



## *The Grove, High Ercall, Shropshire.*

*Heritage Statement to support an Appeal Against an Enforcement Notice in the  
High Ercall Conservation Area.*

*Client: Mr. Brett Earp.*

*March 2019.*

*Report No. HS/highercall/AH203/19/03/19V1.*

*Prepared by:*

*Helen Martin-Bacon, MCIfA.*



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## HERITAGE STATEMENT

Site name: The Grove.  
Location: High Ercall, Shropshire TF6 6BE NGR SJ 59243 17339 (Figure 1).  
Oasis ref: commerci1- 344145  
Report No: HS/highercall/AH203/19/03/19V1

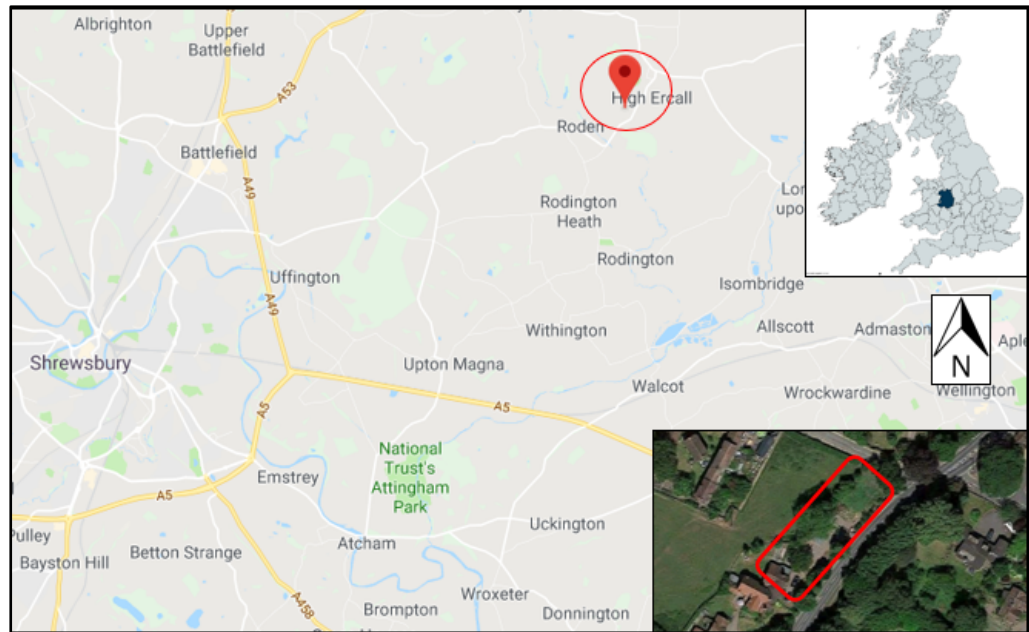


Figure 1. Location Plan

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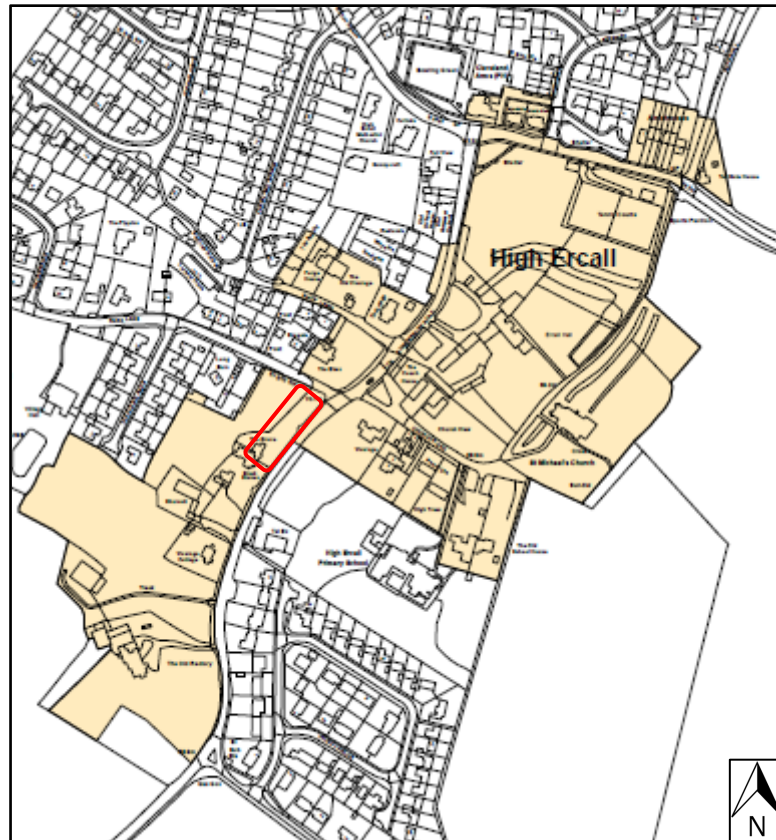
### PART 1 INTRODUCTION

