



**DRAFT  
CHARACTER APPRAISAL  
FOR  
WOLVERLEY CONSERVATION  
AREA**

**MARCH 2007**



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CONSERVATION AREA  
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## **1. INTRODUCTION**

Wolverley Conservation Area (the Area) was designated by Wyre Forest District Council in 1972. It is situated off the B4189 (Wolverley Road), 2.8 miles north west of Kidderminster, in the County of Worcestershire.

The Conservation Area encompasses a small rural village, including a high local school and church, and covers 30.5 hectares.

This document aims to set out the special architectural and historic characteristics of the Conservation Area. The character appraisal will be of interest and use to those involved with development and use of the area, and that adjoining it, to preserve and enhance the village character.

The Adopted Wyre Forest District Local Plan (January 2004) contains policies, outlined in Appendix 2 of that document, to assist in preserving and enhancing Conservation Areas within the District: these will be used when considering any development or other proposals within the defined boundaries of this Conservation Area. Appendix 1 of the same document shows the boundary of the District, in map form, together with a number of the features referred to in this document.

## **2. LEGISLATIVE AND POLICY FRAMEWORK**

The first Conservation Areas were designated under the Civic Amenities Act (1967). This Act was superseded by the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. Section 69 of this later Act imposes a duty on Local Planning Authorities to identify areas that are of special architectural or historic interest, where it is desirable to preserve and enhance the character and appearance, and to designate them as Conservation Areas.

Planning Policy Guidance Note 15 (PPG 15) *Planning and the Historic Environment* gives further guidance on Conservation Areas, their designation and their assessment, and clarifies the legal responsibilities of both owners of properties within Conservation Areas, and the Local Authorities whose areas the Conservation Area falls within.

The General Permitted Development Order 1995 (GPDO) classes a Conservation Area as being “Article 1(5) land”. Whilst planning permission is not required for many types of works outside such areas, control is given to Local Authorities for works being undertaken within Conservation Areas, including, but not exclusively, the enlargement of a dwelling-house, the rendering of such properties, and the installation of antennae and satellite dishes.

The Adopted Wyre Forest District Local Plan (January 2004) contains various policies describing the aims and objectives of the Local Authority with relation to the wider historic environment and in particular to the preservation and enhancement of the conservation areas within the District. These policies are contained within Appendix 1 of this Appraisal.

English Heritage published new guidance on Conservation Area Appraisals in August

2006. In preparing this draft appraisal, regard has been given to this guidance; likewise the management plan and public consultation will all be in accordance with these guidelines.

It should be noted here that it is not only buildings that are protected when a Conservation Area is designated – trees are also given some protection. Furthermore, PPG 15 also advises that highway work should reflect the need to protect the historic environment, including road building and highway maintenance.

### 3. ANALYSIS OF CHARACTER

#### 3.1 *Setting and topography*



*An aerial view of Wolverley demonstrating the post enclosure field system and the strong presence of trees within the Area*

The village of Wolverley lies within the Stour valley. Both the Rivers Stour and Horsebrook flow through the Conservation Area. The centre of Wolverley village is situated at the foot of an outcrop of sandstone, which forms a small cliff, on which the church and churchyard are prominently positioned. The northern part of the village is reached through a deep cutting through the sandstone, too narrow to accommodate two way traffic and controlled by lights.

Sandstone is a prominent feature and there are rock dwellings scattered over the parish, notable examples include those at Blakeshall and Drakelow. Soil is light sandy loam and the subsoil is sandstone and gravel.

The area is well wooded - some of these woods are semi-ancient, namely Birch Wood, Bodenham Wood, Cookley Wood and Middle Wood.

#### 3.2 *Historic Evolution*

The earliest documentary reference to the settlement at Wolverley is found in a charter dated 866 AD. Archaeological finds indicate that the area was occupied prior to this date. Within the locality is an Iron Age Hill Fort at Drakelow which has been designated a Scheduled Ancient Monument. Romano-British occupation of the area has also been identified and is believed to have given rise to the place names of Solcum Wood and Solcum Farm. By 1086 Wolverley was of sufficient importance to be mentioned in the Domesday Book, and was noted to have a priest suggesting that there may have been a church or chapel within Wolverley at this time.



The parish is recorded as being sparsely populated at the turn of 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> century. However, a key event occurred during this period that would be an influential factor in the future shaping of Wolverley. In 1620 a William Sebright (the Sebrights were a family that had been in the Area since 1302) left land for the maintenance of a free grammar school at Wolverley.

