Chirk Conservation Area Assessment

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Mae'r ddogfen hon ar gael yn Gymraeg. Ffoniwch (01978) 292019 / 292019 am eich copi.
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Hawk House, Chirk Castle grounds

Special thanks to Graham Greasley for permission to use his pictures of old Chirk in this document.
INTRODUCTION

Aim of the Chirk Conservation Area Assessment

Conservation Areas are 'areas of special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance'.

Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990

Local Authorities are required by law to designate conservation areas and to formulate policies and proposals for their preservation and enhancement. Chirk Conservation Area was designated on the 29th August 1975 and was reviewed on 6th October 1997 where boundary changes were recommended and approved.

The boundary review and character assessment is the first to be undertaken since its designation. The purpose of it is as follows:-

- Conservation Areas are designated under the Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. Government policy on conservation areas is incorporated in two sets of guidance (see Appendix 1). Both highlight the need for strong conservation area policies in the local plan, which should be based on a clear definition of its special architectural or historic interest.

- A review strengthens and justifies definition of the conservation area's special character and allows a strategy to be developed that will create a clear context for future development. As an adopted Council document, it is a point of reference for officers when exercising its planning duties and grant-giving powers. This should lead to a higher quality built environment as a result of more informed decision-making by officers, developers and householders.

A Conservation Area Enhancement Plan will be produced at a later date, with detailed policies for the improvement of the conservation area and will be subject to public consultation.

The purpose of the above is to promote and support developments that are in keeping with, or enhance, the character of Chirk Conservation Area. They are not attempts to stiffle change. The aim is to strike the right balance so that the interests of conservation are given their full weight against the need for change and development. This also meets the Council's responsibility for preserving and enhancing the character and appearance of the Conservation Area.
About Conservation Areas

Designating a Conservation Area is a matter for the Local Planning Authority and is one made against locally related criteria. ‘Quality of place’ or ‘local distinctiveness’ is the prime consideration.

The character of the Conservation Area can derive from many factors including individual buildings, building groups and their relationship with spaces, architectural detailing, materials, views, colours, landscaping, street furniture and so on. It may also draw on sounds, local environmental conditions or historical changes. These qualities may change throughout the course of the day and night. Such elements of character cannot be directly safeguarded. However, by protecting the buildings and spaces formed between them, it is more likely that the activities and uses that make up the character of a place can be sustained.
Chirk is located approximately 8km (5 miles) north of Oswestry and 14km (9 miles) south west of Wrexham. The Conservation Area centres on the central core of the village, encompassing part of the original medieval grid street pattern that was later altered by Telford's historic A5 trunk road from London to Holyhead. All of Church Street and parts of Castle Street, Holyhead Road, Station Road and Trevor Road are included. The town acts as a gateway to the beautiful and distinctive Ceiriog Valley to its west.
within the private garden of The Mount, it was clearly sited to control access up the valley and probably remained in use until the building of the present Chirk Castle. The position and extent of any likely bailey or courtyard attached to the motte is unknown. In 1391, a recording of some buildings in the area suggests demesne buildings. These included a chapel, hall, chamber, grange and barns. The hall and chapel may have been located to the west of the Church on the corner of Church Street and Castle Road at Bryn Eglwys. Some surviving masonry in the cellars at Bryn Eglwys supports this.

Chirk is a reputed, ancient, Welsh-dominated, religious stronghold. This, plus the location of the motte and demesne buildings, may have been a factor in the siting of the early 12th Century Church of St Mary. The church was originally dedicated to St Tysilio, a Welsh saint, who also had a Christian burial ground dedicated to him. It is constructed of yellow sandstone from the Upper coal measures, probably from outcrops near the current Chirk Castle estate. It has a chancel and nave, of which part of the original has been incorporated into later building works, highlighted by the residual pilaster buttresses. A wider section incorporates a round arched south door, now blocked, behind a 19th century buttress.

