

Church Stretton Town Design Statement

Approved by South Shropshire District Council 2007



Prepared by the Town Design Statement Group
on behalf of Church Stretton Town Council

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'This happy place draws people to it like a seaside town, for health is in the air and a thousand delights in the little streams and green hollows of its sheltering hills.'

Arthur Mee's
'Shropshire' 1926.



Foreword by the Mayor, Church Stretton Town Council

The Church Stretton Town Council welcomes the publication of this Town Design Statement. It will be a valuable tool in helping to promote the need for good design and the need to conserve the many and varied aspects of what makes Church Stretton the unique, interesting and beautiful place it is.

Inevitably changes, including the development of houses, commercial properties and roads, will take place in order to accommodate the needs of future generations. The purpose of the document is to help ensure that development is appropriately designed and in keeping with our heritage and local character, and that it respects, wherever possible, the special features which those of us who live here consider important.

On behalf of the Town Council I would like to thank all the people and organisations for their input and dedication in bringing this extensive document to publication.

Councillor Beryl Smith J.P. Town Mayor

Foreword by Shropshire Hills AONB Partnership

When the Shropshire Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty was designated in 1958, Church Stretton was the only town included within the boundary. Other towns outside the AONB are of rich character and heritage, but no other is as integrated with the hills as Church Stretton. Applying the concept of 'natural beauty' to a town may seem difficult or perverse, but as these pages richly describe, the natural setting of Church Stretton is fundamental to its character. The legal definition of natural beauty has recently been broadened to encompass cultural influences, and it is the combination of human and natural factors which shapes our settlements just as much, albeit in a different way, as the surrounding landscape.

The planning system, as the main protective mechanism of the AONB, has helped to preserve much of the character of the town and its setting. Things have moved a long way since 1958. This Design Statement captures the character of the town with accurate, well researched description which I am sure will become definitive. Its recommendations and guidelines are considered, yet set a bold vision. But in addition to the value of the document itself, the process of its preparation, led by and involving the community, is a fine example and will pay long term dividends.

I am delighted that the AONB Partnership has been able to support the preparation of the Town Design Statement. The purposes of AONB designation encompass not just visual aspects, but also the inherent natural and cultural qualities of the place. They include too the need to pursue sustainable development, which holds significant challenges such as managing transport, maintaining balanced and vibrant communities, and dramatically reducing energy use in both new and older buildings. As this Statement shows, design has a role in helping to address these challenges, and should always be considered with this wider picture in mind.

Phil Holden, Shropshire Hills AONB Manager

Foreword by The National Trust

On behalf of the National Trust, we are most grateful for the opportunity to contribute to the development of a Design Statement for Church Stretton. In view of our close relationship with Church Stretton due to its proximity to Carding Mill Valley and the Long Mynd, the National Trust has a direct and fundamental concern for the conservation and well-being of the town.

The National Trust is most anxious to ensure that any new development is carefully designed and contributes positively to Stretton's sense of place and to its intimate scale. Neither should it detract from its historic character nor from the enjoyment its many visitors derive from the landscape, views and open access. Church Stretton is a town where piecemeal and inappropriate development may so very easily damage the loveliness of its landscape and the pleasure it gives to residents and visitors.

The Long Mynd is a Site of Special Scientific Interest. Indeed it is the largest and one of the most significant SSSIs in the West Midlands, designated for its heathland vegetation, its fauna and flora and the internationally important geological outcrops. Development here, or in its batches and valleys, could so easily detract from the sense of wilderness and its native wildlife, that it should be explicitly excluded in the Design Statement for Stretton.

We estimate that over 250,000 visits are made annually to the valley making it one of the most important sites for tourism in the region. This generates very important economic benefits. This was dramatically illustrated during 2001 when the area was closed to visitors due to foot and mouth disease. In that year Church Stretton lost £1.8 million from the local economy, perhaps the single most compelling argument for keeping Church Stretton small, pretty and unspoilt. In 2005 a large part of the Long Mynd was designated Open Access Land under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act.

***Peter Carty, Countryside Property Manager
Jeremy Milln, Archaeologist (West Midlands)***

Section 1

Introduction

Church Stretton is a special place. It is a small market town in the heart of the Shropshire Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty with an historic town centre. Part of the town is within a Conservation Area. The main purpose of this document is to provide design guidance to developers, designers, the local planning authority and others, based on the local distinctiveness and character of Church Stretton. It has been researched and written by local residents on behalf of the Town Council, with advice and support from officers of the Shropshire Hills AONB Partnership and South Shropshire District Council. It includes references to particular features and qualities that local people value and wish to see conserved. The Town Design Statement is based on information gathered from consultations with local people and from a detailed survey of the town, during 2005 and 2006.

This Town Design Statement applies to the town of Church Stretton only and does not include the neighbouring settlements of All Stretton and Little Stretton. All the General Guidelines apply to the two town parish wards of Church Stretton. Within this overall area are eight areas described in detail with Area Guidelines and Recommendations.

The idea for a Town Design Statement came from the Church Stretton Area Partnership (CSAP) Strategic Action Plan and the CSAP has contributed to the costs of publishing this document. The vision of the CSAP is 'Long Mynd living – an inspiring and thriving environment'. It is the intention of this document to enable Church Stretton to continue to thrive. The Strategic Action Plan (on page 13) acknowledges the importance of the environment: 'Both local residents and businesses are overwhelmingly of the view that the high quality landscape of the Church Stretton area, the attractive town centre, the peaceful environment and the open spaces are the major strength of the area.'

In January 2007 the Executive Committee of South Shropshire District Council as local planning authority accepted (subject to some amendments being made) the draft Town Design Statement to be used as a material consideration in determining future planning applications in Church Stretton. This document will act as a means to encourage good design, reinforce local distinctiveness and reject poor design. It is hoped that key principles from the Town Design Statement will be incorporated into the Local Development Framework. The Town Design Statement will enable developers and designers to understand some of the qualities that local people value and be aware of these issues at an early stage in the design process. The underlying principle is that all new development should respect, maintain or enhance local distinctiveness.

The following section sets out the context for the Design Statement, with reference to national and local planning guidance. There is information on the background to this study and a description of Church Stretton, its history and environment.



View of the town and its setting

Government Guidance on Design

Planning Policy Statement 1 (PPS 1) sets out the overarching planning policies on the delivery of sustainable development through the planning system. Good design plays a fundamental role in achieving this. PPS1 states: *'Good design ensures attractive, usable, durable and adaptable places and is a key element in achieving sustainable development. Good design is indivisible from good planning. Planning authorities should plan positively for the achievement of high quality and inclusive design for all development, including individual buildings, public and private spaces and wider area development schemes. Good design should contribute positively to making places better for people. Design which is inappropriate in its context, or which fails to take the opportunities available for improving the character and quality of an area and the way it functions, should not be accepted.'* Ref: Planning Policy Statement 1: Delivering Sustainable Development (ODPM 2005).

Planning Policy Statement 7 (PPS7) 'Sustainable Development in Rural Areas' refers to Nationally Designated areas. Paragraphs 21-23 state:

21. *'Nationally designated areas comprising National Parks ... and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty have been confirmed by the Government as having the highest status of protection in relation to landscape and scenic beauty. The conservation of the natural beauty of the landscape and countryside should therefore be given great weight in planning policies and development control decisions in these areas. The conservation of wildlife and the cultural heritage are important considerations in all these areas...'*
22. *'Major developments should not take place in these designated areas, except in exceptional circumstances... Consideration of such applications should therefore include an assessment of (i) the need for development, including in terms of any national considerations, and the impact of permitting it, or refusing it, upon the local economy; (ii) the cost and scope for developing elsewhere outside the designated area, or meeting the need for it in some other way; and (iii) any detrimental effect on the environment, the landscape and recreational opportunities, and the extent to which that could be moderated.'*
23. *'Planning authorities should ensure that any planning permission granted for major development in these designated areas should be carried out to high environmental standards through the application of appropriate conditions where necessary.'* (ODPM 2004)

Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) is a national designation that brings additional duties and controls. Under section 85 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000, local authorities and other public bodies (including town councils) must have regard to the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of such areas. All plans and policies (including planning policies), which affect an AONB, must meet this requirement. In practice, the Shropshire Hills AONB Partnership works closely with South Shropshire District Council to help them meet this obligation, although the responsibility for planning decisions remains with the local authority. 'Permitted development rights' within an AONB differ from those outside. The result is that outbuildings, extensions and alterations may be more likely to need a planning application. More information is available in SSDC's Best Value Practice Note 35.

Review of the Local Plan and the Local Development Framework

Recently a new system for producing Planning Policy has been introduced called the Local Development Framework (LDF) and this will supersede the existing Local Plan in the future. At present the policies covering the future development of Church Stretton are contained within the South Shropshire Local Plan 2004 – 2011 (adopted April 2005).

As Shropshire is becoming a Unitary Authority the District Council is not publishing the Core Strategy Preferred Options paper for public consultation, but is still producing an options and issues paper for its site allocations document in early 2008. This document will set out the possible options for the future role of Church Stretton as a main market town in the District and what scale of development is envisaged over the next 20 years. For more information please see the District Council website: www.southshropshire.gov.uk or contact David Francis on 01584 813337.

The Town Design Statement forms an important part of the evidence base and is a material consideration in determining the design of future planning proposals in Church Stretton. However, it does not address the matter of where and what scale of future development should be allocated in Church Stretton. These are matters for the Local Development Framework.

The South Shropshire Local Plan 2004 – 2011 adopted April 2005

The Written Statement includes a number of policies relating to the environment which are particularly relevant to this Design Statement, especially Policy E1 Landscape Conservation, Policy E4 Development in Conservation Areas, Policy E6 Design, Policy E7 New Development General Requirements and Policy S14 Protection of tree cover, Church Stretton. The Local Plan stresses the importance of the landscape and *'the need to conserve and enhance its diverse character and distinctiveness'*. The importance of the Historic Environment is also identified with its *'wealth of attractive villages and picturesque small market towns, a rich heritage of historic buildings, historic landscapes and gardens and important archaeological sites together with many fine traditional buildings, all of which make a vital contribution to the character of the area. One of the main aims of the Plan is to conserve these to retain the beauty and character of the District.'* It states the need to protect listed buildings, structures or features listed as being of special architectural or historic interest and their settings, and archaeological remains, which form an important part of the area's character. The policy also aims to protect Conservation Areas from the harmful effects of change. It states that the purpose of the Plan is to ensure development *'respects the character of its immediate surroundings and achieves a high standard of design'*.

Policy E1 Landscape Conservation

This policy acknowledges the outstanding landscape qualities of the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). The policy states:

'Proposals for development will not be permitted which would adversely affect:

- The character or natural beauty of the Shropshire Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty to achieve the highest level of protection.*
- The scenic quality and distinctive character of the South Shropshire landscape outside the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty;*
- The character and appearance and setting of the District's historic parks or gardens of special historic or ecological interest.*

In determining planning applications in the countryside the Council will have regard to:

- The suitability of design, the quality of the proposal and the appropriate use of materials.'*

It is worth reiterating that Church Stretton is the only market town in the Shropshire Hills AONB.

Policy E4 Development in Conservation Areas

This policy states: *'Development in conservation areas will be required to be complementary to the scale, design and materials of adjacent buildings and preserve or enhance the character and appearance of the area. Conservation Area consent for the demolition of buildings in conservation areas will only be granted in conjunction with proposals for replacement buildings or remedial works. In determining applications for proposals to which this policy applies, the Council will have regard to:*

- any conservation area statement, village design statement or other supplementary planning guidance for the area;*
- the quality of the design and the appropriateness of the proposed use;*
- the appropriateness of materials and building techniques.'*

Proposals to extend or designate new conservation areas should be made to the District Council.

It is therefore expected that South Shropshire District Council will have regard to this Design Statement in determining applications for development in the Conservation Areas within Church Stretton.

Policy E6 Design

This policy states: *'Development in South Shropshire should respect the diversity and distinctiveness of local landscape character. In towns and villages, proposals should relate to the context provided by:*

- buildings, street and plot patterns;*
- building frontages;*
- topography;*
- established public views;*
- landmark buildings;*
- other townscape elements.*

In determining applications for new buildings the Council will have regard to:

- *any development brief, conservation area statement, village design statement, contextual statement or other supplementary planning guidance;*
- *the quality of the design and the appropriateness of the proposed materials and building techniques.'*

The reasons stated for this policy include *'to take fully into account Village Design Statements which are based on a shared local understanding of the landscape and the settlements within the landscape'.*

It is therefore expected that South Shropshire District Council will fully take into account this Design Statement in determining such applications in Church Stretton.

Policy E7 New Development General Requirements

This policy is *'to ensure new development is of the highest possible standard of design and makes a positive contribution to sustainable development'.* It covers the issues of scale, appropriateness to the site, access, car parking, outdoor play space for children, protection of historic buildings, conservation areas, important archaeological remains or historic landscapes, and landscaping. It states that proposals for new development should ensure that

- *'The proposal does not adversely affect historic buildings, conservation areas, important archaeological remains or historic landscapes;*
- *The proposal includes a landscaping scheme appropriate to the development which contains measures for the protection and/or creation of wildlife habitats, such as trees, shrubs and other semi-natural habitats, and geological features;*
- *Tandem development where one property lies behind another without a highway frontage should be avoided, as this is generally considered to be an unsatisfactory arrangement;*
- *The proposal does not occupy or adversely affect an open space in a town or village which should be retained in the interests of amenity and visual character, nor the area of land between settlements located close together in accordance with Policy S12'.*

Policy S14 Protection of tree cover, Church Stretton

This policy states: *'Development will not be permitted on land shown on the Church Stretton inset to the Proposals Map, namely: Allen Coppice, Coppice Leasowes, Brockhurst Wood, Goughs Coppice, Helmeth Hill, Hopes Wood, Old Rectory Wood, Plocks Coppice, Rabbit Burrow and Ragleth Wood together with the informal areas around Old Rectory Wood and Brockhurst.'* The reasons stated are:

- a) to protect and conserve the landscape quality and setting of Church Stretton;*
- b) to ensure the existing balance between the open spaces, woodland and the developed area are maintained;*
- c) to comply with the landscape and recreation and tourism policies of the Plan.'*

Design and Access Statements

In May 2006 the government introduced changes to the planning applications process in circular 01/06 *'Guidance on changes to the development control system'.* This circular includes a requirement that most types of planning applications, including those for listed building consent, should be accompanied by a design and access statement. Such statements should explain the design principles and concepts that have informed the development and how access issues have been dealt with. In an AONB a design and access statement is required for any built development that requires planning permission.

The circular states that the statement should *'help all those assessing the application to understand the design and access rationale that underpins them.'* It goes on to say *'Development proposals that are not based on a good understanding of local physical, economic and social context are often unsympathetic and poorly designed ... and ... a major part of a design and access statement is the explanation of how local context has influenced the design. On the role of local communities, the circular says that 'Design and access statements will allow local communities, access groups, amenity groups and other stakeholders to involve themselves more directly in the planning process . . . (they) will also enable the design rationale for the proposal to be more transparent to stakeholders and the local planning authority.'*

On the design component of the statement the government circular states that *'A design and access statement should explain the design principles and concepts that have been applied to particular aspects of the proposal – these are the amount, layout, scale, landscaping and appearance of the development.'* It expands on this by saying *'the statement should explain and*

justify the appearance of the place or buildings proposed including how this will relate to the appearance and character of the development's surroundings.'

This Town Design Statement is intended to provide detailed information to support the preparation of design and access statements for developments in Church Stretton. It is expected that design and access statements will make reference to this Town Design Statement. Further general guidance on the preparation of design and access statements is contained in the document '*Design and Access Statements, how to write, read and use them*' published by the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE). This is available free to download from: www.cabe.org.uk

Background to the study and methodology

The Town Design Statement project was first promoted, as part of the Church Stretton Area Partnership Strategic Plan, at two Town Council led meetings in January 2005. A Working Group was established to take the project forward and further meetings were held, involving local volunteers and representatives from the Town Council, Area Partnership, Area Tourism Group, CPRE (Campaign to Protect Rural England) and Conservation Group, and with support from officers of South Shropshire District Council and Shropshire Hills AONB Partnership.

A Presentation and Launch event was held in the Parish Centre on 30 April 2005 to raise awareness of the project and to seek the views and involvement of local people. An exhibition of photographs and maps was prepared and over 300 people attended on the day. Many people contributed their ideas and opinions, by questionnaires and by comments on 'post-it' notes and on a large scale map. People were asked what they particularly valued about the town and what they would like to see improved. Following this event a steering group was established and plans were made to undertake a detailed survey of the character of the town in the summer and early autumn, and to work towards a second public consultation event in October.

