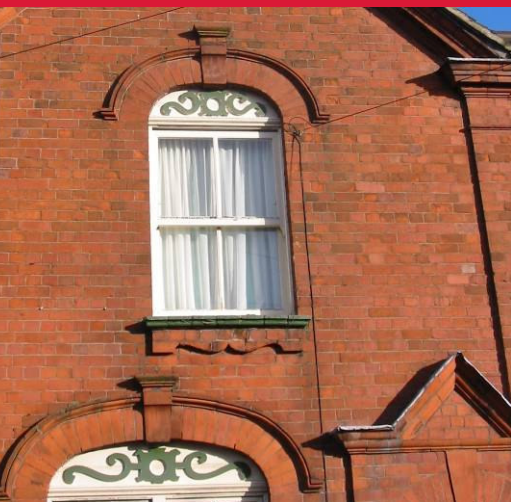




Hitchman Street Conservation Area Appraisal

February 2008



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1. Appraisal Context

1.1 This Character Appraisal has been prepared for Hitchman Street Conservation Area, whose original boundaries were designated in July 1990, Stoke on Trent's eighteenth Conservation Area.

1.2 Conservation Areas are designated by Local Authorities under fulfilment of duties imposed by Section 69 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. This defines Conservation Areas as:

“areas of special architectural or historic interest the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance”

Special interest may originate from a variety of sources, while character is defined in a holistic sense rather than deriving from the merits of any single building.

1.3 Production of Character Appraisals is required under the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister's *Best Value* initiative (BVPI 219b), though best practice has long required their preparation. The objective of an Appraisal is to analyse and define in depth the special interest and traits which make up the *character* of a Conservation Area, to identify the pressures and challenges facing its survival and to recommend courses of action which will aid in achieving sensitive management, preservation and enhancement (the latter points fulfilling duties imposed by Section 71 of the 1990 Act).

1.4 Conservation Area status is a material consideration in the evaluation of planning applications. Here Section 72 of the 1990 Act requires Local Planning Authorities to pay special attention to the desirability of achieving preservation or enhancement through their decision making. Appraisals represent an important resource in fulfilling such duties while Planning Policy Guidance 15, *Planning and the Historic Environment*, provides a principal point of guidance. Where new development is planned Appraisals may provide a useful design resource to those proposing it.

1.5 Conservation Area status curtails certain 'permitted' householder development rights requiring planning permission to be sought in these areas (outlined in the General Permitted Development Order 1995). Local Authorities have further powers to restrict permitted developments to the forward elevations of properties that front the highway through the introduction of Article 4(2) designations, while approval of the Secretary of State is required for more wide ranging 4(1) designations.

1.6 English Heritage recommends production of distinct Management Strategy documents for each Conservation Area. The basis of these documents is the analysis contained within and recommendations arising from each Appraisal. These documents will provide a boost in efficiency while helping ensure fulfilment of statutory duties. In the context of the new Local Development Framework (LDF) these Management Strategy documents may eventually be adopted as Supplementary Planning Documents.

1.7 Work on the new LDF is currently proceeding. In the interim, policies included within the City Plan 2001 continue in force unless superseded by those arising from the Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Structure Plan 1996-2011 or Regional Planning

Guidance. The City Plan reiterates the Authority's commitment to fulfilling statutory duties regarding Conservation Areas and listed buildings, sets design and development standards, while introducing two non-statutory 'lists' of relevance to this Appraisal: a *Local List* (Buildings of Special Local Interest) and *Areas of Archaeological Importance*.

- 1.8 When reading or using an Appraisal it is important to note that while every effort is made to provide detailed analysis the document can never be comprehensive. Failure to mention a particular element or detail *must not* be taken to imply that it is of no importance to an appreciation of the character or appearance of the Area and thus of no relevance in consideration of planning applications.
- 1.9 This Appraisal has been produced by the Directorate of Regeneration and Heritage (Urban Design and Conservation), Stoke-on-Trent City Council. Enquiries regarding this Appraisal should be addressed to:

