Fradley

Character Assessment

March 2017

Contents

# 1   Introduction

1.1   This is the Fradley Character Assessment (CA). A character assessment is a document that describes the distinct appearance and feel of a settlement or an area. It communicates the key physical features and characteristics that combine to give a particular settlement or an area its local distinctiveness and unique identity.

1.2   The CA was prepared to form part of the Fradley Neighbourhood Plan. This was undertaken through spatial analysis of satellite imagery and street views photos.

1.3   The CA informs the policy relating to character areas. It should be used by those wishing to bring forward development proposals within any of the character areas identified in *Map 1 – Fradley Historic Development.*

Overview of the area

1.4   The assessment area, focused on the built up area of the parish, is about 70 hectares, located approximately 4.5 miles north-east of the City of Lichfield and one mile southwest of Alrewas.

1.5   The two main residential settlements, Fradley Village and Fradley South are connected via Bridge Farm Lane and Turnbull Road (1990's developments along them).

1.6   The character areas of Fradley Village and Fradley South are strongly linked to their historic development, from which some similarities emerge.

2 Historic Development

Map 1
Fradley
Historic Development
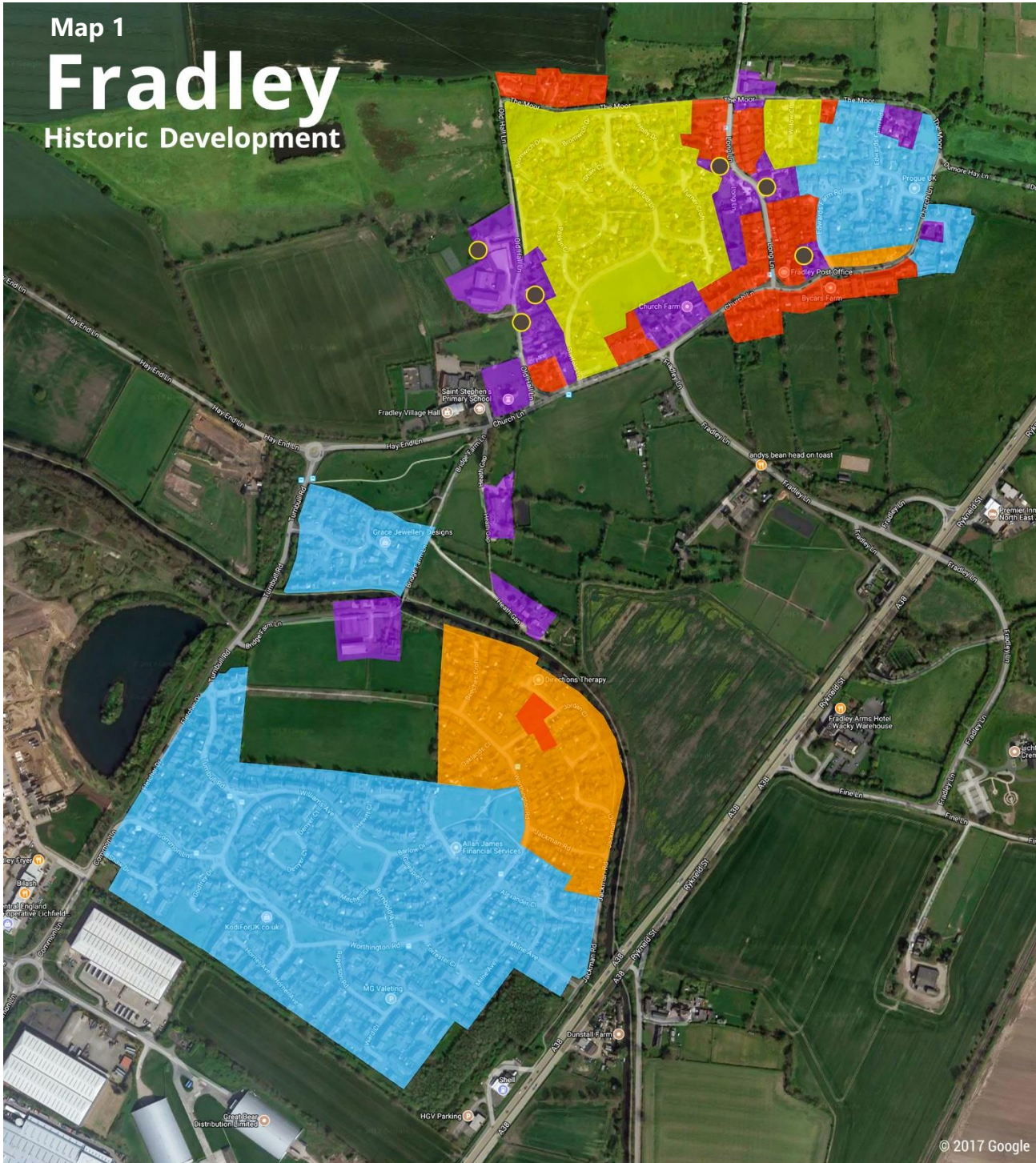
Grade II Listed Buildings
17th-18th Century

Pre 20th Century
Loose building grain,
Local vernacular building forms

Inter and Post-war housing
Semidetached villas and
Staggered terrace forms

1970-80s style link detached forms
with little reference to
traditional character or materials

1980's Village Expansion
Culs-de-sac &
detached dwellings

1990's Village Expansion
Culs-de-sac

Pre-18th Century

Fradley Old Village

2.1 The old village originally was founded in the context of the early medieval manor of Alrewas. The place name indicates a foundation during the early medieval period, as it is of Old English derivation, referring perhaps to a man name Frod or to Fodder (Old English *'fodor'*), coupled with Old English *'leah'*, referring either to a wood or to a clearing in a wood used for agriculture, the latter meaning clearly applies to Fradley, which notably occupied a compact area of fields bounded to north, west and south of Fradley Heath. The village has grown up along Long Lane, Fradley Lane and Old Hall Lane. There are still six preserved Grade II Listed Buildings along Long Lane and Old Hall Lane.

