



DRAFT CHARACTER APPRAISAL FOR CHURCHILL

December 2007



CHURCHILL CONSERVATION AREA CHARACTER APPRAISAL

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1. INTRODUCTION

Churchill Conservation Area (the Area) was designated by Wyre Forest District Council in 1991. It is situated about five miles east of Kidderminster in the county of Worcestershire.

The Conservation Area encompasses a small rural hamlet containing buildings that mainly date from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, which are strung out along a narrow winding lane, together with adjoining landscape features.

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 1 of this 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 2 of this document shows the boundary of the Conservation Area, 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 This Act was superseded by the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.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 public consultation will 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

Churchill is situated approximately five miles north east of Kidderminster, in the parish of Churchill and Blakedown. The Conservation Area covers an area of 22 hectares.

Most of the village can be seen by walking along Churchill Lane from the junction of Mill Lane to the cross roads by the old school and then along Stackenbridge Lane. At the north of the village three roads diverge going to Cookley, Kinver and Stakenbridge. A stream (Ganlow Brook) runs parallel to the southern edge of the settlement and has been dammed to form a substantial pool, “Hammer Pond” in the eastern part of the Conservation Area. This served as the power supply for Churchill Forge, which has been designated a scheduled ancient monument.



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Aerial view of the Conservation Area and surrounding land

3.2 *Historic Evolution*

The early history of Churchill is unclear, however it is recorded in the Domesday Book of 1086. Documents show that by the thirteenth century the settlement had a stone church and a mill. It is likely that “Hammer Pond” a pool, some two acres in extent, at the eastern part of the Area was formed in the thirteenth or fourteenth century, by damming the Ganlow Brook.

By the fifteenth century, documentary sources provide a clearer picture of the settlement. The stone church consisted of a nave and chancel with a small bell turret and next to the church was a green. Houses had been constructed along the stream in both directions from the church. Stretching away from the settlement was the arable open field system.

During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries Churchill underwent some changes. These included the passing of the Enclosures Act in 1773, which began the current pattern of field boundaries. Cartographical indicates that field boundaries have changed very little in Churchill since the nineteenth century.

In 1798 a school opened in Churchill, in 1896 it moved to larger premises but was eventually closed in 1961 due to the expansion of neighbouring Blakedown school.



The current Village Hall was once the village school

The medieval church was demolished in the 1860s when it was decided that it would cost as much to repair the church as it would to build a new one. The new church of St. James was consecrated 22nd Sept 1868.

3.3 *Land-uses*

Historically the most important occupation in the village was agriculture and it continued to be the biggest employer of local labour until well into the nineteenth century. While there are a number of farms remaining the area is now predominantly residential.



The Parish contains a number of streams and as a result there were a number of corn mills that were later adapted to become forges. In Churchill the presence of a mill can be traced back to the thirteenth century and by the sixteenth century a blade mill and mill pool are documented. Churchill Forge from the seventeenth century produced edged metal tools such as spades, shovels, forks and rakes. The forge is no longer operating but the equipment and pond still remain, serving as a reminder of historic land use within the Area.



Example of agricultural and industrial buildings that survive in the Area

Due to its rural location the Area is popular with walkers, horse riders and cyclists. There are no shops or schools in the village. Churchill Forge Mill, open to the public on certain days of the year, is also a visitor attraction. The religious needs of the Area are served by the Church of St James the Great.

3.4 *Colours*

Colours are provided by both the built and natural environment. Many of the buildings are constructed of red brick and this forms a key component of colour. This is further enhanced by the presence of brick built boundary walls and the occurrence of red sandstone. Several of the buildings also have elements that have been painted or rendered white.

The strong presence of trees, hedges and grass within the Area also contribute to the colour in the Area which changes dependent on the seasons.

3.5 *Climate*

The surrounding countryside creates the setting for the Area and is heavily influenced by the climate, which changes scenery, colours and views with the seasons.

3.6 *Green Spaces*

The western boundary of the conservation area includes a small hill covered with a patchwork of fields, hedges and trees, and accessible via public footpaths, which forms an important backdrop to the hamlet particularly when viewed from the east. The Area also contains the Churchill and Blakedown Valleys Special Wildlife Sites.

3.6.1 *Trees*

Trees and high hedges are an important component of the character and appearance of the Area.

Numerous deciduous trees throughout the Conservation Area add significantly to its character, opening and closing seasonal views and providing seasonal variations in colour. Trees line both banks of the stream that runs through the Area, as well as the banks of the forge pool. Trees also provide a degree of cover and screen several of the buildings from view from the road, allowing only tantalising glimpses of the properties to be seen.

There are no Tree Preservation Orders within the Area, although there are a number close by and these trees provide an important back drop to the Conservation Area.



Trees and hedges provide a strong contribution to the character and appearance of the Area

3.7 *Historic pattern and movement*



The Ganlow Brook

It is evident, through looking at the pattern and density of the buildings, that the stream and the road dissecting the village have been the principal influence on the development of the village. The settlement has effectively been separated into three parts, those at the southern end before the sandstone cut through, those in the centre around the Church and those at the north eastern side of the Area.

