



CHARACTER APPRAISAL FOR GILGAL CONSERVATION AREA STOURPORT-ON-SEVERN

Revised January 2015



**GILGAL
CONSERVATION AREA
CHARACTER APPRAISAL
REVISED JANUARY 2015**

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Appendix 1 Adopted Wyre Forest District Council Local Plan Policies

Appendix 2 Boundary of Gilgal Conservation Area

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Wyre Forest District Council (2015)

Based on an Appraisal
Undertaken for
Wyre Forest District Council
by Nick Joyce Architects

1.0 INTRODUCTION

This character appraisal relates to Gilgal Conservation Area in the town of Stourport-on-Severn, Worcestershire. The Conservation Area is 2.6 hectares in extent and comprises a group of buildings and associated environments that date from the seventeenth to nineteenth centuries, and form the oldest part of the Town.

Some of the comments in this appraisal which relate to Enhancement Sites and Neutral Sites are intended as snapshots in time, whilst others relating to the overall character of the Area will have more enduring relevance.

Appendix 2 (Enclosure 1 back of document) shows the extent of the above Conservation Area, together with a number of features referred to in this document.

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 Site Allocations and Policies Local Plan and the Adopted Kidderminster Central Area Action Plan include policies linked to the Historic Environment. For Gilgal Conservation Area Policy SAL.UP6 of the Site Allocations and Policies Local Plan, which is called 'Safeguarding the Historic Environment', is particularly relevant. This Policy ensures that future development within, or adjacent to the Conservation Area, will need to protect, conserve and, where possible, enhance the Area.

2.0 UNIFICATION OF CONSERVATION AREAS

Four adjoining conservation areas have been designated within Stourport-on-Severn, as follows:

- a) Stourport-on-Severn No. 1 (1970, reviewed 1991).
- b) Stourport-on-Severn No. 2 (1970, reviewed 1991).
- c) Gilgal (1991).
- d) Staffordshire and Worcestershire Canal (part) (1976).

The above areas follow the chronological pattern of the development of Stourport-on-Severn up to the turn of the twentieth century. Each displays its own character and appearance but at the same time they merge to form a coherent whole.

The Gilgal Conservation Area (in the east) covers Lower Mitton which, prior to the 1760's, was a small hamlet and the only settlement in the vicinity; being located at a historic crossing point of the River Stour. In the late 1760's the Staffordshire and Worcestershire Canal was constructed around the west of the hamlet in order to link the Rivers Trent (far to the north) and Severn (nearby to the south). Lower Mitton continued to be the favoured crossing point of the Stour, but the canal and its terminus with the River Severn

provided a climate of trade and commerce that instigated the foundation, laying out and construction of the adjoining town of Stourport-on-Severn.

Conservation Area No.2 (in the north) continues from the south-west end of the Gilgal and covers the central part of the Town. The buildings in the Area are primarily in the Georgian style, which forms a visually powerful expression that reflects the timing of the Town's foundation and early growth.

Conservation Area No.1 extends immediately to the south of No. 2 Area, to include a complex of Georgian canal basins, environments and buildings; together with part of the River Severn.

The Staffordshire and Worcestershire Canal is a Conservation Area for its entire north-south course throughout the District. At its southern end, it curves west around the northern edge of the Gilgal Conservation Area before turning south to connect with Conservation Area Nos.1 and 2, and its terminus with the River Severn.

3.0 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.

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) has replaced previous Government guidance which was detailed in Planning Policy Statement 5: Planning for the Historic Environment. The NPPF does, however, maintain the importance placed on conserving and enhancing the Historic Environment as well as providing specific advice for Conservation Areas, most notably in Paragraphs 127, 137 and 138.

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 Site Allocations and Policies Local Plan and the Adopted Kidderminster Central Area Action Plan contain various policies describing the aims and objectives of the Local Authority in 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. 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.

4.0 ANALYSIS OF CHARACTER

4.1 Setting

Lower Mitton was originally a small settlement set in farmland. Much of the setting has been altered over the years and has several components, as follows:

- a) The River Stour forms the boundary immediately to the south-east. The associated River corridor has much vegetation and some adjoining open space, which give this aspect of the setting a green feel and helps buffer it visually from industrial and business development further to the south-east.



*River Stour and adjoining trees,
which forms the boundary immediately to the south-east*

- b) To the south is industrial development presently dominated by nineteenth century carpet factories, which are shortly to be

redeveloped. The treatment of the setting at the junction of Stour Lane, Mitton Street and Severn Road, in this redevelopment, will need to be undertaken particularly sensitively. In this respect there may be an opportunity to reinstate houses adjoining the roadside, similar to the ones demolished in this vicinity when the carpet factory was constructed.



*Corner of Mitton Street and Severn Road dated 1925 (left) and at present (right).
The houses adjoining the right and left sides of the older photograph have been demolished*

- c) Immediately to the east, at the junction of Worcester Road and Gilgal, a modern petrol station adjoins the boundary. This is a particularly incongruous feature and the subject of further comments elsewhere in this document (refer Neutral Sites).



*Incongruous petrol filling station (right of centre)
at the junction of Gilgal and Worcester Road*

- d) To the north-west, west and south-west is residential development. Adjoining the northern part of the Area, older properties (Nos. 44-50, Gilgal), plots, a footpath, and a sandstone wall adjoining the canal, are harmonious and continuous with the Area. A number of properties in Severn Road, to the south-west; and No. 19, Mitton Gardens, are similarly harmonious.

4.2 Topography

The topography of the Area has influenced its character, as follows:

- a) Mitton was built around a small hillside that leads down to the River Stour, which in turn runs around its base. The two main streets, Mitton Street and Gilgal, were laid out in a continuous semi-circle around the hillside but running broadly diagonal to the contours and converging at the lowest point to join the crossing point of the River.
- b) A network of steep pre-nineteenth century footpaths leads from an area to the west of Gilgal, down into the Area and particularly into Gilgal and the north-east end of Mitton Street. Although steep, these footpaths have “*elbows*” in places that follow the contours and historic plot boundaries, and provide short breaks from the gradient.
- c) The rooflines of properties in Mitton Street and Gilgal, particularly those of dwellings, are stepped with the gradient.
- d) Properties on the up-slope side of Mitton Street tend to have conspicuous brick or red sandstone revetments to their elevated front gardens; whilst those on the down-slope side have low walls visible from the street.
- e) The main concentration of historic residential development along Mitton Street and the southern end of Gilgal is set back from the River Stour, which is likely to have been a precaution against flooding.