18th – 19th Centuries

2.2 Fradley was first mentioned in **1768** when an engineer called James Brindley won the contract to build the canal from Coventry, to link with the Trent and Mersey at Fradley Junction.

2.3 Dwellings built before the 20th Century with local materials emerge along Heath Gap and are scattered along Church Lane, Long Lane and Old Hall Lane in Fradley Village. **Saint Stephen's Church** was built in **1861** on the corner of Church Lane and Old Hall Lane and a Victorian schoolhouse was built beside the church in **1875** (it was demolished in **2008** to make room for modern classrooms at St. Stephen's Primary School).

20th Century - Present

Fradley Airfield

2.4 Construction on the Fradley Aerodrome (known as RAF Lichfield) started in **1939** and in August **1940** the Royal Air Force moved in, along with Hawker Hurricane, Airspeed Oxford and Avro Anson aircraft. The Spitfire arrived in 1941 and Vickers Wellington aircraft followed in 1942. Alongside RAF personnel training in the Wellingtons, there were a large number of Australians and some Canadians and Czechs. The RAF left in **1958** and the whole site was sold by the Air Ministry in 1962.

2.5 After World War II, houses were built on the airfield to house RAF personnel - 85 in total were built. In **1959** these houses were sold off to Lichfield Rural Council to house council house

tenants from around the City. Some of these residents are still living on Fradley South. Since 2000, major development has delivered industrial units as well as over 750 new homes.

Fradley South

2.6   The area saw a lot of residential development during the **1970-1980s** in the northeast of the area, with further modern development in the **1990's** with tighter urban grain and winding street in the rest. Roads on a newly built housing estate in Fradley South are named after some of the Australian airmen who lost their lives in the Second World War. Following the completion of the Stirling Centre in southwest of Fradley South in **2009**, comprising retail units, offices and food outlets, Fradley was formally re-categorised by Lichfield District Council as a 'key rural settlement'.


Fradley South - before the 1990s developments and Fradley Park

Fradley Park/Airfield Development

2.7   In **1998** major redevelopment started on the former airfield, with the construction of factories, warehouses and 750 new houses (with further development planned through the Lichfield District Local Plan). Today **Fradley Park**, a 300-acre warehousing and distribution development, covers most of the former airfield. Tenants of Fradley Park include Tesco, Faurecia, Hellman Worldwide Logistics, NTN Bearings (UK), Newell Rubbermaid, Caterpillar Logistics, Swish UK Zytek and Palletways Birmingham.

