

Character Appraisal Study and Boundary Review of the Church Square, Oldbury Conservation Area



Prepared for

Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council

By

Birmingham Archaeology Heritage Services

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

This report has been prepared by Shane Kelleher and edited by Malcolm Hislop of Birmingham Archaeology Heritage Services in accordance with a written scheme of investigation based on the requirements of the Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council document, *Brief for a Character Appraisal Study and Boundary Review of Church Square, Oldbury Conservation Area*.

The purpose of the study to which this report relates has been to provide a comprehensive character assessment and objective appraisal of the current conservation area and surrounding area. The area of study, as defined within the briefing documentation, was therefore greater than the area covered by the current conservation area. The principal aim of this study has been to establish a boundary to the conservation area that is based upon robust defensible reasoning.

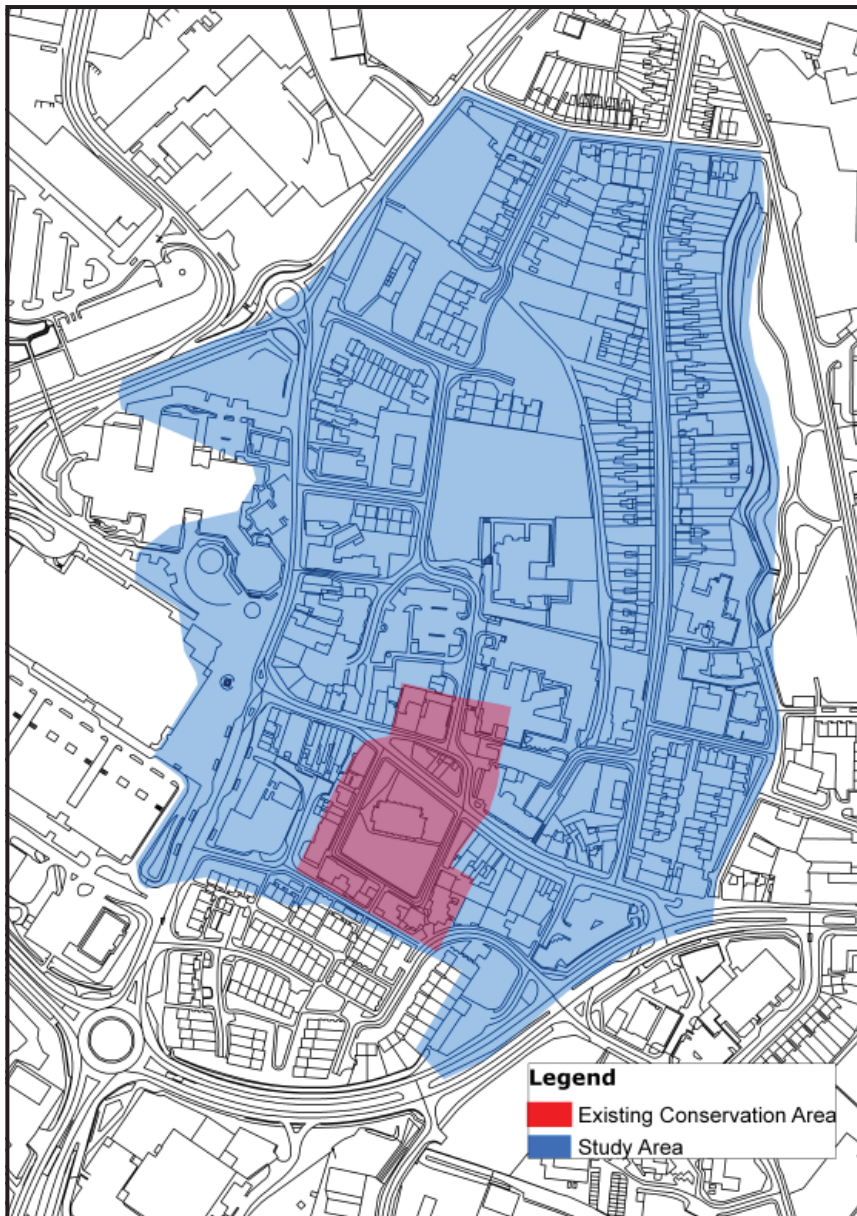
This study has been carried out in accordance with the guidelines set out by English Heritage in their publication entitled *Guidance on Conservation Area Appraisals*, dated August 2005. It has been framed by policies contained in the Unitary Development Plan for the Borough, (UDP 2004).

The original study area designated as a conservation area is indicated on the following plan:



Map 1: Church Square, Oldbury Conservation Area.

The study area included the existing conservation area centred on Church Square as well as a much wider area encompassing the town centre. Included in this wider area were Upper and Lower Birmingham Street, Low Town, Simpson Street, McKean Road, and the area around New Meeting Street. It also included part of Halesowen Street, much of Civic Square and Church Street, and the south side of Century Road.



Map 2: Appraisal and Boundary Review Study Area.

The study area boundaries were drawn by the Council, in their briefing documentation, more widely than the present conservation area to allow a full evaluation of the designated area.

2.0 PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT

A Conservation Area is defined, by Section 69 (1) (a) of the Planning (Listed) Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, as “an area of special architectural or historic interest the character of appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance”.

Section 71 of the same Act places a duty on local planning authorities to Formulate and publish proposals for the preservation and enhancement of conservation areas, to identify what it is about the character or appearance of the area which should be preserved or enhanced, and set out the means by which that objective is to be pursued.

Government policy on planning issues in relation to listed buildings and conservation areas is set out in Planning Policy Guidance: Planning and the Historic Environment (PPG 15). Section 4 deals with conservation areas.

English Heritage, which is the government's statutory advisor on archaeology and the historic environment, has produced a number of relevant guidance documents, two of the most recent statements being Guidance on Conservation Area Appraisals (2005) and Guidance on the Management of Conservation Areas (2005).

Relevant Council policy for conservation of the historic environment of Oldbury is contained in the Unitary Development Plan, which was formally adopted in April 2004 following a process of review. Local policies and proposals are set out in the Oldbury Inset to the UDP (2004). Certain policies of the UDP have been saved until 2010, when it will be superseded by the Core Strategy under the new Local Development Framework (LDF). A number of Oldbury Inset Policies have not been saved.

The LDF will set out a core strategy for the Borough supported by a statement of Community Involvement, with a Proposals Map, topic based Development Plan Documents and Area Action Plans for key areas of change or conservation.

An interim policy framework document, The Oldbury Town Planning Statement, was approved by Sandwell's Cabinet Member for Environment and Transport in 2004. The Statement does not have statutory weight, nor does it contain planning policies or proposals, but it does set out the issues to be considered during the plan making process for Oldbury, and identifies the main areas where growth and change is anticipated in the short term, concluding that there are three such areas for which Area Action plans should be prepared.

The town centre of Oldbury is one of three areas, and it is intended that the findings of this conservation area appraisal and boundary review will make a key contribution to the process of preparing the Area Action Plan.

Conservation and Heritage policy C4 in the UDP (2004) declares that the Council will seek to retain and preserve "noteworthy buildings and structures which are a vital part of the local architecture and history and which contribute to the uniqueness of the locality. This will be achieved through a Local List of Buildings". The Local List is being introduced for each of the six towns of the borough: Smethwick, Oldbury, Rowley Regis, Tipton, Wednesbury, and West Bromwich.

3.0 LOCATION AND SETTING

3.1 Location and context

Oldbury is a Black Country town with a town centre population of around 10,830 (2001 census) centred on NGR SO 989 897. It forms part of Sandwell Metropolitan Borough which lies within the West Midlands conurbation.

3.2 General character and plan form

The current conservation area comprises Church Square with Unity Place to the north and the intervening part of Birmingham Street. Church Square comprises a roughly lozenge shaped area containing Christ Church, which forms the centrepiece of the conservation area. It is bordered by roads on all four sides including Birmingham Street (north), one of the town's main thoroughfares. Unity Place is a crescent shaped lane extending around the back of some of the Birmingham Street properties to create an island. The other three sides of Church Square are also lined with buildings. The conservation area is bounded to the south by the north side of Canal Street, to the east and west by the backs of properties fronting Church Square, and to the north by a line to the rear of properties fronting Unity Place.

3.3 Landscape setting

The Church Square Conservation Area forms an important part of the streetscape of Oldbury Town Centre. The square itself forms an interesting concourse and a welcome break from the rigidly linear and relatively narrow Birmingham Street, Oldbury's principal shopping street, which gently slopes from west to east through the conservation area. Birmingham Street, which largely comprises an attractive mix of historic listed and unlisted buildings, has retained much of its historic form and function, and thus places Church Square firmly within its historic setting. The area to the immediate north has not been as fortunate, it is now occupied by a surface level carpark which has been constructed on the site of mid to late 19th-century terraced housing which were cleared in the late 20th-century. The conservation area is bounded by Canal Street to the south where late 20th-century terrace and mews type residential developments have been built on the site of a late 19th-century ironworks which was cleared in recent times.

4.0 HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT OF THE STUDY AREA

4.1 The Origins and Historic Development of the Area

The earliest documentary evidence for Oldbury dates from the 12th century where the Manor of Oldbury (spelt Aldeberia or Adlebury in Middle English) was a member of the Manor of Halesowen. Derived from the Anglo Saxon Ealdenbyrig (or old burgh), onomastically a settlement in this area can be traced further back into the medieval period and is more than likely Anglo Saxon in origin. The prehistory of the area is less certain, the 'old' element in the placename may suggest that an earlier fort, possibly Iron Age in origin, was located at or near the current town, however, as yet, no archaeological evidence has been uncovered. There is also disputed evidence that Oldbury denoted a Roman camp or station, and that a Roman road called the Portway passed very near or through it. Again evidence for such a settlement has not been realised in the archaeological record, and it must be noted that "to assume a Roman origin for Oldbury on the strength of its ancient Portway would be idle and unjustifiable".

Under the Normans Oldbury was given to the Earl of Shrewsbury and thus became part of Shropshire. It is unknown what form and size the settlement took at this early stage, however it is possible that Oldbury was "not even a nucleated settlement until the later middle ages or later". The settlement passed with Halesowen to the Crown in 1102 and was probably granted with Halesowen to the abbey of Halesowen "for the Vill appeared at the courts of the manor from the time of Henry III (1207-1272)". It became part of the extensive Halesowen parish, and was, along with Halesowen, a detached part of Shropshire for many centuries Oldbury is not mentioned in the court rolls again until 1557 where it was first described as a manor when Sir Robert Dudley and his wife Amy Robsart settled at Blakeley Hall. Oldbury emerged from "the domination of the mother parish in 1558". Cartographic representations depict that until the late 18th century the town was a small settlement around the present central crossroads, located on a low hill above surrounding agricultural land. The absence of densely packed and intercut features and the probable presence of extensive garden areas in the centre of Oldbury in both the medieval and early post-medieval periods suggests "non-intensive occupation in a settlement of village size".

Oldbury's location in the midst of a district abounding in iron, coal, and limestone, and in close proximity to Birmingham and the Black Country, meant that it was well situated to profit from the Industrial Revolution which was being fuelled by the South Staffordshire and East Worcestershire coalfields. It rapidly changed from a predominately agricultural to a predominately industrial economy and settlement during the 19th century. In 1767 an Act of Parliament authorised the cutting of a canal through Oldbury, connecting Birmingham with the collieries in the Wednesbury and Bilston districts. This canal, which was designed by James Brindley, and completed in 1769, looped to the north around Oldbury town centre, has shaped and constrained the fortunes, morphology, and development of Oldbury until it went out

of use in the 1950s. Improvements and additions to the canal system by Thomas Telford in the 1820s meant that Oldbury became a canal island, within which the once small rural village developed into a compact, densely populated town centre. The canal gave great impetus to trade in the district and Oldbury was ideally situated as it was much nearer to Birmingham than any of the other colliery districts. This canalside location drew entrepreneurs and more established businesses, which with the possibility of secure employment, drew both skilled and unskilled labour from the nearby towns and villages. Under a series of Acts of Parliament in the mid 19th-century Oldbury was annexed to Worcestershire.

Oldbury's development continued apace; shops, churches, public buildings, and houses were constructed on new roads which expanded out from the ancient Market Square, whilst industrial works were dotted along the canal. Various industries grew up in and around the town in the 19th century; these included chemical works, iron foundries, edge tool works, corn mills, wagon works, brick works, maltings, and at least one brewery. By the 1840s Oldbury Town "was bursting at the seams, and its services were wholly inadequate for the number of people". The development continued into the early 20th-century and Oldbury was incorporated as a town in 1935. Despite its later status as a Municipal Borough, Oldbury did not develop as a centre to match West Bromwich or Smethwick. The latter half of the 20th-century saw a period of clearance, depopulation and economic decline until the Savacentre was constructed at the historic market square in 1979, the first such town centre 'hypermarket' in the UK. A new civic centre to serve the borough the north of this followed. These large new developments have served to change and alter the form and fortunes of the town

4.2 The Church Square Conservation Area

The present Conservation Area comprises a lozenge shape area around and including Church Square upon which stands the mid 19th-century Christ Church which is the central focal point for the area. The main element consists of the central square bounded by a number of fine early and mid 19th-century listed and unlisted buildings. Of these the finest examples are 16 Church Square, a mid 19th-century house of red brick laid in Flemish bond with timber bay windows, original sashes, and a central doorcase with Tuscan Pilasters and segmental pediment on brackets; 2 and 3 Church Square which is an early 19th-century house of stuccoed brick with multi-pane sash windows and a central door under a flat-headed porch with unfluted Greek Doric columns; and 1 Church Square, a mid 19th-century house, which, although recently renovated, retains many original external features such as Tudor-style drip-moulds, quoins, and scrolling aprons. Both Birmingham Street terminals of the square are formed by two early and mid 19th-century banks which have retained their original function. Another interesting feature of Church Square is an apparently in-situ early 19th-century cast-iron milepost.



Plate 1: Christchurch.



Plate 2: 1 Church Square.

The south side of the Conservation Area is bounded by Canal Street, upon which are two interesting unlisted structures. These are a small former mid 19th-century rendered brick Baptist Schoolhouse, and a late 19th-century red brick industrial building which forms part of the rear of 10 Church Square. On the north side of Birmingham Street is a mid 19th-century road island dividing Birmingham Street and Unity Place. Built upon this island is The Junction Public House at one end and 36-38 Birmingham Street at the other. Linking these two fine buildings is 34-36 Birmingham Street a late 19th-century two-storey red brick commercial/residential infill. On the north side of the road island are two further listed buildings; 30 Birmingham Street is an early to mid 19th-century former bank building of stuccoed brick with a central ground floor doorway which is flanked by rusticated engaged columns with foliated capitals carrying a dentilled pediment. The other building is 12 Unity Place; the road named after the Unitarian Chapel which stood there until the late 20th-century; this building is an early to mid 19th-century former red brick house with timber canted bay windows containing sashes.



Plate 3: 32 to 38 Birmingham Street.

The Church Square Conservation Area delineates an area which was very popular amongst the wealthier and higher status inhabitants of Oldbury throughout the 19th-century. The surviving historic buildings help evoke an understanding of the area at this time. It consisted of a tree lined square bounded by the fashionable houses of the Oldbury upper classes, close to the shopping area of Birmingham Street where they perhaps vended and purchased their supplies, whilst also being in close proximity to their proceeds and savings in the three nearby banks. In addition they were also adjacent to the Junction Public House, whilst overlooking the Church, and thus close to the House of God, which was located at the centre of the square.



Plate 4: 2 and 3 Church Square.

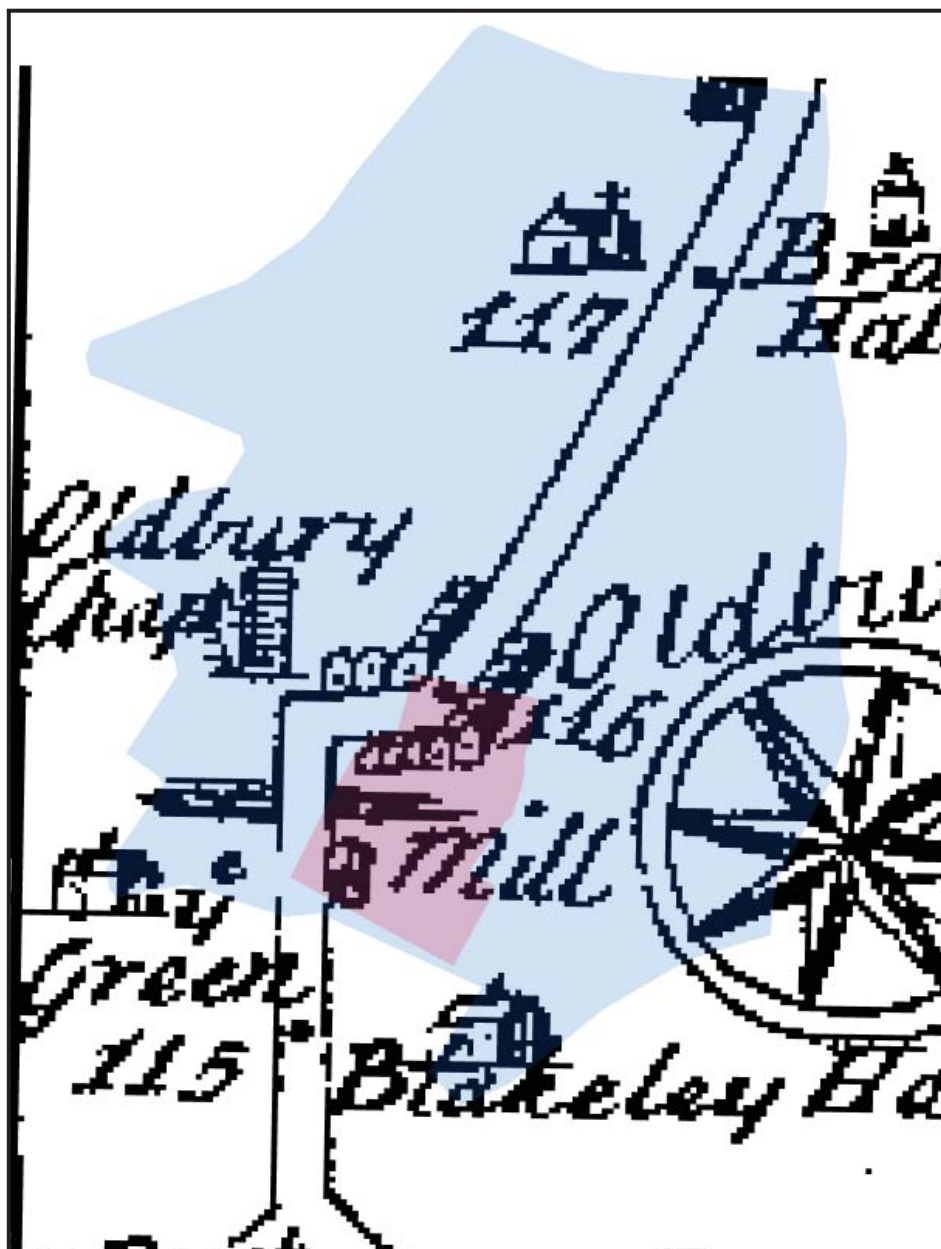
4.3 The Morphology of the Area

The study area includes the existing Conservation Area and extends along Birmingham Street to the recently pedestrianised Civic Square. It includes the old Municipal Building and octagonal Council chamber and continues along Church Street to include the Big House.

