

Location and Context

This Character Area includes the medieval village of Allesley, Allesley Park, the earthwork remains of Allesley Castle and fields located next to the village. The area is located to the west of the city centre. An arterial route to the city centre runs through the village so despite being a rural location, it has good access to the city centre. The Character Area is surrounded by housing, with some fields to the northwest.

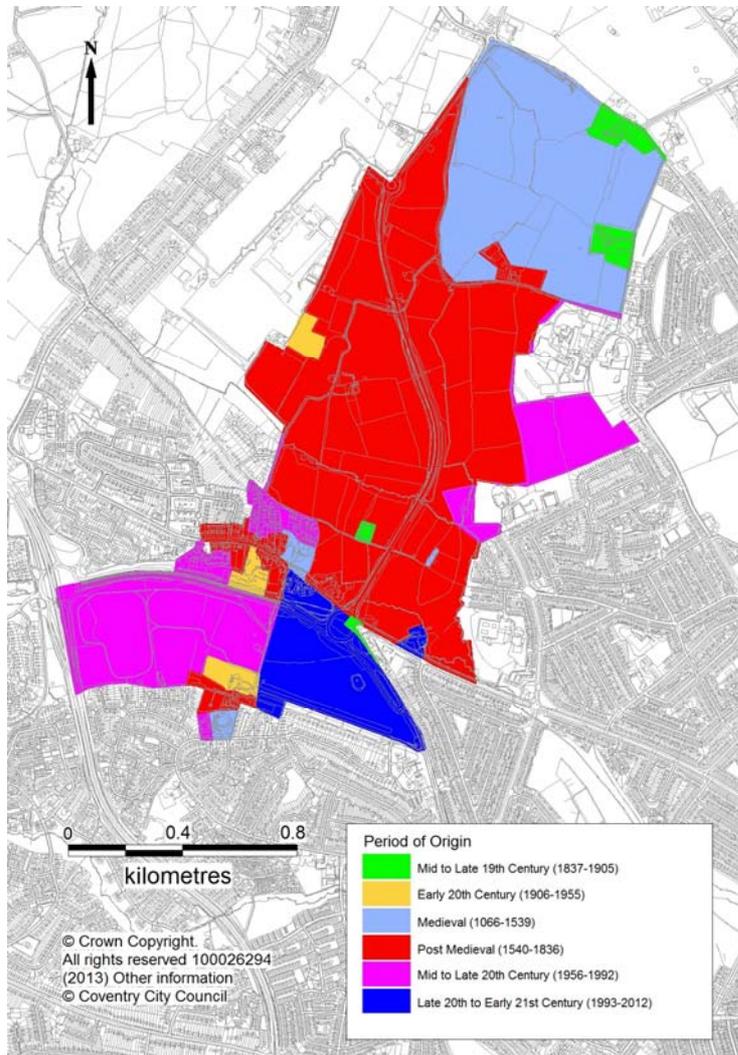
Heritage Designations in the Character Area

- Scheduled Ancient Monuments: 1
- Archaeological Constraint Areas: 23
- Listed Buildings: 33
- Locally Listed Buildings: 8
- Conservation Areas: 1
- Registered Parks and Gardens: 0

Historic Development

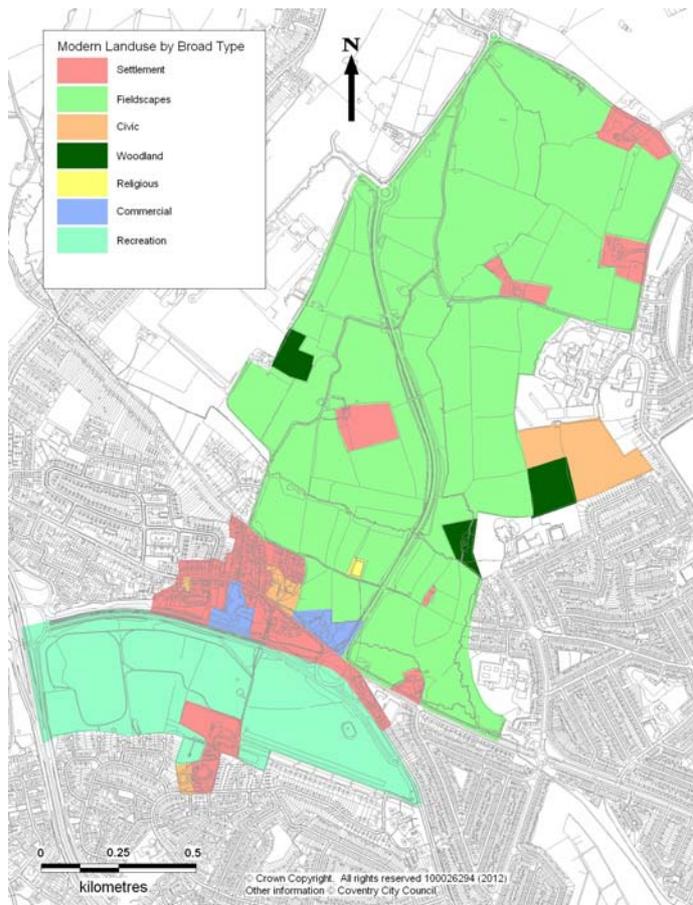
Apart from the possible Iron Age defended enclosure situated to the west of Staircase Lane, this is a landscape of predominantly medieval and post-medieval date, with many features from this period still present today. Allesley Park, for instance, was originally part of a much larger medieval deer park which is believed to date from the 12th or 13th century when hunting was a fashionable pastime amongst the Norman aristocracy. The park was surrounded by a large bank and ditch, or park pale, in order stop the deer escaping. The boundaries of the park have changed considerably – for example, the medieval deer park originally extended much further south to Broad Lane – however, evidence of the park pale remains. The northern boundary of the medieval park broadly follows today's Pickford Way and the earthworks of the park pale are still present in places. The park was probably returned to agricultural use by the 15th century and the corrugated landscaping known as 'ridge and furrow', caused by ploughing, is still visible in today's park. A more obscure medieval feature located in the park is the earthwork of Allesley Castle. There is no documentary evidence for the castle and no archaeological work has been carried out on the site, but it is thought to pre-date the medieval park. It may have been built in the 1140s as an illegally built fortification associated with the civil war between King Stephen and Empress Matilda. The park is segregated from Allesley Village, located to the north, by the course of

