



CONSERVATION AREA CHARACTER APPRAISAL FOR BEWDLEY

Revised January 2015



**CHARACTER APPRAISAL
FOR
BEWDLEY
CONSERVATION AREA
REVISED JANUARY 2015**

Based on an Appraisal
Undertaken for
Wyre Forest District Council
by
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Appendix 1 Adopted Wyre Forest District Council Local Plan Policies
Appendix 2 Boundary of Bewdley Conservation Area

1.0 INTRODUCTION

This character appraisal relates to Bewdley Conservation Area, in the town of Bewdley, Worcestershire. The Conservation Area was designated in 1968 and reviewed in 1978, and is 42.8 hectares (105.7 acres) in extent. It comprises the town centre; adjoining residential streets; part of the River Severn, adjoining river frontages and other landscape features; and part of the old settlement of Wribbenhall. The surviving built component of the Conservation Area dates primarily from the fifteenth to the nineteenth centuries, although settlement in the area predates this period.

Some of the comments in this appraisal relate to potential Enhancement Sites and also to Neutral Sites, and are intended as snapshots in time; whilst other comments 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 Bewdley 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 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 This Act was superseded by the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.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.

3.0 ANALYSIS OF CHARACTER

3.1 Setting and Topography

There are several components of setting and topography adjoining and within the Area that are important to its character, as follows:

- a) The Conservation Area is at the heart of the town of Bewdley that is itself set in and hidden by unspoilt undulating countryside. The Area includes a large proportion of the town and in places abuts open countryside; hence the rural setting of the town is an important component of its character and in turn that of the Conservation Area. Much of this countryside was recognised in the Worcestershire County Development Plan during the 1950's as being an Area of Great Landscape Value, and has been recognised in successive Local Plans as having high local landscape quality. To the west, north and south lie the Wyre Forest and its outliers, which are recognised as being of national importance to nature conservation. The urban fringe to the east of the River is entirely allocated as Green Belt. It is important to conserve the rural setting of the town and Conservation Area, and in so doing to recognise the interrelationships between the Area and overall setting.



*Rural setting of Bewdley,
looking south from Trimbley Lane*

- b) The River Severn forms a valley through the centre of the Conservation Area and Town. Here the channel varies in width between approximately 40 and 55 metres, and comprises a very significant feature. The riverbanks are, for the most part in this location, revetted with natural sandstone blocks that historically formed quaysides. Importantly, the River very much brings the countryside into the town, particularly as to the north and south, the town is pinched inwards in plan towards the River. In addition, there is only one bridge over the River in the town centre and Conservation Area, meaning views upstream and downstream from the bridge itself and adjoining quaysides towards the countryside are uninterrupted and continuous.
- c) Flat level shelves or terraces, line either side of the River channel and comprise a natural flood plain. On the south-west bank, the shelf is approximately 100 metres wide; whilst to the north-east, it is a little wider. These shelves were almost entirely developed prior to the twentieth century to form the existing town centre. In later years development tended to be on higher adjoining ground, meaning the town spread in an east-west direction rather than along the terraces which largely remained as undeveloped riverside meadows. The latter provide relatively immediate and important links between the edge of the Conservation Area and open countryside. In conservation terms, it is important to retain them free of further built development; the area of character interest extending beyond the existing Conservation Area boundary to include the riverside meadows and associated footpaths. In addition, the area of character interest on the terraces also extends to a number of buildings beyond the existing Conservation Area boundary. These include period buildings lining the south east side of Lax Lane, Mill House (Severnside Mill), Springfield Villas and Springfield Place (Riverside North) and No. 21 Stourport Road. The land and buildings immediately adjoining the River at the south east end of Riverside North occupy a particularly important site in visual terms and comprise an important component of the immediate setting. Within this vicinity the late nineteenth century Springfield Villas and Springfield House sit reasonably comfortably; but the three late twentieth century commercial buildings at the south east end, are particularly incongruous.



*Severn Bank House (left) and the Old School buildings (right)
adjoining the south east side of Lax Lane*

d) Rising land immediately beyond the shelves, which merges with small hills. These hills rise to a significantly higher level than the town centre and provide it with a strong sense of natural containment. They include the following:

- East side of the River:
 - Maypole Piece: a largely undeveloped hill that is particularly prominent from the Seven Valley Steam Railway, the main eastern approach into Bewdley along the Kidderminster Road; when looking north east from the central bridge, the northern end of Lax Lane, Severnside South, and Venus Bank. Although well within the modern day town boundary, the largely undeveloped nature of this feature gives the vicinity a rural feel and helps buffer the eastern part of the Area from later development in northern Wribbenhall. Parts of the upper reaches and the side adjoining the northern edge of the Severn Valley Railway Station, have substantial tree and shrub cover adding to its interest. There is a substantial amount of housing development on the lower slopes of the western end; that in Maypole Close integrating particularly poorly with the character of the Area. It is important in Conservation terms to prevent further built development on this feature as well as retaining the vegetation. The area of character interest extends beyond the existing Conservation Area boundary at this point, particularly in relation to the ridge and hillside extending to the south-east and north east.



*Wooded hilltop and slopes of Maypole Piece
from the Severn Valley Steam Railway Station (left)
and looking north east from the River end of Lax Lane*

- Clarence Way/Gloucester Way and the Summer House: a partially developed hillside linking with open countryside to the north west, which is particularly prominent from the Seven Valley Steam Railway, the main eastern approach into Bewdley along the Kidderminster Road, the central bridge, the River frontages on the south west bank and parts of the rising land to the west including Venus Bank. The gradients have heavy tree cover, mostly in deciduous species but scattered across the crest are a number of specimen conifers. These have been

planted in the grounds of The Summer House; a large isolated period house on the skyline. Some late twentieth century housing development on the eastern side of the slope integrates poorly with the setting. It is important to retain the undeveloped nature of the crest, western side and the direct link to open countryside to the north west, of this feature.



*Wooded hilltop associated with the Summer House,
from Severnside South, with Beales Corner to the fore (left)
and from the Severn Valley Steam Railway Station (right)*

- West side of the River:
 - Venus Bank and Patchetts Hill: a developed hillside to the north-west of the area. Development on the lower and middle parts of Venus bank generally integrates well with the character of the Area (many buildings faithfully occupying the footings and being of a similar style and scale to older buildings in the vicinity) but the integration has been less successful in relation to housing development on the upper parts, particularly off Church View and Woodthorpe Drive to the north west. The modern housing development off Church View appears particularly incongruous on the skyline, as seen from several important viewpoints including the central River bridge. It is important to retain the remaining undeveloped areas at the south east end of Church View and off Richmond Road, and to avoid further intensification or infilling on the rest of the hillside. The area of character interest extends beyond the existing Conservation Area boundary at this point to include an undeveloped area of land adjoining the end of Church View which it is desirable to retain undeveloped.



*Venus Bank with Severnside North to the fore,
from the central bridge*

- Wyre Hill and Sandy Bank: a developed hillside on the south west side of the Area occupied by a ribbon of Listed Buildings and other buildings of interest, which are amongst the oldest parts of the town along an old routeway leading out to the west. There are numerous gaps in the built development, including grassy and wooded roadside banks and large garden plots, which it is important to retain free of development. Modern housing development to the south west and north west of the Conservation Area in Wyre Hill integrates poorly with the character of the Area.

- Tickenhill: a hillside on the south-west edge of the Area immediately adjoining open countryside to the south. This is currently occupied by Listed Tickenhill House and modern housing development to the north-west and north-east. In the latter respect, Park Close and Telford Drive, integrate poorly with the edge of the Conservation Area. Tickenhill itself was formerly the site of the Tudor Tickenhill Palace. The adjoining land probably contained extensive gardens and merged with an ancient deer park thought to have been in the vicinity. It is very important to retain the open nature of the remaining undeveloped land and countryside in this vicinity; including along the eastern side of Snuffmill Walk, and the south west, south and south east periphery of Tickenhill. The area of character interest extends beyond the existing Conservation Area boundary at this point, particularly in relation to the open countryside adjoining Tickenhill.
- Kateshill, Redhill & Winterdyne: These features are located on the southern edge of the town and link directly with open countryside overlooking the Severn Valley. Kateshill and Redhill are largely undeveloped hillsides, whilst Winterdyne is a largely undeveloped plateau. The upper slopes of the rising land and associated vegetation are visible from several locations within the Conservation Area. These include from the railway station in Wribbenhall, a public car park off Lax Lane, riverside walks and closing the view looking south east along High Street. Importantly, they include or merge with the historic parkland and gardens associated with Kateshill House and Winterdyne House. The latter parkland is recognised by the Hereford and Worcester Gardens Preservation Trust as being of local importance. There are numerous trees, hedgerows and shrubs in this vicinity, including ornamental planting, which add considerable interest and character. A road (Red Hill) passing through this area and leading to the nearby hamlet of Ribbesford, is quite narrow and is cut into the sandstone bedrock for a short distance. This narrow cutting is a further important characteristic of the vicinity. It is important to maintain this entire area free of further built development, to retain the vegetation, and retain the character of the narrow roadway. The area of character interest extends beyond the existing Conservation Area boundary at this point, particularly in relation to Winterdyne House and Park.



*Redhill, closing the view looking south east along High Street (left)
and from Severnside Mill and the Severn Valley Way in Wribbenhall (right)*

- Winbrook: a twisting gully with a road at its base forming the main route into and out of the western side of the Area. The steeply sloping sides and gradient of the base give this aspect of the setting a strong sense of enclosure and flow. Although well within the modern day town boundary, the gully sides retain some undeveloped areas both within and beyond the existing Conservation Area boundary, which give the vicinity a rural feel. A narrow winding footpath extends

along the upper part of the northern slope from both within and beyond the Conservation Area. These undeveloped spaces should be retained wherever possible, perhaps as Urban Open Space. There are a number of old buildings and plots of interest beyond the existing Conservation Area boundary in this vicinity, which it is also desirable to retain. The area of character interest extends beyond the existing Conservation Area boundary at this point, particularly in relation to older buildings and undeveloped land adjoining the footpath to the north of Cleobury Road (and between the footpath and the Cleobury Road) and extending as far west as the junction with Merricks Lane.

The historic centre of the town has become enlarged with suburban development on both sides of the River, principally in an east-west direction. To the west, this mainly dates from the twentieth century; whilst to the east this dates from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. In relation to the latter, the area of character interest extends beyond the existing Conservation Area boundary to include various buildings adjoining both sides of the Kidderminster Road and terminated with All Saints Church. Further east along the Kidderminster Road and including the south west end of Habberley Road, is another group of buildings (all dwellings) which primarily date from the mid nineteenth century and comprise an important period gateway corridor.

