

22/11/1970



CONSERVATION AREA 17 NORBURY CANAL JUNCTION



The cover map of Staffordshire was first published by Hermann Moll in 1724. It gives special emphasis to the roads, rivers and parkland. The County boundary differs from the present one, as parts now in Shropshire, Worcestershire and Warwickshire are included.

STAFFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL
TOWN & COUNTRY PLANNING COMMITTEE
CIVIC AMENITIES ACT 1967

CONSERVATION AREA 17
NORBURY
CANAL
JUNCTION



PURPOSE OF DESIGNATION

The rapid changes now taking place in town and village, whilst giving practical benefits, also threaten many beautiful and historic areas with destruction or despoliation. Such areas, often unique in character due to rich variation in types of buildings, trees and open spaces, form an important part of the national heritage.

In the past, individual buildings of architectural or historic interest have been protected by legislation, whereas attractive groups of buildings, often of little individual value, and areas of character, beauty or historic importance have been mainly unprotected.

The Civic Amenities Act, 1967, remedies the deficiency by enabling Local Planning Authorities to designate as Conservation Areas "areas of special architectural or historic interest, the character of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance."

Potential Conservation Areas exist in many towns and villages, varying in size from complete centres to groups of buildings. Although often centred on historic buildings, they may include features of archaeological importance, historic street patterns, village greens or areas of particular character.

Staffordshire has been strongly influenced by the effects of the Industrial Revolution and subsequent growth of industry and population. The pressures resulting from this growth cause considerable problems in terms of visual environment, nevertheless many areas and settlements of good traditional character still remain in the towns, villages and country estates. Their preservation cannot be considered in isolation, without taking into account the natural growth and future needs of people, commerce and industry.

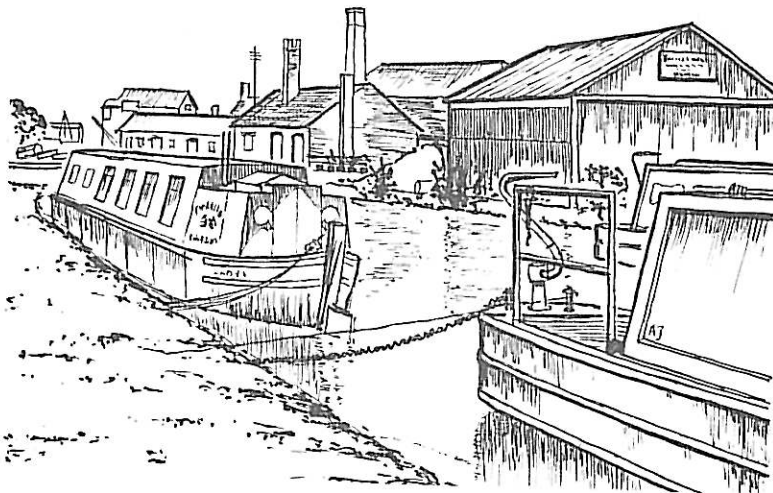
Conservation is the means by which existing character can be preserved and enhanced with due regard for other demands. Designation of the Conservation Area followed by detail design proposals will form the basis for positive action, but ultimate success will depend on active public interest and support.

CONSERVATION AREA · NORBURY CANAL JUNCTION

In 1851 it was said in White's Directory that the canals of Staffordshire were numerous and extensive; "indeed, no other district in the world is more amply supplied with this cheap and easy method of distributing its own productions, and those of others." The construction of the railways followed by the revival of the roads has meant that canals are no longer the salient form of communication that once they were, but the growing recognition of the attractions of pleasure cruising has given canals a new importance and revitalised the centres associated with them.

The importance of Staffordshire canals is attributable partly to the mineral wealth of the County which led to the transport of heavy and fragile commodities ranging from coal to china, and partly to the geographical setting.

Staffordshire is at the centre of the national network devised by James Brindley, and the earliest canals in the county comprised



the Trent and Mersey, the Staffordshire and Worcestershire, and the Coventry Canal, with their various branches. Civil engineering was still in its infancy so that the canals followed contours, changing level where necessary: a curving heavily-locked route was often the result.