Principal Urban Design and Conservation Officer
01782 23 2477

Or

Senior Conservation Officer
01782 23 2154

2. The Study Area

- 2.1 “Hitchman Street” Conservation Area is a group of thirteen houses and one shop, dating from 1889. These dwellings were completed in 1890 and this is recorded by a date stone in the façade facing Victoria Road which also bears the monogram “WMB”. William Meath Baker was the absent owner of an adjacent pottery, inherited from his Uncle, William Baker. William Baker’s sister (Aunt of WMB) was called Hitchman when she married, hence the name of the Street.
- 2.2 Hitchman Street is located on the north side of City road, the main road linking Fenton and Stoke-Upon-Tent. It connects Victoria Road with Fountain Street. There are two main frontages, one to Victoria Road and the other to Hitchman Street. For simplicity, the Conservation Area will be referred to as “Hitchman Street”.
- 2.3 Hitchman Street is still residential in character. Although much of the factory in Fountain Street has now been demolished, original pottery bottle kilns survive on the site and have a strong connection to the housing.
- 2.4 The original houses were built for one distinct class, offering similar arrangements of accommodation and access. All provided accommodation for workers associated with one pottery to live in and were clearly built on a philanthropic model. Having said that, the houses are consciously designed and respond to the site. Where the apex of the site does not permit a deep floor plan, the houses become double fronted.
- 2.5 The area has suffered from economic decline since its conception. The houses fell into a state of disrepair and the Council declared the Conservation Area in 1990 in an effort to conserve them. An application for a compulsory purchase failed but successful negotiations with the then owner resulted in the buildings being refurbished. They are now in need of maintenance.

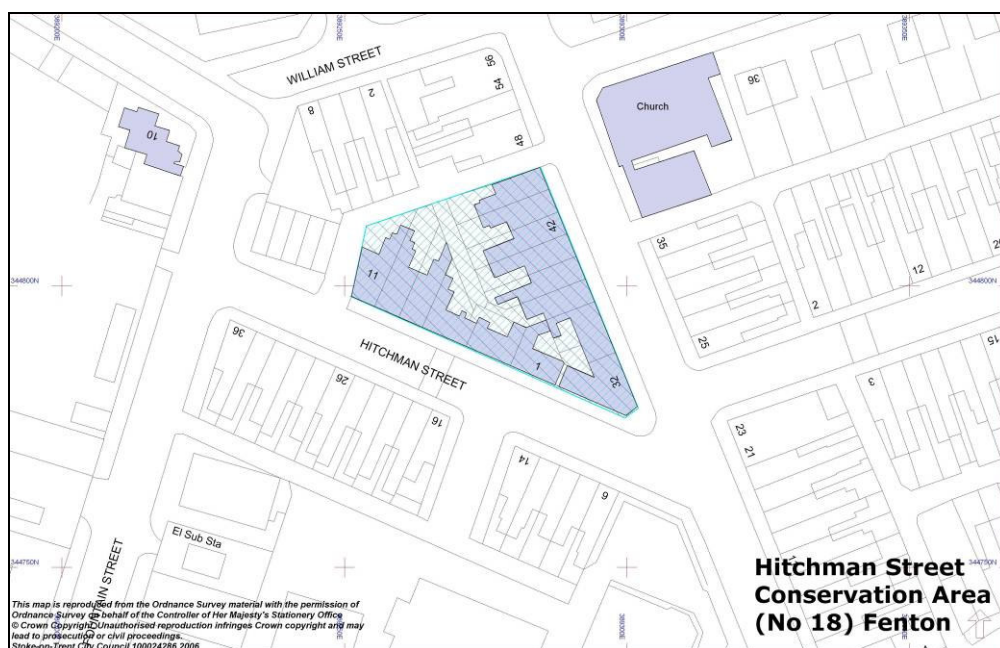


FIGURE 1: Map of Conservation Area showing locally listed buildings in grey

3. History and Archaeology

- 3.1 The town of Fenton is in the southern part of the City. Historically it consisted of two different townships of Fenton Culvert or Great Fenton and Fenton Vivian or Little Fenton. These distinct mediaeval settlements were united into one urban district in 1910.
- 3.2 The map below shows the town of Fenton recorded as Lane Delph in 1775. The road running diagonally across the map was the road from Newcastle-Under-Lyme to Uttoxeter turnpiked in 1759. Most of the land north of this road was Fenton Vivian; to the south, Fenton Culvert. Initially the main settlements were at Fenton Park and Great Fenton but by the middle of the 18th Century most settlements were clustered around the road.