In May and June 2005 a series of five walks around the town, guided by experts in various fields, was arranged, which provided an opportunity to look in detail at the architecture, trees, local history, geology and landscape setting of the town. These were attended by 92 people. Plans to involve young people and school children were progressed, and a children's competition was organised. Displays in the Mayfair Community Centre and in a shop window on Sandford Avenue were organised and a talk was given at the secondary school to a group of older students.

The town was divided into eight study areas and, using survey forms, teams of volunteers worked to identify the particular characteristics of each area, and record a description of each street. Thirty people took part in this exercise from June to September 2005. A second exhibition was then created to illustrate the survey and to seek local views on this. This consultation event took place in October 2005. The display also included contributions from young people involved in youth groups, and drawings and comments from the younger children who had entered the competition. The event was well attended by nearly 300 people. Comments were collected as before. A small exhibition in the library followed this event and questionnaires were again available.

The large amount of information that had been collected was then reviewed by an editorial group (four members of the steering group). The group re-visited some areas of the town to clarify the results of the earlier survey work and to collect additional detail. The other sections of the Design Statement were written and a first draft of the document was prepared by the editorial group. This was considered by the full steering group in September 2006 and subsequently amended and published for public consultation in December 2006. Thirty nine written responses were received by the end of January 2007, which were considered in detail and numerous small amendments were made to address these responses. The revised document was considered and approved by the Town Council in April 2007.

Consultation exercise at the Parish Centre



This Town Design Statement project has been a community effort, undertaken by volunteers, who have committed a huge amount of time to the research, the public events and exhibitions, and the development of this publication. The group responsible has been supported in this undertaking by officers at the District Council, the Shropshire Hills AONB Partnership and the Town Council. The project would not have been possible without their generous help and advice. A full list of acknowledgements can be found at the back of this document.

Church Stretton and its setting

Church Stretton is a town of just under 3,000 people in the south of Shropshire. It lies along the A49 Shrewsbury to Hereford road and is flanked by the impressive hills of the Long Mynd to the west and Caer Caradoc, Hazler and Ragleth hills to the east. It is the only town within the Shropshire Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). This national designation has the purpose of conserving and enhancing natural beauty whilst taking account of the social and economic needs of local communities and of rural industries such as agriculture and forestry.

The historic core of the town lies on the flatter land in the valley bottom, but development from the late Victorian period onwards has moved up the steeper slopes to east and west. The town has been described as 'Little Switzerland' because of the way the houses cling to the wooded hillsides. The watershed in the valley floor means that streams from Carding Mill Valley flow north, whilst those from Town Brook Valley run southwards. Church Stretton is located in a rapid response catchment due to its location within the Shropshire Hills. (A rapid response catchment can be defined as a catchment that reacts rapidly to rainfall resulting in flooding.) The South Shropshire Local Plan addresses the issue of flood risk in Policy RE2.

Tourism is the mainstay of the local economy and the town owes its popularity to its development as a resort during the late 1800s and early 1900s. Carding Mill Valley on the Long Mynd, owned and managed by the National Trust, is a popular destination, drawing visitors from the West Midlands region and beyond.

The character of Church Stretton is strongly influenced by its setting. The dramatic hills to the east and west provide an attractive backdrop to the town and serve to emphasise its location within a rural landscape. Trees are a dominant feature within the town itself and when combined with the large Edwardian properties, set within their own grounds, set the tone for the character of the settlement.

Geology

The area around Church Stretton is world famous for its geology. Many of the pioneering geologists of the 19th century worked in the region and a number of the local names they gave to the features are used throughout the world. The hills around the town are formed from some of the oldest rocks in Shropshire. The Stretton Hills to the east – Caradoc, Lawley, Hazler and Ragleth – comprise hard ashes and lavas from long extinct and lost volcanoes. These volcanoes were active during the Precambrian period (560 million years ago), a time before hard shelled life became abundant. The rocks of the Long Mynd to the west were laid down at a similar time in a gently subsiding arm of the sea. Over 7km of sandy, muddy and silty sediments were deposited in this shallow sinking basin, then later compressed and folded almost vertically, and now form the impressive bulk of the Long Mynd. The Church Stretton Fault, a major break in the earth's crust, was also created around this time. The main branch of the Fault runs along the lower slopes of the Stretton Hills and in times past, it was the scene of many violent earthquakes. Fortunately, it has been dormant for around 50 million years now.

The main Stretton Valley floor contains slightly younger (but still ancient) rocks from the Silurian period. These are buried beneath sands, gravels and boulder clays deposited along the base and sides of an ice sheet which penetrated the valley from the north, around 20,000 years ago. The ice came from the Cheshire Plain into north Shropshire and reached as far south as Marshbrook. It probably filled the valley to about 300m above present sea level but never actually covered the Long Mynd or the Stretton Hills. Much of the sands, gravels and clays which now carpet the valley floor were derived from local rocks, but some material had travelled much further, carried along in the base of the ice sheet from Scotland and northern England. The Long Mynd probably supported a local ice cap around 20,000 years ago. When this melted, the fast flowing streams, in a much wetter climate than today, carved out the steep sided young valleys of the Long Mynd (the batches) facing the town. These valleys had been initiated as more gentle features around 20 million years ago. The main ice sheet started to retreat about 16,000 years ago and had probably completely disappeared from the area by 12,000 years ago. Deprived of large volumes of melting

water from the ice, and in a somewhat drier climate, the valley streams have eroded the batches more slowly since then. In the last 10,000 years, the streams have deposited a large gravel fan which spreads out into the valley floor. It slopes gently to the east and the main part of the town is sited on this well drained area.

Landscape

The setting of Church Stretton within the Shropshire Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty means that the character of the surrounding countryside is important in understanding the context for the town. An analysis of the landscape character throughout Shropshire has been undertaken by Shropshire County Council. The results of this were published in September 2006 in the document 'The Shropshire Landscape Typology'. This shows that Church Stretton is surrounded by five landscape types:

- Settled Pastoral Farmlands
- High Volcanic Hills and Slopes
- High Open Moorlands
- Wooded Hills and Farmlands
- Pasture Hills



Settled Pastoral Farmlands

The Settled Pastoral Farmland landscape type occurs to the north and south of the town. This is a lowland landscape with heavy, often poorly drained soils. The landscape scale is small to medium in size with predominantly filtered views. Traditional livestock farming continues today as modern dairying and stock rearing. The historic field pattern of medium to irregular shaped fields, bounded by hedges has been retained in most places. These fields were probably derived from the informal piecemeal enclosure of open fields during the late medieval and early modern period. Small remnants of ancient woodland occur in some places but the tree cover is largely provided by scattered hedgerow, oak and ash. Willows and alders are frequent along watercourses. A sinuous network of lanes links the scattered farms and wayside cottages.

The Church Stretton landscape (photo by Peter Toghill)

High Volcanic Hills and Slopes

The Stretton hills to the east of Church Stretton (The Lawley, Caer Caradoc, Hope Bowdler, Ragleth and Helmeth) are in the High Volcanic Hills and Slopes landscape type. The hills are formed from volcanic deposits rather than being remnants of volcanoes themselves. The landscape remains unenclosed and would have been used for common rough grazing in the past. This has led to the survival of archaeological earthworks – for example, the Iron Age hillfort and field system on Caer Caradoc. A mixture of low intensity pastoral farming remains as the current land use and this, combined with the steeply sloping landform, creates a range of impressive views. Botanically rich communities of acid grassland plants occur on the shallow impoverished soils with bracken and scrub encroachment in places. Settlement is restricted to dispersed cottages at the foot of the slopes.

High Open Moorlands

To the west of the town, the higher slopes of the Long Mynd lie within the High Open Moorland landscape type. This is a largely unenclosed upland landscape, notable for its extensive tracts of moorland. The shallow impoverished soils give rise to a mosaic of heathland and rough grassland communities. Localised bogs and wet flushes add ecological diversity and limited areas of scrub occur on some slopes. Views from the gently undulating plateau tops are often panoramic. This contrasts with the restricted views from the narrow steep sided valleys (batches) above the town – which are often framed by trees. Within the batches, the scale of the landscape is smaller. Barrows and other prehistoric earthworks survive on the open moorland and some limited areas of ancient fields and more recent smallholdings may be found lower down the slopes of the Long Mynd and within the batches. Signs of habitation are restricted to the scattered cottages and small farms associated with these field systems.

Wooded Hills and Farmland

East of Church Stretton, the Wooded Hills and Farmlands landscape type occurs on the lower slopes of the Stretton Hills. Here, the sloping topography gives rise to a medium to large scale landscape that offers framed and sometimes filtered views. Farming tends to be mixed and is set within a pattern of dispersed farmsteads. Large, discrete blocks of woodland with an ancient semi-natural character occur on the steepest slopes. The fields are predominantly ancient and irregular and probably owe their origin to small medieval open fields. The straighter field boundaries result from enclosure during the late 1700s and early 1800s. Species-rich hedgerows form the field boundaries and frame the winding road network. Some of the woodlands have high wildlife value and are designated as SSSIs (Sites of Special Scientific Interest) or County Wildlife Sites while others have been purchased by the Woodland Trust and National Trust. These woodlands, which frame the town, are fundamental to the beauty of the valley.

Pasture Hills

To the north-west of the town, the Pasture Hills landscape type flanks the western slopes of the Long Mynd. This area has a prominent sloping topography with mixed but generally impoverished soils. The landscape scale is small to medium, offering filtered views through hedges and trees. Pastoral farming predominates within a pattern of unenclosed moorland and rough pasture. Such areas often support good populations of ground nesting birds, although this is no longer the case in Church Stretton. Remnants of ancient woodland occur on the steeper slopes and along the watercourses. Scattered hedgerow ash and oak are set within a species rich hedgerow network. The field systems are ancient and irregular and the settlement pattern is primarily one of dispersed farmsteads and wayside cottages.



Conclusion

The countryside around Church Stretton has been affected in part by recent agricultural intensification. Large breeding populations of curlew and lapwing and many other once common species are now extinct or dramatically reduced in numbers. The bright green of fertilised improved grassland has replaced native flower rich swards. In the valley bottom and along the lower slopes of the hills, pastoral farming predominates, there is good network of species-rich hedges and buildings are well dispersed. The town remains the focus for the local community. The surrounding hills offer unenclosed upland landscapes that are rich in wildlife and archaeological features and offer a sense of wildness and open space. The hills also afford extensive views of the town and surrounding countryside, a factor which must be taken into account in the consideration of any development proposal.

History Overview

The development of Church Stretton has been strongly influenced by the local topography. Historically the steep hills constrained much of the town to the east and west, whilst the marshy valley floor restricted development to the valley sides. More recent development (the last 50-60 years) has strayed beyond these geographical barriers and the town has expanded both up the hillsides and along the valley bottom. Development pressure in the past 10-15 years has led to residential developments within some of the larger gardens (sometimes including the demolition of the older property) as well as the subdivision of existing plots. Such developments have often been highly controversial.

Early history

Initial human activity in the Church Stretton area was on the hilltops, and during the Neolithic period the Portway on the Long Mynd came into use as a track way. In the late Bronze Age, the settlement and organisation of the landscape began and burial barrows and field systems were created on the hills. By 800 BC hillforts, such as the one on Caer Caradoc, were constructed. The use of metal tools led to greater woodland clearance by 500 BC and people began to move down into the valley floor. By AD 52, the Romans had built Watling Street along the east side of the valley.

Church Stretton and its neighbouring villages, All Stretton and Little Stretton, take their name from Watling Street (although these two settlements developed later). The town's church was probably in existence before the Norman Conquest. Later, a road from Chester to Bristol (formerly Bristol Road, now High Street) ran along the west side of the valley, close to the base of the Long Mynd. The town developed along this line between 1086 and 1200. Most of the buildings were concentrated to the south of the Burway/Sandford Avenue (formerly Brook Road and Lake Lane/Station Road respectively) crossing. In the late 1100s/early 1200s a great re-building of the church coincided with the siting of a planned town in Church Stretton. Burgage plots (narrow medieval plots) were laid out along the High Street and a Wednesday market was granted by the Crown – although this subsequently either failed to become established or fell into disuse.



2 stone carvings from the Parish Church



Parish Church

In 1593 a fire destroyed part of Church Stretton town but probably left other parts unscathed. The reconstruction seems not to have destroyed the town's original plan. A new half-timbered market house was built in 1617 in the Square (replaced in 1840 and then demolished as unsafe in 1963). A Thursday market was granted, and a number of inns flourished, taking advantage of the town's location on the Chester to Bristol road. The town's oldest building (apart from the church), the Bucks Head, occupies the southern end of the market place. This was built as a hall and cross wing. The hall has gone, but the cross wing dates from between 1287-1321, according to the *Victoria History of Shropshire*.



The Square

A number of notable Georgian houses were built along the High Street in the 1700s and a village school was constructed on the Burway Road in 1779 (Burway House). A second school was erected in Church Street in 1860 with a further classroom being added in 1893. This now houses the library and information centre. The school was in turn replaced by new primary and secondary schools in Shrewsbury Road in the 1960s. The swimming baths incorporate part of the former Workhouse (built in 1838).



School House

The Victorian and Edwardian town

Probably the single most important event in the history of the town took place in 1852 with the coming of the railway, encouraging the idea of the town developing as a resort. In 1884-5 an avenue of lime trees was planted, instigated by Holland Sandford, rector of Eaton-under-Heywood. The road was later named after him. Significant houses built at this time include Bank House on Longhills Road and Woodcote (1896-8), by Parker and Unwin. These architects also designed the pair of cottages at the bottom of Cunney Road, prototypes for Garden City houses at New Earswick and Letchworth. The Longmynd Hotel, occupying a dominant site high above the town, began as the Hydrotherapy Establishment and was built at the end of the Victorian period.

In 1899 the Church Stretton Building Co. Ltd was formed. Together with the Church Stretton Land Company (1897) and several other organisations, this company invested capital to develop the town as 'a superior residential district' and to attract 'a good class of visitor'. New roads were laid out on the slopes of the hills. These included Cunney Road, Madeira Walk, Trevor Hill, Stanyeld Road, Links Road, Crossways and Clive Avenue. Watling Street, for the first time, also had begun to be settled.



Arden House

Within 10 years, large villas had been built on the sides of the valley and these exemplify the rich variety of Edwardian architecture. Overdale (c1903) in Clive Avenue, Mynd Court (c1905), Longhills Road, the neo-timber framed Arden House and The Rowans on Burway Road are notable. Towards the end of the grandest phase of Church Stretton's development, Scotsmans Field (1908), Burway Road (designed by Ernest Newton) and the White House (1913), Sandford Avenue, (designed for the Rev. C.S. Horne and recently demolished) all merit a mention.

Many new shops and houses were built in the town centre at this time. Around 60 small houses, semi-detached or in short terraces, were built at the southern end of Crossways and Watling Street, and further south along this old road.

The detached houses of Hazler Crescent and the grander villas of Sandford Avenue and Watling Street were constructed at the same time. There was also some building on Clive Avenue, Cunney Road, Madeira Walk, Trevor Hill and Stanyeld. Almost all of these were detached villas in ample grounds, similar to those in the eastern stretch of Sandford Avenue. These large Edwardian villas, complemented by spacious grounds designed as an integral part of the development, define much of the character of the town today.

However, this great burst of growth had slowed by 1909 and many plans, notably to develop the north-eastern end of the town were not realised. By the mid 1920s little had been added except the 20 council houses off Ludlow Road. The largest elements in the town's growth in the 1930s and 1940s were the 30 council houses built in Essex Road around 1930 and later, the detached houses along Hazler Road and around the east end of Sandford Avenue. Property in the town between Beaumont and Essex Roads, including part of the south side of Lutwyche Road and part of the north side of Sandford Avenue, was developed. There was also infilling in Carding Mill Valley Road, Madeira Walk, Shrewsbury Road, and the south ends of Watling Street South and Clive Avenue. The new bypass was built in 1941 which bisected the area by Crossways and absorbed most of Watling Street.

Post war to the present

After the Second World War, an urgent housing shortage led to development near the town centre. In 1947 council houses were built in Lutwyche Road and Essex Road. In the 1950s 72 more council houses were built in Lutwyche Road and Central Avenue in semi-detached pairs and short terraces, and the council housing in Essex Road was continued north. More houses were built along the east side of Shrewsbury Road, and in 1963-4 the 22 council houses and bungalows in Brooksbury were built. In the late 1970s and early 1980s Essex Road was extended further north, including Windsor Place, which opened in 1978, whilst Churchill Road was extended east to meet it. This completed the housing encirclement of Brooksbury recreation ground and Russells

Meadow playing fields. West and north of the town, private houses were built on the south side of Burway Road and on the west side of Shrewsbury Road around the Yeld.

