



CHARACTER APPRAISAL FOR UPPER ARLEY CONSERVATION AREA

Revised JANUARY 2015



**UPPER ARLEY
CONSERVATION AREA
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Revised January 2015**

	Page
1.0 Introduction	1
2.0 Legislative and Policy Framework	1
3.0 Analysis of Character	2
3.1 Setting and topography	
3.2 Historic evolution	3
3.3 Land uses	4
3.4 Colours	5
3.5 Climate	
3.6 Green spaces	
3.7 Historic pattern and movement	7
3.8 Illumination and night-time appearance	8
3.9 Views	
3.10 Style of buildings	10
3.11 Size and morphology of buildings	11
3.12 Materials and construction	
3.13 Survival of architectural features	14
3.14 Landmarks, focal points and special features	15
3.15 Ground surfaces	16
3.16 Hard landscaping/street furniture	17
3.17 Tranquil areas and active areas	18
3.18 Noise	
3.19 Paths	19
3.20 Alien features	
3.21 Areas that would benefit from enhancement	
3.22 Neutral areas	20
4.0 Concluding Statement	20
Appendix 1	Adopted Wyre Forest District Council Local Plan Policies
Appendix 2	Boundary of Upper Arley Conservation Area



1. INTRODUCTION

Upper Arley Conservation Area (the Area) was designated by Wyre Forest District Council in 1991. It is situated about 5 miles north of Bewdley and 6 miles north-west of Kidderminster in the County of Worcestershire.

The Conservation Area encompasses a small rural hamlet set on the sides of the valley of the River Severn, together with outlying buildings and 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 Site Allocations and Policies Local Plan and the Adopted Kidderminster Central Area Action Plan include policies linked to the Historic Environment. For Wolverley 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. 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 This Act was superseded by the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.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 Policy Planning 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 with Appendix 1 of this Appraisal.

3.4 Colours

The natural environment is the key contributor to colour within the Area and as a consequence colour changes throughout the year. Numerous deciduous trees throughout the Conservation Area add significantly to its character, opening and closing views and providing colour variations and interest. The River Severn reflects the colours of the surrounding Area.



Example of how the natural environment provide colour and variation to the Area throughout the year

The buildings nestle within this natural environment and the predominant colours of the structures, typically a red brick or red or buff coloured sandstone, harmonise with the natural environment. Green paintwork, used for example on barge boards and doors, is used on a large number of buildings within the Area and gives the Area a subtle sense of uniformity in colour.

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 hamlet is surrounded by an attractive landscape of woodland and pasture. These natural features significantly contribute to the character and appearance of the Area. Grass is a strong visual contributor to the Area. Important green spaces within the Area include the open fields between the River and the railway station, between the River and Arley House, and on either sides of the lanes leading into the settlement, together with the park and garden associated with Arley House.

3.6.1 Trees

There is a large degree of tree cover within, and adjacent to, the Area and it forms a key component of the character and appearance of the Area. The presence of orchards within

the Area give an indication of Arley’s agricultural past and present. An area of trees of particular note is Arley Arboretum, which was formerly established around 1820 and developed under subsequent ownerships. The Arboretum opened to the public in 2002. It has more than 300 species of trees including; caryas, thujas, junipers, pines, cedars, maples, beechs, in formal and informal plantings and gardens.



Arley Arboretum

3.6.2 Parks and Gardens

Upper Arley contains the only Registered Park and Garden within the Wyre Forest District. The Park has been included on the Register because it has been assessed and judged by English Heritage to be of “special historic interest.” The park includes the 19th century arboretum, and the 18th and 19th century kitchen gardens, part of which has been developed as an Italian Garden with formal plantings and water features. The walls of the gardens are grade II listed.

Other notable gardens within the Area include the garden at Arley Station. It is situated on the southern side of the station and runs the whole length of the site. The planting and layout gives it a feel of a “cottage garden.”



Top: The entrance to the Arboretum, bottom left to right, the Walled Garden, the Italian Garden and the garden at Arley Station

3.6.3 *Wildlife sites*

The following wildlife sites are present within or adjacent to the Area:

- The River Severn which has been designated a Special Wildlife Site
- Wyre Forest which has been designated by English Nature site of special scientific interest. The Arboretum also has a rich diversity of wildlife.