4.3 Historic Evolution

The Area encompasses the old settlement of Lower Mitton that predates the adjoining Georgian town of Stourport-on-Severn.

Mitton was probably established in association with a historic crossing point of the River Stour, immediately to the east, on a route leading north-west from the city of Worcester. This crossing point is still in use today as the Town’s principal crossing point of the River.

The oldest surviving building in the Area (No. 41, Mitton Street) may date from the early seventeenth century, and remnants of old fabric (timber framing) survive in other buildings in the vicinity (for example No. 4, Mitton Street). A medieval or Saxon church is said to have existed on the site of the current churchyard immediately to the north of the Area. A map of 1802 indicates a distribution of buildings, streets, paths and plots, which survive in whole or part today; albeit with subsequent nineteenth century infilling. As such, it is possible the origins of the settlement and its street, and broader plot layout, are of considerable age.



Maps of Stourport-on-Severn dated 1802 (left) and 1849 (right)

4.4 Land Uses

Land uses in the Area are as follows:

- a) The predominant land use is residential, which sits comfortably with its historic role as a small settlement.
- b) A public house (No. 18, Gilgal) in a period building, which provides a social and visual focal point at the junction of Gilgal, Mitton Street and the Worcester Road.
- c) A former coal and coke yard in Gilgal, which survives unaltered and represents an important documentation of a specialised building type and historic use.
- d) Retail and office uses, which currently occupy nineteenth century factory buildings located at the corner of Mitton Street and Worcester Road. Although these uses are non-traditional, they are assisting in the worthwhile retention of important period buildings in the Area.
- e) Builders yard and hire premises (Mitton Street, east side) which detract from the character of the Area.
- f) Vacant builders yard (Mitton Street, north-west side) which detracts from the character of the Area.
- g) On the edge of the Area, at the junction of Gilgal and Worcester Road, is a petrol filling station, which detracts from the area.

4.5 Colours

Colours within the Area are provided by ground surfaces, building materials and vegetation, as follows:

- a) Non-traditional black tarmacadam has been used on the roads and footpaths, replacing older materials. This detracts from the character of the Area.
- b) Buildings exist in a variety of colours from the black and white of timber framing, and red-orange brick of the oldest survivors; to more recent colour washed renders, the latter detracting from the character of the Area.

Grey slate and red-brown tiles of roofing materials.

Some walls are in red sandstone, including that enclosing the southern side of the canal towpath (Gilgal) and a few front garden walls and revetments in Mitton Street.

Woodwork, such as window and door joinery may have originally been painted white but has more recently been given a variety of treatments and colours; much of which is alien to the Area and buildings in question.

- c) Natural colours in the Area are derived from deciduous trees and shrubs; especially along the rising footpaths and in domestic gardens. Such vegetation is particularly visible from vantage points on higher ground within and adjoining the Area, and act as pleasant green back cloths to the colours of buildings.

A similar distribution of vegetation extends beyond the Area and the matching seasonal changes unite it with its immediate surroundings.

- d) Despite the level of residential use in the Area, grass lawns are not a common visible feature.
- e) Roadside trees are not a characteristic of the Area.

4.6 Climate

Climate exerts a number of influences in the Area, as follows:

- a) There appears to be no widespread evidence of buildings being deliberately orientated towards the sunlight, rather they face and follow the back of the pavement. At the junction of Gilgal, Mitton Street and the Worcester Road, however, the road opens out to form a broad, spacious and light junction and it is here the largest dwellings are

located; albeit generally facing the back of the pavement, with the exception of No. 15 Gilgal, which faces south.

- b) Sloping rather than flat roofs on all buildings in the Area, reflects a need to shed rainwater; as does semicircular coping to free standing walls, which also reduces the potential impact of frost. Pediments, and simple pointed or flat canopies, to some front doorways, serve to deflect rainwater and as decoration.
- c) Windows are of reasonable size, reflecting a temperate climate; and the traditional opening mechanism is the sash, the lower component opening upwards for ventilation.
- d) The potential for flooding of properties from the River Stour, is largely overcome by the natural rising of ground away from the river and the historic siting of buildings up these natural slopes. Nevertheless, the lower levels around the central road junction have been prone to regular, heavy flooding.

4.7 Trees

Roadside trees are not a traditional characteristic of the street frontages in the Area, but there is a strong presence of trees and shrubs elsewhere, as follows:

- a) In domestic gardens adjoining the footpaths to the west of Gilgal;
- b) In domestic gardens to the east of Gilgal, and of properties in Mitton Street and Stour Lane;
- c) Adjoining the footpath between the north-east side Gilgal and the Canal; and
- d) Along the banks of the River Stour.

The above trees are of deciduous species and as such, their visual impact changes with the seasons. They create a sense of visual depth in the Area by concealing and revealing certain views at different times of the year, and introduce welcome natural colour. They help present an impression this small part of the town is not as densely developed as other parts. None of the above trees are protected with Tree Preservation Orders.

4.8 Historic Street Pattern and Movement

The core historic roads in the Area are Mitton Street, Gilgal, Worcester Road, Stour Lane and Severn Road. All are still in use following pre-1800 routes, as the main vehicular corridors of the Area; although Stour Lane may once have extended further, to the bank of the River Stour.

Gilgal and Mitton Street are laid out in a continuous semi-circular shape, with the Worcester Road intersecting from the east roughly half way along the semi-circle.

Mitton Street is of considerable age, probably preceding the seventeenth century. The date of Gilgal is not certain and in this respect it may predate or post date the late eighteenth century canal which runs along its northern side.

Important old footpaths indicated on a map of 1802, still connect the Gilgal and the eastern end of Mitton Street, with an area to the west currently occupied by twentieth century residential development in Mitton Close and Mitton Gardens; and Gilgal, with the Canal towpath.