Historic maps of the Area, show that the layout of the village today is little altered than that of the mid 19th century. The presence of mid to late 20th century buildings are often located on the site of previous buildings, which has often meant that plot boundaries have been retained.

The movement patterns would have been created by the presence of both industry and agriculture within the Area. The social focal points, such as the church, the school and the Post Office would also have had an impact on the movement within the Area.

3.8 *Illumination and night-time appearance*

The absence of street lighting, helps it retain a rural and uncluttered feel.

3.9 *Views*

The views provide important links between the village and its surroundings.

a) Into the Area

Views into the Area are, to a certain extent limited by the topography of the Area. One of the main vantage points for views into the Area is from the hill on the western side of the Area. This provides views down into the settlement, emphasising the gradient and varied roofscape.

b) Out of the Area

The views out of the Area reinforce the sense of the rural location of Churchill. To a certain extent views out of the Area are limited by the degree of tree cover. However, wide reaching views out of the Area can be gained from the hill behind Church Farm.

c) Views within the Area

Due to topography and the curve of the Area, views within the Area are effectively limited into sections, with parts only being revealed when the corner is traversed.



Examples of some of the views that can be gained into and out of the area from the hill to the west of the Conservation Area

3.10 Style of buildings

There are several different architectural styles throughout the village with examples of both polite and rural vernacular architecture, mostly dating from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

To a certain extent the history of the village is reflected in its building stock. The presence of agricultural buildings, either still in use, for example Church Farm, or converted to domestic buildings, such as Churchill Old Farm Barns and Church Farm Barns, serve as a reminder of the close connection Churchill had with agriculture

Industrial buildings also survive in the form of Baches Forge. The forge is an important group of industrial red brick buildings dating from the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century. The forge was the location for the local manufacture of spades and shovels. These buildings and the pool are a Scheduled Ancient Monument, and form part of what was once a network of water powered forges associated with the streams and pools in the vicinity.

3.11 Size and morphology of buildings

As with most historic settlements, the size of the building is largely dictated by their historic uses, and the plot divisions. Historically the more wealthy the owner, the larger the plot of land and subsequently, the larger the property. Three houses of particular note for their size, their occupation of important positions and which stand in their own extensive grounds are Churchill House, Glebe House and Churchill Court. Although Churchill Court is a 1970s construction it is believed to lie on the site of the medieval manor court.

From examining cartographical evidence it appears that traditional plot boundaries and outbuildings generally survive intact. Most of the buildings in the Area are detached and are mainly two storey in height. The exception tends to be the more vernacular buildings which are located near the Church.

3.12 Materials and construction

a) Walls and construction methods

The predominant building material in the Area is red brick, which ranges from dark orange/red to a more burnt plum colour. Some of the older agricultural buildings include timber framing. Sandstone has also been used as a building material, most notably at the Church which is constructed of sandstone ashlar, quarried from the nearby Hagley Park. In other instances sandstone has been used as a plinth, for copings and for dressings.

Within the Area there are a variety of facing materials. Some of the buildings have been left untreated, resulting in natural colours, while others have been rendered, or painted white, a ½ timbered style can also be found on several of the properties.

b) Windows

There are a variety of window types within the Area, and these include side hung casements, sash windows and gabled dormers. Most of the window frames and glazing bars are painted white.

Windows are constructed in timber, metal or Upvc. Upvc windows, due to the material and finish are not considered appropriate on traditional properties. While there are only a few examples of stone windows within the Area, stone is used to provide detailing around the windows including keystones and lintels.

c) Doors

The Area contains a variety of doors and surrounds. The doors range from the standard timber and Upvc part-glazed modern doors, to the more traditional including simple boarded and panelled doors. Many of the door surrounds include some form of canopy.

d) Roofs

Roofing materials in the Area vary and include slate, tile and corrugated asbestos. Tile is however the most prevalent roofing material. The colour of the roofing materials also vary from brown/grey to red.

Most of the roofs are gabled, the pitch of which are generally steep, varying between 40 to 45 degrees. There are exceptions such as the Old Church Farmhouse which has a hipped roof.

Several of buildings within the Area, such as the Village Hall, have decorative barge

boards. The barge boards provide further interest to the gables and eaves of these buildings.

The lack of a uniform roof line, provides the Area with a roofscape of character and interest.



An example of the roofing materials and colours found within the Area

e) Boundary walls, copings and railings

Boundary walls are an important feature of the Area. They assist in defining, both physically and visually, the boundary of the property or group of properties. They also limit views, resulting in restricted views in the Area.

Boundary walls are predominantly brick but there is a range of different copings including soldier coursing and blue half round bricks. Other boundary treatments include estate fencing and high hedges.

