



Forest of Dean District Council  
Supplementary Planning Document  
**Blakeney & Awre  
Character Appraisal**

Adopted March 13th 2008

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Fig 1.

## The purpose of the Character Appraisal

The statutory definition of a conservation area is 'an area of special architectural or historical interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance.' Section 71 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 places a duty on local planning authorities to formulate and publish proposals for designated conservation areas. This requirement is expanded on in government guidance.

This document is also written to support the wider policies for the historic environment stated in the adopted Forest of Dean District Council Local Plan 2005. Character Appraisals will ultimately fit with the new Supplementary Planning Guidance for the historic environment.

A conservation area appraisal is undertaken to reflect the special character and appearance of the settlement and built heritage at the time of the survey, whilst the historical background is important it is not the principle aim of the document.

As Awre and Blakeney are existing conservation areas the additional planning controls over whether certain development needs planning permission already exist. These controls do not alter because a Character Appraisal is produced. However the Character Appraisal will clearly identify the features or aspects of special architectural or historical interest that should be preserved or enhanced when development is proposed. However there are no plans for additional controls on the replacement of windows and doors in the conservation area.

Where a property is listed but is on the edge of a conservation area, it is not always the case that it will be included in the conservation area, as listing affords the property a higher level of protection than being in a conservation area would. Guy Hall in Awre is such an example. See Fig 1.

The purpose of the document is not intended to inhibit new development or modern design but it should give guidelines to improve the quality of new build.

## Best Value Performance Indicators

Recently the percentage of up to date and completed character appraisals has become a Best Value Performance Indicator; the indicators are used to determine the effectiveness of a local authority. It is therefore important that the Forest of Dean has an increasing number of up to date adopted Character Appraisals.

## Target Audience

This document has been written as an aid to determining planning applications and for residents, agencies and people with a general interest in the area. It is hoped that through the analysis of the area the elements that produce its special character will be clearly identified. Once the special character has been established any new development that is permitted can be designed to fit in harmoniously or contribute to the conservation area and the special character of the village.

## Process

A Character Appraisal is written to establish the characteristics that make up the value of Conservation Area designation. The assessment process includes a review of the existing boundaries, whether they are appropriate, and any possible modifications that could be made. The process of adopting a character appraisal has a number of stages; the draft document is the subject of a public consultation. The local community and residents within the villages are consulted, as are a number of interested local and national organisations.

All the comments received during the consultation period are considered and any amendments made, a final draft is then produced. This document is formally considered by members of the Forest of Dean District Council and if approved it is then formally adopted.

Awre and Blakeney are both within the same parish. Because of their close historic associations and closeness geographically these two settlements have been incorporated into one document.

Awre Conservation area is small and not under any significant threat from development, however there is pressure within the settlement of Blakeney and there is a need for affordable housing.

Awre is classed as being in the 'Open Countryside', however Blakeney has a defined settlement boundary.

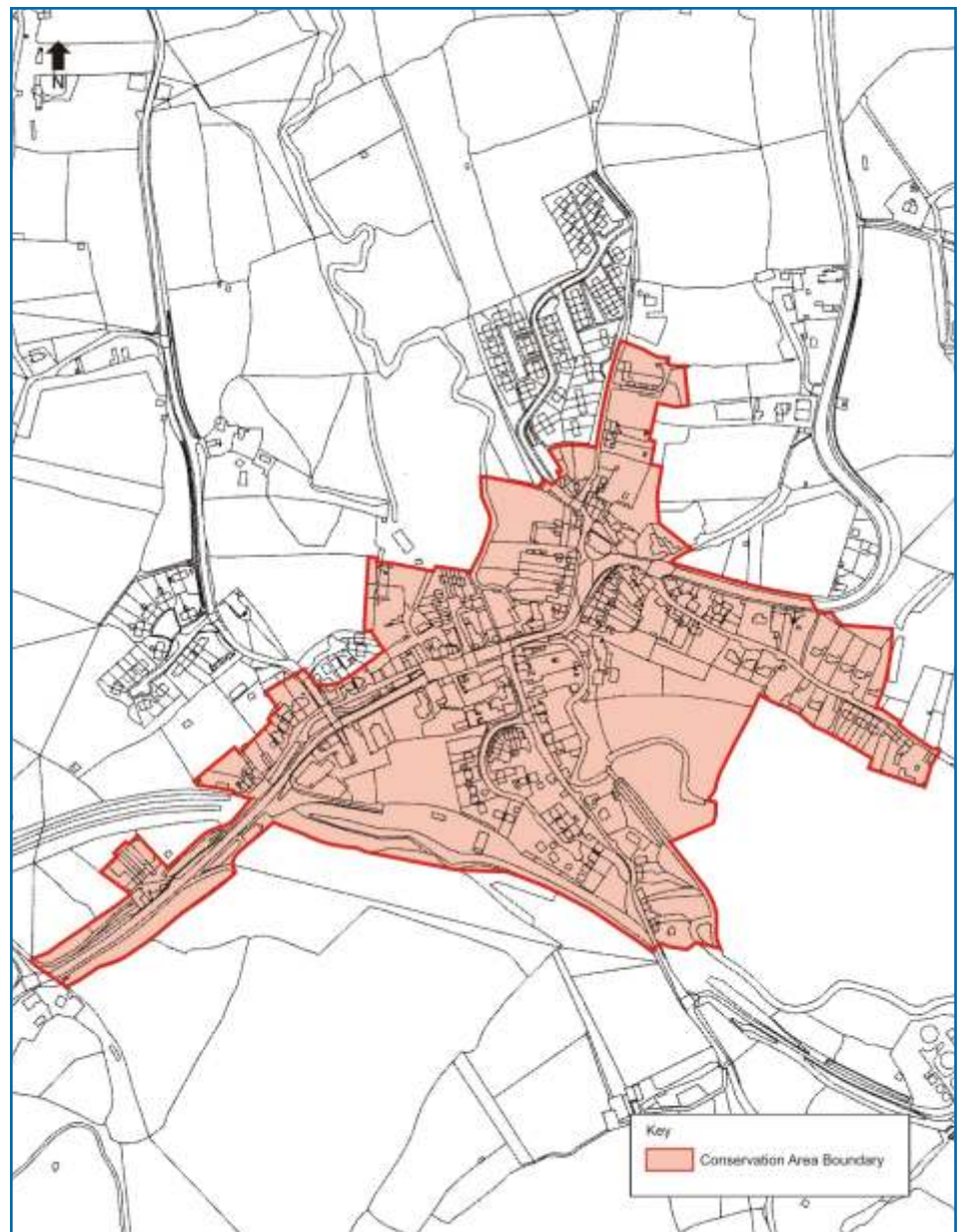


# Blakeney Conservation Area

Originally designated as a conservation area on 8th November 1979, this Character Appraisal and the revised boundaries was adopted as a Supplementary Planning Document on 13th March 2008 and supersedes all previous versions. The area covers approximately 18.45 hectares, (45.59 acres).

There are 27 listed buildings currently within the conservation area.

For avoidance of doubt, where the boundary of the conservation area is shown on a wall, fence, hedgerow, tree line or other means of enclosure, it shall be deemed to be included within the conservation area.



## Evolution of area

### Historic Development of the Village

Archaeological evidence confirms the presence of an early Romano-British settlement in the area as early as the 1st century AD. It is thought that the settlement developed along the stretch of Roman road that ran through the area, a major route between Gloucester and Caerleon.

The village is not mentioned in the Domesday book but by the 12th Century a licence to forge was granted to Thomas de Blakencia. Either the village then took the name from the family or vice versa, however in later references a John de Blakeney (who's origins were in Gloucestershire) was granted a manor in Norfolk. Samuel Rudder's New History of Gloucestershire suggests that the village may have been the lost village of 'Pontune' mentioned in Domesday because of the bridges that crossed over the brooks.

The settlement continued to grow. Expansion came with the 19th Century and the industrialisation of the Forest and the railways. The village had a number of important breweries and was surrounded by orchards providing fruit, particularly the famous 'Blakeney Red' Perry pear.

The Church has always been of modest construction, first recorded in 1551 as a chapel attached to the Parish Church of Awre, dedicated to St Phillip and St James. By the 18th Century it was attached to an Inn known as the Bird in Hand. This was all demolished when the current building was commenced in 1820 by Samuel Hewlett. The name of the Bird in Hand was taken up by another building at the turning to the Awre road. See Fig 2.