One of the footpaths leading down into Gilgal

The road layout has influenced development in the Area in that most of the buildings are laid out in a linear form along both sides of Gilgal and Mitton Street. In addition, a number of houses to the west of the Gilgal are only accessible via the narrow network of footpaths, and this is a particularly interesting characteristic of the Area.

Vehicular movements of all sizes constitute by far the most dominant patterns of movement in the Area, and are of high volume. Mitton Street, Gilgal and Worcester Road, carry the bulk of this traffic; the former two routes having been made one-way from north to south to assist the flow. This vehicular traffic has a serious detrimental effect on the character of the Area, in terms of visual intrusion, safety, noise, smells and dust.

At night, the character of the highway in Mitton Street and Gilgal is still dominated by vehicular traffic. Although reduced in volume during this period, the flow is nonetheless continuous. It is quite probable and regrettable that a widespread loss of traditional windows in this vicinity has been brought about

by the desire of residents to make their homes less affected by traffic noise and dust.



Vehicular traffic in Gilgal

The problem of vehicular traffic may be alleviated with the construction of a Stourport-on-Severn relief road; a scheme originally proposed by the County Council but with no firm timetable for implementation.

There is little pedestrian movement along the roadside pavements. This may be due to the constant perception of and actual conflict between pedestrians and vehicles in the Area, especially along the narrow pavements at the lower end of Gilgal. This, coupled with traffic volumes and speeds, makes the Area an intimidating and frightening place for pedestrians.

The footpaths to the rear of Gilgal are infrequently used but have a completely contrasting character to those adjoining the roads, rather akin to a *“hidden world”*, and form an important part of the character of the Area.

4.9 Illumination and Night-time Appearance

The night-time character of the Area remains very similar to that of the day due to a lack of premises stay open after dark.

Street lamps are mounted on unsympathetic concrete standards and evenly spaced along both sides of Gilgal and Mitton Street. They cast an even spread of light at surface level. The glow from the lamps is of an orange hue which provide a somewhat surreal and unsympathetic orange light.

The street lamps gently illuminate the fronts of buildings in the Area. A petrol filling station adjoining the eastern side of the Area on the central junction emits an unsympathetic wide glare of light which has a dramatic and detrimental effect upon the appearance and character of the Area.

The footpaths up the bank to the west of Gilgal are less well served with illumination. Lamps here, again on unsympathetic concrete standards, are

positioned only at strategic distances or corners. Because of this the footpaths are unwelcoming and potentially dangerous. In this respect, careful attention to light management could improve the situation.

At night, the character of the highway in Mitton Street and Gilgal is still dominated by vehicular traffic.

The heavy volumes of traffic in Mitton Street and Gilgal add weight to a case to improve the lighting in the bankside footpaths, so as to give residents a better alternative means of accessing their homes rather than walking along the roadside pavements.

4.10 Views

Important views into, out of and within the Area, are as follows:

a) Into the Area:

The principle views into the Area are from the three major roads entering it, from a footbridge crossing the canal to its immediate north, and from footpaths to the west of Gilgal. From all but the Worcester Road approach, these views are obtained at levels near or at the top of the embankment.



View into the Area looking north-west along Worcester Road

Views into the Area when entering from Mitton Street and Gilgal, are channelled into short vistas by the curving nature of the highway, the linear pattern of adjoining development, and a substantial and important sandstone wall adjoining the north side of Gilgal. From the Worcester Road approach, the Steps public house (No. 18, Gilgal) stands ahead as a very prominent and important landmark and focal point at the foot of the embankment, with street vistas to the left and right. Upon crossing the bridge to the River Stour, the view to the left reveals a stretch of river embankment and flowing water, and an adjacent factory building of red brick. At this point, the view to the right reveals particularly large houses (Nos. 15, and 19 & 27, Gilgal) terminating

the southern end of humbler built development on either side of Gilgal. These features form part of the eastern boundary of the Area.

The footbridge over the canal provides a view of roofscapes to the south and south-west; and a seasonal opportunity to glimpse the fronts of the late nineteenth century houses to the east of Mitton Close.

The footpaths to the west of Gilgal provide glimpses into and between the private domestic gardens to those properties in the vicinity.

The urban nature of the surroundings to the Area prevent inward views of the from distant vantage points. This is undoubtedly a visually introverted Area.

b) Out of the Area:

Views out of the Area are generally confined and fore-shortened due to the surrounding urban environment. From a few points along the network of rising footpaths, it is possible to take views outward over the roofs of buildings. Where these footpaths emerge from the Area looking west into Mitton Gardens, the views are of unsympathetic late twentieth century bungalows and flats. The view from the Worcester Road junction is dominated by an unsympathetic petrol filling station. On the northern side of the latter, however, is a range of older buildings that just catch the eye. The view along Mitton Street is completely harmonious, with the Church spire on the corner of Mitton Street and Vale Road being a visible landmark.

To the south of Mitton Street, between the junctions with Severn Road and Stour Lane, extends a substantial area of industrial development presently dominated by nineteenth century carpet factories; which are shortly to be redeveloped. This area is visible from Severn Road, Mitton Street and Stour Lane, and the treatment of this aspect of the view in any redevelopment will need to be undertaken particularly sensitively.

Adjoining the northern part of Gilgal beyond the Area, older properties (Nos. 44-50, Gilgal), plots, a rear footpath, and a continuation of the sandstone wall adjoining the canal, are harmonious and continuous with the Area. A number of properties in Severn Road are similarly harmonious.

c) Within the Area:

Within the Area, views are largely restricted to short-distance vistas along the major streets, the curving nature of Gilgal and Mitton Street coupled with the closeness of the associated development, guiding and leading the eye along and through what for much part appears to be a confined corridor. At the centre, in relation to the Worcester Road junction, the vista opens out and larger buildings (Nos. 15, 18, 19 & 27, Gilgal) provide landmarks, focal points and terminating features. The petrol filling station at the central road junction features strongly and unsympathetically in these views, even though it is not within the Area. The narrow footpaths to the west of Gilgal, with their high sides of walls, fences and trees, and sharp changes in direction, create more

confined vistas; but with occasional glimpses of adjoining buildings and the private world of domestic gardens. Period buildings within the Area, at the end of the view lines leading from these footpaths, are Nos. 13 & 14, Gilgal.