3.7 *Historic Pattern and Movement*

It is evident through looking at the pattern and density of the buildings, that the river and the topography of the Area have been the principal influence on the early development of the village. The church and manor house were situated on high ground overlooking the settlement. The sweep of Arley Lane down to the River and up towards the Church is an important feature of the Area.



Arley Lane as it sweeps from the river and up towards the Church

The ownership and maintenance of an estate at Arley has also had an impact on the development of the village. As previously mentioned under the ownership of Viscount Valentia the building of Arley Castle resulted in the re-routing of the road, and the demolition of buildings that blocked his view and under R D Turner new houses were built. The continuation of the estate has meant employment for local people and the Estate's control of a large portion of the housing stock has limited Arley becoming a "dormitory" village.

Movement patterns have been created historically by the river and later on, the railway. The River Severn formed an important highway now, due to its shallow water levels, it is only used by canoeists and on occasion for raft races. The ferry which had been operating at this location since the 14th century and linked the two sides of the river was replaced in the early 1970s by a footbridge. The river remains an important tourism draw.

The railway has provided movement into and out of the Area since the 19th century. When it first opened it was used by fishermen coming for a day's sport on the nearby River Severn and also enabled Upper Arley to become a venue for works outings from the Black Country. It was also used as a freight line by the collieries to the north at Kinlet, Highley and Arley. The passenger service ceased in Sept 1963 but was re-opened in 1974 as an historic stream railway and continues to bring people into the Area.

The river and the railway, plus other tourism draws such as the Arboretum carry on providing movement into and out of the Area.

3.8 *Illumination and night-time appearance*

Illumination within the Area is unobtrusive and sensitive to the rural location. In addition to the occasional street light, private lamps can be found, such as those at the Church, Arley Tower and the Station. The design is often a traditional lantern light.

3.9 *Views*

The views into and out of the Area provide important links between the village and its surroundings. The setting of the village in the valley of the River Severn adds to its character and serves to both restrict and enhance views into and out of the Area.

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 village itself is largely screened from outside view. The few vantage points that do exist are:

- On approach to Arley from Shatterford, at some points the Church of St Peter can be seen
- Hungry Hill
- Railway bridge
- Seckley Viewpoint



View of St Peter's Church gained on approach to Arley from Shatterford

b) Out of the Area

Due to the varying gradients within the Area, distant views out of the Area and to the surrounding rural countryside can be gained.

- From the footbridge: The views upstream are uninterrupted and allows for views along the River and out of the Area,
- Arboretum – Its vantage point on a hill means views can be gained out towards the River and beyond,



View from the footbridge along the river and out of the Area

- The Church located in a strategic position, to emphasise its status within the village and also to enable views across the valley/area.
- Railway station and bridge provides views across the valley and beyond

c) Views within the Area

The pattern of settlement on the north bank of the river has resulted in limiting views within the Area. The main road that leads into the village curves into the shape of a horseshoe, which has the effect of hiding elements of the village until the corner is breached.



The street layout limits views within the Area but adds visual interest

But due to the topography of the Area some vantage points do occur including:

- Entrance to arboretum provides views down Arley Lane towards the river,
- Churchyard, allows for views down to the river, across to the railway station, and into the Arboretum,
- Footbridge, allows for views along the riverbanks,
- Train station one of the best vantage points to view the village. The roofscape and skyline can be clearly seen from this view point.



View from the Railway Station into the Area

3.10 *Style of buildings*

There are several different architectural styles throughout the village, mostly dating from the 18th and 19th centuries with examples of both polite and vernacular architecture standing side by side, representing to some extent the history of the village, and the development and alteration of the village through this time period.

Earlier examples of common vernacular can be seen at what is now the post-office-cum-shop, and the cottages on School Bank, whereas more modern examples can be seen closer to the Church at the Bungalows and at High and Low Terrace. These latter properties are clearly modern in their design, with their balconies and modern brick, but due to their position in the landscape, do not sit uncomfortably with their surroundings.

More polite examples of local architecture can be seen clustered to the north-west of the River, including Arley Tower, Hafren House, Valencia House and Glebe House. Both Arley Tower and Hafren House are constructed in sandstone ashlar, with different forms of rustication. Typical Georgian bays can also be seen at Hafren Court, whilst Arley Tower is more ornamental and decorative. Glebe House is more of a typical Georgian Polite building, with well-balanced window and door piercings, rubbed brick voisoirs and decorative keystones.