The watercourses have also played an important part in the development of this settlement as power sources for the many mills that were once working in and around the village providing employment for the surrounding area. See Fig 3.

The Forest of Dean Central railway ran through the village with a goods yard near to Station Villas. There are important remains of the embankment and bridges relating to this line on the edge of the conservation area. See Fig 4.

In the 1950 & 60's the village increased in size due to the development of two council estates (outside the conservation area), many of these are now in private ownership as a result of the right to buy. See Fig 5.

In the 1970's the village was still a busy centre with as many as 14 local shops including two butchers, a fishmonger and greengrocer, a bakery and Butlers General Store. This has diminished to just two shops and one pub.

Today the majority of the population commute out of the area to work and although agriculture continues in the surrounding area, its scale has reduced.

### Archaeological significance

There is evidence to suggest that an early Romano-British settlement was established along a Roman road that ran through Blakeney. Various shards of



Fig 2.



Fig 3.



Fig 4.



Fig 5.





Fig 6.



Fig 7.

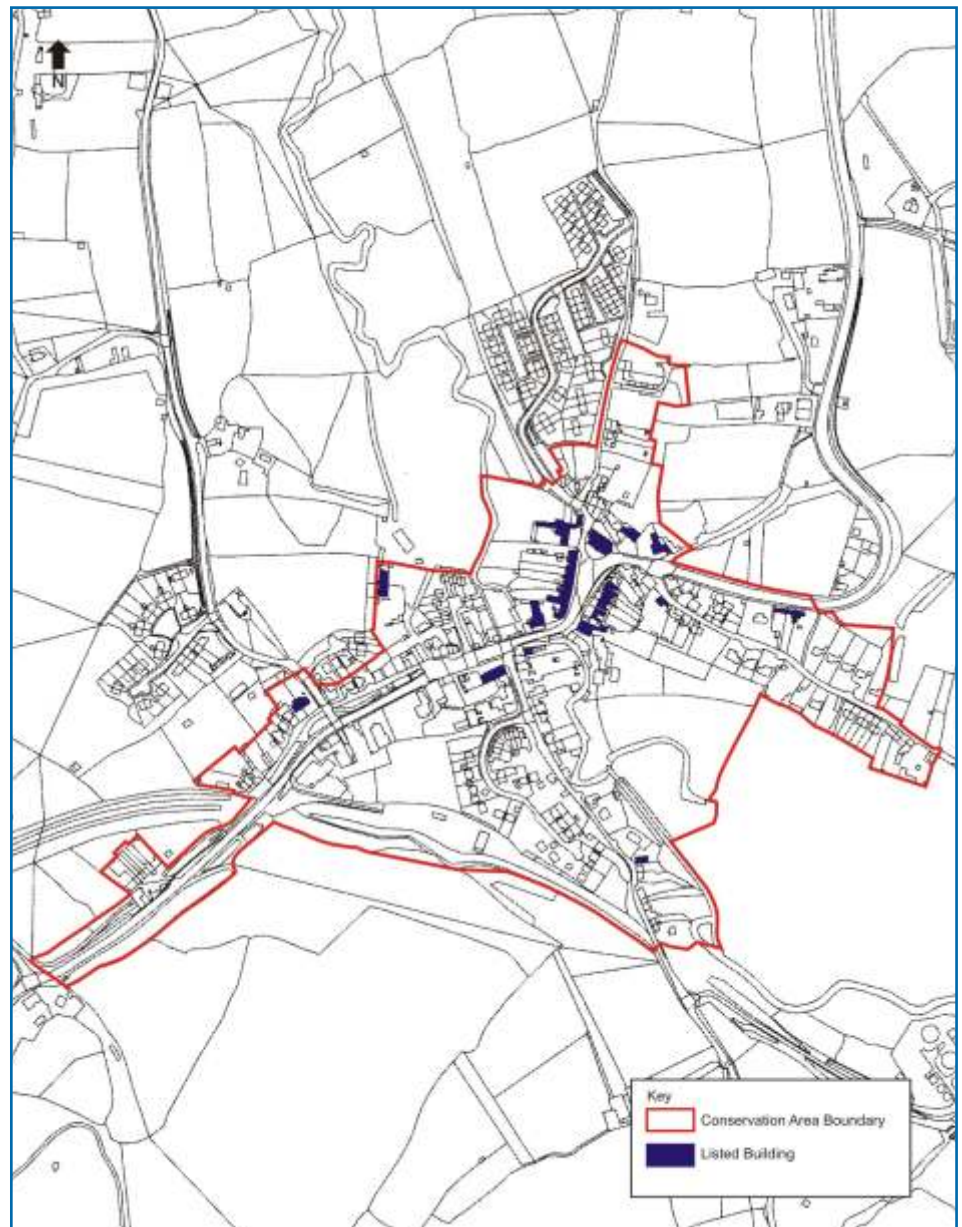
Roman pottery and numerous Roman coins have been found during building works in and around properties in the village.

Foundations of Roman buildings have also been uncovered during excavations in the village. Evidence was uncovered of stone and timber buildings, dating from around the 1st century AD until the 3rd century AD. These may have related to a substantial settlement.

During excavations where evidence of Roman occupation has been found, a number of deposits of iron slag have also been discovered, suggesting that the economy wasn't solely based on agriculture.

Archaeological evidence suggests that the Roman settlement declined in the 3rd century, as there are fewer remains for this period.

Medieval pottery has also been uncovered following excavations preceding building works in the village.



Any development within these areas could be subject to archaeological assessment following Government advice (PPG16) and consultation with the County Archaeology Service.

## Townscape Analysis

### Setting

Blakeney is set in a low valley bottom on the confluence of two brooks, the Forge brook and Blackpool brook. These join in the village to become the Bideford brook to the south east of the village. See Fig 6 on opposite page.

This would have provided an ideal crossing point along the historic route from Gloucester to Chepstow. To the northwest of the village loose encroachment settlements of small stone built cottages with steep orchards extend up over Blakeney Hill and through Furnace Bottom. More recent infill consists of larger dwellings or bungalows; this is typical of settlements on the edge of the statutory Forest.

To the southeast the village is bounded by open meadows and farmland See Fig 7 on opposite page, this distinct difference in context reflects the economic differences that have evolved in this community, in part due to its location on the borders of the industrial Forest.

### Skyline

The village is overlooked by Viney and Blakeney Hills, both well populated with traditional encroachment type cottages and field patterns See Fig 8. Pillator Hill to the south west of the village remains undeveloped. There are no long distance views from the centre of the village being in the valley bottom.

On the edges of the village, from Highfield and Lowfield, it is possible to see longer views across the village into the open countryside.

### Approaches

The main A48 trunk road cuts through the centre of the village. Travelling from the direction of Gloucester and Newnham on Severn the approach starts with a steep decent through wide curving bends into the village. To the left hand side there is a row of listed cottages that mark the start of the village. A long view down the hill is terminated by the church with a steep left hand bend into Church Square. See Fig 9.

Travelling from the Lydney direction into the village there is a more gentle approach with a gradual descent into the village, the Blackpool brook runs through a canalised channel to the left-hand side, for about 1km. It passes by the 19th Century Mill complex, with it's row of mill workers cottages. See Fig 10.

The approach from Soudley is more rural. The 3/354 (formerly the B4227) is classed as a scenic route and descends into the village between high hedges passing the Highfield Estate to the right and the Independent Chapel to the left.

### Landmarks

Approaching from the Lydney direction the first significant landmark of the village is the school on the right hand side, with the Blackpool brook running to the left, where the remains of a fish trap are still visible as a waterfall, at this point one of the leat's that runs through the village is also taken from the brook. See Fig 11.



Fig 8.



Fig 9.



Fig 10.



Fig 11.





Fig 12.



Fig 13.



Fig 14.



Fig 15.

The Baptist Chapel sits in an elevated position above the A48, although not listed this is an important landmark within the village, it was restored in 1874, this chapel still has an active congregation. See Fig 12.

As the road curves into Church Square, All Saints Church is set in the centre of the village with a dominant position. It is a 19th Century building replacing earlier chapels that served the village.

### Independent Church

This Grade II\* listed building is currently on the English Heritage Buildings at Risk list. It is significant in size, scale and date for this type of chapel. Located on the Soudley road in a prominent position overlooking the village, the chapel is currently being restored, however the setting is changing due to the increasing growth of the mature trees around it.

The School was opened in 1865. See Fig 13.

The Lynch Gates to the churchyard are late 19th Century with a stone tile roof. They are in good condition and have been recently restored by the parish council. They are subject to occasional vandalism and litter as they provided a useful shelter for young people. See Fig 14.