3   Fradley Village
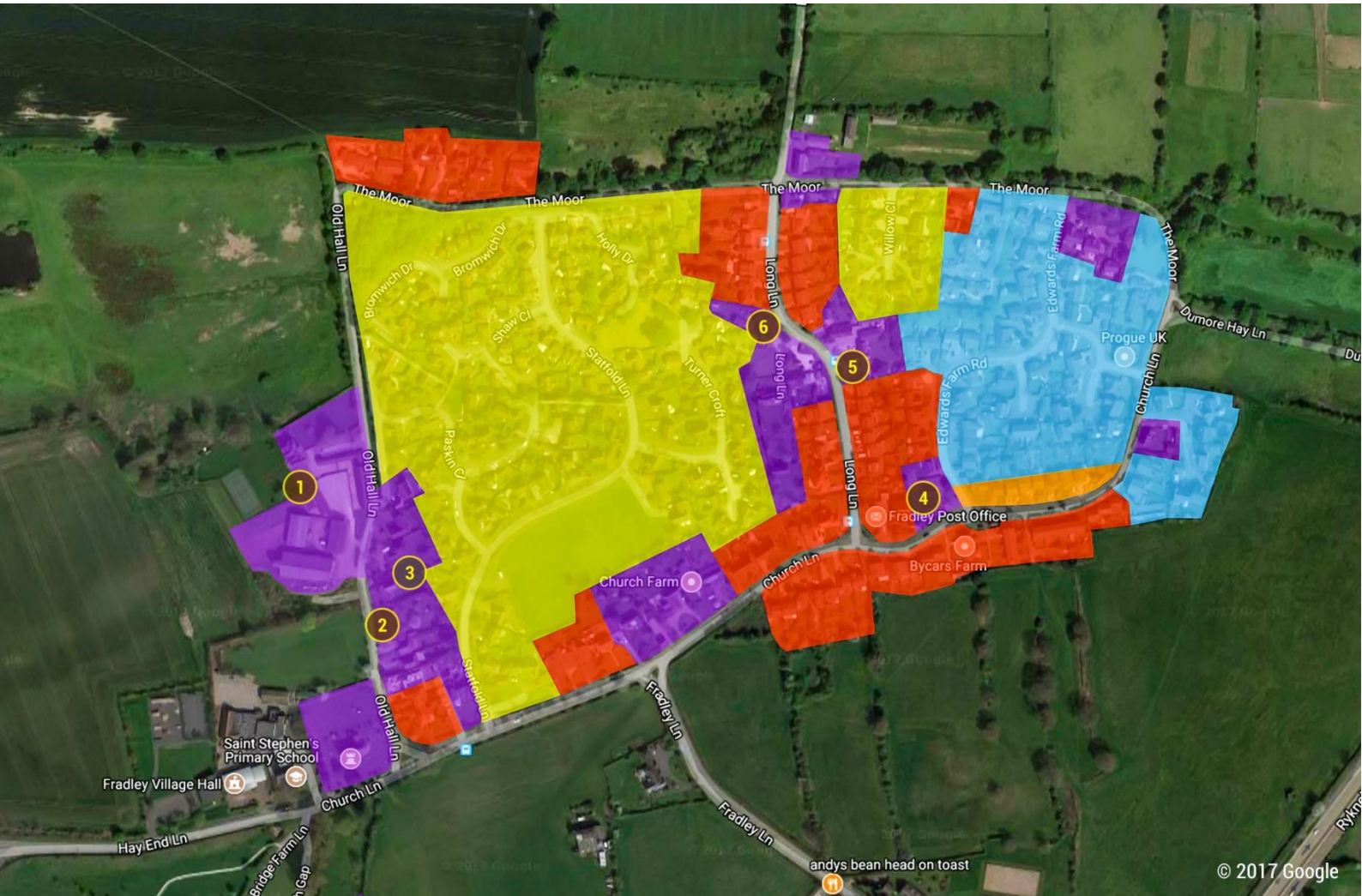
Fradley Village
Historic Development

● **Pre 20th Century**
Loose building grain,
Local vernacular building forms

● **Inter and Post-war housing**
Semidetached villas and
Staggered terrace forms

● **1970-80s style link detached forms**
with little reference to
traditional character or materials

● **1980's Village Expansion**
Culs-de-sac &
detached dwellings

● **1990's Village Expansion**
Culs-de-sac

Grade II Listed Buildings:

1 Old Hall Farmhouse
~17th century origin
on a medieval moated site

2 The Croft - timber framed farmhouse
the earliest fabric thought to date
to the 17th century.

3 Lodge Croft
18th century
farmhouse

4 Oldbrook Cottage
17th century
timber framed house

5 Agric House
17th century
cruck-framed house

6 Thatch Cottage
thatched timber-framed
17th century cottage.

Pre 20th Century

Loose building grain, varied setbacks, two storeys, built with local/similar materials, thatched cottages, façades: timber-framed, soft orange and white painted brick, boundary treatments: wood fence, hedge and brick, 45º roofs

Long Lane

Long Lane

Long Lane

Inter and Post-war housing

Semi-detached villas and staggered terrace forms, two storeys, mixed colours and textures: brindle brick and white painted brick, boundary treatments: mostly hedge and brick, varied roof angles (30º-45º)

Church Lane

Church Lane

The Moor

1980's Village Expansion

Culs-de-sac & detached dwellings, varied setbacks, two storeys, soft orange brick (Statfold Lane), brindle brick (Willow Close), boundary treatments: mostly hedge, roofs: brown and red clay tile, varied roof angles (30º- 45º)

Statfold Lane

Willow Close

1990's Village Expansion

Culs-de-sac & detached standard dwellings, varied setbacks, two storeys, soft orange brick and timber-framed façades, boundary treatments: hedge, brick or none, slate and clay tile, 45º roofs

Bycars Farm Croft

Edwards Farm Road

Statfold Lane

General character area overview

3.1   Urban fabric is compact, especially in southeast with few green pockets.

3.2   Mixed development areas (from historic buildings from 17th Century to more recent additions) have some variations between historic periods in terms of design and materials used.

