

## AREA 2B: ABBEY MILL LANE

## Area 2b: Abbey Mill Lane

*Abbey Mill Lane, Orchard Street and Monastery Close*

**Article 4 Direction** - covers part of area, Abbey Mill Lane 1-31 (odds), 6 & 8, Abbey Gate House, Lake Cottage, and Ye Olde Fighting Cocks P.H., Monastery Close (all) and Orchard Street (all) - refer to map.

### Scheduled Monuments

*All are Monument number 96:*

- South of Ye Olde Fighting Cocks; where York House, Salisbury House and Abbey Mill House are located
- West side of Abbey Mill Lane (part)
- South east side of Abbey Mill Lane (part)

### Listed Buildings

*Abbey Mill Lane*

The Abbey Mills (eastern block now York House and western block now Salisbury House (Grade II)

Abbey Mill House (Grade II)

25 (Grade II)

Ye Olde Fighting Cocks P.H. (Grade II)

Abbey Gate House (Grade II\*).



*Abbey Gate House (grade II\* listed)*



*No. 8 Abbey Mill Lane, a locally listed building in the fork of the road.*

### Locally Listed Buildings

*Abbey Mill Lane*

Lake Cottage

Evens: 6, 8 (2 units)

Odds: 1-23 (incl), 27-31 (incl)

*Orchard Street*

Evens: 2-34 (incl)

*Monastery Close*

1- 4 (cons)



*Nos. 1-4 Monastery Close, a locally listed building.*



*Orchard Street, all of which is locally listed.*



## Area 2b: Abbey Mill Lane

### Character Summary

This character area is located to the west of the Abbey Precinct (Character Area 2a) and to the south of Fishpool Street (Character Area 4c). It is accessed through the monumental C14 flint Abbey Gateway located on Abbey Mill Lane (described in more detail in Character Area 2a) and terminates at Verulamium Park (Character Area 1).

Although historically this area was part of the Abbey precinct (Character Area 2a), as denoted by the names of the streets, today the character is distinct from this historical connection. This is due to the residential nature of the area and, in comparison, the built-up character of these roads, which include some cottages as well as some grander Georgian buildings. However, as some of the buildings have functions associated with the Abbey, this historical link is continued today. There are also common characteristics with St Michael's (Character Area 4c) due to the style of the buildings, the way that the street has a village atmosphere,

and because in both areas the road leads gently downhill towards an entrance to the park. In this part of the character area the mill building dominates and, although it now has a residential function, its origins as a grain and subsequently a silk mill relate it to both the nearby river and Abbey. Similarly, in St Michael's, Kingsbury Mill historically served the same function.

Primarily, this character area is peaceful as there is no through traffic and it is not an obvious route to the park. It is also quite dominated by greenery from the park, Abbey Orchard and also from some of the gardens which are open to the western side of the road. This character area and its fine buildings are a somewhat hidden aspect of the town. From within the area many of the larger buildings are well-screened by mature trees and high brick walls. Views of many of the buildings are only afforded at close quarters, even the Abbey and the Abbey Gatehouse are gradually revealed on the approach to the town.



*The area marks the terminus of the park and its character is strongly influenced by its greenery.*



*The old mill buildings (grade II listed) dominate the southern end of the character area.*



*The area is mostly residential with cottage-style houses and a village-like atmosphere.*



*The area is quite hidden and large historic buildings in neighbouring character areas, such as the Abbey Gateway (above) only become apparent as you ascend the hill.*

## Area 2b: Abbey Mill Lane

### History and Buildings

The street is residential in function, although there is a landmark public house at its southern end. This is the Olde Fighting Cocks Inn where the original cock pit is still in evidence. It is a listed two storey building, with a piecemeal plan form. An attractive hipped roof and hexagonal frontage, derived from the structure of a pigeon house which was moved from the grounds of the abbey c1600, dominates, it also displays timber framing and a large chimney facing onto the park. Reputedly the oldest inn in England, it was on the present day site as least as early as 1600, though the visible building dates from c1890. Its historic links to the Abbey, where it was used as the Abbey's fishing lodge due to its proximity to the river, before it became a pub explains its early date as well as its isolated setting. It borders the Park and this setting contributes to its character, particularly the sense of its history. Its position at the end of the lane with a roadway on both sides and a path at the front allows it to be appreciated in the round.