### Views

There are good views around the perimeter of the village of largely unaltered farmland, still farmed traditionally. There are small scale fields with many hedgerows and footpaths, at the time of the survey some of these were rather overgrown. These views form an important setting for the village

Looking out from the village it is possible to see the cottages that extend from the edges of the village on to the neighbouring hillsides and the edge of the statutory forest woodland. The tree cover changes from the small patchwork of fruit orchards to the dense tree line of the statutory forest.

### Structure

The core of the village is Church Square, though roughly triangular in shape!

Ribbon development radiates from Church Square along a number of smaller lanes with attractive stone built cottages. It extends southwards along the A48 with small groups of dwellings rather than a continuous street scene.

Outside the conservation area above the village at Lowfield is the larger and most recent 'council estate' built during the 1960s and added to in the 1970s. Some of these are in private ownership. In Church Way the stone cottages on one side of the lane face the housing estate See Fig 15. In Awre Road there is a small group of former council houses, and at Highfield is the earliest group of housing. In the majority they are well maintained with well-kept gardens.

### Hierarchy

The buildings that front on to Church Square are generally more architectural in form whilst further away from the central area they become more vernacular in style. Swan House has an elevated situation above the village on the old road towards Gloucester (now known as Swan Lane) historically this was a coaching inn, recent work suggests that this property is possibly the oldest house in the village.

## Quality of Spaces

There are key areas of open space around the Blackpool brook as it enters the village, opposite the school. In addition there is protected open space to the rear of the Yew Tree Inn adjacent to the churchyard.

The village has an excellent playing field and football ground, however this was marred by the fact that a shelter near the entrance to the ground was full of litter and waste at the time of this survey.

There are some areas of negative space, these will be dealt with under a separate heading.

## Landscape setting

### Topography

The setting of the conservation area is important in relating building styles to the surrounding countryside and local vernacular.

The landscape classification for the area is 'Undulating Farmland' as described in the Forest of Dean District Landscape Character Assessment 2002. Blakeney is an area of soft, fertile, agricultural landscape. Its soils are suited to both pastoral and arable farming, as well as orchards.

The two valleys that have been formed by the Blackpool and Soudley brooks and the steep sided hills that overlook it dominate the landform in Blakeney. The streams are generally set deep below the road surface level and have become canalised and are therefore not visible when passing through the village. See Fig 16.

The overgrown channels are a habitat for wildlife, but would benefit from clearance and management. There are numerous outcrops of Japanese Knotweed. This is a notifiable species, its veracious growth and intrusive root action can cause significant damage to walls and structures whilst the gradual build up of vegetation can trap litter, thus having a detrimental effect on the conservation area in the long term. See Fig 17.

On the edges of the conservation area as the Bideford brook passes into open countryside towards the River Severn the banks are crowded with well-established hazel and alder. In this area, behind the properties of Millend there are the remains of a system of historic leat's and channels.

There are well-established ancient hedgerows and small field patterns around the conservation area, further broken up by a network of footpaths over old stone stiles and deep hollow-ways. These are an important local feature of the landscape around Blakeney. A number of the stone stiles are listed. Some of these footpaths are being lost through lack of use and maintenance. See Fig 18.

The lower lying fields following the Soudley Valley and the meadows around Millend are populated with wild daffodils during the spring, with the deep sides of the hollow-ways providing habitat for a wide range of wild flowers and small wildlife such as stoats and weasels.



Fig 16.



Fig 17.



Fig 18.





Fig 19.



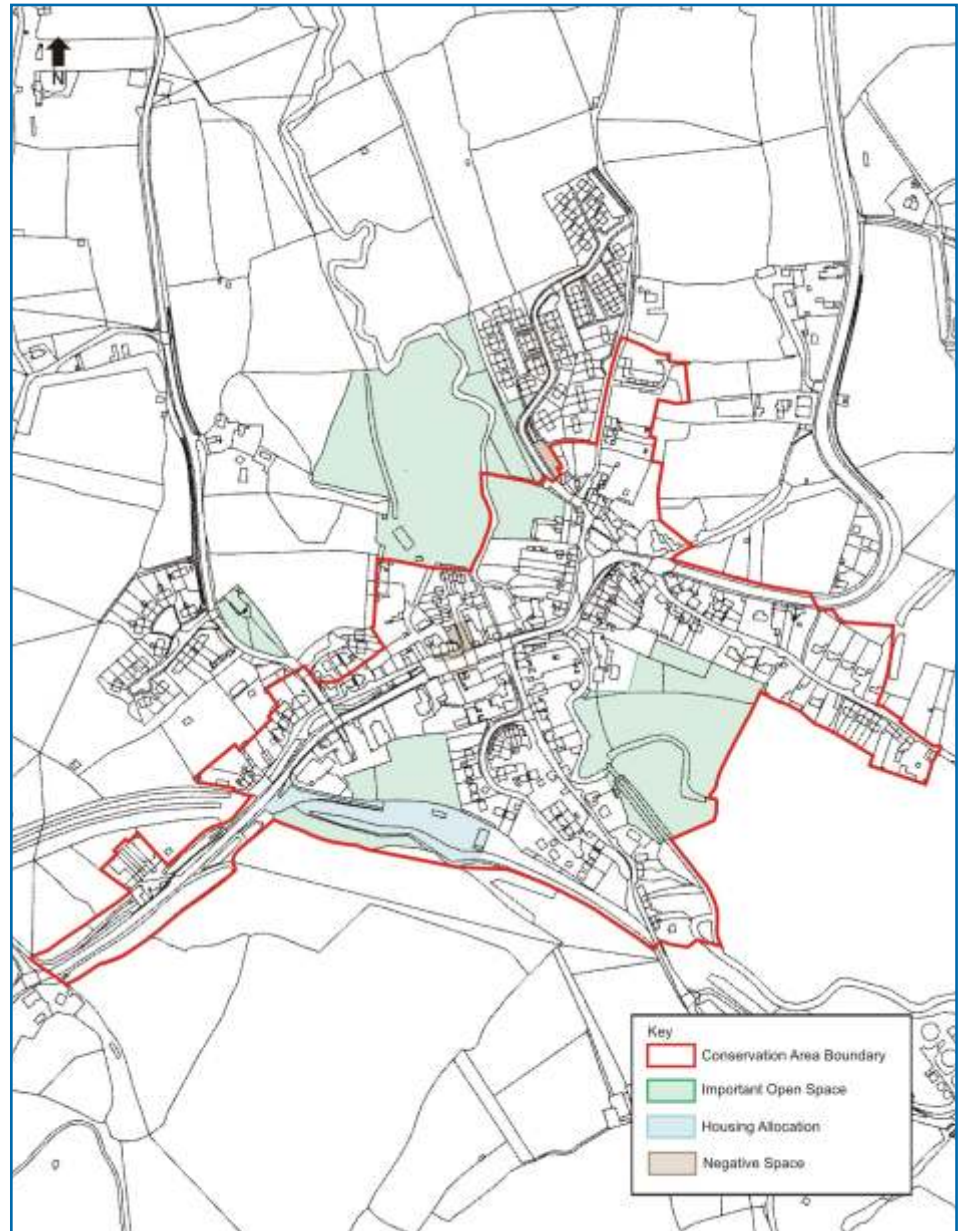
Fig 20.



Fig 21.



Fig 22.



### Church Square and Awre Road

Church Square is notable for the Georgian and Victorian town houses that dominate the square See Fig 19. Most of these are of two and a half to three storeys, and are in most cases later alterations to earlier stone built or timber framed Cottages, some of these earlier features are visible to the rear of the properties.

To the east side of the Square the street frontage is raised above the main A48. This is a continual frontage with a number of good 19th Century shop fronts remaining, particularly at the old Post Office and Hillside. Original windows remain with original glass in most cases. See Fig 20.

This side of the Square retains an unusual amount of wrought iron railings around small forecourt gardens with herbaceous plants. Chimneys have been retained and the majority of properties in the square have retained traditional twelve pane sash windows.



Many of the properties in Church Square are listed and in comparison with other dwellings within the village the listing has prevented the loss of historic fabric such as timber sash windows, porches and other visually attractive features. As a result Church Square has retained its character and attractive appearance.

The Old Vicarage originally known as Moira, looks down into Church Square from an elevated position with an ornate wrought iron gateway leading into the garden. It creates a visual stop to the end of the village at this point. See Fig 21 on opposite page.

