areas that are a visual deterrent.



*Agricultural buildings at St Mary's...*



*And on the edge of St Michael's*



*Overflowing waste basket and concrete bench do not enhance.*

*Posts and wires.*

13.06

Throughout the area, posts and wires from the Utility companies are distracting by their positions and conditions.

*Boundary treatments*

13.07

Some properties are bounded with concrete block walls which jar with the quality of the stone walls nearby.

*Upvc products.*

13.08

Many properties, and not only the newer ones, have been fitted with Upvc windows. This often bright white, plastic material which has a damaging effect on the overall appearance of the area and which weakens character, should be avoided.



*Untidy wires in Churchyard*



*Concrete block garden walling*



*Upvc windows...*



*... here and ...*



*... everywhere.*

#### **14.00 Problems, Pressures and the Capacity for Change**

This appraisal has highlighted the following problems and pressure spots in the conservation area.

##### **14.01 St. Michael's:**

- Changes in height and massing of properties, especially close to the Square.
- Design quality of additions and use of materials
- Retaining gaps between buildings
- Retaining trees/hedges.
- Boundary treatments and fences
- Number of Upvc windows.

##### **14.02 St. Mary's:**

- Boundary walls, fences.
- Retaining spaces between buildings.
- Retention of trees/hedges.

##### **14.03 Generally:**

- Untidy poles and wires.
- Untidy areas.
- Retention of open parkland and trees between the zones and the retention of fields around the village are important to keep identity of place.

#### **15.00 Changes to the Conservation Area Boundary.**

15.01 The present conservation area boundary is now over thirty years old and it is drawn widely about the settlement to encompass fields some distance from it. Since then, PPG 15 has heightened awareness and appreciation of historic areas and their setting. The current guidance advises that an appraisal should identify and assess the architectural or historical interest of an area and that, unless they form part of the historic built environment, landscape features should not be included. This is because if the boundary is drawn to include parts that have no special interest, the justification for the conservation area will be weakened and, in the event of appeal, Conservation Area status might not be given the weight that it deserves.

15.02 Bearing this in mind, it is suggested that Abberley is given a new conservation area boundary; a boundary that is drawn closely around buildings but excluding some fields and woods where there is no evidence of a strong historical connection to the village. Their importance in creating a setting for Abberley is mentioned in the Management Strategy.

15.03 The new boundaries follow robust boundaries to each property, i.e. a permanent fence, wall or road edge or feature that is easily identifiable and is unlikely to change significantly in the future. Guidelines for assessing Conservation Area Boundaries are set out in PPG 15 and the criteria for assessment are given in Appendix 1.

15.04 Beginning with St Michael', suggested boundary route is explained as follows:

- The boundary is drawn to include all of the buildings within this part of the Village, but excluding Grey Croft which is considered to be too far away from the heart to contribute and which, in any case, has never been in the Conservation Area.

- Some of the later buildings, such as the bungalows or the 1970s houses, have been identified as having a neutral effect on the appearance and character of the Conservation Area but these have nevertheless been retained within the boundary. This is because most of them are well established with gardens about them and because their positions in the village maintain the density and historic layout of the place. The Pleck, for instance, is a boarded bungalow but it, together with the Glebe, occupies a plot that was significant on early maps.
- The retention of the old field shape and their medieval connection with the development of the village justifies the inclusion of Town Meadow and Mill Meadow within the conservation area boundary.

#### 15.05 At St Mary's:

- The boundary is drawn to encompass the Church and the most significant buildings about it. It is considered that Jacob's Well is too distant to contribute to this group of properties – its position lends itself to be grouped with those in Suffolk Lane.
- Although the Abberley Green is owned by the Abberley Green Village Trust it is included in the conservation area boundary because it contains the coffin path which relates historically to St Mary's Church.
- The modern buildings belonging to Church Farm are of no architectural interest and they have been excluded from the boundary. Similarly Leeroy, a modern boarded bungalow is excluded.

15.06 The woodland to the east of St Mary's Church is owned and managed by the Abberley Green Village Trust and the cutting of trees is subject to a felling licence. As none of the trees are considered at the present time to be of sufficient quality to justify a tree preservation order it is not appropriate to include this area within the conservation area.

### **16.00 Community Involvement**

16.01 Every household within the conservation area and immediately adjacent to the conservation area was sent a letter and leaflet which explains the appraisal process. An exhibition and public meeting was held in Abberley to which local people were invited to comment on the draft proposals. In addition, local groups such as the Parish Council and other authorities such as the Highways Authority, Natural England and Worcestershire Archaeology were sent a copy of the appraisal and were invited to comment. A total period of 8 weeks has been given for comments and the document was also available to freely download from the Council's website. Comments received have been taken into consideration in amending the draft Appraisal and Management Strategy.

16.02 A full report in which all comments were taken into account was put before Members for their consideration, at a Planning Committee.