At the northern boundary of this character area, Abbey Mill Lane is adjacent to Character Areas 2c, 4c, and 2a; this boundary and the beginning of the road are denoted by the Abbey Gateway. On the west of the hill just below the gateway is the Glossop's Memorial Garden, a small geometric garden dedicated in 1928, commonly thought to be designed by Sir Herbert Baker (1862-1946), the eminent architect and friend of Sir Edwin Lutyens, it is now believed that his colleague Charles Douglas St Leger may have been involved<sup>1</sup>. It displays a high degree of craftsmanship. Set up slightly from the road, it is approached by knapped flint and brick steps and the terrace has a brick on edge surface, flower beds and seats attached to the rear wall. The perimeter wall is particularly fine: it is knapped flint in brick panels with an elaborate red brick coping and, in the centre, curving in elevation and on plan. Behind this garden, the large buildings of the school are clearly visible giving a collegiate character (see Character Area 4c).

Southwards beyond the garden is the Abbey Gate House (Grade II\*) which is the residence of the Bishop of St Albans. It is a landmark, three storey, early C19 building, which is situated on a large plot. It has a hipped slate roof with deep eaves, there is a central projecting porch and a modern canted bay to the right. There is a low single storey extension to the north. In 1996 excavations revealed evidence of at least two structures, the earliest dating from the C12/13 and another from the C17; it is possible that one of these is the stables built by Robert de Gorham (1151-67) of which there is documentary evidence.



*An old photograph of Ye Olde Fighting Cocks, displaying the distinctive hexagonal frontage. Image courtesy of St Albans Museum.*



*Glossop's Memorial Garden with the buildings of St Albans School visible behind.*

<sup>1</sup> Hertfordshire Gardens Trust, St Albans Local List



## Area 2b: Abbey Mill Lane

### History and Buildings contd.

A tall brick wall runs along the road frontage south of Abbey Gate House as far as the vehicular access and serves to enclose the Bishop's garden which has views to the rear of some of the school buildings. Immediately south is no. 6, a two storey, but tall, L-shaped curtilage building of purplish red brick forming the boundary with the access road. South of this point the boundary is less formal, changing to a hedge and beyond traditional park style railings giving a softer edge as the lane passes downhill to the park. Further to the south on the west side, past where the road forks, are two late C20 houses of contemporary design, one of which is the Bishop of Hertford's house which backs onto the park. Occupying a well-treed site and being well set back, they are reticent, apart from when viewed directly through the driveway entrance and more generally when the trees are not in leaf. This last part of the road, which is quite enclosed by trees, ends at the park where the foliage and views open up; this entrance to the park is only obvious and visible from close proximity.



*Traditional-style park railings backed by greenery form the boundary treatment at the south end of the road. Mature trees screen modern houses from the road.*



*A view of the Abbey from the northern end of the road.*

The east side of Abbey Mill Lane starts at its northern end as also having a landscaped and open character, where a low flint wall encloses the Abbey grounds and allows fine views of the west end of the Abbey set off by the Abbey Orchard's green setting. South of the Abbey Orchard, is Monastery Close, a large characterful building subdivided into flats. Dating from 1895, it is a two and three storey classical gothic style house, with an attic storey under a high pitched slate roof; it was originally built as a dormitory/boarding house for the nearby school (then known as the St Albans Grammar School). The three entrance and garden elevations are in painted roughcast with prominent quoins. Details include sash windows with gothic glazing bars, square hood moulds, string courses, and some sections of battlemented parapet. The south side, only a little of which is visible, is plainer and red brick. Its large curtilage is used for a garden and parking and it is enclosed by unusual walls incorporating arches and large sections of tumbled brickwork; the latter is visible on the north side of Orchard Street.