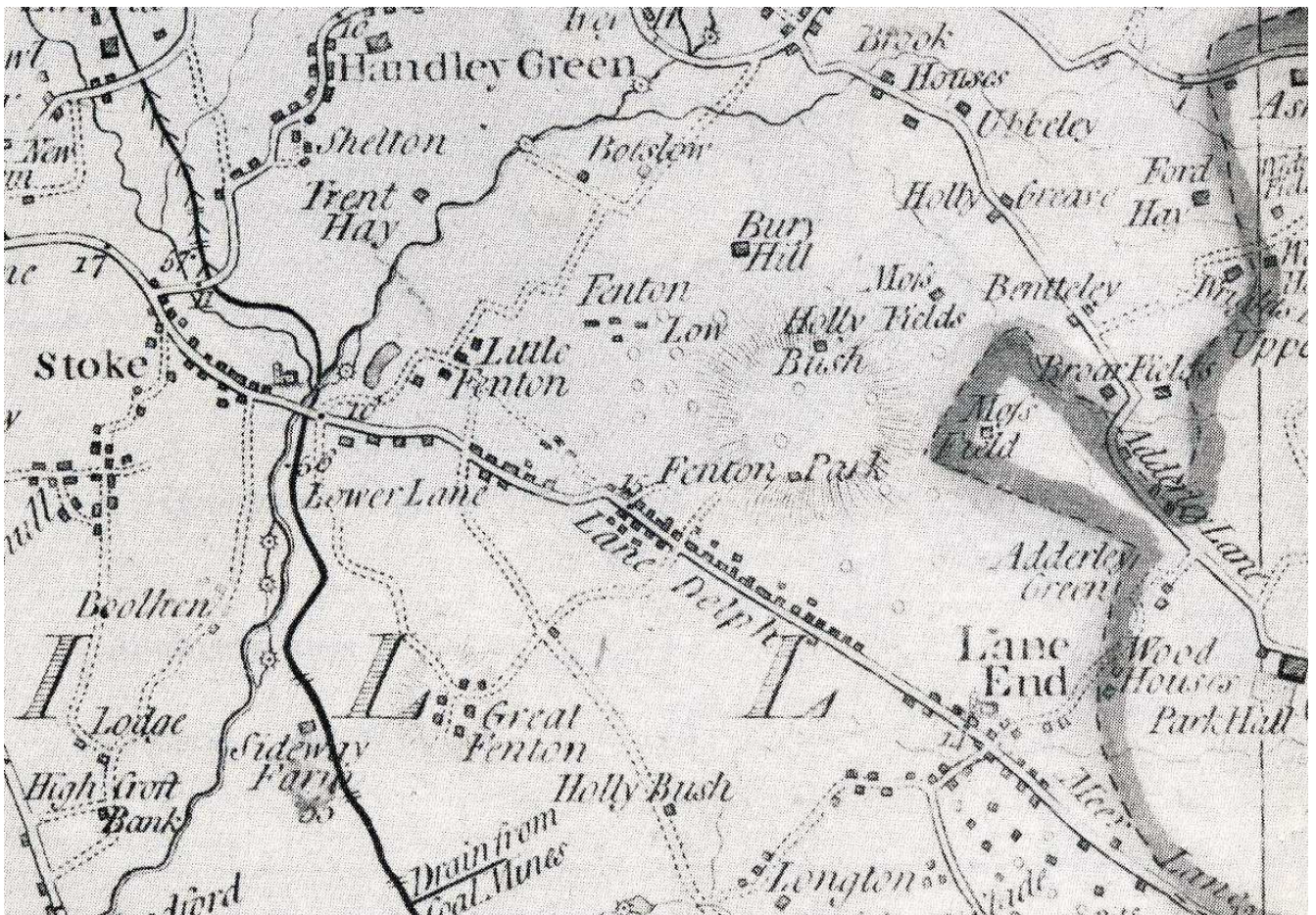