The 13th Century was a crucial time in the development of the town. During this time the lands around Chirk became controlled by the Welsh Prince Gruffydd ap Madoc. The Prince is reputed to have founded Valle Crucis Abbey in Llangollen, yet he was a stalwart supporter of Norman England. However, his son Llywelyn, was of a more patriotic nature, and wished to exert a stronger Welsh influence in the area. With de Montfort, an English
rebel, an attempt was made to seize Chirk. This caused grave personal conflict to his father. Largely as a result of Llywelyn’s failed attempt, Chirk was seized by Edward I, who bequeathed it in 1272 to Roger Mortimer of Wigmore. Mortimer subsequently built the new Chirk Castle between 1295 and 1310, a mile to the west of the Norman motte. The abandoning of the motte meant inevitably that it would fall into decay and ruin. Chirk Castle does not appear to have been placed in a strategic military site; however, its original gateway faced west to the Ceiriog Valley, so any Welshman would be immediately aware of Chirk’s allegiance to the English crown.

The town of Chirk was carefully planned after military defences were in place and was similar to several townships under Edwardian control in Wales, such as Denbigh, Ruthin and Rhuddlan. It was granted a market charter and, in 1324 (or possibly earlier in 1282), Chirk became a free borough with burgages (holdings of land with a dwelling place). In 1391 23 were recorded. Today the plots and medieval grid iron street pattern in the central core of the town have now largely disappeared. This is probably a result of natural evolution, the campaigns of Owain Glyndŵr - the last Welsh prince - in the early 15th Century and Telford’s road building in the 19th Century.

Certainly the campaigns of Glyndŵr in the 1402 uprising had the first devastating impact on the town, which included the decimation of the hall and chapel at Bryn Eglwys. In 1530 the travel writer Leland noted only a few houses in Chirk. Certainly from that description there seemed little in the way of the once thriving market town of Edward I, despite the fact that it had been granted a new market charter in 1506.

Events in the 17th Century also had an influence on the landscape of Chirk, including the Civil War of 1642-7, where land cultivation occurred as more intensive farming measures were undertaken for food supplies for soldiers. Chirk Castle was damaged - not by shelling, but by brute force as revenge for allegiance switching by the Myddleton family, who owned the castle at that time.

During the 17th century, Sir Thomas Myddleton created Whitehurst Gardens at the north end of Chirk. This was built as a pleasure garden for himself and important guests, such as Major General James Berry, Duke of Beaufort; the Lord President of Wales; and various circuit judges.
The gardens included a banqueting house, a summerhouse, an orangery, deer and fishponds, fruit and vegetables such as figs and asparagus and a boathouse. The garden eventually fell into decline, and by 1931 became part of land used for colliery housing for Black Park, but the walls, terrace and impressively large mount survive. In 2001 plans began to repair the listed structures at Whitehurst.

There was also an element of urbanisation in the 17th, 18th and 19th century in Chirk. Numerous influential landowners and industrialists such as the Myddletons, Trevors, Kynastons, Myttons, Eytons and the Wards exploited local mineral reserves such as iron, coal, slate, limestone and clay. The influx of men with money to the town - sometimes from afar - may have had an impact on the architectural character of the town centre. By the middle of the 18th century, it appears that the Georgian architectural style gained influence amongst the local gentry and industrialists, replacing the vernacular style of house building. Good Georgian examples in the town include The Mount at the southern end of Church Street, and the Hand Hotel. Telford’s A5 road from London to Dublin was built at the beginning of the 19th Century, which widened the road and set milestones along the route, significantly altering the original layout of medieval Chirk. It also created business opportunities in the town centre, particularly in the form of hostelries and inns. Most have now largely disappeared or have been extensively remodelled.