3.2 Historic Evolution

The Conservation Area comprises the historic core of the Town and adjoining landscape features. Prehistoric and Roman artefacts have been found in the Area, but it is from the medieval period onwards that the remaining above ground fabric dates.

Bewdley was not mentioned in the Domesday Survey of 1086 but Wribbenhall appears as "*Bailiwick*", an outlying estate of the manor of Kidderminster. The oldest surviving reference to Bewdley, or "*Beaulieu*", is in 1304 when it was associated with a manor on the western side of the River.

Bewdley has probably always been the site of an important crossing point of the River Severn, this probably providing one of the main reasons for the settlement. A ford at Bewdley had probably existed from an early period and a ferry is mentioned in 1336. The first bridge was built in 1447.

Throughout the late 14th and 15th centuries there was a steady increase in profits from the ferry and in the number of free tenants in Bewdley. The first record of a burgage is in 1367 and in 1376 permission was granted for a market on Wyre Hill. In the mid. 15th century, a market place was established in Load Street. By this time Bewdley changed from a linear settlement, along Wyre Hill and the road to the ford, into a planned town focussed on the River. A chapel was built in the centre of the town (Load Street) c1450 and the main streets and town gates (which do not survive) may also have been laid out around this time. The status of the town was enhanced by the presence of a royal palace known as Tickenhill, that was built on a hillside adjoining the south-west edge of the town during the 16th century by Henry VII for his son Arthur. The Court of the Marches usually spent Summer at Tickenhill. A number of timber framed buildings were constructed during this period.

The first bridge was rebuilt in timber during 1460 but in 1483 a new stone bridge was built and survived until the end of the 18th. Century, being replaced with the current bridge in 1798.

During the later Middle Ages Bewdley increased in prosperity and importance, and by the 16th and 17th centuries had become an important inland port and focus for trade between the Upper Severn Valley, the Black Country and Bristol. Bewdley also became a centre for non-conformist religious groups, and the many chapels, particularly off High Street, reflect the Stuart Clarendon code that such building should be located in inconspicuous locations.

As well as being a trading centre, Bewdley supported a variety of crafts and industries, including cloth, leather and rope production. The presence of a navigable river and the

proximity of the Wyre Forest with its natural resources meant Bewdley could attract trade from areas normally outside the hinterland of a town its size.

By the mid.18th.Century Bewdley had become one of the most important inland ports in the country. Owing to its strategic location, it became a port of trans-shipment and served as a collection centre for bar-iron and other goods from Wales and the west, which were then sent overland to the emergent industries of Birmingham or downstream to Bristol. The prosperity of the town during this period became reflected in many Georgian buildings, and some new and earlier properties were given particularly elegant facades at this time. A number of merchants in the town became very wealthy and secured for themselves the most prestigious situations overlooking the town, where they built substantial homes. Many of these buildings survive although not always in single family occupation. Although the medieval past of Bewdley is still very much in evidence, Pevsner (writing in the mid. 20th century) described the town as *“the most perfect small Georgian town in Worcestershire”*, reflecting the important and enduring contribution made to its appearance during later years.

The importance of Bewdley declined with the coming of the canals during the late 18th. Century, and particularly with the development of Stourport-on-Severn a few miles to the south, which was established at the terminus of the newly constructed Staffordshire and Worcestershire Canal (c.1771) and the River Severn. Following this period, Bewdley continued to function as a market town but was not such an important centre for trade. A railway station was constructed in on the eastern side of the River in Wribbenhall during the mid-nineteenth century, linking the town with nearby Kidderminster and Bridgnorth; but the town was largely overlooked by more extensive Victorian development (and redevelopment). Consequently, with diminished trade and little impetus for change, the town retained much of its historic form during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and certainly its architectural legacy that today is perhaps its most striking attraction.

Sir Stanley Baldwin, later Earl Baldwin of Bewdley and Prime Minister for several years during the early twentieth century, was born in No. 15 Lower Park; which is still standing albeit subdivided into flats.

During the late twentieth century, with the introduction of the modern day town planning system, both Bewdley and Wribbenhall experienced substantial suburban residential growth, and infilling within and adjoining the Conservation Area. Much of this development was poorly integrated with the existing fabric of the town. In 1986, a southern bypass including a second river crossing was opened, which helped to alleviate some of the problems associated with increasing vehicular traffic in the historic core.

3.3 Land Uses

There is a limited range of land uses within the Area at present, the predominant ones being as follows:

- a) Residential above shops in Load Street and dwellings in all other Streets (including subdivision of many large older properties). Notably, many shops are occupied by small independent occupants rather than national chains, which gives local variety and interest.



Dwellings in Lax Lane

- c) Leisure, recreation and tourism; including a museum, small hotels, pubs, restaurants and footpaths.
- d) Ecclesiastical buildings in High Street and the centre of Load Street.
- e) Railway station and railway infrastructure dating from the mid-nineteenth century, in Wribbenhall. This is now part of the Severn Valley Steam Railway.



*Severn Valley Steam Railway Station
in Wribbenhall*

Traditional uses which have ceased but for which old buildings and structures still remain, include the following:

- a) River side quays and warehouses, for example, 8 to 13 Stourport Road, and Ricketts Place, which are now flats and dwellings.



*Former warehouse (now flats) adjoining
Stourport Road in Wribbenhall*

- b) Leather tanning in Severnside South (now Telford Court flats).
- c) Rope making in buildings between Westbourne Street and Stephenson Place.



Buildings associated with the former "Loves" Rope Works in Wribbenhall

- d) Horn works/work house to the rear of No. 64 High Street.
- e) Bakeries and small workshops, including to the rear of properties, for example, to the rear of Nos. 14 & 20, High Street
- f) Court, town jail and foundry, in the current town hall and museum complex, Load Street
- g) Almshouses, which are all still in residential use, for example Burltons almshouses in Park Lane and Cooke's Almshouses in Park Lane.
- h) School buildings in High Street, Lax Lane and Westbourne Street.

It is very important that old buildings and structures such as those referred to above are retained because they represent visible material reminders of the historic evolution of the town. In some cases sensitive conversion to other uses may be acceptable, where this is compatible with the character of the original building or structure.

Outside the Area but still within the town, there is a notable absence of industrial and large buildings, either historic or modern, or large retail units, which is an interesting aspect of the character of the vicinity. Although now much enlarged, Bewdley thus still retains a small town feel. Beyond the town, the land use is almost exclusively agriculture and woodland.

3.4 Colours

The principal colours within the Area are as follows:

- a) Black/brown timbers and white/cream infilling of 15th to 17th century buildings;
- b) Reddish-plum brickwork and white mortar of Georgian and later buildings;
- c) White paint-work of window and door frames;
- d) White or creams of rendered walls or painted brickwork;
- e) Red and yellow-green of natural sandstone;
- f) Reddish-brown of hand made plain clay tiled roofs;
- g) Occasional greys of natural slate roofs;
- h) Grey tarmac of roads and pavements;
- i) Greens of grass, shrubs, trees and undeveloped hillsides;
- j) Greys and browns of deciduous trees during their de-foliated seasons;
- k) All-year deep green of the sporadically located coniferous trees; and
- l) Reflected colours on the river surface.

Outside the Area, the dominant colours are in the range of greens of trees and grass in Summer, and the varying tones of gold to grey and browns of deciduous trees in other seasons.

3.5 Climate

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

- a) Roofs are sloping, rather than being flat, to shed rainwater; whilst coping to free standing walls is semi-circular, to shed water and reduce the potential impact of frost. Doorways often have pediments or simple pointed canopies, whilst eaves are overhanging slightly, to deflect rainwater and as decoration.
- b) There is no evidence of deflection of trees by wind pressure or buildings having been built with blank elevations facing the prevailing wind direction.
- c) There appear to be very few instances of individual buildings being orientated towards the sunlight, they instead face the axis of the street.
- d) One major climatic incident that repeatedly threatens the lower levels of the town is that of flooding from the centrally located River Severn during the winter, when it can rise more than fifteen feet. This may be one reason why some of the oldest buildings in the town were located on the higher ground in the vicinity of Wyre Hill, Winbrook and Welch Gate. Nevertheless, the construction of many buildings close to the River's edge has not been deterred by these events, and some older buildings such as warehouses were located near the riverside as a matter of convenience.

The problem of annual flooding in the Town is in the process of being addressed. During 2001 work commenced on the Bewdley Flood Alleviation Scheme, which involved erection of a demountable flood barrier along Severnside North for limited times during the high-risk period of winter. The barrier and supporting struts are constructed of aluminium, the silver colour of which reads unsympathetically against the traditional colours in the Area; whilst the permanent associated ground fixtures, fixtures to the bridge, and permanent walling on the edge of the Conservation Area, appear insensitive. These drawbacks aside, the barrier should assist in the long-term protection of many buildings from the annual threat of flooding.

3.6 Trees

The degree of tree cover within the Area is high and it comprises an important component of its character. Most of these trees are located within private domestic gardens or public gardens and spaces. Roadside trees are not a characteristic of the Area.

Some of the most important trees are located as follows:

- a) Along the east bank of the River between Beales Corner and Millside Court/Severnside Mill, and all parts of the river banks extending out of the Conservation Area.



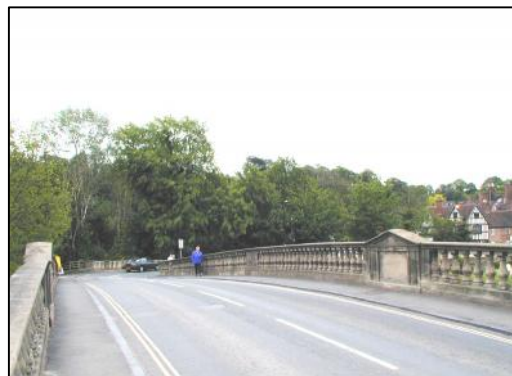
*Riverside trees between Beales Corner,
the fore of Millside Court/Severnside Mill (Wribbenhall)
and along the eastern riverbank leading out of the Conservation Area*

- b) In the Queen Elizabeth II Silver Jubilee Gardens and the woodland adjoining its southern corner.



Important trees comprising the woodland adjoining the southern corner of the Queen Elizabeth II Silver Jubilee Gardens

- c) In the Lychgate Gardens off Westbourne Street.
- e) Trees between Pleasant Harbour and the eastern end of the central bridge.