*The Gothic-style Monastery Close is an architecturally interesting building and demonstrates the historic use and development of the area and has therefore been locally listed.*

## Area 2b: Abbey Mill Lane

### History and Buildings contd.

To the south is Orchard Street. Nos. 2-34 are terraces of two storey, small-scale, narrow fronted cottages of the early to mid C19. Orchard Street is a quaint narrow cul de sac, reached up an incline at right angles to the lane and leading eastwards out towards the Abbey Orchard, where at the far eastern end a pedestrian access leads to the park. On the north side is the wall to Monastery Close and some garages/outbuildings with doors set flush with the wall. Cottages are confined to the south side of the street where they are set immediately at the back of pavement. The street elevation is of yellow stock brick (a few were unfortunately painted many years ago detracting from the unity of the terraces) but the rear elevation provides an interesting contrast, being built of flint within red brick panels. Most of these cottages have surviving early eight over eight sash windows in flush frames and four panelled doors. To the front and rear they present an uninterrupted slate roofscape. There is a high brick and flint wall, in need of repair which matches the rear of the properties and which backs onto the Abbey Orchard (see Area 2a).

On either side of the entrance to Orchard Street, nos. 5-23 Abbey Mill Lane are similar terraces to those in Orchard Street which also date from the second quarter of the C19. The terraces are very regular with each cottage having one upper and one lower window to one side and the door to the other. They are grouped in threes and fours with a ridge line that steps down with the fall in the road. Very distinctive and charming, they are set up on a bank, behind a retaining wall topped by traditional railings, breached at intervals by shared flights of steps. Each cottage has a small front garden and further steps up to the door. There is a World War I street war memorial on the wall of no. 9 Abbey Mill Lane, at the entrance to Orchard Street.

Both groups not only contribute to the character of this area, as shown by their local listing, but are also visible from within the Abbey Orchard (Character Area 2a) where views of the roof tops can be seen from near the Abbey, and at closer quarters, from where one of the many paths across the Abbey Orchard leads past the eastern end of the road.



*The rear of Orchard Street viewed from the Abbey Orchard. The flint and brick materials match the wall at the rear of the properties (visible in the far left of the photo).*



*Cottages either side of Orchard Street.*

## Area 2b: Abbey Mill Lane

### History and Buildings contd.

Abbey Mill Lane splits about half way along the road, and here on the east side is located no. 25. It is a listed early C19 house, with a painted ashlar façade, a slate roof, a good doorway with decorative Georgian fanlight and similar eight over eight sash windows to the neighbouring cottages. Adjacent are nos. 27-29, which date from c.1900, they are a semi-detached pair of symmetrical red brick houses. Although they have a wider frontage than no. 25, they relate well in form, scale and proportion and like no. 25 they are situated just at the back of the pavement. Unlike no. 25 but befitting their later date, they have recessed three over three windows (without horns) in arched openings with prominent drip moulds and a plain clay tiled roof. No. 31, adjoining it to the south, has a deeper and L-shaped plan and asymmetrical appearance. Although having a red brick façade and a tiled roof, like the nos. 27 & 29, it presents a rather diminutive gable end directly to the street and a more Edwardian character, with bargeboards and larger recessed two over two sash windows with integral four-paned fanlights in the top sash. Its wide side garden, which continues to the south, presents a very green and rural appearance to the east side of the lane, and again here there are traditional park style railings. Nos. 27-31 form a good well-mannered group with the listed building and have been locally listed. Their rear elevations are also visible from the Abbey Orchard. At the southern extremity of the lane, backing onto the Abbey Orchard, is a line of four flat-roofed modern garages set behind an expansive concreted garage court and low modern

wall, which detracts from the rural character of the lane. Although the form, in particular the flat roof, is not in itself a traditional one, the limited height of this group does at least minimise the visual impact. From this point in the road, views of the Fighting Cocks' chimneys and various mill buildings (see below) act as a focal point and terminus to the road.