The 19th Century also introduced the Victorian code of moral and social responsibility to the town. This manifested itself in a number of buildings. Charlotte Myddleton-Biddulph of Chirk Castle Estate had a significant influence in this. She commissioned the Picturesque Hand Terrace, estate workers cottages built in 1820 - 5, and the Neo Elizabethan Former National Girls School of 1843 - 4 by Augustus Pugin, co-architect of the Houses of Parliament, ‘with an aptness of style to function’.

Outside the town centre the great advances in transport and communication in the 18th and 19th Century led to the construction of the magnificent aqueduct and viaduct to the south west of Chirk. Designed by Telford and Henry Robertson respectively, these great engineers effectively and elegantly spanned the Ceiriog Valley to create stunning pieces of architecture in yellow sandstone, whilst furthering the canal and rail networks respectively. The viaduct was built deliberately
higher than the aqueduct to emphasise the superiority of rail over water.

The later 19th and earlier 20th Century expansion of the town was piecemeal. The significant building style of this period in Chirk belongs to the Edwardian era. Chirk Town Council Offices on Holyhead Road is an excellent example of a neo-Jacobean domestic style public building in the Edwardian period. The War Memorial on the junction of Holyhead and Station Road is particularly remarkable. It was commissioned by Lord Howard de Walden of Chirk Castle and designed by the noted designer and sculptor Eric Gill, after World War I. The austerity of the form, the pathos of the figured relief and the spare elegance of the lettering have achieved great dignity. Also of note is Bryn Coed in Castle Road, built in 1912 by Shayler and Erridge, architects for A. Wood, a manager for Brynkinalt Colliery, in a Restoration revival style. No less significant are the Edwardian properties lining Station Road, with a simple restrained decoration that has been largely unaltered.

The later 20th Century has seen political changes in local government, which has perhaps led to differing aspirations and approaches to the town. Before 1974 it was governed locally, from Castle Road. From 1974 to 1996 it fell under the administration of Glyndŵr District Council, based in Ruthin, within Clwyd County. From 1996 Wrexham County Borough Council has administered the area.

The town centre is the main commercial core of Chirk. Today it is recognised as an important neighbourhood shopping centre, covering a diverse range of goods and services, with approximately 30 businesses currently located there, to support a population of almost 4000 in Chirk community itself, but also a wider community in the Ceiriog valley of approximately 2000. However, the vitality and viability of the town has been threatened in recent years. This is partly as a result of the following pertinent issues: -

- **Low tourism visits to town centre, despite its fundamental but unrealised architectural beauty and character and the proximity to nearby tourist attractions, such as the castle (owned by the National Trust) and canal;**
- **Re-routing of the main transport route, although this has resulted in a reduction in traffic and an increase in the quality of the environment;**
Inappropriate replacement of traditional materials, both to historic buildings and the wider townscape; and

Poor quality development after World War Two. Some examples of mirroring historic form and features in the town centre have been particularly unsuccessful.

These factors could result in the decline of the overall architectural townscape, which, with other key factors such as a secure economic base and tourism, are vitally important in attracting the community, businesses and visitors to this unique town.

The main land uses are retail and commercial at the heart of the Conservation Area and residential to roads outwith the main spine of the A5. Adjacent landscapes to the Conservation Area have an influence its setting. To the north is an extensive 20th century residential area, and beyond is Whitehurst, a registered Historic Park and Garden.

A significant industrial area to its north west separates the town from part of its medieval heritage in the form of Chirk Castle, and the surrounding countryside. This includes the site of Kronospan. Chirk Castle is a Grade I listed building with a Historic Park and Garden owned by the National Trust. To the south west is the River Ceiriog valley with its listed aqueduct and viaduct, which are of outstanding aesthetic value. Brynkinalt Estate lies to the east, also with an historic park and garden, but a large section of its land has been scythed by the A483 by pass from Wrexham to Oswestry.

Approximately 10% of the population of Chirk speak Welsh. However, in the Ceiriog Valley, where Chirk is seen with Oswestry as the nearest shopping district, the figure is over 50%. Bilingual signage is evident to the highways, but private signage shows little evidence of this.