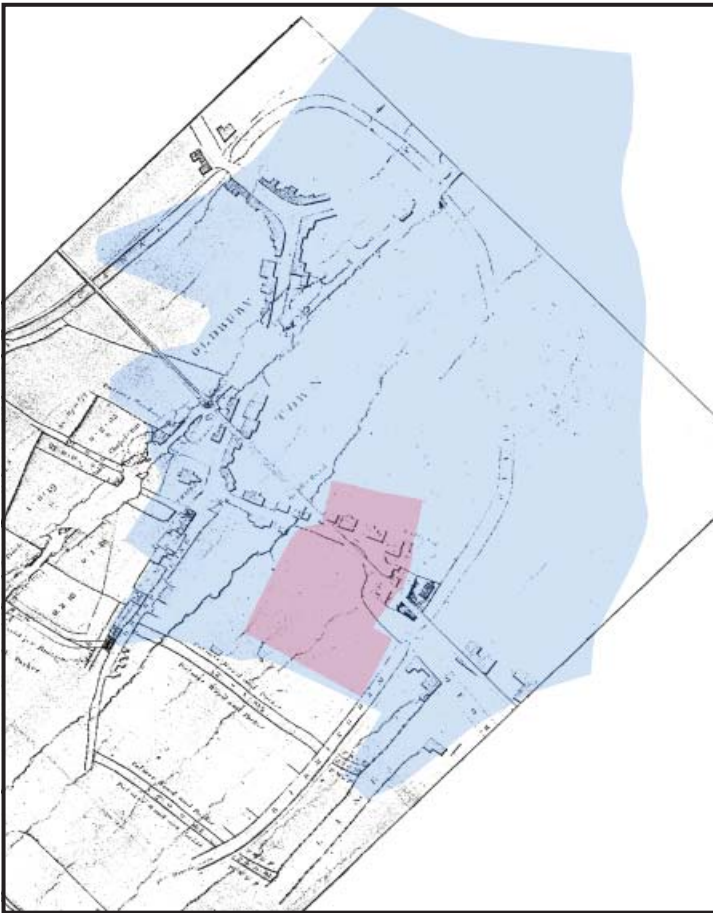
The study area runs north from Church Street, continuing along Bromford Road to the junction of Century Road, where it turns eastwards to the River Tame. It follows the river south to Flash Road, returning along Oldbury Ringway to Judges Close and Canal Street, where it returns to the Conservation Area.

The boundary has been widely drawn and includes the line of the Oldbury loop canal and the residential area of Simpson Street and McKean Road.

The earliest known cartographic representation of Oldbury is found in Ogilby's 'Britannia' of 1675. This is essentially a road/route map of Britain and therefore may not delineate the full extent of the settlement. This 'map' shows settlement at that period along what appears to be Church Street and West Bromwich Street, and depicts Oldbury Chapel, a mill, Blakeley Hall, and Brade Hall.



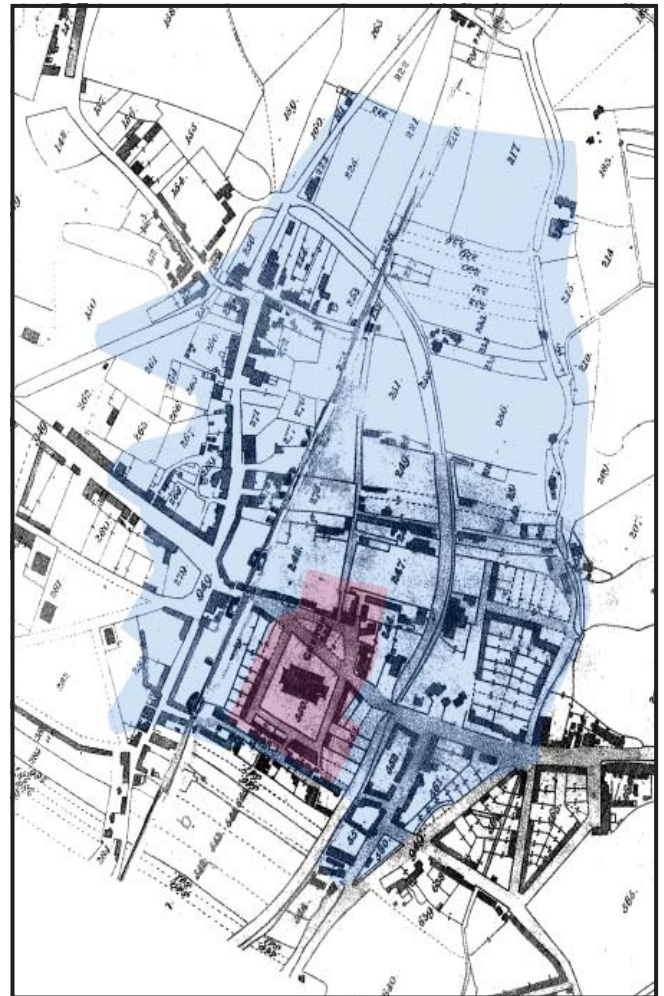
Map 3: Oldbury as depicted in Ogilby's "Britannia" 1675.



Map 4: Map of Central Oldbury 1810.

The earliest map to attempt to correctly represent Oldbury is the Map of Central Oldbury 1810. This clearly depicts the canal system prior to Thomas Telford's later improvements. It shows the two main streets of Church Street/Halesowen Street and Birmingham Street. Oldbury chapel is present in the area of the current war memorial on Church Street. The area behind this is denoted as Chapel Croft. Buildings line the northern side of Birmingham Street whilst there are a few on the south side of the road. The curve in the road currently marked by the Junction Public House is present, whilst the area now occupied by Church Square was as yet undeveloped. Large buildings line both sides of Church Street, whilst the current Halesowen Street was called Drury Lane. The Big House is also depicted on Church Street. Much of the undeveloped land surrounding the settlement appears to be apportioned between Palmer, Wood, and Parker, who were apparently the husbands of the daughters of a Mr Freeth; the major landowner in the area (Dr Terry Daniels pers comm.).

The first map to show the extent of the development of Oldbury by the mid 19th-century was that drawn up by Dugdale Houghton in 1845. The preceding fifty or so years of industrial development had seen Oldbury grow from a small rural village into what seems to be a carefully planned urban entity surrounded by the canal system which essentially was its lifeblood and its catalyst for development. Major changes had occurred since the previous map. The most significant perhaps was the laying out of Church Square and the erection of Christ Church which adorns it. The square was bounded by many of the buildings which currently surround it including the current Barclays Bank, and 1, 2, and 3 Church Square. The road island to the north had been laid out but had as yet to be built on, whilst the development of Birmingham Street continued with further construction in the upper section of the road. Towards the centre of the study area Albert Street and New Meeting Street had been laid out, whilst court-like housing had been constructed in the Low Town area. Terraced housing has been erected on the plot now bounded by Pinfolds Street, Simpson Street, Flash Road, and Birmingham Street. Most of the plots on Church Street had been built on at this time, whilst the east side of Halesowen Street and sections of Freeth Street had also been developed. One noticeable absentee from the earlier map is Oldbury Chapel which is not marked on this map at all.



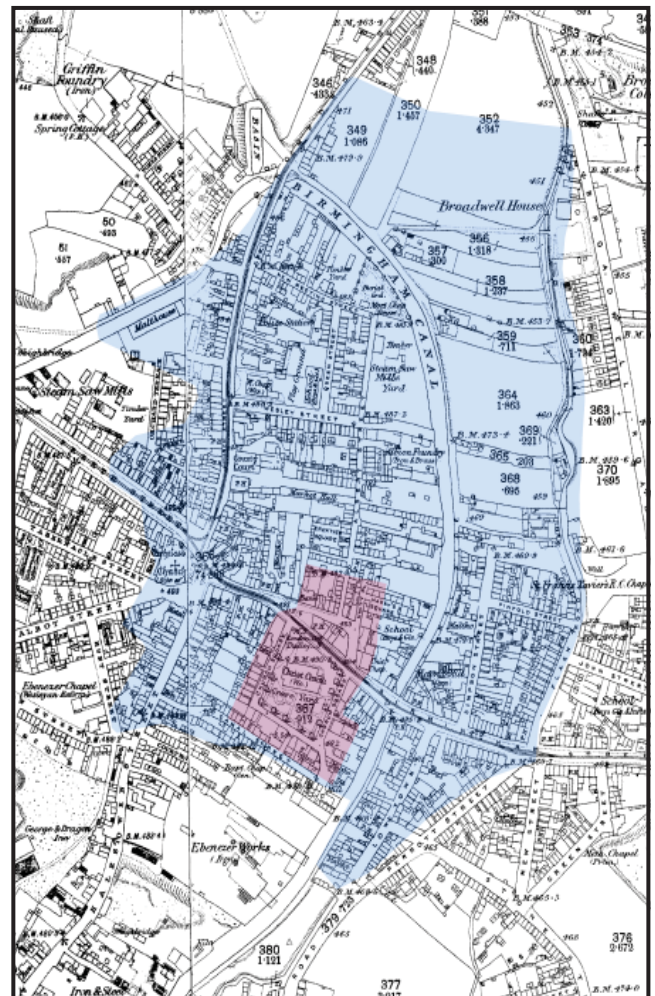
Map 5: Dugdale Houghton's Map of 1845.



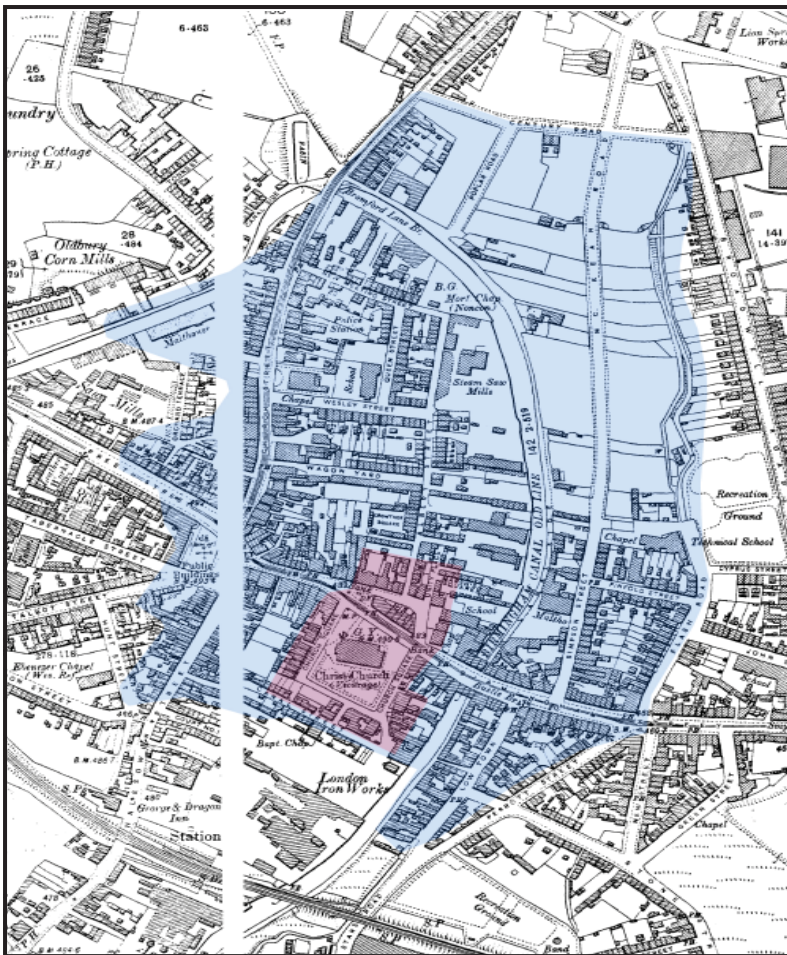
Map 6: Bates and Handsworth's Map of 1857.

Bates and Handsworth's plan of 1857 displays some changes from the 1845 map. The major building work carried out in the interim period is the construction of the Wesleyan Chapel and School on Church Street. Terraced housing has been constructed along Wesley Street and Orchard Street upon which the current council offices stand. Queen Street had been laid out, whilst Simpson Street had seen more development particularly on the west side of the road. Other changes include the construction of what appears to be the Junction Public House on Birmingham Street, whilst a church is marked to the northeast of Queen Street. The railways had encroached on the scene with the construction of a railway station and railway carriage works immediately to the northeast of the study area near Broadwell Road.

The first large scale Ordnance Survey maps dating from 1890 provide the earliest survey comparable with present day standards. An understanding of the functional make up of areas of the town is possible as many of the earlier and new buildings are labelled with functions such as a police station, county court, and the predecessor of the Waggon and Horses Public House on Church Street. The new church seen on the previous map is labelled as a Nonconformist Mortuary Chapel and Burial Ground. The Town Hall is marked near the site of the former Oldbury Chapel, whilst St. Francis Xavier's Roman Catholic chapel has been constructed near Pinfold Street. This map also provides an interesting insight into the industrial works within the study area at this time. These generally straddle the canal system and include Steam Saw Mills and Albion Foundry near Albert Street, and a malthouse to the rear of the west side of Church Street. The railways by this date were obviously superseding the canal system as a factor in industrial location as large industrial works such as a forge and colliery were growing up around the L & NWR railway line to the east of Broadwell Road just outside the study area. Continuing on a transport theme tramlines have been laid down on Birmingham Street and Church Street.



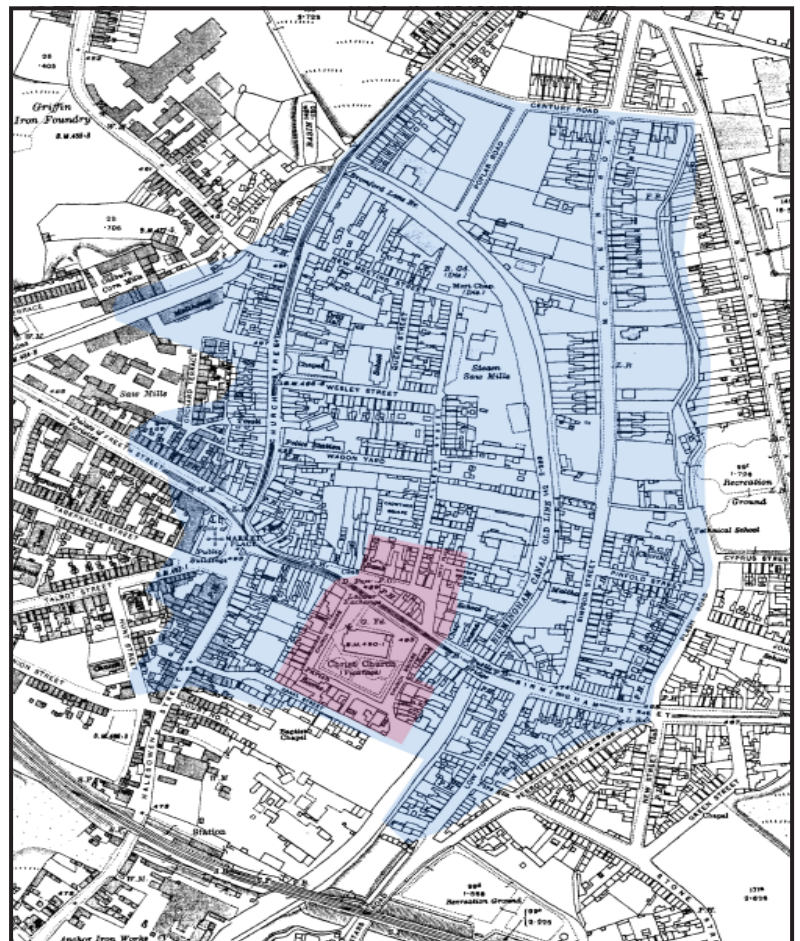
Map 7: 1890 Ordnance Survey.