On the eastern side of the valley, there was some infilling on Clive Avenue, especially at the south end, and the south side of Sandford Avenue. In the 1960s the large private estate at Battlefield was built. In the same period more private housing was built in Poplar Drive up the northern slope of Ragleth hill. The extension of Poplar Drive, with Chelmick Drive and the upper part of Ragleth Road, higher up the side of the valley caused some disquiet and as a result a civic society, the Stretton Society, was formed in 1974-5. Hazler Orchard off Hazler Road, also high on the hillside, was developed at this time.

At the south end of the town Woodcote Edge's houses were built in the grounds of Woodcote in the mid 1960s. On the opposite side of Ludlow Road, the Stretton Farm estate of bungalows was built over the grounds of Stretton House, which was demolished early in the 1970s. In 1968 there was a serious fire at The Hotel on the corner of High Street and Sandford Avenue and it later became a public house.

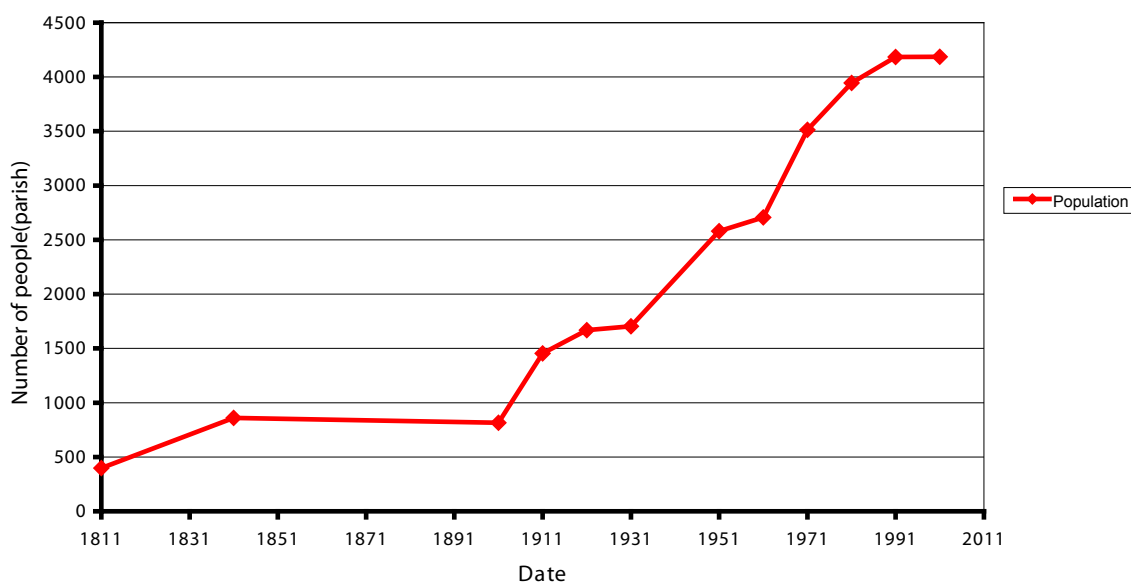
In 1986 part of the town centre was designated a Conservation Area. In the 1980s and 1990s Swain's Meadow, Rectory Gardens, King's Court, and the housing on the north side of Sandford Avenue in the town centre were built. The largest change to the town centre layout was made when the supermarket was opened next to the car park in 1994. With this, the central part of High Street was opened up to Easthope Road and Central Avenue. In the early 1990s the Mynd industrial estate was developed following the earlier development in the 1970s of the station yard. The Parish Council was replaced by Church Stretton Town Council in 2001.

The history section uses material from the Victoria County History, Shropshire. This information is reproduced from 'A Victoria History of the Counties of England, A History of the County of Shropshire, Volume X' pages 79 to 82, by permission of the Executive Editor.

Population

The current population of the town of Church Stretton is 2,789 (1) spread between two wards. Historically the population was much smaller, growing from an estimated 35 in 1086 to around 489 in 1667 and to 924 by 1801. Population growth in the parish between 1811 and 2001 is shown in Figure 1 (below). This diagram shows the numbers for the whole parish and includes the settlements of All Stretton and Little Stretton. The sudden increase between 1901 and 1911 is attributed to development of Church Stretton as a health resort. The population of the parish (4,186 in 2001) has nearly doubled since 1951 and is stable now.

Church Stretton Parish: Population Growth from 1811 to 2001



(1) Population figures source: Office for National Statistics 2001 Census, key statistics using the 2004 Urban and Rural definition. Information provided by the Sustainability Group, Economy and Environment department, Shropshire County Council.

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Section 2

General Design Guidelines

Introduction

The Design Guidelines which follow are based on an analysis of the information gathered from surveying the town and from the consultations for the Town Design Statement. More information about the material gathered from the consultations is found in Appendix 3 at the back of this document.

The Design Guidelines make reference to the views, the quality of the environment, trees, Conservation Areas, lighting and landscaping in particular. These are followed by a set of General Development Guidelines and Design Guidelines for larger residential developments. This section is then followed by the detailed character descriptions, recommendations and design guidelines for each area of the town.

The implementation of the guidelines and recommendations will require resources of various kinds from a number of public bodies. It is recognised that such resources are limited and future budgets may be constrained, and that in approving these guidelines and recommendations public authorities such as SSDC and the Town Council, will not necessarily be making a commitment of additional resources.

Further details on implementation are in Section 3.

Local character

The notes on the history of Church Stretton in the previous section give some details of how the town developed. Generally the buildings have a variety of styles with black and white half timbered buildings, and a predominance of red brick and render. There are very few classical buildings. Exceptions are the three banks in the town centre and Nos.17 and 19 in The Square. For many people the character of the town is best illustrated by the buildings of the Victorian and Edwardian periods, of the last years of the 19th and the early years of the 20th centuries. This was a time of rapid growth, when many of the substantial houses and villas were built. Good quality materials were readily available as well as cheap labour and skilled craftsmanship. These houses are well proportioned, set in spacious grounds and have many decorative details, including neo-timber framing. As Nicholas Pevsner recorded in his book on Shropshire in 1958 *'Half timber is the hallmark of Church Stretton'*. (2) A large number of trees, which residents value so highly, were planted at this time and now screen many of the properties. If the special character of Church Stretton is to be maintained it is important to preserve the setting of the period properties, as well as the properties themselves.

Clive Avenue is a good example of a road of large Edwardian houses set in spacious gardens, exemplified by the landmark house 'Overdale' built in 1903, complemented by some splendid street trees. Even the more modest properties in other parts of the town, built in the earlier part of the 20th century, display many of the same features which illustrate local character. These incorporate a distinctive mix of mellow red brick, with roughcast or render, some with hanging tiles, timber details on gables, and contrasting slate or tiled roofs. Details of windows, porches and doors add to the overall character and help to give the town a distinct and recognisable character. Much of the post war development, as in many other towns, did not, sadly, respect this character. (2) see Bibliography

The importance of views and the quality of the environment

From the consultation undertaken, local people felt strongly that the special character of Church Stretton was particularly demonstrated by its setting amongst the hills. The views of the surrounding countryside are the most important feature of the town. People value the green spaces within the town and the

Quality of Environment Guidelines and Recommendations:

QE1. The separateness of the settlements of Church Stretton, All Stretton and Little Stretton should be maintained.

QE2. Development on the higher levels of the hillsides outside the Limit to Development, as defined by Policy S1 of the Local Plan, should only be permitted in exceptional circumstances, namely:
a) that there is no significant impact on the landscape setting of the town,
b) no significant loss of tree cover and
c) no detriment to visual amenity.

QE3. Infill development and building in gardens should only be allowed when it respects the character and appearance of the area.



Overdale

QE4. Existing views to the hills and to special features such as the parish church should be respected.

Trees Guidelines and Recommendations:

T1. It is important that more consideration should be given to the layout of development when there are large trees on the site.

T2. A proper assessment of the impact of the construction of new buildings on trees should be carried out for all developments affecting trees. (See British Standard BS5837:2005.) Adequate root protection and exclusion zones should then be enforced.

T3. The implications of shading by retained trees should be shown on all planning proposals. New development should be designed to avoid such shady areas.

T4. Space should be set aside for tree planting in all new development and at least one tree planted for every new building, wherever practical.

T5. Consideration should be given to the replacement of existing street trees, when necessary, and the planting of more trees in public areas, particularly native trees.



Entrance to Rectory Wood and Field - a gateway to the hills

way that the countryside comes right into the town. The setting of Church Stretton within the Shropshire Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty is greatly appreciated.

Many people expressed the view that the more recent larger estates and some infilling and development in gardens has been detrimental to the character of the town. Small developments are felt to be more in keeping with the character of the town than large estates. Some residents felt that the subdivision of plots has gone as far as it should. People value the compactness of the town and believe that excessive development, either up the hillsides or on the valley floor would adversely affect the character of Church Stretton.

Development on hillsides and associated retaining walls are a particular issue in Church Stretton because of the steepness of the slopes. Hillside developments need sensitive treatment to avoid creating fortress-like structures. Such constructions form scars on the landscape and are visible from across the valley.

The need for greater consultation and discussion at the design stage was expressed by many people. This would improve the quality of design and help to maintain the local character and special qualities valued by residents. Consideration should be given to the creation of a Design Forum to facilitate dialogue between councils (the District and Town Councils), developers, designers and representatives of local residents to encourage good quality design in all projects. This could be similar to the conservation area committee in Ludlow.

Trees

Trees are a special feature of Church Stretton and greatly valued. The extensive tree cover is a distinctive characteristic of the town and the Shropshire Hills AONB. The wooded hill slopes and large number of garden trees contribute greatly to the rural feel of the built up area and provide links to the surrounding countryside. Trees are so important to the town that they merit their own section in the Town Design Statement. Consideration should be given to the development of policies within South Shropshire's Local Development Framework to deal with the protection of important trees and woodlands. These Tree Guidelines (and the more comprehensive section on trees in Appendix 1) have been developed with the Shropshire Hills AONB Partnership in conjunction with Tree Wardens for the town and local residents. The aim is to conserve and enhance Church Stretton's tree cover so that it continues to make a major contribution to the character of the town.



View from the War Memorial

Tree guidelines and recommendations

The issues surrounding the conservation and enhancement of tree cover can be grouped under three headings: protection; new planting; and education. However, if these tree guidelines are to be effective, some means of implementation is required. Members of the community could play a role in this, supported by the AONB Partnership and others. The recommendations in Appendix 1 offer a means of involving the community to implement some of these guidelines.

Protecting Trees

Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs) are the main mechanism for protecting trees. The TPO system is administered by South Shropshire District Council. The Council has published a Best Value Practice Note (BVPN no. 20) to explain the duties, powers and policies for trees and hedgerows. The guidance could, however, be expanded to give fuller information and advice on appropriate methods for safeguarding trees. Construction adjacent to large trees can be damaging and can lead to later pruning or felling and an appropriate guideline deals with this.

Although the Tree Preservation Order system is designed to be pro-active, South Shropshire District Council policy is to make a TPO only when trees or groups of trees are:

- specimens of townscape or landscape significance
- sound and healthy;
- do not give rise to any safety concerns;
- under active threat of removal or damage.

This approach means that many trees valued by local residents in the town may currently be unprotected. There is concern that such trees could be felled or damaged.

Further information on trees and tree protection will be found in Appendix 1 at the end of this document.

New planting

Many of the trees in the town were planted in a relatively short space of time around 100 years ago. These trees are now approaching the natural end of their lives, and unless a systematic approach is taken to their replacement, the character of the town will be significantly altered. When new trees are planted, the species chosen must be appropriate for the soil, the level of exposure to wind and drainage conditions on the site. Native trees provide the most benefits for biodiversity, but the character of the town is defined by non-native plantings as much as it is by indigenous species. Similarly, a tree's size at maturity is an important factor and one that can lead to early felling if not properly understood.

Education Issues: Trees

To support the implementation of the Tree Guidelines, raise awareness about trees, and provide information about trees, the development of a programme of events and initiatives is suggested. More information about these potential developments will be found in Appendix 1.



Group of trees on Hazler Road (spinney)



Lime Walk

Appendix 1 gives more information on the background to the Tree Guidelines and suggests further recommendations. It should be read in conjunction with this section. It is recognised that these Guidelines and Recommendations are dependent upon resources. A range of funding opportunities, including sponsorship, will need to be sought.

Conservation Areas

Part of the town centre was designated a Conservation Area in 1986. In March 2005 the Conservation Area was extended to cover a wider area on the west side of the town (to the north and south west of the existing Conservation Area), in recognition of its special architectural, historic and landscape interest and the need to conserve and enhance this. One of the special characteristics of the area identified at the time was the large individual houses in woodland, (many built during the Edwardian period), the mature landscaping and the tranquillity of the area. The panoramic views from the roads, such as Cunnery Road, Madeira Walk and Trevor Hill were additional important features.

In a Conservation Area special attention needs to be given to the use of materials and the need for high quality design. Retaining historic features is important to maintaining individuality and helps to create a sense of place. There is much concern about the loss of original features in period properties and the installation of unsympathetic windows, doors and porches. This could be controlled by removing permitted development rights, which has been implemented in many

Conservation Areas Guidelines and Recommendations:

C1. Traditional materials and designs should be used for window frames, doors and bargeboards, together with natural slate and mellow clay roof tiles in Conservation Areas, where appropriate.

C2. Unnecessary signs should be removed within the town and street furniture should be consistent and in keeping with an historic market town.

C3. Footways should be paved with natural stone, or similar, in the town centre.

Note: It is recognised that these Guidelines are subject to resources being available.

Lighting Guidelines and Recommendations:

L1. The low pressure sodium (yellow) street lights in the town should be progressively replaced, with less harsh and more attractive lighting. In the town centre when possible street lights should be mounted on buildings, rather than on columns.

L2. Wherever possible energy efficient lighting should be used in preference to conventional external lighting.

L3. External lighting should be designed to avoid light spillage and to have the minimum brightness and period of illumination necessary to maintain security. Where possible movement-sensitive automatic lights for security purposes should be used to avoid light pollution by continuous illumination and reduce energy consumption.

L4. Where appropriate conditions should be placed on new planning permissions to enable control of external lighting.

of Shrewsbury's Conservation Areas for some time. It is recognised that the proposals to extend the Conservation Area and remove permitted development rights are dependent on resources being available to South Shropshire District Council and more detailed evidence being presented.

There is a growing proliferation of signs and street furniture in the town centre which detracts from the historic character of the area. Consideration needs to be given to reduce clutter, co-ordinate design and reinforce the local character. The design of hard landscaping and street furniture, and the materials used in public areas are important. Improvements could be made in particular to signing and the use of quality paving materials.

Further background information and recommendations relating to Conservation Areas will be found in Appendix 2 at the end of this document, and should be read in conjunction with this section.



The replacement window on the right does not respect the original character of the building



The town centre would be greatly enhanced by quality paving



Signs in the town centre

The impact of lighting

Lighting is an integral part of the streetscape and should be considered in conjunction with all the other streetscape elements. It can give the town, and open spaces within the town, another dimension. Used incorrectly it can cause light pollution. Flood lighting for sports facilities and security lighting (used outside retirement and residential homes for example) should be designed to control brightness and the adverse effect on residential areas and the night sky. Street lighting on the hillsides in particular stands out from the valley floor. It is recommended that street lighting should be designed to prevent light spillage and efficiently light only the intended area, and that consideration is given to the placing of lights on buildings (rather than lamp posts) particularly in the town centre. The careful lighting of buildings, such as the parish church, is welcomed. Energy efficient lighting should be used where possible and the period of illumination minimised.

Landscaping

The quality of the natural landscape is an over-riding characteristic of the town. A key requirement of new development is that a detailed landscape scheme should be submitted. This needs to take the site and its setting into consideration and maximise the opportunities for retaining existing landscape features. Space needs to be allocated for tree planting and other screening. Play areas for children are important in new housing developments and consideration should be given to the layout and grouping of houses to enable children to play safely.



Garden boundaries are an important characteristic of many streets



Smaller scaled paving would be preferable to a large expanse of black tarred surface in the Conservation Area



Good landscape planting greatly improves Kings Court



Insensitive treatment of a brook

Landscaping Guidelines and Recommendations:

LA1. Where possible, developments should have a quality landscape scheme aimed at enhancing the rural, tree-rich character of the town. It should incorporate new tree planting and retain as many of the natural landscape features as possible, and encourage biodiversity.

LA2. Landscape schemes should be robustly monitored and enforced.

LA3. Where possible, developments should provide green areas with suitable landscaping incorporating existing and newly planted trees.

LA4. Garden boundaries should be softened, where appropriate, with natural materials to help to maintain a 'countryside feel'.

