



STAFFORDSHIRE & WORCESTERSHIRE CANAL CONSERVATION AREA

MANAGEMENT PLAN



May 2007

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The Conservation Area Character Appraisal provides an evaluation of the Area's qualities and significances. The purpose of the Management Plan is to present proposals that, in addition to managing change, will also preserve and enhance the Area. The Character Appraisal and the Management Plan should therefore be read in conjunction with each other.

Local Authorities are required from time to time to prepare and undertake schemes to preserve and enhance the character or appearance of Conservation Areas, and the District Council will undertake such schemes as resources permit. Individual and joint schemes with landowners, developers and statutory undertakers will be encouraged where feasible and appropriate.

2.0 LEGISLATIVE AND POLICY FRAMEWORK

Section 71 (1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, requires Local Planning Authorities to formulate and publish proposals for the preservation and enhancement of any parts of their area which are Conservation Areas.

Planning Policy Guidance Note 15 (PPG15) *Planning and the Historic Environment* gives further guidance on Conservation Areas and clarifies the legal responsibilities of both owners of properties within the Conservation Area, and the Local Authorities.

English Heritage published new guidance on Conservation Area Appraisals and the Management of Conservation Areas in August 2005. This Management Plan has been prepared with regard to the guidance. A Public Consultation was carried out between January and February 2007 on this document.

The Conservation Area Appraisal, the Management Proposals, and the Boundary Review will be subject to a review, through the rolling programme of Appraisals within the District.

3.0 MANAGEMENT PROPOSALS

The Canal is a major environmental and recreational asset of the District. It has a vital role as a tourist attraction for visitors as boat users, walkers, cyclists and anglers. It also provides an important means of accessing the wider attractive countryside for the residents of Stourport on Severn, Kidderminster, Wolverley and Cookley. In addition the whole canal is designated as a Special Wildlife Site in recognition of its importance for nature conservation. Furthermore, several Sites of Special Scientific Interest lie abutting the boundary of the Conservation Area, including the River Stour Flood Plain, Wilden Marsh and Meadows, and Puxton Marsh. Other Special Wildlife Sites exist adjacent to the canal, namely Puxton Marsh and Caunsall Marsh.

The canal system requires careful and sensitive management to ensure increasing visitor numbers do not adversely impact on the special character of the Area and the its environmental quality.

Fortunately the majority of the Area is controlled and managed by British Waterways who have ensured the preservation of the canal and its infrastructure, whilst enhancing its wider leisure role for both the local communities and visitors to the area. The District Council will continue to liaise and work with British Waterways to ensure that the special character of the Area is maintained.

3.1 *Buildings/ Structures*

Many of the buildings within the Area were originally related to the canal through their function. Other types of buildings within or adjacent to the Area are often industrial in their origins. These all form an essential part of the character, appearance, and history of the Area, whether abutting the Area, or lying within it.

A Buildings at Risk Survey (a survey identifying the condition of Listed Buildings, and their occupancy, to identify buildings that are considered by the Local Authority as being “at risk” through neglect and decay, or vulnerable to becoming so) encompassing Stourport-on-Severn and Kidderminster was undertaken during the summer of 2005.

Proposals:

- The District Council will complete the “Buildings at Risk” survey for the remainder of the Area (i.e. the area to the north of Wolverley Court Lock). Follow-up action in respect of buildings that are deemed to be “at risk” will be undertaken.
- The buildings/structures identified in the Area Appraisal to be of local interest will be included, where appropriate, onto the Wyre Forest District Council’s ‘Local List’, if not already done so.
- Development within the Conservation Area, or which affects its settings, or views into or out of the Area, will not be permitted unless it includes detailed plans and preserves or enhances, and otherwise harmonises with the special character and appearance of the Area. In considering how development meets the above, particular regard will be paid to the Conservation Area Appraisal.