Examples of both polite and vernacular architecture that can be found within the Area

The Gothic Revival appears to have found favour at Upper Arley with the construction of new buildings in that style, including the turreted and crenellated lodges at the Arboretum, Arley Tower and the now demolished Arley Castle. Other properties, including the Church and Arley Cottage, were refurbished to include gothic elements.

Twentieth century buildings are also present within the Area, however with the exception of the small range of bungalows, these developments have been set back/away from Arley Lane.

3.11 Size and morphology of buildings

The development varies from that of Arley House standing in extensive grounds, to the tighter arrangement of dwellings along the narrow Arley Lane. The plots of larger proportions were historically for the occupation of the wealthier families or those with important community positions. The redevelopment of Arley Estate in the 19th century had an impact on the pattern and density of buildings with several buildings demolished to provide clear views to the River.

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 properties and include the Church which is one of the largest buildings within the Area. Its position on high ground emphasises its status and ensures that it is seen from outside the Area.

Most of the buildings either form part of a small terrace or are detached. In the village centre the buildings are predominantly built against the edge of the street. The properties are mainly two storey in height. A common characteristic of the Area is the use of dormers which provide light to rooms contained partly in the roof space.

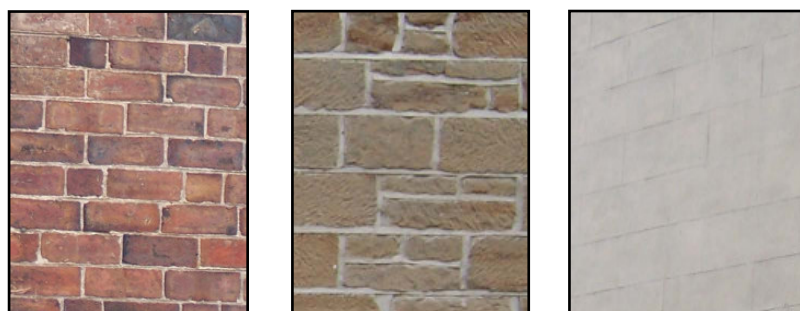
3.12 Materials and construction

a) Walls and construction methods

The principal building material within the Area is red brick which ranges from the warm orange red, to dark plum red. Blue brick is also used for decorative effect most noticeably at the Grange. There is a mix of brick bond throughout the Area. The principle one used is Flemish bond and its variations but variations on English bond can also be found.

The presence of a freestone quarry in the parish has resulted in sandstone also being frequently used as a building material and ranges from a red to a buff coloured stone. Sandstone has been used for important buildings such as the Church and the School. There are examples of both sandstone ashlar and coursed sandstone rubble. There are also examples where sandstone has been used in the dressings, details and plinths.

Within the Area the facing material is typically left untreated, resulting in natural colours. There are a couple of exceptions, notably the pub which has been painted white, Arley Cottage and Hafren House which is stuccoed.



Examples of construction methods within the Area, from left to right, brick, sandstone, stucco

There is also evidence of timber framing within the Area although these properties have often been refaced with brick. One such example is the Harbour Inn.

Creamy white lime mortar can be found on several of the properties but there are also examples of poor quality repointing in an inappropriate cement based mortar, often over-sailing the original joints which detracts from the appearance of the buildings.

b) Windows

Windows are generally rectangular in shape and there is a mix of casement and sash windows within the Area, however casement appears to be the principal type.

Windows are either constructed in painted timber 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. Other window dressings include rubbed brick heads and segmental arches of tapered bricks.

A noticeable feature of the Area are dormer windows and in particular wall dormers in which the dormer is integral with the face of the wall below and breaks the line of the cornice. The roof of the dormer tends to follow that of the main roof and so are predominantly gabled.



A selection of windows from within the Area

c) Doors

The Area contains a variety of doors and surrounds. Traditional doors compliment the historic character of the village. Doors range from simple planked doors (with and without ornamental hinges), ledged and boarded timber and part glazed to upvc. The latter, when used on the more historic properties, is not considered to be particularly sympathetic to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area.



A selection of doors within the Area

Many of the buildings have simple door surrounds, with some examples of peaked hooded canopys.

d) Roofs

Roofing materials in the Area vary between tile and slate. The tiles are often a red brown clay tile. Originally the tiles would have been handmade resulting in a slightly curved tile, adding to the historic character of the property more modern replacement and the use of slate on some buildings, has resulted in a more flat and uniform appearance. The weather can change the colour of the tiles and slate, with rain making the tiles go deeper in colour and bringing out the green and purple of the ores in the slate.