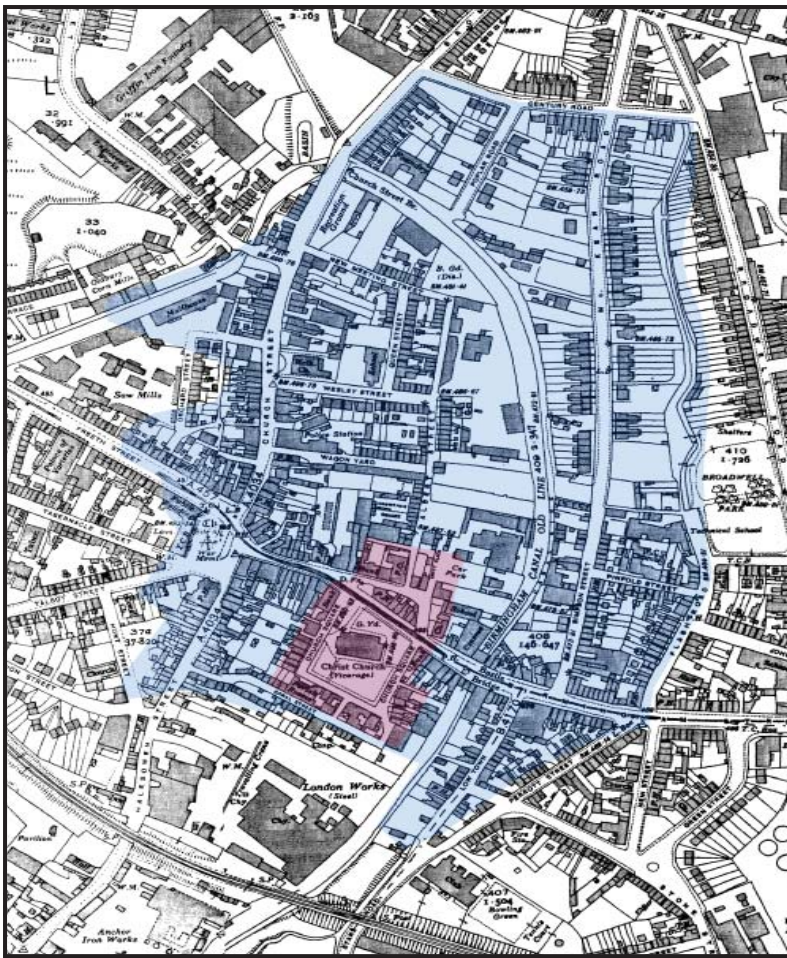
The Ordnance Survey map of 1904 shows the laying out of McKean Road, which is essentially the northern extension of Simpson Street. This, along with the newly laid Century Road and Poplar Road, had yet to be developed. Terraced housing had been built along the east side of Church Street parallel to Poplar Road whilst a Technical School had been built at Flash Road. The Town Hall had been extended to the north and along Freeth Street. The canal surrounding the town had been renamed Birmingham Canal Old Line.

Map 8: 1904 Ordnance Survey.

Inspection of the Ordnance Survey map dated 1919 reveals that little major development had been carried out during the intervening fifteen years apart from the construction of houses along McKean Road and Century Road. The Nonconformist Mortuary Chapel and Burial Ground are marked as disused. Some of the buildings on Birmingham Street are labelled including a Cinema and the Labour Exchange.



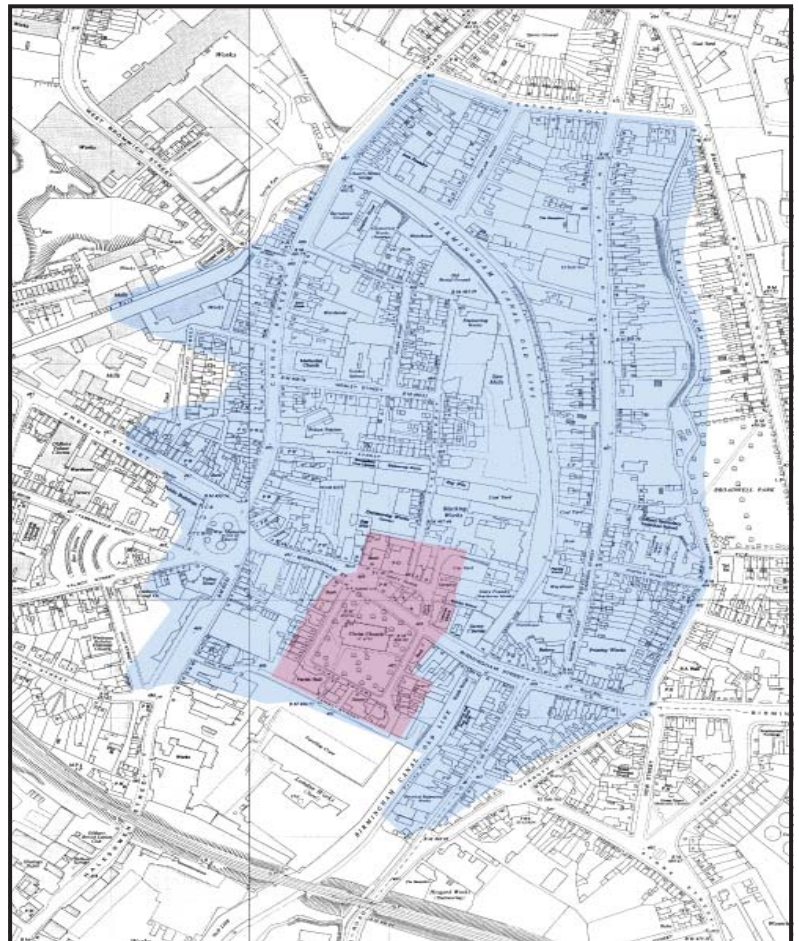
Map 9: 1919 Ordnance Survey.



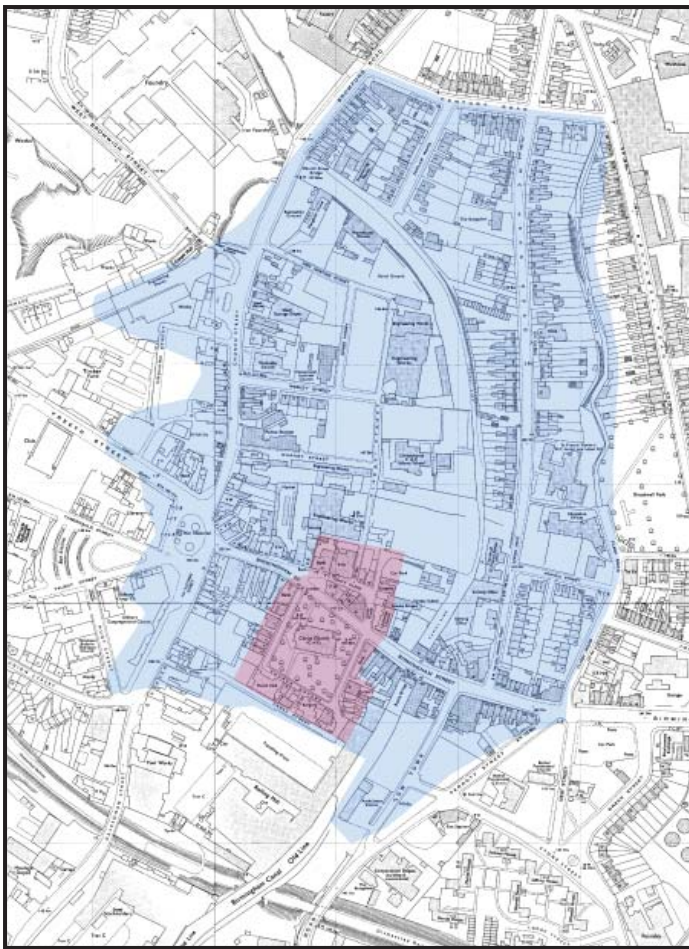
By the time of the Ordnance Survey map of 1939 there had been further residential development along Simpson Street and McKean Road. Clearance had taken place to the south of Church Street Bridge with the land given over to recreation ground, whilst the Nonconformist Mortuary Chapel had been demolished. The Broadwell Engineering works to the northeast of the study area had continued to expand, whilst the War Memorial is shown on the site of the former Oldbury Chapel.

Map 10: 1939 Ordnance Survey.

In contrast to the relatively static years of the first half of the 20th-century, the post 2nd World War period was one of considerable change. By the Ordnance Survey map of 1958 there had been much clearance on the west side of Halesowen Street; this trend for clearing 19th century terraced development was to continue for much of the remainder of the century.



Map 11: 1958 Ordnance Survey.

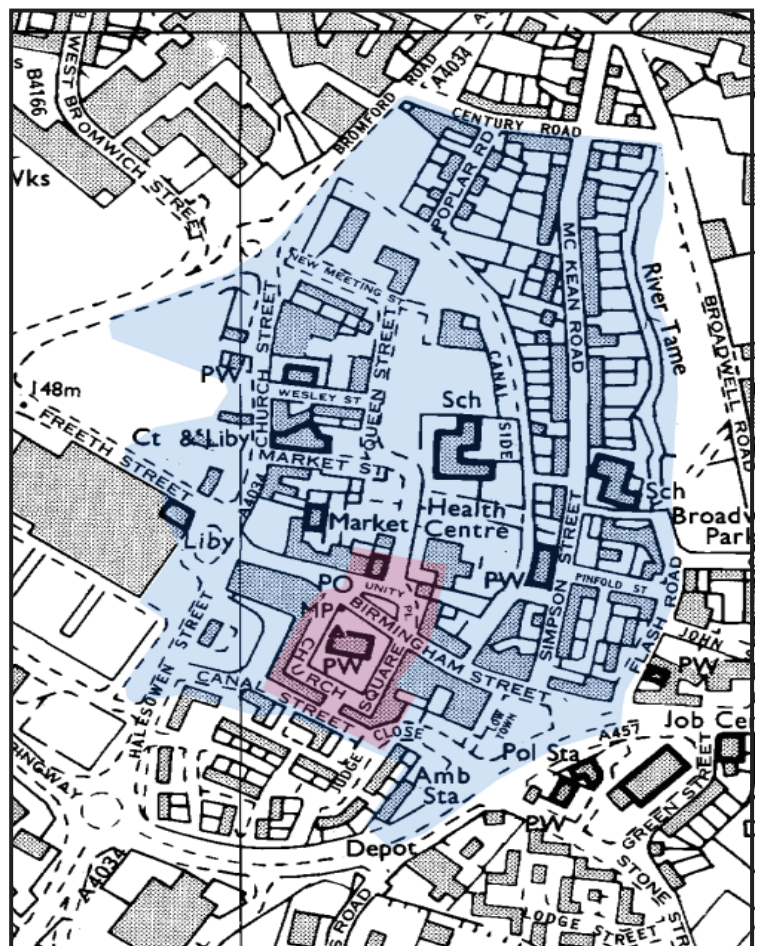


By the time of the Ordnance Survey map of 1971 large swathes of buildings had been demolished within the study area including the terraced housing at Orchard Street, Low Town, between Queen Street and Albert Street, and along Market Street. The west side of Halesowen Street has been completely cleared including the demolition of the historic Talbot Hotel. In addition to being a period of clearance this was also a period of regeneration; the Victorian terracing surrounded by Pinfold Street, Simpson Street, and Flash Road had been demolished and replaced by a contemporary residential development, whilst an Ambulance Station had been built on the site of an engineering works at Low Town. Also on Simpson Street a former Engineering Works had been converted for use as a sorting office, and the Roman Catholic Church of St. Francis Xavier had been constructed. Christ Church Church of England Infants' School off Albert Street had also been constructed. Another major occurrence at this time was the fact that the canal appears to have gone out of use, it is simply marked canal side.

Map 12: 1971 Ordnance Survey.

This trend of demolition, clearance, and regeneration continued in the period between this and the next Ordnance Survey map in 1992. The major development in this period was the construction of the Savacentre on the junction of Freeth Street and Halesowen Street. This development necessitated the demolition of the Town Hall but the former Public Library was retained within this development. Other regeneration projects included the clearance of an engineering works to the east of Market Street and the construction of a school. The Unitarian Church on Unity Place had been replaced with new development, whilst the Engineering Works on Church Street had been cleared for the new Council offices, which had yet to be constructed.

Since 1992 the new Civic Centre/Council Offices have been constructed at Church Street. Apartment blocks and houses have been constructed on Flash Road, New Meeting Street and off Poplar Avenue.



Map 13: 1992 Ordnance Survey.

4.4 Archaeology, including scheduled monuments

A search of Sandwell Historic Environment Record (HER) has revealed that there are no Scheduled Ancient Monuments (SAMs) within or in the vicinity of the study area, but that a number of programmes of archaeological intervention and activity have taken place within the study area. These include excavations at the junction of Church Street and Birmingham Street which revealed several pits of 18th- and 19th-century date, and a pit containing many roof tile fragments and pottery sherds of a 17th-century and earlier date. It is possible that these relate to one of the houses depicted on Ogilby's map of 1675. Earlier excavations at Church Street (to the rear of properties on the former Orchard Street) uncovered pottery sherds dating back to the 14th century and some later brick cellars. The redevelopment of the area surrounding New Meeting Street in recent times has led to a number of archaeological interventions. Test trenches at the site of the Wesleyan Chapel and Burial Ground revealed grave cuts and memorial stones. Further trial trenches in the New Meeting Street area revealed evidence of medieval cultivation soil which was subsequently cut and overlain by more recent deposits including brick walls, foundation trenches, cellar walls, and brick surfaces. Historic building analysis of the Old Slaughter House located between New Meeting Street and Bromford Road recorded a very interesting and rare survival of a type of structure which has been little studied. The form and fittings of this late 19th century purpose built facility were well preserved allowing the processes that took place to be easily understood. Excavations following demolition of the abattoir buildings showed little evidence for activity on the site before the late 18th-century. Excavations at St. Francis Xavier School on McKean Road uncovered a small brick structure dating to the 18th and 19th centuries. The small size and proliferation of nails found led to the interpretation that this may have formed part of a workshop for the nailmaking or other small-scale local industry.

There are a number of extant historic listed and unlisted buildings and structures; these will be dealt with in sections 6.3 and 6.4 below.

5.0 SPATIAL ANALYSIS

5.1 The Character and Interrelationship of Spaces within the Area

Civic Square

Historically and in recent times much emphasis and planning has been put into the provision of public spaces within Oldbury town centre. Historically the hustle and bustle of urban, and perhaps to an extent, rural life in Oldbury has been centred around Market Square where many of Oldbury's wares were bought and sold, and its inhabitants could meet to discuss the various issues of the day. The clearance and regeneration of much of the town centre in the mid and late 20th-century saw a divergence away from this with more of an emphasis on internal shopping and meeting places such as the SavaCentre. This has been redressed in recent times with the regeneration and laying out of Civic Square, the area around the War Memorial at Freeth Street. As well as providing an attractive and open area within the town centre, Civic Square also hosts an open air market twice weekly rekindling a tradition stretching back centuries. This Civic Square extends northwards onto Church Street encompassing the modern Sandwell Council buildings and many remnants of Oldbury's civic past such as the former library, courthouse, police station, and public buildings creating an attractive and historically evocative civic enclave.

Church Square

Linked to Civic Square by the rigidly linear Birmingham Street is Church Square, a verdant enclave set within a metaphorical sea of asphalt. In sharp contrast to Civic Square, which perhaps sees the vast majority of Oldbury's pedestrian traffic, and as such is one of its busiest areas, Church Square provides a welcome relief and break from the daily grind. Set back from Birmingham Street, Oldbury's principal shopping street, Church Square, which enjoys a peaceful and tranquil setting, is quite a pleasant and inviting public space. Surrounded by some of Oldbury's finest buildings and having Christchurch at its centrepiece, Church Square has retained this function from its laying out in the early/mid 19th-century.

Birmingham Old Line Canal

Despite the fact that the former Birmingham Old Line Canal essentially forms the backbone of the entire study area, this narrow, clearly-defined, historic linear space is a very neglected, underused, and underappreciated public space. Now strewn with litter, overgrown, blocked in places, and removed from its historic context, it is an example of how not to deal with or utilise the vestiges of our former waterways.

Town Centre Car Parks

The periods of clearance and renewal in the mid and late 20th-century saw a number of surface level car parks being laid out within the study area. These mainly occupy the central area of the study area in the space between Church Street and Birmingham Street with another occupying much of the former Low Town area of the town centre. Visually the former do not detract from the qualities of the townscape, serving as a necessary evil, well hidden from the main shopping and historic areas. The latter however is perhaps not ideally located, sited at the eastern entrance to the town from the Oldbury Ringway, meaning that for many the first impression of Oldbury is formed by a carpark forming a poor foreground for a number of historic buildings.