LA5. The choice of materials of hard landscaping and driveways in front of buildings should be carefully considered and should reflect the character of adjoining buildings and areas. The area of hard landscaping should be minimised to enable soft landscaping to dominate and reduce the potential of flooding from water run-off

LA6. Existing green areas of public open space should be retained and managed appropriately.

LA7. It is desirable that play areas for children and some open space be incorporated into housing developments wherever possible, or a contribution towards play areas/open space elsewhere made.

LA8. Opportunities to create more 'cuts' for pedestrians should be pursued in all re-development and development proposals. These may encourage walking to the town centre rather than driving.

General Development Guidelines:

D1. All new development should respect, maintain and enhance local distinctiveness and character.

D2. All new development should be of an appropriate scale and reflect the existing settlement pattern.

D3. Developers should be asked to refer to the Town Design Statement in the Design and Access Statement. These are now required for all planning applications relating to built development.

D4. A variety of building styles sympathetic with and complementary to the older buildings of the town should be used, avoiding over fussy combinations of too many details. Inappropriate use of pastiche and the use of porticos and styles foreign to the town should be avoided.

D5. Innovative designs of the time, using modern materials, should also be encouraged providing they respect and enhance local distinctiveness and character.

D6. The materials used should harmonise with and reflect the surrounding buildings. Materials would normally be selected from mellow red bricks, rendering or roughcast, timber, stone and hanging tiles or terracotta for details. Brick colour should match that of the older properties in the town.

D7. Contrasting grey or dark roof tiles, natural slate or mellow clay roof tiles should be used. Bright red roofs (or other inappropriate colours) and concrete roof tiles should generally be avoided. Wall and roof colours should be different to provide contrast.

D8. Local materials and recycled materials should be used where possible.

D9. Environmentally friendly building techniques and development practices should be incorporated into new developments demonstrating resource efficiency design techniques to a minimum of the very good EcoHomes standard/3* the Code for Sustainable Homes standard, to ensure energy conservation, minimise adverse impact on the environment and where practical use renewable energy.

D10. Wherever practical, sustainable surface water drainage systems should be incorporated within development schemes.

D11. All new development should consider the needs of people with disabilities.

D12. Where garden development is permitted the choice of materials and colours should harmonise with the original period house, and reflect the proportions and detailing.

D13. The shape of roofs should provide some variety and interest, and where there are groups of houses the roof lines should not form a straight line.

General Development

Any future development in Church Stretton should follow these design guidelines. They are intended to maintain the special characteristics of the town and reflect the views of the community.



Natural boundaries provide biodiversity and are an important habitat for wildlife



Boundaries should harmonise with the locality



Examples of new properties



Examples of interesting roof lines



Timber framing and timber details

D14. The pitch of the roof is an important design consideration and for infill development should normally reflect the Victorian, Edwardian and other early 20th century properties nearby.

D15. Boundaries should harmonise with the locality – where natural banks and hedges, or stone walls are predominant, brick walls should be avoided.

D16. The height of retaining walls should be restricted and consideration given to stepping or softening with planting whenever possible. Materials should reflect the nearby boundary features of older properties.

D17. The existing topography of Church Stretton should be conserved and development should avoid significant change to the hillsides.

D18. Groups of houses should be arranged to form variety and the appearance of natural growth. They should incorporate a mix of wall finishes to avoid uniformity and a repetition of one style.

D19. In recognition of the importance of the setting of the town, consideration should be given to the visual appearance and impact of any development from the surrounding hills.

D20. High quality in design, materials and workmanship should be strongly encouraged.

Design Guidelines for larger residential developments:

If a larger scale development, for more than seven or eight houses, were to be proposed, the following additional design guidelines should be used:

LD1. All new housing, whether market priced or affordable, should be well designed, in scale and in keeping with the character of the town.

LD2. Any development should provide individuality with styles that complement and harmonise with existing properties in the town.

LD3. The layout should incorporate small groups of houses rather than large blocks of similar houses

LD4. Quality materials should be used, which should complement the existing character of Church Stretton.

LD5. High priority should be given to a substantial landscaping scheme to ensure that houses are set within a tree-rich landscape.

LD6. Natural boundaries should be planted to reduce the need for brick walls and provide biodiversity.

Area 1 Design Guidelines:

A1G1. The lime trees in Sandford Avenue are an important feature. They should be properly maintained and replacements planted as necessary.

A1G2. The country lane appearance of Watling Street North should be retained.

A1G3. Development should respect the character and appearance of the area and normally reflect the architectural styles of the earlier houses, with mellow red brick and rendering, and should harmonise in terms of scale, and spacing.

Detailed area descriptions with Guidelines and Recommendations for enhancement

The town was divided into eight study areas for the purpose of surveying by teams of volunteers. These areas have been changed slightly for the written descriptions, below, to avoid splitting some roads between areas.

Area 1 Sandford Avenue (East), Watling Street North, Battlefield

Sandford Avenue (East)

Sandford Avenue and its famous avenue of lime trees, is the most dramatic of the 'gateways' to the town and one of the defining distinctive features of Church Stretton, as it descends towards the town centre. Approaching from the direction of Much Wenlock, there are good views of the town ahead and the hills beyond, particularly in winter. The lime trees were originally planted in 1884, a project instigated by the Rev Dr Holland Sandford. Some replanting has taken place in recent years. Many local people have specifically identified this avenue of trees and leafy approach to the town as of significant value and it is one of the best loved features of the town.



The trees and the mature planting fronting the houses, set in spacious plots, and the grass verges give a unified appearance and successfully link countryside and town. Sandford Avenue contains a high number of substantial, red brick houses (some part rendered or roughcast), which date back to the expansion of Church Stretton in the late Victorian and Edwardian era. The impression is of quality materials, attractive roof details and windows, finials, hanging tiles and some stone facing. Later bungalows, built in the 1930s, have character and are set in spacious grounds. On the south side particularly, the tree canopy is augmented by substantial conifers and other trees and large shrubs in gardens.



Infilling has already changed the character to some extent with some plots divided, some rear and front gardens developed and new off-shoots with small groups of new houses. Large houses squeezed into small plots do not reflect the spacious setting of existing development. The generous frontages of remaining large plots, well screened from the road with mature hedges and tree cover provided by the lime trees, mean the distinctive character has been largely retained but is in danger of being spoilt if insensitive development continues. It has been proposed that this area be included in a new Conservation Area.



Sandford Avenue

Watling Street North

This single track road and its continuation is the original Roman road and of historical significance. It has distinctive natural steep banks and no footway, giving the appearance of a country lane, reinforced by the laid hedge and abundance of wild



Watling Street North

flowers, which provide a good habitat for wildlife. The houses on the eastern side are almost invisible as they are set well back from the road. Many are large and in substantial grounds with mature and varied trees. A pair of substantial Edwardian style houses on the western side is also well screened. Materials include mellow brick and render or roughcast with interesting porches, bay windows and roof details. It has been proposed that this area be included in a new Conservation Area.

This ancient thoroughfare, together with Cwms Lane within the Battlefield estate, provides an atmospheric gateway for walkers to one of Church Stretton's main attractions – Caer Caradoc and the hills beyond. This is a favourite road for many in the town, because of its 'old world charm' and country lane character. Other more recent additions of brick walls are not in keeping with the character of this area. A particularly high retaining wall, although using stone, is not sympathetic or in scale with existing banks. A harshly landscaped stream using inappropriate materials does not enhance this natural feature.

The white painted Catholic Church of St Milburga was built in 1929 and although a modest building is a feature on an important corner. It has walls of pebble dash with a red tiled roof. There are good views across the valley from here.

Battlefield

The name Battlefield refers to the resistance to early Roman rule and the possible presence of Caratacus here. The Battlefield area of the town, consisting of Helmeth Road, Oaks Road, Alison Road and their off-shoots, together with the new houses of Brook Meadow, has all been developed since the 1960s. This area is reached via the narrow Watling Street North and enjoys an open aspect with extensive views to the Long Mynd, Caer Caradoc and Helmeth



Helmeth Road

Woods. The sense of space and panoramic vistas owe much to the pre-dominance of the low brick-built bungalows. The unifying feature of low brick walls, which characterises the estate gardens, is appreciated by local people. There are some important mature trees, mainly conifers, on Helmeth Road, which add to the character of this area. The building density is greater here than on Sandford Avenue and Watling Street North but still generally spacious.

Area 2 Design Guidelines:

A2G1. Development should respect the character and appearance of the area and generally reflect the architectural styles of the earlier houses, with mellow red brick and rendering, and should harmonise in terms of scale and materials.

A2G2. Roof tiles should provide contrast to the walls and bright red roof tiles should be avoided.

A2G3. Any building permitted must be at a density appropriate to the area and allow adequate space for landscaping.

A2G4. Any development must fit into its setting and the local topography.

A2G5. When building in groups, a variety of styles should be encouraged, drawing from this area's existing vernacular.

A2G6. The spinney opposite Windle Hill should be retained as an area of open space for its amenity value.

A2G7. The existing banks, hedges and stone walls should be retained and any new development should incorporate similar boundary features to preserve the country feel of this lane.

A2G8. The importance of the tree canopy in screening development should be reinforced with any new development or enhancement schemes.

Area 2 Hazler Road and area



Hazler Road

Hazler Road

This was the original and only route to Much Wenlock and beyond until 1824, when it was displaced by Sandford Avenue. The properties are in a variety of styles. They are well spaced and set among trees, and are in keeping with their surroundings. The houses are set well back from the road, which preserves the rural appearance. The road has some fine old oak trees, which add a distinctive character, particularly to the lower end. The road gently curves upwards towards Hazler Hill and with its high banks and no footway gives the appearance of a country lane, set against a backdrop of woodlands. The filtered views of the town and Long Mynd from the higher eastern end are particularly impressive and are an important characteristic of the area.

Many houses in Hazler Road date from the first half of the twentieth century. They tend to be individually distinct, of generous proportions, well separated and to have mature gardens. This residential area has great variety, using mainly red brick, as well as render and roughcast – the latter a distinctive feature of Church Stretton. It has been proposed that this area (together with Caradoc Drive) be included in

a new Conservation Area. Most of the modern additions, predominantly bungalows, fit well in the surroundings. Most of the banks comprise natural vegetation, complemented by local rough stone. The use of brick for retaining walls is out of character here.

Higher up, a large new property on the corner of Windle Hill is unnecessarily dominating because of its insensitive placing on an elevated plot. It is not as set back as other houses and this disturbs the rural atmosphere. The site was originally wooded and all the trees were totally cleared to allow for the development. The size of the property is such that there is now insufficient space for trees.



View from Snatchfields Lane (of Hazler Orchard area)

Hazler Orchard, Westfields, The Meadows and Windle Hill

These streets occupy a commanding position, where the land slopes steeply. Because they are very prominent they are the most visible feature of Church Stretton when seen from across the other side of the valley, and are very noticeable from the well used public footpath along Snatchfields Lane. Hazler Orchard is the older road and trees are beginning to soften the outlines. Newer developments at Westfields and The Meadows consist of substantial executive houses with large gardens, which mostly sit well in the landscape.

The executive style two and three storey properties on Windle Hill are particularly dominant on the east side of the valley. The houses are large and close together and local residents feel they are less in keeping with the character of the town than some other modern developments.

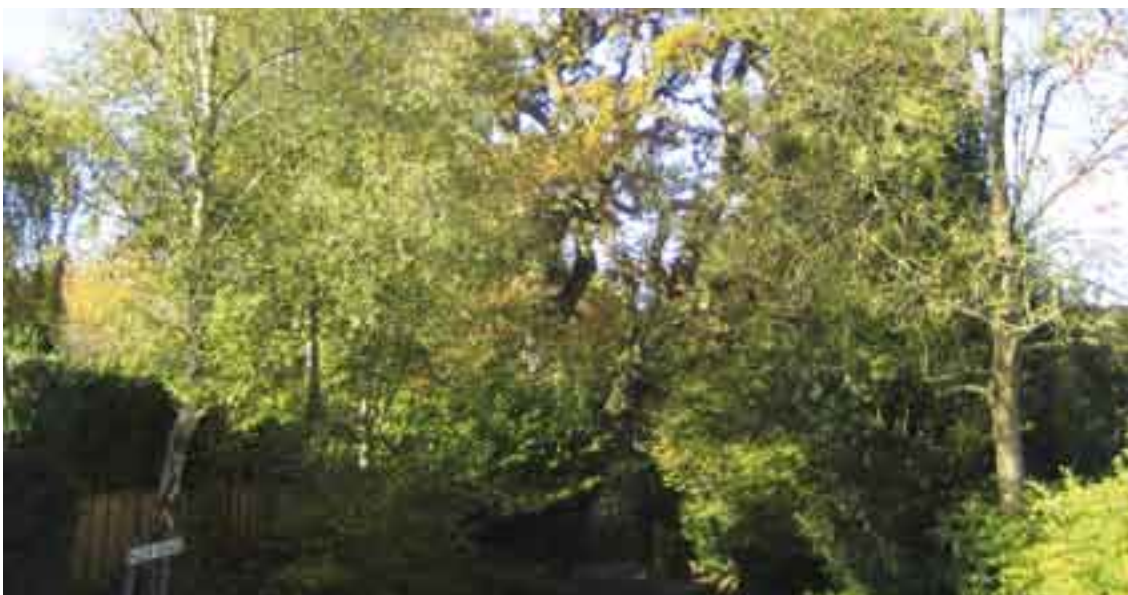
The spinney on a triangle of land opposite Windle Hill is an important open space. It is closely planted mainly with larch, Scots pine and Douglas fir, which complement the wooded appearance of this area. It provides screening for the existing and proposed new houses at Westholme and should be retained for its amenity value.

Hazler Crescent

The Crescent is varied with some substantial older houses built of brick and roughcast. There are many surviving period details and some pleasing Edwardian villas. There are several detached villas and some more modest houses set close together. These are in red brick with mainly squared and some splayed bay windows. Other buildings are roughcast or red brick with roughcast on the upper storey. Some have gables and one or two have dentil cornices.



Hazler Crescent



Hazler Road

Area 3 Design Guidelines:

A3G1. Development in Clive Avenue should respect the character and appearance of the area and normally reflect the architectural styles of the earlier houses, with mellow red brick, half timbering and rendering, and should harmonise in terms of scale and materials.

A3G2. Any further development proposals relating to Overdale should respect the character and its setting within an Italianate garden.

A3G3. Any building permitted by subdivision of the larger plots must be at a density which will ensure that the natural landscape continues to dominate the area.

A3G4. The existing stone walls and grass verges should be conserved.

A3G5. Views between houses of the surrounding hills should be respected, and the prominent appearance of the area from the town and the other side of the valley should be taken into account in any development.

Area 3 Clive Avenue, Watling Street South and area

The area is almost exclusively residential. Houses are a mixture of brick, render and half-timbered features. There is a variety of architectural styles and ages from the Victorian period up to the present day. A definitive right of way, footpath 30, of great antiquity and formerly known as The Coffin Path, emerges on to Clive Avenue. It can be traced southwards over Ragleth Hill to Chelmick and leads to St Laurence's church in the centre of the town.



Clive Avenue



Overdale

above triangular windows, inspired by the Arts and Crafts style. This area with its special historic, architectural and landscape features is outstanding and it has been proposed that it should be designated a Conservation Area.

Three large oak trees are a particularly distinctive feature and should be protected. In recent years there has been some infilling in the larger gardens and on the remaining open spaces. Clive Avenue provides access to public footpaths leading to Ragleth and Hazler Hills and to walks in the Woodland Trust properties of Gough's Coppice and Phylla's Grove. The lower part of Clive Avenue has high quality houses, well spaced and set back. New houses have recently been built in the large garden of one of the Edwardian houses and the Donkey field on the other side of the road



Bridleways

Clive Avenue

Clive Avenue, an unadopted road, is wide and gracious, with broad grass verges, stone walls and extensive tree planting. There are excellent views of the surrounding hills, as it leads up the slope of Ragleth Hill. There are many large Edwardian houses on Clive Avenue, the most notable being Overdale, built in 1903, a landmark building in a fine Italianate landscaped garden, visible from many parts of the town. It has half-timbered gable ends, a typical feature noted by Pevsner as *'the hallmark of Church Stretton'*. The Victoria History of Shropshire says that it exemplifies *'the rich variety of Edwardian architecture'*. It has stone mullions and stained glass in the upper lights, and is complemented by the original coach house. It was the most mentioned and valued individual property in Church Stretton during the public consultations on this design statement project and is particularly important in the townscape because of its prominent position when viewed from across the valley. A recent appeal decision has allowed for four houses to be built in the grounds, which the inspector considered would conserve the main elements of the setting.