Wolverley in the 18<sup>th</sup> century witnessed a variety of changes. During the late 17<sup>th</sup> and early 18<sup>th</sup> century the area was home to a fast growing iron industry. Wolverley Lower Mill, established by Philip Foley and Joshua Newborough helped the village play a key role in the early tinplate industry. In 1669 a new water course was cut at the foot of the Church hill field to divert water from the River Stour, to drive the Mills water wheel. The Cookley Ironworks were also founded towards the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, and subsequent iron works were erected on the banks of the River Stour. The flourishing iron industry would have been facilitated by the construction of the Staffs and Worcestershire Canal which opened 1771. A consequence of industry growth within the area would have been an influx of workers to fill the jobs made available by the iron industry.

Other 18<sup>th</sup> century changes that would have impacted on the landscape around Wolverley include the passing of the Wolverley Enclosures Act in 1775, and, as previously mentioned, the construction in 1771 of the Staffordshire and Worcestershire Canal.

Even the church, believed to have been built in the 12<sup>th</sup> century, underwent change during this period. In 1769 it was found that the church was too ruinous to repair and so it was pulled down and rebuilt. It has been suggested that the bricks were made from clay excavated during the construction of the Staffordshire and Worcestershire Canal. The base of the new church tower may be the only surviving remains of the earlier church building.

The principal sources for the land-use history of the area for the later post medieval and modern periods are the Tithe Map 1839 and the successive maps produced by the Ordnance Survey dating from 1889. These sources are consistent in indicating that the Area had a moderate level of agricultural activity, set within a post-enclosure field system, which still forms the basic pattern of the landscape.

### 3.3 *Land-uses*

The predominant land uses are as follows:

- Residential: The predominant land-use is residential.
- Religious: The Church provides a religious and social focal point for the village. It is believed that a church has been located at this site since the 12<sup>th</sup> century. Thus the historical importance of the this building should be emphasised.
- Recreational: Situated at the heart of the village centre is the Queen's Head, the sole remaining Public House within the Area.



*The Queen's Head Public House*

- Retail: There is a post office cum village shop within the village which serves the village and the outerlying area.
- Educational: Wolverley High School is located at the northern part of the Conservation Area. Wolverley Sebright Primary School is situated on the south side of the village, lying just outside the Conservation Area. A school has been sited within the village since the 17<sup>th</sup> century and has occupied and owned various properties within the village, before taking on it's current location in 1931 This provides the village and the school with a closely intertwined history.



*The post office/village shop*

### 3.4 Colours

Colours within the Area change throughout the year. They are provided by:

#### 3.4.1 Built Environment:

##### a) Buildings:

- white or creams of rendered or painted brickwork,
- reddish brickwork with some blue bricks,
- roofing materials, typically reds and greys,
- black down pipes,
- black or white paintwork of window and door frames,
- Coloured doors of Wolverley Cottages



##### b) Street furniture:

- Bins, (bright red, black)
- grey lampposts



##### c) Street surfaces

- Grey tarmac of road surface and pavement,
- Road markings



#### 3.4.2 Natural Environment:

a) Grasses and trees. Provide colour variations and interest throughout the seasonal cycles of the year,

b) Water: The Horsebrook and the Stour both flow through the Area and dependent on climate conditions can vary from a muddy brown to clear and reflective of their surroundings,

c) The local red sand stone is a prominent natural feature and can be seen at various points within the Area



*Examples of some of the elements that introduce colour to the Area*

### 3.5 *Climate*

Climate exerts a number of influences in the Area both on the natural and the built environment.

The surrounding countryside, creating the setting for the Area and often giving rural views out of the Area, is heavily influenced by the climate, changing scenery, colours and views with the seasons.

The roofs of the buildings within the Area are sloping, rather than being flat, to shed rainwater, whilst coping to free standing walls is semi-circular, to shed water and reduce the potential impact of frost.

### 3.6 *Green Spaces*

#### 3.6.1 Trees

Trees are a vitally important component of the character of the Area and the two have a strong historic association.

Trees and hedges provide/serve various ‘functions’ within the Area. They assist in adding colour variations and interest throughout the year.



*Example of how trees and hedges provide colour and variation to the Area throughout the year; picture on the left taken in the summer; picture on the right taken in the autumn*

Trees also provide a screen, limiting views into and out of the Area depending on the season. This gives rise to a feeling of seclusion, and reinforces the rural feel of the village. In the northern part of the Conservation Area, many of the buildings are ‘hidden’ behind trees and hedges allowing only tantalising glimpses of the properties to be seen.

There are three Tree Preservation Orders (TPO) within the Conservation Area and one that adjoins it. They are as follows:

- TPO 104: A horse chestnut of out-standing amenity value
- TPO 81: Some roadside chestnuts, provide an important visual amenity at the approach to the village
- TPO 62: Horse chestnut, one individual horse chestnut tree close to the drive of the vicarage.
- TPO 210: Mixed coniferous and broadleaved woodland to the rear of Wolverley House.