4.11 Pattern and Density of Building

The pattern and density of building in the Area is as follows:

- a) The buildings mainly adjoin roads or footpaths in a near linear pattern; and generally face the street or the footpaths, respectively.
- b) The majority of buildings are set against the back of the pavement or immediately against the edge of the path, but a few have shallow front gardens which are never more than 3 metres in depth in Mitton Street, and less in Gilgal (north-east end).
- c) The density of buildings is quite high and they are generally arranged in short terraced groups, which portrays a close knit appearance. In Gilgal, a few larger dwellings wrap around smaller ones.



Terraced housing in Gilgal

- d) Many buildings appear to have been constructed with only small communal rear gardens or small communal yards, although there appears to have been some recent demarcation to create privacy. Generally these garden plots or yards still survive.

4.12 Type of Buildings

The types of building in the Area are as follows:

- a) The predominant type of building is the small terraced dwelling, with a few larger dwellings (presumably for once better off residents) in the vicinity of the Worcester Road junction, where the vista widens out. Many dwellings have rear wings and outbuildings, including privies and washhouses.



*Outbuildings to the rear of Nos. 14, 15, 16 & 17, Mitton Gardens (left),
& No. 28, Mitton Street (right)*

- b) No. 18, Gilgal, is the only existing public house in the Area, occupying a period building at the junction of Mitton Street, Gilgal and the Worcester Road.

Interestingly, No. 3, Mitton Street (Currently flats) was originally a public house, and retains an old former brew house with a louvered roof to the rear.



*No. 3, Mitton Street, a former public house
with a brew house to the rear*

- c) The group of small buildings and enclosed space between Nos. 18 & 19, Gilgal (west side) was originally a coal yard dating from the nineteenth century, and survives intact; the only known surviving example of its type in the District.



*Buildings associated with the former coal yard
between Nos. 18 & 19, Gilgal*

- d) Nos. 28, 29, 30, & 31, Gilgal (west side) are former combined shops and houses dating from the early to mid. nineteenth century. These buildings originally had simple rectangular shop fronts (without wooden stall risers) in the front elevations that were removed during the late twentieth century in a visually detrimental refurbishment exclusively for residential use; hence the current rectangular ground floor window openings.



*Former shop fronts to Nos. 28, 29, 30 & 31, Gilgal (top left)
and as they are at present (top right and below)*

- e) No. 8A Gilgal (north side) was originally a combined shop and dwelling dating from circa.1900 that had a substantial single-pane shop front in its front elevation removed around 1990 during a conversion to flats, to the detriment to its character and that of the vicinity.
- f) No. 28, Gilgal, may have originally been constructed as a house but also had a shop in the building from the late nineteenth century until the late twentieth century, with a substantial period shop front. The latter was a bakery until the 1990's.
- g) No. 29, Mitton Street, was originally a house that was unsympathetically extended during the late twentieth century to be used as a food take away; which closed during the 1990's.
- h) Importantly, No. 35 Mitton Street (south-east side) is a former shop dating from circa. 1900 and significantly, retains the only period shop front on the Area.



*No. 35 Mitton Street,
with the last remaining period shop front in the Area*

- i) A nineteenth century factory building (the Anglo Works) located at the corner of Mitton Street and Worcester Road. This is now occupied by retail and office uses.
- j) Builders yard and hire premises (Mitton Street, east side) which detract from the character of the Area.
- k) Vacant builders yard (Mitton Street, north-west side) which detracts from the character of the Area.

4.13 Style of Buildings

Architectural styles in the Area are as follows:

- a) The predominant style is that of polite Georgian, reflected in the older terraced cottages and larger Georgian houses. In addition, mid. nineteenth century terraced cottages in the Area draw significantly on the Georgian influence.



Georgian style of a larger house in Gilgal

- b) Classical influences in Victorian industrial buildings, located at the junction of Worcester Road and Mitton Street.
- c) Vernacular influences, in the seventeenth century square timber framing of No. 41, Mitton Street; which is the only such surviving building the Area.



Vernacular style house in Mitton Street

- d) A bland “Council house” signature style of the mid. to late twentieth century is evident in Nos. 11-15, Mitton Street; which are not harmonious with the Area.

4.14 Size of Buildings

The size of buildings in the Area are as follows:

- a) Dwellings are predominantly of two storeys, with a small number in the vicinity of the Worcester Road junction having three storeys (plus cellars). The latter were presumably built for more affluent residents and take advantage of the wider vista to the fore.
- b) Dwellings generally have narrow frontages, often being only one or two bays wide, with the front door opening directly into a front room. The larger dwellings in the vicinity of the Worcester Road junction are three bays wide.
- c) The industrial buildings (Anglo Works) at the junction of Mitton Street and Worcester Road are of larger size and massing than the dwellings. The principle building on this site appears to have been extended at an early stage, using some of the architectural themes and details of the original.



*Large industrial buildings
at the junction of Mitton Street and Worcester Road*

4.15 Morphology of Buildings

The morphology of buildings in the Area, is as follows:

- a) The predominant small terraced dwellings can be described as being of two storeys, of domestic scale, height to eaves is less than the width of the street which helps give a perception of space between the facing buildings (except at the "pinch-point" at the foot of Gilgal),
- b) Plots are of a regularly narrow width.
- c) The buildings are of similar heights along the street and their collective massing creates a degree of unity to the views.

- d) They have been built to the pattern of the road layout, which has curves along much of its length, but they do not flow gently with that curvature. Instead their frontages tend to be staggered, often quite erratically to conform to it.

(The above factors combine to make the buildings of the Area feel compatible and comfortable with the human scale).

- e) Windows and doors are rectangular and because of the terracing there is an overall sense of rhythm to the wider street scene
- f) Building profiles can be seen due to frontage gaps and subtle changes in street massing and these reveal plan depths greater than the widths of the plots.
- g) Facades to double fronted buildings are symmetrical.