Trees adjoining the eastern end of the central bridge

- f) In most domestic gardens, excluding those properties off Load Street.
- g) On the hillsides and crests, particularly east of Northwood Lane and surrounding Summer house, to the rear of High Street, surrounding Tickenhill (including an extensive boundary holly hedge), Kateshill and Winterdyne, Maypole Piece, and private gardens on Venus Bank; and
- h) Adjoining Redhill and Kateshill, where the tree canopy almost completely overhangs the road, creating an attractive and characteristic tunnel like appearance and effect during the Summer.
- i) Along the watercourses to the south of Tickenhill. This area has been identified by the Worcestershire Nature Conservation Trust (and in the District Local Plan) as a Special Wildlife Site.

Smaller pockets of trees and shrubs can be seen from the streets through alleys and arches, and over roadside walls. Whether they are in small or large groups, the presence of trees is of the utmost importance to soften the sharp edges of the built form and to add visual character.

The substantial hillside grounds have been planted predominantly with deciduous native species. They are mature and in dense groups which give heavy cover to the slopes without totally obstructing the principal views out from the house. In all of these curtilages there are several examples of specimen coniferous species scattered sporadically among the

indigenous varieties. In winter, the coniferous species make bold punctuations to the leafless varieties and add a degree of colour to the views. In summer, the indigenous species take visual command but not at the expense of concealing the others.

Many of the important trees in the Area are protected with Tree Preservation Orders.

A small group of three non-native deciduous trees planted on the quayside to the fore of No. 3 Severnside South, looks inconspicuous in this historically open area. Ideally these trees should be removed for better historical authenticity, to prevent them obscuring the adjoining buildings when viewed from the central bridge and Beales Corner, and to prevent the possibility of the roots causing long-term structural problems to the quayside.



*Inappropriately located trees on the quayside
at the north east end of Severnside South*

In recent years there has been a noticeable thinning of traditional riverside willow trees on the east bank adjoining the recent Millside Court/Severnside Mill housing development. It is desirable to retain and reinstate willow trees in this location, as they may assist with bank stability and help to provide seasonal screening of the Severnside Mill development which is of an inconspicuous and somewhat unsympathetic design. There is an area of open space (embankment) to the fore of Beales Corner, which is noticeably free of trees. The latter should not be introduced to this location as they will obscure views of the buildings on Beales Corner when viewed from the opposite bank of the River and the central bridge

3.7 Historic Street Pattern and Movement

The overall plan of the town is in two parts lying on either side of the central River and bridge, with the parishes of Bewdley on the north-west side and Wribbenhall on the south-east side.

The basic plan of the town centre (on the western bank of the river) is of a rectangle with its long axis orientated parallel to and determined by, the river. Relating to this basic rectangle, Severnside South comprises a low riverside road and High Street is the higher road; the two ends being linked by Load Street at the north west end and Lax Lane at the south east end. Adjoining and immediately to the north is a triangle comprising a further riverside road, namely Severnside North; the northern end of which turns back along Dog Lane to link with the western end of Load Street. Extending from the north west and south west corners of the rectangle are further roads (Dowles Road, Welch Gate, Winbrook, Wyre Hill, Park Lane and Richmond Road, from the north west; and Lower Park from the south west) that follow winding courses leading out of the town in various directions. To the north east corner is the river bridge linking Load Street to a short braid of streets and alleys comprising Wribbenhall on the south-east bank, which subsequently converge to the Kidderminster road leading east and Stourport Road leading south east.

The first bridge was built in 1447, being rebuilt in timber during 1460 and in stone during 1483. The latter collapsed in 1795 and was replaced with the current bridge in 1798.

It has been suggested the original road to the river from the west was in the valley of the Winbrook and that Wyre Hill (known as High Street in the medieval period) was created when the settlement became a town during the 15th century. Wyre Hill and Lax Lane, however, are likely to have been the focus for settlement until the building of the first bridge in 1447. In 1472 there are documentary references to Dog Lane, High Street (now Wyre Hill), Over Street (now High Street) and Lax Lane. Bridge Gate, Welsh Gate and Welsh Pool Gate (possibly Dog Lane Gate) are also mentioned and it is likely that Tinkers Gate/Lax Gate was also built at this time. The development of the street system must have occurred, therefore, around the middle of the 15th century and was connected to the rapid development of the town and a shift of focus from the ford and Lax Lane to the quays and the bridge. Severnside and Load Street were probably included in this development although there are no documentary references to these streets until the 1530's.

Medieval Bewdley had four gates. These were Welch Gate, Bridge Gate, Tinkers/Lax Gate and Dog Lane Gate. The gates were large timber constructions with rooms above. Structural remains of the Dog Lane Gate were uncovered in 1959. No above ground remains of these gates survive today.

It has been suggested the curved line of Dog Lane may mark the line of a town ditch. Richmond Road and Dowles Road are probably medieval in date. The road from Bewdley to Ribbesford (Red Hill) currently runs through what was part of the park attached to Tickenhill Palace. It is unlikely that a public highway would run through a royal park, and the medieval road may have skirted the park and run along the edge of the flood plain of the Severn after it left Tinkers Gate.

The street system in the post-medieval period is essentially an extension of the medieval one. Park Lane was first recorded in 1595 although it may have existed earlier. A barley market, shambles and butter cross once formed a long range of timber framed buildings occupying the middle of Load Street, being demolished in 1783. Wyre Hill remained the main route to the west until 1753, when a turnpike road to Cleobury Mortimer was built along the valley of the Winbrook, perhaps improving an earlier route way. The road south from Bewdley that passes the lodge to Winterdyne, probably post-dates the break-up of the medieval park associated with Tickenhill; which may have occurred during the late 17th century. The Kidderminster Road through Wribbenhall is probably an old pack horse route between Bewdley and Kidderminster; whilst the Stourport Road, also on the east bank, was constructed in 1820. The previous bridge in the centre of the town collapsed in 1795 and Thomas Telford was commissioned to construct a new bridge, which opened in 1801 and survives to the present day. Significantly, the western end of the new bridge was aligned with the north-east end of Load Street rather than the prominence a few metres to the south in Severnside South on which the band stand now stands.

There are several old or otherwise important footpaths in the Conservation Area, some serving residential properties and being their sole historic source of access (for example, to the rears of High Street and Load Street, on Venus Bank, and off the Racks) whilst others link with open countryside. These footpaths include the following:

- a) Park Alley, linking High Street with open countryside.
- b) The Racks, running parallel to the north side of Winbrook and Cleobury Road.
- c) The Gob, linking the lower end of Sandy Bank and Winbrook.
- d) Venus Bank.
- e) Path running parallel to the south west side of High Street, linking Park Lane with Park Alley.
- f) Path skirting the east and south sides of the current grounds to Tickenhill.
- g) Track linking the south west end of Lower Park with Kateshill and open countryside to the south west.
- h) Three paths leading from High Street, Severnside South and Lax Lane into and out of the Silver Jubilee Gardens.
- i) The riverside walks along Severnside North, Severnside South, and the east bank; all of which link the centre of the town with open countryside and which include the

Worcestershire Way and Severn Way. These are two regional long distance footpaths. The Worcestershire Way passes along the south west bank of the River and the Severn Way passes along the north east bank of the River. It is particularly important to conserve the character of these routes, the adjoining environments and views.

- j) Pewterer's Alley in Wribbenhall.
- k) Around the northern edge of Winterdyne Park.

Roads and footpaths, other than in Load Street, tend to be quite narrow. Junctions between roads and footpaths tend to be in a "T" or "Y" form, and both historically and at present, there are no roundabouts. A few footpaths are raised above the level of the adjoining roads, for example, in parts of Wyre Hill (western end), Sandy Bank (eastern end), Welch Gate (south side) and to the fore of Nos. 72 to 78, Kidderminster Road.



*Traditional "T" junction between Lax Lane and High Street (left)
and a raised pavement leading from Welch Gate into Sandy Bank (right)*

It is particularly important to preserve the historic street pattern within and adjoining the Conservation Area, in terms of route, width, gradient, junction arrangements and traditional footpath characteristics, all of which comprise an important aspects of the Area's character.

At present critical traffic movements within the Conservation Area occur as follows:

a) Vehicular:

There is a constant stream of vehicles using the central bridge and consequently the streets through the Town which lead to it. The historic lay out of Load Street has allowed sufficient width to permit on-street parking on both sides with two- way traffic and a stacking lane for vehicles wishing to enter the short-stay car park. At the upper end of Load Street, the carriageway divides in order to pass around the church of St. Anne. Immediately above the church, Load Street is joined by High Street, Park Lane and Dowles Road, before rising further into Welch Gate. All of these junctions occur within close proximity of one another and the result is the point of greatest vehicular congestion in the town centre. The merging of through and local traffic flows heading towards the bridge, and the junction of Dowles Road as the entry to the principle car parks, are equal contributors to this situation. On the east side of the river, Kidderminster Road takes the heaviest flows of traffic with its sharply turning junction with Stourport Road being an occasional congestion point.

b) Pedestrian:

Load Street is the retail and commercial nucleus of the town and local residents who choose to walk to the facilities there appear to do so via High Street, Park Lane, Welch Gate and Kidderminster Road.

The tourists' attention is centred on the river's edge, along Severnside North and South, Beale's Corner, the bridge; and Load Street. Lax Lane, High Street and Welch Gate make secondary, but never the less popular areas of attention for tourists. The bridge, with its convergence of traffic, tourists and local residents can become a place of hazardous conflict.

Large numbers of pedestrian movements also occur between the public car parks to the rear of Load Street and off Dog Lane, and the Town Centre and other areas of attraction.

Modern but traditionally styled metal railings finished in black have been installed along the River frontages in Severnside North, Severnside South (part) and Beale's Corner. Modern but traditionally styled metal litter bins have been installed in various locations in the Area, including Load Street.