### 3.6.2 Parks and Gardens

Green spaces have long been important to the character of Wolverley. The Tithe Map of 1839 show pleasure gardens attached to Wolverley House and these formally laid gardens are still present on the 1903 Ordnance Survey map. It is said that these gardens were planned under the direction of the poet William Shenstone (1714-1763). The octagonal walled kitchen garden, which served Wolverley House and was later owned by the school, is a noticeable feature on the historic maps and is still present today.

Houses within the village centre tend to have gardens to the rear of the property, with the front opening out onto the street.

### 3.6.3 Wildlife sites

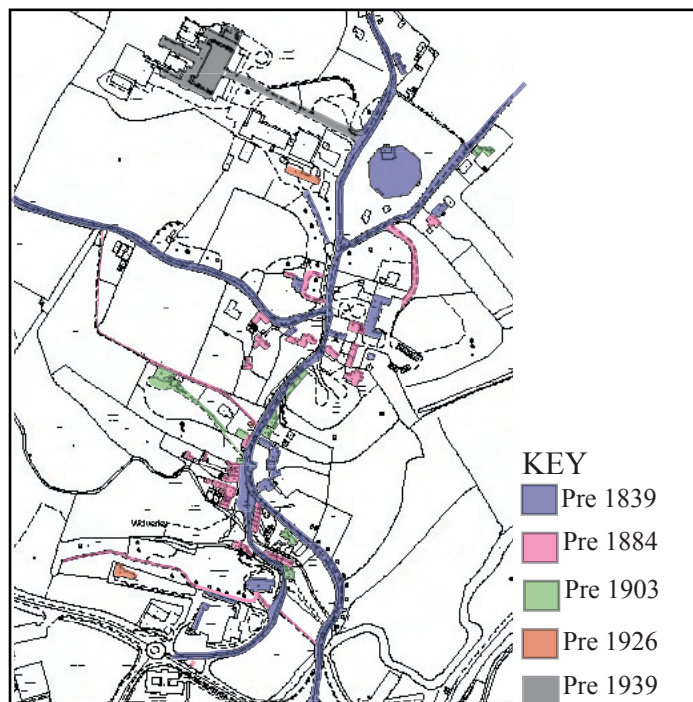
The following sites are within, adjacent or in close proximity to the Area and have been designated as Special Wildlife Sites: Gloucester Coppice, Wolverley Marsh, the River Stour and the Staffordshire and Worcestershire Canal.

Bishop's Field a small (1.5 hectare) marsh in the flood plain of the River Stour at Wolverley, is looked after by Worcestershire Wildlife Trust and hosts a variety of wetland flora and fauna including southern marsh orchids and huge dumps of the greater tussock sedge which is uncommon in the Midlands.



*Bishops Field Wildlife Site*

## 3.7 Historic pattern and movement



*Map showing the historic development of the Area based on successive historic maps including the tithe map and Ordnance Surveys.*



Historic maps of the area, including the 1839 Tithe Map and successive Ordnance Survey maps, show that the layout of the village today is little altered than that of the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century and probably earlier. It is probable that the layout is based on the medieval road layout. A painting of Wolverley in the 18<sup>th</sup> century (viewing Wolverley from the south east) show Bury Hall and the Church in their current position. It also depicts the tithe barn which remained in that location until destroyed by fire in 1937.

It is evident, through looking at the pattern and density of the buildings, that the main road(s) and river dissecting the village has been the principal influence on the early development of the village. A later precipitous force on the development of the village has been the school which has been sited in the village since the 17<sup>th</sup> century. The ownership and occupation of the school at various sites within the village (including Old School House, Bury Hall, Wolverley House) will have had an effect on the historic pattern and movement of the Area.



*The River Horsebrook has had an influential impact on the layout of the village*

The movement patterns of the Area are created by the social focal points (the schools, the church, the pub and the post office) of the village. The school in particular, has a major impact on the traffic at the start and close of school and also on pedestrian activity with students walking to and from the High School to the village centre.

The B4189 which runs adjacent to the southern boundary of the Area is a busy road and is the route for a limited public transport service for the village.

### *3.8 Illumination and night-time appearance*

There are a number of street lights within the Area. Whilst the orange light provided by the street lights do not preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the Area, the soft light given out is minimal in terms of its impact. The concrete design of the columns are neither attractive or sensitive to the character and appearance of the Area and it would be desirable for these to be replaced with a more sensitive design.

### *3.9 Views*

The views provide important links between the village and its surroundings. The setting of the village in the Stour valley adds to the character, providing gradient, a varied roofscape and potential for views over the village.

#### *a) Into the Area*

The topography surrounding the Conservation Area and for much of the village itself, means it is difficult to gain distant views into the Area. The setting of the village, nestled in a valley between sandstone cliffs, means that the Area (with the exception of the Church) is largely screened from outside view. This is an important aspect of the character of the Area. The few vantage points that do exist are:

- On approach to Wolverley from the B4189 a view of the Church can be seen. The road then runs along the southern edge of the Conservation Area allowing limited views into the Area.
- From the Staffordshire and Worcestershire Canal views of the Church and Bury Hall and Brooklands can be gained.
- From the northern part of Drakelow Lane glimpses of the Church and some of the village buildings can be seen.