Swan House (16th Century) is more hidden behind high walls but was historically a coaching inn positioned on the original road (Swan Lane) towards Gloucester out of the village; this is now a green lane. Swan House appears to have timber framing to the front elevation but much of this is applied and not original. To the rear, the property is substantially timber framed.

Awre road is a difficult lane to turn into off the main A48 opposite the church. The lane narrows to a pinch point just after the turning between a high stone wall and No. 1 Awre Road.

This listed building retains leaded lights with historic glass within some original wooden casements on the front elevation See Fig 22 on opposite page and has a small rear extension with a hipped roof for the staircase. There are several other examples of this design feature in the village.

Further along the road to the southern side a number of large houses were built during the 1980s, these are large and rather dominant over the more modest dwellings along this road. See Fig 23.

The materials used in the construction of these properties are not sympathetic to their surroundings. They are not in keeping with the character of the area.

To the left hand side of the road and above the long stretch of high retaining wall a modern stone fronted house built more recently has been more sensitively designed to minimise impact. However the pitch of the roof on the gable end would have looked better at a steeper angle and would have been more in keeping with the older cottages. See Fig 24.

The high wall along Awre Road is a notable characteristic.

To the far end of the village along Awre Road there is an early 16 /17th Century cottage, it is unlisted but still of style once typical of this village See Fig 25. This is one and a half storeys with pitched dormer windows, unfortunately it has had its original windows replaced with plastic frames. Opposite is a row of attractive cottages with wrought iron fencing and small courtyard gardens, some of these are now undergoing maintenance to conserve the historic character. See Fig 26.

## Millend

Named after the main purpose of a number of buildings and watercourses, along this historic route that lead from the village down to Gatcombe an important quay on the river Severn.

On entering the Millend there are a number of early cottages. Millend House has a deep-pitched hipped roof with a dormer window. On the opposite side of the road the remains of the leat that fed the small mill at Brooklyn can be seen, it is unfortunate that this leat no longer carries water.



Fig 23.



Fig 24.



Fig 25.



Fig 26.



Fig 27.



Fig 28.



Fig 29.



Fig 30.

Opposite is the entrance to Butlers Mead, built in 1998/9 it is a moderate development that blends well with the setting. The scale, form and proportions of the dwellings compliment the character of the village, whilst the use of coloured blocks provides a good match for the Forest sandstone typical of the Blakeney area. Timber framed windows dramatically improve the look of these cottages. There is a good mix of dwellings from small two and three bed terraces to larger detached houses. See Fig 27.

There are also the remains of historic water courses to the rear of the properties on Millend. High Trees (Grade II Listed) dating to 16th - 17th Century with drip mouldings over windows was likely to have been a mill before later adaptation for residential accommodation See Fig 28. The Wheel pits of two of the Mills are still visible, at Brooklyn and the Mill adjacent to High Trees at the far end of Millend.

Towards the end of Millend there is an attractive row of small stone built cottages. The remains of the buttress of the old railway bridge create a visual stop to the street. The lane towards Etloe and Gatcombe narrows to a deeply cut hollow way as you travel towards the river. The condition of this lane is poor, with the lack of highways maintenance it has not been resurfaced for sometime.

### High Street

Until the turn of the 20th Century the Blackpool brook ran through the centre of the village in an open channel, this was culverted to broaden the high street for commercial traffic. The main core of the shopping centre has never been architecturally special apart from Sydenham House, (once known as Butler's Stores), the Kings Head and a small number of vernacular cottages that remain.

There is a clear and distinct transition between the unity of the buildings within Church Square and loose form of the main high street, which was the commercial area of the village until the 1970s and 80s.

Looking towards Church Square, Manchester House provides a visual stop on the High Street. Note the poor quality of pavements in Fig 29.

Looking in the opposite direction the aspect is entirely different. The buildings have a loose form with no consistent frontage, this is in part due to the open structure of this area and the commercial functions it had during the 19th and early 20th Centuries, there were two breweries in the centre of the village and a forge. Those sites have been redeveloped as modern housing. See Fig 30.

The Smithy is a development that has not enhanced the quality of building in the High Street or added to the conservation area. The entrance has a negative impact with add hoc parking and empty space. See Fig 31 on opposite page.

Despite the original quality of a number of buildings in this part of the village, the visual impact is poor and recent alterations to buildings have not been well done. There is a proliferation of uPVC windows and doors which detract from their appearance.

Brook Farm has lost all historic integrity; this early farmhouse is evidence of the detrimental changes that can occur to a building without the protection of listing.

There is a proliferation of signage and street furniture that arguably does more to confuse the pedestrian or driver than assist them.

There is no clear definition to areas set aside for parking and those set aside for recreation. The exterior of the Kings Head is cluttered with gazebos, tables, bus shelter and road crossing. See Fig 32.

Alterations have taken place to the front of the village shop and to the front of the old Co-op, with featureless uPVC windows. The proportions of the new windows on the old Co-op do not align with those on the first floor. This building would have been improved greatly with the insertion of matching windows.

These are lost opportunities to enhance the appearance at this end of the village and demonstrate the gradual erosion of character within the village.

The village post office has received a recent face-lift, which has enhanced this interesting building built directly over the stream. An important feature is the railings in front of the shop. See Fig 33.

Butts Lane leads to the Village Hall and playing field and although the entrance to this lane is spoilt by the poor alteration that has taken place on the old Co-op, Highmead House (Grade II) situated to the end of the lane is a good example of a late 18thC dwelling with Doric style portico. Meadoway is attached to one side.

## Condition of built fabric

### Buildings

The condition of buildings within the village is generally good. However there are some examples of poor quality alterations and workmanship such as Brook Farm and the buildings at the entrance to Butts Lane.

The United Reform Church on the Soudley road is currently on the English Heritage National Register as a 'Building at Risk', though a sympathetic owner is gradually conserving it. Surrounding vegetation and trees have overgrown the churchyard and are beginning to obscure this splendid building from view.

A number of buildings have seen detrimental changes through time; the Kings Head originally had an 18th Century frontage with a 'Venetian' window.

Unfortunately the historic frontage was altered sometime in the early 1960s when this was a very busy and successful pub, although the upper storey retains the Venetian window and some of the original character of the building. See Fig 34.

The stone footings and some of the structural timbers of the Tannery at Millend House are deteriorating due to the need to maintain the rainwater goods and the root action of plants in this location.

Adjacent to the entrance of the Smithy is Brook Farm; this is arguably one of the earliest remaining cottages within the centre of the village, although it remains unlisted. It has recently undergone an unsympathetic refurbishment. It has lost its traditional lime render and has been poorly re-pointed using orange cement rather than the softer looking traditional lime putty. The removal of original lime render, the re-pointing with concrete and the insertion of uPVC windows and doors is likely to cause damp over a period of time, and devalue the property. See Fig 35 on next page.

The condition of the buildings within Church Square is good with buildings being maintained to a high standard. At the time of survey the Yew Tree Inn was in poor



Fig 31.



Fig 32.



Fig 33.



Fig 34.





Fig 35.



Fig 36.



Fig 37.



Fig 38.

condition but working towards a scheme of conversion that will reinstate some of the traditional qualities of this structure.

The cottages to the end of the village along Awre Road are in a poor condition, however these are currently undergoing refurbishment. It is the intention that features such as the wooden windows and iron railings will be retained to maintain the historic character of this row of cottages. This would be a welcome improvement. See Fig 36.

### Occupation levels

Occupation levels within the village are high, other than the previously mentioned cottages in Awre Road.

The Yew Tree Inn has been vacant for some time but this is now subject to refurbishment.

### Negative Spaces

The entrance to the Smithy is rather bland and empty. There are open areas with no defined parking bays and the ad hoc parking of cars gives rise to the scruffy appearance of the site and a lack of cohesion.

The public toilets, redundant garage forecourt (now used by Dean Mower's), and the bus stop outside the Kings Head public house creates an unappealing view. The road and pedestrian signage around the pelican crossing is a confusing mess. See Fig 37.

The empty car parking area opposite the Lynch gates of the churchyard is a plot of vacant land that is neither dedicated parking or for recreational use. This land is owned by Two Rivers Housing and could be kept in tidier condition to help promote local respect, appreciation and care of the environment around their housing. At the time of survey an untaxed vehicle had been left on this land whilst another car had been left in the road. See Fig 38.

The area around the entrance to the Youth Club looks over grown and uncared for, and consequently provides a trap for litter and rubbish.