4.16 Materials and Construction

The materials and construction in the Area are as follows:

- a) Roofs:
- Roofs are pitched at approximately 40 degrees, with ridges running parallel to the street and with gable (unhipped) ends. They are covered with either small rectangular red brown plain clay tiles or rectangular natural grey slate. (Some have been recovered in recent times with machine made tiles or modern inter-locking concrete tiles, to the detriment of their character and that of the Area).
 - Ridges have semi-circular tile capping, generally without embellishment; and are stepped with the gradient.



Roof pitches and stepped roofline in Gilgal

- Verges have been kept close to the gable wall face and sealed with a mortar fillet, there being no timber barge boards, overhangs or fascias.

- Eaves have brick dentilling or a continuous protecting course of brick arranged squarely or diagonally to the wall face.



Verging and dentilling in Mitton Street

- The traditional flashing material is lead, stepped with the jointing of the brickwork.
- Chimney stacks are in brick, of rectangular plan, well proportioned in height, and tend to be ridge mounted in side walls on small older dwellings, and on or below the ridge in side walls or internal bay walls on large older and late nineteenth century dwellings. They have little by way of decoration at capping but most retain their pots and in all, they give a sturdy and interesting roofscape

N.B.

No. 15, Gilgal, has a mansard roof but this is the only such example in the Area and not therefore generally characteristic.

b) Walls:

Walls to buildings are predominantly built in a reddish-orange or reddish-brown brick, laid in Flemish bond; with the bricks of Victorian cottages having a smoother machine made surface than older Georgian properties.

Importantly, the appearance of a Flemish bond on the outside of a modern cavity wall may be easily replicated by using stretchers and half/third “*snap*” bricks, the latter in place of a fully cross jointed brick arranged header outwards.



Brickwork with a traditional Flemish bond

Free-standing brick walls are traditionally capped with semi-circular blue coping bricks.



Brick wall with traditional semi-circular blue coping

c) Windows and doors:

- Window and door openings are rectangular and have a vertical emphasis.
- Window openings have flat or cambered heads. Flat heads have embellishment, such as applied rusticated headers or rubbed gauged brick voussoirs. Cambered heads are formed with single or double courses of bricks identical to those of the walls.
- Two of the larger dwellings at the Worcester Road junction incorporate front facing semi-circular windows to the attic or top floor (Nos. 18, 19 & 27, Gilgal) and one has a Palladian window, which are features of some quality. One of these dwellings has canted bay windows to the ground floor.

- Smaller dwellings only have one window per floor in the front elevation.
- Some mid. nineteenth century windows have embellished projecting stone lintels and brackets, painted white. Many windows have stone cills.
- The traditional window mechanism is the vertically sliding sash, subdivided with glazing bars.
- Dormers and rooflights are not traditional to the Area.



*A selection of traditional windows found within the Area.
Note the glazing bars and frame to the window opening
in the centre of the bottom row are replacements*

- All front doors are single and traditionally, panelled. None incorporate glass.

- Some doorways have pointed or flat canopies, fanlights or box lights, and door cases.
- The larger properties have pedimented heads and most smaller properties have a flat headed canopy. All have a stone step.
- The traditional material for door and window joinery is wood, painted rather than stained.
- Terraces of dwellings often have a shared tunnel passageway leading from their fronts to the rear.



*A selection of traditional doorways and passageways found within the Area.
Note the doors on the left of the middle and bottom rows are replacements*

4.17 Survival of Architectural Features

This Area has a poor level of surviving features. In recent years it has had its character and appearance seriously eroded by inappropriate, but quite legal

alterations. One of the strongest, but certainly not the only of these, is the replacement of original timber windows. This has been characterised by the insertion of a variety of different styles and designs in uPVC, aluminium and stained "*stormproof*" timber. Compounding the harm further is the fact that in several cases, the aperture itself has been altered and where this has occurred, the impact in visual as well as historic terms has been disruptive. The alterations are as follows:

- a) Replacement of traditional sash windows with ones of inappropriate design, style and construction, in uPVC, aluminium and timber.
- b) Alteration of window aperture shapes to accommodate replacement windows.
- c) Removal of old shop fronts (for example, Nos. 8A and 28, 29, 30 & 31, Gilgal). Importantly, No. 35 Mitton Street (south-east side) is a former shop dating from circa 1900 and, the only surviving period shop front on the Area and thus with significant interest.
- d) Replacement of traditional front doors with ones of inappropriate design and style in uPVC and timber.
- e) Use of modern timber stains on joinery.
- f) Unsympathetic roof coverings.
- g) Painting of brickwork.
- h) Application of render.
- i) Inappropriate pointing
- j) Alterations to traditional brick or sandstone of front walls and revetments (for example, loss of sandstone revetment at Nos. 11-15, Mitton Street).
- k) Loss of outbuildings, including privies and wash houses.
- l) Cluttering effect of wall mounted satellite antennas.

Most of the unsympathetic alterations referred to above could be reversed (excluding point k). It is desirable that restoration should be considered in preference to redevelopment. Generally, every effort should be made to retain built fabric in the Area dating from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in particular.

4.18 Landmarks, Focal Points and Special Features

Landmarks, focal points and special features in the Area, are as follows:

- a) Landmarks:

Landmarks are buildings, structures or other features, that are important because their size, design or position makes them particularly noticeable. Special care is needed in the treatment of landmarks and their settings.

The topography of the Area and its surroundings are such that few of the buildings are landmarks from distant vantage points; however, there are buildings prominent from positions entering or within the Area, as follows:

- Nos.18 (Steps Public House), and 15, 19 & 27, Gilgal. These are relatively large buildings in the vicinity of the Worcester Road junction and terminating the rows of development in Gilgal. A pole sign on the forecourt of the adjoining petrol filling station adversely interrupts the setting and view of these buildings.