*View of the Church from the Staffordshire and Worcestershire Canal*

#### b) Out of the Area

For the reasons of topography referred to above, long distance views out of the Area are restricted. The vantage points that do exist are:

- The Church and churchyard - provides views across to the River Stour and out to Franche.
- Bridge, Drakelow Lane – views out along the River Stour.
- From the former Live and Let Live Public House provides views across to the woods at Wolverley Court.



*View from the churchyard across to Franche*

#### c) Views within the Area

Views within the Area are restricted through the natural topography of the village, and the area in which it is sited. The centre of the village is sunken between sandstone cliffs, limiting the views to the immediate surroundings. The curving of the streets and paths result in views that unfold as you traverse through the Area. The curves of the road draw the eye towards the next element of the village, which is tantalisingly hidden from view, until the corner is breached. The limited views endow the Area with a sense of visual drama and interest and is an important characteristic of the Area.



*Examples of some of the characteristic curves that limit views within the Area but provide visual interest*

Many of the views within the Area are therefore limited to the immediate surroundings but there are some longer reaching views into the Area and these include:

- The Church and churchyard– provides a vantage point for overlooking the village to the north.
- Northern approach to the Holloway (by Wolverley House)- provides views across to the Church.
- The former Live and Let Live Public House provides a vantage point to overlook the village centre and across to the Church.
- The village centre provides views to the entrance of the holloway and across to the Church



*View from the churchyard across the village centre*

### *3.10 Pattern and density of building*

Wolverley village has effectively been dissected into two parts, with the holloway linking the two.

The northern part of the Conservation Area is dominated by Wolverley House, built in the mid 18<sup>th</sup> century by Edward Knight and its associated buildings which include the former coach house (now called Lucas Buildings), the Dovecote and the gate posts. These together with the Birches form an impressive group of Listed Buildings. The group is surrounded by clusters of varied and mature trees, which conceal the buildings from full view from the road.

Although the village centre has, to a certain extent, an enclosed feel due to its location between the sandstone cliffs, the layout of the buildings provide the village centre with an open character. This is caused in part by the largest building, the Old School House being set back and “winged” by the Music Room and the Knight House. It is also the result of the road layout, which as previously discussed hides the village from view until it reaches the village centre.

Most of the buildings either form part of a small terrace or are detached. In the village centre the buildings are typically built against the edge of the street and are often accompanied by small outbuildings to the rear.

The plots of larger proportions are for the historic occupation of the wealthier families or those with important community positions. Their houses are noticeably larger and of a better quality eg Wolverley House, The Birches, the Old Sebright School and houses, Bury Hall. Some of these larger properties have now been sub divided.

The majority of the buildings in the Area are residential; there is one public house and one shop. There are several civic buildings within the Area including St John the Baptist Church and Wolverley High School. Other civic buildings have been converted to residential use, including the original school house.



### *3.11 Style of buildings*

There are several different architectural styles throughout the village, mostly dating from the Georgian through to the Victorian Periods, with examples of both Polite and Vernacular architecture, representing to some extent the history of the village, and the development of the village through the late Eighteenth and early Nineteenth Centuries.

Within the heart of the village, the majority of the properties are more vernacular in style, with some variation from the simple Georgian workers cottages adjacent to the Queens Head public house, to the cottages opposite incorporating several elements of Gothic Revivalism.



*Above examples of vernacular architecture, below examples of polite architecture present within the Area*



Other properties, whilst more Polite, also show the different styles, ranging from the classic balanced Georgian properties, such as Wolverley House, to the more ornamental and decorative (again largely Gothic Revival) properties, including Court House.

Whilst some of the buildings may appear to be Georgian in date, such as the Vicarage and the Old Vicarage, they are in fact a Victorian construction. It seems that some of the later properties were designed and built to reflect the architecture of earlier periods, and to tie in with the surrounding architecture – a surprising and unusual trend for this period.

### *3.12 Size and morphology of buildings*

As with most historic settlements, the size of buildings is largely dictated by their historic uses, and the plot divisions. The more wealthy the owner, then larger the plot of land, and subsequently the larger the property.



The Church is one of the most dominant buildings within the Area. It retains its architectural ascendancy over the Area through its size in comparison to the surrounding buildings, and due to its position on the top of a sandstone cliff. This location further gives a sense of drama and emphasises its status.



*The position and size of the Church dominates the surrounding area*

As would be expected, the larger plots of land, and often the more dominant in terms of aspect and topography, are taken up by the larger houses, including the old school, Wolverley House, and The Birches. These properties are generally of three storey height, although some are of two storey, but with tall front elevations and/or roof-scapes.