### Potential areas which could be enhanced

The lower end of the village could be dramatically improved to provide a more cohesive space and effectively create a more unified feel with Church Square, particularly in the areas around the Kings Head and the bus stop and the area at the end of Butts Lane and bus stop.

The provision of clearly identifiable parking areas would be an asset to the village. This could be achieved through reinstating decent pavements with areas of flagstones and possibly using cast iron bollards to delineate spaces.

The entrance to the smithy is a missed opportunity to enhance the centre of the village with either planting or seating; this would create a more attractive focal area within the village, and enhance the entrance to this cul-de-sac.

The exterior of the Kings Head is cluttered, with signs and temporary gazebos adding to the untidiness. The layout of tables and wet weather cover needs to be better thought out to encourage more people to stop and to improve the feel of the centre of the village.

The Street is wide enough to introduce soft and hard landscaping or tree planting, however such improvements have a cost implication, funds would need to be sourced from grant giving bodies. Improvements could encourage travellers to stop in the village to use shops and businesses and this in turn would benefit trade.

### Street furniture

Although the bus shelters are relatively new they add nothing to the character and appearance of the centre of the conservation area. A more traditional style would be an enhancement.

### Paving traditions

There are no surviving stone paving slabs in the pavements around the village. The pavements are a mixture of tarmac and concrete in poor condition. Along the high street from Church Square towards the Post Office they are extremely worn and uneven and slope dramatically, making walking difficult. The condition of the pavements in this part of the village adds to the untidy appearance.

To the rear of the church outside the Buttery associated with Moira (The Old Vicarage) there are ramped sets to the original stable doorways, adjacent to a churn rest. See Fig 43 on page 16.

In Millend there is a 'cart wash' with a cobbled surface leading down into the brook, this feature is unusual and worth conserving. It is unfortunate that the rough gate does nothing to enhance this interesting feature. See Fig 43 on page 16.

### Wirescape

The wiring in Awre Road is the most visually predominant within the village where overhead wiring is obvious along this lane. See Fig 39. It is not visible within the centre of the village.

## Local Building Patterns

### Local Building patterns

- Vernacular is a term used to describe buildings that are built to suit the needs of the owner, with materials that are to hand, rather than following a set form of architectural style such as neoclassical or gothic. Vernacular buildings are generally simple in form and primarily functional.
- Polite architecture is the reverse of vernacular, it relates to buildings which are architecturally designed in a well defined style, using materials sourced from afar that sometimes needed to be transported into the area. This form of architecture generally relates to country houses and other status buildings. See Fig 40.

Blakeney is an example of a village that demonstrates elements of almost every period of vernacular architecture. Highmead House and Medoway are examples of more polite architecture. More recent developments have tended to be homogenous with elements of design that reflect both traditional and formal design.

There are also the utilitarian designs of 'post war' council housing on the fringes of the conservation area.



Fig 39.



Fig 40.

## Materials

The local red laminated sandstone is the most predominant building material, probably from the extensive quarries and mines in and around Blakeney Hill. There are some variations in the colour and quality. *See Fig 41.*

Historically a number of the properties were coated with lime render. A fashion in the 1980's for the exposure of stone surfaces has led to the loss of this on a number of highly visible properties since the creation of the conservation area. The render was often applied to protect the soft sandstone from adversely weathering. The sandstone is particularly hygroscopic, it needs to breathe so lime render is the ideal protective coat unlike concrete which can have an adverse effect on the fabric of the building and can encourage damp within. Red brick is used on some later buildings.

Another characteristic feature of the village are the high enclosed retaining walls either side of some of the lanes leading out of the village, typically Awre Road and Church Way. These are constructed out of flat bedded local sandstone and in some areas without mortar.

The need for car parking in the village has led to this wall having been breached for either parking or access splays. Gradually the walls are becoming more fragmentary with a significant loss of character. *See Fig 42.*

In Awre Road where a parking bay has been created it has been well done, however this still has a significant impact on the nature of these small lanes and whilst a similar material may be used, the effect can be detrimental if the stone is bedded incorrectly. Equally the incorrect type of mortar and the method of pointing (for example wide strap pointing) can also radically change the appearance to the detriment of the conservation area.

Lime wash was also used to coat the stables and buttery to Moira, the buildings still show traces of yellow ochre coloured lime wash *See Fig 43.* Unfortunately the side of the building to the steps has recently been painted using modern exterior masonry paint, this is unlikely to react well with the soft sandstone, which will cause it to bubble.

Welsh slate is now the predominant roofing material within the village although there are some examples of concrete tile.

Double roman clay tiles are retained on a small number of outbuildings and sheds around the village and were historically a predominant roofing fabric.

The roofscape is varied with older cottages showing more deeply pitched and sometimes gabled or hipped roofs.

Sandstone roof tiles are still visible to the rear of some of the older structures; these have been traditionally cut from local sandstone and are difficult to replace with sources of stone no longer able to produce the thinly laminated sandstone needed for splitting tiles. *See Fig 44.*

A number of the properties have evidence of timber framing to the rear, this is visible from overlooking gardens.

In the centre of the village is a listed Tannery of cruck construction with lapped board exterior. This is an unassuming but important listed building within the



Fig 41.



Fig 42.



Fig 43.



Fig 44.



centre of the village but as the crucks are not visible on the exterior it appears fairly insignificant See Fig 45. The barn has lost its more traditional wooden doors and these have been replaced with an inappropriate 'up and over door' in recent years without the benefit of Listed Building Consent.

There are a large number of properties within the village that retain hooded porches, these range from simple hoods to more ornate wrought iron porches. These should be retained, as should the iron railings. See Fig 46 & 47.

Another characteristic feature of the village are the retaining walls that are visible along the Awre Road and up into Church Way. They are slowly being incorporated into entrances for vehicles with wide splays, this precedent is significant as it has a detrimental effect on the character of these lanes.

## Activities, uses and linkages

The village shop and post office are continually busy and benefit from the traffic passing through on the A48.

The village has an excellent sports field and village hall.

There are a number of other community spaces within the village but these appear to be under used, such as the Youth Club and the Church Rooms.

## Images and associations

### Sounds

The continual traffic noise tends to obliterate any rural associations, particularly breaking Lorries as they approach the centre of the village too fast. In areas further away from the main road where more rural sounds are apparent, rooks and buzzards with some noise from farm machinery can be heard.

### Smells

There are smells from the fish and chip shop in the centre of the village at cooking times.

Towards the far end of Millend it is sometimes possible to smell the sewage works.

At certain times of the year when muck spreading is taking place the wind blows the smell into the village where it hangs in the valley.

### Associations

Sternhold and Hopkins who were the first to set the Psalms to music are thought to have been residents of the parish with Thomas Sternhold having been resident at the Hawfield just outside the village.

Blakeney Red Perry Pear, a famous variety of pear best known for its excellent Perry but not good to eat, usually resulting in an affliction known as the 'colly wobbles'. There are a number of orchards around the village that are still planted with trees. After the Perry making process the skins were used for the die khaki, which was used for the uniforms of the British army!



Fig 45.



Fig 46.



Fig 47.

## Conclusion

Blakeney has all the bits of the jigsaw that go to making an attractive village, a beautiful setting with good examples of 19th Century architecture, with earlier cottages intermixed. The lanes and footpaths that wind out of the village are exceptional in the age of the hedgerows and the lack of modern intervention. The local sandstone gives the older cottage a warm-colour against green trees and hedges.

However the village has undergone many detrimental changes over the years. The proliferation of uPVC windows and doors has spread through the village. Whilst the A48 has lead to a mass signage within the centre of the village and pavements are patched and uneven.

Litter is a constant issue in a number of areas where young people gather particularly in the Lynch Gates and the shelter on 'The Butts'.

The conservation area appraisal will help to focus attention on those elements that could be improved, but it is well recognised that there are few sources of funding to help improvements.

It will also focus attention on the style and form of new build within the village in assessing planning applications and how they might contribute to the conservation area rather than detracting from it.

The important open space within the designated conservation area maintains the village's context and value.

## SWOT Analysis

A SWOT analysis identifies the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats to the area.

### Strengths

- Context and setting.
- Church Square with its collection of 19thC shop fronts, and small gardens with wrought iron fences and hooded porches.
- The attractive stone walls, and narrow lanes.
- The brooks running through the village.
- Blakeney Red pear trees.