Set into the slope between the two arms of the lane as it splits, and abutting onto each arm, is no. 8, which serves to create a sense of enclosure to the lanes either side. It is an earlier mid C19 cottage with casement windows and plain tiled hipped roofs (previously slate), it is constructed of brick, although the eastern/rear elevation has white painted render. This rear elevation appears diminutive from the upper road because it is set into the bank, but even where it fronts onto the lower road its scale is still a modest two-storey building with low flanking wings.

Lower down the hill, Lake Cottage also lies between two roads, but with its long axis across the hill, where it faces north with the Fighting Cock Inn behind, it does not enclose the two lanes. Instead it serves to open up views between the two, particularly from the eastern lane to the western lane, where because the eastern lane is higher, the two C20 houses (described above) can be seen in their woodland settings. It is a charming low red brick cottage with a low pitched slate roof and casement windows and, based on its noticeable blue brick patterning, dating from 1818.



*No. 25 Abbey Mill Lane (grade II listed).*



*Nos. 27&29 are locally listed and relate well to grade II-listed No.25 (see left).*



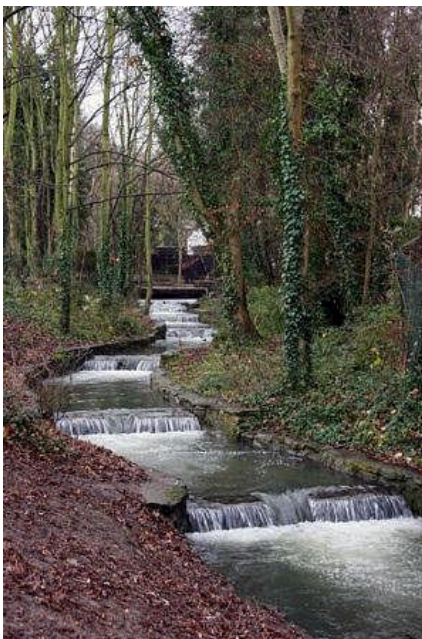
*The road splits towards the bottom of the hill with the two branches going around Lake Cottage, No.8 and The Fighting Cocks pub.*



## Area 2b: Abbey Mill Lane

### History and Buildings contd.

At the terminus of this character area is the Abbey Mill. Historically the Abbey Mill used the water from the River Ver for power, initially for grinding grain but by 1381 it was converted for the production of silk, although the oven and the barn which once stood on the site probably continued to be used for brewing the monks' beer until the monastery was dissolved. Evidence of a barn, granary, adjacent mill and fishponds and a grain processing oven, dating c 1300-1450 were found during the 1988 excavation. Today a small gothic style lodge house heralds the mill entrance. Immediately to the east is Abbey Mill House which dates from c.1830 and is stuccoed with a slate roof (Grade II). The two surviving Grade II listed mill buildings, the eastern and western blocks, are listed as dating from the late C18, although from the OS map the western block seems to be of a later date and to have replaced an earlier building on the site. They are of a massive scale - three storeys with an attic level - and are constructed of a dark red brick with a slate roof. The windows are 3 light case-ments under segmental, triple brick arches. Both of the blocks were converted to flats (including the insertion of dormers to light the upper floor) in the late 1980s and named York House and Salisbury House; new flats (Winchester House) and houses (Lincoln Mews) were built alongside.



*The weir runs down between the old mill site and the park from a pool at the front of Ye Olde Fighting Cocks Inn.*

The mill buildings are glimpsed from within the park, near to the River Ver, as well as from the Fighting Cocks Inn, but the group is generally screened from the park by vegetation, although some tree topping has unfortunately currently opened up wide views of the modern buildings at close quarters.