The smaller properties are found more at the bottom of the village, overlooked by both the Church and the larger properties. Usually set within small plots of land, and forming terraces, these are generally of two storey, with shallower roof pitches, and irregular plot widths, such as the Sebright Cottages and the Wolverley Cottages. This grouping within the village centre gives a harmonious effect to the village, further enhanced with the old school house, where this group of buildings were constructed to complement each other, and to give a courtyard feel.

However, this appearance of harmony is altered, when viewed from higher ground, when, due to the changing topography within a confined area, the village can seem quite cluttered.

### *3.13 Materials and construction*

#### *a) Walls and construction methods*

The principal building material within the Area is red brick, which ranges from the dark plum red, found in Wolverley Cottages, to the more warm orange red found in The Vicarage. This range of colour helps to identify the period of construction of many of the properties, with the darker (and often larger) brick being used in the Georgian period, whilst the warmer orange (and smaller) brick being used in the Victorian period.

There is a mix of brick bond throughout the Area, with nearly every type of bond being evident: Flemish bond is the principle one used, but English bond is also evident, and variations of both of these bonds are also clearly used throughout the Area. Stretcher bond is used, but only for boundary walls, due to its lack of structural strength.

Other types of building material are also present, including polychrome brickwork, as can be seen at Oak House, and sandstone/ ashlar, which can be found at The Old Court and at the Church. Sandstone is also used for dressings, details and plinths throughout the Area, and in some areas, it has been hewn away to form structures, such as the caves to the south of the Queens Head pub, and the animal pound on the edge of the village.

Whilst in many areas the facing material is often left untreated, resulting in natural colours, both render and paint are used extensively throughout the Area. Much of the brickwork has been painted white, such as the Sebright Cottages and the side elevations of the Queens Head. Render is present in some quantity, either presenting a flat finish to the building, or with stucco incised joints. Again, much of this is painted white.

The mortar used predominantly within the Area is a creamy white lime mortar, with medium-sized aggregate. However, much re-pointing has been carried out in a cement-based mortar, using a Rugby cement and red sand, resulting in a brown, hard finish, often over-sailing the original joints.

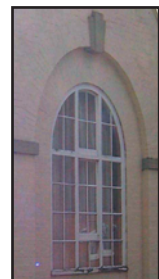


*Examples of some of the different building materials used throughout the Area: sandstone ashlar, brick, sandstone*

## b) Windows



Windows are generally rectangular in shape and there is a mix of casement and sash windows within the Area. These are also mixed in their periods, with traditional side-hung, cottage-style casements present on buildings such as Wolverley Cottages, to more modern top and side-hung casements, constructed either in painted or stained timber or white Upvc. Sash windows vary from each building, and Georgian sashes are evident in buildings, including Wolverley House and The Birches, whilst Victorian sashes, with larger lights are present on buildings including the Queens Head.



Other styles of windows are also present, with arched windows being a common feature, these either being elliptical or round-headed. Most of these style of windows are within the collection of buildings around the courtyard which helps to give a sense of uniformity through their use, also responding to the windows in the church and to the arch detail in Wolverhill, opposite the courtyard.



The only other details worthy of note are the two windows in the Court House, which are of three cinquefoiled lights. These are not present anywhere else within the Area, and relate to nothing, but fit well with the style of this building.

c) Doors

The Area contains a variety of doors and surrounds. The doors range from the standard timber and Upvc part-glazed modern doors, such as those at Sebright Cottages, to the more traditional doors, ranging from simple planked doors (with and without ornamental hinges), and ornamental oak doors. The former styles of doors are not considered to be particularly sympathetic to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area, whilst the latter, more traditional styles of doors are sympathetic and assist in creating the character and appearance of the Area.

Door surrounds are also varied, with simple timber strips, such as above the shop-cum-post office, to grand porticos, such as The Music Room and Wolverley House (both entrances).

d) Roofs

Roofing materials vary between tiles and slate. Originally the tiles would have been hand made, resulting in a slightly curved tile, adding to the historic character of the property. More modern replacements and the use of welsh blue slate on some buildings, has resulted in a more flat and uniform appearance. The colours arising from these materials helps to define the character and appearance of the Area, especially when viewed from high points in the vicinity. The warm red of the tile and the harder grey blue of the slate often change with the weather: the tiles tend to become deeper in colour, whilst the rain brings out the green and purple of the ores in the slate. The use of synthetic slates have not been identified within the Area.



*View across the roofs of some of the buildings within the village centre*

Most of the roofs are gabled. The pitch of which are generally steep, varying between 35 and 50 degrees. The differing heights of the roofs throughout the village provides visual character and interest to the Area, especially when viewed from the vantage point of the Church.