This Character Assessment highlights the overall qualities of the Conservation Area. It identifies buildings and areas that require preservation and enhancement. It is not intended to be comprehensive and the omission of any particular building, feature or space does not mean that it is of no interest.
LOCAL PLANNING ISSUES

Planning Policy

The local planning development framework is contained in the 'Glyndŵr District Local Plan', which became operative in February 1994. Policies C1, C3 to C6, C8, C9, C11 to C15 are most relevant. They give priority to preservation and enhancement of those features within Conservation Areas that contribute to their unique character. This includes Listed Buildings and Scheduled Ancient Monuments. Policies A1, L9, S1, S2 and T9 are also relevant. Reference must also be had to the Clwyd County Council Structure Plan (First Alteration).

The emerging Wrexham Unitary Development Plan - Forward to 2011 will also be a material consideration in determining planning applications affecting the site, and will eventually supersede the Glyndŵr District Local Plan and the Structure Plan.

Planning Control

Managing change in Conservation Areas

In order to protect its special character, certain controls exist, which are over and above normal planning permission. Alterations to the walls and roof of a dwelling house may require planning permission. Demolition may require Conservation Area Consent, or tree pruning and removal may require Consent for Work to Trees. Controls in Conservation Areas are not intended as a hindrance to change, but as positive management of change.

The outward appearance of all properties in Conservation Areas is vitally important. Owners should bear in mind that inappropriate alteration and the removal of traditional detail could have a negative impact on the building and the Conservation Area. Such alterations do not usually increase the value of a property and may make it more difficult to sell.

You are advised to discuss any proposals with a planning officer, who will be able to advise you whether planning permission is required or not. Listed Buildings and Tree Preservation Orders require separate consents for any works affecting them. There is no fee required for Listed Building Consent, Conservation Area Consent, or Consent for Work to Trees.

Outline planning applications are not usually accepted for sites within Conservation Areas since the level of detail provided is rarely adequate. Detailed plans are always required for new development, and pre-application advice on proposals is always encouraged.

