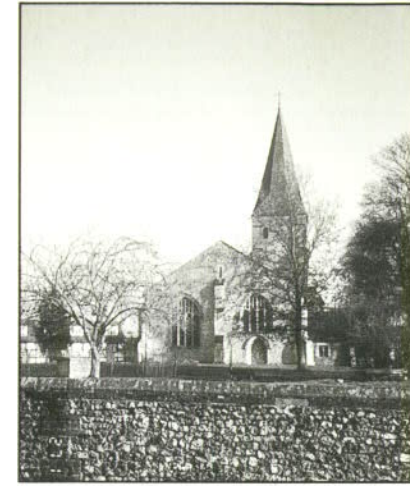


Conservation Area



ALTON



Introduction & Brief History

Alton Conservation Area was designated in 1970 and extended in 1982.

Alton lies on the earliest main road from Winchester to London and was the focal point of roads leading from Basingstoke, Reading and Odiham to the south-east coastal ports.

The trading activity along the road created farmsteads. Nearby at Holybourne is the substantial Roman settlement of Neatham. Neatham market is recorded in the Domesday Book in 1086. It is believed that Neatham was situated at the junction of the Winchester to London and Silchester to Chichester Roman Roads.

The Winchester to London road crossed the River Wey at a point known as the George Bridge (very close to Bakers Alley). In the car park behind the Banks in the High Street, was a large pond, part of "Cut Pound."

The Church of St Lawrence was built during the Norman period on high ground overlooking the town. It was remodelled in the 13th century.

Alton's growth as a wealthy trading town is indicated in 1295 when the town was represented in Parliament by two Burgesses. By the middle of the thirteenth century the market had moved to its present site; there was a fair charter in the fourteenth century followed by the Guildhall in the fifteenth century.

Alton's trade was built on cloth, tanning and brewing and by the sixteenth century the cloth industry was firmly established.

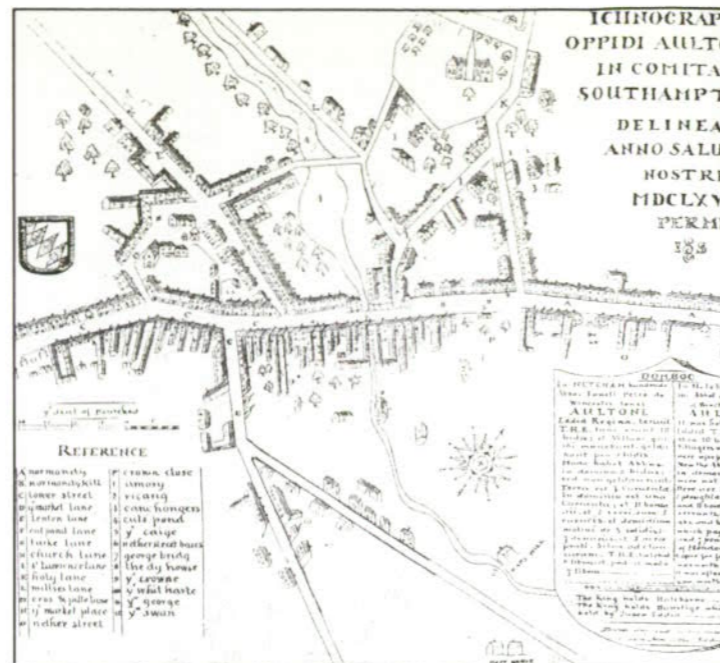
The scale of the industry was large e.g. a single clothier once occupied all the buildings in Market Street and Amery Street. In the High Street too many of the burgage plots were occupied by clothiers. Workshops filled the long narrow plots.



Maps of the town in 1666, 1842 and 1907 show how little the basic street pattern of the town has changed, particularly within the Conservation Area boundary. However only a few of these long burgage plots survive, mainly on the north side of Crown Hill by the Crown Hotel.

The seventeenth century map of Alton shows the current alignment of Loes Alley and Cross and Pillory Lane at a time when these approached a much larger market square. Documents indicate these to be early medieval streets. By 1288 the market was flourishing and included most of Market Street.

The map also indicated the extent of merchants houses on the High Street, Market Street and Normandy Hill. Some evidence of these buildings still survive and more is being discovered as houses are restored.



Extract from Victorian copy of mid 17th century map of Alton (Courtesy of the H.C.C. Records Office, Winchester)

The medieval street pattern can still be seen. Tracks leading to surrounding fields were a feature of the town's plan. All these survive on their original routes except one - the track leading from the end of Tanhouse Lane westwards. The "enclosure" of Amery Farm and the formation of the Flood Meadows curtailed the use of this track.