Some buildings have decorative barge boards, giving further interest to the gables and the eaves of the buildings, such as the Queens Head, and the Wolverley Cottages. These are often constructed in timber, and painted black. Further decoration can be found in some areas with timber finials at the apex of gables – these are missing on some roofs however, where there is evidence that they were originally present.

The chimneys throughout the Area helps to create interest and split up the roof-scape. These are often constructed with over-sailing brick courses, and many still retain pots. Although the more modern style of straight roll-top pots is common, the more traditional castellated and cannon head pots are still present on some roofs.

e) Rainwater goods

Rainwater goods are traditionally cast iron, predominantly in half-round profile for guttering. However, less sympathetic, lower quality and less durable Upvc guttering has been used in some areas, where, especially on the more historic properties, does little to preserve or enhance either the property or the Area.

f) Boundary walls, copings and railings

Boundary walls and fences are traditionally a feature of properties within the Area and assist in defining, both physically and visually, the boundary of the properties, or group of properties. The materials tend to reflect the character and appearance of the properties, although this is not always the case.

Boundary treatments vary throughout the Area, ranging from brick walls, to estate fencing, and timber post and rail. Much of these complement the area, but there are some treatments that do not compliment the character and appearance of the Area, such as the use of feather-edge boarding at waist height, and concrete pillars with scaffolding poles for railings. In character with the local geology, there are some walls constructed in irregular-coursed sandstone blocks.

There is also a range of different copings, including chamfered sandstone blocks, blue bull-nose and blue half round bricks, concrete blocks, and brick on edge. The latter two of these are not considered to be historically accurate and do not complement the historic character and appearance of the Area.

### 3.14 *Survival of architectural features*

The area has retained many original architectural features. These include:

- Traditional windows and doors – both in traditional materials and designs;
- Traditional roofs and roof coverings – plain clay tiles and Welsh Blue slate;
- Non-painted or rendered brickwork;
- Rendered and incised brickwork;
- Pointing – fine gauge, and wider jointing, in creamy white lime mortar;
- Railings, gates and boundary walls;
- Gable finials – ranging from simple timber spikes to ornate stone acorns;
- Blue wire-crossed bricks and pavements, and cobbles;
- Sandstone gateway to Church from village.

Noticeable losses of, or damage to, architectural features include the following:

- The installation of Upvc in some properties, for windows and/or rainwater goods;
- The use of cement in pointing
- Inappropriate and poorly maintained highways furniture, including signage, bins railings, and street lighting;
- Painting of brickwork with plastic-based paints, rather than breathable paints or whitewash;



### 3.15 Landmarks, focal points and special features

#### a) Landmarks

Landmarks are buildings, structures, or other features that are important because of their size, design or position makes them particularly noticeable.

Landmarks in the Area include the following:

- St John the Baptist Church is a key landmark and is one of the only buildings that can be seen from outside the Conservation Area. It is a landmark building due its position, size and design.
- The holloway's position as the link between the north of the village and the village centre establishes this feature as a landmark within the Area.

- The Queen's Head is one of the largest buildings within this area of the village. Its size coupled with its location at the heart of the village makes this a landmark building.



*The Queen's Head Public House - a landmark within the Area*

- The Court House - the dramatic gothic architecture of this building, its size and position at the centre of a courtyard flanked by other buildings serve to heighten the dramatic impact of the building within the village scene.

- Wolverley House- the size and imposing design of the property make this building a long standing landmark within the area.

#### b) Focal Points

Focal points are buildings, structures or areas, that are important because of their position in view lines, or because they are the centre of well-frequented public activity. Focal points include the following:

- The Queen's Head is an important focal point, as a result of its function but also because of its central position within the village.

- The Holloway provides the link between the north of the village and the village centre (as well as a route through to other villages) and as such is an essential focal point of the village. The provision of traffic lights further augments its status as a focal point with traffic forced to wait at either side of the holloway.



*The holloway*

- Shop/post office As the only shop that serves the village the shop/post office serves an important social purpose and is thus the centre of well frequented public activity. This is highlighted by the amount of cars that can be normally found parked outside.

- The Church has a long established relationship with the village as a social focal point for Wolverley (and Cookley). This is reaffirmed through its location in a highly prominent position within the village. In connection with the Church, the path that leads from the village to the Church must also be considered as an important focal point.



*The Church and Bury Hall as viewed from the Staffordshire and Worcestershire Canal*

- Bury Hall, as a result of its position on the top of the sandstone cliff, is in several view lines.

- The School, as previously mentioned, has a closely intertwined history with village of Wolverley. The current building serves as a focal point for the village, impacting on the volume of traffic and number of people within the Area.

### c) Special Features

There are 13 Listed Buildings within the Area, three of which are grade II\* thereby denoting them as buildings of particular national importance. One of the key characteristics of the Area is the high quality and historic interest of the buildings within it. As a result most are of local and architectural interest. Some key ones to mention however are:

Wolverley cottages are of interest as a consequence of their architecture. While their position within the village acts as a useful tool to draw the eye to the Church.