Other houses of note on Clive Avenue include Hill Cottage with its curved bay windows and timber-clad walls, Clivedon with hanging tiles and fine brick garden wall, and Holmwood (no longer a private residence) with fishscale tiles

has outline planning permission for four houses, where the introduction of natural landscaping will be of vital importance to provide some screening.

The Bridleways and Snatchfields Lane

A modern, modest housing estate, built around two substantial older houses and a cottage. The bungalows are varied in style, well spaced and well set back from the gentle curving road. Good use has been made of trees in softening the buildings.

Ragleth Road and Poplar Drive (leading from Clive Avenue)

On Ragleth Road the houses, though more modest, are well separated and set back from the road, with a pleasing variety of styles, mellow red brick and render, helped by the gentle curvature of the road. Poplar Drive, though containing larger houses, is of essentially similar style. The steady rise in the land ensures good views of the town and the hills.

Chelmick Drive and Chelmick Close (leading from Ragleth Road)

The houses and bungalows of recent construction (mostly 1960s) are quite varied, and include some of the most elevated in Church Stretton. Some plots are quite large and generally well separated. Those on the Close are mostly shielded from view.



Watling Street South

Watling Street South and Crossways/A49

A fairly wide straight road, of Roman origins, leads to the A49, which constitutes the limit of Church Stretton to the south. There is an interesting variety of ages and size of houses with good views to the hills across the valley and looking north, to Caradoc. There are some good examples of Victorian and Edwardian houses with period details including stained glass, original doors and windows, stone dressings and walls with railings. Brick is predominant with some render and roughcast.

The Sandford nursing home, the church and an area used by coaches for picking up and dropping off, give this area a wide community use. The imposing Methodist Church on Watling Street South, built with Ruabon brick, was designed by Joseph Bratton of Birkenhead and opened for services in 1866. It was renovated in 1886 and refurbished in 1937, and has had recent additions. The manse was built in 1909 and the church hall added in 1957.

The wide grass verge alongside the A49, unfortunately not well maintained, gives a neglected look to this important part of the town approach. The A49 is a busy trunk road which divides Church Stretton. A new development of apartments, fronting on to the main road, makes a statement in this prominent location and has gables which reflect neighbouring properties. The open space with trees, near the traffic lights, is an important feature in an otherwise tightly-built area.



The Methodist Church

A3G6. Landscaping along the A49, the main entrance to the town from the south, should be considered. There is a need to screen (with trees) the properties in Watling Street South, which back on to the A49.

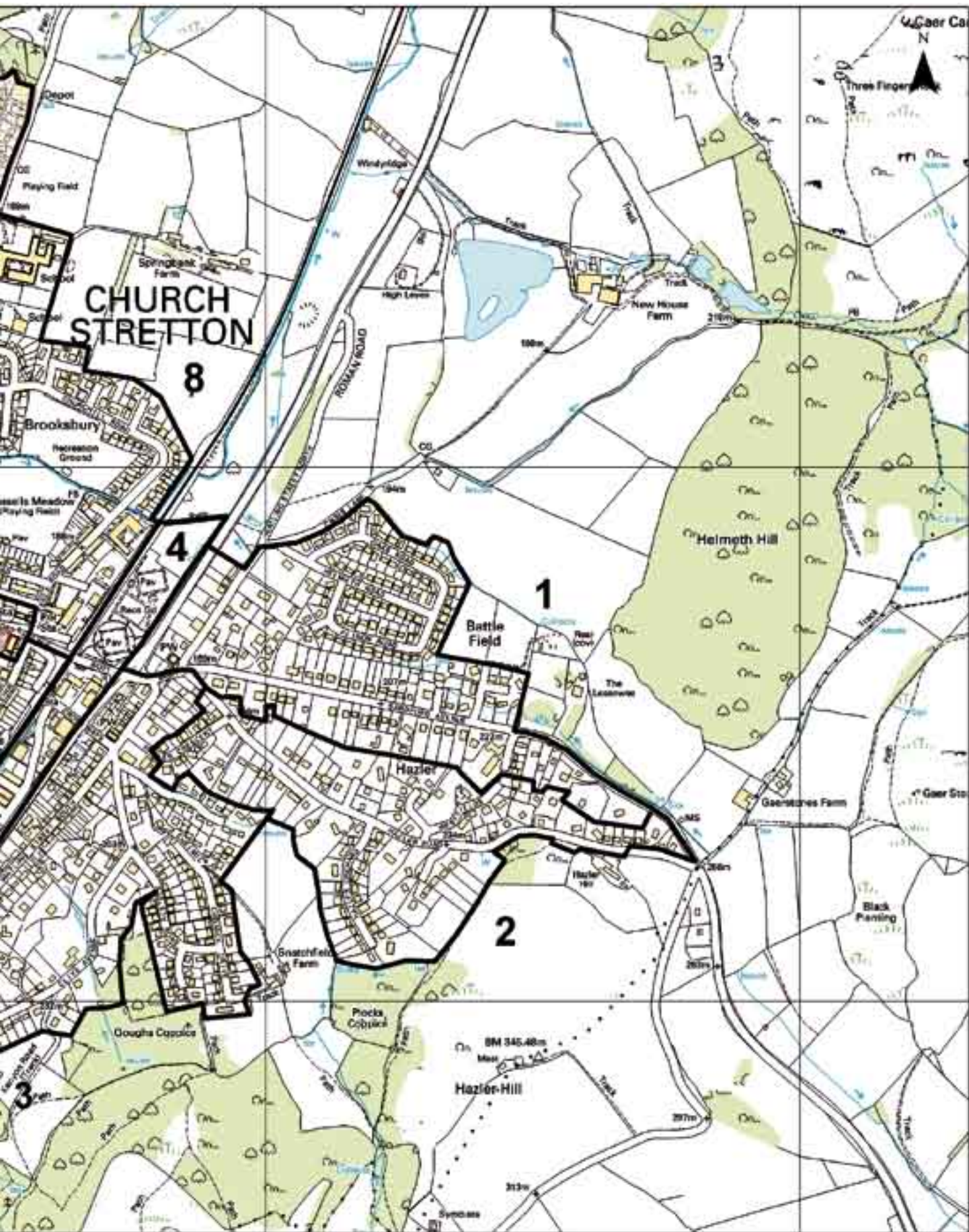
A3G7. The green by Crossways should be enhanced and the hedges maintained.

A3G8. Consideration should be given to new planting and the placing of seats.

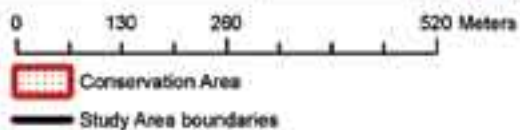


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Map of Church Stretton showing the Study Area



Church Stretton and the Conservation Area



Area 4 Design Guidelines:

A4G1. Any future building should include some variety of styles to provide less repetition, with some brick interspersed with render.

A4G2. More space could be allowed for parking, where appropriate, in order to keep some cars off the road.

A4G3. More amenity space for children would be desirable.

A4G4. Maintenance of the existing hedge boundary by the A49 should be carried out and gaps filled. It would add to the amenity of the area if a similar boundary could be planted on the railway side of the site.

Area 4 Swains Meadow, Industrial Area and the Park

Area 4 has three distinct and very different sections comprising housing, industrial units together with the railway station, and the recreation area. It incorporates part of the main gateway to Church Stretton across the railway bridge along Sandford Avenue. The approach to the town is a particular concern for many local residents who feel let down by the poor quality of the landscaping and maintenance, the proliferation of signs and some unsightly areas around the station and industrial estate. Many visitors come to Church Stretton for its special landscape qualities. The entry from the A49 does not reflect the high quality experience expected from a town in the heart of the Shropshire Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

Swains Meadow

This is a long narrow site, constricted by the A49 to the east and the railway line to the west. The blocks of houses are mainly in terraces and are of a uniform design built with red brick and



Swains Meadow

are mostly well maintained. Although the small size of the gardens does not give much opportunity for tree planting, residents have made good use of shrubs and flowers.

Cars are parked on both sides of the road through a lack of sufficient off-street parking provision. There is a high hedge next to the A49, which, except for one small area, screens the houses from this arterial road and presents a pleasant green approach to the town.

Industrial Units and Railway Station

This area between Swains Meadow and the park consists mainly of small industrial units, the railway station and an open area used as a coach park and for the weekly and much valued visit of rubbish skips. The industrial area managed by Advantage West Midlands is particularly well landscaped and maintained. There is a petrol station, and a number of car-related workshops are situated alongside the railway. The area contributes towards making Church Stretton a working town. The railway station is an important communication link and, for many people, the entry to the town. Some people feel that the station is a poor introduction to the town. The group of volunteers who have worked hard to improve the look of the railway station and keep it tidy should be congratulated and their landscaping scheme is to be encouraged. However the utilitarian shelters for rail travellers' use are ugly.



Landscaping improvements at the Station

As the area lies alongside the A49, it comprises the approach to the town from the south and forms the main gateway to the town over the railway bridge (widened in the 1970s). A number of the industrial units take great pains with their appearance, with hanging baskets, shrubs and neatly kept grass. Other areas are not always well kept, and 'footpath 30' (the Coffin Path) that leads to the southernmost footbridge from the industrial estate over the railway is uninviting.



Mynd Industrial Estate

The road verges at the traffic lights are poorly maintained, which seems out of keeping with what is the main gateway to the town. Along the A49 is an attractive brick building which once housed the electricity generating machinery for the town.

The Park

The gates to the park are very handsome wrought iron made in 1915 by a Belgian refugee. There is an attractive pavilion adjacent to the bowling green. The park is a very pleasant recreational amenity. The flowerbeds are well managed and the tree cover is particularly important. Some of the hedges and borders will need renovating and replacement trees planted to maintain the quality of landscaping in the future. There are recreational facilities for all ages, (including tennis and bowls),



The Park

a playground for young children and a skateboard area. The scaffold structure of the BMX facility is very prominent from the A49. Many people commented on their enjoyment and appreciation of the park – "a welcome sight", "still attractive and well kept", "love the park – great amenity". Some people would like to see improved play facilities for children.



Approach to the town on the A49



Pedestrian approach to the town across the A49

Area 4 Recommendations:

A4R1. The District Council and other interested partners should work with owners and users of the industrial areas to enhance the area with landscaping and screening where possible.

A4R2. An agreed plan to manage the area should be drawn up with all stakeholders, and implemented.

A4R3. The verges and the open spaces at the traffic lights should be maintained at a level more appropriate to the entrance of a market town in an AONB.

A4R4. Footpath 30 (the Coffin Path) to the town centre should be kept tidy.

A4R5. The areas to either side of the Coffin Path should be made more attractive by planting with trees, where possible.

A4R6. Arriva Trains Wales should be encouraged to continue the enhancement of the station and improve the shelters for the benefit of both visitors and residents.

A4R7. In the park consideration should be given to the need for replanting with trees of similar species to ensure continuity.

A4R8. Consideration should be given to improving the play facilities for children.

Area 5 Design Guidelines:

A5G1. There should be no further excavation into the hillside on the west of Ludlow Road.

A5G2. The topography of the local landscape should be respected.

A5G3. The high hedges along the southerly end of Ludlow Road should be retained.

A5G4. The hedges, trees and low walls incorporating stone should be retained as boundaries and inappropriate materials discouraged.

A5G5. The lime trees on Ludlow Road should continue to be protected.

A5G6. The colour and type of brick allowed should be more carefully controlled in favour of more mellow coloured brick.

A5G7. Any new development should be of an appropriate density with adequate space allowed for landscaping.

A5G8. Building above two storeys on an elevated site is not generally appropriate.

A5G9. In Stretton Farm Road the height of the bungalows should be respected in any new development.

Area 5 Ludlow Road, Woodcote Edge, Stretton Farm Road, Cunnery Road, Central Avenue

Ludlow Road and Woodcote Edge

The Ludlow Road is the old southerly route to the town and was formerly known as Bristol Road. Here, the sides of the valley are wooded and Brockhurst Castle (which once guarded the southern approaches to the town) is now hidden by trees. The castle was built of stone and first



Lime trees form a natural gateway

mentioned in 1154-5. It was probably abandoned after repairs were made in the mid 1200s. Brockhurst House, which adjoins the site, was built before 1900 and is now divided into apartments.

Ludlow Road forms an attractive entry to the town as it winds its way from Little Stretton. A tarmac footway is well used by walkers, and there are two paths to the Long Mynd – one is a right of way by Cross Banks and the other is a permissive path on the land of the Longmynd Hotel. The ribbon development housing is

predominantly brick or rendered. Many of the properties started life as post-war detached bungalows, but there are some Victorian/Edwardian and pre-war houses, including typical neo-timber framing details with mellow red bricks. At the very edge of the town a row of council houses on Cross Banks, built in the 1920s and elevated above the road, are partially screened by a high hedge. The substantial hedges on both sides of the road provide screening and reinforce the delightful rural character of this country lane.



Worlds End

Further along, the low walls with associated planting also give character. Houses on the west side are built backing on to the steep rocky hillside and excavation for development continues to take place. This is inappropriate and detrimental to the rural character of the area. This area is known as Worlds End after the 'Worlds End Inn', formerly 'The Grapes', recorded in the mid 19th century, which is now a private house.

To the north of the sharp bend, the mature lime trees (protected by Tree Preservation Orders) on both sides of the road form a natural 'gateway' to the town

and are highly valued as a distinctive feature of this part of the town. Recently three new houses on the east side have been built right under the canopy of these huge trees. This gives concern for the future of the trees. Woodcote Edge, opposite, is a small post-war cul-de-sac on the steep wooded hillside, with some recently built three storey brick houses. The trees on the west side are an important shield to these elevated houses, which otherwise would dominate Ludlow Road.

Stretton Farm Road

This is an area of mainly semi-detached bungalows with light coloured brick, concrete roof tiles and open plan gardens. The properties are unremarkable but unified and low rise. There are good views all around and glimpses of the town centre and church tower to the west. Although there are few mature trees in the gardens, the area blends well with the landscape because of the lack of boundaries. There are views of a distinctive column of pines, which add to the amenity of the area. There is a pedestrian access to High Street.

Another footpath provides access to a delightful and quiet open area of land alongside the railway with a stream and an interesting mix of trees. A footpath also provides access to Central Avenue and to a footbridge over the railway, part of the old Coffin Path.

Cunnery Road

The magnificent view from Cunnery Road is its distinguishing feature. From here there are clear views across towards Overdale on Clive Avenue, Hazler Hill and the town below. The road winds up steeply past the cemetery to the Cud Well and the Longmynd Hotel, and to Rectory Wood and Field. The remainder of the road is unmetalled and traverses back down the wooded hillside as Bridleway 57 to join Ludlow Road. Because the road is so elevated the tree cover is particularly important in screening the houses in longer views across the valley.

Of particular note is Woodcote by Parker and Unwin, 1896-8, (at the end of a long drive, surrounded by woodland and not visible from the road), mentioned by Pevsner as one of two (the other being Scotsmansfield) *'especially good houses of the best period of Church Stretton'*. He describes it as *'buff stone ground floor, with windows in pink stone, a roughcast first floor and gables'*. There are also two charming listed semi-detached cottages, designed by Parker and Unwin in 1900-01. They have white pebble-dash walls, a deep tiled roof with large central gable and tile-roofed porches and were the prototype for Parker and Unwin's larger Garden City houses. On the left are two more recent houses, which tower over the road, built on the steep bank. These brick-built houses are softened by tall trees, which should be retained and which help to screen the properties.

There is a mix of housing, including a row of three (formerly six) terraced cottages (1902), and detached houses built circa 1900, some with very large gardens. Higher up, the housing is predominantly brick and render or roughcast with some half timber details, including three roughcast bungalows with some half-timbering details. A Victorian boarding house, Greenmount, is now flats as is the former Sanatorium, Victoria Court. The rural feel of the road, which has no footway, is enhanced by the steeply wooded hillside on the left and the natural boundaries of trees, hedges and rocky outcrops. This has been interrupted by a recent brick structure, which is not in keeping with this area.

Central Avenue

Central Avenue is a pleasant mix of post-war well built painted brick and rendered semi-detached former council houses. Towards Sandford Avenue there are a few older red brick houses and some bungalows. The grass verges and hawthorn trees add to the amenities, making this a spacious street with views of the surrounding landscape and to the trees of Sandford Avenue.



Houses on steep bank, Cunnery Road



Cunnery Road semi-detached cottages by Parker & Unwin



Woodcote

A5G10. The two grass verges on either side of the entrance (to Stretton Farm Road) on Ludlow Road, provide an opportunity for two trees to be planted, which would reinforce the 'gateway' to this estate.