3.8 Night Time Character and Appearance

During the evening and at night, Bewdley maintains a high level of interest created by the effect of its street lighting, restrained illumination of individual frontages, numerous small bars and restaurants, and general sight seeing and pleasure walking by visitors and towns people (particularly on Summer evenings). Many street lights however are of designs and materials unsympathetic to the Conservation Area, and almost all emit a yellow glow giving a somewhat surreal illumination. Wherever electric street lighting is installed, it should emit white light, which is more sympathetic to the character and period of the area; and use styling appropriate to the historic setting (preferably black metal nineteenth century style lamp posts and possibly even gas lighting). There are variations within different areas, some of which are as follows:

a) Town Centre and River:

The town centre and river frontage have by far the greatest level of pedestrian activity in the evenings. Although there is no cinema or night club to provide noticeable focal points, the town becomes centred upon Load Street, and Severnside North and South, acting as a more broadly spread focal point. The extent of this "spread" is based generally on the attraction of the riverside walks and the distribution of the town's pubs and in particular, those in Load Street, High Street and Welch Gate. Lighting in Load Street is provided mostly by close-sited lamp standards (i.e. situated tightly against the frontages of buildings). Lamps are regularly spaced and this gives an even spread of modest but not intense light onto the pavements. Illumination of individual frontages is limited and those buildings so treated do so on the whole in a subtle (rather than a brash) way. The church tower is gently illuminated. Traditional style free-standing lamps along the Severnside North and South create an interesting and attractive waterfront image when seen from the bridge or from Beale's Corner. In Load Street, street lighting is non traditional and unsympathetic in character. A number of demountable metal poles are to be inserted into the pavement on which to hang flower baskets during the Summer and Christmas illuminations during Winter. The design of these poles is, like the street lighting in this vicinity, unsympathetic.



Traditional style street lamp in Severnside South

b) Wribbenhall:

Beale's Corner is less well illuminated than the town centre. Its street lamps provide pools of light which make attractive reflections on the river when seen from Severnside South.

A petrol filling station adjoins the Kidderminster Road and has a brashly and intensely illuminated fore court, overpowering all features in the vicinity and in so doing comprising a major and uncharacteristic feature in the street scene.

c) Maypole Piece:

Maypole Piece, with no dwellings or roads on its upper reaches disappears totally in the dark.

d) Red Hill:

Along Red Hill, free-standing lamp standards are sited amongst tree canopies which conceal the actual lamp bowls but leave regular pools of light along the pavement. In other areas the street lighting is more exposed and spaced regularly and randomly on either side of the principal roads.

3.9 Views

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

a) Views into the Area:

The topography surrounding the conservation area and indeed for much of the town itself, means it is difficult to gain distant views into the Area. Never-the-less a few such vantage points exist, most notably looking south from Trimpey Lane; the hillsides to the north of the town, for example, Northwood and Hill Farm; and looking north from the top of Blackstone.

These are probably the most distant views obtainable of the town, from where can be seen the higher lying parts of the historic core, sides of the river valley, central bridge, much of the modern suburbs on the west bank, and the surrounding countryside including the Wyre Forest to the north west.

b) Views out of the Area:

For the reasons of topography referred to above, long distance views out of the Area are restricted. The principle distant views are as from the central bridge looking directly up and down stream. In these directions it is possible to see tree lined river banks, and distant wooded hillsides and countryside of open fields and hedgerows; some features being two or three kilometres from boundary of the Conservation Area. It is important in conservation terms to retain the character of these distant views as well as those in close proximity.



Distant views from the central bridge looking north (left) and south (right)

Other views outward are limited to the middle distance, constrained by the hills that lie around the town centre. These views are of hillsides dominated by heavy tree cover, and some are surmounted by substantial period dwellings or less desirable modern housing development (particularly the top of Venus Bank). The wooded nature of both middle and (the few) long distance views serve to emphasise the fact that this is undoubtedly a small town in a rural setting. Views to open countryside are an important component of the Area's character, as they help to retain the feel of a small country town nestled in the landscape.

c) Views within the Area:

Virtually every street and turn has a worthy view, from the water side views adjoining the River, to those of groups of buildings rising up the streets and numerous fine individual examples. In addition, the Severn Valley Railway's steam hauled trains provide popular subjects from town centre vantage points and trains themselves are good viewing places from which to see the town. The most significant views include the following:

- From the central bridge looking towards wide vistas of the fronts of buildings in Severnside North and South, Beale's Corner and the southern end of the Kidderminster Road, into Load Street, and towards various hillsides.



*Severnside North (left) and Severnside South (right)
from the central bridge*

- From the quay and river sides on either bank looking directly across the river towards the fronts of buildings and landscape features on the opposite banks, and towards the central bridge.



*Beales Corner and the southern end of Kidderminster Road,
From the central bridge*

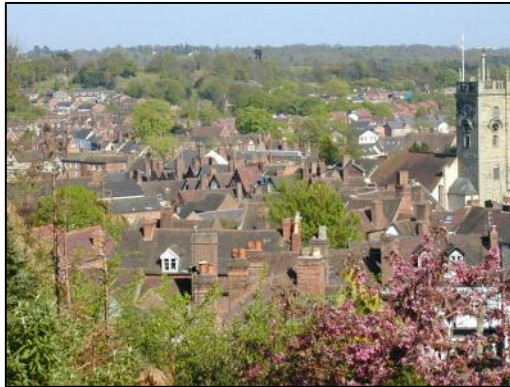
- From High Street looking north east into and across the Queen Elizabeth II Gardens.

- Within the Queen Elizabeth Gardens looking along the footpaths and outwards towards the backs of surrounding buildings and the tower of St. Anne's Church in Load Street..



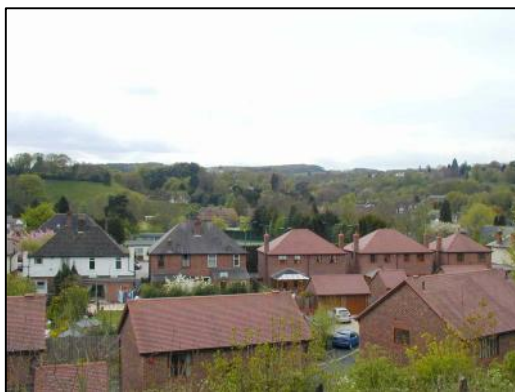
*Church of St. Anne
from the Queen Elizabeth II Silver Jubilee Gardens*

- From Bark Hill (off Winbrook) Venus Bank/Church View and the eastern end of the Racks, looking east and south east over the roofscape of the town.



*Roofscape and Church of St. Anne,
looking east from the Racks*

- The vistas along the narrow enclosed frontages from each end of High Street and Lower Park.
- Along the narrow enclosed pedestrian Parkes Passage, off High Street.
- From various points towards the railway and the steam hauled trains.
- From the valley south of Tickenhill looking towards the southern edge of the town.
- From the Severn Valley Steam Railway station and line looking over the adjoining rooftops and at the slopes of Maypole Piece and that surmounted by the Summerhouse.
- From the Severn Valley Steam Railway station and line looking towards the buildings on the south west side of the River, and the rising green landform of Redhill, Kateshill and Winterdyne.



*Redhill and Kateshill,
looking south from the Severn Valley Steam Railway Station*

- From the footpaths surrounding Tickenhill looking south east across the valley towards Kateshill House, Redhill and Winterdyne and reverse.



*Kateshill House and Redhill,
looking south east from Tickenhill*

- From the footpaths in the fields to the rear of Lower Park looking towards Tickenhill.
- From the footpath at the rear of High Street looking north east into and over rear elevations and gardens.
- Looking south east along High Street and Lower Park and south west from the Gardeners Meadow car park, to the sudden backdrop of undeveloped farmland that comprises the hillside of Red Hill at the north west end of Winterdyne.

3.10 Pattern and Density of Buildings

The pattern and density of buildings and plots within the Conservation Area strongly reflect the medieval period, as follows:

- a) The typical pattern of development is of buildings laid out along the lengths of streets in long narrow plots arranged at right angles to the axis of the street. Many of these plots may be old burgage plots, the earliest being recorded in the fourteenth century.
- b) Plot boundaries are usually defined with walls.
- c) There are many cases where adjoining plots have been united, although such unification of plots is undesirable in character terms.
- d) The principle building on the plot is usually built against the edge of and facing the street and often accompanied by other buildings and ranges to the rear in which domestic or historic industrial activities would have taken place. These subservient buildings were

frequently of a reduced scale and ran at right angles to the street into and down part of the length of the narrow plot.

- e) In many instances buildings are entered via an alley or side tunnel archway through from the street. This pattern of building can still be seen today, particularly when viewed from behind the street frontages.
- f) In those locations where buildings occur, there is generally a clear and overwhelming feel of a high density of development.
- g) Buildings are generally of individual designs or in small terraced groups, but usually abut to form longer terraces giving long almost continuous street frontages.



*Terrace of individually constructed houses
adjoining the Kidderminster Road in Wribbenhall*

- h) Set among the tightly knit pattern of development and on the periphery, are occasional plots of larger proportions for the historic occupation of the wealthier families or those with important community positions. Their houses are noticeably larger and of better quality. There are examples in High Street (The Redfern) and Lower Park (Old Vicarage) particularly dating from the Georgian era, or involving Georgian remodelling of older buildings.



*Old Vicarage in Lower Park;
a substantial house set in extensive grounds*

3.11 Style of Buildings

There are three particularly important styles of buildings within the Area, as follows:

- a) A number of vernacular timber-framed buildings of late medieval to 17th century origin survive within the Area. The larger buildings usually incorporate jettied upper floors, close studding, mid rails and front facing gables. Some include elaborate quatrefoil panels and carved brackets. The smaller and/or less elaborate buildings usually incorporate square framing.



*Variations of timber framing,
with close studding (first and second rows),
panels and quadrant braces (third row)
and square framing (bottom row).*

Note that most of the ground floors and windows have been significantly altered

- b) The predominant architectural style of buildings surviving in the Area is that of the Georgian period, i.e. with classically inspired facades and adornment, and polite formality. These buildings range in quality from humble “courts” and workers cottages with a polite appearance, to finer houses and public buildings displaying a wealth of classical architectural detailing and adornment. Many of the Georgian facades conceal the core of earlier structures, including timber-framed buildings (often apparent in the form of contrasting rear elevations or exposed structural timbers in the gables) which should be retained wherever they occur.



*Variations of Georgian style,
with prestigious private dwellings and public buildings (top row)
and more modest private dwellings (bottom row)*

- c) To a lesser extent, there are nineteenth century and Edwardian buildings, including humble cottages and larger homes, in a variety of styles. Some of these buildings echo the vernacular influences of timber framed buildings, some echo the polite formality of the Georgian period, and some displaying a mixture of influences including the Gothic. There are also examples of late 20th century designs, few of which demonstrate real inspiration from or assimilation with earlier periods.

It is particularly important that new built development within and adjoining the Conservation Area reflects and harmonises with the vernacular (timber framing) and Georgian styles found within the vicinity.