The medieval form of the town was compact and growth was limited (see 17th century map and the tithe map 1842*). The Conservation Area boundary generally defines the later medieval part of the town.

Expansion of the town was prevented during the 19th century due to farming practice. The hopfields were critical because brewing was important to the town's economy. Businessmen were also part time farmers and retained many enclosures.

These large farms consequently came close into the town. The field enclosure at the end of Tanhouse Lane and into Flood Meadows (Tithe No 213, 1842 Map) is the only example to survive.

During the late 18th Century and early 19th Century many of the timber framed building of the town (built mainly by clothiers) were refaced or encased in stucco, brick or mathematical tiles. In some cases they were simply replaced on the same frontage. Good examples, with their core timber frame still intact, occur at:

No. 1 High Street,
16 High Street (14th century open-hall);



There are other key buildings in the town which form landmarks or provide visual interest to the street. The attractive and robustly detailed Edwardian bakery and former butchers shop on the corner of Market Square and Lensen Street, and the handsome and well proportioned *Midland Bank* (c.1700) on the corner of Cross and Pillory Lane and High Street.



The former Town Hall, *Westbrook House*, is a Grade II* Listed Building sited near the entrance to the High Street. It has a splendid Georgian facade of 3 storeys and is a focal point of this part of the High Street. Adjacent is the wrought iron archway sign signifying the entrance path to the Memorial Gardens.

The *Swan Hotel* provides a long frontage on the south side of the High Street. It is also partly clad in mathematical tiles which have been painted and has a strong fenestration pattern of early 19th century sash windows.

At the corner of Market Street and High Street are two more modern buildings. The roofline of Boots store sweeps around the west corner whilst opposite, the projecting oriel window of *No. 48 High Street* identifies the entrance to Market Street.



Alton has a fine group of banks in the provincial classical revival style of the mid-late 20's. No 36 High Street has two particularly fine door cases.

At the bottom of Vicarage Hill is an attractively detailed but simple 18th century house of rich red brick No. 5 Vicarage Hill. It provides a visual stop to views down the Hill and a pinch point entrance to Bakers Alley. The house has a true mansard roof. There are several such roofs in Alton but the detail is unusual to most of Hampshire.

New Development in the Conservation Area

New buildings, extensions and alterations to existing buildings or new uses within the Conservation Area will affect its character. Alton has a distinct character and sense of place which can be developed and reinforced.

The design of new buildings will need to be sensitive, imaginative and build upon existing form, details and materials. Historic buildings in poor condition which contribute to the character of the town will need to be restored as part of development. Those who undertake this development should do so with care.

Further advice is given in the following leaflets which are published by East Hampshire District Council as part of the Conservation Directory:

- East Hampshire's Conservation Areas.
- Caring for East Hampshire's Conservation Areas and Historic Buildings.

Further Reading and References to Alton

- Archaeology of Hampshire County Towns. M Hughes HCC (1976)
- Tithe Maps (1842 and 1666. Old County Series 1901).
- C W Hawkins - A Story of Alton (1973)
- W Curtiss - A short history and description of the Town of Alton (1896)
- G N Godwin - Civil War in Hampshire (1959)
- Alton. A Pictorial Biography. Hawkins and Brice. (1983)
- Hampshire County Treasures (1982)
- Victorian County History.

For further information contact:

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No 36 High Street

The Market Square (recently paved to echo brick) is both an important focal point and a gathering place. The Town Hall and the other historic buildings surrounding the Square create a strong intimate sense of enclosure. A careful and imaginatively designed two or three storey building to replace the old Auction Rooms in the NW corner of the square would serve to reinforce this enclosure and should provide a narrow and intriguing vista from Lady Place Car Park.

The alleys and lanes leading off the Market Square are an important feature of the Conservation Area. Leading off the Square, Cross and Pillory Lane curves its way downhill towards the High Street. A high wall on the edge of the Lane emphasises the enclosure created by buildings of both mature traditional vernacular and good modern design.

Loes Alley (part of which was once the Town Shambles) and Market Street are characterised by small scale shops of a local vernacular design and a variety of ages. These form enclosed routes to the High Street. Several buildings in Market Street are early 19th century refacings of earlier timber framed buildings. Some early Victorian shopfronts have recently been reinstated or repaired e.g. 19, 21 and 23 Market Street.