Area 6 Design Guidelines:

A6G1. In the town centre the colour and quality of materials used is crucially important. All future development should be of good design, in scale, and should respect the particular character of the area.

A6G2. The grain of the medieval street pattern, including burgage plots where applicable, should be retained.

A6G3. Period shop fronts should be retained and reinstated where these have been lost. Internally illuminated signs are not appropriate. Green strip lights are intrusive and should be discouraged. Fascia boards and lettering needs to be in keeping with a historic town centre. Strident colours are also not in keeping.

A6G4. It is important to retain original features such as timber window frames, doors, chimney pots, roof details (with decorative ridge tiles and finials), and to encourage reinstatement where possible.

A6G5. The continuity of the roofscape and street façade add to the character of the town and should be protected and enhanced.

Area 6 Town Centre

This is a very attractive area containing the commercial, historic and cultural heart of Church Stretton. Most of the town centre is in a Conservation Area. A very important feature is the mixed use of buildings with homes above shops and offices. This helps to keep the town alive when the shops and offices are closed.

The dominant building materials are brick and render, with some stone and timber framing. Roofs are mostly of small clay tiles. The variety of materials used, often in one building, contributes a great deal to the overall pleasant appearance of the street scene.

The historic importance of the town is reflected in the age and condition of the buildings in this area. In recent years new buildings have been built, mostly on infill plots. These have used modern materials that only partially blend in. Generally the new development, which includes a supermarket and a small group of houses on Lion Meadow and Church Street, does not integrate with the older buildings.

The character of the town centre is significantly affected by the multitude of signs, the street furniture and the quality of the footways and roads. Parking restrictions require signs and double yellow lines, which are intrusive in the street scene. These need to be reviewed, with sensitivity to the Conservation Area, to introduce a more suitable scheme and redundant signs could be removed. In some areas the footways are poorly surfaced in bitmac or other black surfaces, which greatly detracts from the Conservation Area status of the historic town centre.

Sandford Avenue

Sandford Avenue forms the main entrance to Church Stretton and is an important 'gateway' to the town from the A49, over the railway bridge. There are stunning views towards the hills to the west. The few trees that remain from the original avenue of lime trees are a distinctive feature of the town and provide the much valued leafy approach to the town centre and greatly add to the character of the western end.



The south side of Sandford Avenue is a pleasing mix of Victorian and Edwardian buildings and forms the main shopping area. Many period shop fronts survive and the upper storeys are largely original. On the north side, Stretton Chambers (1907), with its red brick and part rendered detail, although not fronting on to Sandford Avenue, adds to the character of this otherwise rather featureless area, which includes the undistinguished





Opposite page and above: Sandford Avenue

police station, fire station and telephone exchange. Recent refurbishment of Stretton Chambers has included the installation of uPVC windows to this fine building.

Along the south side of Sandford Avenue, except for the notable exception of the inappropriately designed Spar shop, there is a wealth of mellow red brick, terracotta details, interesting dormer windows, attractive roof lines, mock Tudor details, decorative ridge tiles and finials. Of particular note are the curved glass windows (examples include the greengrocer's shop with its mirrored ceiling, the bakers and shoe shop) as well as decorative ironwork, stained glass, glazed tiles and the working clock above Stretton Menswear. The old post office building has a plaque to declare its age of 1912. The Kebab shop, although a new building, fits well because of its scale and the sympathetic use of materials.

Stretton Antiques Market is the original old Maltings and retains many original features. It is a distinctive building with brick and stone details. Wrights, on the corner of Easthope Road, has hanging tiles, glazed bricks, stained glass windows and is part rendered. Newsworld has unfortunately lost its original frontage. Numbers 24 and 26 High Street, with their neo-timber frame details, were built in 1890 and have an interesting roof corner detail and original glazing bars. Hillside Pharmacy has attractive mellow brick, with stone detail facing, but has been much altered over the years. The baker's shop and Peter Briggs both have their original characterful shop fronts.

On the opposite side Barclays Bank (1907-08), an imposing stone building, dominates the street scene, although modern signage detracts from its period character. The old wall, beyond Beaumont Court, is part of the original walled garden of The Hotel (see below). Beaumont Court was built fairly recently, and its set back position spoils the continuity of the street scene. It is an intrusion on this shopping street and does not enhance the period feel. Beaumont Road, which leads off Sandford Avenue, is an undistinguished street with a mix of retail and residential properties.

The crossroads at the top of Sandford Avenue, an important intersection, is dominated by the two banks on the corners and the Old Copper's Malthouse, which was originally the Crown. A stone in the wall gives a date of 1587, referring to an earlier building on the site. This was later developed to become The Hotel, after the arrival of the railway in 1852. The old hotel is brick built with large curved windows, stone details, imposing external stairs and an entrance with fine iron railings.

The Burway

The buildings on the corner of The Burway and Shrewsbury Road are more modest and lead to a row of cottages, one of which is dated 1733, but is possibly older. These contrast with the south side, which includes retail properties, a garage, and the former premises of the South Shropshire Furniture Scheme. The Burway forms the access to the Long Mynd, and more detail of this western end will be found under Area 7.

A6G6. If the south side of Burway Road is redeveloped, it is important to retain some retail premises here as this is part of the commercial area of the town. The height of any proposed development should not exceed the height of neighbouring buildings and should not dominate the small cottages opposite.

A6G7. The proposal to pedestrianise The Square should be revisited. The whole area could be paved with natural stone or a similar material and seating provided, whilst still allowing for use by markets and other events.

A6G8. The view of the Church from High Street over the garden of the Buck's Head should be retained.

A6G9. Footways in the town centre should be repaved in quality materials.

A6G10. Signs and street furniture should be reviewed throughout the town centre and a new simplified scheme introduced, with redundant signs or posts removed.

A6G11. Double yellow lines and other parking restriction measures should be minimised whenever possible. Repainting with narrower lines and the use of the dullest colours permitted would reduce the visual impact of such features.

A6G12. The colour and design of street furniture should be consistent throughout the town centre.

A6G13. The Square has been enhanced with the addition of Victorian style street lamps - these could be replicated in other areas of the town centre.

A6G14. Open spaces and trees in the area should be protected and new opportunities found for street trees and other forms of planting.

High Street and The Square

There are some very attractive buildings along High Street that, together with the backdrop of the hills visible between them, create a definite sense of place. The view down High Street provides an interesting juxtaposition of buildings with Ragleth Hill beyond. This was formerly the Bristol Road, the route from Chester to Bristol. The buildings combine to form a continuous façade along the street and around the market square, which adds to the character and appearance of this area and gives it a distinctive atmosphere. The roofscape and chimneys also add variety to the townscape. The medieval heart of this central area still retains the original land tenure pattern of narrow 'burgage' plots which give this area its special character. There are a number of listed buildings of note including Berry's, No.17, a well proportioned early Georgian dwelling, c1720, with mellowed small bricks and stone quoins. This building has a delightful door on the side with a fanlight and is one of the most attractive buildings in the town centre. Salt's, No.19 (1901), is also a distinctive building with many original features.

Numbers 2 and 3 The Square form a pleasing corner and it is interesting to note the way the sloping roof is cut off. The mosaic entrance at 'Proffit's' old shop at number 5 is now obscured by an enclosed porch of unsympathetic design and materials. The Raven (1733), No.24, a timber framed building, was once an inn as were several other properties in this area. In the middle of The Square there used to be a market hall. There have been markets in Church Stretton from



High Street and The Square

before the 13th century and markets are still held here. At other times The Square is used for a wide range of community events, though mostly for parking. Some years ago the area was partly paved and bollards, Victorian style lampposts and flower planters were added. It is an important focal area of the town and many people would like to see this area pedestrianised.

The Buck's Head, parts of which date from the 16th century, with some timbers remaining from the 1290s, was possibly originally an old manor house and maybe an inn as early as 1700. The entrance was added much later and has a date of 1868 above the door. It is probably one of the first brick houses and has stone transom windows (where the stone is horizontal) and quoins (angle or corner stones). The rear elevation, as seen from the churchyard, is especially fine with its stone and brick wall. The glimpse of the church from High Street over the garden area of the Buck's Head is an important feature. An original advertisement on the adjacent building is still visible. The old barn, a fine three bay timber frame building, was restored in the 1970s, and is now a shop. It is also listed and is a dominant feature on this corner. The mini-roundabout junction creates a visual interruption of the view along High Street.

Further down High Street more listed buildings include the King's Arms, where the timber framed side wall is an attractive feature to the shut or narrow passage way, although the front façade is now rendered. The original layout of the medieval town can be identified in the narrow frontages of the burgage plots here, for example No.51. The Silvester Horne Institute, a distinguished building dating from the First World War, was opened as a memorial to Silvester Horne, an important beneficiary to the town. It is now held in trust by the Town Council. It has many typical Arts and Crafts period details and an attractive roof. There are several interesting old houses all set close to the road. These include Greengates, Ragleth House and Ashford House (with an imposing portico and dating from the late 19th century). Tudor Cottage, at the junction of Cunnery Road, has elaborate timber framework and is a landmark building, forming the visual boundary of the historic town centre.

Church Street area

The church and churchyard enclosed by Church Street are the most valued part of the town for many people. The open space and trees around St Laurence's Church are very important elements of the townscape and dominate Church Street. This is the only part of the town centre that retains a 'country lane' feel. The Priory, built in 1832, with its attractive small windows and mellow brick and stone porch, and the neighbouring cottages, form a very pleasing row, particularly when viewed from the path across the churchyard. Also of note are the gates and stiles which lead to the churchyard. The churchyard is part of the 'Caring for God's Acre' scheme, which encourages a wildlife friendly approach to management.

New properties have been recently built in both Church Street and Church Way. Whilst the new development in Church Way fits in well, some residents feel that the Housman Mews development has over fussy bargeboards and the colour of the bricks and roof tiles is not in keeping with local character. The terrace of Edwardian houses, further down, forms a more harmonious whole, with tiled-roof wooden door canopies which have been copied at Queens Court, opposite the supermarket. The new detached house at the end of the street echoes the adjacent terrace in its treatment of external walls. The wide tile-roofed porch and dormer window with a little timber detailing are both traditional features. The design of this house uses these features sympathetically and successfully, although the ground floor window is rather large and dominating.



The Priory



Church Street

A6G15. A landscaping scheme, including tree planting, for Lion Meadow and Easthope Road should be undertaken. This should include tree planting round the car park, cycle parking and the provision of more seats.

A6G16. Views to the parish church from within the town centre are important and should be retained.

A6G17. The management of the churchyard under the 'Caring for God's Acre' is a worthwhile scheme and could be revitalised with more proactive involvement.



Church Street

There is a pleasing mix of properties on Church Street. Opposite the Edwardian terrace at the southern end there is a pair of attractive Edwardian semi-detached houses, of brick with tiled roofs, timbered gables, rectangular oriel windows to the first floor and splayed bays below. The former elementary school of 1861, of brick with stone details and bell turret, is now the public library and information centre. It is an example of neo-timber frame building. The new doorway, flat roof extensions and the excessive and dominant white signs are not in keeping with this fine Victorian building in the heart of the Conservation Area. Opposite is the old stone smithy and, next to the library, Victorian (1885) cottages with neo-timbering and hanging tiles. Some modern improvements to properties in Church Street, with the loss of original features, have also detracted from the period feel of this lane.

Lion Meadow and Easthope Road

The supermarket and the car parks now form the focal point of the town but lack any distinguishing features and the area is rather open and bland. The red brick and red roof of the supermarket is very dominant when viewed from the hills. There is some landscaping in this area but more could be introduced to improve and define this large space. Queens Court has red brick with render to the first floor and has decorative ridge tiles. The large gables are traditional, but the tall prominent wall of Queens Court facing the supermarket is unnecessarily bleak and needs softening with planting. The recycling skips are well used and conveniently situated. Some residents would like to see these better screened from Lion Meadow. This could be achieved by a landscaping scheme and tree planting on



Queens Court

Lion Meadow, which could also include some provision for secure cycle parking and make the car park attendant's kiosk less intrusive.



Landscaping of the car park would enhance this central focal area

The Medical Centre, Clinic and Mayfair Centre, which comprises a community centre with sheltered accommodation, provide the main focus of Easthope Road. This is a busy area, with access to all the town centre facilities. There are stunning views of the hills all around, but otherwise the architecture lacks distinction. The buildings are mainly of red brick though the Clinic and Mayfair, with their pale grey/brown brick, are out of keeping. The garden area in front of the Clinic and the small gardens in front of the flats provide some much needed landscaping to this area. The rather dark brick of the Kings Court development is relieved by the pleasant landscaping, which greatly adds to the visual amenity of this area.

Area 7 Burway Road, Longhills, Trevor Hill, Cardingmill Valley Road, Madeira Walk

This residential area was mostly developed in the early 20th century at a time of exceptional building activity when Church Stretton was promoting itself as a scenic residential resort. Today it forms part of the extended Conservation Area and is characterised by the large number of substantial detached Edwardian houses and mature trees.



Burway Road

Burway Road provides an attractive and sympathetic transition from the town centre to the Long Mynd. The triangle of green space, at the junction of Church Street, Burway Road and Longhills is registered common land. This is an important area of open space and trees, which has an unfortunate cluttered appearance because of the placing and mix of signs and street furniture.

Leaving the town centre towards the Long Mynd the road leads almost immediately into a green 'tunnel' of trees, shrubs and



Burway Road

native flora. A high percentage of Edwardian houses intermingle with modern houses and bungalows, all well spaced and set back from the road, with a uniformity of building line. There is some evidence of neo-timber-framing, as well as mellow brick walls, some with roughcast or render. The Rowans (over the cattle grid) is half-timbered, as are the gables of Rivenhall. Coombehurst's balconies and wide curving windows are typical of the Edwardian pre-occupation with health and fresh air. These features were especially apparent in seaside Edwardian buildings and then spread to inland spas.

The boundaries to the properties are pleasing and mostly well-maintained, with a mixture of high and low stone walls, mature hedges and fencing. There are some exceptional mature broadleaved and conifer trees, typical of Edwardian planting, such as the beech in the garden of Broughshane and the oak outside the Belvedere Guest House.

Towards the top of the road is Scotsmansfield, a Grade II Edwardian house and garden designed by Ernest Newton, dating from 1908. According to Pevsner it is

one of the 'especially good houses of the best period of Church Stretton'. It has roughcast walls, gables and copper clad bays and leaded lights. It combines Arts and Crafts detailing with broad areas of roughcast – looking forward to Modernist houses. The stone wall with grille above the hedge boundary of Scotsmansfield has been neglected and vandalised, and is in need of restoration.

The space around the houses in this area is as important as the houses themselves. It gives them a pre-eminence in the street scene.



Scotsmansfield

Area 7 Design Guidelines:

A7G1. The visual pre-eminence of the Victorian and Edwardian houses should not be compromised and any development should respect the character and appearance of the area, normally reflecting the architectural styles of the Edwardian houses, and should harmonise in terms of scale and materials.

A7G2. The triangle of common land could be improved by rationalising the signs. This would make a more attractive approach to the hills and give a focal point when looking from the road junction to the east.

A7G3. The spaces, the building line and roof levels should respect those houses of the Edwardian period.

A7G4. In Madeira Walk, where possible, the terracing, stone walls and steps, and trees should be conserved.

A7G5. Development along the first part of Carding Mill Valley to the cattle grid should continue to be set back from the road frontage to maintain an open aspect.

Rectory Gardens

There is an attractive walled entrance to Rectory Gardens with brick pillars. The 18th century Rectory is now sub-divided into four properties and painted with differing colour washes. It is a well proportioned house, rendered and with a Doric portico. Within the grounds of the Rectory is a development of four modern chalet houses of 1982. Although there are no longer any mature trees within Rectory Gardens, a wooded background is provided by Rectory Wood.

Longhills Road

The open green space at the foot of Longhills and Burway is an important part of the townscape, reinforcing the rural nature of the town's setting amidst the slopes of the Long Mynd. The architect-designed shelter sits well in this area. Longhills Road was laid out at the beginning of the first decade of the 20th century as part of Church Stretton's dramatic building boom. The entrance to Longhills is enhanced by the open green space on one side and low rise housing on the other. It leads the eye up through a green tunnel to the Victorian Bank House on the brow of the hill. Bank House, Lymehurst and Myndcourt are all substantial late Victorian/ Edwardian houses, lending much to the character of the road with a pleasing mix of brick, roughcast and neo-timber frame details. At the bottom of Longhills in the valley are three chalet-style bungalows dating from the 1920s. These recall the late Victorian promotion of Church Stretton as 'Little Switzerland'. There are many mature trees in Longhills, most in close proximity to the houses. These, together with the undulating nature of the road make for a uniquely intimate road scene.