One boundary wall that is particularly noticeable is that the follows on from the sandstone cutting, and forms part of the boundary for Churchill Court. The wall enhances the sense of enclosure and noticeably cuts into the footpath and gives a sense of enclosure for both the pedestrian and car user. The presence of the boundary wall and the curve of the road have the overall result of drawing attention to Court Cottage on the opposite side of the road. It also has the effect of increasing the feeling that you have passed from one part of the Conservation Area to another.



Boundary walls contribute to the appearance of the Area

3.13 *Survival of architectural features*

The Area has retained many original architectural features. These include;

- traditional windows and doors,
- railings,
- the inset post box
- the Pound



The survival of architectural features contribute to the character of the Area

3.14 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:

- Church of St. James the Great - a landmark not only because of its size but also because of its position at the end of a view line
- The Great Barn – the large size of the barn makes this building a noticeable feature when viewed from the hill top and on approach to the Area from Waggon Lane.



The Great Barn

b) Focal Points

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

- Church of St James the Great: Although the current Church is a nineteenth century replacement, it is located on a site that has been used for worship since the medieval period,
- War Memorial: the position of the war memorial at the crossroads and its role as place of remembrance makes the war memorial an important focal point,
- Hammer Pond: since the thirteenth century it has served as the water supply for the mill and later forge. Its existence since the thirteenth century means that it has served as a focal point in Churchill for centuries.
- Mandalay: on the approach from Stakenbridge Lane the position of this building in a view line makes this an important focal point for the Area
- Boundary wall for Churchill Court



Left, St James the Great, right Mandalay

c) Special Features

There are 8 statutory list entries within the Area. Churchill Forge has been scheduled as an Ancient Monument. There are also several other buildings, that whilst not included in the statutory list, are of architectural and historic interest.

Particular special features include the following:

- Churchill Pound: place where straying or illegally pastured animals were confined. The Pound at Churchill is one of only two surviving pounds in the District.
- The two former school buildings are of interest not only because of their age and architectural qualities but also because of the social function they carried out for Churchill
- The remaining post box in the wall of Court Cottage, serves a reminder of when there was a Post Office in Churchill
- The survival of historic field and plot boundaries
- The hill on the west side of the Area which forms an important backdrop to the Area and allows for far reaching views out of the Area



The Pound

3.15 Ground Surfaces

There are several types of ground surface with the Area. These include;

- Grass: helps to soften the domination of man made surfaces
- Water: The presence of Hammer Pond and Ganlow Brook means that water forms part of the ground cover in the Area and one that has played an important role in Churchill's history,
- Standard tarmacadam used for the roads and for the pavement. It is a non traditional material and appears as a weak to medium grey depending upon being dry of wet respectively. It gives little visual texture, but due to the traffic that uses the road, it is accepted as a necessary surface material.



Standard tarmacadam used for both the road and pavement

3.16 Hard landscaping/street furniture

Although only few in number, there are several elements of street furniture within the Area, these include;

- Signage: There are a number of highway way signs in the Area. While the design of these may not be complimentary to the Conservation Area, they are a necessary requirement,
- Bench: there is a bench located on Churchill Lane,
- Telephone box: there is a modern style telephone box located outside boundary wall to the Church



Example of street furniture present in the Area

3.17 *Tranquil areas and active areas*

Tranquil Areas

Tranquility 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:

- Hammer Pond: although historically it would have been an active area, the lake and the adjacent public footpath now provides a tranquil area
- The hill, the vantage point that this hill provides with panoramic views across open land, provides a tranquil area



Hammer Pond provides a tranquil area

Active Areas

The active parts of the Area are those covered by patterns of movement, and where focal points exist. The location of Churchill between main roads does result in a fairly regular traffic flow passing through the Area, rather than it being the final destination. This does therefore make the roads that pass through the Area active.

3.18 *Noise*

Although the Area has a rural setting, its relative close proximity to the railway line at Blakedown and the A456 means that distant traffic noise can be heard from certain vantage points.

3.19 *Paths*

The Area is popular with walkers and there are a number of path in the Area. These include the path that leads from between Church Farm and the Old Church Farm House to the top of the hill. This path is important for providing views into and out of the Area. There is also a path that runs alongside Ganlow Brook and Hammer Pond and out towards Stakenbridge.

3.20 *Alien features*

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

- The telephone box – located in a prominent position outside the Church, its modern design does little to enhance the setting of either the listed building or the Conservation Area
- Unsympathetic architectural products and materials including Upvc windows and doors, and pointing with concrete mortar instead of traditional lime mortar
- Traffic signs; although serving a necessary function, their design and presence do not compliment the historic character of the Area.



The telephone box is an example of an alien feature in the Area

3.21 *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 impact on the Area. An example of a neutral area includes the twentieth century flats on the corner of Stackenbridge Lane.

4.0 CONCLUDING STATEMENT

Churchill Conservation Area covers a historic village of predominantly eighteenth and nineteenth century buildings. The presence of the Ganlow Brook has been important to the development of the village and Baches Forge remains as an important survival of what was once a network of water powered mills and forges. The rural character of the Area is enhanced by the number of trees, hedges and agricultural buildings found within the Area.

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.