On the north side of the Conservation Area Cut Pound provides an important open space between Amery Street and Amery Hill. The ponded river is both a foil and a focus for the generally small scale red brick and rendered buildings which surround it.

An enhancement scheme for the area (1992) also led to the reinstatement of a paved surface as part of development at the old bus station site and the Community Centre.



▲ The roofscape and skyline are an important feature of the town. Trees, for example those in the surviving burgage plot gardens of the 18th century town houses on Crown Hill (Nos 1 - 10 High Street) and the variety of roofs, chimney stacks and their arrangement are significant features of views from Church Street, Crown Hill, Vicarage Hill and the Banks car park.

Trees are also important at Lady Place where the Memorial Gardens enclose the car park.

Other Buildings, Materials and Details

Throughout the town, the buildings are of a small scale, generally of two or three storeys. The plots are narrow and conform approximately to the original medieval pattern of one Rod wide. Roofscapes build up towards the main shopping frontages from the rear gardens or yards.

The materials used in Alton are mainly render or stucco, reddish orange or painted brick - these may hide timber

framing. Some local malmstone is also used. Roofs are generally clay peg tiles or slates. There are a variety of details and interesting features used.



Painted shopfronts of the early 19th century, Victorian, Edwardian or 1920's - 30's designs contribute to the character and vitality of the Conservation Area. Details such as doorcases, the remaining brick pavements, alleyways and signs contribute to the overall identity of the town and its Conservation Area.

No.1 High Street has a well proportioned 18th century facade of mathematical tiles (tiles which look like bricks) to an earlier building. ▼ The garden is a significant element in the street scene. Views into the garden from a distance along Church Street and the enclosure of the footpath to the inner ring road make this area important both locally and in the sky line. Any development in this area should ensure that future new uses for the garden of No 1 do not compromise the future economic use of this building.



The Assembly Rooms and Curtis Museum form three sides of a square in Crown Hill. In the centre of the square is the green which surrounds the war memorial. The buildings are overtly French style Gothic and are an important feature of the roofscape in Crown Hill; they were designed by C Barry in 1870.

8 Cross and Pillory Lane (formerly Coppid Hall, fifteenth century);

The Crown Hotel, The Baker's Arms and much of Market Street on the NE side.

55 High Street, parts of the Swan Hotel,

15 to 19 High Street; ▼



The Alton to Winchester railway, which arrived in 1860, prevented the town's expansion on the south side, but substantial growth to the town occurred during this Victorian period. New terraces and pairs of houses were constructed on the town's west side and around the station, together with houses along the Butts (see the Butts Conservation Area). In the town, shops were re-fronted and houses replaced with commercial buildings.

1867 appears to have been an important year for the town. A large school was built in Anstey Road. By 1867 the town's pavements some of flint, local stone cobbles and earth had been replaced with blue and red bricks. These covered Church Street, High Street, Market Street most of Normandy Street and several of the Alleys.

In Church Street and Loes Alley the brick pavements still survive while parts survive adjacent to buildings in the High Street, Crown Hill and beside the White Horse Inn. The brick would have been an important and visually unifying feature of the town.

In the same year Alton was to become famous for the expression "Sweet Fanny Adams". A little girl Fanny Adams was gruesomely murdered in Flood Meadows near the end of Tanhouse Lane. However British soldiers being served with tinned mutton as part of naval convenience foods declared humourously the contents should be likened to "Sweet Fanny Adams". This gradually became a euphemism for "Sweet Nothing" and it subsequently passed into common usage.

The Character of the Conservation Area

There are five key factors which generally determine the character of the Conservation Area:

- the surviving medieval street pattern;
- the many historic buildings of different ages and local vernacular details, generally all in their original narrow plots;
- the Market Square and buildings forming the streets and alleys leading to it;
- the focal point of the Church in the Townscape; and
- the surviving brick pavements.

The main feature of the town is the wide High Street and the narrow streets and alleys leading off it. Most of these follow the earlier medieval pattern.

Bakers Alley, Loes Alley, Cross and Pillory Lane and those alleys on the south side (some of which are through covered archways in buildings) have remained little altered since the late 17th century.

Westbrook Walk is a new pedestrian shopping mall; the route is loosely based on a narrow alley which led from the High Street to the Cattle Market and then on to the Market Square. The mall provides shops of traditional design and detail; spatially it echoes the other lanes.