View from Trevor Hill

Trevor Hill and Stanyeld

Trevor Hill, Stanyeld and Links Road are the highest roads in this area of Church Stretton and were laid out by 1901. The steep entrance to Trevor Hill and Stanyeld, the hairpin bend, the very high stone boundary wall and the terraced gardens, set the scene for the rest of this residential road. The majority of the houses are pre-First World War and there are some fine examples of large detached Edwardian properties. Mature trees, hedges and high boundary walls give stability to the very steep overall scene.

From Trevor Hill there are breathtaking views across the valley from between some of the houses on the town side. The end of the road merges into a track and woodland beyond. On Trevor Hill the theme is mellow brickwork and render or roughcast, with some neo-timbering and tiled roofs. There are many interesting Edwardian and inter-war details including a large wooden porch (The Cliff), a hung-tiled gable (The Cottage), and large windows and balconies on many houses to take advantage of the views and fresh air. Woodside has Arts and Crafts style triangular windows and a large bay window with veranda facing south. Stanyeld is white roughcast with decorative cornice.

Carding Mill Valley

The open aspect on entering Carding Mill Valley is achieved by the houses being set well back from the road. The distinctive Arden House, on the corner, is a fine example of Edwardian architecture with many interesting features – half-timbered gables, brick and stone turret, porch and gateway, stone mullions and transoms, stained glass windows and metalwork. Other houses are an equal blend of old and modern, many with distinctive features such as a lead canopy over the porch of Holly Cottage.

In the middle section of this road trees and high hedges soften and enhance the properties built closer to the road. The sloping site at the valley end of the road has produced an attractive building profile, with properties on the north side being elevated, while those on the south side have gardens intersected by the stream which runs from the valley. The road and countryside merge seamlessly together as the road enters the National Trust part of the valley. Lime Walk, connecting Carding Mill Valley Road and Longhills is an attractive well used footpath lined with mature lime trees.

Madeira Walk

On the west side, the houses, all detached, are built well above the road on a terrace and some are approached by interesting stone steps. The rooftops of three dwellings on the east side are level with the road and these approached by descending steps. There is plenty of tree and shrub cover and space between properties. Two of the first houses to be built, the Beam House (1905) and Madeira House (c1910) with roughcast walls, set the style for later buildings, including a group of 1920s houses.

The Beam House has buttresses in the manner of Charles Voysey, and a wide balcony. It also has external shutters, which became popular in the 1920s. There are balconies and verandas on several houses to take advantage of the views. Two recently built large 3-storey houses on the west interrupt the continuity of the building line. They have inadequate garden space and do not fit well into the landscape, appearing to perch on the side of the steep hillside. The design and use of materials are not in keeping with the predominantly Edwardian and early 20th century character of this road.



Beam House Madeira Walk

A wide range of building materials is often used in the same house in this area – wood framed gables with rendering, stone and brick. The use of stone boundary walls and iron railings well covered with foliage adds interest. Decorative details include a red stone griffin perched on a gable and distinctive chimneys. The views to the hills are a particular feature of this road, which is a public right of way and which resembles a country lane with no footway. The lamp posts, of modern design, are out of keeping.



View of Madeira Walk and Trevor Hill from Shrewsbury Road showing extensive tree cover

Area 8 Design Guidelines:

A8G1. The Local Plan, Policy S12, states that the settlements of All Stretton and Church Stretton should remain separate. This is an important part of the town's character and should be respected.

A8G2. Development should respect the character and appearance of the area and normally reflect the architectural styles of the earlier houses, with mellow red brick and rendering, and should harmonise in terms of scale and materials, and maintain the sense of space.

A8G3. In Shrewsbury Road, where possible, mature trees, hedges, stone walls and natural banks, should be conserved and where necessary renewed.

A8G4. Tree planting along the eastern side of Shrewsbury Road (following the new hedge and including the stretch alongside the playing fields) should be considered.

A8G5. Any new development should reflect the height of neighbouring properties and should not be dominant in the street. Provision should also be made for landscaping as well as parking.

A8G6. The open space on Lutwyche Road next to Shrewsbury Road should be considered for landscaping and any unnecessary or out of date signs should be removed.

Area 8 Shrewsbury Road, Churchill Road (and roads off), Essex Road, Lutwyche Road

Shrewsbury Road

This is the road into town from All Stretton with an open aspect to the east and views to the valley and the hills, over the two schools of Church Stretton. This approach has a rural feel with a distinct break between the settlements and is the northern edge of the town. Road improvements and a new footway have substantially changed the character of this area, although a new hedge including a few trees has been planted. The road would be improved with the planting of more trees, up to and including the school playing fields. Apart from the water extraction plant (Princes Stretton Hills Mineral Water Company) and the schools, the area is residential and the west side is in the Conservation Area.

The purity of the Long Mynd spring water was part of the attraction to promote Church Stretton as a health resort in the late 19th century. The Stretton Hills Mineral Water Company was opened in 1883 in a purpose built factory using the Cwm Dale spring. In its early days the company produced a wide range of mineral and aerated water, together with the Church Stretton Aerated Water Company in Carding Mill Valley (which ceased in 1906). The factory on Shrewsbury Road is known locally as the 'Pop Works'. Water bottled here is distributed throughout the country.



Former hotel, Shrewsbury Road



New house and original Edwardian house

Shrewsbury Road is a very pleasant area. The most prominent feature is the number of tall mature trees, hedges and shrubs surrounding substantial houses (some from the Edwardian period) as well as bungalows set in spacious gardens. The landscaping helps these to integrate well with the wooded hillside above. Some recent development in gardens has had a detrimental effect on the character of this area and put additional pressure on the trees and mature landscaping, resulting in a loss of tree cover. The colour of the materials used has not always been in keeping with the existing earlier properties.

The two new houses in the garden of 59 Shrewsbury Road are a good example of a development which harmonises well with the character of the area and neighbouring properties. The design incorporates details and features which complement the original house, with walls of render and brick details, stone sills, wooden sash windows and a dark clay tiled roof with finials. In the main, spaces between the houses in this road are generous.

There are many examples of neo-timber details along this road with a mix of building materials including brick of varying hues, stone and roughcast or render. Sometimes all these are used in one building, which is a characteristic of the area. Details include hanging red decorative tiles on the gables and extensive stone wall boundaries, mixed with mature hedges. Boundaries are mainly hedges, banks and stone walls. Red brick boundary walls are out of keeping. A right of way from Shrewsbury Road, at the side of Denehurst Court, provides access to Madeira Walk.

Ashbrook Court, built in the 1980s, is on the whole well landscaped, but stands out because of the use of a much darker brick than the older properties nearby. Views of the hills and glimpses of Carding Mill Valley make this a very attractive area.



Ashbrook House dates back in part to the 17th century. A number of older post-war, more traditional houses are situated between Ashbrook Court and Lutwyche Road. The stream, leading to Russells Meadow, adds to the variety of this stretch of road. From this point approaching the town centre there are glimpses of an attractive mix of buildings with the hills beyond.

Trees and outcrop, Shrewsbury Road

A8G7. Street furniture should be in keeping with the town centre adjacent Conservation Area status.

Churchill Road area

Churchill Road and the other roads in this area were built post 1945. There is a mix of semi and detached houses and bungalows. These are mostly brick with concrete roof tiles. There is a range of boundaries including hedges and fences, and many properties have open plan gardens. Many of these are very attractive and well stocked. There are good views all around, with the added attraction of the school playing fields to the north and the open spaces of Russells Meadow and the recreation ground to the south and west. Windsor Place consists of Housing Association residential flats built with light coloured bricks around 1970, and has some mature trees. Ascot Close consists of modern terraced houses built with a rather vivid red brick. They have small gardens and this cul-de-sac has insufficient parking areas.



Essex Road



Polymer Laboratories' new building opened 2002

Essex Road

Essex Road has a mix of Housing Association and privately owned houses, a social club and the entrance to Polymer Laboratories (part of Varian Inc.), Church Stretton's largest employer. The modern well-designed industrial buildings are largely screened from public view by housing on Essex Road (although prominent from the hillsides). The houses, built in the 1930s, are well proportioned, with large gables and finished in roughcast. Further along is the old station built in 1852 of local stone from Soudley with slate roof – the only station on the line at the time built of stone. The mature trees in the park provide an attractive setting. Essex Road is narrow with cars parked on either side. Stretton Chambers, on the corner, is a distinguished building of brick and render dating from 1907.



Corner of Shrewsbury Road and Lutwyche Road

Lutwyche Road & Close, Brooksbury

The entrance to Russells Meadow and the pavilion on Lutwyche Road has a small unsurfaced car park. Russells Meadow and the field beyond is an important local amenity. It has good views all round, provides football and cricket pitches, as well as access to footpaths, and public toilets. Plans are being formulated to redevelop the entrance to Russells Meadow and possibly the industrial unit on the corner of Beaumont Road and Lutwyche Road.

Lutwyche Road is wide with views of the hills and the trees on Sandford Avenue. There are a variety of house styles, including maisonettes. Materials comprise different colour bricks and render. The boundaries range from fences, brick walls and hedges to open plan gardens. The prominent area of open space at the corner with Shrewsbury Road has a seat and trees but the overall impression is a clutter of street furniture.

At the junction of Lutwyche Road and Beaumont Road a small industrial unit is used by a community recycling and craft project. Lutwyche Close has modern houses of brick and timber. There is a 'cut' leading to Sandford Avenue and part of the original wall from the Old Hotel is evident. Both of these features add interest. The modern houses were built on the old garden of the hotel. There is a magnificent sycamore tree, and the lime trees of Sandford Avenue frame some of the rooftops.

Brooksbury is a mix of two and three bedroom semi-detached houses of brick with rendered bungalows and a separate row of garages. This results in a pleasing variety of roof lines and materials. A pathway leads into Russells Meadow with views across to Helmeth and a path by the stream leading to Shrewsbury Road. The tall trees to the rear of Shrewsbury Road frame some of the houses and add to the amenity of the area.

Section 3

Making the Town Design Statement Happen

These Guidelines and Recommendations will only take effect through the support and actions of a number of bodies, individual owners and developers. It is recognised that resources are limited and where additional resources are needed, this will be dependent upon future budgets and/or other finance.

It is hoped that favourable consideration will be given to these Guidelines by these bodies and individuals when:

- planning developments or alterations
- making decisions on individual proposals
- deciding new priorities
- making financial decisions and programmes
- making recommendations about proposals that will impact on the town.

South Shropshire District Council has a crucial role to play as the local planning authority. It is expected that the Guidelines will be referred to as a material planning consideration in deciding planning applications, and should contribute to the Local Development Framework. This will help to ensure that Church Stretton can have the benefit of priorities that reflect its special circumstances and character and the views of local people.

The District Council can also work proactively with other bodies and individuals to encourage good design by establishing dialogue between developers, designers, local councils and bodies (such as the Shropshire Hills AONB Partnership) and representatives of the local community by, for example, forming a Design Forum (Recommendation DF1). It should also consider initiating discussions with owners and occupiers of the industrial/employment area at Crossways (Guideline A4R1). The adoption of the proposed extensions to the Conservation Area should also be progressed (Recommendation CA1 and CA2).

Church Stretton Town Council has a vital role to play as local civic guardian and advocate of a high quality environment for Church Stretton. It can demonstrate good practice with its own land, street lighting, signage and any development it is involved with. It can also use the Guidance as a basis for advice and recommendations to other bodies. It could, for example, promote jointly with other bodies, an award scheme to encourage and foster good quality developments.

Shropshire County Council has an important role, particularly as the local highway authority. The quality of paved surfaces, management of traffic and signage (including bus stops), and the management of verges and street trees (notably in Sandford Avenue), will require action by the County Council. Church Stretton's Schools have a major role in the community and the management and development of their land and buildings can have a significant impact.

Landowners and occupiers all have an important role to play in maintaining and enhancing Church Stretton's environment. Major landowners such as the South Shropshire Housing Association and the National Trust, individual shop owners or householders can all contribute to maintaining and enhancing the town's character and environment by advocating and using high quality design in all elements of their work and buildings, including alterations and extensions to existing buildings.

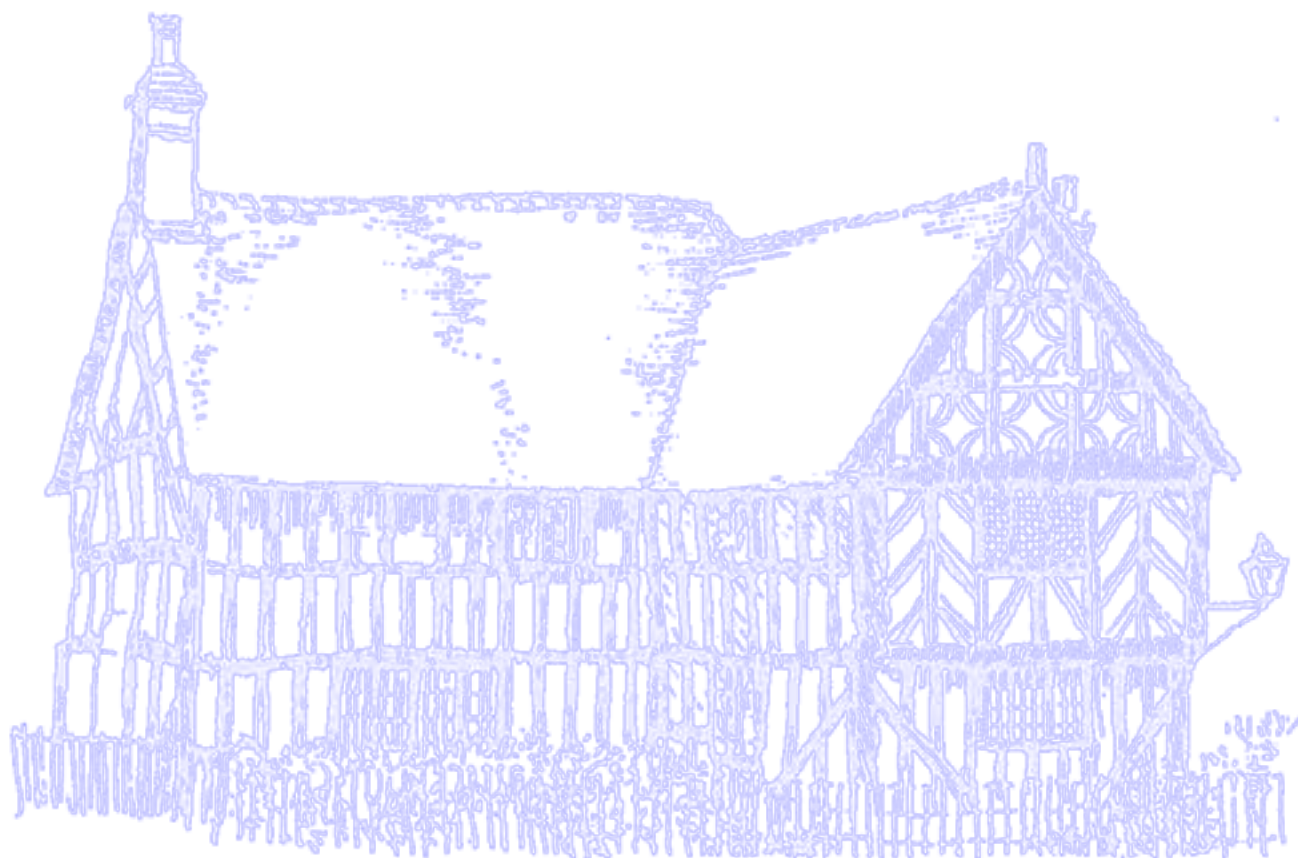
Other organisations, including the Church Stretton Area Partnership, Tourism Group, Shropshire Hills AONB Partnership, Strettons Civic Society, CPRE and Ramblers Association, and other amenity groups, can also continue to make a substantial contribution to the quality of Church Stretton's townscape and landscape by considering design in all aspects of their work, through input in the planning process and through monitoring and advocacy.

The government's **Highways Agency**, responsible for the A49 Trunk Road, can make a significant contribution by enhancing the management of its highway verges, possibly in conjunction with other bodies. **Arriva Trains Wales** has responsibility for the station and could make improvements to this important facility in the town.

This document includes many ideas for enhancing the town. **Individuals** have a vital role to play in contributing time and energy to put some of these proposals into action, whether serving on a committee, standing for election as a Town Councillor, joining an existing group such as the Civic Society or Tourism Group, raising funds or planting trees. Or even, as a householder, choosing to repair or reinstate original features such as wooden windows or doors.

Review and monitoring

It is suggested that the Town Council should review the progress of this Town Design Statement annually, and discuss and review relevant actions and responsibilities with other bodies.



