

CONSERVATION AREA CHARACTER STATEMENT FOR

PARK STREET AND FROGMORE



April 2001



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1.0 Introduction

1.1 The Civic Amenities Act 1967 empowered local planning authorities to make provision for the preservation and enhancement of areas of architectural and historic interest by designating them as Conservation Areas. Park Street and Frogmore Conservation Area was designated in 1994.

1.2 Conservation should not be thought of solely as a process of preservation and an impediment to change. The designation of a Conservation Area represents an opportunity to formulate positive policies to improve and enhance its environmental quality and to ensure the successful integration of any development or redevelopment necessary for its continued success as a living and working community. The St. Albans District Local Plan Review (adopted November 1994) sets out the general principles which will be observed when dealing with applications for new development and redevelopment, (Policy 85).

1.3 The aims of this Character Statement are to show the way in which the form of the Conservation Area has evolved and to assess its present character; to indicate the principles to be adopted in considering planning applications in the area; and to form a framework within which more detailed proposals may be formulated.

2.0 Archaeology and Historical Background

2.1 There are indications that the Park Street and Frogmore area was already an important centre in the years preceding the Roman conquest (AD 43), although the settlement was probably centred near to Hyde Lane, just south of the Conservation Area. Watling Street, the main road connecting Verulamium with the newly established Roman base at London, was laid out by the Roman army and still follows the same course. The local area would have been populated as part of a thriving villa estate. Again, however, this was probably centred south of Hyde Lane. Any visible evidence has been obliterated by gravel workings.

2.2 Saxon pottery finds indicate there was a Saxon settlement by the sixth century, and "Parkye" (the land of trees) was part of Cassio hundred. Park Street formed part of the land grant given by Offa to St. Albans monastery in 793 AD. After the Norman conquest the area was known as "Parke Street".

2.3 "Le Parkmulle" (Park Street Mill) is first referred to in the twelfth century and it was repaired and rebuilt by successive abbots. As well as flour grinding, it was also required to supply the abbey with eels reared and trapped in the mill ponds. During the early-nineteenth century, the Beament family reconstructed the mill. It ceased grinding flour in 1920, and after use as a glue factory, then a scrap metal store, it was converted and extended to form offices in the 1980's. The mill forms a very prominent, tall feature in the centre of Park Street, and provides a pleasing backdrop to the war memorial garden to the north, and creates a dramatic enclosure to Bury Dell Lane. Unfortunately, the mill house was demolished for road widening in the early-1960's. The mill is statutory listed.

2.4 By the fourteenth century, Park Street was one of the largest and richest manors in the area, supplying large quantities of corn to the Abbey. After the reformation, this part of the Abbey estate was granted, by the crown, to Edward Lee and Humphrey Coningsby and continued to be an agricultural village. The oldest buildings surviving in Park Street appear to be Nos. 61-3 (originally a single early-15th century late medieval hall house with an adjoining parlour added in the sixteenth century), and No. 68 (a sixteenth century timber framed building with remains of a jettied front).

2.5 The growth of the coaching trade in the eighteenth century benefited the local inns. The Overdraught Public House (formerly the White Horse) dated from this period. There are, however, seventeenth century records of the Falcon Public House, and whilst The Swan, The Lamb (now No. 38 Frogmore) and The Old Red Lion are not mentioned in records until the nineteenth century, they are likely to have had earlier origins.

3.0 Architectural Character and Quality of Buildings

3.1 There are a number of seventeenth, eighteenth and early-nineteenth century buildings surviving in Park Street and Frogmore, although some immediately south of Burydell Lane up to the railway embankment were demolished for road widening in the 1960's. Many of these oldest buildings are listed with a fairly even distribution throughout the village. The most important groups of these buildings are, firstly, in Park Street, at the junction with Park Street Lane (Nos. 72-80), where the Falcon P.H. and the adjacent takeaway and shop and timbered house complement the scale and form of the adjacent listed buildings (Nos. 66-68 and 82-84) and have retained their high pitched clay tiled roofs. Secondly, Nos. 26-34 Frogmore form a group on the western side of Watling Street. They are two storey painted cottages, have high pitched clay tiled roofs, and relate to Frogmore House and the almshouses. Although most of these buildings have survived in more or less the same form, most have also suffered from alterations to windows and doors.