Most of the roofs are gabled, the pitch of which are generally steep, varying between 40 and 45 degrees. There are exceptions such as the Grange which has a hipped roof. The school has a steeper pitch of 50 degrees.



Several buildings within the Area have barge boards. These are often plain and constructed in timber and painted green. Decorative barge boards can be found at the Vicarage. The barge boards provide further interest to the gables and eaves of these buildings.



The topography of the Area means that there is not a uniform roof line, this coupled with the type of roofing materials present, results in a roofscape that provides visual character and interest.

Example of roofing materials within the Area

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, which, especially on the more historic properties, which does little to enhance the Area.

f) 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 provide an element of privacy for the properties that adjoin Arley Lane. The walls and hedges along Arley Lane enhance a sense of enclosure and the hedgerows visually narrow the carriageway and have the potential to help reduce the speed of traffic entering the village.

Boundary treatments vary throughout the Area, ranging from sandstone, to brick, to estate fencing and high hedges. There is also a range of different copings including dressed sandstone, brick soldier coursing with tile creases. Located at Arley Lane by the beach are locally made white railings. When viewed from the opposite bank, the railings, due to their colour, draw attention and focus to that part of the river and form part of an attractive scene.



Examples of boundary walls within the Area

3.13 Survival of architectural features

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

- Traditional roofs and roof coverings
- Traditional windows and doors both in traditional materials and designs
- Railings, gates and boundary walls
- Blue wire crossed bricks and pavements

Noticeable loss of, or damage to, architectural features include the following

- The installation of Upvc in some properties
- The use of cement in pointing

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:

- St Peter's Church: this is a landmark building by virtue of its position, size and design. It is one of the few buildings that form part of the village centre that can be seen on approach to the Area.
- The School: the setting of the school and its roofline make this building a prominent feature on the skyline.
- Footbridge: Its elevated position, function and design makes it particularly noticeable.



St Peter's Church

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:

- Footbridge: the footbridge across the River Severn provides an important connection between the two sides of the river and as such is a place of well frequented public activity. The bridge also breaks the view line along the river.



The footbridge

- Shop/post office : as the only shop that serves the village the shop provides an important social function and is the centre of well frequented public activity
- The Harbour Inn is the sole remaining Public House within the Area. It is also a focal point as it is one of the few buildings in the Area that is located on the north side of the river.
- St Peter's Church has been a focal point of worship and public activity for centuries. It is also one of the few buildings which can be seen clearly from outside the Area.

- The Railway Station: As a popular tourist attraction, the railway station is a key focal point. Even the noise and steam from the trains draw attention to that part of the Area.



The Severn Valley Railway: Arley Station

c) Special Features

There are 6 listed buildings within the Area. Particular special features of the Area include the following:

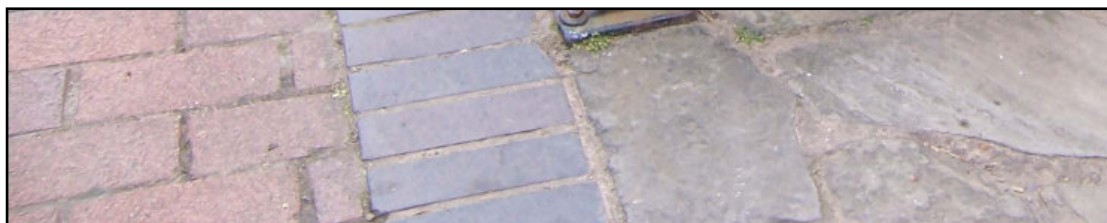
- The range, ages and variety of period architectural detailing and period construction techniques
- Boundary walls
- The River Severn
- Views out to the countryside
- Traditional telephone boxes
- Arley Brook and its valley
- Severn Valley Railway

3.15 Ground Surfaces

As expected from the rural nature of the Area the predominant ground surface is grass. The man made surfaces include the road surfaces which are covered in a standard black-top tarmac. It is a non-traditional material and appears as a weak to medium grey depending upon being dry or wet respectively. As a surface material it provides little visual texture. Arley Lane is painted with conservation double yellow lines, which are painted in fine lines of primrose yellow.