3.12 Size and Morphology of Buildings

Buildings are of predominantly 2 and 3 storeys in height. Load Street is almost entirely 3 or 4 storeys; Severnside North, Dog Lane and Westbourne Street are entirely 2 storeys; Lax Lane has many buildings of 1 and 1 ½ storeys (the latter including cottages having later dormer windows); and Welch gate is mainly 2 and 2 ½ storeys. There is not a tradition of single storey buildings within the Area, other than rear ranges and those associated with particular manufacturing activities.

With the exception of High Street, most of the streets are equal or greater in width to the heights of their buildings, and this gives them a sense of space. In Westbourne Street, High Street and parts of Welch Gate however, the streets are narrower.

In most streets the massing of the buildings along the street is mixed. This is caused by differing numbers of storeys per building, differing storey heights and the changing topography. Consequently the eaves line (in particular) and ridge levels vary, sometimes quite considerably, although the overall effect is generally harmonious. In Welch Gate, there is far more uniformity in the massing which steps up regularly with the gradient into Winbrook.



Varied massing in High Street

The foregoing features give an overall sense of compatibility with the human scale and thus, allow the pedestrian to feel comfortable. Only in parts of High Street and Load Street (particularly adjoining St Anne's Church) does the combination of massing, height and alignment begin to overpower the human scale.

Windows and doors are generally distributed regularly (within limits) within elevations, creating a strong sense of rhythm in the street scene and adding to that already created by the general alignment of the buildings. However, in Welch Gate and Dog Lane, there is less discernible rhythm. In Lax Lane there is rhythm to the ground floor apertures, while in Lower Park and Park Lane, rhythm occurs within individual facades and is not extended uniformly along the street scene.

Facades of Georgian three bay buildings are often symmetrical, whilst Georgian two bay buildings are generally symmetrical above the ground floor.

The predominant way for buildings to carry their ridges is parallel with the road. There are a few buildings, especially in Load Street, which have hipped roof ends facing the street. Most pre 17th Century structures run their ridges down the depth of the plot, i.e. at right angles to the street, and this is still evident with several buildings when they are viewed from the rear. Timber framed buildings tend to incorporate front facing gables.

In all streets, the pitch of roof slopes is at a steeper than medium angle. In Load Street and in relation to many of the Georgian buildings elsewhere, the roofs of some buildings are partially hidden behind parapets. Elsewhere parapets are almost entirely absent, particularly from buildings exhibiting a more vernacular influence and smaller polite buildings.

Dormers are a common feature throughout the area, particularly in Lax Lane and High Street. They are predominantly gabled to the street with a simple clipped verge and are plate-mounted. Dog Lane and Park Lane are exceptions because here there are no dormers to be seen. Occasionally, Velux type rooflights appear to have been introduced through conversion schemes rather than as original features; and can look somewhat incongruous.

Throughout the area, the roofs retain chimneys; most examples of which are of a well proportioned, stout appearance.

The roofscapes are of particular interest. They are of special value in the overhead views across the Area, which are available from the many vantage points. The view of the Town from Venus Bank and Church View is exceptional in this respect.

3.13 Materials and Construction

a) Walls:

The predominant material for timber framed buildings is oak (originally unpainted) with a natural light red-brown or cream-washed infill. Structural timbers are exposed, and include studs, braces, wall plates, mid rails, end rafters (with or without barge boards) and the lower ends of principal rafters (forming projecting eaves). Upper floors are often jettied. Some timbers may be moulded. The ends or corners to different planes are often articulated with carved wooden brackets, whilst wooden brackets usually support the underside of projecting window ledges. Wooden pegs are used to secure joints.



Ornate detailing on timber framed buildings

The predominant walling material for post 17th Century buildings is a plum coloured, well-fired local brick. They are of an open texture with irregular surfaces and arrises (edges). Bricks are traditionally laid in Flemish bond, with narrow joints and white lime putty mortar to a flush finish. Some of the older buildings and those of lower status incorporate more irregular English bonding with both stretcher and header courses. The surface irregularity of the individual bricks gives a texture to the overall facade. Those buildings of greater status employ a more evenly fired soft red brick with gauged rubbed brick window headers and arches, and embellishment such as corner quoins painted white. Some bricks are subtly and slightly darkened by the effect of uneven firing. Some buildings have had their brickwork painted and this is not the appropriate treatment for such a quality material. Some of the buildings have plinths or other parts raised in locally quarried sandstone, the colour of which is mostly a faded hue of red. The corners to Georgian buildings are often adorned with quoins, which add visual interest. There is no tradition in the Area of brick banding in contrasting colours. The use of deep brown bricks on some modern buildings is particularly inappropriate, for example, Eastham Court (Sevenside South).



Brickwork with a traditional Flemish bond

Free standing brick walls are traditionally capped with semi-circular shaped coping bricks or semi-circular shaped sandstone.



Traditional semi-circular coping to the top of a wall

b) Roofs:

The predominant roofing material is a small red-brown plain clay tile, darker than the brickwork. Apart from their colour, these tiles have slight curvatures and this produces a surface of subtle irregularity that is not matched by modern machine-made counterparts. Some roofs have been covered with grey slate but this is generally less preferable in conservation terms. Pantiles are not traditional to the Area. No thatch survives in the Area.



Traditional plain roof tiles

The buildings of both Georgian and Victorian periods have predominantly simple double-pitched roofs, taken to gable ends with a flush verge sealed by a mortar fillet, or hipped on all sides. There are no front facing gables or significant overhangs to these buildings. Barge boards are infrequent but where they do occur, they are ornately pierced and cusped. Timber-framed buildings have barge running down their gables. Verged gables occur infrequently.

Brick dentilling is the predominant eaves treatment. Alternatives to this are parapets, cornices or modillions. Enclosed soffits are not traditional features in the Area.



Pitched roofs with a frontal parapet (left of centre) and hip with eaves (right of centre)



High quality parapet (top left) and eaves treatment (top right) and modest eaves treatment with hit and miss header dentilling (bottom left) and saw tooth dentilling (bottom right)

Lead is the traditional material for flashing, cut to step with and into brick mortar courses, rather than the modern trend of setting into disc-cut grooves in the brickwork.



Lead flashing stepped with the mortar courses

Chimneys are conspicuous throughout the Area. They are mostly tall, square or rectangular in plan and in matching brick. Ridge mounted is the most common position (at right angles to the ridge for those being rectangular) although some can be seen at mid-slope. They occur at party divisions in terraces; or at gable ends, where they have been built into the wall thickness (as opposed to being attached to the outside of the wall). Most have modestly embellished cappings and many retain their clay pots.



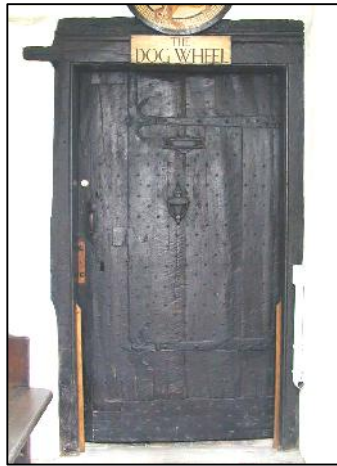
Ridge mounted chimney

c) Doors and Windows:

Door and window openings are generally rectangular. The windows of timber framed buildings tend to be horizontally attenuated, whilst those to later brick buildings (particularly the more formal ones) tend to be vertically attenuated. Wood is the exclusive material for windows and door joinery, usually natural or stained in relation to timber framed buildings and painted white on later buildings. Many doors exhibit ornate period metal fittings, such as handles, letter apertures and doorknockers. Original glass to windows is a common feature and should be retained where possible.

Few original doors to timber framed buildings survive but are of unpainted oak with heavy metal hinges, strapwork, nails and fixtures. Later doors are frequently panelled, high quality Georgian examples featuring six fields to each door and brass fixtures. More humble cottages and other buildings often incorporate simple boarded doors (vertically arranged timbers) with cast iron fittings. With the exception of Severnside North, Dog Lane and Park Lane, the better

post medieval and particularly Georgian and Victorian buildings feature classically inspired door cases, columns to either side, pediments (or at least bracketed canopies) and box or fan lights. Some terraced properties have tunnel entrances giving access to the rear. Some old courts also include communal tunnel entrances, off which front doors lead. Many doorways have stone front steps and metal shoe scrapers mounted into the ground to one side.



Original door to a timber framed building (left) and replica (right) with original brackets



A selection of high quality traditional Georgian doorways found within the Area



A modest late eighteenth or early nineteenth century doorway (left) and tunnel entrance (right)



Metal shoe scraper

Window openings to timber framed buildings are exclusively flat headed, and incorporate transoms and mullions. Originally such windows may have had shutters but no glass; being replaced by side hung casements having small leaded lights, the latter usually forming a lattice divided into small rectangles or diamond shapes. Some of these window openings are cut down through the mid rail, which may have been a later and undesirable alteration. Occasionally windows have projecting frames supported on brackets, particularly where they are located immediately beneath a jetty.



*Transom and mullion casement windows (left)
and a projecting window with supporting brackets (right)
on timber framed buildings*

For later buildings, a flat head has been the most common way to span window apertures although segmental (arched) heads in brick are nearly as frequent, particularly in relation to the more humble buildings. The latter method has been more often used in Welch Gate, Lax Lane and Dog Lane. The flat heads to post 17th Century buildings incorporate either rubbed gauged brick voussoirs (some with ornate central projecting keystones) or applied headers painted white. Voussoirs are always individually gauged rather than the modern and unsympathetic trend of utilising ungauged rectangular bricks with a gauged brick at each end supported on a concealed lintel. Applied headers are nearly always embellished in some way, usually with rustication. In relation to some better quality Georgian buildings, there are particularly pleasing classically inspired variations to the window shape, including Venetian windows (a central semi-circular headed window with two flat headed side arms and arch headed glazing bars within the top of the central component), thermal windows (semi circular) to top floors, and near square windows with semi-circular heads to top floors. The top storey

windows to the more formal post 17th Century buildings tend to be more squared than the windows to lower floors, which are vertically attenuated rectangles.

For post 17th Century buildings, windows are generally recessed into the reveal (with a narrow wooden architrave) or set flush with the face of the wall (with wide wooden architraves) with about equal frequency. Cills are in projecting stone or timber in about equal numbers and painted white, although the better Georgian and Victorian buildings incorporate stone cills. Some late 20th century buildings incorporate unpainted concrete cills, which are unsympathetic in conservation terms.

The better quality Georgian and Victorian buildings incorporate vertically sliding sash windows, with wooden glazing bars dividing the aperture into vertically arranged rectangles. Where side hung casements occur in Georgian or later buildings, they either incorporate horizontal glazing bars or horizontal and vertical glazing bars, dividing the aperture into rectangles. A few modern or older converted buildings incorporate casement windows without glazing bars, a treatment which is particularly inappropriate in character terms. Horizontally sliding sash windows occur in a few cases, particularly to upper storeys.