5.2 Key Views and Vistas

The built up nature of the study area and its surrounds means that key views within or without of the study area are at a premium. The rigid linearity of most of the study area's streets (apart from the west side of Church Street) means that it is quite difficult to gain a suitable vantage point to appreciate the interesting and diverse historic architecture on display. This linearity does in places help frame and provide focus on some views within the study area such as the view of the War Memorial and Public Buildings from Upper Birmingham Street and Unity Place, the view of the Junction Public House from Upper Birmingham Street, and the view of the east side of Church Street from Civic Square. When looking in from outside of the study area, one is for the most part confronted by the comparatively unattractive rear or returns of the number of historic buildings which adorn the town centre. With regard to views outside of the study area the vast majority of the surrounding area is modern or industrial in character, thus not entirely amenable to the framing of key views. Despite a restricted vantage point Church Square itself is a key view from both Upper and lower Birmingham Street. In addition one key external view must be mentioned. Looking from Halesowen Street, rising in the background behind the Sava Centre carpark is a lush green hillside, a reminder of the once largely rural setting that Oldbury was situated. Some of the important and interesting prospects include:



Zone C

Plate 5: The Junction Public House from Upper Birmingham Street.



Zone C

Plate 6: Former public library frp, Upper Birmingham Street.

Zone E



Plate 7: Christchurch from Albert Street.



Zone A

Plate 8: Church Square.

Zone C



Plate 9: Hills to the southwest.

Zone D

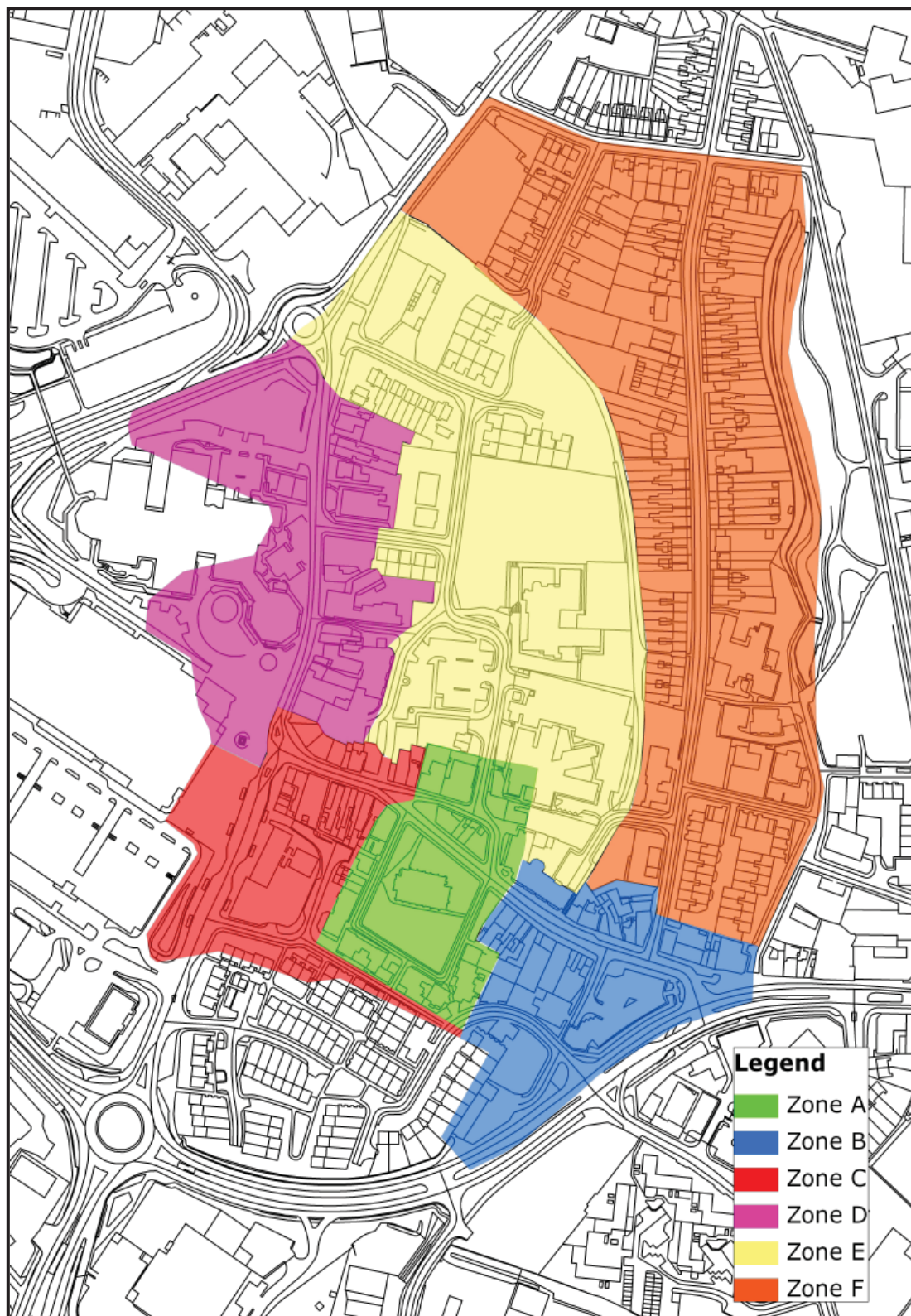


Plate 10: Civic Square.

6.0 CHARACTER ANALYSIS

6.1 Definition of the Character Areas (Zones)

Despite the fact that the study area concentrates on the majority of the town centre of Oldbury, it does fall naturally into a number of discernable character zones which assist in the organisation of this appraisal and boundary review.



Map 14: Study Area Zone Divisions.

Zone A

Zone A comprises the current Church Square Conservation Area which has the mid-19th-century Christ Church at its core. Church Square itself is bounded by an attractive and interesting mix of both listed and unlisted residential and retail buildings interspersed by a number of recent developments which for the most part, are sympathetic to the historic fabric of the area. The grass covered square itself is fenced on three sides with the north side open to Birmingham Street beyond which is Unity Place, which is also within the current conservation area. The west side of the square is bounded by three Grade II listed buildings; 21 Birmingham Street which is a mid 19th-century Bank building; 1 Church Square, and 2/3 Church Square which are early/mid 19th-century houses. The remainder of this side of the square comprises a late 20th-century red brick apartment complex. The western section of the south side of the square also consists of a late 20th-century apartment building, which is adjacent to a late 19th-century blue brick house with a former Baptist Schoolhouse to the rear. The corner between the south and east sides is again infilled with late 20th-century apartments. Similar to the west side, the east side also terminates with a listed bank building. This is to the north of 16 Church Square, a mid 19th-century listed house.

On the north side of Birmingham Street the conservation area contains an interesting and varied architectural mix of listed and unlisted buildings. Central to this section of the zone is a road island which splits Birmingham Street from Unity Place and which contains the Junction Public House; a listed mid 19th-century public house; 34 and 36 Birmingham Street, an unlisted late 19th-century commercial/residential infill; and 38 Birmingham Street, a listed mid 19th-century shop row. The block to the rear of this road island includes another early/mid 19th-century bank building, a former post office. The eastern side of Unity Place comprises a listed early to mid 19th-century listed house and the late 20th-century residential complex St. David's Court which stands on the site of a 19th-century Unitarian chapel and Sunday school.

Zone B

Zone B lies adjacent to the east and southeast of the current conservation area. Comprising Lower Birmingham Street and the majority of Low Town, this zone exhibits very contrasting of levels of historic preservation, terminating at Flash Road to the east and bounded by the curving Oldbury Ringway to the southeast. The buildings lining both sides of Birmingham Street in this zone are an interesting mix of unlisted 19th-century commercial/residential buildings which are largely in good condition apart from the insertion of late 20th-century shop frontages in many cases. These comprise a mixture of styles and finishing materials. The remainder of the zone, on the other hand, is located in the Low Town area of the town centre. This was completely cleared of its 19th-century court and terraced housing in the mid/late 20th-century. The main element of this area is now the ambulance station a mid/late 20th-century structure with a landscaped green area and surface level carpark to the north.

Zone C

Adjacent to the northwest of the conservation area is Upper Birmingham Street, which, along with Halesowen Street and the area in between makes up Zone C. Like Zone B this zone also exhibits contrasting levels of historic preservation. The buildings lining both sides of Birmingham Street

form an attractive mix of listed and unlisted 19th-century commercial/residential buildings along with late 20th-century sections which for the most part are sympathetic to the historic fabric of the zone. 2 and 2a Halesowen Street are the last remaining vestiges of this street, which by at least the mid 19th-century was one of the main streets in Oldbury. Like the Low Town area in Zone B Halesowen Street has endured much clearance in recent times, including the loss of the historic Talbot Hotel which stood on the junction of Talbot Street, which now lies underneath the carpark of the Savacentre, which, along with a section of the recently refurbished market square, makes up the rest of this zone.

Zone D

Extending to the north of Zone C is Church Street which forms the spine of Zone D. The western side of this street has been remodelled in the late 20th-century with the construction of the new civic centre, the octagonal council chamber of which extends into this zone. Only two historic buildings survive on this side of the street; The Big House, which is a fine example of an early 18th-century house; and the late 19th-century former Public Library at the corner of Freeth Street. This side of the zone is bound to the west by the Bromford Road which partially follows the path of a section of the Birmingham Old Line Canal. The east side of the street has fared better with regard to retaining its historic structures being almost completely lined with some fine listed and unlisted buildings including a the mid 19th-century Methodist Church; an early 19th-century Court House which now serves as the public library; and the Waggon and Horses an early 20th-century public house.

Zone E

Zone E covers much of the central part of the study area. Bounded by the former canal to the east and the rear of Church Street to the west, this area has endured much clearance and regeneration in recent years. This clearance has been to the extent that it does not retain any buildings of historic interest. Historically this was an area which could be described as the industrial centre of Oldbury, with many of industrial enterprises taking advantage of its proximity to the canal; on the whole this industrial function has in recent times been replaced by a residential one, with a number of late 20th and early 21st-century residential developments particularly in the north area of the zone. The south area consists of the mid to late 20th-century Christ Church Church of England Primary School and its playing fields, and a recently built health centre and its associated car parks.

Zone F

Bound by the canal to the west and the River Tame to the east, Zone F is almost completely characterised by late 19th and early 20th-century residential development. The spine of this zone is formed by Simpson Street and McKean Road which runs north-south through the zone. This long residential street mainly consists of sections of late Victorian and Edwardian red brick terracing interposed by areas of mid and late 20th-century development, including housing, a church, and a school. This zone terminates to the north at Century Road which contains a mixture of late 19th and 20th-century residential structures and a late 20th-century warehouse. Running southwest from Century Road is Poplar Road which has a number of semi-detached early/mid 20th-century houses.

6.2 Activity within the Area, and its Influences

Zone A which is essentially the current conservation area, provides a readily tangible and present reminder of Oldbury's past. Perhaps the most iconic part of the study area, with Christchurch, and its imposing belfry and spirelet pinnacles, at its centrepiece, and historically the most exclusive address within the town centre. Church Square has for the most part retained much of its exclusivity, now being the preserve of dental surgeries, offices, and two banks. Zone A also incorporates some other fine architectural reminders of the multifunctional nature of the town centre throughout the 19th and 20th-centuries, containing buildings such as a former Baptist Schoolhouse on Canal Street, a fine mid 19th-century public house on Birmingham Street, and the first branch of Lloyds Bank outside of Birmingham on Unity Place.



Plate 11: 16 Church Square.



Plate 12: 30 Birmingham Street.



Plate 13: 21 Birmingham Street.

Zone B comprises Lower Birmingham Street and the present manifestation of the historic Low Town area of the town centre. Lower Birmingham Street was laid out in the early 19th-century and in the subsequent decades was built on and developed to become the lower part of the main shopping street (with Upper Birmingham Street) in Oldbury. It still retains many of its original buildings which appear to have had a combined commercial and residential function with ground floor shop frontages. These buildings are an attractive if unspectacular mixture of varying styles, materials, and different roof heights. Despite this lack of design and decorative uniformity and regularity they do exhibit a consistency of function, building line, and historic context which gives the street a strong cohesive identity. Unfortunately the same cannot be said of the Low Town area which forms the great majority of this zone. Located to the south of Lower Birmingham Street, historically Low Town Street, which ran through this area was lined with early and mid Victorian terraces and courts which fell victim to clearance and 'improvements' in the mid/late 20th-century. This regeneration saw the construction of an ambulance station and the later addition of the Oldbury ringroad, and a carpark which continue to characterise this area.



Plate 14: Lower Birmingham Street (south side).



Plate 15: Lower Birmingham Street (north side).



Plate 16: 1 Low Town.

Zone C is characteristically similar to Zone B. Separated from Zone B by the current conservation area (Zone A) this zone consists of Upper Birmingham Street, the remains of Halesowen Street, and Canal Street, which runs to the south of Church Square. Upper Birmingham Street is an attractive mix of 19th century commercial/residential buildings of varying styles, materials, date, and roof heights with a sympathetic late 20th-century northwest terminal. In addition to providing an attractive corridor vista to the War Memorial and former public buildings on Freeth Street, this varied streetscape presents a continuing and tangible link to the past function of the street yet also displaying a uniformity of building line which as in Zone B provides the street a strong cohesive identity which has not been tarnished by later developments in the late 20th-century. On the other hand late 20th-century developments on Halesowen and Canal Streets have almost completely stripped these streets of their historic fabric and context. Now limited to a small section of early/mid 19th-century shops Halesowen Street was almost completely cleared in two periods of denudation in the mid and late 20th-century, the main one of which was for the construction of the Savacentre carpark in 1979. The area to the south side of Canal Street was cleared of a number of industrial buildings in the late 20th-century which were subsequently replaced with rows of terraced housing.



Plate 17: 12-16 Birmingham Street.

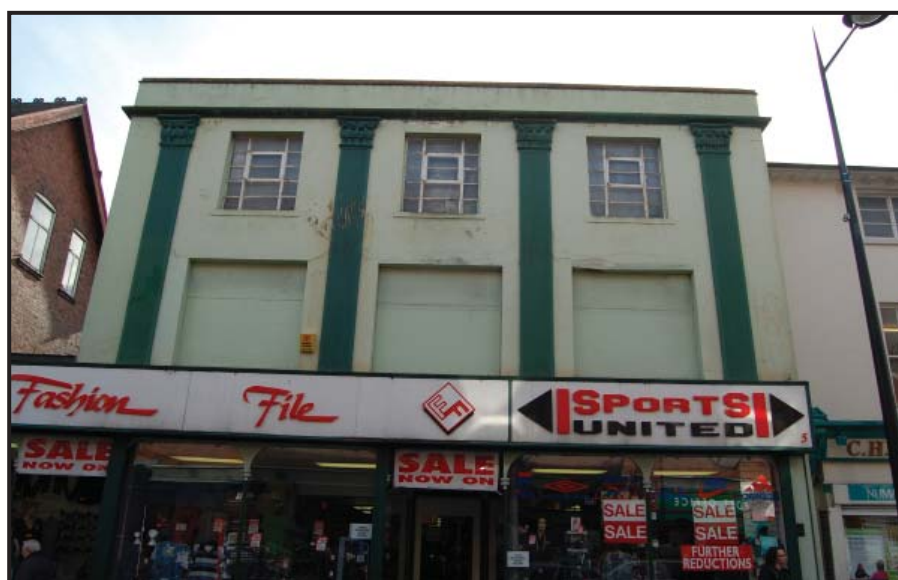


Plate 18: 5 Birmingham Street.

Zone D contains the civic centre of Oldbury. With Church Street at its spine this zone boasts a number of fine civic buildings as well as some excellent examples of ecclesiastical, public house, and domestic architecture spanning back to the early 18th-century when Oldbury was essentially rural in character. Retaining the former public buildings, police station, library, and court house as well as containing the recently built octagonal council chamber of Sandwell Council this area has to an extent retained and in fact augmented its civic function in-spite of clearance and development at close vicinity on all sides. This wealth of civic buildings is further enhanced by the retention of the early 18th-century Big House, the mid 19th-century Methodist Church, early 19th-century offices, and a fine and well preserved example of an early 20th-century public house. What is particularly noticeable in this zone is the almost exclusive preference of the use of brickwork as the principal constructional and facing material in each of the buildings. Adding to the civic/public nature of this zone is the War Memorial erected to commemorate Oldbury's war dead.



Plate 19: Methodist Chapel, Church Street.



Plate 20: Oldbury Public Library, Church Street.

Zone E is much altered from the time when it formed the industrial centre of Oldbury. The only tangible reminder of this former industrial landscape is the remains of the Birmingham Old Line Canal which form the eastern and northern boundary of this zone. The plethora of former factories and industrial works which are located alongside the canal have been replaced largely by late 20th-century/early 21st-century residential developments. The last vestige of this industrial function was removed recently when the old slaughter house on New Meeting Street was demolished. The southern section of this zone is characterised by public buildings with Christ Church Primary School and Oldbury Health Centre and their associated playingfields and carparks taken up much of the land. What also must be noted here is that the main publicly accessible green area in this zone marks the spot of a former Baptist Burial Ground.



Plate 21: The Big House, Church Street.



Plate 22: Birmingham Old Line Canal, New Meeting Street.

Zone F is almost completely residential in nature, characterised by late 19th and early 20th-century terraces, mid 20th-century semi-detached houses, and mid to late 20th-century infill housing. In this sense it is typically suburban in character, providing an insight into the development of domestic architecture over the past century or so, with some reasonable examples of domestic terracing which fail to neither inspire the imagination nor give the zone a strong cohesive identity apart from this shared function. This zone also contains a mid/late 20th-century school and church and some non-descript industrial buildings on Century Road and backing onto the former canal at Simpson Street.



Plate 23: New Meeting Street.



Plate 24: Simpson Street.



Plate 25: Aylestone Cottage, Simpson Street.



Plate 26: Poplar Road.