By the 1830's, however, the approach to canal construction had become quite different now that the traffic to be carried was so much heavier and the emphasis on speed so much greater. New straight and level canals were built at a heavy cost in civil engineering works in the vain attempt to withstand railway competition.

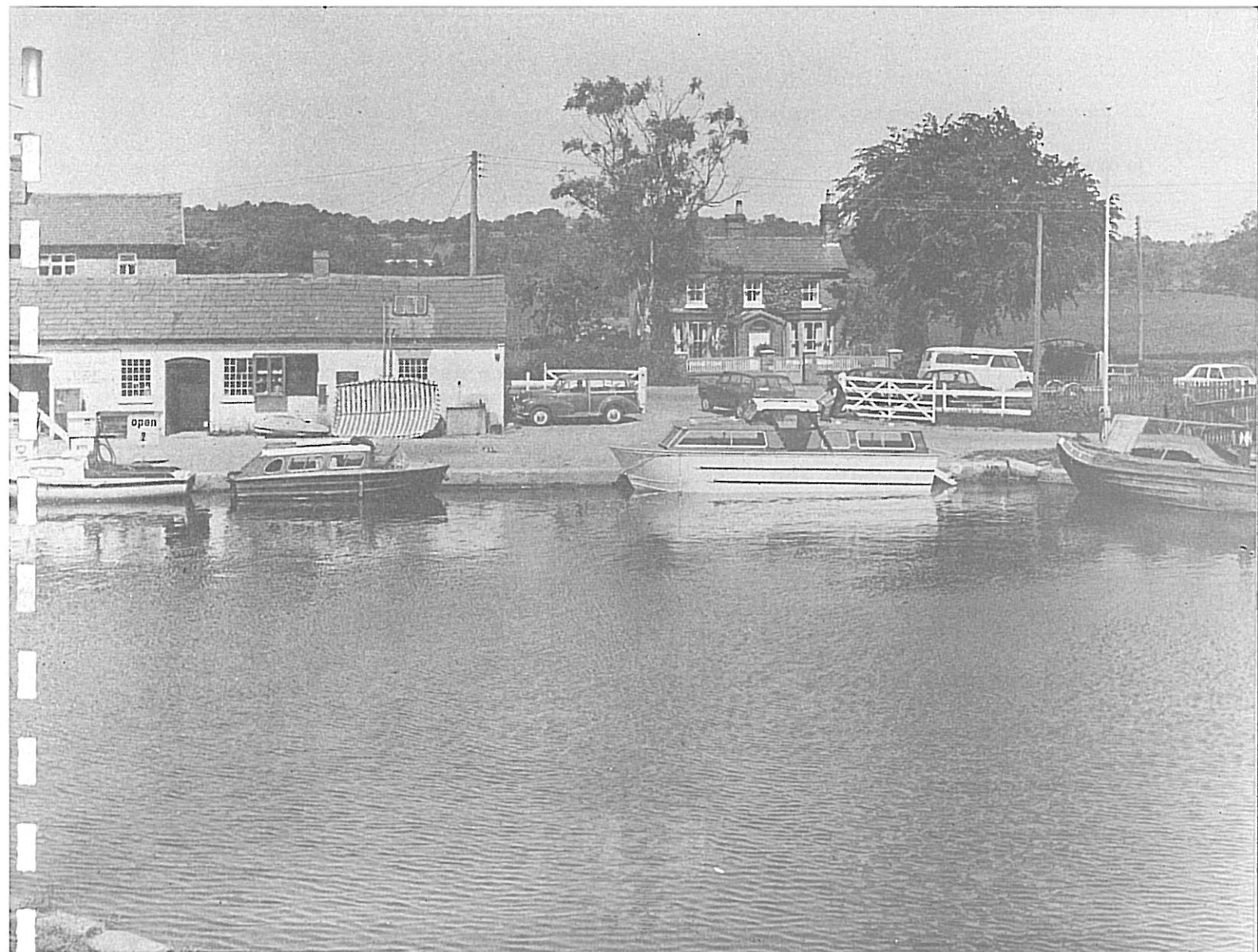
Perhaps the finest example over the whole country of this new conception of canal is the one that runs for most of its length in