*A selection of Georgian sash windows found within the Area,
with gauged headers (top left) gauged headers & keystones (top right),
applied rusticated headers (bottom left)
and in the Venetian style with applied headers (bottom right)*



*Close up of a front mounted sash window with gauged voussoirs (left)
recessed sash window with gauged voussoirs, keystone and stone cill (middle)
and front mounted sash window with segmental brick header (right).
Note that each voussoir to the flat headed windows is individually gauged and of a finer grain and quality
than the brickwork, and that front mounted windows have wide architraves*



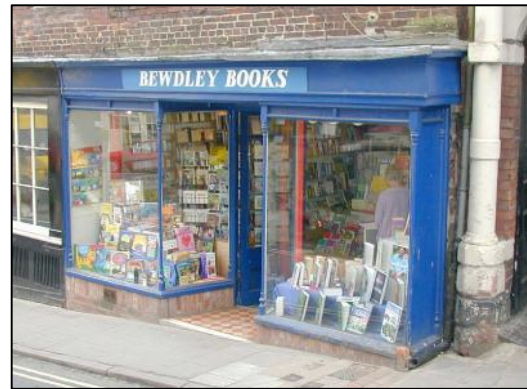
*A rare horizontally sliding window,
occasionally found lighting the upper storey*

Dormers are frequent throughout the Area. They generally have pitched roofs, gables (not hips) and lead clad sides. The predominant location is plate mounted although a few are off-plate or purlin mounted. There is not a tradition of rooflights in the Area, although there are a few buildings in Wribbenhall where rooflights have been inserted; to the detriment of their appearance.



Plate mounted dormer windows

Shop fronts are covered by separate design guidance (in preparation) and include a range of traditional types. The Georgian and mid Victorian types have multiple glazing bars, and are the most sympathetic to the Area; whilst the late Victorian and Edwardian types have larger areas of plate glass. Some former shops have reverted to dwellings, particularly in Welch Gate, but retain their traditional shop fronts as reminders of past uses.



A selection of traditional shop fronts found within the Area

d) Watergoods:

Cast iron is the most common material for watergoods, i.e. gutters, hoppers and down pipes. In Load Street there are particularly interesting and ornate hoppers, some being of lead. Grey plastic watergoods are inappropriate.

3.14 Survival of Architectural Features

The area has retained many original architectural features. This is almost certainly due to the high number of listed buildings, the controls over which have regulated indiscriminate losses; but there are many unlisted buildings of interest, which also retain original features, although in some cases such features have been lost.

Important surviving architectural features include the following:

- a) Pitched roofs, plane roof tiles and original chimneys.
- b) Timber sash windows and timber side-hung casement windows (often designed for leaded lights and/or with horizontal glazing bars).
- c) Gauged or applied rusticated, and segmental window headers.
- d) Traditional timber doors, either panelled or boarded, and metal door fixtures and fittings.
- e) Structural plinths, front door steps, front door boot scrapers, and traditional door fixtures to buildings.
- f) Timber framing to older buildings, including beneath more recent facades.
- g) Unrendered brickwork.
- h) Traditional plain roofing tiles and slates.
- i) Undeveloped rear gardens.
- j) Plot dividing walls and outbuildings.
- k) Traditional shop fronts in Load Street and at the bottom end of Welch Gate.
- l) Traditional railings to the front of dwellings, particularly in High Street.
- m) Small archways leading to rear spaces.
- n) Historic pattern and form of highways.
- o) Old metal street signs.
- p) Old metal court number plates on doors.

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

- a) Repointing using a cement mortar (often coloured) instead of lime putty based mortar, and the use of inappropriate pointing techniques.
- b) The use of PVCu gutters and downpipes.
- d) The application of modern stains or inappropriately coloured paint to joinery.
- e) Inappropriate front doors.
- f) Painting of brickwork.
- g) Replacement of timber framing, particularly to ground floors, with bricks.
- h) Inappropriate canopies and frontage treatment to some shops.
- i) Inappropriate street furniture, highway surfacing, lampposts and highway signage.

These unsympathetic alterations have not, as yet, caused widespread harm to the architectural and historic interest of the area, however, it is important to take appropriate action wherever necessary.

3.15 Wyre Hill

Wyre Hill is almost a hamlet in its own right, and perhaps comprises the oldest part of the town. It has an overwhelmingly vernacular character, deeply rooted in humble cottages of timber framed construction (some of late medieval origin) and later cottages of brick. It is approached from the town centre via Welch Gate and Sandy Bank. The latter of these rises steeply across the contours for about a half kilometre adjoined on the south side by important undeveloped wooded banks until Wyre Hill begins just before the hillside crests onto a plateau high above the town. The road is narrow, winding and lacks pavements in its lower reaches. A few houses sit against the road on the Winbrook valley side and opposite these is a steep, wooded bank. As the upper settlement begins, the pavements re-appear rising to levels high above the road. Road and pavements are also separated horizontally by grassed banks. The buildings, all residential other than two public houses, are located on the

pavement level. The width of the street, banks and pavements puts a substantial distance between building faces and makes this an open, comfortable place for people to be. Space is also provided by gaps along the street between the short terraces of buildings allowing gardens to meet the pavement edge and which it is important to retain free of development.

The historic settlement is in ribbon form and only some 300 metres long. The Conservation Area ends with the historic core, but the settlement continues in the form of incongruous modern residential development on three of its sides.

The buildings are all two storeys, predominantly of 18th and 19th century origin, positioned at the back of the pavement and face the street. The presence of a few older timber-framed cottages amongst those of brick indicates the settlement was of an early foundation. The apertures to buildings have a vertical emphasis. There is little rhythm along the street, other than stepping with the contours. This has the added effect of dropping eaves and ridgelines in the same way and thereby exposing the gable profiles.

The principal walling material is a dark reddish-orange brick, but some of the cottages have been painted white, which is a later and unsympathetic alteration. Roofs are mostly reddish-brown plain clay tiles with a few in natural grey slates. Brick detailing at the eaves is commonplace and the roofs have mostly ridge-mounted chimneys at their gabled ends. Window and door apertures are more cambered than flat headed, and the white painted timber frames are set flush with the wall face. There is good survival of architectural features; the most noticeable exception being the unsympathetic use of uPVC gutters and downpipes.

Wyre Hill shows similar stages of evolutionary growth to that of the town, from medieval to Georgian and Victorian. It shares similarities with Welch Gate, particularly in the way the road and pavements have been formed to rest on the steep gradients

3.16 Landmarks, Focal Points and Special Features

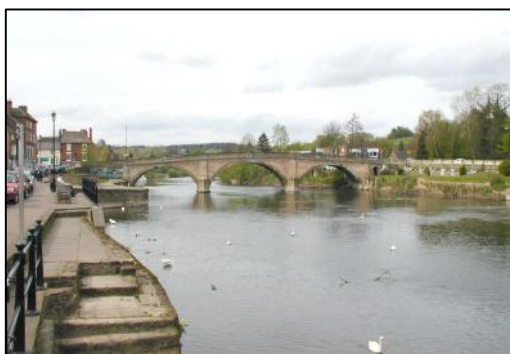
There are numerous landmarks, focal points and special features within and adjoining the Area, which are important in conservation terms, including the following:

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.

The River Severn and surrounding elevated ground form natural landmarks within and adjoining the Area. Man-made landmarks include the following:

- The full lengths of the Severnside frontages, the central bridge, quaysides, and buildings at Beale's Corner, all of which have collective value as landmarks.



Central bridge and quayside on the south west bank

- St. Anne's Church in Load Street.
- Hill top buildings and their settings, including Tickenhill, Kateshill House, The Summer House and Winterdyne (outside Area).
- Particularly important buildings in larger groups, including as follows:
 - Load Street: Town Hall, Nos. 14, 15 (HSBC) & 17, George Hotel, 70 & 71.
 - High Street: No. 11 (Redfern) & 62 (Manor House).
 - Lower Park: No. 1 (The Rectory) & 15 (Lower Park House).
- Severn Valley Steam Railway viaduct over Kidderminster Road and Black Boy Hotel.



Viaduct over the Kidderminster Road

- All Saints Church (Wribbenhall) outside the Area but comprising an important gateway feature.

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 because they are particularly noticeable to the public.

It is difficult to isolate individual sites or buildings within an area so rich in interest and appeal but they include the following:

- The full lengths of the Load Street and Severnside frontages, the bridge, and Beale's Corner; all of which have collective value as focal points.
- Queen Elizabeth II Gardens and the car parks behind Load Street and Lax Lane.
- Individual buildings, including St. Anne's Church & No. 15 (HSBC), Town Hall & Museum, Load Street; Nos. 42 & 62 (Manor House) High Street; Nos. 7 & 8, Lower Park; the Railway Viaduct over Kidderminster Road, and Nos. 34 & 35 Kidderminster Road.



*Load Street seen from the central bridge,
with the landmarks and focal points
of HSBC (left of centre)
and St. Anne's Church (right of centre)*

- Outdoor market to the rear of Load Street, which becomes a focal point by virtue of associated public activity on market days.

Many other smaller buildings act as focal points where they terminate, line or close view lines, particularly looking along roads, pathways and in the vicinity of highways junctions.

c) Special Features:

The Area contains 267 Statutory List Entries which relate to approximately 550 statutorily listed buildings and structures; together with several other buildings and structures of interest, primarily dating from the eighteenth to early twentieth centuries. Some of the latter have been subject to unsympathetic alteration (such as replacement of windows or rendering) but none are beyond restoration, which should be considered in preference to redevelopment. Generally, every effort should be made to retain built fabric in the Area dating from the medieval period to the early twentieth century in particular.

Particularly special features include the following:

- Bridge and associated balustrades, quaysides and other river edgings.
- Range, ages, variety of period architectural detailing and period construction techniques.
- Historic street pattern of roads and footpaths, including alley ways and properties only accessible on foot, and the narrow road ways either side of St. Anne's church.
- Town plan pinched in towards the river.
- Authentic roofscape.
- Railings to the fore of many properties (for example, No. 62 High Street).
- Views to hillsides and open countryside.
- Open spaces within and adjoining the Area, and the proximity of open countryside, for example, along the river frontages; to the south of High Street, Lower Park, Winterdyne and Tickenhill; across Maypole Piece and along Northwood Lane.
- Numerous trees and hedges, including the holly hedge enclosing Tickenhill and a woodland adjoining the south east corner of the Jubilee Gardens.