Pavements are uncommon within the Area, but even so there is a variety of materials used and include tarmacadam, rustic red paviors, sandstone flags and DDA compliant concrete flags.

Some traditional ground surfaces remain and these include drainage elements (outside the post office and café) and the small section of moulded blue clay paviors (criss cross pattern) present outside Chestnut Cottage.



Example of ground surfaces found within the Area

3.16 Hard landscaping/street furniture

There are several elements of street furniture within the Area, these include:

- Signage. The signage within the Area is minimal and low key apart from by the footbridge when the signage becomes cluttered.
- Telephone boxes. There are two traditional telephone boxes within the Area. These are highly recognisable items, and with their gradual removal throughout the country, remain an important part of the character of the village.
- Litter bins. There are several litter bins within the Area that differ in design and vary in size.
- Benches. There are several benches within the Area and are often positioned to address a view



Examples of street furniture found within the Area

3.17 *Tranquil areas and active areas*

With no through traffic, Upper Arley remains in relative tranquillity, although the number of visitors to the Area can dramatically increase during certain times of the year and this can cause congestion and turn tranquil areas into active areas. For example seasonal overflow parking is provided in one riverside meadow on the south bank, to the south of the footbridge. The informal nature this car parking, without fixed signage, hard surfacing or lighting, helps to reduce its impact on the Conservation Area. It is Upper Arley's tranquillity that makes it a tourist draw which in turn has the effect of making it an active area.

- 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 Arboretum – its location away from the village centre and the natural environment it provides ensures that aspects of the Arboretum can be considered tranquil.
- The Churchyard retains its peaceful atmosphere. The provision of a bench outside the church, with views across the valley, allows for rest and reflection.

- Active Areas

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

- The train station is an active area, not only with people using the Severn Valley Railway but also as a point for people to gather to watch the trains.
- The school, at times, is one of the principal active areas
- The 'beach', with access to the River and its close locality to the shop (resulting in vehicles parking on it) is an active area.

3.18 *Noise*

There are several types of noise within the Area,

With no through traffic, vehicular traffic is kept to a minimum. Not being located on a busy road means that there is no constant traffic noise.

Human conversation is a common noise and is especially focused in social areas such as the school, shop and railway station.

Birdsong is also present and reinforces the rural character of the Area and its surroundings.

The presence of the Severn Valley Railway brings with it the identifiable noise of the stream train, which can be heard at certain times of the day.

3.19 Paths

The Area is popular with walkers and there are several paths throughout the Area. One of particular note is along the north bank of the river and forms part of the Severn Valley Way.

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 presence of satellite dishes some clearly seen from public areas,
- The street surface of Arley Lane, as viewed from the entrance to the Arboretum down to the river. Repairs to the road surface have left it looking untidy and it detracts from the historic street scene,
- The use of overhead cables, while a necessity of modern life, does create a certain amount of clutter within the skyline, which is made more noticeable because of the topography of the Area. However the effect is softened by the use of timber telegraph poles instead of metal,
- The footbridge across the River Severn, while serving a valuable role is not aesthetically pleasing. The metal framing seems over bearing and, particularly traversing the bridge, it has the effect of creating a tunnel like aspect and restricts views out.



Examples of alien features within the Area

3.21 Areas that would benefit from enhancement

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

- The Beach - it is an attractive focal point within the Area however it is felt that more could be done to enhance its appeal eg restore cobbles
- Bins - there are a range of of different style of bins all within close proximity which gives the Area a slightly cluttered and eclectic feel. It is felt that a more uniform style would be an enhancement.

3.22 *Neutral Areas*

A neutral area is defined as a small part of a 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 public gaze. Examples of neutral areas include:

- Car park opposite Valentia House provides private car parking which avoids the need for street parking. It is surrounded by trees which provide a screen to a certain extent but the surface of the car park requires a better finish.
- The twentieth century houses: the position of these properties, the materials from which they are constructed means that they do not detract from the Area but neither do they enhance.