### Weaknesses

- The speed of traffic on Main A48 from Gloucester, this approach is often taken far too fast with vehicles struggling to slow through the centre of the village.
- Lack of sensitivity to improving the visual aspect within the high street.
- Proliferation of poorly located signage.
- Proliferation of uPVC windows and doors in unlisted properties.
- Litter in some parts of the village is problematic.

### Opportunities

- To improve the quality of new build within the village to reflect local styles and materials
- Improve the area in and around the entrance to the Smithy.
- To improve the centre of the village with new pavements and parking.
- To reduce the clutter around the centre of the village by defining areas of parking or seating.
- Introduce soft and hard landscaping in the centre of the village.

### Threats

- Bland and poorly designed new build in and around the conservation area, that does not take account of its context.
- Continued installation of uPVC windows and doors out of character.
- Gradual loss of historic stonewalls to lanes.
- General problem of litter.
- Inappropriate alterations to buildings.
- Knotweed in watercourses.



## Awre Conservation Area

Awre was designated as a conservation area on the 29th September 1989. The area covers 3.24 hectares and currently includes 5 Listed buildings and a number of listed monuments in the churchyard.

The Conservation area is small and is closely drawn around the core of the settlement. There are a number of key buildings that are outside the boundary, however they are listed and therefore protected by that designation. There is no immediate threat of development within the area.

For avoidance of doubt, where the boundary of the conservation area is shown on a wall, fence, hedgerow, tree line or other means of enclosure, it shall be deemed to be included within the conservation area.



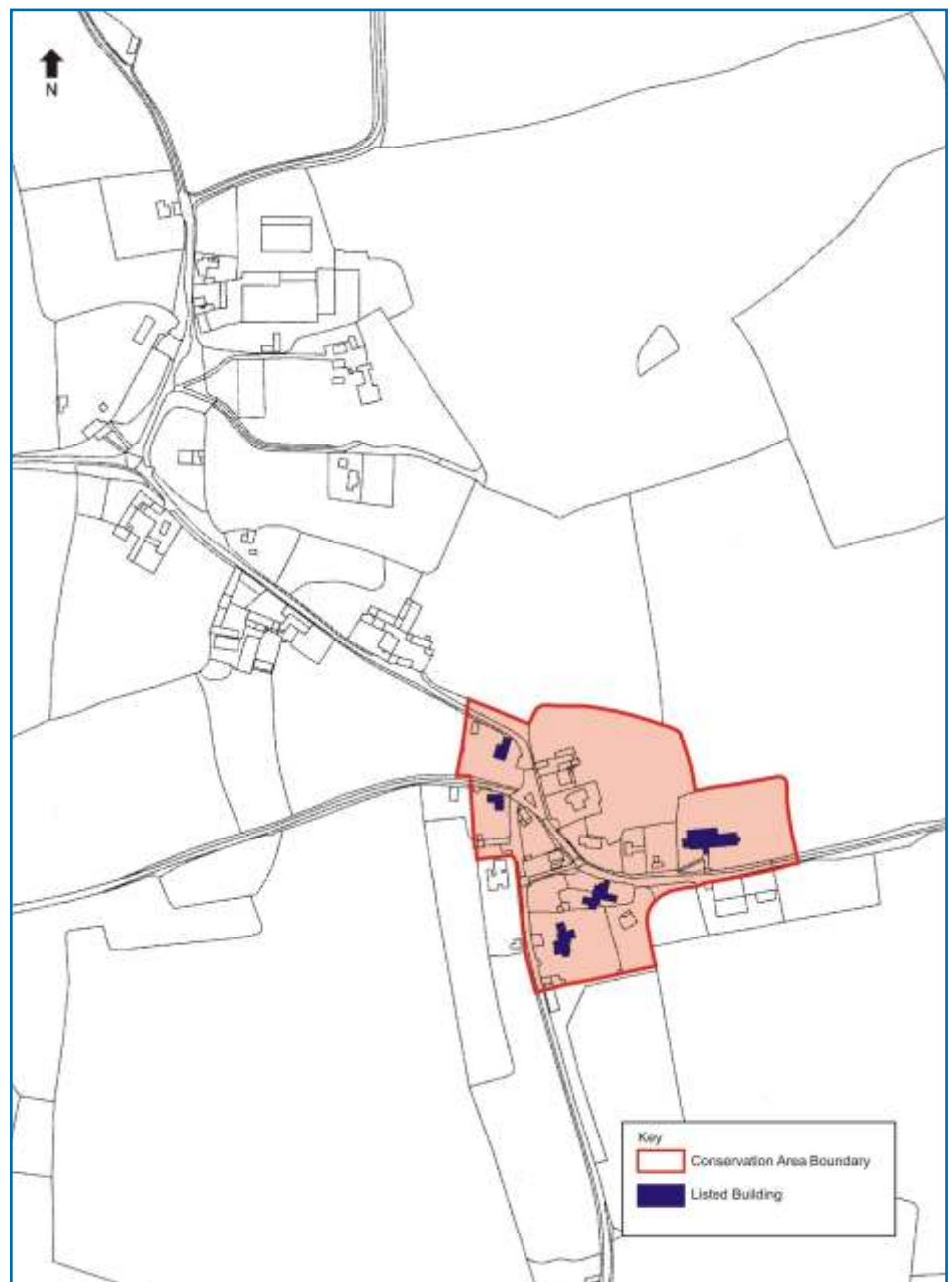
Fig 48.



Fig 49.



Fig 50.



# Evolution of area

## Historic Development of the Village

The place name is unusual and was originally spelt as Aure in some early sources. The Manor of Awre was held by Edward the Confessor in 1066.

There are field names and the remains of ridge and furrow in the fields around the village that suggest a more significant settlement may have existed. The surrounding landscape is populated by a number of large or significant farms. Some of these have early origins and some are associated with moated manorial sites. Although the village gave its name to the parish, Blakeney became the centre of trade and industry, partly due to its location. Awre has remained a more isolated settlement with close links to the river trade, fishing and farming. The use of the landscape around the conservation area is entirely different to the woodland and upland landscape of the Forest.

## Archaeological significance

There is little archaeological evidence in the conservation area according to the County Sites and Monuments Record. It is possible that the historic focal centre of the village may have been to the south eastern side of the church where evidence of a building may indicate the early centre of the village and a possible site for a manorial settlement. Some sources suggest that this might be the site of Lypiatt Manor. Medieval pottery has also been uncovered following field walking.

Although there is little archaeological evidence from within the conservation area, this does not mean that there is no archaeology. A settlement with a well documented history such as Awre may have reduced in size or the nucleus of the settlement may have shifted over time. Ridge and furrow in surrounding fields and place names suggest that this was once a more significant settlement.

# Area Analysis

## Setting

Open estuarine farmland with mature hedgerows and narrow lanes. Many fields around the village have remnants of orchards with some mature and locally important varieties such as the Hagloe Crab and Box Kernel. The estuarine landscape is an important wildlife habitat. *See Fig 48 on opposite page.*

## Skyline

Open wide skies in an exposed landscape. The skyline is very different to that in other parts of the Forest of Dean District. There are no visible buildings puncturing the skyline other than the church tower, though there are a pair of big pylons that hold the span of cable across the river Severn. These are visible from the edges of the village. Many migrating sea birds fly over the village towards Slimbridge Wildfowl Park on the other side of the River Severn. Awre is on the direct flight path between Walmore Common and Slimbridge.

## Approaches

From all directions the village is approached through narrow winding lanes with trees, verges and hedgerows playing an important role in maintaining the special character. Verges within the village have been recently planted with indigenous tree species *See Fig 49 on opposite page.*

## Landmarks

The war memorial is sited at the meeting point of the three roads in the centre of the conservation area. This site was traditionally the village green. *See Fig 50 on opposite page.*



Fig 51.



Fig 52.



Fig 53.



Fig 54.



Fig 55.



Fig 56.



Fig 57.



Fig 58.

The War memorial is overlooked by Vulcan Cottage originally this was the village forge. The well outside the cottage may have been an early focal point for the community and its location is probably linked to the needs of the metal working carried out in the Forge. See Fig 51 on previous page.

The Church is 12th Century with a Norman tower and dedicated to St Andrews. It is visible in the surrounding landscape and from across the river. Its setting is not dominated by any other buildings in the landscape (See Fig 52 on previous page). The access to the church is via a simple Lynch gate See Fig 53 on previous page. There is an ancient Yew tree to the rear of the Church.

The Churchyard contains a large number of early head stones dating from the 17th Century, some carved with deaths heads and cherubs See Fig 54 on previous page. There are also a large number of early chest tombs some of these are listed. The churchyard is not over maintained but sufficiently enough to give it a peaceful rural atmosphere and provide habitat for wild flowers and insects.