*Landmark buildings at the gateway to the southern end of Gilgal.
Note the adverse visual impact of the adjoining pole sign*

- Former Anglo works on Mitton Street; which is a landmark by virtue of its size and position.
- Nos. 39, 40 & 41, Mitton Street. This is a group of buildings located on the outside of a bend in the road. No. 39 is quite large (three storeys) and terminates one end of the group; whilst No. 41 is a timber-framed cottage, notable because it is different from other buildings in the vicinity in terms of its design and materials.
- Red sandstone wall on the north-east side of Gilgal. This is substantial roadside structure, which encloses the side of the pavement and guides the eye around one side of the northern entrance to Gilgal.



Sandstone wall adjoining Gilgal

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. Special care is needed in the treatment of focal points and associated view lines because they are particularly noticeable to the public.

Focal points within the Area are as follows:

- No. 18 (Steps Public House), Gilgal. This building is a prominent feature in the view line looking west along the Worcester Road, and is therefore seen by many occupants of vehicles each day.



*Steps Public House
in the view looking north-west along Worcester Road*

- Nos. 39, 40 & 41, Mitton Street. These are residential buildings that are focal points by virtue of being located on the outside of a bend in the road.



*Residential buildings lining the outside of a bend,
in the view looking east along Mitton Street*

- Nos. 13 & 14, Gilgal. These are humble terraced houses that close the view when looking east from the end of a footpath which connects with the opposite side of Gilgal.

c) Special Features:

The Area contains four Statutory List Entries (Listed Buildings) relating to five individual buildings, together with approximately fifty other buildings and structures of interest. These buildings and structures primarily date from the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, with one building dating from the seventeenth century.

Particularly special features include the following:

- Nos. 15, 18 (Steps public house), 19 & 27, Gilgal, and No. 41, Mitton Street, and their individual design elements (Listed Buildings).
- Former Anglo works and wall extending to the north, Mitton Street.
- Red sandstone wall on the north-east side of Gilgal.
- Small outbuildings (and original retaining walls) in the rear curtilages of dwellings and premises throughout the Area.
- Former coke yard and buildings, between Nos. 18 and 19, Gilgal.
- Period shop front to No. 35, Mitton Street.
- No. 39, Mitton Street (former public house) and its former brew house to the rear.
- Narrow and curving nature of Gilgal and Mitton Street.
- Footpath network to the west of Gilgal and its sole means of access to several dwellings.

4.19 Open Spaces

There are no public open spaces in this Area, however, there are spaces in private ownership which, because of the topography, are visible to the public, as follows:

- a) Domestic gardens on the west side of the Gilgal. At the lower level, these appear to have been cut into the embankment as part of the original building operations and the ground retained by brick walls. These create a degree of interest to the street scene and their loss (by building over) or alteration (by replacing the original retaining walls) would be a serious erosion of character. On the higher ground, the open space is made up by larger gardens laid out at natural ground level.
- b) The former coke yard between Nos. 18 and 19, Gilgal.
- c) The green corridor adjoining the River Stour and the channel itself, which is not culverted.

4.20 Ground Surfaces

The dominant ground surface in the Area is non-traditional black tarmacadam, both on the roadside pavements, and the footpaths to the west of Gilgal. Old rectangular blue-black paving setts are known to have existed in Gilgal but were removed by the County Council during the 1990's.

Some of the dwellings have garden paths, tunnel passageways giving access to the rear, and yards, which retain old paving setts of interest.

The few buildings with shallow front gardens have colourful flower beds that add to the appearance of the Area.

4.21 Tranquil and Active Areas

Tranquil and active areas are as follows:

a) Tranquil areas:

- The quiet and enclosed footpaths to the west of Gilgal, and adjoining domestic gardens, which contrast strongly with the road frontages.



Quiet and enclosed footpath to the west of Gilgal

- Other rear domestic gardens to properties adjoining Gilgal and Mitton Street.
- The corridor of the River Stour.

b) Active areas:

Mitton Street and Gilgal are subject to constant vehicular activity throughout the day and night. This traffic has an adverse effect on the character of the Area and makes it inhospitable to pedestrians.

The footpaths leading up the embankment enable some residents to take alternative pedestrian routes into and out of the Area to those along Gilgal and Mitton Street; and thus attain a measure of safety, quiet and dust free air, when moving to and from their homes.

4.22 Noise

The one sound that dominates all others in the Area is that of vehicular traffic, which is almost constant. It is quite possible the plethora of inappropriate window replacements in the Area has in part been brought about in an attempt to reduce the unwelcome intrusion of vehicular noise. Although the Area is by necessity a crucial through route for traffic, it is also the historical nucleus of the Town. Attention to traffic management could reap considerable

improvements to the character of the Area and give greater respect to the level of importance it holds.

4.23 Smells

The overwhelming smells in the Area emanate from passing vehicles, essentially from their exhausts and hot engines. Occasionally, the petrol filling station at the Worcester Road junction (outside but on the edge of the Area) emits the smell of fuel into the Area, which may be unpleasant to residents at the southern end of the Gilgal.

4.24 Alien Features

Alien features in the Area, are as follows:

- a) Vehicular traffic.
- b) Replacement of traditional sash windows with ones of inappropriate design, style and construction, in uPVC, aluminium and timber; replacement of traditional front doors with ones of inappropriate design and style in uPVC and timber; and use of modern timber stains.
- d) Alteration of window aperture shapes to accommodate replacement windows, and unsympathetic front extensions.
- e) Application of wall mounted satellite dishes.



Unsympathetic alterations to dwellings in Mitton Street

- f) Removal of old shop fronts (for example, Nos. 8A and 28, 29, 30 & 31, Gilgal). Importantly, No. 35 Mitton Street (south-east side) is a former shop dating from circa 1900 and, the only surviving period shop front on the Area and thus with significant interest. These premises are currently vacant and for sale.
- g) Unsympathetic roof coverings.
- h) Painting of and/or application of render to brickwork.
- i) Inappropriate pointing materials and styles.

- j) Alterations to traditional brick or sandstone of front walls and revetments (for example, loss of sandstone revetment at Nos. 11-15, Mitton Street).
- k) Traffic directional signage at the Worcester Road junction.
- l) Advertisement hoarding on the roadside between Nos. 32 & 34, Gilgal.
- m) Advertising boards and models at the hire premises in Mitton Street.
- n) Overhead wires at the junction of Mitton Street and Severn Road.
- o) Unsympathetic lampposts and lighting colour.
- p) Yellow road markings.