4.0 CONCLUDING STATEMENT

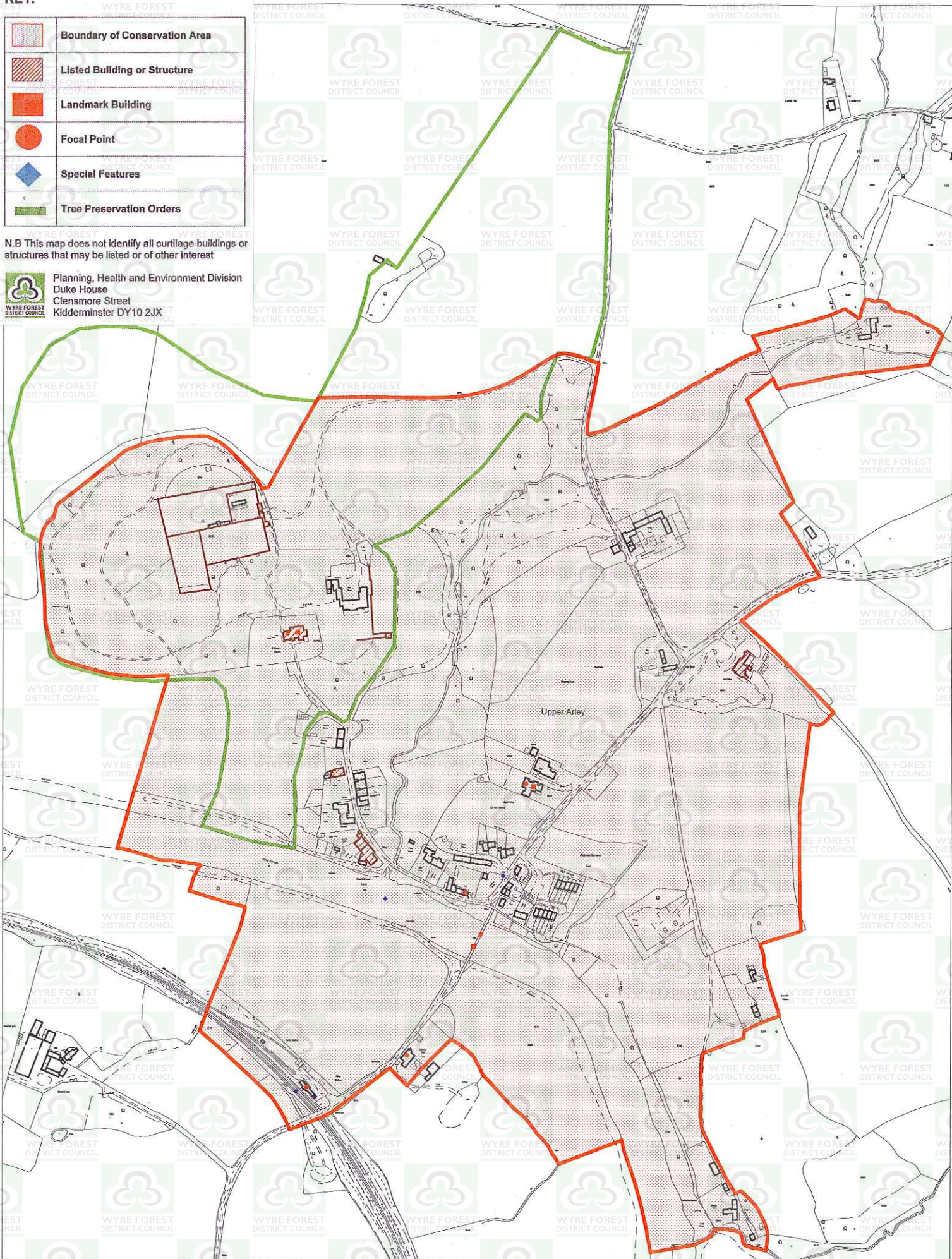
At Upper Arley the natural environment is as important as the built environment in creating the unique character and appearance of the Area. With its riverside setting, variety and number of trees and hedges and its historic buildings, the village is widely recognised as a local tourist destination. The eighteenth and nineteenth century have both left their architectural mark and the River is clearly an important aspect both visually and historically. Whilst containing some twentieth century development, this has mostly not encroached on the historic character of the Area.

KEY:

	Boundary of Conservation Area
	Listed Building or Structure
	Landmark Building
	Focal Point
	Special Features
	Tree Preservation Orders

N.B This map does not identify all curtilage buildings or structures that may be listed or of other interest

 Planning, Health and Environment Division
Duke House
Clensmore Street
Kidderminster DY10 2JX



App 2: Boundary of Upper Arley Conservation Area

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Scale: 1:5500

Date: 04/12/2007