*Wolverley Cottages*

The caves by the Queen's Head Public House carpark - whilst the origin and use of these particular caves has not been determined, their existence is reflective of the rock cut dwellings that are a feature of the area.

Particular special features of the Area include the following:

- The range, ages and variety of period architectural detailing and period construction techniques
- The historic street pattern
- Trees and hedges
- The River Stour and Horsebrook
- Views out to the countryside
- Sandstone walls

### 3.16 Ground Surfaces

The majority of the ground surfaces within the Conservation Area are covered in a standard black-top tarmac, used both for the principal roads running through the village and for the pavements on each side. It is a non traditional material and appears

as a weak to medium grey depending upon being dry or wet respectively. It gives little visual texture, but due to the traffic that uses the road, it is accepted as a necessary surface material.

An indication of previous road/pavement surfaces is given with the presence/existence of a short stretch of old moulded blue clay paviors (criss cross pattern) are present outside the Post Office. There also remain some cobbles forming historic drainage channels.

Grass is the other predominant form of ground cover, including the majority of the churchyard. It helps to soften the domination of man made surfaces.

The presence of both the River Stour and the Horsebrook results in water adding interest to the Area, as a focal point for visual attention as well and also because of its changing colours and reflections.



*Historic street surface present within the Area*

### *3.17 Hard landscaping/street furniture*

There are several elements of street furniture within the Area. These include:

- Litter bins –there appears to be several types of litter bin within the Area and include bright red attached to lampposts and free standing ones.
- Benches – A single concrete bench outside the church with timber slats for seating. Another bench next to the horsebrook. Both benches are in a good point for a rest area. There are also concrete benches outside and belonging to the Queen’s Head.
- Street lights
- Signs
- Railings can be found outside the Church and the pound
- Boundary walls



*Examples of street furniture found within the Area*

### 3.18 *Tranquil areas and active areas*

- Tranquil areas

Tranquillity is the peace of a place where the noises and views of human mechanical activity do not intrude to a noticeable degree. Tranquil areas include the following:

The churchyard: Even though the B4189 runs alongside the churchyard the area retains its peaceful atmosphere,



*The churchyard retains its tranquil feel*

Pathway through woods by Queens Head,

Path past the vicarage and out to the fields.

In these parts it is possible to become detached very quickly from the conflict and noise of traffic.

- Active Areas

The active parts of the Area are those covered by patterns of movement, and where focal points exist. The most active areas are as follows:



The school, at times, is one of the principal active areas, with a high concentration of both adults and children during various parts of the day.

*The B4189 provides an active area adjacent to the Conservation Area*

The post office/cum shop and the Queen's Head Public House create frequent pedestrian and vehicular movement with a number of cars frequently parked outside.

The main road B4189 that runs adjacent to the south of the Conservation Area, provides a high volume of traffic.

### 3.19 *Noise*

There are several types of noise and sources of noise within the Area, but on the whole, the Area is quiet and peaceful.

Vehicular traffic is the most detracting noise within the Area. Traffic through the village is concentrated during certain parts of the day, including the start and finish of school. A constant traffic noise is provided at the South of the Area with presence of the B4189 that runs adjacent to the Conservation Area.

Human conversation is the next most common noise. This is especially focussed in social areas such as the school, shop and public house.



Birdsong is another common noise during the day, largely reinforcing the rural character of the Area and its surroundings.

The introduction of gravel as a driveway covering also creates a noticeable level of noise when cars are pulling on or off the driveways.

### 3.20 *Paths*



*Entrance to path, that links the village centre to the Church*

The footpaths within the Area appear to have a historic basis. Of particular interest is the path, carved out of the sandstone, that connects the Church to the village centre. It is a useful cut through to the Church for pedestrians as it negates the need to walk on the narrow and pavementless road that approaches the church from the village. It is believed that the path predates the 16th century.

Other historic footpaths include one that leads from the Church down to the River Stour. This path is clearly shown in use on an 18<sup>th</sup> century painting of Wolverley. There is also a path that leads from opposite the Court House and leads out to Drakelow Lane, that is demarked on the 1839 tithe map.

### 3.21 *Alien features*

Whilst the Area is predominantly “traditional” in character, there are elements that detract from the appearance of the Area.

- Lampposts of unsympathetic style and finish – yellow light
- Unsympathetic architectural products and materials including UPVC windows and doors, pointing with concrete mortar instead of traditional lime mortar
- Pedestrian footbridge
- Tarmacadam pavements and road surfacing and large expanse of tarmacadam car park by Queens Head Public House.
- Concrete bridge over horsebrook next to the Queens Head Public House

### 3.22 *Areas that would benefit from enhancement*

Whilst most of the Area is in good condition, and generally is sympathetic to the character and appearance of the Area, there are several areas where it is considered that enhancement would benefit the Area.