Avalon Heritage Ltd (AHL) has been commissioned by the owner (the appellant) of The Grove, High Ercall, Shropshire, TF6 6BE to prepare a Heritage Statement (HS) to support an appeal against an enforcement notice (ENF/2018/0272) issued by Telford and Wrekin Brough Council (TWBC) requiring the removal of wooden fencing attached to the top of an existing brick boundary wall to the front of the property. The enforcement notice states that there has been a breach of planning control:-

*The Council considers that the unauthorised close boarded timber fence and gates erected along the road fronting boundaries of the property are unacceptable in terms of their design and appearance and introduce a harsh and overly dominant form of boundary treatment that fails to preserve the traditional frontages and street scene. As a result, it is considered that the development fails to preserve or enhance the character of appearance of the High Ercall Conservation Area.*

The Grove, which is not listed, is located within the High Ercall Conservation Area (HECA, Figure 2) and as a result the TWBC has a statutory duty to ensure that any development within the conservation preserves or enhances its special architectural and historic character. In the view of the TWBC the erection of the timber fence atop an existing brick boundary wall is not in keeping with boundary treatments within the conservation area and as a result harms its special character.

Therefore, this Heritage Statement will focus on whether, in the view of the author of this report <sup>1</sup>, the fence erected by the appellant on the brick boundary wall *fails to preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the High Ercall Conservation Area* and introduces a harsh and overly dominant form of boundary treatment that fails to preserve the traditional frontages and street scene of the conservation area.



**Figure 2** Location of the appeal site within the High Ercall Conservation Area.

The methodology employed in the preparation of this report comprises desk-based assessment, a site visit, an assessment of the special architectural and historic interest of the conservation area and an assessment of whether the fence in question has a harmful effect on it.

This report has been undertaken with reference to guidance prepared by the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists and Historic England and following consultation of planning guidance on the historic environment published by Telford and Wrekin Borough Council. In particular, the following guidance has been used in the preparation of this report:

- *Managing Significance in Decision Taking in the Historic Environment*, Good Practice in Planning 2 Historic England 2015;
- *The Setting of Heritage Assets*, Good Practice in Planning 3 Historic England 2017;
- *Conservation Principles, Policies and Guidance April 2008*;
- *Standards and guidance for historic environment desk-based assessment*, Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA 2014);
- *National Planning Policy Framework, NPPF 2012 rev, 2018*;
- *The Telford and Wrekin Local Plan 2011-2031*.

<sup>1</sup> The Heritage Statement has been prepared by Helen Martin-Bacon, Director and Principal Heritage Consultant at Avalon Heritage Limited who has extensive experience of working in the heritage sector. Full Member of CIfA.

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**Site description:**

The appeal site is situated at the junction of the B5062 (Shrewsbury Road) and Park Lane and comprises a roughly rectilinear parcel of land which runs parallel to the western side of the road. The house, which is red brick with stone painted dressings to the windows and porch, is likely to be of late 18<sup>th</sup> and/or 19<sup>th</sup> century date and is located in the southern half of the appeal site facing towards the Shrewsbury Road. To the front of the house is a garden consisting of a lawned area and several mature trees. The northern half of the appeal site is occupied by a timber garage, a gravel drive and a rough grassed area which extends towards the plot's boundary with Park Lane.