Many of the alien features referred to above could be reversed, whilst the problem of traffic could be alleviated. It is desirable that restoration should be considered in preference to redevelopment of buildings and old walls. Generally, every effort should be made to retain built fabric in the Area dating from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

4.25 Areas that would benefit from Enhancement

Areas that would benefit from enhancement, to the wider benefit of the Conservation Area, are as follows:

- a) Frontage to the bungalows at 11-15, Mitton Street. This area would benefit from a deciduous hedge above the front revetment, to screen the unsympathetic bungalows; and reconstruction of the revetment with red sandstone, which was the original material (before being replaced with bricks during the 1990's) and would harmonise with sandstone boundary walls elsewhere at the western end of Mitton Street.



Frontage to Nos. 11-15, Mitton Street

- b) Footpaths leading up the embankment to the west of Gilgal and adjoining the roadsides. These would benefit from laying of traditional floor surfaces, more sympathetically designed lamp posts to those existing, and also in the case of the footpaths, reinstatement of traditional boundary walls and railings.
- c) Frontages to the salvage yard and hire yard on the east side of Mitton Street. The latter would benefit from removal of the signage, swing barrier, temporary advertising model and scaffolding, and more sympathetic painting of the red and white striped pavement bollard.



*Unsympathetic signage and swing barrier
in the front yard to the hire premises in Mitton Street*

- d) Yard between Nos. 32 & 34, Gilgal. This would benefit from removal of the advertising hoarding, and landscaping or sympathetic use.



*Unsympathetic advertising hoarding
between Nos. 32 & 34, Gilgal*

- e) Façade and frontage to the north east side of the warehouse at the Worcester Road junction. The façade would benefit from sympathetic remodelling and the frontage would benefit from landscaping.



*Unsympathetic façade to the warehouse
at the Worcester Road junction*

- f) Removal of render from facades generally and reinstatement of traditional style windows. Replacement of modern lampposts with lampposts designed more traditionally and sympathetically to the Area.

Although not within the Area, three adjoining sites merit consideration for attention, as follows:

- a) The frontage to the petrol filling station at the Worcester Road junction. This would benefit from a frontage wall of appropriate design and scale in traditional materials, and landscaping.
- b) Steps leading up to the Mitton Chapel Bridge from Gilgal, which would benefit from management of vegetation and repairs to the ground surface.
- c) Reinstatement of missing sandstone blocks in the top of the north west end of the sandstone wall that runs beside the northern end of Gilgal.

4.26 Neutral Areas

A neutral area is defined a small part of an area whose character does not conform with that of its immediate surroundings. The remedy for such incongruous sites is usually to ensure that if the use on it is to continue, any proposals for its further development should be as follows:

- a) Confined to parts within the site which are not visible to the public gaze; or
- b) Designed so as to introduce discreet and subtle elements of the surrounding and predominant characteristic features.

Ideally in neutral areas it would be the more appropriate course of action to remove the offending feature or features altogether, and replace them with structures of appropriate scale, design and appearance.

Neutral areas within the Area are as follows:

- a) Salvage yard on the east side of Mitton Street, adjacent to the warehouse; which should ideally be redeveloped.
- b) Former yard on the west side of Mitton Street (site of Nos. 30 & 31, Mitton Street); which should ideally be redeveloped.
- c) Advertisement hoarding between Nos. 32 & 34, Gilgal; which should ideally be removed and the site used more sympathetically; although any vehicular access associated with the latter should not be from the rear, which would invade important spaces and footpaths..

- d) The single storey extensions to the front of Nos. 21 (former take-away) & 29, Mitton Street.



Unsympathetic extension to the front of a property in Mitton Street

- e) Nos. 11-15, Mitton Street, which should ideally be redeveloped; perhaps drawing upon the design of the former dwellings on the site (refer old photograph in Section 4.1 (b) (Setting) above).
- d) On the edge of the Area, the petrol station at the junction of Gilgal and Worcester Road. This would benefit from sympathetic redevelopment, complementing the larger buildings at the southern end of Gilgal.



*Incongruous petrol filling station
at the junction of Gilgal and Worcester Road*

Due to its visual and physical connection to the Area, the petrol filling station has a significant impact. In this sense, it should perhaps be incorporated into the Area.

5.0 CONCLUDING STATEMENT

It is in some respects, it is difficult to appreciate the historic and architectural interest of Gilgal Conservation Area. This is not because such interest does not exist, but because of the detracting effects of vehicular traffic and the erosion of traditional architectural features. In particular, there has been widespread replacement of historic windows with modern uPVC double-glazing, replacement of doors, rendering or painting of walls, and unsympathetic front extensions.

Away from the roads, the bank-side to the west of Gilgal and its footpaths retain historic integrity. The footpaths wind between private gardens, which help to abate the noise and fumes of traffic. Elsewhere, there are basic elements such as scale, massing, original layout, historic fabric, rooflines, and physical relationship to the adjoining Georgian town and Canal, which are of interest, and which give clues to the evolution of the Area. The Area has the potential to be a meaningful representation of its past, provided thought, will and positive measures are exercised.

Adopted Wyre Forest Local Plan Policies

Policy SAL.UP6

Safeguarding the Historic Environment

1. Heritage Assets

Any development proposal affecting the District's heritage assets, including their setting, should demonstrate how these assets will be protected, conserved and, where appropriate, enhanced. The District's heritage assets include:

- Conservation Areas, Listed Buildings and Scheduled Monuments.
- Building and Structures on the Local Heritage List.
- Landscape features including ancient woodlands and veteran trees, field patterns, watercourses, and hedgerows of visual, historic or nature conservation value.
- Archaeological remains and non-designated historic structures recorded on the County Historic Environment Record.
- Historic parks and gardens.

Developments that relate to a Heritage Asset should be accompanied by a Heritage Statement. Where proposals are likely to affect the significance of a heritage asset, including its setting, the Heritage Statement should demonstrate an understanding of such significance and in sufficient detail to assess any potential impacts. This should be informed by currently available evidence.