3.3   Local development density (as shown in *Figure 1*):

- **Average density: 20 dwellings per hectare (dph)**
  - Higher in west (23dph) and southeast (27dph) – *recent developments 80s-90s*
  - Lower along Long Lane (14-15dph) – *Pre-20th Century and Inter and Post-war*
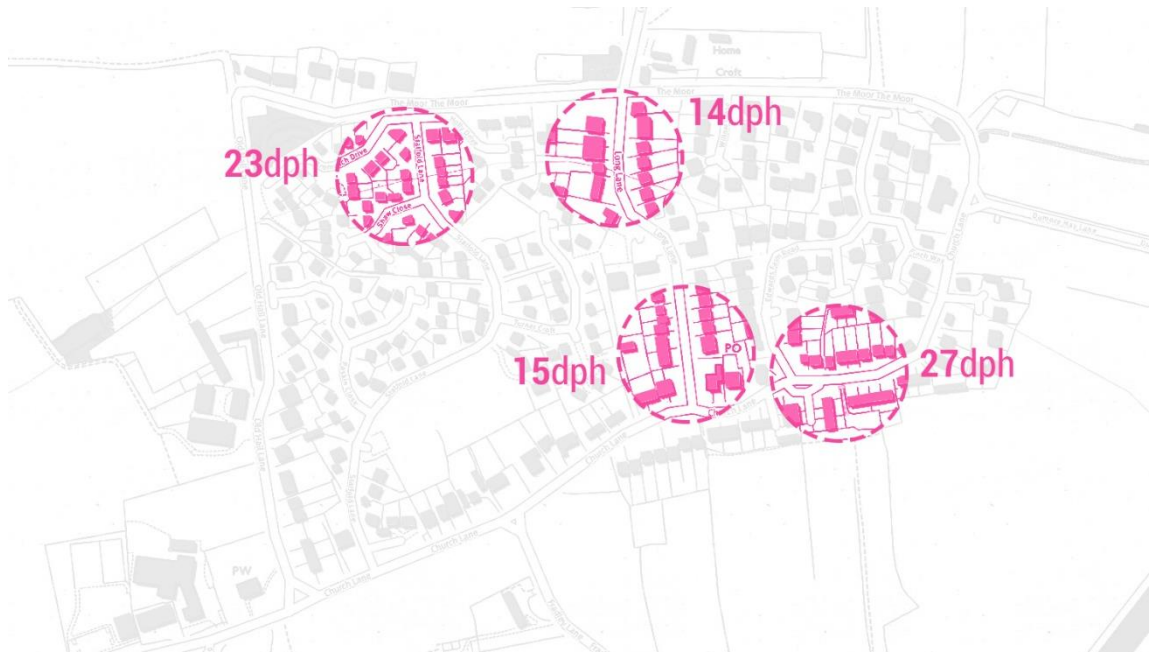
Figure 1 - Fradley Village density (Source of data: Bellway Airfield Site - Amended Design and Access Statement, *Ch 3)*

Layout

3.4   There is a significant variation in building setback from the road. Only a few buildings adjoin the back of pavements without any private space.

1. 1 to 10 metres setback;

2. It is common that dwellings have small front gardens, but there are some generous front gardens in south;

3. Wood fencing or hedges define plot boundaries;

4. Occasional verges.

Topography

3.5   The terrain is entirely flat.

Roads, street, routes

3.6   Fradley Village developed along the existing routes, lanes and tracks leading to farms, creating a scattered, linear settlement form with a low level of permeability, especially for pedestrian access and cycling between east and west. (as shown in *Figure 2*).
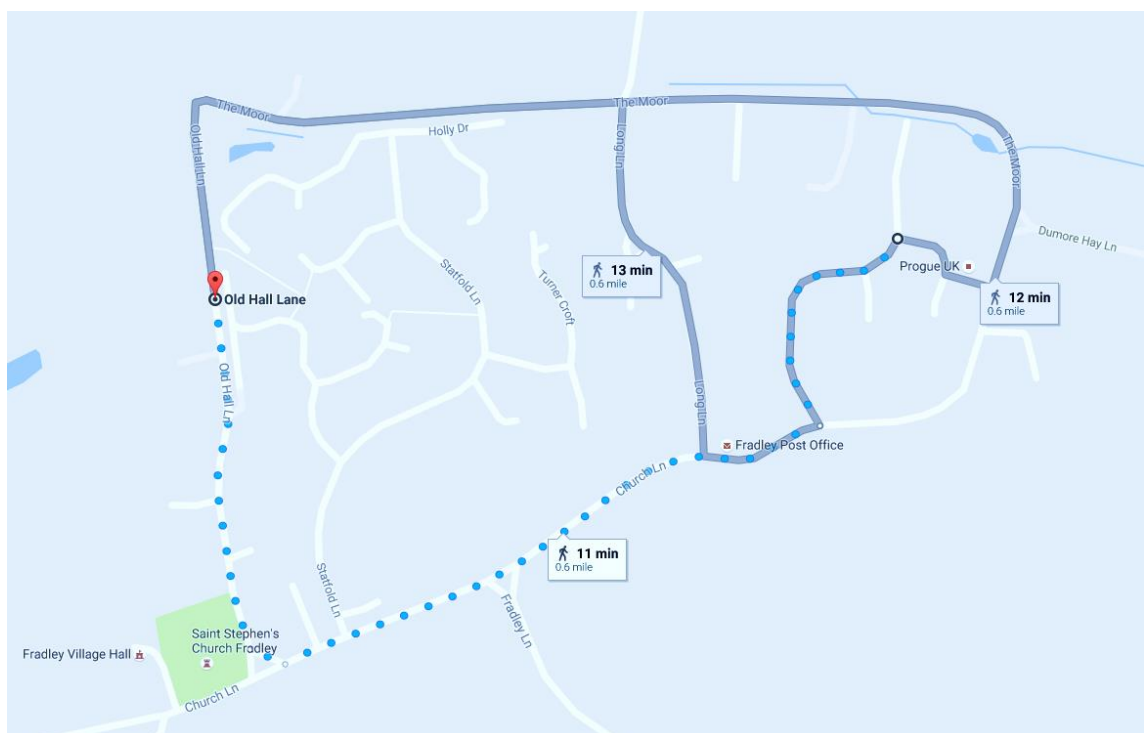

Figure 2 - Walking and cycling between east and west of Fradley Village (Source: Google Maps)

3.7 1980's - 1990's and most recent development has been based on cul-de-sac or internal loop road models for vehicular access, sometimes leading to a confusing road hierarchy.