The appeal site is accessed via a gateway off the Shrewsbury Road at the northern end of the site. The parcel of land which makes up the appeal site is bounded on its western and northern limits by a low brick-built wall with rounded brick coping upon which the close boarded timber fence has been erected. Several mature trees and shrubs are located behind the front boundary (Plate 1). To its rear, eastern boundary is post and rail fencing beyond which is a horse paddock. The Grove is adjoined on its south elevation by a neighbouring property and gardens.



Plate 1 – view of front gates and south-east boundary showing brick wall and wooden fencing.

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## PART 2- SIGNIFICANCE OF THE CONSERVATION AREA.

### Significance:

The High Ercall Conservation Management Plan notes that there are twenty-two dwellings within the conservation area boundary which create its dominant character of large garden plots with detached properties, set back from the road frontage behind boundaries of traditional sandstone and/or mature planting. Whilst some of the properties are of modern post-war date, the majority date from the late medieval period to the 19<sup>th</sup> century (TWBC 2008). Those listed buildings which are within the vicinity of the appeal site are High Ercall Hall, St Michaels Church, The Old Vicarage and Vicarage Cottage none of which have views of the appeal site.

The main road (Shrewsbury Road, B5062) runs through the conservation area and probably represents a historic route along which the linear form of the medieval settlement developed.

The special architectural and historic interest of the High Ercall Conservation is therefore, largely vested in the number of well-preserved listed buildings, in the evidential value which arises from its retention of historic built fabric dating from the medieval to post-war periods and the layout of its network of roads and lanes which most likely date back to the earliest foundation of the village. Although there are relatively few green spaces within the conservation area there are a number of mature trees and hedges which along with the historic buildings contribute to the aesthetic value of the conservation area.

Pertinent to the reasons for the enforcement notice against the appellant by TWBC is the following description in the High Ercall Conservation Area Management Plan:

*The Conservation Area Appraisal clearly identifies the presence of sandstone boundary walls as being a key feature to the character of the conservation area. The Council will use its available powers to ensure that such boundaries are maintained and preserved. It will resist any applications involving demolition or partial demolition of any sandstone wall within the conservation area. This includes the creation of new vehicular or pedestrian accesses or the widening of existing accesses to accommodate vehicles. Demolition or partial demolition within a conservation area requires Conservation Area Consent and this applies to boundary treatment also.*

The High Ercall Conservation Area Appraisal is accompanied by a plan which identifies the extent of the sandstone boundary walls which are considered a key component of the Conservation Area. The author of this report would concede that where sandstone walling is present as a boundary treatment it makes a positive contribution to the conservation area.

However, a site visit for the preparation of this HS found that sandstone boundary treatment within the conservation is far more limited than suggested by the appraisal. It was found that the majority of the boundaries throughout the HECA, and in the main those which front onto the Shrewsbury Road, have received a range of differing treatments from traditional brick walling to thick hedging, modern brick walling, concrete post and fencing all of which appear to be inconsistent with the description of the boundary treatments in the conservation area appraisal.

It is evident from a tour of the HECA that the only remaining sandstone walls fronting onto the Shrewsbury Road are those along the north-west boundary of High Ercall Hall and along Church Road. A sandstone wall exists on the approach to High Ercall from the south but is outside of the conservation area boundary. It is therefore questionable as to whether the sandstone boundary treatment highlighted in the appraisal within the conservation area can be considered a key component of its special architectural and

historic interest given that there is no discernible boundary uniformity apparent (Plates 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10 11).

A map contained within the appraisal document identifies the extent of sandstone boundaries with a yellow line. An extract of this map has been annotated below with a green dotted line to show the actual extent of sandstone walling along the main road. The site is outlined in red (Figure 3). It is clear that there is no correlation between the appraisal document map and what the current situation is within the conservation area.