Conservation Protection

The community of Chirk was resurveyed by CADW in 1998 and 99 buildings are now listed. Within Chirk Conservation Area there are 25 Listed Buildings and structures. One building is listed Grade I, one structure is listed Grade II* and the remainder of the buildings listed Grade II. Adding to the area’s rich history are three Scheduled Ancient Monuments and two Tree Preservation Orders in or adjoining the Conservation Area, covering 34 trees. One also covers Doctors Wood to the south.
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Building Name &amp; Address, Grade and Date of Listing</th>
<th>Origins</th>
<th>Reason for Listing (and Other Points of Interest)</th>
<th>Current Use</th>
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</table>
| The Church of St Mary Grade I 1966               | 12th Century nave and chancel, with additions and alteration in the 16th - 19th Centuries | **Important survival of early fabric in a church which largely retains its medieval character, its fine carved late - medieval roofs, and internal fittings including the outstanding group of 18th Century monuments & memorials.**
Served as family repository for the local Myddleton and Trevor Estates
Interior has very small chancel and reredos, possibly Norman. Now dominated by finely carved memorials to the Myddleton family. | Church |
| Lychgate to above Church Grade II, 1998          | 1923    | **A well designed lychgate. Of group value with the Church of St Mary.**
Timber framed, sandstone walls, stone slab roof. Trefoiled head. | Lychgate |
| Sundial to above Church Grade II, 1998          | 1827    | **A complete sundial in a style typical of its period, of group value with the Church.**
Tall octagonal sandstone pillar. Deeply cut roll-moulded lancet rising to a pointed arch. | Sundial |
| Ward Monument in above Churchyard Grade II 1998 | c.1854  | **A good example of a mid-Victorian graveyard monument to an important local industrialist, of group value with the Church.**
Open chest, painted sandstone. Wide side cusped arch, hollow spandrels. Cast iron railings, cross-laced, fleur terminals. | Monument |
| Trevor Mausoleum in above Churchyard Grade II 1998 | c.1905 | **A fine and elaborate example of Neo-Norman design, employed at a later date**
Neo-Norman, sandstone, stone slab roof. Dressed clasped buttresses to corners.
String course, corbel table supporting stone gutter. Interior has life-size white winged angel standing on small hemisphere, tenderly carrying Mary Rosamund aged five, Baron Trevor's child. | Mausoleum |
| The Mount Church Street Grade II 1966           | 1753    | **A handsome Georgian Townhouse, vital to the south visual enclosure of the street.**
| Hand Hotel Church Street Grade II, 1976         | Mid 18th Century | **A fine example of a 18th Century hostelry with contemporary fenestration.**
Flemish bond red brick, stone plinth and sill bands, slate roof. Three storey. Central Tuscan portico entrance. 12 pane sash windows. Cast iron bracket to sign. | Hotel |
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<th>Building Name &amp; Address, Grade and Date of Listing</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1-7 Hand Terrace Holyhead Road, individually listed as Grade II, 1998</td>
<td>c1820 - 1825</td>
<td>A good example of estate cottages retaining original detailing, built with an apt sense of scale and forming a picturesque composition, carefully fitting into the existing fabric at Chirk. Terrace of 7 estate workers cottages, brick, roughcast, slate roofs. 1 storey and attic. 3 forward wings contain cottages 1, 4 and 7. Continuous slated open veranda. Gothic pointed arched boarded doors with window style to match.</td>
<td>Dwelling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chirk Furniture &amp; Carpet Centre and Dwelling Holyhead Road, Grade II, 1973</td>
<td>1843 - 4</td>
<td>A carefully designed elementary school, and interpreting demonstration of A W N Pugin’s ability to achieve a fine architectural solution to even the smallest commission; the careful ability of plan and the aptness of style to function stand out as Puginian principles. The 1905 extension to the north respects the scale and detail of the original work. Former National Girls School. Altered and extended. Neo Elizabethan. Sandstone, slate roof. Stone mullion windows, some with transoms. Pronounced kneelers to gables, one with bellcote.</td>
<td>Shop/dwelling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chirk Town Council Offices Holyhead Road, Grade II, 1998</td>
<td>1902</td>
<td>A well detailed building in its original condition, an excellent example of the provision of fine public buildings in small towns in the Edwardian period. Jacobean revival style. Sandstone, red tiled roof. Central two-storey porch with raised Tuscan columns and balustrade. Shield in strapwork cartouche. 2 storey projecting mullioned and transited stone bay windows. Double panelled doors, fanlight.</td>
<td>Offices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North and south gatepiers to above Offices Each listed at Grade II, 1998</td>
<td>1902</td>
<td>Part of the design of the Council Offices Gatepiers contemporary to original design. Sandstone blocks, each course alternating in size and rising to cornice, pedestal, ball finial. Missing iron gates.</td>
<td>Gatepiers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>War Memorial Station Avenue, Grade II*, 1998</td>
<td>1919 - 20</td>
<td>A remarkable war memorial by a pre-eminent British sculptor and designer. Eric Gill designed the memorial. A further inscription was added after 1945. Simple tapered square obelisk, Portland stone. Bas-relief hunched figure of great coated, helmeted soldier holding rifle and bayonet. Elegantly lettered inscription to men who died in battle in 1914 - 1918, and 1939 - 1945.</td>
<td>War Memorial</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Building Name &amp; Address, Grade and Date of Listing</td>
<td>Origins</td>
<td>Reason for Listing (and Other Points of Interest)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>St Michael Nursing Home Trevor Road Grade II 1998</td>
<td>1853</td>
<td>A good example of a large mid-Victorian vicarage in simple Tudor Gothic style, especially to fenestration and chimneys and expressive planning. The building became a nursing home in 1983 after the construction of a new smaller vicarage next door. Yellow sandstone, slate roof, steeply pitched coped gables. Tudor arch entrance porch. Mullion and transom windows with heavily moulded timber frames in chamfered stone surrounds.</td>
<td>Nursing Home</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trevor House Trevor Road Grade II, 1998</td>
<td>C17</td>
<td>An important house with an interesting history. May be house known as Plas Iva, first mentioned in 1660. Slate roof, timber framing to rear that forms irregular L plan. Front elevation has four paned C19 sash windows.</td>
<td>Dwelling House</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Milestone Castle Road Grade II, 1998</td>
<td>1894</td>
<td>A milestone of interest with a late 19th Century plate in miles and furlongs. May belong to earlier series of turnpike milestones on Holyhead Road. Stone, rounded top, cast iron plate.</td>
<td>Milestone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Castle Road Grade II 1998</td>
<td>17th Century</td>
<td>A prominent urban group at the centre of Chirk. One of a row of 4, all refaced in brick in the early - mid 19th Century. Slate roof, 2 storey. C19 gabled timber framed porch on brackets. Stone cills and plinth</td>
<td>Dwelling House</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chirk Surgery, 2 Castle Road Grade II, 1998</td>
<td>17th Century</td>
<td>2 storey, with porch to match No. 1. Timber small paned windows in openings. Rear largely stone, with upper storey timber framed. Outbuildings.</td>
<td>Doctor’s Surgery</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bryn Eglwys 3 Castle Road Grade II, 1998</td>
<td>17th Century</td>
<td>As above, with three storeys. Small paned iron windows to attic.</td>
<td>Dwelling House</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bryn Coed Castle Road Grade II 1998</td>
<td>1912</td>
<td>A fine example of the late 19th and early 20th century Restoration Revival style Central bay altered in 1916, service end added later in a matching style. Ruabon purple red brick, slate roof, timber dentilled eaves cornice. 2 storey. Main wings have 12 paned sash windows. Recessed central bay has single storey entrance with central door in limestone frame.</td>
<td>Dwelling House</td>
</tr>
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SUMMARY OF SPECIAL CHARACTER