3.8 Access to properties is generally by one of the following:

1. Main, historic road network

2. Lanes (or tracks)

3. Internal loop road

4. Cul-de-sac

Green and natural features

3.9 There are some residual green pockets in residential areas that are not designed for play and leisure. The combination of wild and maintained vegetation create distinctive views around the edge of the village (e.g. The Moor, Church Lane, Old Hall Lane)

3.10 Watersmeet is a low vegetation area (see *Annex 3*) that links Fradley Village to Fradley South via pedestrian access.

Landmarks

3.11 **Saint Stephen's Church** (see *Annex 3*) - home to the war graves of a number of Australian aircrew and one German Luftwaffe pilot who lost their lives during World War II. In 2000 a memorial to all who served at RAF Lichfield was constructed in Fradley.

Buildings and details

3.12 Fradley Village is made up of a wide range of buildings forms of varying architectural merit. There are a number of historic buildings mixed with more recent additions. The most obvious forms characteristics are:

1. Two storeys;

2. Pitched roofs sloping towards the street (with exceptions in the 1990's village expansion area) with occasional dormer windows - 30° to 45°;

3. Majority of wide fronted units;

4. Varied building, ridge and eaves height;

5. Chimneys are common features.

3.13   There are significant variations in terms of materials used for roofs and façades (as shown on *Page 9*).

Streetscape features

3.14   There is a weak visual hierarchy of the streets inside the village (e.g. Statford Lane), mainly caused by similar height of the buildings (mainly two storey) cul-de-sacs and winding streets.

3.15   The mix of garden fences, trimmed hedges with brick and wood fences, with a variation in the drive surface materials generate visual diversity along the streets.

Land use

3.16   Mostly residential dwelling houses.

3.17   Others:
- Fradley Post Office
- Education: St. Stephen's Primary School
- Fradley Village Hall
- Religious: St. Stephen's Church
- Fradley Youth & Community Hall
- Small professional businesses

Summary

3.18   Fradley Village is a low-density two storey residential area with a mixture of historic developments and variations of character in terms of street layout, setbacks and materials used for buildings and plot boundaries.