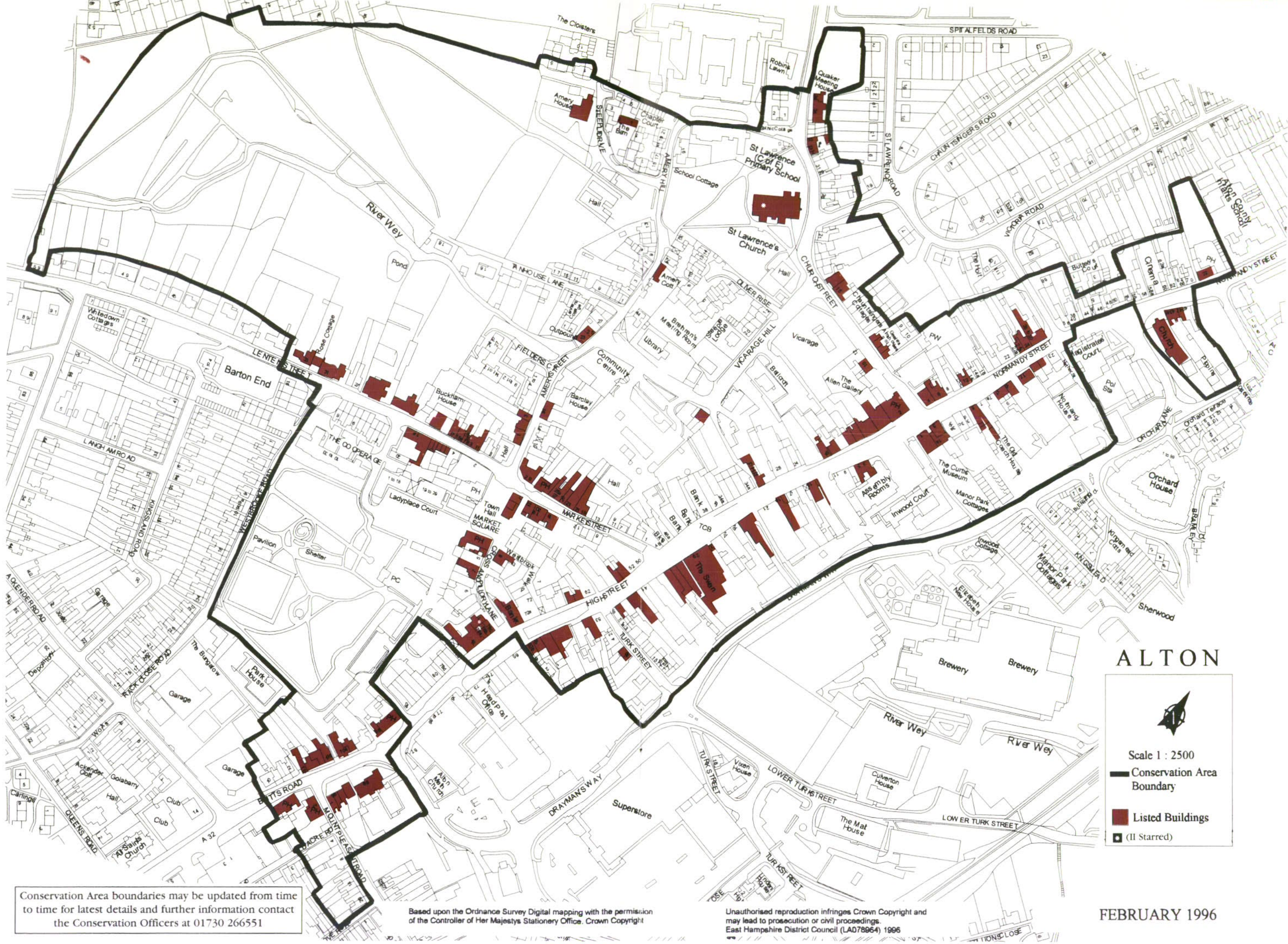
There are several key spaces in the town. St Lawrence Church is a focal point for views both from the church and to it. ▲

There are narrow views to the church from Church Street and from cottages in Amery Hill. These buildings also contribute to the roofscape and help create enclosure to the church.

There are important views from Vicarage Hill car park, the Church Street/High Street junction and Flood Meadows where the Church spire and Cedar trees on Vicarage Hill are key features of the skyline.



The boundary of the churchyard and its open space surrounding the church appears to be almost entirely unaltered since the middle of the seventeenth century. The cottages opposite the chancel of the Church create an intimate space in Church Street.



ALTON



Scale 1 : 2500

— Conservation Area Boundary

■ Listed Buildings

■ (II Starred)

Conservation Area boundaries may be updated from time to time for latest details and further information contact the Conservation Officers at 01730 266551

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