3.2 In addition to the listed and locally listed buildings mentioned above, there are three large nineteenth century buildings situated close to the ford which contribute to the setting of the listed cottages, 90 and 92 Park Street, and the attractive appearance of the area around the ford. These are No. 88 Park Street, The Old Red Lion, and No. 4 Frogmore. The Swan P.H., 42 Park Street, is another nineteenth century building, which complements the adjacent listed building (No. 52) and positively contributes to the appearance and character of Park Street.

3.3 There are also many modest later-nineteenth century buildings within the Conservation Area. Most are concentrated in two locations closely related to the two railway lines. Firstly, at the northern end of Park Street, south of the railway (1858), on the eastern side of the road, several red brick terraces were built on Cooks Field and the mill gardens. Many have suffered alterations to windows or roofs. Secondly, Branch Road, between the old branch line (1868) and the River Ver, is almost entirely Victorian (with the exception of seven modern houses). The earliest buildings date from the 1860's/70's. A variety of bricks has been used, some being red, some Luton grey and some yellow gault brick with red brick details. There is also one rendered terrace with ashlar markings to simulate stone. A coffee tavern, built in 1884 as part of the temperance movement, was converted into two houses (now Nos. 2 and 4).

3.4 There are a number of other Victorian terraces in Park Street and Frogmore. At the eastern end of Bury Dell Lane, opposite Toll Cottage, a seventeenth century listed building, and surrounded by a low flint wall, there is a terrace of five cottages which replaced three thatched cottages in 1846. A further terrace of four cottages opposite the Mill on the south side of Burydell Lane have unfortunately been spoilt by window alterations but their position relative to the mill creates a valuable and attractive composition.

3.5 In the early 1800's, the Manor of Park was split into two, the Park Valley Estate (north) and the Parkbury Lodge Estate. Frogmore House, situated on part of the Park Valley Estate, was refronted by the architect Francis Wigg, for himself. It incorporated part of an older farmhouse (Park Valley) and some cottages. Frogmore House is statutorily listed. Francis Wigg was also patron of Frogmore Chapel of Ease, designed by George Gilbert Scott, which is now statutorily listed, and three almshouses (Nos. 14-18) built in 1842 (see Appendix II). When the Wigg family sold Frogmore House in 1890, they built and endowed three more almshouses (Nos. 22-26). Sidney Brunton, who bought the estate from the Wiggs, altered the gardens and constructed an ornamental canal (diverting part of the river) and golf links, including a brick and timber golf house. This former setting of Frogmore House has survived to some extent behind Brinsmead, although the Mobile Home Park has now covered part of it.

4.0 Materials

4.1 A variety of traditional building materials can be found, reflecting Park Street and Frogmore's rural past, its location on a major trunk road and the arrival of the railway. Most of the earliest surviving houses are timber framed with brick infill or brick refronting. In a few cases buildings have been rendered or the brickwork has been painted. In general, however, further painting or rendering of brickwork will be discouraged. Many of the older houses have plain tiled roofs although slate is also much in evidence especially on nineteenth century buildings.

4.2 A variety of different brick types can be found within the Conservation Area. In the eighteenth century a warm red brick was common and was probably made locally from nearby clay deposits. During the nineteenth century improved communications meant that bricks could be imported cheaply from further afield.

4.3 It is probable that most of the timber framed buildings would once have been thatched. In Hertfordshire wheat straw was used for thatching rather than reeds. Most of the historic buildings are now tiled. In the nineteenth century Welsh slate became more widely available. Slate enabled a shallower roof pitch to be used giving a distinctive appearance to Victorian terraces and houses. Some recent housing has copper roofing.

5.0 The Railways

5.1 The London North Western Railway Company Watford to St Albans line (1858) crosses over the Watling Street on a high embankment at what was then the northern end of the village. Unfortunately, the original brick bridge has been replaced by a steel one. A station and station house were built in 1890 (the station was demolished in 1959). Station Terrace on the west side of Park Street was built on Fallow Field in 1913. To connect the LNWR line to the Midland Company's line at Napsbury, a second line was constructed, crossing the

Watling Street and River Ver on an embankment. The line was never used, although the eastern part was used as a siding. Although the bridges across Watling Street and to the west have been demolished, the embankment remains, covered with bushes and trees, and the bridge buttresses form a pinch point in the views along Watling Street. The bridge over the River Ver also survives. The former railway embankments make important wildlife habitats.