4   Fradley South
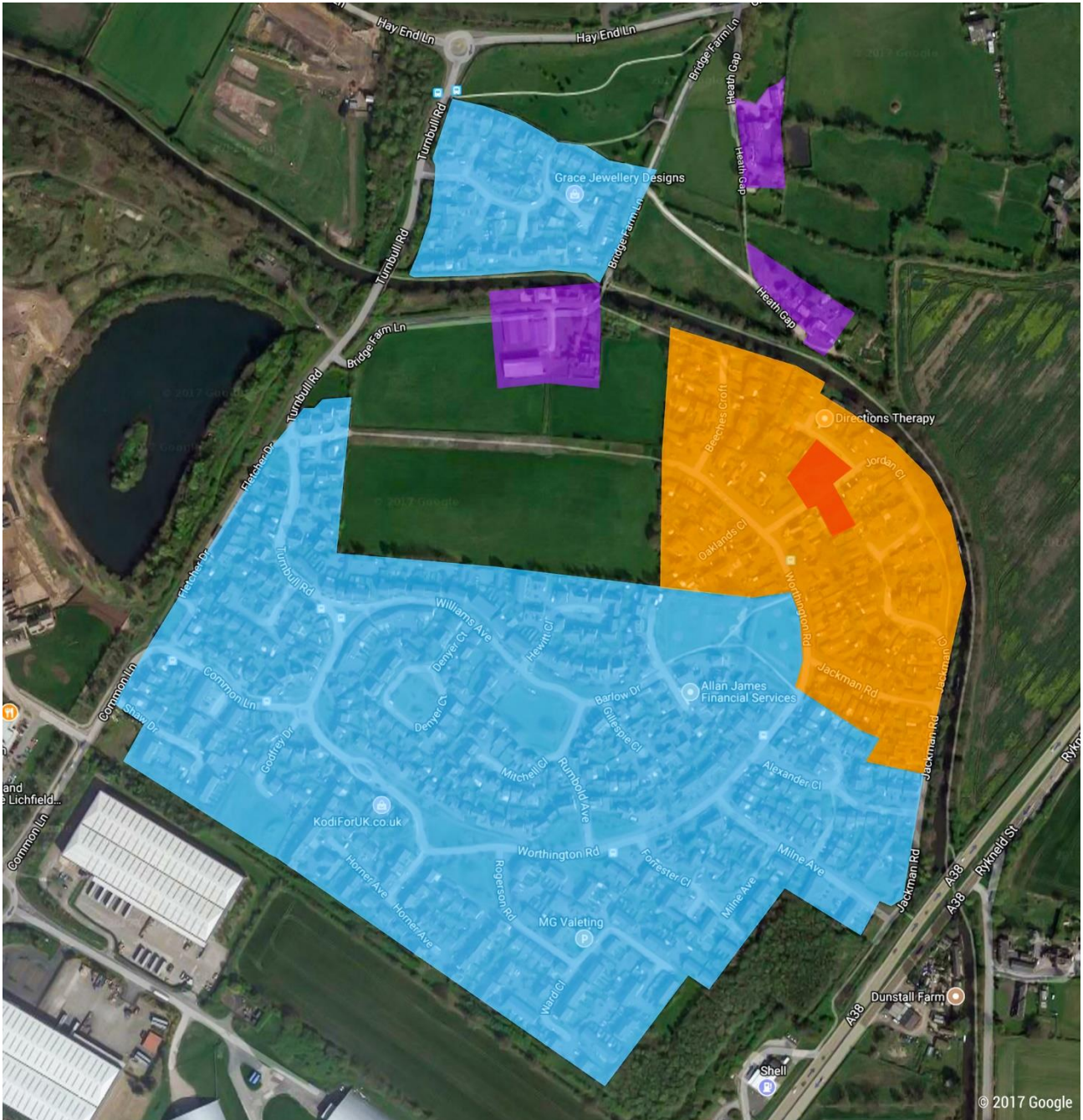
Fradley South
Historic Development

<table>
<tr><td>●</td><td>Pre 20th Century
Loose building grain,
Local vernacular building forms</td><td>●</td><td>Inter and Post-war housing
Semidetached villas and
Staggered terrace forms</td></tr>
<tr><td>●</td><td>1970-80s style link detached forms
with little reference to
traditional character or materials</td><td>●</td><td>1990's Village Expansion
Culs-de-sac</td></tr>
</table>

Pre 20th Century

Loose building grain, narrow streets, local materials, two storeys, varied setbacks, materials: soft orange, brindle and white painted bricks, boundary treatments: wood fencing and hedge, varied roof angles (30º - 45º)

Bridge Farm Lane
View towards Heath Gap

Heath Gap
View from Southern Area
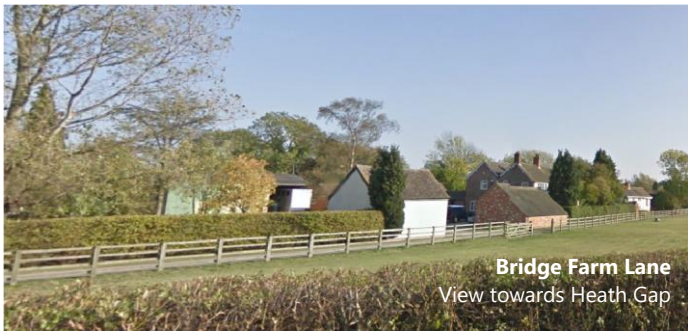
1970 - 1980s style link detached forms

with little reference to traditional character or materials, two storeys, roof angle: mostly 30º
slate tiles, brindle brick and white painted brick, varied setbacks, natural boundary treatments

Jordan Croft

Jordan Close

Jackman Close

1990s style housing

Culs-de-sac, tighter urban grain and winding street layout, two to three storeys, dormers, varied setbacks, boundary treatments (metal fencing, brick, hedge), mixed colours and textures: soft orange brick with white painted brick, pastel coloured textured render, red brick, varied roof angles (30º-45º)

Denyer Court

Common Lane

Rogerson Road

Milne Ave

Horner Ave

Turnbull Road

Williams Ave

General overview of character

4.1   The development at Fradley South is the most recent addition to Fradley. It is made up of a variety of dwelling types and sizes.

4.2   Built urban fabric is disrupted by Bridge Farm and there are significant variations between historic periods of development in terms of materials used and street layout.

4.3   A major disruption of character between Fradley South and the new developments at Fradley Park (as shown in *Figure 3*) marks the different type of adjacent use classes (*C3. Dwelling houses* versus *A1. Shops, A3. Café, A5. Hot food takeaway,* and a *B8 warehouse*).

Figure 3 - Disruption of Character between Fradley South and Fradley Park - areas with different adjacent use classes

4.4   Green pockets within the residential developments makes the place distinctive and some of these pockets are areas designed for play and leisure (e.g. Worthington Road Park – *see Annex 3*).

4.5   Development is limited by the Coventry Canal in the north and northeast, Fletcher Drive and Turnbull Road in the west and a warehouse unit in the southwest. The Canal runs through the village and merges with the Trent and Mersey Canal at nearby Fradley Junction.