The entrance to the Abbey Orchard is situated close to the entrance to the mill site and to the south is the entrance to the park; The Olde Fighting Cocks Inn, separates the two. It is also at this point that the river divides around the mill site, evoking the site's historical function. Below the weir and shaded by trees, the river gently cascades down the western side of the mill site, between the former mill and the park, in a man-made staircase which creates a waterfall effect. Immediately beside the Ver-Colne Valley Walk, the water gently re-joins with the leat before continuing eastwards along the northern edge of the eastern section of the park (Character Area 7b).



*The area in front of the Fighting Cocks links the Abbey Orchard and the park and is a common pedestrian through-route.*



*Some of the modern residential buildings on the old mill site can unfortunately be seen from the park despite screening by trees.*

## Area 2b: Abbey Mill Lane

### Public Realm

The main landscape areas which impact on this character area (although they are located outside of the character area) are the Abbey Orchard and the park.

The Abbey Orchard is accessed via the eastern end of Orchard Street and at the southern end of the character area opposite the mill site, although these are not obvious entrance points, especially the former. The latter entrance is often stumbled upon as the terminus of the Orchard, where the Inn and buildings come as somewhat of a surprise. The Abbey Orchard is most visible from the northern end of Abbey Mill Lane and creates a pleasant contrast with the more enclosed nature of the southern end of the street, where there is a thick band of trees on the west and buildings on the east. This viewpoint also affords one of the classic views of the west end of the Abbey, which was renovated by Grimthorpe in the 1850s.

The park is most visible from the southern end of the character area where it serves as a pleasant backdrop to the Fighting Cocks Inn and the former mill. It also contributes to their setting by giving a strong sense of their historic setting and aids the tranquillity of this area. This entrance near to the inn is the primary entrance to the park in this area and allows connectivity between the city centre and the park.



*Glossop's Memorial Garden at the northern end of Abbey Mill Lane provides a sense of openness and landscaping. Image courtesy of St Albans Museums.*

Within this character area, the Glossop Memorial Garden is a public garden and, although in a very accessible position, it is probably rather upstaged by the large open space opposite of the Abbey Orchard and is currently most used by students from the adjacent school. Improvement should enable it to take its rightful place as a public asset. The garden to the south (although a private space and screened by trees), and the wooded area around the modern houses, contribute to the character area by creating a sense of peace and seclusion, despite their proximity to the city centre.

This Area also benefits from the triangular site of Romeland Gardens, which is situated to the north in Character Area 2c. This is because it is viewed from within this character area when looking through the Gateway from Abbey Mill Lane.

The pavements have retained their traditional blue bricks and stone kerbs. Street furniture is for the most part low key.



*Abbey Mill Lane is fairly enclosed at the southern end.*



*The Fighting Cocks with the Abbey Orchard in the background.*



## Area 2b: Abbey Mill Lane

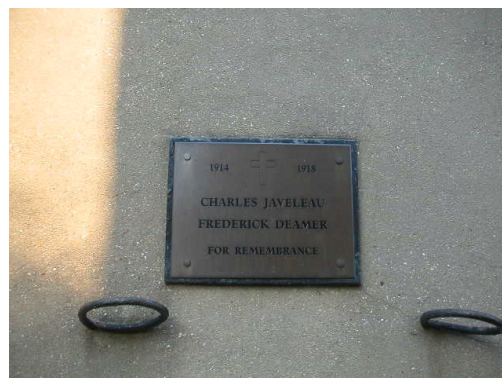
### Positive & Negative Characteristics and Scope for Change