### Views

There are good views of open farmland, with cows and orchards, mature hedges and fruit trees. There are numerous green lanes that offer access to farmland and the river. Many of these are still used on a frequent basis. Outside the conservation area there are extensive views across the river. See Fig 55.

### Structure

Awre is a loosely connected settlement of cottages and larger farms along a number of attractive narrow lanes leading towards the Church. There is no defined street frontage or planned development. There are no areas of estate housing.

### Hierarchy

The village is a quiet rural settlement now, but historically was more prominent with close links via the river trade. The focus however shifted to those settlements along the main road links such as Newnham and Blakeney.

### Quality of Spaces

Open fields surround the conservation area and extend into the village centre. There are well-maintained hedgerows, excellent well-established ancient orchard in and around the village.

## Landscape setting

### Topography

As described in the Forest of Dean District Landscape Character Assessment 2002, Awre is classed as drained farmland. See Fig 56.

The village is located in an ecologically important area of soft, fertile, agricultural landscape. Its soils are suited to both pastoral and arable farming, as well as orchards. See Fig 57.

The landform in Awre is gentle and rolling, wild flowers and daffodil's with few areas of woodland, save small coppices and the alders and willows which line the banks of the streams which flow through the area. There are well-established hedgerows, and verges deep with cow parsley See Fig 58. Towards the river the land is made up of drained riverside farmland and grazed salt marsh, the Triassic mudstones are visible on the edge of the river and have been traditionally used as building material.



# Condition of built fabric

## Buildings

The buildings are generally in good condition with the exception of the barns at New House farm, where the roof has failed. This will result in the rapid deterioration of these buildings. See Fig 59.

There are no buildings at risk within the Awre conservation area. The number of listed building is small.

There are a number of significant buildings around the village but only five within the conservation area, Brays Court is the most notable of these.

The Red Hart is a listed public house. The original part dates from the 16th Century and is a timber framed cottage with a heavy chimney stack, the main part of the building dates from the 18th Century with an interesting configuration of windows on the first and second floor where 16 pane sashes have been doubled up to create larger windows. The addition of a flat roof toilet block to the front elevation of the building during the 1970's was a negative addition! See Fig 60.

## Occupation levels

There are no vacant properties within the conservation area, however Vulcan Cottage has been empty for long periods. This gives this cottage a rather abandoned appearance. See Fig 61.

## Negative Spaces

Character Appraisals usually look at the positive and negative aspects of a settlement, however as Awre conservation area is so compact it is very difficult to find any negative spaces. There is an un-maintained plot adjacent to Vulcan Cottage that at the time of the survey was overgrown with brambles, bringing this plot back into use would make a positive contribution to the conservation area. Historically this site had a number of small cottages on it.

## Potential areas which could be enhanced.

The lane along side the Read Hart is a bit empty and undefined and could be Improved, as could the access to the public house.

## Street furniture

Very little save the red phone box and the post box outside the old post office in the centre of the settlement the verges are grown with wild flowers and grasses, they are not manicured and this contributes to the timeless quality of the place

## Wirescape

The wiring in the village does not appear generally intrusive, although there are a number around the front of the public house. It would be a positive enhancement if these were to be removed underground. See Fig 62.

# Local Building Patterns

## Local Building patterns

- Vernacular is a term used to describe buildings that are built to suit the needs of the owner with materials that are to hand, rather than following a set form of architectural style such as neoclassical or gothic. Vernacular buildings are generally simple in form and primarily functional.



Fig 59.



Fig 60.



Fig 61.



Fig 62.



Fig 63.



Fig 64.



Fig 65.



Fig 66.

- Polite architecture is the reverse of vernacular, it relates to buildings which are architecturally designed in a well defined style, using materials sourced from afar that sometimes needed to be transported into the area. This form of architecture generally relates to country houses and other status buildings.

There is no particular period of architecture within the village that is dominant. The buildings show a gradual development of change and evolution to meet the changes of need. *Fig 63* shows how a 16th/17th Century farm house has been added to with a 19th Century brick extension to the front, from the roadside it is only the 19th Century extension that is visible.

### Materials

There is a mixture of building materials within the conservation area.

Typical of this area is the use of Triassic mudstones from the underlying geology. This is a flat light grey soft stone which is easily eroded by weather action and is often rendered to protect it, traditionally this would have been done with lime render. Other building are constructed using Forest sandstone, the nearest location for which would be the quarries around Blakeney. It is more durable than the Triassic stone but still subject to weather erosion.

Recent additions have sometimes failed to match the mellow quality of the original brick work, with this façade looking rather dominant over the original cottage. See *Fig 64*. Vulcan Cottage is constructed using red brick, with a stone tile roof.

There are a number of modern bungalows within the conservation area. These are constructed using brick and at the time they were built were not designed to have a minimal effect on the setting.

Roofing materials are a combination of welsh slate, some rosemary tiled tile, and modern concrete tiles. Vulcan Cottage has a stone tile roof.

Wooden window frames are evident throughout the village and in the conservation area, being used on modern conversions. See *Fig 65*.

There are several working farmyards within the conservation area, the associated structures are typical barns constructed from a variety of material including corrugated metal sheet, concrete blocks, re-used tile and slate and other materials. These are typical agricultural structures associated with this rural industry.

## Activities, uses and linkages

Vulcan Cottage was historically a forge. The association of the name with the activity is an interesting link with Vulcan being the Roman God of fire and Blacksmithing. See *Fig 66*.

A number of the farms around the village have the remains of cider mills, these are an important element of the local character and should be retained.

## Images and associations

### Sounds

With Sea birds from the River Severn, cows in the fields, a summer's day with grasshoppers chirruping and bees buzzing, this village is a rare opportunity for

tranquillity. However there are also real farmyard noises including tractors and machinery, the sounds are of a working rural community that is still based around agriculture.

### **Associations**

Awre is very much a farming community and the atmosphere is closely linked to the activities within the village. Salmon fishing has always been an important part of the livelihood of this community until fairly recently. There are still racks of putchers on the river to the west of the village.

The associations of this settlement are closely linked to Blakeney.

Box Kernel and Hagloe Crab Apples are important local varieties grown for cider making.

## **Conclusion**

Awre village is an attractive rural settlement that has retained much of its character which is impart due to its relatively isolated location. The conservation area is focused around the church and the war memorial. It is drawn around that part of the settlement where the dwellings are more closely associated with each other, however the settlement is much more widely spread, due to the nature of its evolution.

There are large areas of open space between buildings and this is a characteristic of this village. Many of the buildings outside the conservation area are 'listed' so protection for these takes precedent over that afforded by being in a conservation area. There are no areas that are highlighted for development as the village is classed as being in the open countryside. Future development is also unlikely as the village is some distance from local amenities and transport networks.

For these reasons this appraisal does not recommend any changes to the original boundary of the Awre conservation area.



## SWOT Analysis

A SWOT analysis identifies the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats to the area.

### Strengths

- General appearance of a well cared for village and community.
- Historic church and churchyard.
- Continued farming of the landscape in a traditional manner.
- Village pub and post office.
- Position away from main roads.

### Weaknesses

- Distance from amenities.
- Distance from schools and shops.
- Lack of public transport.
- Farmyard at New House Farm is being used for working on vehicles, has a rather neglected air.

### Opportunities

- To ensure that the special Characteristics of the area are considered in any developments or alterations of buildings and the open spaces between them in the future.
- To improve the area around the front of the pub.

### Threats

- Unsympathetic development of properties, or land.
- Loss of farming changes in farming practices.

## Management proposals

### Application of policy guidance

The Forest of Dean Local District Local Plan 2005 sets out a number of policies that this authority will follow when dealing with conservation areas. The policies are as follows:

#### **(R)FHE.1 Preservation and Enhancement of Conservation Areas**

The Council will seek to preserve or enhance the character or appearance of designated Conservation Areas and will review from time to time the need for further designations. Development, which would detract from the visual, historic or architectural character of such areas or their settings, will not be permitted. Consideration will be given to the use of Article 4 directions where permitted development would be likely to have an adverse effect, particularly upon a programme or scheme of conservation works, or on buildings which have been grant aided.

#### **(R)FHE.2 Demolition in Conservation Areas**

Where the buildings or walls make little or no positive contribution to the character or appearance of a Conservation Area, their demolition will be permitted, but only if the demolition proposal is accompanied by fully detailed and acceptable plans for the redevelopment proposed after demolition which demonstrate that the redevelopment scheme will preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the Conservation Area.