NORBURY CANAL JUNCTION

Staffordshire and was known originally as the Birmingham and Liverpool Junction Canal. It extended 39 miles from near Wolverhampton to Nantwich and was constructed by that giant of the early 19th century engineering world, Thomas Telford. The canal was wholly opened in 1835, and Norbury Canal Junction represents the most active point along its course. This is where the main canal was joined by the branch that ran westwards to Newport and Shrewsbury providing a link to Shropshire and Wales.

The canals of the 18th and 19th centuries were revolutionary not only in accelerating the transport of goods, but also in providing a new

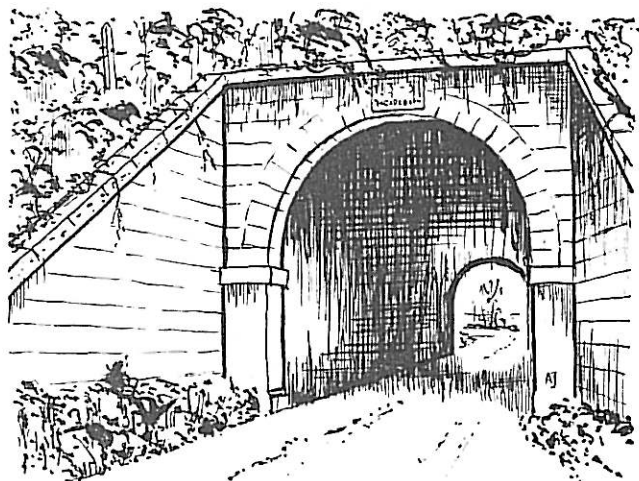


arterial pattern divorced from the roads that had continuously influenced economic and social development from Roman times onwards. The considerations that determined the course of canals were new, and in the same way that the railways produced their Swindons and their Doncasters, so the canals generated new centres of settlement. It is true that Stourport as a town created by the canals is a phenomenon unique in England, but nevertheless Norbury, together with Fradley and Haywood, is a good example of a canal junction sited in what had been open country. Consequently all the facilities required for the repair and maintenance

of boats and for the sustenance of men and horses had to be specially provided.

Norbury Canal Junction is one of these entrepôts owing its existence to the construction of canals. Here are to be found the fully-equipped maintenance depot of the British Waterways Board, the modernised Junction Inn, the warehouse converted to a shop and an office and the large basin for the mooring of the pleasure craft that have now in the main taken the place of the narrow boats for

which the canal was primarily constructed. Added to the group of buildings are the two bridges: one that takes the towpath of the main canal over the branch, and the second that takes the road over the main



ROAD TUNNEL BENEATH CANAL

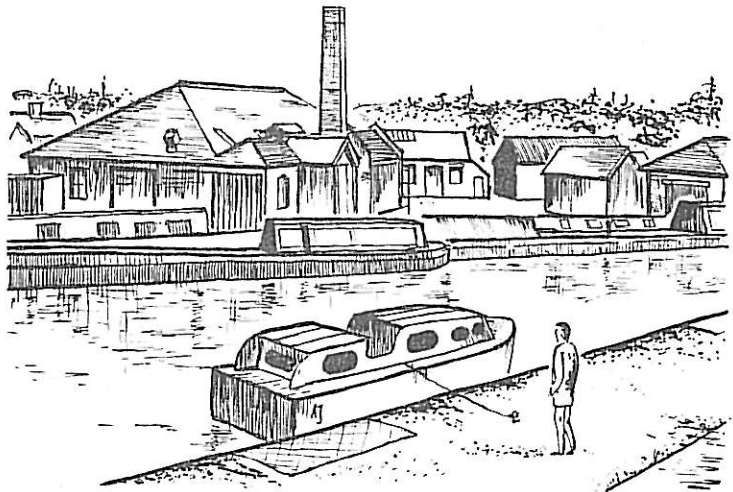
canal at the north end of the complex.