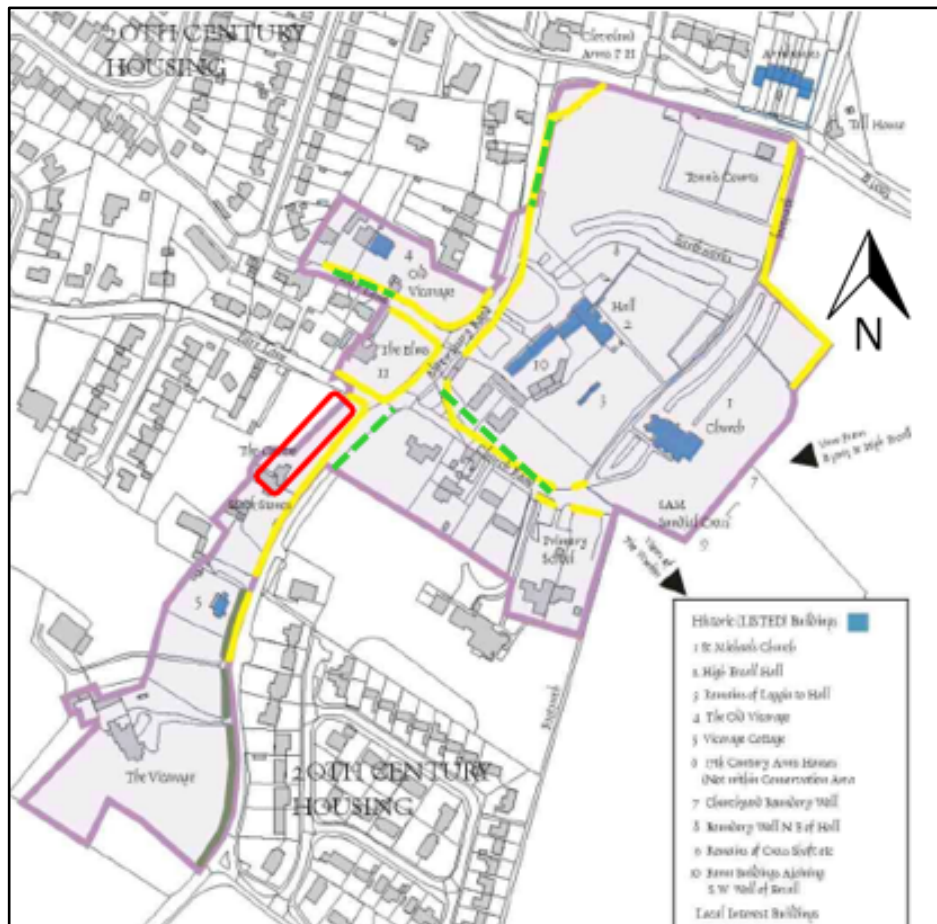


Figure 3. Map showing actual extent of sandstone boundaries in green dotted lines.



Plate 2. View down Park Lane showing disputed fencing at the Grove (left of photo) and boundary fence to The Elms (right of photo).



Plate 3. View looking south towards the appeal site with a view of the boundary treatment of The Elms fronting the B5062. The appeal site can be seen in the distance.



Plate 4. View looking north on the B5062 and the corner of Shop Lane showing boundary treatment of The Lodge.



Plate 5. View looking north on the B5062 showing range of differing boundary treatments.



Plate 6. View looking north on B5062 showing further boundary treatments.



Plate 7. Partial view of boundary to High Ercall Hall on B5062 consisting of concrete blocks capped by brick coping.



Plate 8. Partial view of boundary to High Ercall Hall on B5062 with blue metal gates.





Plate 9. View showing boundary treatments on Shop Lane.



Plate 10. View of boundary treatment to Vicarage Cottage from the north on B5602.



Plate 11. View of B5062 to the south towards the telephone exchange.



**Plate 11. Example of modern boundary treatment within the conservation area.**

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### PART 3 – IMPACT ASSESSMENT

#### Impacts:

As mentioned previously, the specific focus of this report is to assess whether the fence erected by the appellant constitutes a failure to enhance or preserve the character of the conservation area and whether it is an overly dominant feature of the street scene out of keeping with its surroundings. The enforcement notice has been issued by TWBC on the basis that the fence and gates are *unacceptable in terms of their design and appearance and introduce a harsh and overly dominant form of boundary treatment that fails to preserve the traditional frontages and street scene.*

This HS, based upon the findings of a site visit, contends that on the contrary the wooden fence and gates erected by the appellant represent one of a number of inconsistent boundary treatments along the Shrewsbury Road and within the HECA as a whole. It is clear that properties within the conservation area and along the Shrewsbury Road are not formal or uniform, with a range of built forms intended to provide screening for security and privacy from the busy main road. Therefore, it cannot be argued that the timber fencing and gates erected by the appellant represent a wholly uncharacteristic feature within the conservation area.