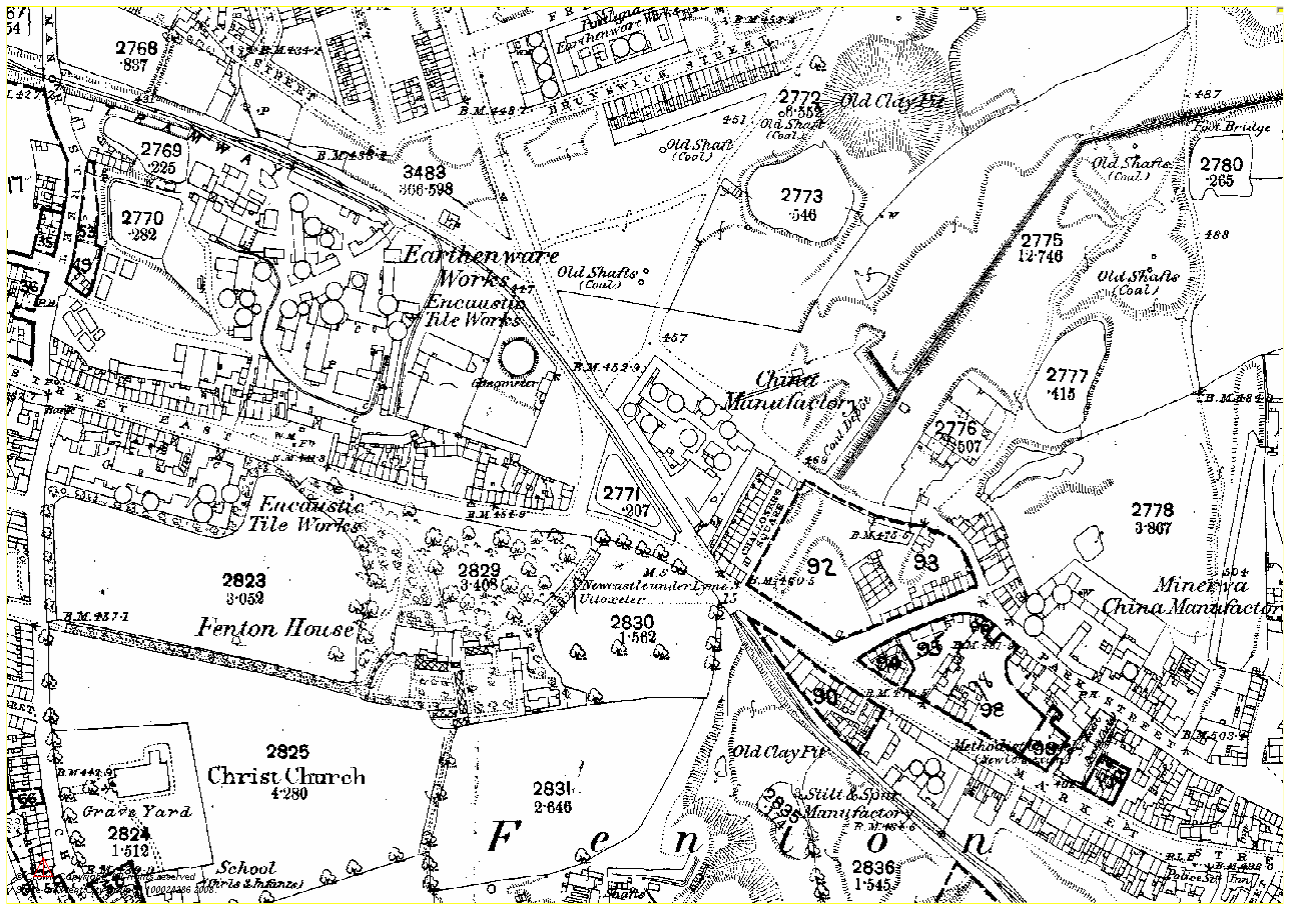