The canal junction may have been built out of commercial interests, but in its present form it is a scene of great beauty, a beauty that it owes to many contributing factors. The first is perhaps the vitality that results from the human activity that is generated, whether this be the building and repair or simply the mooring of boats, the enjoyment of the amenities of the inn, or fishing at the water's edge. Secondly there is the delight of the water itself, reflecting the outlines of the buildings around and presenting an ever-changing surface as ripples are created by the passing traffic. Thirdly the buildings contribute to the scene for although they are predominantly functional nevertheless they do observe a uniformity of scale and design. The materials used are consistently brick, sometimes painted white, for the walls, and tiles and slates are used for the roofs. There is little that is planned about the arrangement of the buildings, but this very absence of a plan introduces a caprice that is eloquent testimony to the gradual evolution of the site. Fourthly Norbury Canal Junction possesses that indefinable quality that canals

manage to muster. There is a nostalgic atmosphere about canals, stemming from their association with an age where 5 m.p.h. represented speed, but there is no feeling of dereliction, and the phoenix that has emerged at Norbury has the vitality of youth.

The widespread popularity of canals as a place for leisure activity does, of course, present problems as well as advantages, and these are evidenced at Norbury Canal Junction. The public should be encouraged to come to Norbury whether as cruisers or merely as onlookers, but in providing for their needs the greatest care must be exercised to ensure that just those features that promote popularity are not unconsciously eroded. It may be desirable to erect new buildings at Norbury and to modernise some of those already existing, but, if so, most scrupulous attention should be given not only to the siting but also to the design and materials of the buildings. Likewise the detailing of any areas developed for recreational purposes or car parking and of any new engineering works needed, for instance in the provision of additional boat moorings, should be handled in a manner sensitive to the local scene.

The boundary of the Conservation Area at Norbury Canal Junction has been drawn so as to



include the whole of the canal junction and sufficient of the rural hinterland to ensure retention of the immediate setting. Within this area it is essential that the greatest care shall be extended in the exercise of planning control and in the consideration of long-term planning proposals. It is for these reasons that Norbury Canal Junction has been designated as a conservation area.

FUTURE ACTION

The Conservation Area has been carefully considered by the Local Planning Authority in consultation with the District Council and local amenity bodies.

A specific responsibility is placed upon the Local Planning Authority and the Minister to take account of the character of the Conservation Area when exercising their planning duties and grant-giving powers. Development proposals affecting such areas may also be advertised and account taken of representations received in determining each case.

The Civic Amenities Act, 1967, makes it clear however that designation of a conservation area is only a prelude to action for preserving and enhancing its character and appearance. The present document is concerned with the reasons for designation. It analyses and defines the basic qualities of the particular features and groups of buildings which it is considered make a significant contribution to the character of the Area. Further reports will set out detailed policies and plans for the Area including recommendations to developers on types of development, on design and on materials considered suitable. The policies may include requirements for detailed information on particular classes of applications, advertisement of applications and proposals for retention of important buildings.

It may be necessary to prepare detailed proposals for improving the appearance of the Area by action such as reduction of traffic congestion, screening of particular features and provision of alternative outlets for undesirable development.

It is hoped that improvement and enhancement of conservation areas will not be completely dependent upon long-term proposals, or restricted by the uncertainties of individual development. Much can be achieved in the immediate future by collective action in street re-decoration, removal of untidy signs and advertisements and planting of trees. Public participation is essential to attract local interest and to support voluntary action by amenity bodies in restoring and improving the beautiful parts of environment.

Based upon the Ordnance Survey
Map with the sanction of the
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North



Boundary of Conservation
Area : —————

Scales :

Metres

0 100

Feet

0 400

CONSERVATION AREA

NORBURY CANAL JUNCTION

CSR 4/400/D1