4.6   There are several bridges that cross the Coventry Canal in Fradley, including Bell Bridge which carries the A38.

4.7   Local development density is higher than in Fradley Village (as shown in *Figure 4*):

- **Average density: 31 dwellings per hectare (dph)** – *this does not vary by the age of development*
  - Higher in south (38dph) and southwest (42dph)
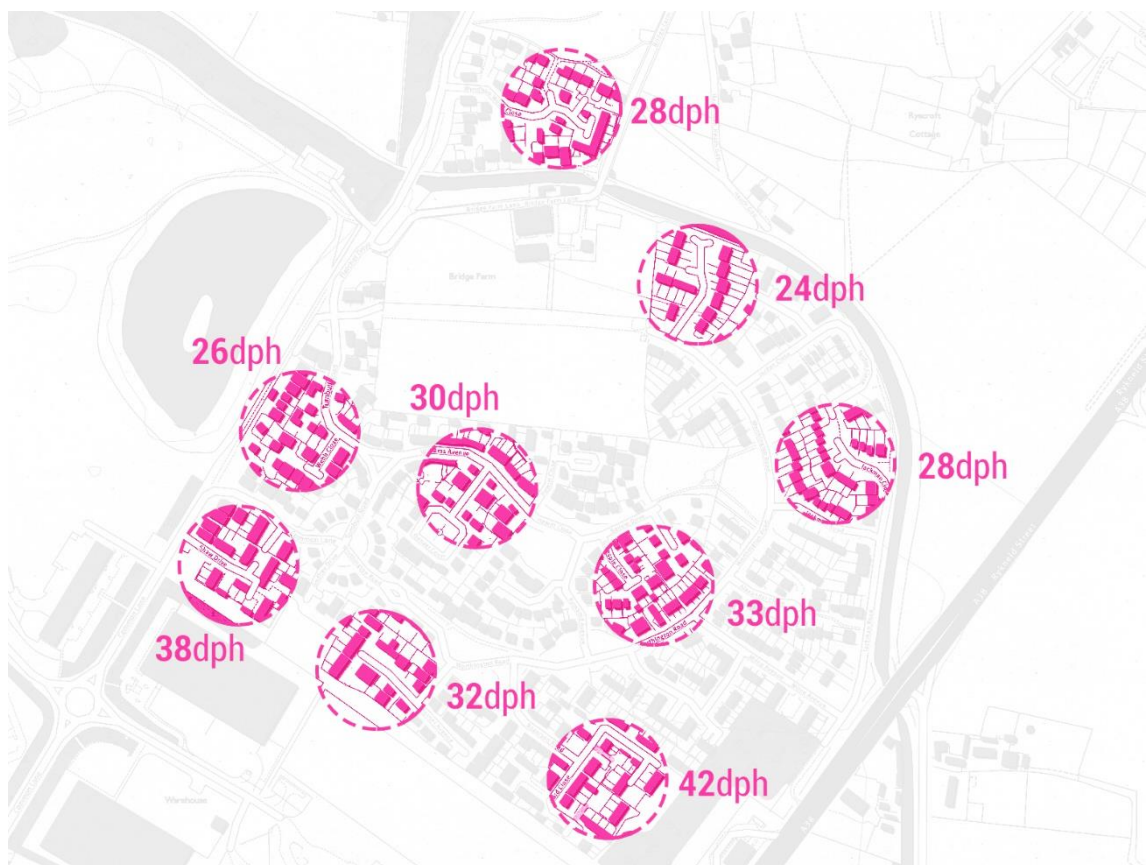 - Lower in central areas (30-33dph), west (26dph) and northeast (24-28dph)

Figure 4 - Fradley Village density (Source of data: Bellway Airfield Site - Amended Design and Access Statement, *Ch 3)*

Layout

4.8   All dwellings have some form of private amenity to the street. In general, terraced units are set closer to the street than detached larger units but there is variation within the neighbourhood.

4.9   Larger front gardens have boundary treatments in the form of hedges and railings while smaller front gardens are highlighted by a change in material and planting.

1. 1m to 8m setback

2. Variety of front garden sizes depending on dwelling size and parking arrangement.

3. Railings, hedges and materials define boundaries between public/private space.

4. Wide verges / public green space define the main street.

Topography

4.10   The terrain is entirely flat.

Roads, street, routes

4.11   Fradley South is accessed by an internal loop road. The movement network is insular and focused mainly on Common Lane, creating a cul-de-sac which concentrates the majority of traffic onto a single road. Buses are required to perform a U-turn at the end of Worthington Road. Pedestrian access is focused towards Coventry Canal and the bridges as well as an internal network through green spaces. The area lacks strong pedestrian connections to the new local centre in southwest (Stirling Centre - Common Lane).

Green and natural features

4.12   Most of the green pockets are integrated inside the urban grain as a result of the designed street grid, with residential developments overlooking them – some of them designed for playing and leisure (e.g. Worthington Road Park – see *Annex 3*).

4.13   Notable green features include:

- Coventry Canal – green areas developed along the canal.

- Some Fradley South developments are overlooking Watersmeet that links to Fradley Village via pedestrian access (see *Annex 3*).

Landmarks

4.14 Thatched cottages in the village.

Buildings and details

4.15 The buildings attempt to interpret some of the characteristics of local historic vernacular including dormers and roof forms. Form characteristics for Fradley South are:

1. Two- and three-storey development;
2. A mix of detached, semi-detached and terraced units;
3. Pitched roofs (30 to 45 degrees);
4. Dormers are common features in the area;
5. Larger units along the main street.

Streetscape features

4.16 There are some variations in terms of street width and the way they help the visual navigation through the area. In some areas, buildings makes the navigation easier (e.g. Denyer Court, Rogerson Roade), while in other cases there is a weak focal point along a footpath/cycleway and the winding street layout, culs-de-sac and lack of street hierarchy create confusion in spatial perception.

4.17 The mix of garden fences, trimmed hedges, wood and metal fences with a variation in the drive surface materials create a visual diversity along the streets.

Land use

4.18 Mostly residential dwelling houses. There are some small professional businesses scattered around the area.

Summary

4.19 Fradley South is a two to three storey modern residential area with a variety of dwelling types and sizes, with green pockets and culs-de-sac. Brick is the main local material with colour as a differentiator between different historic developments.