Overall the appellant's boundary treatment is a low-key approach to privacy and security, which provides a visually acceptable form of enclosure when viewed against the disparate forms of boundary treatment prevailing along the Shrewsbury Road and within the conservation area generally.

There is variety in the colour and texture of boundary treatments within the conservation area ranging from grey to orange and brown hues. The appellant's fencing therefore blends in well with its surroundings and this will be more the case once the fencing has weathered. The gate is recessed from the boundary line and as a consequence is not especially visible and it too, is of a colour and texture which is not incongruous to its surroundings. It is therefore questionable as to whether the appellant's fence and gates can be described as *harsh and overly dominant.*

The Council's enforcement notice also refers to the appellant's boundary treatment as failing to preserve the traditional frontages and street scene. As previously mentioned, there are already a number of modern boundary treatments within the conservation area, illustrating that more contemporary features are also part of the streetscene along with traditional features.

The approach into High Ercall on the Shrewsbury Road from the south gives the greatest distance view of the fence but due to the disparate nature of neighbouring boundary treatments and the colour/texture of the appellant's fencing, it is not overly dominant in the view and it cannot be argued that it harms the character and appearance of the conservation area (Plate 13).



Plate 13. View of The Grove front boundary, not especially visible in the background.

The appeal site fronts directly onto the Shrewsbury Road which is very busy with a constant flow of traffic including HGV vehicles, tractors and tankers (Plate 14). The appellant has experienced several instances of theft from the front garden and has erected the fencing to secure the property against further theft. As the garden of The Grove is to the front of the house, the appellant has also erected the fence to provide privacy from passing road and foot traffic in order to provide a safe and private space for family activities. It is noticeable that a number of other properties along the Shrewsbury Road, within the conservation area, have tall boundaries, the height reinforced by either brick walling, fencing or thick hedging in order to provide privacy and security from the main road.



Plate 14. Typical traffic on B5062 passing the appeal site.

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## PART 4 – CONCLUSION

It is the conclusion of this HIS that the current boundary fence and gate erected by the appellant at The Grove are not inappropriate to their location and function and that they do not harm the character of the conservation area or detract from any appreciation of its special architectural and historic significance. Similarly, for the reasons given above it is considered that the fence and gates do not adversely impact on the appearance of the streetscene along the Shrewsbury Road.

The form, colour and texture of the appellant's fencing is quite commonly found within the conservation area particularly where boundaries adjoin the road and does not represent a wholly uncharacteristic feature within the conservation area contrary to the description in the conservation area appraisal of it being characterised by sandstone boundary walling.

Given that the appellant's fencing and gate do not harm the appearance of the conservation area or erode its heritage significance, and given that the appellant has a right to security and privacy such as that enjoyed by neighbouring properties in the conservation area, this HS would recommend that the planning balance is in favour of the appellant and that the enforcement notice to remove the fence and gate should not be upheld on the heritage grounds currently being used by the Council.

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## References:

*Conservation Principles, Policies and Guidance*, Historic England 2008;

*Conserving and Enhancing the Historic Environment*, National Planning Policy Framework DCLG 2018;

*The Setting of Heritage Assets. Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning: 3*, Historic England 2015 London.

*Managing Significance in Decision Taking in the Historic Environment, Good Practice in Planning 2*, Historic England 2015;

*Standards and guidance for historic environment desk-based assessment*, Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA 2014);

*National Planning Policy Framework*, DCLG NPPF 2012 rev, 2018;

*High Ercall Conservation Area Management Plan*, Telford and Wrekin Borough Council (2008)

#### HERITAGE SERVICES:

- Constraints reports and heritage risk assessments for land acquisition;
- Heritage Impact Assessments;
- Statements of Significance;
- Setting Assessments;
- Listed Building Appraisals;
- Historic Building Survey and Recording;
- Places of worship;
- Historic agricultural buildings;
- Desk-Based Assessments;
- Historic Landscape Survey;
- Analysis of historic and designed gardens.

#### ARCHAEOLOGICAL SERVICES:

- Scoping and negotiation with LPAs;
- Preparation of WSIs and mitigation strategies;
- Project Management and set up of archaeological/geophysical surveys;
- Consultancy and advice;
- Co-ordination of fieldwork;
- Procurement.

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