3.2 *Trees, greenery and green spaces*

Trees and hedges play a vitally important part in the setting of the Conservation Area. As well as adding colour variation and interest to the Area throughout the year they assist in softening the urban landscape and maintaining the rural character of the Area. The District Council will seek to preserve such trees and hedgerows, having regard to their health and condition, their effect on buildings or land, the importance of maintaining root systems, and perpetuation through replanting. Importantly, where it is proposed to fell, top or lop a tree not protected by a Tree Preservation Order, in a Conservation Area, six weeks advance notice must be given to the District Council.

Proposal:

- If proposed works to trees not covered by Tree Preservation Orders is deemed by the District Council, as being unjustified or unreasonable, or the Local Authority learns of other potential adverse effects, it will consider making a Tree Preservation Order to protect those trees to be impacted by the proposed works.

3.3 *Setting and Views*

The views into and out of the Area range from rural, semi rural to urban. These are important in the creation of the character and appearance of the Conservation Area, and should be protected, and development monitored to ensure that they do not detract from the character of the Area.

Proposal:

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

3.4 *Illumination*

The lack of illumination throughout the majority of the area assists in retaining the character of the Area. Poor quality lighting, whether on development sites, or on highways, will have a detrimental impact on the character, setting and appearance of the Area, and should be considered carefully prior to any implementation of lighting schemes.

Proposals:

- Within and adjoining the Conservation Area, Wyre Forest District Council will work with Highways partners in preserving the special character and appearance of the Area through the appropriate use and design of highway street lighting, as and when this is to be replaced.
- Any new developments abutting the Conservation Area, where public lighting is proposed, must consider the impact of lighting on the Area. The District Council will ensure the quality of any such schemes, through the Planning process.

3.5 *Hard landscaping/street furniture*

Both hard landscaping and “street” furniture, such as benches, finger posts, etc, all have an important part to play in retaining, enhancing and preserving the special character and appearance of the Area. Inappropriate materials and design can have a detrimental impact on the character and appearance of the Area.

Proposals:

- The District Council will work with County Council partners to ensure that highway works, abutting the Area, preserve or enhance the special character and appearance of the Area.

- Where new proposals for hard landscaping, and the replacement of “street” furniture within the Area are submitted, the District Council will work with partners, including British Waterways, to ensure that all hard landscaping and “street” furniture within the Area, preserves or enhances the special character and appearance of the Area.

3.5 *Alien/Negative Features*

Alien and negative features have a detrimental impact on the character, appearance and setting of the Area. Often this cannot be rectified immediately, but through considerate long-term planning, these can often be removed, and be replaced with more sympathetic features.

Proposal:

- Alien and negative features will be identified within the Character Appraisal, and consideration will be given to replacing these, where-ever possible, as resources allow, or encouraging their replacement. This may be through the planning process, and particular regard will be given to the existing Character Appraisal when considering the design, colour and principle of such replacements.

3.6 *Pattern and Movement*

The canal’s industrial usage is now minimal, if existing at all, and has been replaced with leisure and tourism based activities, including boating, walking, fishing and cycling. However, these activities should not detract from the character and appearance of the Area.

Proposals:

- The District Council will work with partners to ensure that the pedestrian and cycle access along the Canal towpath is retained, and is kept to a reasonable standard.
- Where sites are proposed for development adjacent to the Canal, the District Council will seek to secure the funding of appropriate improvements to the canal towpath.
- The District Council will work with partners, including British Waterways, to ensure that private moorings are in keeping with the character and appearance of the canal.

3.7 *Nature Conservation*

The canal corridor, and much of its surroundings, in particular through the more rural parts of the District, are important resources for indigenous fauna and flora. These need to be identified and protected wherever possible.

Proposals:

- Where development which may have an adverse effect on an area considered to be of importance to nature conservation is proposed, this will not be permitted, unless there proposals outweigh the importance and value of the nature conservation of the site, and that there are no other reasonable alternative means of meeting the need for the development.
- Through their Biodiversity Action Plan, British Waterways have committed to surveying sections of the canal for otters, creating reptile hibernaculars, and encouraging wildflower verges through appropriate mowing regimes.