Importantly, at least ten medieval buildings survive in the modern town. These are the timber-framed 15th century houses and possibly a market building on Wyre Hill; 15th century timber framed houses on Winbrook, Welch Gate, High Street, and Lax Lane; and a 14th century timber-framed hall with cross-wing on the Stourport Road. It is likely that more medieval structures may survive behind the facades of later buildings. Notably, four 15th century framed bays belonging to the medieval palace survive within the 18th century Tickenhill Manor. A medieval cross (partially reconstructed) stands in Wribbenhall on the site of the chapel built in 1719. There are several buildings dating from the 19th and early 20th centuries of interest.



No. 14, Lower Park (left) and No. 8 High Street (right); not listed but of interest

3.17 Open Space

Open spaces are areas in which there is little or no development. They can be public or private gardens and space, undeveloped hillsides, expanses of water, and street squares. The Conservation Area has many open spaces, large and small, which appear through archways, over walls, up rising slopes and between buildings. Open spaces give breaks and contrast to the geometric form of buildings; often contain trees which add further interest and seating from which various views of the area can be enjoyed. They may provide important components of the Area's setting where they abut boundaries or read in important view lines and vistas. The principal areas of open space the following:

- a) Queen Elizabeth II Silver Jubilee Gardens and woodland adjoining its south east corner.
- b) River bank adjoining Severnside South (north-west end), the central bridge (including bandstand) and Gardeners Meadow car park, the first and last both within and extending beyond the existing boundary of the Conservation Area.
- c) Cricket pitch and adjoining riverside meadows to the south east of Gardeners Meadow car park, extending beyond the existing boundary of the Conservation Area.
- d) Red Hill and Winterdyne parkland to the south east, within and extending beyond the existing boundary of the Conservation Area.
- e) Kates Hill and parkland, within and extending beyond the existing boundary of the Conservation Area.
- f) Tickenhill, including land to the south west, south and south east within and extending beyond the existing boundary of the Conservation Area.
- g) Hill sides adjoining Winbrook and Cleobury Road, within and extending beyond the existing boundary of the Conservation Area.
- h) Land adjoining Gibraltar House (Dowles Road).
- i) Riverside Meadows extending north west from Severnside North (north west bank of River) beyond the existing boundary of the Conservation Area.
- j) Boundary along the western side of dog Lane car park.
- k) Riverside Meadows and bowling green off Riverside North (north east bank of the River) extending beyond the existing boundary of the Conservation Area.
- l) Hillside and top in the vicinity of the Summer House and Gloucester Way in Wribbenhall.
- m) Lychgate Gardens off Westbourne Street and the Stourport Road in Wribbenhall.



Lychgate Gardens in Wribbenhall

- n) Maypole Piece in Wribbenhall, including the hill and hillside and undeveloped gap between All Saints Church and the petrol filling station.
- o) River bank to the fore of Beales Corner, and Millside Court through to Bewdley High School (north east side of the River) both within and extending beyond the existing boundary of the Conservation Area.

- p) Wooded area adjoining the north east side of the central bridge land arches at Beales Corner.
- q) Numerous private gardens and undeveloped plots (not all highlighted on map) but including the extensive garden surrounding the Rectory in Lower Park.

It is particularly important to retain the above areas free from built development and structures. It would be desirable to investigate the potential for a public access route to, and view-point seating on the top of, Maypole Piece.

3.18 Ground Surfaces

There are four basic surfaces across the Area and each has a significant impact upon its quality and character, as follows:

- a) Modern tarmac is by far the most common surfacing material for roads and pavements in the Area. This material is historically and visually inappropriate. It appears as a weak to medium grey depending upon being dry or wet respectively. It gives little relief or visual texture.
- b) A short stretch of old moulded blue clay setts (criss-cross pattern) survives along the eastern end of the Racks (parallel to Winbrook) and limited numbers of old cut stone setts or cobbles survive to the fore of both the Town Hall, and Phipps and Pritchard (Load Street) and in the wagon entrance to No. 21 Load Street. Limited areas of uncut pebbles/cobbles survive in parts of High Street and to the fore of Nos. 1 to 9 Kidderminster Road (off the vehicular highway). Traditional style paving materials in the form of grey square slabs have been extensively incorporated into Load Street, although their regularity of size and texture lacks historic authenticity. In Severnside North, modern semi-traditional style road setts (Marshall Tegula) and riven stone paving slabs were installed by the County Council during the 1990's. Occasionally, kerbs are defined with traditional stone edging but for the most part they are of incongruous pre-cast concrete. In some parts of High Street the modern tarmac has broken away to expose older edging gutters in cut stone.



*Traditional moulded setts (left) cut stone setts or cobbles (centre)
and uncut pebbles or cobbles (right)*

- c) Some properties incorporate traditional style metal railings to their fore, whilst in other cases traditional style railings enclose or delineate other spaces and features.



*Traditional railings
to the fore of a house in High Street (top left) and in Westbourne Street (top right)
and traditional style railings adjoining the River (bottom)*

- d) Grass appears in small gardens and extensive communal areas throughout the Area. The smaller patches add to the texture and colour of the Area. In the larger communal areas, the grass covering goes further and softens the total domination of surfaces by man's intervention. It does this in two ways, firstly by being irregular through its natural process of growth and then mowing. Secondly, by following uneven contours and shapes it creates further ways to contrast buildings and roads and to put them into a perspective of scale.
- e) Water occurs in the substantial expanse of the central River and in an ornamental pool in the Jubilee Gardens. It adds considerable interest to the Area, with its changing colours and reflections, and as a focal point for visual attention. It is important to consider any forms of development, which are in positions likely to cause reflection, with the conscious awareness of how their image in inverted duplication will add to or harm the Area's appearance.

3.19 Tranquil and Active Areas

The Conservation Area includes several tranquil and active areas as follows.

Tranquillity is the peace of a place where the noises, smells and views of human mechanical activity do not intrude to a noticeable degree. It is particularly important to retain the tranquil character of such areas.

Tranquil areas include the following:

- a) Queen Elizabeth II Silver Jubilee Gardens and backland plots to the rear of Load Street, Severnside South, Lax Lane and High Street (and Lower Park).
- b) Network of backland plots, footpaths and open land to the south west of High Street and Lower Park, and south of Tickenhill, including the following:
 - Park Alley and the footpaths leading up from there to Tickenhill and open countryside.
 - Footpath on the south east slopes of Tickenhill.
 - Footpath leading west from the bottom of Red Hill.
- b) Lychgate Gardens in Wribbenhall.
- c) Parts of the footpath running parallel to the north side of Winbrook and Cleobury Road.

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

The active parts are those covered by patterns of movement (refer Vehicular Movement) and where focal points exist. The most active areas are as follows:

- a) The main roads and pavements where frequent vehicular and pedestrian movements occur, including the Kidderminster Road, River bridge, Load Street, Severnside South, Welch Gate and Winbrook, and the car parks off Dog Lane. In these areas, the noise and fumes of vehicular traffic are generally environmental detractors.

In Welch Gate, Winbrook, High Street, and either side of St. Annes Church in Load Street, the narrowness of the pedestrian pavement means vehicular traffic can become a danger to pedestrians; although little can be done about the carriageway widths in these locations, the narrowness of which is an important component of the Area's character.

- f) Open air market between Dog Lane and Load Street.
- c) The Silver Jubilee Gardens which because they are only accessible on foot but are popular with locals and tourists, are both tranquil (car free and free of ball games) and active (with a high seasonal footfall).

3.20 Noise

There are several types of noise and sources of noise within the Area. Detracting noises include the following:

- a) The noise of motorised vehicles. This noise is worst along the Kidderminster Road, Beale's Corner, central bridge, Load Street, Welch Gate and Winbrook, and the car parks off Dog Lane. In these areas, the noise of vehicular traffic are environmental detractors but because of the necessity to bring traffic through the town centre, it is inevitable that this type of noise occurs and will continue to make its presence known.
- b) Late night music is heard from some of the public houses in the Area. Those from where music occasionally intrudes into the adjoining residential domain include in High Street associated with the Talbot Public House and the Little Packhorse Public House.

The more acceptable and characteristic sounds within the Area include the following:

- a) Bird song within the outer areas, Silver Jubilee Gardens and adjoining woodlands, and private rear gardens.
- b) Calls of geese, swans, ducks and gulls along and over the river.
- c) Human conversation on the streets and along the riverside walks.
- d) Church bells that chime the hour and quarter.
- e) Whistles and sounds of steam trains as they depart and arrive at the Severn Valley Steam Railway station in Wribbenhall.

3.21 Smells

Unwelcome smells within the Area include the following:

- a) Fumes from vehicular traffic, particularly along the Kidderminster Road, Beale's Corner, central bridge, Load Street, Welch Gate and Winbrook, and the car parks off Dog Lane. In these areas, the fumes of vehicular traffic are environmental detractors.
- b) Cooking smells from restaurants and food take away premises in Load Street and Welch Gate. Extractor fans and ducting usually positioned on the rear elevations of such premises often comprise particularly incongruous and unwelcome features. Most are finished with a bright silver colour that should at the very least be repainted brick red or black.

3.22 Alien Features

Alien features are those which post-date the last dominant architectural style in the Area by way of their invention, design or construction. Features considered to be alien to the Area include the following:

- a) Lampposts, pedestrian crossing lights, bus shelters and railings of unsympathetic style and finish.



Unsympathetic lamp post (left) and bus stop (right) in Load Street

- b) Traffic signage and clutter (often too large and too many) for example, yellow parking directional signs at either end of the central bridge.
- c) Tarmacadam pavements and road surfacing, and yellow road markings (cream would be more acceptable).

- d) Overhead telephone wires, for example, in Lax Lane and Welch Gate. In addition, there is one unsympathetic metal telegraph pole in Westbourne Street.
- e) Modern telephone boxes, for example, adjoining the Load Street car park.
- f) Satellite dishes.
- g) Unsympathetic architectural products and materials, including, uPVC windows and doors, standard DIY doors, concrete window cills and headers, Velux type roof lights, and pointing with concrete mortar instead of traditional lime mortar.
- h) Inappropriate shop fronts, fascias and windows, particularly in Load Street.
- i) Fixtures and fittings bolted or screwed to brickwork, leaving permanent disfigurement to the fabric of buildings.
- j) Painted brickwork and woodwork painted in inappropriate colours.