FIGURE 2: Map of Fenton, an extract from William Yates' Map of 1775



FIGURES 3 and 4: Map of Fenton dated 1880 above, Map dated 1924 below.



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- 3.3 The maps above show this road, then the High Street (east), now named the City Road. The 1880 map shows Fenton before the formation of Hitchman Street; the 1900 map shows Victoria Place, Fountain Street and Hitchman Street.
 - 3.4 In 1765 William Baker, architect of Audlem Staffordshire, bought the estate and manor of Fenton Culvert together with a pottery for his second son William Baker II. William II died at a young age leaving William III only 13 years old. His mother Sarah married Ralph Bourne, who later took his step-son into business with him and the firm traded as Bourne and Baker. Ralph Bourne subsequently took his brother into the firm and it traded as Bourne Baker and Bourne.
 - 3.5 The factory stood on the north side of the turnpiked road, a fragment of which still survives to each side of Fountain Street on the City Road. In 1806 the Trent and Mersey Canal Company built a railroad or tramway linking Stoke to Fenton. This was accessible to the north side of the factory and was used for the delivery of raw materials.
 - 3.6 By the late 1820's the Baker and Bourne families owned over 100 houses and the Roebuck Inn in Fenton. Most were situated along the north and south sides of High Street (now City Road) between Pear Tree Lane and Victoria Place.
 - 3.7 Ralph Bourne died in 1835 and shortly after the partnership was dissolved with the works being carried on by William Baker. The business flourished and by 1850 the pottery had almost 500 employees and was the biggest firm in Fenton.
 - 3.8 In 1863 William bought an estate in Gloucestershire called Hasfield Court. He died two years later. The estate and factory were then inherited by his brother, the Rev. Ralph Bourne Baker; he then married the Bishop of Meath's daughter. Their son William Meath Baker inherited in 1875 and did not take an active part in running the factories. He did however, make regular visits to Fenton where, like his Uncle, he was heavily involved with the development of the town.
 - 3.9 In the mid 1880's William Meath Baker demolished the cottages on the east side of his factory fronting the High Street (now City Road) and what later became Victoria Place. In 1885 he constructed 30 houses with ornate frontages decorated with moulded brickwork and terracotta tiles. The houses were of various sizes, some double fronted and some with passage halls but most had two storey rear wings containing a third bedroom and water closet. These are a model for the later houses in Hitchman Street.
 - 3.10 The area at the front of the new houses at the junction of Victoria Street and the High Street is referred to as either Victoria Square (or Market Square on the 1900 OS map) and was formed by filling in a large pool in 1891. Most of the factory has now been demolished. A drinking fountain near the entrance to the Works was provided by William Baker for the people of Fenton. It later gave its name to the road constructed through the factory in 1900 called Fountain Street. Fenton Urban District Council contributed to the cost of the road and later in 1909, built a fire station at the end of Fountain Street, locally listed and shown on the map of the Conservation Area at fig.1.
 - 3.11 The plots on the south side of Hitchman Street were sold to local builders who constructed 16 terraced houses in a much plainer style, typical of terrace development elsewhere in the City.

4. Spatial Analysis and Appraisal of Views

4.1 Form

- 4.1.1 The layout of Hitchman Street is unlike the speculative housing which surrounds it. Although the houses are built for the same purpose – to provide housing for factory employees, the development is carefully designed to provide a focal point and contribute to the commercial frontages along Victoria Street. The houses are more decorated and have larger plot sizes than those built speculatively. They also have internal water closets rather than external “privies”.



FIGURE 5: Victoria Place c.1970 showing original windows and doors common to both Baker developments and also seen at Hitchman Street.

- 4.1.2 The photograph above shows housing built by the same employer only a few metres from Hitchman Street. It shares many features and has a strong visual connection with the later houses at Hitchman Street. In this way both developments achieve two things. Firstly, they promote Fenton as a place with a strong sense of identity and secondly they promote the Baker family and factory with a strong visual statement.
- 4.1.3 Stoke on Trent does not have many terraces that aspire to making a contribution to the civic identity of a place and very few examples use repeated small and modest

elements to make a grander whole. It is common for the London terraced house to be manipulated and replicated to give the impression that the terrace as a whole is perceived to be something grander, but not here.

4.1.4 Both developments share prominent Flemish gables which act as landmarks and enforce the sense of common identity.

4.2 Views



FIGURE 6: *View of the shop on the corner of Hitchman Street and Victoria Road. Note the gable which echoes that in Victoria Place.*

4.2.1 Views of quality out of the Area are limited:

- The area is now dominated by traffic flows and the roundabout at Victoria Place. A large volume of traffic uses Victoria Road as a main access road to the City Centre. Views to the south and west are particularly poor. The views to the east and north still have established streets and although these are eroded, they do provide a strong visual context for the houses.
- Shops along the east side of Victoria Road do have some fine details and the shop opposite the Flemish gable in Hitchman Street is higher and has more decorative detail than the housing immediately adjacent.