6.0 Schools and School Houses

6.1 During the early-nineteenth century a school was held in a private house behind some terraced houses on the east side of Watling Street (now demolished and replaced by 69-101 Park Street). In 1831 Francis Wigg took over two buildings south of the White Horse Inn and established a National School and school house. The school house was demolished by the Midland Railway Company in 1866, whereupon Carr Wigg built part of Ver Cottage to serve as teacher's accommodation. In 1869 the school playground was enlarged. In 1873 the Wigg family conveyed the school to the Parish and the school was enlarged and a new school house built in 1878 in Branch Road (No. 1). Ver Cottage was then extended to become a house. Ver Cottage, the old school and the new school house all still exist and form an attractive group near to the railway buttresses. In 1899 a new school and master's house were built at the lower end of Branch Road. These buildings also still exist. The school was extended in 1952, retaining the original school buildings at the centre, although now it is much altered.

7.0 The Watercress Beds and Village Green

7.1 The late-nineteenth century saw the establishment of watercress beds in Park Street alongside the River Ver. In 1885, part of the area used as a village green off Bury Dell Lane was leased out by the Council for watercress beds, at a time when Hertfordshire was the national centre for the industry.

8.0 Trees

8.1 There are several important groups of trees within the Park Street and Frogmore Conservation Area. Some of these are additionally protected by Tree Preservation Orders, but most trees over a certain size in the area have legal protection at present. Many trees are related to the river course and the railway embankment and form an important backdrop to the buildings fronting the A5183. In addition, there is a group which screen the northern end of the industrial estate (TPO 35). It would be beneficial if this group could be augmented by additional trees and shrubs along the verges, to provide additional screening. There are also a number of individual trees of some amenity value alongside the A5183, mostly being in private gardens.

9.0 General Enhancement Objectives

9.1 There are many buildings in Park Street and Frogmore of architectural or historic interest. Also, regrettably, some buildings have been lost (particularly just south of Bury Dell Lane in the early 1960's). However, there is still a substantial continuity of historic buildings and features of interest which link together in views along the Watling Street. It is felt that this gives sufficient cohesion to form a Conservation Area.

9.2 The area does suffer from the presence of the industrial estate and the effects of heavy lorry traffic. It is considered that the area could be enhanced by additional tree planting to screen some less attractive buildings and areas. There are several locations where much improvement could be effected by renewal of street furniture, rationalisation of commercial advertising and by encouraging repair and maintenance of some buildings that are deteriorating. Also, there are several car parking areas which could be enhanced, perhaps by re-surfacing and/or planting.

9.3 Together with the buildings, it is felt that the open spaces alongside the River Ver, which are, in general, well-treed and therefore create a pleasant backdrop to the buildings, are an important feature of the Conservation Area.

9.4 Whilst a high percentage of the unlisted buildings have suffered from alterations to roof coverings, and window and door alterations, most of these could be reversed over time.

10.0 Summary

10.1 It is the Council's policy to encourage the retention of those features that make the Conservation Area special; including historic buildings, trees, hedges, walls, fences etc. In addition the Council demands a high standard of design and materials for any new development in the Conservation Area.

10.2 If further advice or guidance is required please contact the Conservation and Design Team, St. Albans City and District Council Offices, PO Box 2, Civic Centre, St. Albans, Herts. AL3 3JE. Tel. St. Albans (01727 866100).

STATUTORY LISTED BUILDINGS

PARK STREET

52, 68, 82, 84, White Horse P.H. (Overdraught), 90, 92, 61 & 63, 65 & 67, Park Street Mill

BURY DELL LANE

Toll Cottage

FROGMORE

Church of Holy Trinity, Lych Gate at Church of Holy Trinity, Frogmore House, Garden Wall to Frogmore House, Garden Cottage

LOCALLY LISTED BUILDINGS

THE BEECHES

Railway Bridge

BRANCH ROAD

The Old School, 1, 7-49 (odd) (excluding 27B), Park Street School House, 2, 4, 6, 10, 12, 20-38

BURY DELL LANE

3-11 (consec.)

FROGMORE

The Old Red Lion, P.H., 4, 12, 14-18, 20, 22, 24, 26& 28, 30, 32 & 34

PARK STREET

1-55 (includes 11a) (odds) 105 (Ver Cottage), 1-12 Station Terrace, The Swan P.H. (42), 66a, The Falcon P.H. (72), 74, 76 & 78, 88, Railway bridges / buttresses on former Midland Railway Branch Line.