Where buildings or walls in any Conservation Area make a positive contribution to the character or appearance of that Conservation Area, their total or substantial demolition will not be permitted unless:

1. All reasonable efforts have been made to sustain existing uses or to find viable new uses
2. Preservation in some form of charitable or community ownership is not possible
3. Redevelopment would produce substantial benefits for the community that would decisively outweigh the loss resulting from demolition.

#### **(R)FHE.5 Change of Use of Buildings of Architectural or Historic Importance**

Where an alternative use is proposed for a Listed Building or a building of local historic or architectural importance planning permission will be granted where it can be demonstrated that the proposal will preserve the historic and architectural character of the building in its setting and that no other reasonable alternative use exists which would better safeguard the architectural or historic importance of the building.

#### **(R)FHE.6 Development Affecting Archaeological Sites**

Nationally important archaeological remains whether scheduled or not will be required to be preserved in-situ. Planning Permission will not be granted for

development which would involve significant alteration or damage to such remains or which would have a significant impact on the setting of visible remains.

Where proposals affect remains of lesser importance, planning permission will only be granted where the need for the development outweighs all other material considerations, and where appropriate and satisfactory arrangements have been made and can be implemented for the excavation and recording of any remains. Where permitted, development that affects remains of archaeological importance must be implemented in such a manner as to minimise any adverse effect on the remains concerned.

In all matters relating to this policy the Council and the developer will be expected to take appropriate specialist advice.

### **(R)FHE.7 Requirement to Provide Archaeological Information**

Development proposals likely to affect sites of archaeological interest and their settings or within areas of known or likely archaeological potential must be accompanied by an archaeological assessment and where appropriate the results of a field evaluation appraising the likely extent or nature of the archaeology, together with an indication of how the impact of the proposals on the archaeological remains will be mitigated. This information will be a material consideration when determining an application.

There are wider issues relating to conservation areas and these are set out in government guidance, these together with the local plan policies will be used to guide the consideration of proposals in the designated Conservation Area.

### **Amendments to boundaries**

In Blakeney the alterations from the original boundary designated 8th November 1979 are so that they correspond more correctly with features on the ground and include areas of open space in between the main densities of housing. These are protected open space and important aspects of the setting of the village.

There are no changes to the boundary in Awre.

### **Consideration of the resources needed to maintain area**

There are no major financial resource implications arising out of this character analysis for local authorities. There are extremely limited resources available from central or local government specifically to maintain conservation areas; however the character appraisal maybe useful for Awre Parish Council in identifying proposals for the future. For other agencies or authorities such as the District Council and Gloucester County Council this character appraisal can identify issues that maybe able to be dealt with when considering on going maintenance or planned programs affecting these villages.

It offers an opportunity for private developers investing resources in the area to recognise the needs of the village when undertaking major or minor development.

### **Monitoring Change**

Change in Awre Parish needs to be monitored over the coming years in order to control the small alterations which take place, but which could eventually further erode the character of the conservation areas. Monitoring will take place subject to officer time and as funds allow; the photographic recording of the conservation area every two years would produce a comparison exercise and a record for use in the future.



### **Procedures for consistent decision-making**

There is considerable detailed government guidance for dealing with development in conservation areas which is used by all local authorities in England and Wales. However the nature of historic buildings and conservation areas means that it is virtually impossible to produce a standardised strategy, as every building or area needs to be dealt with individually. The production of character appraisals, a Local Development Framework and Supplementary Planning Guidance will help provide a consistent base for decision-making within this local authority.

### **Enforcement strategy**

It is occasionally necessary for local authorities to use their statutory powers to initiate the repair of buildings which are having a detrimental affect on the conservation area, these powers included urgent works notices and section 215 notices.

Local authorities also have the statutory powers to instigate the repair of listed buildings, and non-listed buildings within a conservation area, through the use of urgent works notices. If an urgent works notice were to be issued on a non-listed building in a conservation area, it would require permission from the Secretary of State. An urgent works notice is used to secure emergency repairs to a building to alleviate the deterioration of a building, the notice is issued to the owner, but if the owner refuses to carry out the necessary works the local authority can, and then claim the costs back from the owner.

Section 215 notices are part of the local authorities planning powers; the notice can be served on the owner of any land or building whose condition affects the quality of the area. If the notice were served, the owner would be expected to redeem the situation through cleaning up the site or building. If the owner does not comply with the notice the authority can carry out the works then reclaim the cost from the owner.

Action will be taken where there are breaches of regulations and where it is necessary to do so. Aspects like the introduction of satellite dishes to walls and roofs fronting a highway without permission are issues that need to be seriously considered.

To make 'material changes' to Listed buildings without Listed Building Consent is a criminal offence, to ensure that alterations and repairs comply with the law it is always advisable to consult the listed buildings officer for the district to find out if you need consent for works you are planning.

### **Proposals for article 4 directions**

A local authority has power to withdraw further permitted development rights by issuing Article 4(1) and 4(2) directions, however a conservation area has to be deemed of considerable importance before Article 4 directions can be justified. This is an option available to the Forest of Dean District Council, however there are no proposals in this Character Appraisal to introduce Article 4 directions.

### **Intended action for buildings at risk**

The Independent Chapel in Blakeney is Grade II \* and currently on the English Heritage Buildings at Risk List, work is currently being undertaken to ensure the future of this building is secure.

The Yew Tree Inn in Blakeney has been identified as a local Building at Risk, but a scheme of works has recently been under discussion working towards an effective solution.

## Proposed enhancement schemes

Planning Act 1990 (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) states that Local authorities have a duty to prepare schemes for the enhancement of conservation areas. Many of the suggested areas of enhancement are included in this character appraisal. These suggestions relate back to the policies for the historic environment as set out in the Forest of Dean Local Plan 2005. At the present time there is no specific budget or strategy for the completion of such schemes, which means that they can only be achieved through close partnership with other public bodies, agencies or sections within Local Authorities.

### Wirescape

Where the opportunity arises electricity and telecommunication wiring could be provided underground, to the benefit of the village. The removal of these overhead wires would reduce the clutter seen along the rural lanes and significantly enhance the conservation area.

### Street furniture

Were street furniture to be introduced in Awre or Blakeney every effort should be made for appropriate designs to be chosen.

## Economic development and regeneration

### New development

Conservation area status is not designed to stop all future development in that area. However it is also made clear in government guidance and the local authorities own local plan that new development in conservation areas should be of a high standard.

New development should relate to its surroundings, in scale and form, and the grain of the settlement, e.g. street patterns. However in order to relate to its surroundings new development does not automatically have to be an imitation of the buildings already present in an area. Conservation philosophy advises against the reproduction of old styles in new buildings, and encourages new development to be in the style of the time.

It is the quality of a design that is fundamental in producing a high quality of building, linked with the level of detailing and finish.

The special architectural character of an area does not need to stand still at the date of designation providing any development enhances or at least has a neutral effect on the character of the area. New developments could be a way to further improve the quality of an area if sensitive yet innovative designs are produced. In 1998 the Forest of Dean District Council adopted the 'Residential Design Guide', the document was produced by the University of the West of England, and provides information and guidelines suitable for new development in the Forest of Dean, the document is a highly useful resource for those intending to develop areas of the district.

### Building regulation relaxation

The Building Regulations through Government policy requires new buildings, building works or services installed in them to be continually achieving better energy efficiency and lower CO2 emissions, as well as requiring in certain circumstances better access in and around the building.

Special considerations apply if the building on which the work is to be carried has special historic or architectural value and where compliance with the current requirements of the regulations would unacceptably alter the character or appearance of the building.

When undertaking work on or in connection with buildings with special historic or architectural value, the aim should be to improve energy efficiency and access where and to the extent that is practically possible. This is provided that the work does not prejudice the character of the listed building or increase the risk of long term deterioration to the building fabric or fittings.

Therefore when carrying works to such buildings which require Building Regulations Consent, it is important to speak to the Building Control section at an early stage so any perceived conflicts of legislation can be identified and resolved in a manner that satisfies the current requirements of the affected Regulations and Legislation.

### **Strategy for the management of trees and other greenery**

Most trees within the conservation area boundary are automatically safeguarded, as written notice is required to be submitted to the local authority six weeks before the work is carried out. This allows the local authority time to place a tree preservation order on the tree in question if it is felt worthy of the designation. It is the Forest of Dean District Council's Countryside Section that deals with such queries.





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