FIGURE 7: Shop opposite Hitchman Street on Victoria Road also with decorative column and panelled joinery.

FIGURE 8: Shop opposite Hitchman Street with decorative details not repeated in adjacent housing.



4.2.2 Views within the Area are simply those of the rear wings of the houses interestingly the church door opposite the alleyway to Victoria Road is centred on it. Note the height difference between the terrace within the Conservation Area on the right to those terraced houses to the left.



Figure 9: *Alley way to side of conservation area.*

Figure 10: *View of Factory Bottle ovens – a fragment of the surviving Baker factory – now owned by James Kent.*



4.3 Open Spaces

4.3.1 There are no open spaces within the Conservation Area. The boundary is so tightly drawn it does not include the alleyway above.

5. Built Form

5.1 Style

5.1.1 The houses are almost a built exemplar of a brick-maker's copy book. There is a great deal of moulded brick ornament and variety of style – it is a modest example of Queen Anne Revival Style popular in the late 19th century. The arrangement is much less free than the adjacent development at Victoria Place, more of a unified rhythm, symmetrical around the scrolled Flemish gable of the shop.

5.1.2 The most striking features of the terrace are the repeated gables, decorated with moulded brick panels, finials and other ornament.

5.1.3 The chimneys are of a similar height giving the buildings a much grander scale than the more prosaic terraces opposite. The terrace shares detail with Victoria Place and the central shop seems to have escaped the refurbishment and retained original window details.



FIGURE 11: *Strong silhouette of roof-scape is an important characteristic of the Conservation Area*

5.2 Architectural Character, Materials, Colours and Textures

5.21 Character

- 5.21.1 The design of all of the houses is broadly the same. The Conservation Area contains two terraces of houses sharing the same repeated details. The details have not been eroded over time because the properties have always been rented to the occupants from a single landlord. The last decoration of the exterior enhances this sense of common ownership and all houses are painted in the same way.
- 5.21.2 The character of the Conservation Area is therefore clearly institutional. The houses are grouped together to produce an architecture that is greater than the sum of its parts. The houses are an advert for the factory and to a greater extent for Fenton itself. The owner is creating an image and identity for the town, struggling with the competing interests of Stoke and Longton.
- 5.21.3 There is however a striking difference in the colour of the brickwork. The terrace to Hitchman Street is a strong orangey red; those houses to Victoria Road are darker. I am of the opinion that the difference is simply dirt. The brick colour is not common in the area which strengthens the impression that these buildings were designed and commissioned by people not local to the area; their character is therefore not local in either appearance or aspiration.

5.22 Plan, Form and Massing

- 5.22.1 The plan of development responded to the layout of the roads and to promote a public image of Fenton. The form of the terraces and the massing of them is to provide a more imposing front than would be normally expected of worker's housing. The addition of huge gables and combination of housing types gives the impression of three storeys rather than two. The façade is grander and has a more impressive scale although the size differs little from the later housing opposite.
- 5.22.2 The layout of the terraces is in the shape of an arrow head and is part of a greater urban design proposal for the insertion of a new road at Fountain Street. It is unclear why the terrace at Hitchman street is shorter than the street and if the creation of a small "place" in front of the fire station was intentional.
- 5.22.3 The development is very limited. Looking at the composition of housing and factory on the 1924 map, it is clear that the size of the factory is much reduced. It is odd that the south side of Hitchman Street was sold for speculative housing unless the money raised partially paid for the development on the north side.
- 5.22.4 The fire station shares details with the housing and adds to the quality of the views of the Conservation Area. However, the shortness of the terrace has given opportunity for infill garages at the end of the street at the junction with Fountain Street. These are not attractive and do not enhance the Conservation Area.

5.22.5 The plan and form of the houses is interesting. The narrower plots have houses of the same size as the wider plots because of the varying depth of the site. This is not evident from the street and therefore the impression given, is not that the houses are the same but some are grander than others. Double fronted houses are usually reserved for the middle classes and therefore the character of the frontage becomes more gentrified than those opposite.