PARK STREET LANE

1, 1a, 2

WATLING STREET

Station House

OTHER SOURCES OF INFORMATION

Department of the Environment and Department of National Heritage
Planning Policy Guidance Note 15: Planning and the Historic Environment

St Albans District Local Plan Review 1994

“The Book of Park Street & Frogmore” by Cyril Martin

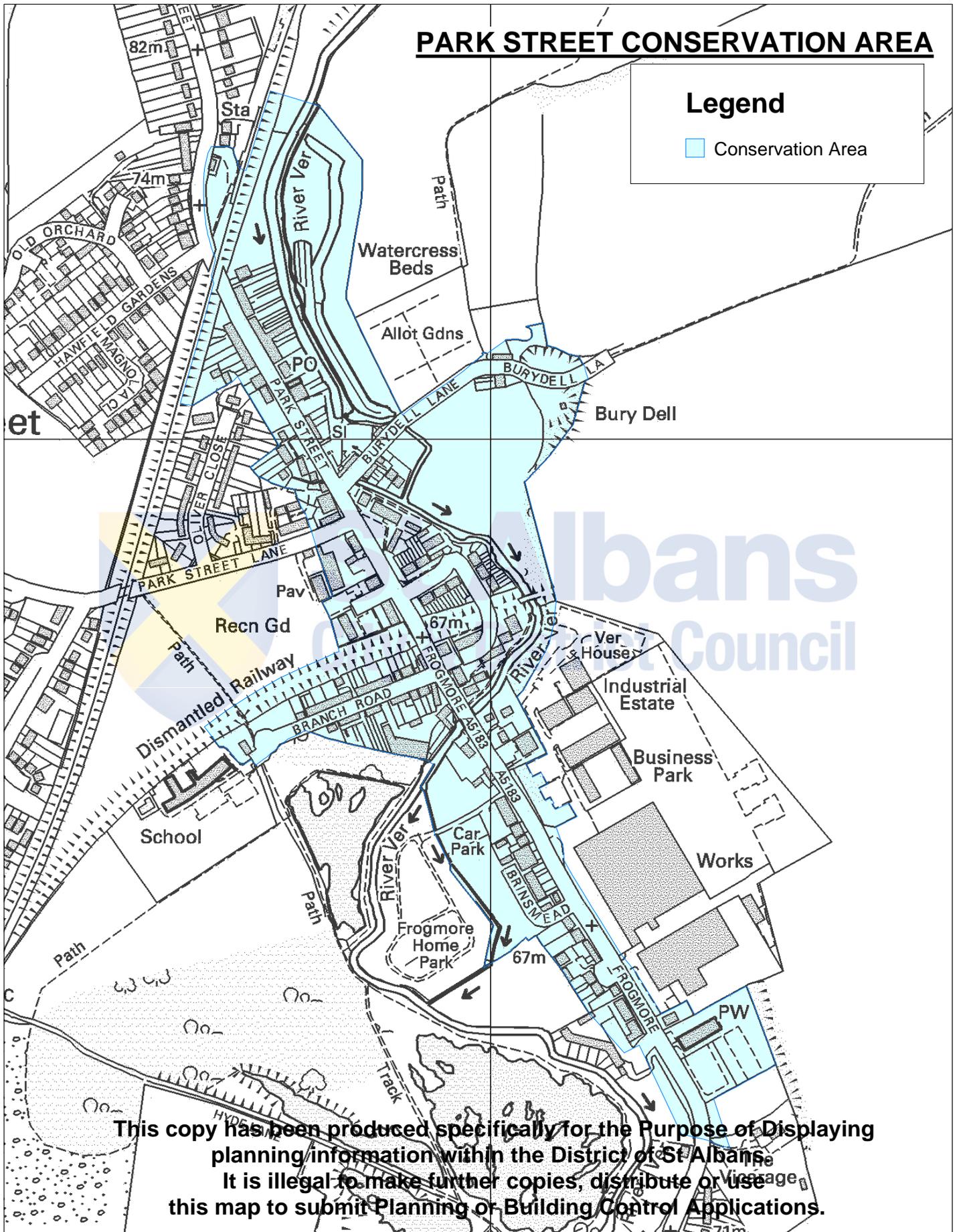
“An Edwardian Village and its People” by Cyril Martin

Park Street and Frogmore Society

PARK STREET CONSERVATION AREA

Legend

Conservation Area



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