BUILDING MATERIALS & DETAILS

Walling Materials:

Brickwork

The predominant walling material is red brick. This can be seen used on the vast majority of the buildings and structures in the Conservation Area. The prevalent use of brick is as a result of the topography and geology of the area. It is an area that does not have a superabundance of stone within easy reach of the settlement but does have an abundance of clay from which bricks can be easily made. The absence of stone for structural use, such as lintels to doors and windows led to the use (which is common in brick areas) of the, structural, brick segmental arch. This is to be found on many of the brick buildings in the area. This tradition has been employed on the modern brick buildings in the settlement.

The earliest use of red brick within the settlement is the 1712 additions, or re-fashioning, of the south side of The Hall. Other examples of 18th century brickwork can be seen on the range of buildings immediately north-east of The Hall and to Hill Farm.

Many more examples of 19th century brickwork are to be found within the settlement. The principal examples are the 1873 northeast extension to The Hall, its ancillary buildings to the north and east; The Grange (formerly the Rectory); Somersal Farm; the re-fashioning of Church Cottage and the building now known as The Red House.

The 20th century has contributed a number of brick buildings – principally those to the west and south west of Montgomery House; the pair of cottages on
Grove Lane; Highfield House (immediately north of the Wesleyan Church) and the Village Hall.

Timber-framing

Prior to the prevalent use of brickwork, which became more widespread from the mid-16th century onwards and more popular (and available) from the mid-17th century, is the use of timber-framed buildings with wattle/lath & daub infill panels. Such buildings were prevalent in the medieval period and are found where stone was scare and timber was plentiful. Somersal Herbert has retained a number of fine examples of timber-framing – displaying both high and low status. The principal example is the north front of The Hall which displays a combination of high status work including vertical close-framing, straight and curving diagonal framing, decorative quatre-foils and decorative balusters. The areas between the timbers have been filled with wattle/lath and daub/plaster and painted with limewash. The combination of dark oak timbers and white or cream panels give rise to the generic “black and white” terminology for such houses.

The south eastern wing of Montgomery House also displays high status vertical close-framing (over a stone plinth) and infill panels. Other parts of the house, including the long range to its rear, displays the lower status box-framing. Here the original wattle & daub infill panels have been replaced, at a later date, with brick panels (or brick nogging, as it is known).

Decorative timber-framing at The Hall

The Old Cottage, almost opposite Montgomery House is also of box-framed construction with brick infill panels.

A late example of timber-framed construction is the church lych-gate which was constructed in about 1912.

Stonework

The parish church represents the largest stone constructed building in the settlement. The stone for this building is most likely to have come from
East Staffordshire where ‘Hollington’ stone is still being quarried. The Churchyard Cross is also constructed entirely of stone.

Elsewhere within the settlement the use of stone is uncommon being found used for the plinth to some of the timber-framed properties and its occasional use for stone dressings such as for window cills (to the 1873 Hall extension).

The gate piers to The Hall are constructed entirely of stone and stone details are used for other gate piers associated with The Hall.

The Village Hall of 1905 employs a random stone plinth to the brick building.

**Render**

There are a few examples of render within the settlement. These are to be found, principally, on the Wesleyan Chapel (a rough cast, self coloured render), an outbuilding to The Paddock and to The Paddock itself (a smooth render).

**Roof Coverings:**

The predominant roofing material used within the Conservation Area is clay tile. These are generally known as ‘Staffordshire Blue’ clay tiles and are accompanied by clay ridge tiles. The ridge tiles to the Wesleyan Chapel are red to contrast with the ‘blue’ clay tiles. The clay tiles to the Village Hall are a slightly redder tile than the Staffordshire Blues.
and were probably intended purposefully as an accent to the building design.

Clay tile roof with decorative red clay ridge & finial tiles to the Wesleyan Church

Reddish clay tiles to the Village Hall

Other types of roof covering are to be found within the Conservation Area. These are thatch, slate and timber shingles. Thatch was a traditional roofing material where there was no local source for stone slates (before the use of tiles and slates). It is probable that all of the extant timber-framed buildings originally had thatched roofs. The Old Cottage is the only surviving thatch roofed timber-framed building in the settlement.

Thatched roof covering to The Old Cottage

Slate roofs are found on the following buildings – the nave and chancel of the church, The Red House, Church Cottage, the outbuilding to The Cottage and the new house (Brook House) to the west of The Cottage.

Slate roof at The Red House

Slate roof at Church Cottage

Timber shingles have been used on the church lych-gate. This structure was architect-designed and the use of shingles were probably chosen to complement the design of the gateway.

Timber shingles to lych-gate

Chimney stacks:

All the historic buildings and most of the new buildings in the Conservation Area have chimney stacks. The predominant construction material being red brick. In terms of design and form they are generally simple and plain, although some concessions to decorative detailing can be seen.
Square red brick stacks at The Paddock – notice the chamfered recesses to convey a grouping of four stacks

Simple, tall brick stack at Church Cottage. Notice the complimentary use of blue brick.

Tall chimneystack at the Village Hall with decorative topping

Simple brick stacks at Hill Farm

Decorative brick stack on The Hall

Many of the chimneystacks within the settlement do not have chimney pots. Where chimney pots do appear they are generally plain and simple, circular, clay pots.

Windows & Doors:

The earliest windows, in terms of style, are the stone tracery windows to the Parish Church. Whilst many of these are later copies (inserted or re-newed at a restoration) they reflect the ecclesiastical window types prevalent throughout the medieval period.

Two examples of stone tracery windows at the parish Church
The Wesleyan Church, built in 1900, was designed in the Early English (13th century) style with its characteristic narrow ‘lancet’ type windows.

Many of the cottages display timber window frames with leaded-lights. The examples below from Montgomery House are typical of this style. The majority of such windows which are to be found in the settlement are relatively modern replicas.

Many cottages also display simple casement type windows. These at Hill Farm, for example, are of simple construction but are likely to be 20th century replacements. The original casement windows most probably had one or two narrow, horizontal, glazing bars.

The 1873 addition to The Hall is the only building in the settlement which displays a number of sash windows. The south side of The Hall originally contained a number of sash windows but these have been replaced with cruciform style windows.
Gates & Gateways:

A number of large and impressive gateways are to be found within the settlement – primarily related to the larger houses of the village. The oldest gateway is to The Hall with its chamfered stone piers, moulded stone caps and carved stone urns. The metal gates are more modern in date.

The Hall has three other gateways – the first is the secondary entrance from Grove Lane, which is of relatively modern construction. The second is a pair of piers between the 1873 wing and the long range of buildings to its north east. Both of these are of brick with stone dressings and surmounted by moulded caps and ball finials. The metal gates to the Grove Lane entrance are modern.

The third set of gate piers is located to the west of The Hall adjacent to the open field. This is a pair of brick and stone piers which have, unfortunately lost their stone caps and finials. This gateway also retains its original timber gates (now somewhat decayed). In terms of period and design they appear to date from the later 19th century – possibly circa. 1873.

The gateway and gates to Montgomery House are of modern construction (1980s) and are constructed from red brick with stone caps and ball finials. The gates are also of the 1980s.
SOMERSAL HERBERT CONSERVATION AREA

BUILDING CHRONOLOGY

FIG 7

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