The **special character** of the Conservation Area draws on its Georgian, Victorian and Edwardian building styles to create its distinctive character. The relationship between building and landscaping is also very important, seen particularly in the wider street scene, larger communal areas and smaller curtilage spaces.

The **medieval grid iron street pattern** creates linear roads, which strongly interrelate with trees in the townscape. Also important is the strong collection of marker buildings that define road junctions.

**Building materials** are also important, with yellow sandstone principally used in larger buildings designed for the community such as the Church, Council Offices and the former National Girls School, and local warm red brick used for private residences. Some buildings have been rendered and painted white. Much of the brickwork is constructed in the Flemish bond style. Later buildings are constructed in Ruabon brick, either red or purple. Decoration to buildings is generally minimal. Instead the features of the façade relate principally to window and doors styles, patterns and their location in the façade. Roofs are generally of slate, although some small, red clay tiles exist. Traditional rainwater goods are of cast iron, but properties constructed before the early 19th Century may have some of lead. Hoppers of this period are generally fairly decorative, and the date inscribed.

**Plan form** is principally in the form of terraces or large detached properties which can be seen to some extent in each sub area. This creates a fairly regular spatial pattern in the townscape, and the rhythm is punctuated by strongly designed buildings, or building features, such as porches, bay windows and gable detailing. Properties are largely two storey, although some three storey exist. Two storey properties are sometimes as similar in scale as three storey buildings.

**Building details** are significant. Vertical sliding sash windows in white painted timber, and panelled timber doors with a fanlight is common to Georgian, Victorian and Edwardian architecture. Vernacular buildings tend to have multi paneled, side hung, cast iron windows and boarded tongue and groove doors. Also important are modestly scaled open gabled porches, typically no larger than the door head itself.