6.3 Architectural and Historic Qualities of the Buildings

The type, date, function, and survival of historic buildings in Oldbury is intrinsically linked with the settlement's history and development as a prominent and prosperous Black Country town in the 19th-century. In this sense the vast majority of Oldbury's surviving built heritage post-dates the cutting of the canal in the mid/late 18th-century. Being a town centre Oldbury's historic built environment reflects the needs, requirements, and functions of a developing town. Adorned with various types of buildings such as churches, both established and non-conformist; residential housing, of varying status; public/civic buildings such as libraries, police stations, and courthouses; commercial buildings such as banks, shops, offices, and public houses; and industrial buildings; the town's historic architecture provides an interesting insight into the history, development, and various functions of Oldbury in past-times.

Church Architecture

Two Grade II listed churches are found within the study area. These buildings, which are individual and architectural in design, were constructed using quality materials, designed in styles which were very much de rigueur for their denominations at the time of construction, and retain their original function as places of worship. Christchurch which was constructed in 1840-41 was built in a typically understated English gothic style. Principally of red brick laid in English bond, this landmark building resides in a pleasant leafy square surrounded by fine Georgian townhouses, and its belfry can be seen from many vantage points within the study area. In contrast the Methodist Chapel on Church Street is unmistakably non-conformist in design. Built in 1853, this imposing edifice is a mass of red brick laid in Flemish bond pierced by regimented rows of round arched windows. Situated on an elevated corner site overlooking the town's civic centre this building is very much a visually important and fine element of Oldbury's town centre.

Domestic Architecture

A large number of domestic buildings survive within the study area. These, perhaps more than any of the other building types on display, exhibit the differing social status of Oldbury's inhabitants. The Big House, a Grade II* listed structure, the oldest surviving building in Oldbury town centre, and conceivably one of the finest domestic buildings in the Black Country, is perhaps the jewel in the crown of Oldbury's built heritage. Constructed in the early 18th-century of red brick laid in Flemish bond with stone dressings, this building is an obvious and tangible insight into the settlement of Oldbury prior to the Industrial Revolution, the cutting of the canals, and its development as a prosperous 19th century town. Its quality of design, construction, and materials, have ensured its survival into the 21st century and like the Methodist Chapel above, it contributes greatly to the civic zone of the town centred around Church Street and Freeth Street.

The Big House no doubt was constructed and lived in by one of the area's wealthier families. By the early/mid 19th-century the tastes and requirements of Oldbury's wealthier classes had changed with the prevailing fashions and developments. Church Square and Unity Place became the most desirable place to live in the expanding town centre. A number of fine quality residences were constructed around this leafy square. Many of these survive today and appear to be a desirable place to locate commercial offices. These houses have been clearly constructed with status in mind, yet display that reserved dignity befitting many domestic townhouses of the period straddling the Georgian and Victorian eras. Constructed in high quality materials such as red brick laid in Flemish bond often stuccoed over as was the style of the day these buildings display good preservation, and make an excellent contribution to the quality and diversity of Oldbury's built heritage.

On the other end of the social spectrum many if not all of the courts and terraces which housed the lower classes within the study area were demolished during the clearance and regeneration schemes of the 20th-century. What does remain however are the various late 19th/early 20th-century terraces and early/mid 20th-century houses which line Simpson Street, McKean Road and the surrounding streets.

These are characteristic of many similar developments in towns and suburban streets across the country, blending red brick, terracotta, and in cases concrete, to create almost generic terraced rows perhaps for those townfolk who worked in the shops or industries in the town centre or elsewhere in the Black Country.

Civic/Public Buildings

In recent times Oldbury has been given an increased role in the administration of the borough. The recent Sandwell Council Offices are a modern addition to a good number of fine historic former civic/public buildings which occupy the area around Church Street and Freeth Street. These structures include a former court house, a former police station, and former public buildings. Despite being of different periods, these are principally of red brick, and display the use of high quality building materials, architectural design, and perhaps were constructed with the instilling of civic pride in mind.

Commercial Buildings

Being a town centre the study area is rich in historic commercial buildings such as banks, shops, offices, and public houses. Oldbury contains three interesting examples of early and mid 19th-century bank premises, and in fact can boast the first branch of Lloyds Bank outside of Birmingham. Located around the historically fashionable Church Square, the very nature of these buildings meant that they had to appear well constructed in quality materials and to a good standard of architectural design, they had to appear wealthy yet not opulent, and perhaps most of all they had to appear safe. Two of these buildings continue in this banking function, whilst the third has been converted for use as a sandwich restaurant.

Birmingham Street, the principal shopping street in Oldbury retains a number of its historic shop premises. For the most part these have been altered externally particularly on the ground floor where presumably once wooden shopfronts and signs have been replaced with inappropriate plastic and fluorescent signage.

Oldbury can also boast two fine examples of listed public houses. The Junction Public House which was constructed in the mid 19th-century displays fine confident architectural design, the use of fine good quality and innovative materials such as cast basalt, and is a landmark building on the road island in the centre of Birmingham Street adjacent to Church Square. The Waggon and Horses on Church Street was constructed c.1900 and is very much of its time combining red brickwork, reconstituted stone, and terracotta panels with curly gables and a polygonal wooden corner turret to produce a fine structure which is in an excellent state of survival.

Industrial Buildings

There is no doubt from cartographic evidence that much of the area adjacent to the canal within the study area was once lined with various types of industrial buildings. Regeneration and obsolescence has led to the decline of the once thriving industries and have seen the demolition of the vast majority of these types of buildings within the study area. One such industrial building is found to the rear of 10 Church Square within the Church Square Conservation Area. This small structure which is of red brick laid in stretcher bond had some industrial function which is now unreadable from the exterior. Despite its humble nature and lack of detail or ornamentation it is a tangible reminder of Oldbury's industrial history and heritage.

Modern Structures

More recent additions to the architectural stock of the study area include the late 20th-century octagonal chamber of Sandwell Council, which forms part of the well-designed pagoda-like council buildings on Church Street, and is as such an interesting addition to Oldbury's built heritage.

6.4 The Contribution of Key Unlisted Buildings

A 'local list' of important non-statutorily listed historic buildings/structures does not yet exist for the Oldbury area although the creation of such a list is an objective of the Unitary Development Plan. There are certainly a number of unlisted buildings of architectural and historical interest which make an important contribution to the character of the study area, but which have not been deemed significant enough to merit inclusion on the statutory list. However, they do deserve some form of recognition and protection, and the creation of a local list would be an appropriate way forward.

Zone A

Most of the historic structures in Zone A are statutorily listed, however there are some unlisted structures in the area which make an important contribution to its overall character. To the south of the current conservation area along Canal Street are two quite interesting historic buildings which appear humbler in contrast to the wealthy adjacent Church Square. The first of these is the industrial building mentioned above, whilst the other building is a much altered former Baptist Schoolhouse which is now rather dwarfed by recent developments along the street. Other notable unlisted buildings in this zone include 9 Church Square, which is a mid/late 19th-century house entirely constructed in blue brick laid in stretcher bond; 10 Church Square, a mid/late 19th-century stucco covered house with painted moulded brick windows.



Plate 27: Former Baptist Chapel/Schoolhouse, Canal Street.



Plate 28: Industrial Building, Canal Street.



Plate 29: 9 Church Square.

Zone B

Whilst all of the buildings in this zone are unlisted, the vast majority of them are historic in character. Forming both sides of the lower half of Oldbury's main shopping street these buildings have retained their commercial and domestic function. Whilst often greatly altered at ground floor level the upper levels of these rows are often diverse in materials, design, and height, and are relatively in a much better condition than at ground floor level. Another interesting unlisted building in this area is 1 Low Town, which is the last remaining vestige of a much larger mid/late 19th-century residential area which stretched to the south. In addition to this it is one of the first buildings you see when approaching Oldbury from the ringway to the southeast.



Plate 30: Lower Birmingham Street (north side).



Plate 31: Lower Birmingham Street (north side).

Zone C

This also contains a number of unlisted historic buildings and is similar in character to Zone B with regard to form and function, and character. These unlisted buildings include the mock-Tudor Bulls Head Public House and what may be the remains of a former cinema.



Plate 32: Upper Birmingham Street (north side).

Zone D

Notable unlisted buildings in this zone include the octagonal council chamber of Sandwell Council; 31 and 31a, 33 to 35, and 37 Church Street, which are fine and well surviving mid/late 19th-century residences; the War Memorial on Civic Place; and perhaps the most iconic landmark amongst Oldbury's unlisted buildings, the former Public Buildings and Library on Freeth Street.



Plate 33: Upper Birmingham Street (south side).



Plate 34: Octagonal Council Chamber, Church Street.



Plate 35: Steel House, Church Street.



Plate 36: 31 Church Street.



Plate 37: 21 Church Street.



Plate 38: Former Public Library, Freeth Street.

Zone E

There are no notable unlisted buildings in this zone.

Zone F

This zone contains some late 19th and early 20th-century residential terraces and detached houses such as Wesley Villas which were constructed in 1908, and Aylestone Cottage, which was built in 1911, despite these nothing in this zone could be described as having an important contribution to the character of the area.



Plate 39: Aylestone Cottage, Simpson Street.



Plate 40: Wesley Villas, McKean Road.

6.5 Local Details

Nothing in the study area could be described as distinctly local to Oldbury itself. However, when examined within the wider context of the Black Country, the extant historic buildings of Oldbury town centre provide an insight and reminder of the types of building being constructed from the early 19th-century onwards in the industrial towns and villages of the Black Country. Often previously small rural settlements, the Industrial Revolution and particularly the new transport systems proved the catalyst for rapid development and growth which necessitated the construction of a plethora of civic, religious, industrial, domestic, and commercial structures within planned town centres, of which Oldbury, unlike many of its contemporaries, retains a sizeable number of fine examples.



Plate 41: Waggon and Horses Public House, Church Street.

The only building material found in the study area which has a distinctly local provenance appears to be the cast basalt decorative features such as brackets, lintels, and strings found at The Junction Public House, Birmingham Street. These were made in the glass furnaces of the nearby Chances Glassworks in Smethwick through a process which saw basalt from the nearby Rowley quarries melted under Henry Adcock's patent of 1851, and cast into a usable and attractive building material. None of the other building materials found in the study area could be described as conspicuously local in character. The vast majority of the historic buildings in the study area are constructed in red brick which is likely to have been locally sourced within the Black Country.



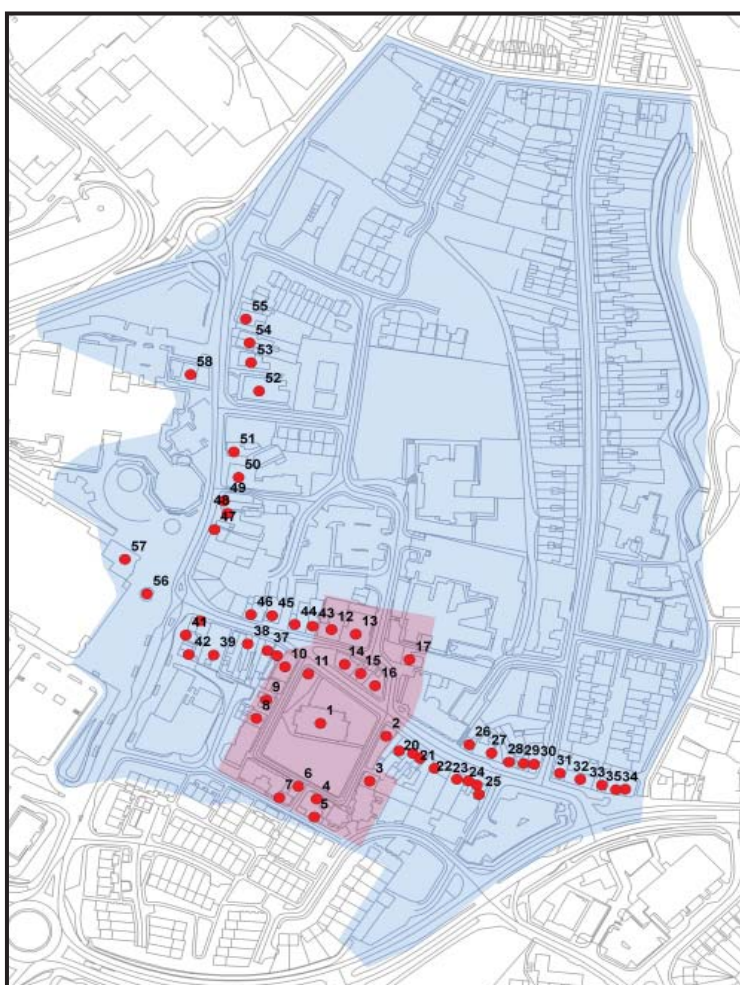
Plate 42: The Junction Public House, Birmingham Street.

6.6 Prevalent and Traditional Building Materials

The prevalent building materials found within the study area are further clues to its industrial and post-medieval past. Chief amongst these is red brick which is the prevalent building material used in the town centre. This red brick has often been decoratively augmented by various other materials such as blue brick, yellow brick, terracotta, stuccowork, stone, reconstituted stone, and moulded brickwork. In Zones A, B, and C this red brick is often found to be rendered over which is perhaps a question of changing tastes and fashion, or perhaps function. Further building materials commonly found in the study area include Welsh slate which was the principal roofing material in the study area from the early 19th-century, its easy availability being one of the benefits of its proximity to the canal.

6.7 Audit of Heritage Assets

There are 11 statutorily listed buildings/structures in Zone A, 3 in Zone C, and 5 in Zone D, making 19 in total, all assessed as grade II apart from one grade II* building in Zone D. No locally listed buildings exist within the study area as yet, although this situation is very likely to change once the assessment for Oldbury is done. In the meantime, a number of significant unlisted buildings have been considered for the purpose of this appraisal and boundary review, some of which would certainly be candidates for local listing: 6 in Zone A, 16 in Zone B, 9 in Zone C, 8 in Zone D, giving a total of 40 unlisted buildings and a grand total of 58 buildings altogether that have been appraised as part of this study. In addition a number of structures in Zone F were appraised and considered; these however are not included in the Audit of Heritage Assets as this area will not be included in the revised Conservation Area.

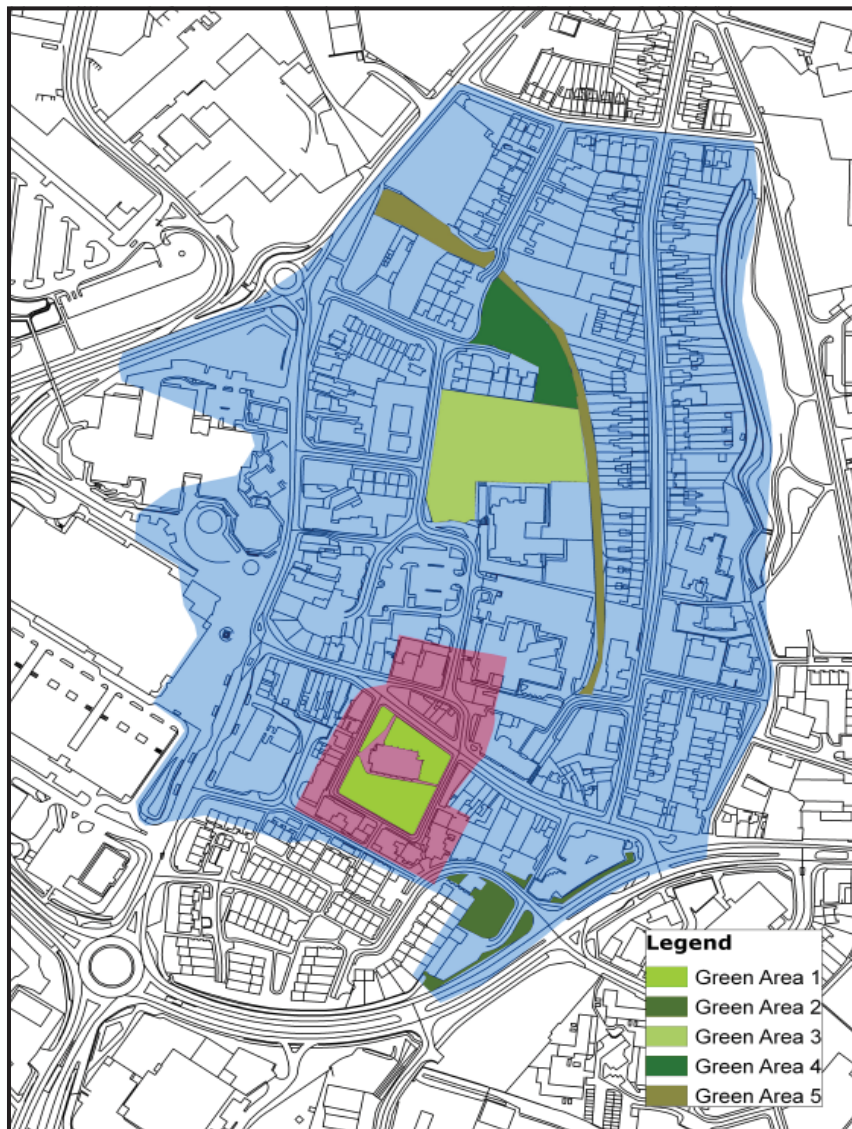


Map 15: Heritage Audit.

Descriptions of all these buildings are included in the Audit of Heritage Assets to be found in Appendix 1 at the end of this report. These are classified according to an assessment of their relative architectural and/or historic significance, any enhanced significance due to group value, and the contribution that each makes to the special interest of the Conservation Area.

6.8 Contribution made by Greenery and Green Spaces

A number of green spaces have been identified within the study area. These serve as verdant enclaves within a distinctly urban landscape.