#### Positive

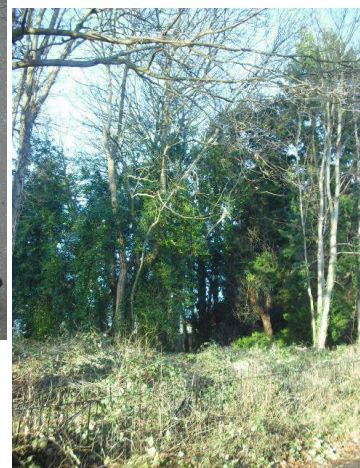
- ✓ The listed buildings and their settings which contribute so much to the area and the street scene. The listed buildings along Abbey Mill Lane as well as outside this character area all contribute to the character of the Area.
- ✓ The locally listed buildings, including the unique and characterful Monastery Close and quaint early to mid C19 Orchard Street and nos. 5-23 Abbey Mill Lane, likewise contribute.
- ✓ Scheduled Ancient Monument of the Abbey Gateway (Area 2a), which forms the northern entrance to the character area. The other Scheduled Ancient Monument (no. 96) is below ground, but is historically extremely important.
- ✓ Some good street furniture and blue brick pavings.
- ✓ WWI street war memorial on wall of no. 9 Abbey Mill Lane at entrance to Orchard Street
- ✓ As Abbey Mill Lane is not a thoroughfare for traffic it retains a quiet atmosphere, aided by the amount of vegetation particularly to the western side; in many ways it therefore has a similar character to St Michael's (Character Area 4c) in terms of the almost village atmosphere of the area.
- ✓ Views of the Abbey Orchard from the northern end of Abbey Mill Lane which offer spectacular and surprising view of the western end of the Abbey.
- ✓ Glossop Memorial Garden - One of the hidden gardens in St Albans.
- ✓ The parkland which surrounds the character area to the south, which is also part of the Metropolitan Green Belt and which, given its proximity to the city centre, positively impacts on the city and allows accessibility.
- ✓ The landscape gaps and extensive gardens of many of the buildings which contribute to the street scene and sense of tranquillity of the character area.
- ✓ Landscaping which allows the mill and the southern end of Abbey Mill Lane to retain its tranquillity despite being an entrance to the park.
- ✓ The degree to which the character and detail has been retained in the buildings as well as the landscapes, which therefore retain unspoiled and pleasing picturesque views and vistas.



*The Abbey Gateway forms the northern entrance to the area.*



*The World War I street war memorial is an interesting feature within the area.*



*The greenery of the area makes a positive contribution.*

#### Neutral

- Modern Houses (Hertford House and Gresford Lodge), although these are generally inconspicuous as they are viewed in the context of their treed sites.

## Area 2b: Abbey Mill Lane

### Positive & Negative Characteristics and Scope for Change

#### Negative

- ✖ Amount of parked cars on Abbey Mill Lane, Orchard Street and Monastery Close and the double yellow lines.
- ✖ Garage group at the southern end of Abbey Mill Lane.



*Garages at the southern end of the road.*



*Large number of parked cars somewhat mar the character.*

#### Scope for Change

- The wall at the rear of Orchard Street requires repair.
- Footpaths along Abbey Mill Lane need to be maintained.
- Maintenance and re-instatement of the historic paving rather than replacement with alternative materials.
- Glossop Memorial Gardens is one of the hidden gardens in St Albans and as such is part of the *City Vision* plans. The aim here is to landscape the area to reflect the original intentions of the design by Sir Herbert Baker, the eminent architect of the late C19 and early C20. Based upon original drawings and correspondence in the RIBA archives, the former rose beds will be grassed there will be a sculptured box plant in the centre of each new turf border and herbs and other plants around the edges by the wall.
- Taking the Verulamium Park Masterplan Study and the Verulamium Park Management Plan forward provides an opportunity to look at ways to enhance the character and appearance of the Park whilst encouraging its continued use and accessibility.
- Caution with modern development so that it does not dilute the unique character of the area which is sensitive to change.
- The character area is largely covered by an Article 4 direction, which aims to preserve its characteristics by withdrawing Permitted Development rights for changes which could otherwise be carried out without planning permission. Along with the listing of many of the buildings this should preserve this important area from unsympathetic development. However, vigilance is required as unsympathetic changes, such as street furniture, plot division, loss of landscape gaps by infilling, incremental changes and development, as well as increased traffic, could easily damage this extremely important and sensitive area. Retention of the positive features of the area (as outlined above) should be encouraged.