When considering a development proposal which may affect a Heritage Asset, or when preparing a Heritage Statement, applicants should have regard to the following points:

- i. To ensure that proposals would not have a detrimental impact on the significance of a Heritage Asset or its setting and to identify how proposals make a positive contribution to the character and local distinctiveness of the area.
- ii. Any harm or loss of significance will require clear and convincing justification.
- iii. The re-use of heritage assets will be encouraged where this is consistent with the conservation of the specific heritage asset.
- iv. Proposals which secure the long-term future of a heritage asset at risk will specifically be encouraged.
- v. That repairs, alterations, extensions and conversions of heritage assets take into account the materials, styles and techniques to be used and the period in which the asset was built.
- vi. The installations of fixtures and fittings should not have a detrimental impact on a heritage asset, should be inconspicuously sited and proportioned and be designed sympathetically.
- vii. In considering new development that may affect a heritage asset, proposals will need to identify how the scale, height and massing of new development in relation to the particular feature, and the materials and design utilised, does not detrimentally affect the asset or its setting.

Development proposals that would have an adverse impact on a heritage asset and/or its setting, or which will result in a reduction or loss of significance, will not be permitted, unless it is clearly demonstrated the following criteria are met:

- a. There are no reasonable alternative means of meeting the need for development appropriate to the level of significance of the Heritage Asset.
- b. The reasons for the development outweigh the individual significance of the Heritage Asset, its importance as part of a group and to the local scene, and the need to safeguard the wider stock of such Heritage Assets.
- c. In the case of demolitions, that the substantial public benefits of the development outweigh the loss of the building or structure; or the nature of the asset prevents all reasonable uses of the site; or the loss of the heritage asset is outweighed by the benefits of bringing the site back into use. Redevelopment proposals should provide design which mitigates appropriately against the loss of the heritage asset in proportion to its significance at a national or local level.

Where material change to a heritage asset has been agreed, recording and interpretation should be undertaken to document and understand the asset's archaeological, architectural, artistic or historic significance. The scope of the recording should be proportionate to the asset's significance and the impact of the development on the asset. The information and understanding gained should be made publicly available, as a minimum, through the relevant Historic Environment Record.

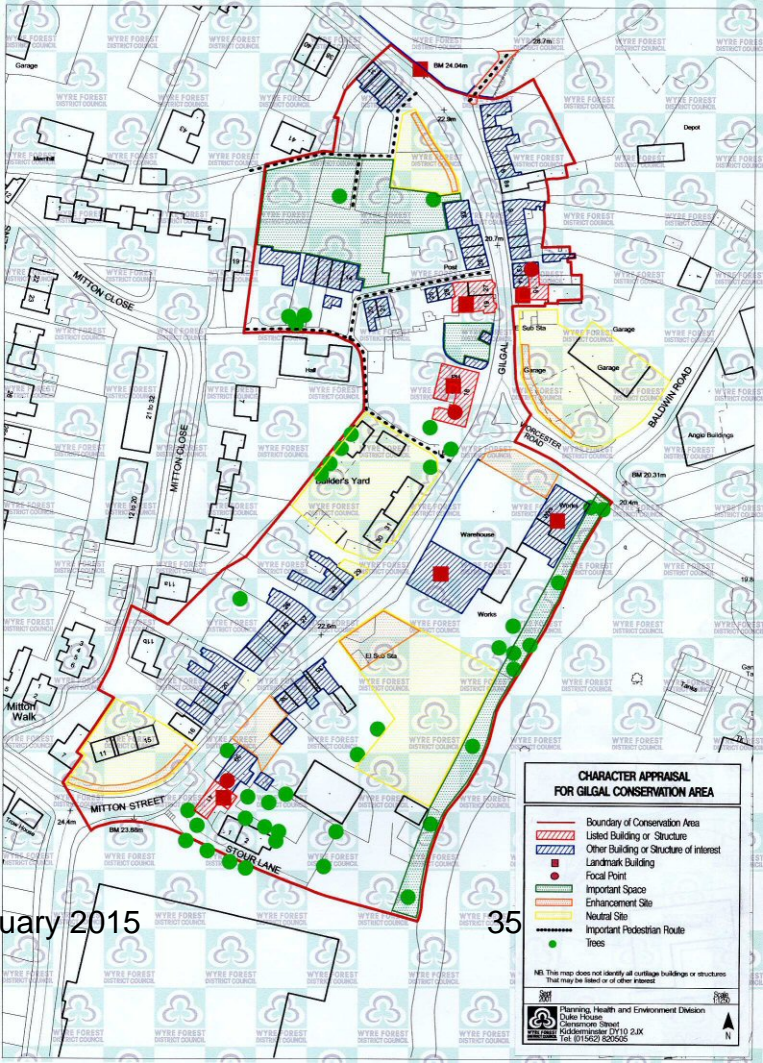
2. Conservation Areas

When development is proposed in, or adjacent to, a Conservation Area, proposals should accord with the existing (or draft) Conservation Area Character Appraisal and seek to enhance or better reveal the significance of the area. Development should not adversely affect views into, within, or out of the Conservation Area.

Proposals for the demolition of a building or structure in a Conservation Area will only be permitted where it has been clearly demonstrated that:

- i. It has no significance in itself or by association, and no value to the significance of the Conservation Area.
- ii. Its demolition or replacement would benefit the character or appearance of the Conservation Area.
- iii. Proposals include detailed and appropriate proposals for redevelopment, together with clear evidence redevelopment will proceed.

Proposals that affect shop fronts within a Conservation Area should have regard to the Council's Shop Front Design Guidance.



**CHARACTER APPRAISAL
FOR GILGAL CONSERVATION AREA**

- Boundary of Conservation Area
- Listed Building or Structure
- Other Building or Structure of Interest
- Landmark Building
- Focal Point
- Important Space
- Enhancement Site
- Neutral Site
- Important Pedestrian Route
- Trees

NE: This map does not identify all outlying buildings or structures that may be listed or of other interest