Map 16: Green Spaces.

Green Space 1 (Zone A)

Christ Church is situated in a pleasant green square interspersed with pathways, and dotted with stone headstones, tombs, and mature trees. This green square, which is partially surrounded with cast iron railings, serves as a useful public amenity with its park benches providing welcome respite from the shops of Birmingham Street. This space also makes a significant contribution to the setting of the church and the surrounding houses, retaining its historic context and setting.



Plate 43: Church Square.



Plate 44: Low Town Green Space.

Green Space 2 (Zone B)

Green Space 2 is found in the Low Town area of the town centre to the southeast of the current conservation area. This is essentially landscaping around the ambulance station and a surface level car park, both of which were constructed in the late 20th-century following the clearance of a number of mid and late 19th-century court and terraced housing. Gently sloping from the north and lined with both mature and young trees, this green space provides a welcome relief from the nearby Oldbury Ringway and the adjacent high density residential area.

Green Space 3 (Zone E)

The playing fields of Christchurch C of E Infants School bounded by Queen Street to the west, by the school building to the south, residential development to the north and the mature tree lined former Birmingham Old Line Canal to the east. Occupying the site of a former Engineering works this green space is obviously quite important to the running of the school.



Plate 45: School playing fields, Queen Street.



Plate 46: Former Baptist Burial Ground.

Green Space 4 (Zone E)

Now utilised as a green area for a recent residential development this green space marks the site of a mid 19th-century Wesleyan burial ground and mortuary chapel. Demarcated from the former canal section by mature trees and scrubland, this green space has been divided up by a tarmac pathway and an access way for the recent housing development. The mature trees provide an attractive screen between this recent development and the early/mid 20th-century houses of Poplar Road.

Green Space 5 (Zone E)

Green Space 5 runs along the former route of the Birmingham Old Line Canal. Although not fully accessible at the time of this study due to overgrowth this is potentially a very important public amenity resource for the town of Oldbury. Lined with mature trees and with the possibility of various habitat types including possible riparian and wetland areas this former canal corridor could prove to be quite a significant and important educational public amenity, and historic interpretative area akin to other such canal systems in Sandwell such as at Galton Valley in Smethwick, and Tipton's Factory Locks.



Plate 47: Former Birmingham Old Line Canal.

6.9 Negative Factors

Oldbury town centre faces similar problems to many small town centres throughout the country. In most town centres issues such as litter, graffiti, and anti-social behaviour are ongoing concerns. Whilst these were not overtly visible during a few daytime visits, there is no doubt that they are an issue in Oldbury. With regard to litter, whilst there did appear to be adequate public refuse bins on the main thoroughfares they were often not used; the back streets, alleyways and green areas also had some litter strewn about. Graffiti on the whole did not appear to be a problem apart from along the line of the old canal, whilst no anti-social behaviour was evident despite anecdotal evidence from some local residents.



Plate 48: Litter on Civic Square.

From a conservation, built heritage, and aesthetic point of view one of the most noticeable negative feature of Oldbury town centre is the inappropriate and often gaudy, tacky, and unsympathetic use of plastic and fluorescent business signage and shop frontages throughout the study area. Combined with often wholesale unsympathetic alterations to ground floor shopfronts, nameboards, fascias, and fenestration schemes, the ground floor/publicly accessible areas of both historic and modern buildings often appears cheap, distasteful, and many areas of the townscape appear incongruous and piecemeal despite an often shared heritage.



Plate 49: Lower Birmingham Street (north side).



Plate 50: Lower Birmingham Street (north side).

Despite what should be an attractive counterbalance to the surrounding urban area, the line of the Old Birmingham Canal is a much neglected resource which has the potential to provide a much needed leisure amenity for cyclists and walkers. This is now strewn with rubbish including old kitchen units, armchairs, and it is a classic area for anti-social behaviour, a fact which has been backed up by anecdotal evidence from local residents.



Plate 51: Fly tipping on former canal route.



Plate 52: Fly tipping on former canal route.

Another negative factor is that the study area is surrounded by post industrial and relatively unattractive development which characterised the latter decades of the last century. This detracts from the historic context of the study area providing a negative background to what is a rather pleasant and historic town centre.

6.10 Neutral Areas

There are a number of neutral areas within or adjacent to the overall study area. These neither enhance nor detract from the character or appearance of the study area; however they do have the potential for enhancement.



Plate 53: Low Town Car Park.

Low Town and Halesowen Street, which respectively take up a sizeable portion of Zone B and C are similar to Zone E in that they also experienced mass clearance in the 20th century. Low Town is now occupied by an ambulance station and surface level carpark, whilst much of the east side of Halesowen Street awaits development.



Plate 54: Wesley Street.

6.11 General Condition

The general condition of the study area is quite mixed. It is clear that much effort has been made in recent times to arrest the decline and depression that the town, like many of its contemporaries, spiralled into from the mid 20th-century onwards. Periods of clearance and in many cases unfortunate and hastily planned regeneration has blighted many a town centre, Oldbury was not spared the clearance with large swathes of 19th-century housing being demolished in the middle and latter half of the 20th-century. Oldbury's economic and population decline in this period did however mean that much of this denuded area still remained relatively undeveloped until very recently.

The construction of the new civic centre and the laying out of Civic Square appears to have been one of the major catalysts for this recent upturn in Oldbury's fortunes. Thoughtfully planned, aesthetically pleasing, and user friendly, Civic Square serves to frame and highlight a number of the historic buildings in the Church Street area, and particularly highlights the former Public Buildings on Freeth Street, which now appear stand out from the attached SavaCentre forming a pleasant and iconic landmark in the area.

The condition of the historic buildings is on the whole quite good. The vast majority if not all of the listed structures appear to be externally in quite good condition, and where development of these has taken place it seems to have been sympathetic to the building. Some issues to highlight regarding the listed buildings include:



Plate 55: Renovations of Lloyds Bank, Church Square.

1. The unattractive and perhaps damaging growth of moss/lichen on the brickwork of Christchurch. Also at Christchurch the consecration stone is in a very poor state of disrepair.



Plate 56: Moss/lichen on Christchurch brickwork.



Plate 57: Crumbling dedication stone, Christchurch.

2. The cast-iron milepost at Church Square is in need of painting and conservation.



Plate 58: Milepost, Church Square.

3. Inappropriate signage and/or shop frontages at 12 Unity Square, 12 and 13 Church Street and in other listed buildings on Birmingham Street and Halesowen Street.



Plate 59: Inappropriate Signage, corner of Simpson Street.

The unlisted historic buildings have fared less well, however there are none of which give great cause for concern. Many of these have a commercial function and again suffer from inappropriate signage as highlighted above. Others particularly on Lower Birmingham Street appeared to be undergoing refurbishment, or were shut during the site visits, which may mean that they were closed for the day, shut down, or out of hours at those times. In addition to this the Oldbury Town Planning Statement does note that Birmingham Street is in a poor condition and is primed for changed.

One of the major causes of concern is the former line of the canal which is in a poor condition, apparently used as a dumping ground for domestic goods and furniture, and likely to be a magnet for anti-social behaviour.

The other green spaces within the area appear to be well maintained apart from some issues with litter, particularly around Church Square and in the parts of the former Baptist burial ground which straddle the former canal. Other than that in the green areas the grass is kept trim and the trees and shrubs appear to be in reasonably good condition.

6.12 Problems, Pressures and Capacity for Change

Within the proposed extended conservation area there are a number of threats to the character of the area. One specific issue highlighted in the Oldbury Town Planning Statement (2004) is the fact that in the past few decades Oldbury has relinquished its role as a small market town, a fact exacerbated by the development of the Sava Centre in the early 1970s which has intensified the subsequent decline in the usage and provision of the town's traditional local shops. This trend of switching away

from small/local retail to larger scale retail provision has continued with the introduction of the Oldbury Green Retail Park in the mid 1990s. This trend has particular consequences for Oldbury's built heritage. A good many of these smaller/local shops are located in either listed or unlisted historic buildings and essentially form the core of Oldbury town centre. Many of these buildings, which have already been blighted by inappropriate signage and shop frontages, may come under development pressure, suffer inappropriate alterations, or may become derelict due to poor or non-existent maintenance, if levels of investment in the town centre's traditional shops declines or isn't increased. It must be noted here that Birmingham Street, which is the location for the majority of these types of building, has been earmarked in the Oldbury Town Planning Statement as a key area for change due to the areas poor condition.

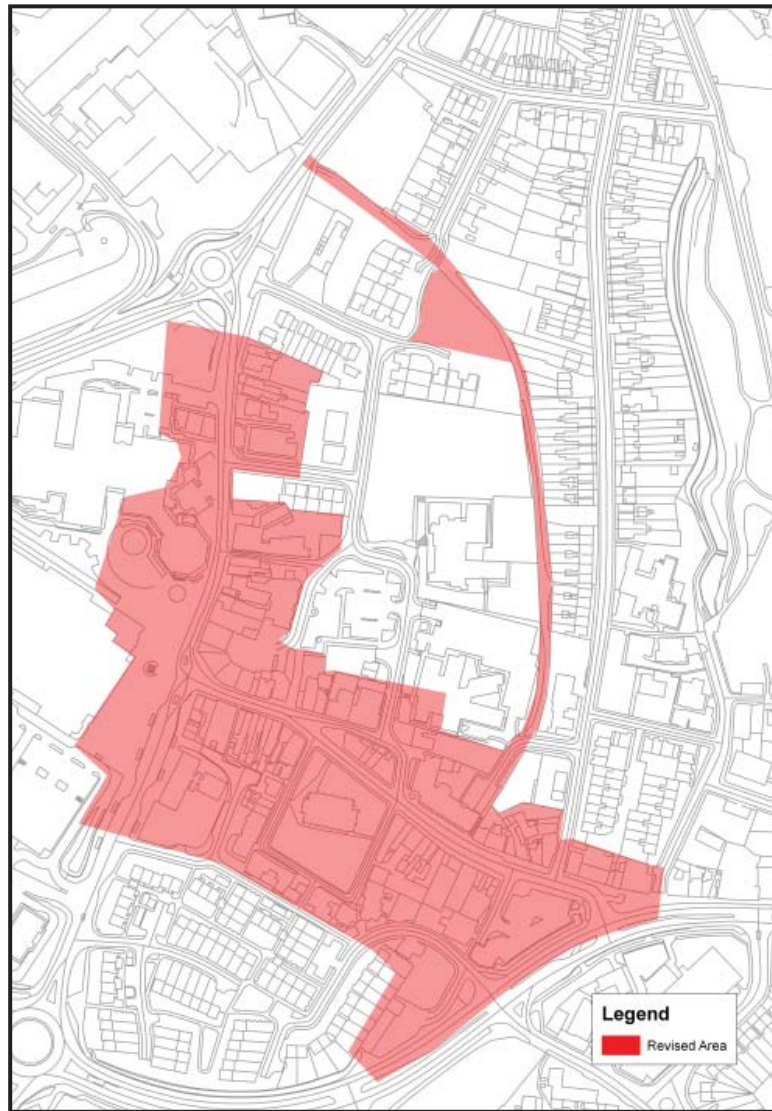
With regard to inappropriate shop signage and frontages there is a certain capacity for change. Particularly with regard to signage there is an opportunity to essentially give Birmingham Street a ground level facelift the benefits of which would certainly outweigh the costs. This one small measure would contribute enormously to the fabric and texture of the townscape.

The Oldbury Town Planning Statement also indicates that the Oldbury Town Plan Area faces the future problem of finding and allocating housing sites to meet future housing needs. This is largely due to the constraints on land created by the legacy of contaminated land and hazardous installations remaining from the areas industrial heritage. This potentially means that the green areas, open spaces, and perhaps unlisted historic buildings within the study area will face pressure to be developed in the future as Oldbury strives to house its increasing population. To an extent this process has already begun within the construction of new multi-occupancy housing developments in Zones E and F, which have seen development on green spaces, and the recent demolition of quite a rare historic unlisted building. In addition there are some open areas in Oldbury with landmark potential, if they were to be developed, such as the carpark at Low Town in Zone B and at Halesowen Street in Zone C. Any future development of these needs to be controlled in order to provide a development which befits this type of location and serves to frame and amplify rather than detract from the nearby historic buildings.

Another particular problem is the condition of the former Birmingham Old Line Canal. This is currently in a sad, dejected state, and for an archaeological feature, which essentially sparked the development of Oldbury from a small rural settlement to an urban town, has been neglected and forgotten. This resource provides many opportunities for use as a public and educational amenity. Located between two large schools and almost adjacent to recent housing developments, the in-filled canal route could provide opportunities for walking, cycling, and for the study of different ecological habitats and Oldbury's rich industrial history. Instead it is currently used illegally as a dumping ground and is an area primed for anti-social behaviour.

7.0 SUGGESTED BOUNDARY CHANGES

While there is no doubt that Church Square forms the focus of the heritage interest in Oldbury town centre, it is not an isolated enclave, and the conclusion of this appraisal and review, which has highlighted other significant areas of heritage resource within the study area, that the current conservation area boundaries should be extended in order to protect a greater part of the historic core of Oldbury.



Map 17: Proposed Extended Conservation Area.

Thus, it is recommended that Zone A, the current conservation area, is extended to include the vast majority of Zones B, C, and D, and the former canal route and former burial ground which form the eastern boundary of Zone E. This would mean that in Zone B the boundaries would be extended to encapsulate Lower Birmingham Street and the remaining vestiges of the residential area of Low Town. Here the revised boundary would also encompass Low Town surface level carpark and Ambulance Station. These are located in a very prominent position with a green area, which essentially forms the southeast entrance to Oldbury from the road network. Any future development of these sites should take these factors into account and should appropriately frame the historic buildings which line Birmingham Street.

The revised area in Zone C contains Upper Birmingham Street which is characterised by both listed and unlisted historic and modern commercial buildings. The revised boundary here also includes a section of Halesowen Street, which, whilst containing a couple of listed buildings, also has some vacant land apparently primed for future development near what is Oldbury's main and historic crossroads and entrance into the town centre. Zone C also includes part of the recently laid out Civic Square which serves as a very useful public amenity framing the historic buildings in its vicinity.

The boundary has been drawn in Zone D to include much of the east side of Church Street, which contains some fine examples of 19th-century religious, civic, and domestic architecture. On the west side of the street the boundary has been drawn to include The Big House, the octagonal Council Chamber, the remainder of civic square, the War Memorial, and the landmark former public buildings and library. It has been decided not to include the vast majority of Zones E and F, Zone E is devoid of historic buildings and contains much recent development, whilst Zone F, which does contain late 19th and early 20th-century

domestic buildings, does not particularly merit, nor would perhaps benefit from being included within the revised conservation area. It would be perhaps more pertinent to protect this area by designating it as an Area of Townscape Value. This would mean that the special quality of this area would be highlighted and identified, and that any proposals for alteration or redevelopment in this area must be justifiable, and be an improvement on the existing.

What is included in the revised conservation area from Zones E and F is the line of the former Birmingham Old Canal, which itself was so important to the development of Oldbury, and the green area containing the former Baptist burial ground.

8.0 LOCAL GENERIC GUIDANCE

8.1 Opportunities for Enhancement

In recent times the laying out of Civic Square and the construction of the Sandwell Council Offices have served to enhance the area around Church Street, and, in-fact, these have helped to frame and amplify the historic buildings in this area. Further opportunities for similar enhancement exist within Oldbury Town Centre. Such sites include the opportunity to enhance some potential landmark sites at critical visual locations within the conservation area. The carpark at Low Town and much of Halesowen Street will no doubt come under development pressure in the future as development space in Oldbury grows scarcer. These are in very sensitive areas on the edges of the town centre, where any development would serve to create a first impression of the town from its southeast and northwest entrances. Therefore any development on these sites must be sympathetically planned with the enhancement of these prime areas and adjacent historic buildings in mind.

There is too, an enormous opportunity for the improvement of the urban environment by tackling the problem of refuse, particularly in the green spaces, and dealing with other aspects of anti-social behaviour particularly associated with the former Birmingham Old Line Canal. There is a great opportunity to enhance this former canal area as a linear open space as described in Policy OS1 in the Unitary Development Plan, which states Sandwell's aim to protect and enhance its stock of open spaces, and to improve their quality and accessibility in order to maximise their contribution to a sustainable pattern of land use including the diversity of nature. This former canal-side area as highlighted elsewhere in this document (6.12) would be an excellent opportunity to develop a valuable open space which could serve many facets of Oldbury's community and further enhance the urban environment.

The issue of inappropriate shop signage and frontages should also be addressed here. The merits of these have been described elsewhere in this document but it must be said that any opportunity to address this issue would greatly enhance the appearance of much of the town centre. The use of shopfronts and signage more in keeping with the rest of the building and its architecture, thus reducing the very much maligned horizontality of having a ground floor of radically different character to the upper levels.

8.2 Planning Policy and Guidance

While the general policy on conservation areas is set out in the Unitary Development Plan (Policy C3) and Development Control Policy DC8, the emphasis is on new build and alterations rather than repair and there are no stipulations, nor detailed guidance, on the use of traditional materials for maintenance to existing buildings.

The Unitary Development Plan does however provide guidance on appropriate design for shop frontages

and business signage, which is an issue particularly pertinent in Oldbury. Here Policy DC8 states that standard signs and company logos should be adapted to suit the building and its setting, and that signs within conservation areas should be constructed of traditional timber fascias with good quality sign-writing, or a style appropriate to the age of the building. This means that the vast majority of business signage within the revised conservation would not be in keeping with this policy, an issue which needs to be highlighted and addressed.