**Boundary detailing** is an issue where boundary walls exist, but a significant number of buildings, both residential and commercial, directly face the street. They enclose the street by massing and height, and are enhanced by trees or boundary walls.
The landscaping elements are very important to the character of the Conservation Area. There is a significant amount of limes, some poplars and horse chestnuts. Tree avenues are very distinctive to Chirk and soften the linear street pattern, adding diversity to the streetscape.

The public realm could be enhanced. Numerous and substantial highway signage is a particular problem, particularly at road junctions, due to the necessity of bilingual signage and highway standards. Poor quality paving undertaken by the previous local authority has failed to take account of buildings or the wider streetscape, and the scale of street lighting does not sit comfortably within the street. The latter is a legacy from the A5, before the by-pass was built in the mid 1980’s. The trees in Church Street are horse chestnuts which are not indigenous to the area, and their impact has been compromised by poor tree management in the past. However, since local government re-organisation in 1996, Wrexham County Borough Council has endeavoured to enhance the public realm in Conservation Areas when funds have become available. In 2001, due to funding under the WDA’s Small Towns and Villages Initiative (STVI), Church Street will be enhanced by using more appropriate paving materials and creating a better treescape.

Little new development has taken place in the Conservation Area, but inappropriate materials have weakened design where it has occurred.

Despite the wealth of mining and quarrying that has taken place in Chirk and the Ceiriog Valley, it does not have the historic, neglected and sometimes grimy industrial character that has occurred in other areas of Wrexham Borough. It is also quite distinct from the flat plains of the Maelor in relation to topography, farming practices and ancient manorial systems. The essence of the character is principally of a Welsh, rural estate town, important as a border town to Wales from England and from the rural Welsh hinterland to urban Wrexham.
The Conservation Area is extensive in size, which has resulted in a lot of diversity in the character of the area. However, a number of streets are homogeneous with one another and as a result, create their own distinctive character. Overall, this distinctiveness enriches the character of the Conservation Area.

Five sub areas have been defined. These are:

Sub-Area 1
Holyhead Road North

Sub-Area 2
Holyhead Road South

Sub-Area 3
Station Avenue

Sub-Area 4
Church Street

Sub-Area 5
Castle Road and Trevor Road.
Sub-Area 1: Holyhead Road North

Important Features:

- linear development pattern on the eastern side of the road;
- large, architecturally cohesive and visually integrated buildings;
- similar scale and massing;
- scale and massing appropriate to past and current uses;
- dominant building material of yellow Cefn sandstone;
- strong hierarchy of space, diminishing in size from the extensive public open space to the west of the road, to large and substantial curtilage plots to smaller building plots from north to south;
- focal point created by open space;
- open space and development creates a pleasing composition of density and openness; and
- trees and vegetation largely confined to curtilages.

This sub area is a linear pattern of development where the character and hierarchy of space is a key feature. Building mass and frontage detailing in this area is important, as it reinforces the legibility of the sub-area.

The Conservation Area is clearly defined to the north by the punctuation of grand civic architecture in the form of Chirk Town Council Offices, set close to the road. This building, built in yellow sandstone to a Jacobean revival style, is particularly well detailed and has suffered little change. The symmetry to the front elevation creates a sense of rhythm to the building façade, and the imposing central two storey ashlar porch with raised Tuscan columns adds to its sense of importance. Also of note are the coped gables with square finials and the substantial stone stacks over the porch and side bays. The treatment to the rear of the property has also been addressed by keeping with the frontage, with mullion and transom windows between raking buttresses to the rear hall. The hedge curtilage adds a rural dimension to the finesse of stonework and follows the street line.

Adjacent is Pugin’s glory, the former National Girls School. It is now Shannon Sales Carpet and Furniture Store. It is also of coursed, snecked sandstone with stone mullion windows. Two projecting gabled bays to the former school’s
frontage continue the rhythm to the street created by the symmetry of the Town Council Offices. The pronounced bellcote gable and ornamental chimney-stacks punctuate the skyline, providing a focal point from the south, seen particularly well from the junction of Station Road. Unfortunately, it is obscured by highway signage.