Tudor cottage

Acknowledgements

Town Design Statement Steering Group and Survey Teams

The following people were involved in the working group, the steering group or surveying the town:

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The churchyard

Appendix 1

Tree Issues

Appendix 1 supplements the Tree guidelines and recommendations contained in Section 2 and should be read together with that section.

Background to trees in Church Stretton

Semi-natural woodland in Church Stretton has not changed markedly since the medieval period. At this time the valley bottom would have been occupied by wet woodland comprising oak and willow. These species form some of the field boundaries in the flatter areas today. On the steeper hill slopes, more extensive tracts of broadleaved woodland would have occurred. These are still evident in the significant stands on the sides of Helmeth, Hazler and Ragleth Hills, in Rectory Wood, and in the woods that cloak the lower slopes of the Long Mynd.

Many of these hillside woods have a long history of use and management going back at least to the medieval period. For example, Ragleth Wood is a surviving fragment of the Long Forest; a royal hunting forest that was disafforested in 1301 and Caer Caradoc is known to have still been wooded at the time of Charles I. Many stands of woodland were managed as coppices during the 18th and 19th centuries, linked to the increased value of timber with the development of local coal mines and ironworks.

A particular feature of Church Stretton is the presence of many fine specimen conifers on the valley sides. Many of these evergreens were planted in the mid-19th century when there was a desire to create a landscape of trees interspersed with large houses. This rapid development of the town at the end of the 19th century and beginning of the 20th was accompanied by further tree planting, designed to complement the town's status as a resort.

Tree issues and guidelines

The issues surrounding the conservation and enhancement of tree cover in Church Stretton can be grouped under three headings: protection; new planting; and education. These are described below and the relevant guidelines are included in the Town Design Statement in the section on Trees. However, if these tree guidelines are to be effective, some means of implementation is required. Members of the local community could play a role in this. It is recommended that a Church Stretton Tree Group should be formed to oversee and implement the Tree Guidelines.

The Group may be able to secure funds to access training and resources for the implementation of these tree guidelines. A number of sources, including the Sustainable Development Fund from the Shropshire Hills AONB Partnership and South Shropshire District Councils Regeneration Team (through their Grant Ranger facility) as well as the Tree Council, Entrust and the Lottery may be able to help.

Protecting trees

Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs) are the main mechanism for protecting trees. The TPO system is administered by the Local Authority, in this case, South Shropshire District Council. The Council has published a Best Value Practice Note (BVPN no. 20) to inform the public about its planning duties, powers and policies for trees and hedgerows.

In the Secretary of State's view, (Department of Communities and Local Government website: www.communities.gov.uk) TPOs should be used to protect selected trees and woodlands if their removal would have a significant impact on the local environment and its enjoyment by the public. The trees, or at least part of them, should normally be visible from a public place, such as a road or footpath. It is considered inappropriate to make a TPO in respect of a tree which is dead, dying or dangerous.

A large group TPO was served on Church Stretton in 1959. This gave protection to groups of trees around the town. Policy S14 of the Local Plan states that development will not be permitted in these areas which are shown on Inset Map 4 of the South Shropshire District Local Plan (2004- 2011). However, the TPO was made a long time ago and many trees will have either

Tree Protection Recommendations:

TP1. A Church Stretton Tree Group should be formed to oversee and support the implementation of the Tree Guidelines and Recommendations.

TP2. An audit of the trees in Church Stretton should take place to identify which trees currently have protection and which trees might need protection.

TP3. TPOs should be served on all trees identified by the audit in TP2, which meet the criteria, but which are not currently protected.

TP4. The existing Conservation Area should be extended to include an area east of the A49.

TP5. South Shropshire District Council should consider expanding the best value practice note (BVPN 20) to include more detail on trees within development.

Tree Planting Recommendations:

TN1. A survey of the town to identify areas where trees in public spaces could be planted or where mature trees will need replacing should be carried out.

TN2. The information gathered by TN1 should be used to prepare an Opportunity Map which indicates locations, species and timescales for new and replacement tree planting.

TN3. A guide for the general public about which tree species are suitable for which sites in Church Stretton should be produced.

TN4. The wider community, including schools and youth groups, could be involved in the planting and aftercare of new trees.

TN5. Consideration should be given to the establishment of a Community Orchard and an Arboretum to supply young local provenance trees for the town.

TN6. Grants and sponsorship (from companies and landowners) should be sought to finance and support new planting.

TN7. The oak trees on Hazler Road and the three large oak trees in Clive Avenue should be protected by Tree Preservation Orders.

Note: These Guidelines and Recommendations are dependent upon resources (volunteers and finance) being available.

been lost through natural wastage, or new ones will have been planted, or grown up, since then. In any case, the 1959 TPO may not cover trees within the town itself. Accurate and up to date information on which trees in the town are covered by TPOs or are within a Conservation Area is now needed. Although the Tree Preservation Order system is designed to be pro-active, South Shropshire District Council has advised that they currently do not have the capacity to serve TPOs unless a tree is under threat.

Most trees within Conservation Areas are also given a degree of protection via a legal mechanism which requires anyone proposing to carry out work on a tree or trees, to give six weeks notice to the Local Authority. The Local Authority may then decide to serve a TPO on that tree or trees and it is that TPO which provides the protection. Conservation Areas are areas of special architectural or historical interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance. They are designated by Local Authorities and are generally centred around listed buildings. Other buildings and landscape features, including trees, may also contribute to the special character of a Conservation Area. Trees in Conservation Areas which are already protected by a TPO are subject to the normal TPO controls.

The proposal to extend the Conservation Area to the east of the A49 would extend some protection to trees in that part of the town. This is seen as an important step as it would offer the opportunity to conserve not just the important trees in that area but their relationship to the valued buildings as well.

Trees can be affected by development either directly, through felling, or indirectly through damage to roots or branches. Within Church Stretton, indirect damage to trees often causes the most public concern and in some cases, may lead to the loss of a tree, or trees. Common causes of indirect damage are:

- Compaction of the root zone through the storage of building materials and machinery, thus preventing the tree from accessing the water, oxygen and nutrients necessary for good health and ultimately, survival.
- Breaking of branches during access to the site – this can allow disease to enter the tree.
- Building under the canopy of an existing tree. The root zone of a tree extends to at least the same distance underground as the branches above ground and the construction of foundations within this zone can cause severe damage.
- A failure to recognise the size of different trees at maturity which can lead to requests to fell trees later on.

There is now a British Standard, BS 5837:2005 on trees and construction which gives essential advice on all of the important issues relating to trees and construction. In addition, there is also a wide range of guidance available on the mitigation of the effects of development on trees. Of particular note is Local Planning Guidance Note (17), published by The County Borough of Wrexham, which is a useful example. This Note expands on tree protection policies in the Wrexham Councils Unitary Development Plan. It outlines the Council's requirements when considering applications which could affect trees and forms a material consideration in the determination of relevant planning applications. The Note sets out the survey requirements expected of developers, including the use of specialist advice; the types of information required for proper assessment of the application as it relates to trees; and gives guidance on appropriate methods of safeguarding trees both during and after construction.

Residents in Church Stretton have a perception that the enforcement and monitoring of TPOs, and works to trees in Conservation Areas does not always take place. At the same time, there is concern that trees are being damaged by new development.

New Planting

Many of the trees in the town were planted in a relatively short space of time around a 100 years ago. These trees are now approaching the natural end of their lives and unless a systematic approach is taken to their replacement, the character of the town will be significantly altered. Street trees are at particular risk of loss. South Shropshire District Council is able to require new planting as part of planning permissions for development within the town. However this is a relatively limited mechanism and other ways of supporting new planting are needed.

When new trees are planted, the species chosen should be appropriate for the soils, level of exposure to wind and drainage conditions on the site. Native trees provide the most benefits for

biodiversity, but the character of the town is defined by non-native plantings as much as it is by indigenous species. Similarly, a tree's size at maturity is an important factor and one that can lead to early felling if not properly understood. All new plantings are also at risk of vandalism – although in a town like Church Stretton, this risk is relatively small. Nevertheless, this aspect needs to be considered when new trees are planted.

Education Issues: Trees

In recent times there appears to have been a shift in attitude to trees. There seems to be a perception that trees are dangerous and represent a liability for landowners. At the same time, trees may be seen as a barrier to development, or to have a negative impact on cherished views. On some occasions trees are felt to cause a mess, particularly when leaves fall in autumn.

This perceived general lack of sympathy and understanding for trees also extends to the need for ongoing management. Tree owners can be surprised to find that trees need regular maintenance and that this can involve advice from arboricultural experts, with its attendant costs.

Lastly, the restrictions imposed by Tree Preservation Orders and Conservation Area designation are not always well understood. Residents are often unclear about what works they can and cannot carry out on trees without permission.

Conclusion

It is recognised that these Guidelines and Recommendations are dependent upon resources. A range of funding opportunities, including sponsorship, will need to be pursued. The formation of a Church Stretton Tree Group is a key component in this strategy.

Tree Education Recommendations:

TE1. A programme of walks, talks and events aimed at celebrating trees and providing information about the planting and management of trees should be developed, in conjunction with the AONB Partnership.

TE2. An information leaflet about protected trees and their management should be produced. It should be circulated to owners of trees covered by TPOs and residents within the Conservation Areas.

TE3. Tree planting days for local schools based on the Opportunity Map prepared under TN3 should be set up.

TE4. An 'Adopt a Tree/Hedge' scheme should be developed.



The Stretton valley looking north

Appendix 2

Conservation Areas

Appendix 2 supplements the Conservation Area guidelines and recommendations contained in Section 2 and should be read together with that section.

Part of Church Stretton, including the town centre and a residential area to the west is in a Conservation Area. In 2004 the Church Stretton Conservation Group, reporting to the Town Council, proposed an extension to the Conservation Area to include areas on the east side of the A49, including Sandford Avenue, Watling Street North, Hazler Road and Clive Avenue. Details were drawn up and the proposal was approved at a meeting of the Town Council on 16 May 2005 and then submitted to South Shropshire District Council.

The Town Design Statement makes the case to include this area to the east of the A49 in a Conservation Area. The area is described in the survey areas 1 to 3. This area should be designated a Conservation Area because of its historic, architectural and landscape value. The approach road to the town, Sandford Avenue, is perhaps the most important single feature in conferring on the town its unique character, with its avenue of lime trees and large houses set in spacious plots, dating from the late Victorian and Edwardian period. Hazler Road and Clive Avenue are distinctive residential areas, with substantial houses, some dating from the Edwardian period. Many of the same features that justified the Conservation Area extension in 2005 can be applied equally to this area. Overdale, with its formal garden and mansion, is probably the single most important house and garden on this side of the town and is particularly visible on the hillside. Following a Hearing in November 2006 permission has been granted to build on part of the garden of Overdale. The reasons for identifying this area as a Conservation Area, however, remain and it becomes even more important to see this accomplished.

At the Town Council meeting of 15 January 2007 a proposal to extend the Conservation Area to include the whole of Carding Mill Valley was passed and this decision has now been submitted to the District Council for action, along with the earlier proposal.

There is much concern about the loss of original features in period properties and the installation of unsympathetic windows, doors and porches. This could be controlled by removing permitted development rights, which has been implemented in many of Shrewsbury's Conservation Areas for some time. It is recognised that the proposals to extend the Conservation Area and remove permitted development rights are dependent on resources being available to South Shropshire District Council.

Conservation Areas Recommendations:

CA1. The area east of the A49 including Sandford Avenue (east), Watling Street North, Hazler Road and Clive Avenue should be designated a Conservation Area, following the wishes of the Town Council at its meeting on 16 May 2005.

CA2. Carding Mill Valley should be included in the Conservation Area, following the decision of the Town Council at its meeting on 15 January 2007.

CA3. Permitted development rights for windows, doors and porches in the existing Conservation Area in Church Stretton should be removed.

Note: It is recognised that these Recommendations are subject to resources being available.

DF1. Consideration should be given to the creation of a Design Forum to facilitate dialogue between councils (the District and Town Councils), developers, designers and representatives of local residents to encourage good quality design in all projects. This could be similar to the conservation area committee in Ludlow.

Appendix 3

Community Consultations

Part of the brief of the project was to gain the views of local people in Church Stretton. This section is a summary of the views expressed as part of the community consultations, which were held to raise awareness and to involve people in the project, and does not form part of the Town Design Statement.

During the course of the development of the project many people contributed their ideas and comments about the town and its setting, and provided information about what made the town special to them. Some of the public consultation events are detailed in the section 'Background to the study and methodology'. Views were sought through questionnaires and through participatory events. People were asked what they particularly valued about the town and what they would like to see improved. The responses were, not surprisingly, very varied. There was an overwhelming high regard for the beautiful setting of Church Stretton, the importance of the views of the hills from all parts of the town, the tree cover and the way the town blends with the surrounding landscape. As well as comments about the townscape, favourite buildings and views, there was concern about the growing level of traffic, and that the town's character would be spoilt by over-development. Naturally, some views were positive and others were negative. A wide range of comments, relevant to a design guide, have been included in the Town Design Statement. Ideas for enhancing the town have also been incorporated as many useful ideas were suggested.

Some views were not included because they did not translate easily into planning and design guidelines. These are included in the general report on the community consultation below in the hope that they can be taken into account whenever the future of the town is being considered.

The Town

Many comments were made about the small and friendly feel of the town. The features particularly valued include the town's compact size and its 'village' feel, with everything within walking distance, the diverse selection of local shops (some family run) and the lack of 'clone' shops (chain stores). Some garish shop fascia boards were disliked. The amenities of the town were seen as very important, such as being on a mainline railway, the Medical Centre and community facility at Mayfair, the schools, post office, fire station, park, library and visitor centre and banks. Easy access to the playing fields and open spaces such as Rectory Wood and Field, and the network of footpaths in and around the town were highly regarded. People felt very privileged that Church Stretton lies within the Shropshire Hills AONB and of our connection with the National Trust, through the many volunteers who help in Carding Mill Valley and throughout the area.

The old buildings in the town centre were particularly prized as well as the various and interesting mixture of doors, windows and rooflines, which all harmonise with each other. The glimpses of the hills through gaps between buildings were mentioned by many respondents. There was much concern over the lack of a 'focal point' in the town and a strong desire for The Square to be pedestrianised and made attractive with seating and more planters. The clutter of surplus road signs and road markings were disliked.

Trees and the countryside

Trees, hedges and wildlife were much valued along with the way the town blends with the natural landscape and the hills. The setting of the town as viewed from the hills is seen as important, as are the mature gardens with large trees and the lime trees growing throughout the town. The loss of tree cover was a cause of concern. Many expressed a wish to extend the Conservation Area and also a need for more tree protection. One comment in particular sums up these various views – 'We value the trees ... which thread the urban and rural landscapes together in the setting of the AONB, against the backdrop of the Long Mynd and the South Shropshire hills, giving spectacular scenery which seen from the town makes its setting unique.'

The quietness of the town and surrounding area is a highly valued characteristic identified by local residents, who expressed the wish to see this preserved.

The Town and Development

There was an overwhelming feeling that our status as the only town in the Shropshire Hills AONB should be respected by keeping building to a minimum, with no more large scale development and urban sprawl particularly with regard to the green fields behind the schools, development high on the hillsides and the land at the end of Watling Street North. There was also a strong wish that the town boundary should be retained and also that there should be no more garden infill, which people felt was eroding the special character of the town. People felt that there are enough large executive houses in Church Stretton. They expressed the wish that any future housing allowed should primarily be affordable and no larger than 2-3 bedrooms, to cater for local need. Many people felt it should be integrated within the present town boundary and that it should be small scale. Many people wished for greater consultation and discussion on proposed developments and at an earlier stage, and a proposal to establish a 'Design Forum' is included as a recommendation.

Some people felt there should be more provision of leisure facilities, but there was a mixed opinion of what these should comprise. Traffic was also an issue, with much concern over parking and congested roads, particularly Shrewsbury Road and Churchill Road, which people considered has been exacerbated by the lack of parking at Denehurst Court. Many people felt that the infrastructure of Church Stretton and attendant services was already at capacity, particularly with so much sheltered housing and retirement units.

Some further areas of concern included the potential for flooding in the valley, the lack of affordable housing for local young people, insufficient provision of public lavatories, litter and dog fouling, a lack of public seats in the town and a need for more conservation and care of St. Laurence's Churchyard.

All the material gathered is available to view, on request, at the Town Council Office, 60 High Street, Church Stretton.



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Church Stretton

Town Design Statement



Top: Holly Cottage, Kings Arms

Middle Row: Bucks Head, Rear of Bucks Head, Overdale

Bottom Row: Fan lights at Berry's, School House, The Priory



CHURCH STRETTON TOWN COUNCIL