In addition Policy DC13 states that all shop fronts should be designed within the scale and architectural character of the building within which they are to be contained, and that the design of shop fronts on Listed Buildings, and within Conservation Areas and Areas of Townscape Value should be designed sympathetically to reflect the heritage value of the area. Here it may be pertinent to produce specific design guidelines for businesses to follow in Oldbury. Such a document would be a constructive step towards the preservation and the amelioration of the historic character of Oldbury.

8.3 Protection, Restoration and Enhancement

The extension of the conservation area to encompass the proposals described in this report would have the effect of extending a degree of protection to much of Oldbury's historic town centre. Individual recognition of certain of the contributory elements would help to pin down their intrinsic heritage value and identify their contributions to the wider townscape.

To this end it is considered that the planned compilation of a local list of buildings should be set in motion. Many of the non-listed buildings identified during the appraisal would be obvious candidates for consideration, as described above (6.4 The Contribution of Key Unlisted Buildings).

Zone A: 10 Church Square, Industrial building to rear of 10 Church Square; 9 Church Square; Chapel to rear of 9 Church Square; Former Post Office, Unity Place; 34 and 36 Birmingham Street.

Zone B: 23 and 25 Birmingham Street; 27 Birmingham Street; 31 Birmingham Street; 33 Birmingham Street; 35 Birmingham Street; 37-41 Birmingham Street; 1 Low Town; 48 and 50 Birmingham Street; 52 to 56 Birmingham Street; 58 Birmingham Street; 60 Birmingham Street; 62 Birmingham Street; 64 and 66 Birmingham Street; 68 to 78 Birmingham Street; 80 Birmingham Street; 82 Birmingham Street; 84 Birmingham Street.

Zone C: 19 Birmingham Street; 17 Birmingham Street; 7 to 15 Birmingham Street; 2a Halesowen Street; 26 and 28 Birmingham Street; 22 and 24 Birmingham Street; Ye Olde Bulls Head, 18 Birmingham Street; 12 to 16 Birmingham Street.

Zone D: 11 and 13 Church Street; 21 Church Street; 31 and 31a Church Street; 33 to 35 Church Street; 37 Church Street (Steel House); War Memorial, Civic Square; Former Library, Freeth Street.

In addition to creating a local list of buildings it is also advisable that Zone F, which is not included within the proposed revised conservation area, and which contains the late Victorian and Edwardian terraces on Simpson Street and McKean Road should be considered for protection as an Area of Townscape Value which would mean that while not receiving the degree of control a conservation area affords, the special quality of this area would be highlighted and identified, and that any proposals for alteration or redevelopment in this area must be justifiable, and be an improvement on the existing.

Opportunities for enhancement have been outlined above in section 8.1 including measures for the

enhancement of key landmark locations, inappropriate shop frontages and signage, and for the former Birmingham Old Line Canal. In addition the litter problem in certain green areas and in various other locations in the town centre could to some extent be ameliorated by the introduction of sympathetically designed, regularly serviced bins in areas where these are lacking, as well as enforcement notices to engender an ambience of custodial care rather than the current sense of *laissez faire*.

8.4 Potential HERS and THI Projects

The proposed extended conservation area has the potential to form the basis of a Townscape Heritage Initiative scheme or a Heritage Economic Regeneration Scheme aimed at making the Oldbury Area in general a more attractive place in which to live, work, and invest through emphasising and ameliorating the town centres built heritage. Recent efforts to improve the area around Civic Square and Church Street have been a success, and should serve as an example for further regeneration of historic areas within the town centre.

Birmingham Street has been highlighted in the Oldbury Town Planning Statement as an area in a poor condition, and as an area primed for change. In this sense it is perhaps a prime candidate for a THI or HERS project. Of all the areas within the proposed revised conservation area the current condition of Birmingham Street presents most threat to the special character of the area. Birmingham Street has perhaps suffered more than most due to the changing tastes towards large scale retail shopping, in which the role small town shop has lessened in importance, and therefore the street as a whole has suffered due to widespread economic and social problems. It is in a very central and pivotal location within Oldbury's historic town centre and the regeneration of the street would deliver benefits to the wider community. In addition there is a potential for a community involvement in the scheme as the street consists of a good number of locally owned shops, which have in the past been an invaluable resource to the population of Oldbury.

The other main focus of a potential THI or HERS scheme would be the regeneration of the former Birmingham Old Line Canal as a public and educational amenity. This is perhaps one of the last remaining reminders of Oldbury's rich industrial heritage within the town centre itself. It is currently in a sad derelict state and a magnet for anti-social behaviour. The town and community at large would benefit greatly from its regeneration.

8.5 Research Strategy for Archaeological Evaluation and Historic Building Recording

This character appraisal study and boundary review of Church Square Conservation Area, Oldbury has revealed an area with a surprisingly rich survival of a wide and interesting range of historic buildings despite concentrated periods of economic decline, clearance, and regeneration in the mid and late 20th-century. Whilst it is widely accepted that there was some form of Anglo-Saxon settlement at Oldbury, evidence for this is as yet absent from the archaeological record. Archaeological, documentary, and cartographic evidence does suggest that the study area was sparsely populated until the cutting of the canals which were the catalyst for the rapid development of Oldbury from the early 19th century, and in fact much of the topography and urban morphology of Oldbury appears to have been shaped by the canals. As shown above, a search of Sandwell HER shows that archaeological interventions in the study area have revealed some evidence for activity in the area prior to the cutting of the canals, but as yet no definitive picture of this settlement has been formed. The area itself has been mapped extensively and accurately from the early/mid 19th-century, thus providing an understanding of the development of the study area over a period of c. 200 years. These maps should be consulted extensively prior to any future development works in the study area.

Archaeological Evaluation

Any programme of archaeological evaluation must be carried out with the above in mind. It would be difficult to pinpoint any specific locations for archaeological evaluation which would provide us with a further and greater understanding of the development of the study area. However, there are obvious locations in the study area which are archaeologically sensitive. These include the former Baptist burial ground on New Meeting Street, and the line of the old canal. The main research interest area here would be to add to the history of non-conformists in the town, and to provide a greater understanding of the construction of the canal. In addition there are a number of open undeveloped spaces within the study area (particularly those highlighted under Neutral Spaces above) these are likely to experience more developer led pressure than any other sites in Oldbury, therefore it is important to ensure that any development on these is subject to archaeological mitigation and would be sympathetic to the historic character of the area. In addition it would be prescient and appropriate to attach at the very least an archaeological watching brief condition to any future development within the revised conservation area.

Historic Building Recording

A large number of the historic buildings in the study area are not statutorily listed and as such are not statutorily protected from obtuse development. It is recommended that many of these are considered for a 'local list' when such a resource is set up. It does not appear that any of these structures is under any specific threat at the present time, but if such a threat were to occur it is important that a programme of archaeological assessment and recording be carried out prior to any decisions being made on future development works. This would help provide an understanding of the development and significance of the structure enabling an informed decision to be made regarding its future.

Each of the buildings afforded statutory protection within the study area is Grade II listed apart from The Big House in Zone D which is a Grade II* listed building. The fact that these buildings are included on the statutory list means that Listed Building Consent is required for any future development works, whilst in addition any proposed alterations to The Big House would require permission from English Heritage.

None of the historic buildings found within the study area is at risk from specific or current threats. However, the row of buildings to the immediate east of the study area on the north side of Birmingham Street appears to be currently threatened. This row which contains a corner-situated public house and commercial/residential buildings which seem contemporaneous with the rest of this part of Birmingham Street has been abandoned and boarded up seemingly awaiting development. Whilst not in the study area, any future development on this site has the potential to adversely affect the extended conservation area. It is important that an in-depth understanding of this row of buildings is gained prior to any future decisions being made on the development of this site.



Plate 60: Abandoned buildings south of Study Area, Birmingham Street.

In order to realise this significance and understanding, a Historic Buildings Assessment of the structures should be carried out by a skilled historic buildings archaeologist. This will help provide an in-depth understanding of their architectural history, structural phasing, and significance. It will also provide recommendations for future historic building mitigation such as the need for future recording, the level of which will be determined following such an assessment. In addition once this understanding has been attained it would be possible to assess the suitability of this row of buildings for inclusion within the revised conservation area.

APPENDIX 1: AUDIT OF HERITAGE ASSETS

Zone A

1. Christ Church, Church Square (Grade II listed)

Listed Building Description:

Church. 1840 - 41 by Johnson. Brick in English bond with sandstone dressings and slate roof. Comprises a nave, north-west tower, north and south aisles under pitched roofs, lower chancel, and a lean-to vestry against the east end of the south aisle. The tower has clasping buttresses to the lower stage. On the west side is a lancet window, on the north a pointed doorway, with a clock face above. The bell openings are in two stages, both set back slightly. Both have three narrow chamfered lancets, the lower ones with stone surrounds. The parapet has corner pinnacles. At the west end of the nave is a door with gabled stone surround and pointed chamfered doorway. It is flanked by lancet windows, with a third lancet above. The aisles are both of five bays separated by buttresses and with paired chamfered lancets. At the west end of the south aisle is a pointed doorway. Both aisles have east windows of paired chamfered lancets. The east chancel window has triple stepped lancets. Interior: walls and ceiling plastered. Five-bay arcade of moulded pointed arches springing from octagonal columns. Galleries on three sides. Flat ceiling with moulded transverse ribs and corbelled wall-posts; east end divided into square panels. Faded stencil decoration. Timber pulpit in a Gothic style. Clerestory windows with glass of c1840; east window in memory of William Chance, died 1856; one west window by Thomas William Camm of Smethwick, c1910.

2. Barclays Bank, 17 Church Square (Grade II listed)

Listed Building Description:

Bank. Mid-C19. Brick, stuccoed on ground floor, with hipped slate roof. Three storeys. The facade to Birmingham Street has chamfered rustication to the ground floor, which has a modillion cornice, chamfered quoins to the upper storeys, and a dentilled eaves cornice. On the ground floor are three C20 windows. The first floor window is of four sashed lights with moulded surrounds and cornice on brackets. The central light is wider and pedimented. The second floor window is tripartite with an architrave. The sashed lights are separated by quoin strips. The corner of the building is rounded. The left-hand bay of the Church Square elevation is treated in a similar manner to the Birmingham Street facade. The upper windows are sashed with architraves, that on the first floor having a pediment on brackets. To the right are three bays, rendered with C20 windows on the ground floor. The first floor windows have bracketed lintels with cornices. Doorway across corner between two facades. Chimney on ridge between first and second bays of Church Square elevation.

3. 16 Church Square (Grade II listed)

Listed Building Description:

House, now offices. Mid-C19. Brick in Flemish bond with some painted stone dressings and slate roof. A symmetrical composition of three storeys and three bays. Windows sashed with no glazing bars. On the ground floor are timber bay windows. The first floor windows have a sill band, and lintels with keystones. The central window has an architrave and a broken pediment. The second floor windows have a sill band. The doorway has a moulded round head and a doorcase with Tuscan pilasters and a segmental pediment on brackets. Gable chimneys.

4. Dental Health Centre, 10 Church Square (Unlisted)

House, now Dental Health Centre. Mid/late 19th-century two-storey, five-bay house, with a splayed corner bay. Of painted brickwork with a slate roof. Ground-floor level has segmental arch windows with hood mouldings, a console keystone, and three-over-two casement windows, which flank a central doorway with engaged pilasters. The upper storey, which has an alternative fenestration layout to the ground floor, has flat arched openings with hung sash windows.

5. Industrial Building to rear of 10 Church Square (Canal Street) (Unlisted)

Late 19th-century industrial building of unknown specific function. Single-pile, and two storeys in height, of red brick in stretcher bond, the main access to this building is through a walled side yard or through 10 Church Square. A number of openings have been blocked up, whilst those surviving are a mixture of segmental arched and flat brick arch windows of varying periods.

6. Church View, 9 Church Square (Unlisted)

Mid 19th-century house marked Sunday School on 1890 Ordnance Survey Map. This appears to have been entirely refaced and re fenestrated in the early 20th-century. It is of two storeys, three bays, and of blue brick laid in Stretcher Bond. This house has an attractive splayed corner, a decorative course of buff coloured brick, soldier arch window heads, nine-pane awning windows, and a slate roof. At ground-floor level these windows flank a narrow doorway with a stained glass rectangular fanlight surmounted by soldier arch head.

7. Chapel/School to the rear of 9 Church Square (Canal Street) (Unlisted)

Mid 19th-century Baptist Chapel, now used as Oldbury Spiritualist Centre. Single storey and single pile with three bays on its principal south elevation. Much altered with modern rendering, uPVC windows, and an altered roofline. Historic photos show that the brickwork was originally exposed and that over the door was a kneelered gablet.

8. 2 and 3 Church Square (Grade II listed)

Listed Building Description:

House, now offices. Early C19. Stuccoed brick. Three storeys, three bays. Chanelled rustication on ground floor. Windows sashed with glazing bars. Those on the ground floor have hood moulds. First-floor windows have architraves and sill band. Second-floor windows have timber lintels. Parapet rebuilt in exposed brick. Door in central bay under flat-headed porch with unfluted Greek Doric columns.

9. 1 Church Square (Grade II listed)

Listed Building Description:

House. Early-mid C19. Stuccoed; slate roof with wide eaves. 2 storeys; 3 bays with quoins to extreme left and right. Ground floor with central door with splayed reveals, quoined surround and Tudor-style drip-mould with upswept motif above and on the left, a late C19 canted bay window and on the right an original window. Broad band at first floor cill level. First floor with three windows, all with splayed reveals, quoins, Tudor-type drip-moulds and scrolling aprons. Included for group value.

10. Lloyds Bank (Former TSB) 21 Birmingham Street (Grade II listed)

Listed Building Description:

Bank. Early to mid-C19. Brick, stuccoed on ground floor, with hipped slate roof. Three storeys, with two bays facing Birmingham Street and two facing Church Square. Adjoining to the left the Church Square elevation has a further three bays of two storeys. The ground floor has channelled rustication and C20 windows: three facing Birmingham Street and seven facing Church Square. The upper storeys have sashed windows with glazing bars. The first floor windows of the taller part of the building have cornices on brackets. Doors to right of Birmingham Street elevation and across corner between two facades. Moulded overhanging eaves. Chimneys on ridge of three-storey part and at left of two-storey part.

11. Milepost, Church Square (Grade II listed)

Listed Building Description:

Milepost approximately 40 metres north of tower of Christ Church GV II Milepost. Circa 1800. Cast-iron. Triangular plan, with sloping top inscribed: "TO LONDON 114 MILES". Left-hand face has pointing finger in relief and illegible inscription. Right-hand face similar, with inscription partly legible: "BIRM ... MILES".

12. Subway (Former Lloyds Bank), 30 Birmingham Street (Grade II listed)

Listed Building Description:

Bank. Early to mid-C19. Stuccoed brick with slate roof. Three storeys, four bays. Windows sashed. On the ground floor are three windows to each side of a central doorway, separated by rusticated pilaster strips supporting an entablature with dentilled cornice. The two left hand windows have been altered to accommodate cash machines; the left hand one replaces a doorway. The central doorway is flanked by rusticated engaged columns with foliated capitals and has a dentilled pediment. Chimneys at left and between second and third bays, set forward from ridge.

13. Former Post office Unity Place (Unlisted)

House. Mid 19th-century two bay, three storey house with two storey, two bay annex. Ground floor level of the main block has been altered in the early/mid 20th-century, and delineated by what appears to be an inserted moulded string course which continues onto the annex the facing of which may be of a similar date. The upper levels are of painted red brick laid in what appears to be Flemish bond. First floor has sixteen pane inserted windows, whilst those on the second floor are original two-over-two wooden sash windows with stops. The eaves are decorated with dentilated brickwork.

14. The Junction Public House, Birmingham Street (Grade II listed)

Listed Building Description:

Public House. Mid-C19. Brick with painted stucco or stone dressings and slate roof. Three storeys, with three bays to both west and south. Ground floor has fluted Doric pilasters carrying entablature. In the centre of the west wall is a truncated pilaster separating two C20 windows. To each side there is a doorway flanked by pilasters. The windows of the south wall are all flanked by pilasters, the middle one being narrower. At the left is a doorway. The west elevation has chamfered quoins to the upper storeys. The windows to both elevations are sashed with margin lights. Those to the first floor have a decorated

sill band, and cornices on brackets, also with decoration. The second floor windows have decorated sills. Bracketed eaves. Roof hipped at west, gabled at east. Chimneys between second and third bays of south elevation, in front of and behind ridge, and in line with first bay.

The decorative brackets, lintels, and string courses are made of cast basalt from Rowley quarries melted under Henry Adcock's patent of c1851 in glass furnaces at Chances Glassworks nearby (SMR 1448).

15. 34 and 36 Birmingham Street (Unlisted)

Shop row. Late 19th-century infill block on road island. 20th-century shop frontages surmounted by one storey of orangey red brickwork laid in Flemish bond with a slate roof. The three first-floor bays have inserted uPVC window frames and concrete/reconstituted stone heads.