Chirk Service Station is set at an angle to the road, with Stanton House Hotel. The garage is a 1950’s single storey, flat felt-roofed building attached to a vernacular 19th Century two storey house with a Mansard slate roof. This building and the adjacent hotel were once probably both subdivided into two cottages, as illustrated in the Ordnance Survey Map of 1872 on page 3. Some visual harmony is met by the use of Cefn sandstone, the retention of the buildings' original rectangular shape, and frontage symmetry by vertically emphasised windows.

The loss of boundary walls is a problem, as edges become less defined between street and private space, which is not appropriate in this area. This upsets the continuity of the street line and creates an over-familiarity between street and private space. A possible sensitive reinstatement may include hinged cast iron / steel railings that could open to allow for parking or partial vegetation. Any existing cobbles that lie underneath the tarmac could be reintroduced also. These matters could easily be rectified; some possibly with the assistance of grant aid.

Many of the buildings in Holyhead Road are located in substantial curtilages with possible scope to develop to the front and side of the property. Great care is needed, as it may disrupt the curtilage space and building dimensions to properties here that are so characteristic of this sub-area.

There is scope to extend some properties to the rear. However, due to their visibility from Colliery Road, a sensitive design would be appropriate.
Sub-Area 2: Holyhead Road South

Important Features:

- linear development pattern;
- intimacy, created by development proximity to road, density of development, plot size, modest scale and massing, low roof lines, and the introduction of small front gardens;
- diverse, yet complementary historic architectural styles, principally Picturesque and Edwardian;
- the Hand Terrace, which provides a focal point; and
- vegetation to building curtilages and avenues of trees to public areas.

The character of this sub-area is linear in pattern, yet more intimate than Holyhead Road north. Buildings are still two storey, but set closer to the road, with a fairly uniform building line to a modest scale and massing. Low rooflines of slate and the introduction of small front gardens complement this. Space between buildings is greatly diminished and the density of development increased.

On the north side of the Colliery Road junction is a pair of semi detached houses. They were likely to have been built at the same time but different window design has created an Edwardian and Victorian appearance respectively. Originally, the windows were cast iron and multi paned, and these should be reinstated where appropriate. Small front gardens soften their setting. Originally they were cottages, but today they form solicitor’s offices (identified by an attractive brass plaque to the door) and a former post office. Semi-octagonal bay windows enhance a townscape rhythm established by the buildings in Holyhead Road north. Lean-to open porches create a similar townscape pattern with verandas to Hand Terrace to its south.
Hand Terrace is a white painted, roughcast building of 7 estate workers cottages, built to give the appearance of almshouses. It has three forward wings and recessed entrances under a continuous slated open veranda. Overall, the façades are simple, with the character and appearance largely determined by the style of the windows and doors. This has been done to beautiful effect by Gothic pointed style in heavily moulded frames. A variety of flora and fauna subdivide the terraced gardens. Some alterations undermine the strong character of the terrace, but they could be addressed with grant aid.

The British Legion, a former school, mirrors the style, massing and scale of the buildings to Holyhead Road north and is built of Cefn sandstone with a strong civic design. The space within the curtilage allows for a view of the car park to the rear, with modern housing beyond. Sensitive natural screening may enhance this view.

The recreation field has a number of trees of varying heights and types on its perimeter and was given to the parish of Chirk in 1912 by Lord Harold de Walden. The gates are particularly eye-catching, providing an excellent visual illustration of Chirk’s history, such as the dragon, hand, colliery, dog, and castle. Unfortunately, the black-painted wrought iron gates are suffering the first signs of corrosion. They sit well within a finely landscaped area, enhanced by semi concentric steps flanked by buff sandstone pillars.