The general treatment of the public realm and urban fabric, including the bins, lamp-posts, and railings, are all considerably dated, generally in poor condition, and are unsympathetic to the character and appearance of the Area. It is desirable that these are replaced, as and when funding is available for these, with styles and materials more suiting the character of the village.



*The Pound*

The animal pound, and the surrounding grass is currently completely fenced off with hoped railings, whilst the door to the pound is constructed in aluminium which is now looking in poor condition. As part of the history of the Area, and one of the few such remaining pounds in the area, this feature should be enhanced, and more should be made of this. The style of railings are not sympathetic to the character of the Area, and it is considered that

the replacement of these with a timber post and rail may be more characteristic and sympathetic.

The final area considered to benefit from enhancement would be the area to the front of the Queens Head public house. This is currently hard standing, and is used as an unofficial car park. This presents a large expanse of tarmac in the middle of the village, and does nothing to enhance either the setting of the buildings, or the village. Considerable car parking is available in the vicinity, but this is underused.

### 3.23 *Neutral areas*

A neutral area is defined as a small part of an area whose character does not conform with that of its immediate surroundings. These sites do not necessarily detract from an area, but should development proposals be forthcoming, then they should improve the site, in terms of visual and/or social impact on the Area, and relate well to the surroundings, or be designed that the development is confined to spaces within the neutral area that are not visible to the public gaze.

The area in which the Live and Let Live sits is considered to be a neutral area. Whilst this is an historic part of the Area, and is visible from outside the Area, and from the Church, the site covers a considerable area, and appropriate development here would benefit the Area. Much of the site is covered in tarmacadam, and is gated off. The use of more appropriate covering materials, and better site definition would also be of benefit to the Area.

## 4.0 **CONCLUDING STATEMENT**

Wolverley Conservation Area has considerable architectural and historic interest. The historic core of the village still has a strong prescence With its rural setting, variety and number of trees and hedges, its historic buildings, the village is widely recognised for its character and appearance.

There are elements within the Conservation Area that detract from this character, but they do not have an over-powering impact. However, these should be addressed, and more appropriate detailing and finishes should be used where possible.

# Appendix 1

## Adopted Wyre Forest Local Plan Policies

### Development in Conservation Areas

#### Policy CA.1

Development within an existing or proposed Conservation Area, or which affects its setting, or views into or out of the area, will not be permitted unless it includes detailed plans and preserves or enhances, and otherwise harmonises with the special character and appearance of the area. In considering how development meets the above, particular regard will be paid to existing and proposed Conservation Area Character Appraisals.

### Demolition in Conservation Areas

#### Policy CA.2

Proposals for the demolition of a building or structure in a Conservation Area will not be permitted unless it is clearly demonstrated that:

- i) it has no recognised interest in itself or by association, and no value to the character or appearance of the Conservation Area;
- ii) its demolition or replacement would benefit the character or appearance of the Conservation Area; and
- iii) they include detailed and appropriate proposals for redevelopment, together with clear evidence such redevelopment will proceed; or
- iv) it is wholly beyond repair and they include detailed and appropriate proposals for redevelopment, together with clear evidence the redevelopment will proceed.

### Shop Fronts in Conservation Areas and in Relation to Listed Buildings

#### Policy CA.3

Within Conservation Areas and in relation to statutorily and non-statutorily Listed Buildings, shop fronts and their repair must:

- i) minimise the loss of, impact upon and be compatible with, historic fabric;
- ii) be of traditional design, materials and surface finish;
- iii) be of appropriate proportions;
- iv) avoid internally illuminated fascias and other internally illuminated signage, and externally mounted lighting and advertisements;
- v) avoid externally mounted, opaque or incompatibly coloured security shuttering;
- vi) not spread across individual adjoining buildings; and
- vii) otherwise harmonise with the building or structure, its curtilage and setting.

## **Trees and Hedgerows in Conservation Areas**

### **Policy CA.4**

Trees and hedgerows that contribute to the special character, appearance or amenity of Conservation Areas must be retained and not directly or indirectly adversely affected. Appropriate topping, lopping or felling of trees will usually be acceptable if it is essential:

- i) to their health or stability;
- ii) to the safety or condition of buildings, structures or land; or
- iii) would otherwise benefit the character or appearance of a Conservation Area.

Care should be taken to conserve root systems. Proposals for felling must be clearly justified and exceptional, and accompanied by appropriate proposals for replanting. Consideration will be given to making Tree Preservation Orders, as appropriate.

## **Highways Works in Conservation Areas**

### **Policy CA.5**

Within and adjoining Conservation Areas, highway works must preserve or enhance the special character and appearance of the area.