16. 38 Birmingham Street (Grade II listed)

Listed Building Description:

Shop row. Mid-C19. Brick with painted stone or stucco dressings and slate roof. Three storeys. South facade, facing Birmingham Street, of four bays with chamfered quoins to upper storeys. C20 shop fronts on ground floor, with doorway in second bay having round head. Windows to upper storeys sashed. Those to first floor have architraves, and cornices on brackets. Those to the second floor have architraves with segmental heads and keystones. Elaborate bracketed eaves cornice. Chimney at left. The right-hand corner is curved. The left-hand bay of the right-hand return wall is flanked by chamfered quoins and is treated in a manner similar to the front elevation. To the right are two bays of four storeys. The ground floor is stuccoed and has three window openings with segmental heads: the right-hand one is blind. The windows of the first and second floors have architraves with segmental heads and keystones. The third floor windows, under the eaves, have plain surrounds. Two chimneys on ridge.

17. 12 Unity Place (Grade II listed)

Listed Building Description:

House, now doctor's surgery. Early to mid-C19. Brick with slate roof. A symmetrical composition of two storeys and three bays. On the ground floor are timber canted bay windows, with sashes. The first floor windows are sashed with glazing bars. The doorway has a round gauged brick arch and a fanlight. Moulded eaves cornice. Gable chimneys. Included for group value.

Zone B

18. 23 and 25 Birmingham Street (Formerly Grade II listed)

Listed Building Description (revoked 23/9/87):

23: House, early C19, altered. Stuccoed; slate roof. 3 storeys; 1 bay. Ground floor modern shop front. 1st floor modern metal casement in new window opening. 2nd floor with sash window in moulded surround. Listed for group value only.

25: early C19. Stuccoed; slate roof with bracketed eaves cornice. 3 storeys; 3 bays in rhythm 1 x 2 with quoins L & R. Ground floor with modern shop front. 1st floor with 3 sash windows in moulded surrounds with cornices. Glazing bars in the upper sashes only. 2nd floor with 3 square sash windows in moulded surround. Group value. Now faced with late 20th-century brick façade.

19. 27 Birmingham Street (Unlisted)

Mid 19th-century house/shop now offices. Three-storey, two-bay building covered with modern render. Mid/late 20th-century shop frontage and first floor uPVC windows. Second floor retains decorative bracketed sills, which compliment the bracketed eaves.

20. 29 Birmingham Street (Unlisted)

Mid 19th-century shopping block with upper storey accommodation. Of three storeys and three bays with pitched slate roof. Much altered at ground floor level which has been divided into two mid/late 20th-century shopfronts. The upper levels which are of a brownish-red brick laid in Flemish bond, are in a much better state of preservation retaining original features such as multi-pane stopped timber-frame sash windows with pedimented heads supported by brackets, and bracketed eaves.

21. 31 Birmingham Street (Unlisted)

Much altered two-storey, seven-bay, mid/late 19th-century shop row. Ground floor has been altered to hold three late 20th-century shop fronts. The first floor, which is of red brick, contains original the fenestration scheme reflecting the former ground floor layout of three distinct shops. These windows have painted stone heads and sills and contain inserted uPVC frames. The eaves are of dentilated moulded brickwork.

22. 33 Birmingham Street (Unlisted)

Mid 19th-century two-storey, three-bay house/shop. Remnants of a wooden shopfront at ground-floor level, much altered by mid/late 20th-century insert. First-floor level is rendered with three windows with raised sills, heads, and jambs, and uPVC inserted frames. The parapet eaves are decorated with moulded and dentilated brickwork.

23. 35 Birmingham Street (Unlisted)

Interesting mid 19th-century three-bay, two-storey with dormer house. Whilst ground-floor level has been altered to contain a mid/late 20th-century shopfront, the upper levels are in a good state of preservation. First floor is of red brick with three multi-pane sash windows. The central window has a stone surround, segmental head, and carved keystone, this is flanked by two similarly proportioned windows with flat arches with keystones. The roof, which is unusual in Oldbury, is a slate-covered mansard style roof, which contains three multi-pane sash windows.

24. 37 to 41 Birmingham Street (Unlisted)

Two-storey, three-bay mid/late 19th-century corner shop row with chamfered corner entrance. Ground-floor level is divided into three individual shop units and contains elements of a wooden shop front amidst mid/late 20th-century alterations. First floor is rendered and has three windows, with inserted frames, which reflect the ground floor divisions. A pitched slate roof rises above a decorative moulded brick eaves band.

25. 1 Low Town (Unlisted)

Mid/late 19th-century two-storey, three-bay house of painted brickwork laid in what appears to be Flemish garden wall bond. The fenestration scheme is unusual and must reflect internal divisions. The ground floor windows have segmental arch heads, whilst those on the first floor have flat heads. All original windows seem to have been replaced. The slate roof which rises from a dentilated brick eaves band, is pitched, and has ridge tiles.

26. 48 and 50 Birmingham Street (Unlisted)

Recently renovated mid/late two-storey, two-bay, 19th-century house. Ground floor divided in two by late 20th-century shop frontages. Rendered first floor with two inserted uPVC windows with stone lintels, surmounted by a modern slate roof.

27. 52 to 56 Birmingham Street (Unlisted)

Mid/late 19th-century two-storey, five-bay terrace/shop row part of which appears as a public house in the 1890 Ordnance Survey map. Divided into three distinct shopping units at ground floor by late 20th-century shop frontages. Sections of the ground floor retain original decorative terracotta string band which delineates first-floor level. While the first-floor fenestration scheme appears original with stone lintels and sills, the window frames are uPVC inserts. The roof is hipped and is slate covered.

28. 58 Birmingham Street (Unlisted)

Mid/late 19th-century two-storey, two-bay, shop. Ground-floor level, which has late 20th-century roller shuttering and signage, retains some elements of what may be an original shop frontage, including wooden fascias and brackets, and green glazed brick/tiles. The first floor, which is rendered and rises to a coped parapet, has two windows with stone lintels and sills, and inserted uPVC frames.

29. 60 Birmingham Street (Unlisted)

Mid/late 19th-century two-storey, two-bay house with a pitched slate roof. Ground-floor level has been altered to hold a late 20th-century roller shuttered shop frontage. First-floor level is rendered, however, red brickwork is exposed in places. The two first-floor windows appear altered/inserted with concrete and tile heads.

30. 62 Birmingham Street (Unlisted)

Mid/late 19th-century two-storey, one-bay house. Ground floor which is of painted brickwork in Flemish bond has a late 20th-century roller shuttered shop frontage. First floor has a single window with stone sill and inserted uPVC frame. The head of this window is formed by part of the dogtooth brick eaves, from which the pitched slate roof rises.

31. 64 and 66 Birmingham Street (Unlisted)

Mid/late 19th-century two-storey, three-bay house. Appears to have been entirely refaced to street front in late 20th-century. However, the rear of the building retains its original red brickwork, segmental and flat arched windows, dentilated eaves, and a hipped slate roof.

32. 68 to 78 Birmingham Street (Unlisted)

Mid/late 19th-century two-storey, five-bay terrace/shop row. The left four bays at ground-floor level appear late 20th-century timber shop fronts, whilst the fifth bay contains a late 19th-century shop front. All of the windows on the rendered first floor have inserted uPVC frames, whilst the pitched slate roof rises from three courses of dentilated and oversailing red brickwork.

33. 80 Birmingham Street (Unlisted)

Mid/late 19th-century three-storey, two-bay house/shop. Ground-floor level has a wooden shop frontage. The upper floors are rendered, and both on the first floor and the single window at second-floor level retain their original four-pane timber sash windows. The pitched slate roof rises above red brick eaves with blue brick dentilation.

34. 82 Birmingham Street (Unlisted)

Mid/late 19th-century two-storey, two-bay house/shop. Ground floor has two wooden shop frontages flanking a central doorway. Both first-floor windows retain their four-paned timber sash windows. The pitched slate roof rises above moulded dentilated brick eaves.

35. 84 Birmingham Street (Unlisted)

Mid/late 19th-century three-storey, three-bay house/shop. Ground-floor level has two wooden shop frontages flanking a central doorway. Each upper floor window has timber framed awning windows. The slate roof is hipped.

Zone C

36. 19 Birmingham Street (Unlisted)

Mid/late 19th-century two-storey, four-bay house. The ground floor has been altered for use as estate agents. uPVC windows have been inserted in each of the first floor windows. The building is completely rendered, and has a pitched slate roof.

37. 17 Birmingham Street (Unlisted)

Mid/late 19th-century two-storey, two-bay house/shop. Ground floor has been altered to hold a late 20th-century shop front with roller shutter. First floor, which rises to a parapet, is rendered and has two windows with stone heads and sills which contain inserted mid 20th-century steel frames. The top courses of the parapet are of dogtooth brickwork.

38. 7 to 15 Birmingham Street (Unlisted)

Late 19th-century ten-bay, two-storey with dormer Arts and Crafts style shop row. Ground floor is divided into five separate shop units which are delineated by what appear to be late 19th-century cast-iron framed shop fronts. First floor is of red brick laid in Flemish bond and is divided into five sets of two segmental arch windows which are in turn divided by engaged brick pilasters some of which support a string of moulded brickwork. The pitched slate roof, which has crested ridge tiles, has five gabled dormers; those above bays one, three and five have two segmental arch windows, and have decorative weatherboarding, wooden bargeboards, and terracotta finials. Those other dormers are smaller and contain three sash windows under a decorative pediment.

39. 5 Birmingham Street (Grade II listed)

Listed Building Description:

Shop. Early C19, altered in early and mid C20. Stuccoed with roof concealed behind coped parapet. 3 storeys with corinthian pilasters rising through first and second floors to cornice band below parapet. 3 window front with early-mid C20 iron-framed windows on second floor and larger windows of similar type on first floor. Ground floor with cast-iron framed late C19 shop front, boarded up at time of resurvey.

40. 1 and 3 Birmingham Street (Grade II listed)

Listed Building Description:

Shop pair. Early C19, altered in later C19. Stuccoed with pyramidally-hipped slate roof. Stacks to rear of ridge. 3 storey with deeply overhanging bracketed eaves. 3 window front, shallow casements on second floor, sashes on first floor, to right margin-light, to left and centre with glazing bars only in upper blade.

Ground floor with early C20 triple shop front to left and double late C19 shop front to right with inset half-glazed door. This shop front continues round the corner as a double ground floor shop front on the Market Place.

40. 1 and 3 Birmingham Street (Grade II listed)

Listed Building Description:

Shop pair. Early C19, altered in later C19. Stuccoed with pyramidally-hipped slate roof. Stacks to rear of ridge. 3 storey with deeply overhanging bracketed eaves. 3 window front, shallow casements on second floor, sashes on first floor, to right margin-light, to left and centre with glazing bars only in upper blade.

41. 2 Halesowen Street (Grade II listed)

Listed Building Description:

Shop. Early C19. Stuccoed with slate roof with wide eaves. 2 storeys. 2 window front, sashes with margin-light glazing in upper blades on first floor; ground floor with C20 shop front.

42. 2a Halesowen Street (Unlisted)

Early/Mid 19th-century two-storey, four-bay shop row. Ground floor is divided into three 20th-century shop fronts. First floor is rendered with brick eaves which rise to a parapet in front of the pitched slate roof. The windows at first floor appear to be inserts with brick on-edge sills and steel framed awning windows.

43. 26 and 28 Birmingham Street (Unlisted)

Mid 19th-century three-storey house completely refaced in 20th-century.

44. 22 and 24 Birmingham Street (Unlisted)

Late 19th-century two-storey, three-bay shop with parapet. Ground floor, which has been divided into two distinct units, retains elements of a late 19th-century cast-iron shop front. The windows at first-floor level have been blocked as part of its current use as a funeral parlour. This has decorative moulded brick strings.

45. Ye Olde Bulls Head Public House 18 Birmingham Street (Unlisted)

Late 19th-century mock-Tudor, two-storey, three-bay public house. Faux timber framing with ground-floor pub timber shop frontage and latticed first-floor windows and a central blind gable dormer in the pitched slate roof.

46. 12, 14 and 16 Birmingham Street (Unlisted)

Mid/late 19th-century two-storey, three-bay shop row with a pitched slate roof. Ground floor has been divided into three shop units by late 19th-century cast-iron shop fronts. The first floor, which has three inserted uPVC windows, is completely rendered.

Zone D

47. 11 and 13 Church Street (Unlisted)

Early/mid 19th-century two-storey, three-bay house. This building is completely rendered and has a pitched slate roof. Ground floor has been divided into two distinct shop fronts, one of which has altered to contain mid/late 20th-century shop front, whilst the other has a separate doorway and multi-pane casement window. One of the windows at first-floor level retains its original one-over-one timber sash window.

48. 15 Church Street (Grade II listed)

Listed Building Description:

Offices. Early C19. Brick in Flemish bond with stucco dressings and slate roof. Two storeys, two bays. On the ground floor are two bowed windows with glazing bars. First floor windows sashed with no glazing bars, with sill band and with lintels which have chamfered false voussoirs and keystone. Door, at left, has moulded round head with impost blocks, keystone, and fanlight.

49. Waggon and Horses Public House, 17 Church Street (Grade II listed)

Listed building description:

Public House. Circa 1900. Brick and terracotta with stone dressings; tiled roof with decorative ridge tiles. To the road two and on the return three gables with a polygonal turret towards the corner with terracotta tympana. Ground-floor with windows on the corner, big segment-headed windows and subsidiary doors. First floor with pairs of sash windows with glazing bars in the upper sashes only. Interior: the bar remains complete with floor and wall tiles, lincrusta bar and rear screen and much of its etched and engraved glass.

50. Oldbury Public Library (Former Court House), 19 Church Street (Grade II listed)

Listed building description:

Court house, now public library. 1816. Brick in Flemish bond with painted stone dressings and slate roof. Two storeys, five bays. Ground floor windows recessed within an arcade of round arches with keystones and impost band. They are sashed with glazing bars and have gauged brick round heads. On the first floor is a similar arcade with moulded arches. The windows are sashed with Gothick glazing. In the central bay of the ground floor arcade is a C20 doorway. Above is a plaque inscribed: "This Court House was erected AD 1816". Chimney at right.

51. 21 Church Street (Unlisted)

Mid/late 19th-century two-storey, four-bay house with chamfered corner bay. This is of painted red brick laid in Flemish bond. Ground floor level has a central doorway with fanlight and cast-iron door surround with scroll brackets supporting an overdoor. All of the window frames have been replaced with Upvc insert, and all apart from one on the ground floor have cut stone four-centred arch shaped heads. The other window appears to be a late 19th-century insert with a moulded brick segmental arch head with a moulded keystone.

52. Methodist Church, Church Street/ Wesley Street (Grade II listed)

Listed Building Description:

Methodist church. 1853. Brick in Flemish bond with some stone dressings and slate roof. Façade of two storeys and four bays, with cornice and clasping pilasters, and two-storey arcade of round arches linked by impost band. Set within these arches are narrower windows on each floor, with round heads. Doorways in central two bays. Beneath the gable which is coped, is an inscription: "1853 WESLEY". North and south sides of five bays with two storeys of round-headed windows.

53. 31 and 31a Church Street (Unlisted)

Mid/late 19th-century two-storey, two-bay detached house. Constructed in red brick laid in English bond with decorative blue brick strings and plinth course. Ground floor has two canted bay windows with stone sills and lintels. All of the windows have been replaced with uPVC sashes. Each bay at first-floor level has two segmental pointed heads with stone springers and keystones, beneath two gablets with timber bargeboards with quatrefoil decorations.

54. 33 to 35 Church Street (Unlisted)

Mid/late 19th-century two-storey, two-bay detached house. Constructed in red brick laid in Flemish bond. Two canted bays rise from plinth to eaves with terracotta panelling between ground and first-floor windows which have been replaced by uPVC inserts.

55. 37 Church Street (Steel House) (Unlisted)

Former police station. Mid 19th-century two-storey, four-bay building constructed in red brick laid in Flemish bond with decorative stone features. Tri-partite front with a central entrance with stuccoed ashlar decoration with an ogee shoulder arch above a round headed door with fanlight. This is flanked by two segmental arch windows with stucco keystones. At first-floor level are two segmental arch windows with moulded stone surrounds and keystones. Each flanking bay which rises to a broken pediment gable with a blind oeil-de-boeuf, has a single similar segmental arch window on each floor.

56. War Memorial, Halesowen Street (Unlisted)

Early/mid 20th-century cut stone cenotaph dedicated IN THE MEMORY OF THE MEN OF OLDBURY WHO FELL IN THE GREAT WARS 1914-1918 AND 1939-1945 AND IN ALL OTHER CONFLICTS. Main feature is a sculpted wreath.

57. Former Library, Freeth Street (Unlisted)

Late 19th/early 20th-century public library. Of red brick laid in English bond, with a corner octagonal tower with spire. Highly ornamented with terracotta window surrounds, strings, scroll pedimented doorway, panels, and curved gables.

58. The Big House, 44 Church Street (Grade II* listed)

Listed Building Description:

House, now offices. Early C18. Brick in Flemish bond with painted stone dressings and hipped slate roof. Double-depth plan. A symmetrical composition of three storeys and five bays with chamfered quoins. Windows are boxed sashes with glazing bars and stone lintels with keystones. Band above each storey, and moulded eaves cornice. Door of eight raised and fielded panels with panelled reveals. Timber doorcase of reeded engaged columns and swan-necked pediment, the latter closed at the top by an additional open triangular pediment. Within the pediment is painted: "AD 1705". At the rear some windows have elliptical brick arches. Interior: the principal ground floor rooms each have an exposed ceiling beam. The right hand front room has an inglenook fireplace with re-used timber bresummer and panelled jambs, now containing a cast iron hob grate with Adamesque decoration. The open-well stair has an open string, three turned balusters to each tread, and a ramped and wreathed handrail. The interior doors are mostly of raised and fielded panels. On the second floor are two panelled doors of c1700.