Annex 1 – Local materials
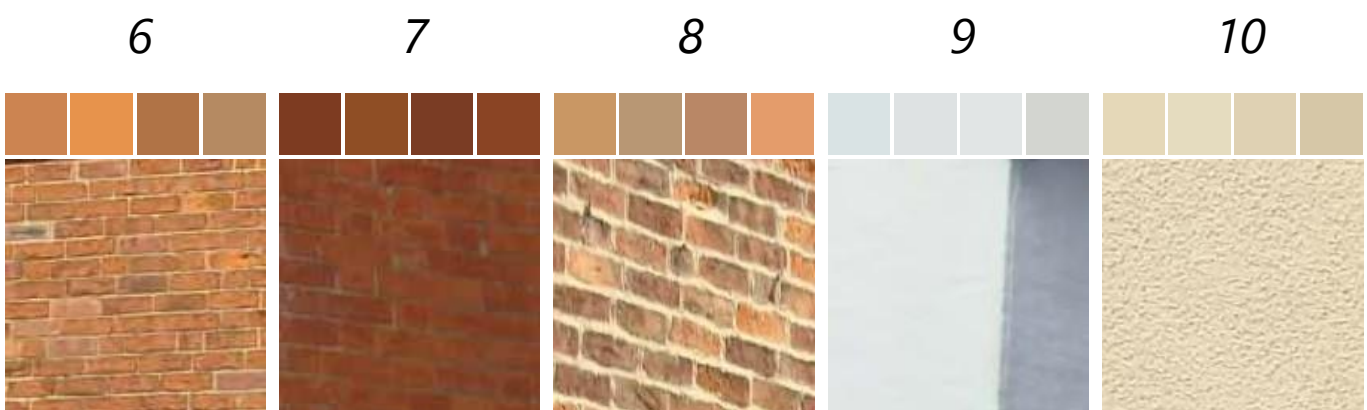
Traditional roof materials and colour

1

2

3

4

5

1. Slate tile

2. Plain red clay tile

3. Plain brown clay or concrete tile

4. Plain dark brown concrete tile

5. Thatch

Typical wall materials and colour

6

7

8

9

10

6. Soft orange brick

7. Red brick

8. Orange brindle brick

9. White painted brick

10. Pastel coloured textured render

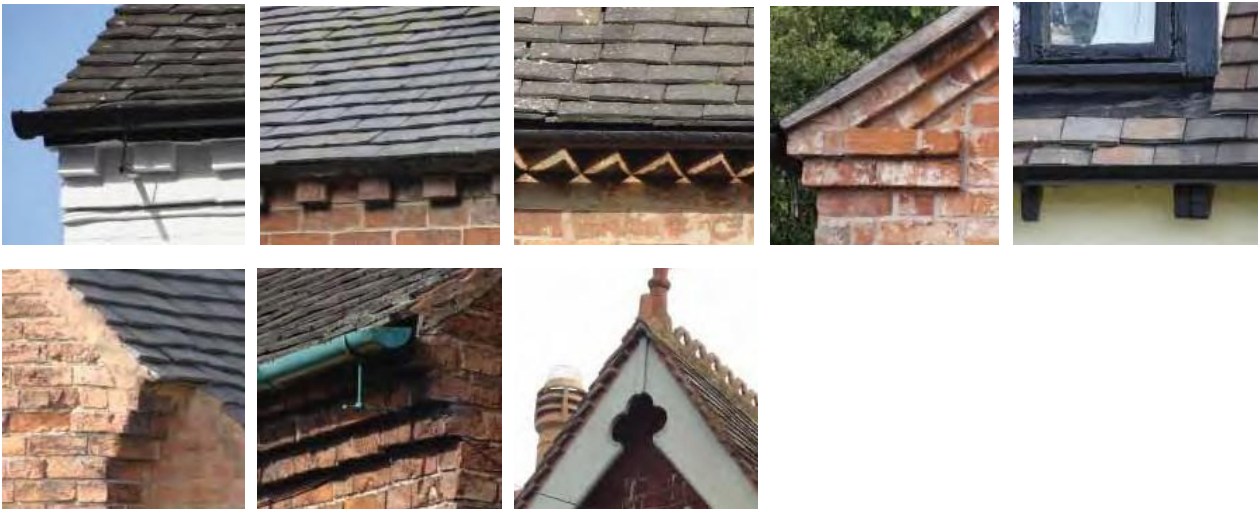# Annex 2 – Local architecture

Windows and bays

Dormers

Porches and canopies

Chimney

Eaves detail

Window arch detail

The photographs illustrate some of the more frequently used building elements on the historic buildings in and around Fradley. These elements could be considered representative of the local vernacular. The images are included as inspiration for future reserved matters applications where contemporary interpretations of these historic forms could help to create a locally distinctive character for the new neighbourhood.
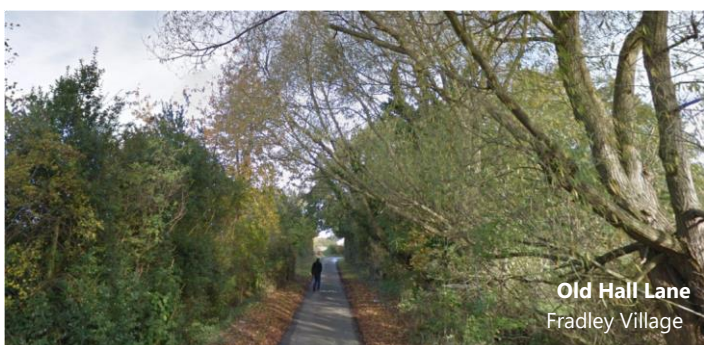
Annex 3 – Green Areas & Landmarks

St Stephen's Church
Fradley Village

Watersmeet
Between Fradley Village and Fradley South

Coventry Canal *- View from Turnbull Road*
Fradley South

Old Hall Lane
Fradley Village

Worthington Road Park
Fradley South

Sources

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