the Pickford Brook. The deer park may have been laid out in such a way that the brook deliberately segregated the Norman aristocracy and the medieval villagers.



Allesley village itself has its origins in the medieval or even Anglo-Saxon period. The settlement comprises cottages and houses along Birmingham Road of 16th to 19th Century date, most of which are listed buildings. There is a development of 20th century housing, including small detached houses, to the north of the Birmingham Road. One of the oldest houses in the village is the Stone House (Grade II* Listed) which is believed to date from before 1557. The medieval All Saint's Church is located on a promontory overlooking the main road through the village. A medieval pathway, or holloway, leads from the graveyard to fields behind the church. Many of the fields contain ridge and furrow earthworks and some are bounded by hedgerows with reverse 'S' profiles, reflecting the former cultivation ridges in the medieval open fields prior to their enclosure.

The 1654 Inclosure Award confirms that this area was within one of Allesley's open fields during the medieval period. The present field pattern in this area dates to around 1654 with a number of the hedgerows qualifying as being 'Ancient' under the 1997 Hedgerow Regulations. In the north of the Character Area some areas of the current field pattern are even earlier. Their irregular shape, sinuous boundaries along with documentary evidence suggests that they are medieval assarts. A good example of this is the area to the south of Brownhill Green Road. Other remnants of the medieval landscape are the probable remains of a medieval moat and fishpond located to the rear of Coundon Lodge, to the west of Coundon Green. Although there is no documentary evidence to confirm the date of Staircase Lane, the sunken level of the road strongly indicates that this is an ancient route. North Brook Road is recorded in the 1410-11 Cartulary of St. Mary's Priory, although it was then known as Le Pokelane. The Coundon Wedge Drive was developed in the 1980s for improved access to the former Browns Lane Jaguar plant located outside the Character Area to the west, which has subsequently been scaled back and is subject to on-going mixed-use redevelopment.



Modern Character

Allesley Park is a popular public open space. It is enjoyed by young families in particular who benefit from a children's play area. There is also a small public golf course, toilets, a large car park, wildlife gardens and a walled garden associated with Allesley Hall. Despite the popularity of the park some areas are surprisingly secluded including the walled garden and the castle earthworks which are hidden by trees. Activity is focused to the east side of the park where the public facilities are located. This area is highly valued by local residents who have formed community groups for the park, although many members of the public are not aware of the castle remains. The park was originally set apart from Allesley Village by the brook and today it is also segregated

by the Pickford Way dual carriage way. The park is almost entirely surrounded by arterial roads so despite the proximity of the park to housing, it is mostly accessed by car. The historic core of Allesley Village is protected as a Conservation Area reflecting its status as the best preserved historic village within the Coventry City boundary. Attractive cottages are present along the Birmingham Road and are overlooked by All Saint's Church, located on an elevated promontory.

Two narrow lanes called Rectory Close and Butcher's Lane lead off Birmingham Road onto mid-20th century housing developments also included in the Conservation Area. The 1950s housing comprises small detached dwellings with small gardens to the front and rear. To the north east of the village are small, enclosed agricultural fields. They are easily accessible by public footpaths. Fields closest to the village are small and narrow with distinctive curving hedgerows.

Overall, the fields in the Coundon Wedge are small, bounded by ancient hedgerows and divided by winding lanes. Much of the current field pattern dates to the mid-17th Century with a remaining area of medieval assarts in the north of the Character Area. The area has a quiet, tranquil atmosphere despite the presence of the Coundon Wedge Drive which is well hidden.



A view of Allesley Village along Birmingham Road

Geology and Topography

The Character Area overlies sandstone with alluvium deposits of sand with clay and gravel. It has an undulating topography which overall rises from 90m above sea level to the south to 125m to the north.