FIGURE 12: *Double fronted house in Hitchman Street.*

5.23 External Walls and Façade Finishes

5.23.1 Brickwork

Brickwork is the principal material for the development. There is no stone or stucco for ornament. All decoration is derived from the moulded brickwork used as cornices, aprons, cills, arches, keystones and console brackets. Dog tooth patterns enrich the gables together with flowers and leaves to the split pediments over the doors.

There is additional decoration directly below the window arches, picked out in green and white. The shop also has this decoration above its sashes, left as terracotta which must have been the original intention.

The decoration is differently treated depending on the aspect of the terrace. Houses to Victoria Road are built in a very similar way to those in Victoria Place. See fig.14. Whilst the ornament is simpler and more repetitive, similar features are used. Two

doors are put together to give a more impressive entrance at a larger scale. The gables are larger on Victoria Road than Hitchman Street and have similar detailing using key stones as support for pilasters. This freedom of expression and wit make the development consciously “designed” and further study should be made regarding the designer.



FIGURE 13: *Shop window with decorative terracotta panels below arch.*



FIGURE 14: *Larger scale elevations to Victoria Road resembling those at Victoria Place*

5.23.2 Roofs

- Material

All roofs are as original and are covered by blue clay tiles. There are no decorated or perforated ridge tiles. The gables are punctuated by finials.

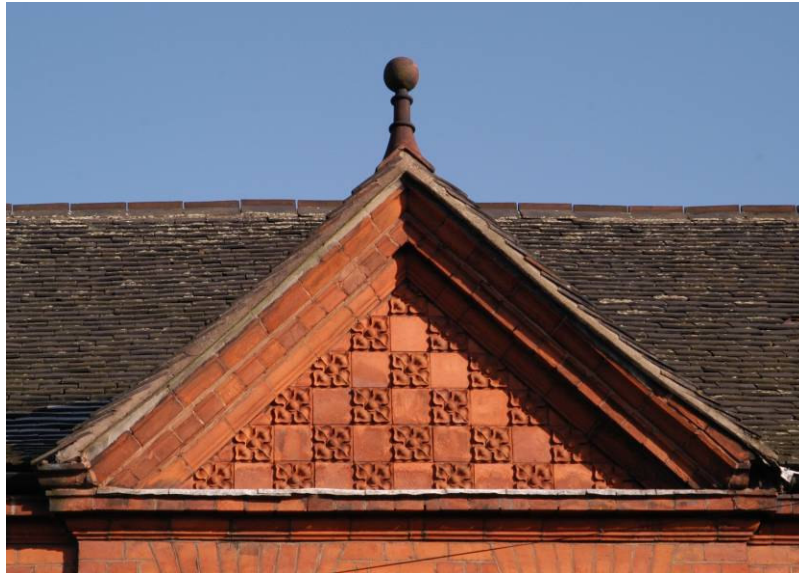


FIGURE 15: *Showing a gable to Hitchman Street; although decorated, it is more modest than the gables to the Victoria Road elevation above*

- Pitch and Type

The steeply pitched roofs add scale and grandeur to the small terraces in contrast to their immediate neighbours.

5.23.3 Windows

- Type and Fenestration

All the windows across the terraces appear to have been replaced with modern timber sash windows to a uniform design. They are not poor copies but they do lack any sense of individual detailing and the horns are crude. The sad thing is, they are not true copies of the original fenestration and as such do not add to the architectural character of the houses. The terraces were built at a time when window design was changing; careful examination of the archive photograph of Victoria Place shows clearly why the replacement windows appear to be crude and “off the peg”. Originally the windows did not have horns at all. The glazing bars were thinner and the upper sash panes were

originally divided into four equal square panes each. This reflected the changing fashion and relative cheapness of larger panes of glass for the lower sashes. Original examples do survive in the shop at first floor level, see fig.14.



Figure 16: *Windows with moulded aprons curved arches and prominent key-stones.*

5.23.4 Doors

No original doors survive, again these have been replaced by well intentioned but badly formed copies. The panel pattern is correct but the central panel is too high and the lower panels too long – the original ones were much squarer.