3.23 Enhancement Sites

Areas and features that would benefit from enhancement include the following:

- a) Car park between Load Street and Dog Lane.
- b) South west facing elevations of late 20th century three storey town houses in Millside Court (Nos. 1, 2, 20 & 21) that adjoin the east bank of the River and are particularly prominent in the view looking from the opposite bank along Severnside South. The design profile and detailing, and colours of the walls and garage doors do not read sympathetically with the designs and colouring of nearby traditional buildings. In addition, several willow trees have been removed from the adjoining riverbank, making the buildings more visible and leading to unsightly exposure and erosion of topsoil and loss of ground vegetation.



*Riverside elevations
of Millside Court, Wribbenhall.
Note also the significant loss of riverside trees
and exposure of soil*

- c) Unsympathetic shop fronts, including the following:
 - No.16 (HSBC) Load Street: unsympathetic ground floor windows, brickwork and entablature course. Desirable to instate two doors (possibly artificial) with classical doorcases and pediments into two of the existing window openings, instate glazing bars and rubbed gauge headers to the windows, and replacement of the brickwork to more closely match the original.



*Unsympathetic alterations to the ground floor
of HSBC in Load Street*

- No. 40 (Hairdresser) Load Street: unsympathetic flat roof installed during 1950's. Desirable to reinstate a pitched tiled roof.
- No. 49 (Jackson's Butcher) Load Street: unsympathetic blue glazed tiles to shop front and red plastic blind (also with unsympathetically placed front lettering). Desirable to reinstate traditional style shop front and blind (without lettering).
- Nos. 50 & 51 (CoOp) Load Street: unsympathetic style shop fronts and advertising or blanking at back of window. Desirable to reinstate traditional style shop front.
- No. 50 Load Street: unsympathetic alterations to first floor Venetian window. Desirable to reinstate original style sashes and glazing bars to Venetian window.
- No. 54 (Bobbetts): unsympathetic shop front and deteriorating condition of facade. Desirable to reinstate traditional style shop front and restore facade.
- No. 57 (Bewdley Kebab) and 58 (Spar) Load Street: unsympathetic and recessed shop fronts. Desirable to reinstate traditional style front mounted shop front.
- No. 65 (Blunts Shoes) Load Street: unsympathetically coloured, sized and styled wording on fascia. Desirable to replace with more sympathetic hand painted wording.
- No. 1 (Mallards Café) Severnside South: unsympathetic ground floor shop front, painted brickwork and design of first floor canted windows and unsympathetic plastic door canopy (lower right). Desirable to reinstate a traditional style shop front, cornices to the canted windows, and to remove the plastic door canopy.

In addition to the enhancement of specific locations and features referred to above, the character of the Area would benefit from having various tarmacadam surfaces and concrete kerbs replaced with more sympathetic materials; together with the installation of more sympathetic lampposts, street signage poles, roadside railings, and bus stops; and reduction of overhead cabling.

3.24 Neutral Sites

A neutral area is defined as 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, then any proposals for its further development should be either:

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

Ideally with neutral areas it would be the more appropriate course of action would to remove the offending feature or features altogether and replace them with structures of appropriate scale, design and appearance consistent with the character of the Conservation Area. If this course is to be considered then care has to be taken to ensure that an uncharacteristic feature is not in itself an important remnant of the Area's history which despite its location should be retained.

Neutral sites include the following:

- a) Texaco Petrol filling station and shop, Kidderminster Road.



*Texaco petrol filling station and shop,
Kidderminster Road*

- b) Lock-up garages to the rear of Police Station, Kidderminster Road.
- c) Fire Station, hose drying tower, Library and Medical Centre, between Load Street and Dog Lane (unsympathetic late 20th century buildings and structures).



*Library and fire station
between Load Street and Dog Lane*

- d) Extensions to the north east corner of St. George's Hall (Load Street) and Lavatories to the rear of No. 69 Load Street (unsympathetic late 20th century buildings).



*Extension to St. George's Hall (left)
and lavatories to the rear of No. 69 Load Street (right)*

- e) Telephone exchange, Dowles Road, and in particular the north east facing mono pitch roof, dark brickwork, uncharacterful fenestration and satellite dish.



Telephone Exchange in Dowles Road

- f) Unsympathetic twentieth century dwellings in Maypole Close and Telford Drive (adjoining the Conservation Area but in sensitive locations); and Park Close, Kidderminster Road (Nos. 27 to 33) and No. 63a High Street (within the Conservation Area and in sensitive locations).



*Late twentieth century dwellings
in Maypole Close,
viewed from the Severn Valley Steam Railway Station*

- g) Bridge House and adjoining commercial buildings in Riverside North. (Adjoining the Conservation Area but in a prominent position).



Bridge House adjoining the central bridge

3.25 Condition of Buildings and Structures

Most buildings and structures within the Conservation Area are in good or fair condition. A few buildings and structures are in poor or very bad condition, or otherwise require urgent attention. These include the following:

- a) No. 3, Beale's Corner: a vacant timber framed dwelling in a location prone to seasonal flooding.
- b) Old Workhouse, rear No. 63 High Street:
A substantial vacant three storey building. A sympathetic conversion to another use (possibly workshops or craft studios) retaining the open plan nature of the upper floors may facilitate restoration.



Vacant Old Workhouse in High Street

- c) Outbuildings (possibly former washhouse and bakery) rear 14 & 15 High Street.



Outbuildings to the rear of Nos. 14 & 15, High Street

- d) Nos. 2 & 3, Severnside South: water goods require unblocking (annually due to pigeons) and woodwork requires restoration and painting.
- e) Central bridge: The principal balustrades and balustrades extending to the fore of Beales Corner are subject to intermittent damage from vehicles and gradual weathering. Some stone piers to the metal part of the balustrade have been restored using unsympathetic materials, including non-stone coping and concrete footings. The stone work to the land arches (north side) adjoining Beales corner is in need of restoration.

4.0 CONCLUSION

Bewdley Conservation Area has considerable architectural and historic interest. The town's origins as a principal crossing point of the River Severn during medieval times and as an inland port established it as a thriving centre for trade, which continued until the late 18th and early 19th centuries. Its prosperity is reflected in many buildings, particularly those constructed during the late middle ages and Georgian periods; which have stamped a clear and unmistakable character on the town, and generally comprise a clear lead for new development to follow. The construction of the railway station during the mid. 19th century brought Victorian architectural influences, particularly to parts of Wribbenhall.

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 BEWDLEY
CONSERVATION AREA**

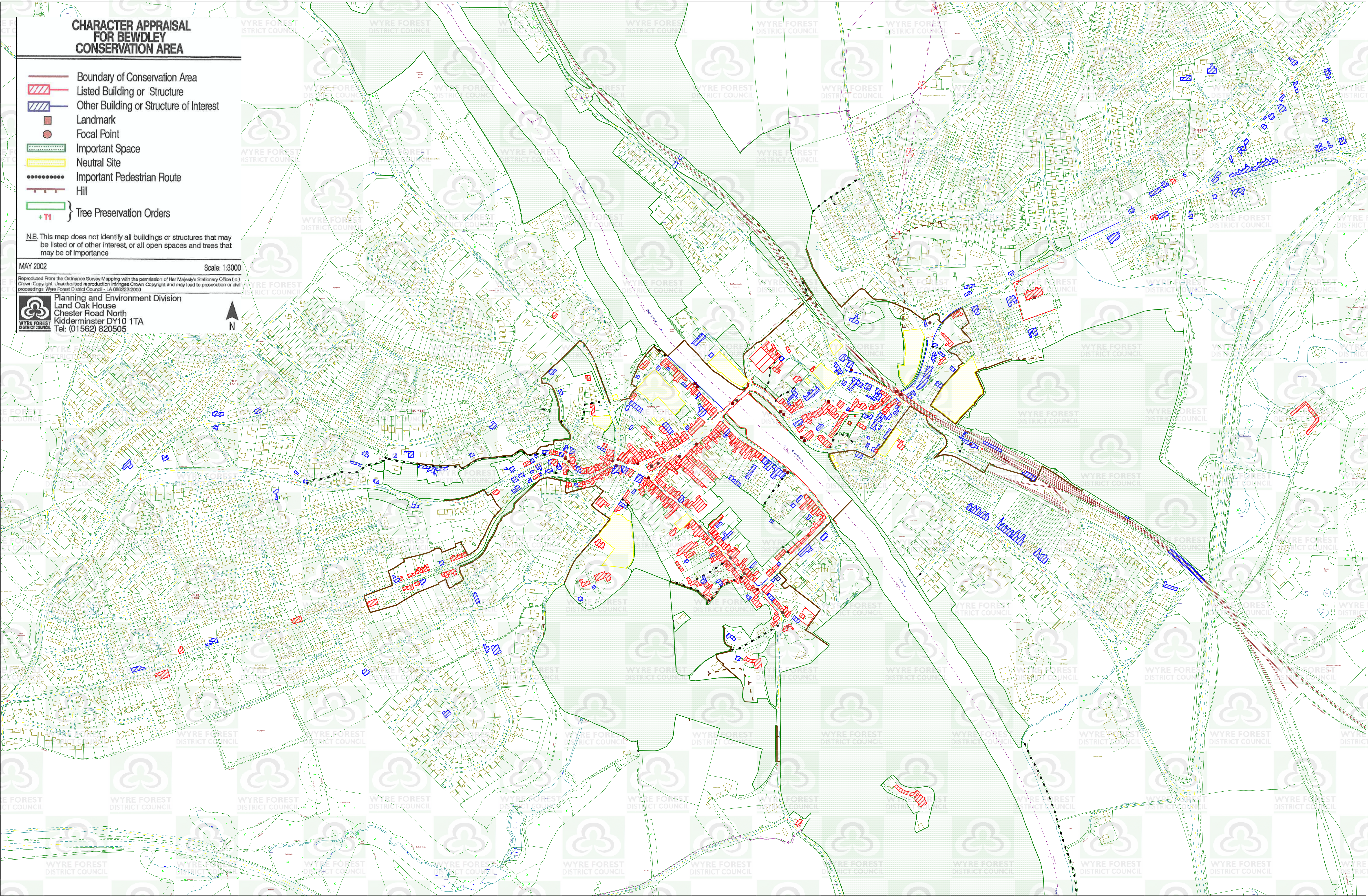
- Boundary of Conservation Area
- Listed Building or Structure
- Other Building or Structure of Interest
- Landmark
- Focal Point
- Important Space
- Neutral Site
- Important Pedestrian Route
- Hill
- Tree Preservation Orders

NE. This map does not identify all buildings or structures that may be listed or of other interest, or all open spaces and trees that may be of importance

MAY 2002 Scale: 1:3000

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