There are no porches or hoods but there are brick door-cases which are either simple pilasters supporting pediments above fanlights or more elaborate examples rising above the ground floor cornice to a split pediment supporting a larger pediment and decorated panels.

Both examples use the pairing of doorways to create a greater sense of scale and importance. The doorways are further enhanced by the use of fanlights to exaggerate the height of the entrance.

The doorways to the deepest planned houses at the west end of Hitchman Street are recessed taking advantage of the available space. The doorways to the shallower double fronted houses are on the pavement edge. See fig.18.



Figures 17 and 18: *Doors to Hitchman Street both on pavement edge and recessed.*

5.23.5 Enclosure

The Conservation Area is so tightly drawn around the rear yards of the houses that it does not even include the alleyway to the north side.

The houses do not have any front gardens nor any other form of enclosure to the front.



FIGURE 19: *Garages occupy the space at the end of the street. The fire station can be seen in the background*

5.23.6 Groundscape



FIGURE 20: *Fragment of original cobbled surface*

There are fragments of historic street surfaces remaining within the Conservation Area, but they are too small to make a contribution to the special interest of it.

5.3 Listed and Unlisted Buildings of Importance

5.3.1 Buildings on the Statutory List

There are no listed buildings in the Conservation Area.

5.3.2 Buildings of Special Local Interest Listed in the Local Plan

Nos: 32-46 even Victoria Road

Nos. 1-11 odd Hitchman Street

5.4 Trees, Green Spaces, Edges and Ecology

5.4.1 There are no trees or green spaces within the Conservation Area.

5.5 Detractors and Neutral Areas – Enhancement and Development Opportunities

5.5.1 Features which detract from the character and appearance of the Area include:

- Impact of garages on border of Conservation Area – see fig.19.
- Lack of maintenance to windows and doors
- Insertion of poorly detailed windows and doors
- Tightness of boundary of Conservation Area excluding Fire Station and listed bottle ovens

5.5.2 Enhancement Opportunities include:

- Superficial brick clean of terrace on Victoria Road
- Replacement of joinery following original design
- Introduction of street trees
- New signage, front door and windows for the shop

6. Pressures and Threats

6.1 The ownership of the houses has passed from the Baker family and the houses are clearly in need of maintenance.

6.2 The housing mass is so fragmentary it is vulnerable to clearance and replacement with buildings of a more commercial nature.

7. Summary of Special Interest

Architecture Hitchman Street Conservation Area is probably the smallest Conservation Area within the City. It was declared to save some of the finest exemplars of worker's housing that we have. The vast majority of housing of this type is speculative and was not consciously "designed". The architecture here is a bold expression of the style of the time and is unusual by being so; most of the housing in Stoke is provincial and generally late in its conception.

History The Area has strong associations with the Baker family and what was the largest factory in Fenton. It directly relates to the grander architecture on the other side of the City road (Albert Square) as it was built by the same family to promote the civic aspirations of Fenton. William Meath Baker is an interesting character in his own right; a friend of Elgar's, William features in the Enigma Variations.

Character and Appearance The Area has a strong visual identity which is particularly distinctive. Together with Victoria Place, also built by the Baker family for the same purpose, these houses represent a rare example of domestic philanthropic architecture. The grand scale of the gables give the impression of three storey development and the mix of house types to provide double fronted houses ensures that this development is very different to those that surround it. The amount of surface decoration to the front facades and provision of large rear wings further demonstrate the quality of the development.



FIGURE 21: *The Fire Station in Fountain Street*

8. Recommendations and Proposals

- 8.1 It is recommended to enlarge the Conservation Area to include Victoria Place. Both developments were built for the same people by the same employer and share history together. The buildings also share common detailing. The boundary should also include the rear yard and the site of the demolished houses on City Road, the Fire Station and Listed bottle ovens on Fountain Street.
- 8.2 It is not recommended to alter the existing Article 4 (2) direction.
- 8.3 Consideration should be given to reintroducing appropriate lamp standards to the Conservation Area.
- 8.4 Provision of an information point giving detail about the area and its history might be considered. This could be incorporated into the design of a central feature were this course followed.



Figure 22: *Improvements could be made to the prominent shop signage and entrance.*



Figure 23: *Listed Bottle ovens, the surviving fragment of the Baker Factory*

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